



Empowering Communities Grant Impact Evaluation 2019

The following grantees participated in an evaluation to better understand how the Empowering Communities funds help them engage residents in community decision-making and impact SDOH:

- Ashtabula County Community Action Agency (ACCAA)
- Historic South Initiative*
- Old Brooklyn Community Development Corporation (OBCDC)
- Rural Action
- Miami Valley Housing Opportunities (MVHO)

Measurement Resources Company (MRC) conducted an external evaluation to assess what the grantees did, how well they did it, and how individuals or communities are better off as a result.

*Historic South Initiative was not included as part of MRC's evaluation.

Overall, an estimated 2,401 unique residents were served through the Empowering Communities grant.



As a result of the Community Empowerment Grant, grantees:

- Increased resident engagement in efforts addressing SDOH;
- Increased Ohio residents' self-advocacy and community organizing skills;
- Improved child and adult overall well-being, including mental and physical health, employment and meeting basic needs; and
- Practiced community-based services in both project development and implementation.

Lessons learned:

1. Flexibility grantees had in terms of how to spend Empowering Communities Grant dollars was key to grantees' successes in increased resident well-being and empowerment.
2. The Empowering Communities Grant impacted residents and grantee organizations. Implementing a multi-level evaluation strategy that measures impact on both residents and grantees will serve to better tell the Empowering Communities whole impact story.

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Grantees' Accomplishments

Ashtabula County Community Action Agency (ACCAA)

ACCAA created a Community Learning Center, the Dragon Empowerment Center (DEC), to serve as a one-stop hub where all community members can access supportive services, health, education, recreational, and enrichment programs in order to address the non-academic conditions that negatively affect a student's ability to come to school "ready-to-learn."

- 341 dental services to 247 children;
- Of students with test and attendance data available:
 - 74% increased attendance;
 - 76% increased reading scores; and
 - 91% increased math scores.
- 42 vision referrals and assistance;
- 142 tutoring sessions to 87 children;
- 942 clothing donations and 427 meal donations;
- 10 community events attended by 828 residents; and
- 100% of parents agreed that the community center was a valuable resource and has a positive impact on their child's life.

Old Brooklyn Community Development Corporation (OBCDC)

OBCDC hired a Community Health Coordinator to leverage the grant funding and establish a Resident Health Council to coordinate health interventions based on community input.

- 2,100 farmers' market attendees;
- 1,333 free farmers' market shuttle rides;
- 81 (attendance more than doubled that of the previous year) Crooked River Exploration Camp attendees (a week-long camp for children, integrating educational activities around urban and natural ecosystems, awarded 2020 Program Excellence Award by American Camping Association Ohio Board);
- 5 residents in the Resident Health Council;
- Residents overall experienced increased access to healthy foods, improved knowledge of their health statuses, and reduced transportation barriers; and
- (70% or more) felt empowered to influence decisions related to their own lives; in terms of their empowerment to influence decisions made in their community, 70% of residents believe that by working together people in their community can influence decisions.

Rural Action

Coordinated development of Community Improvement Challenge teams aimed to increase resident engagement and empowerment to influence decisions related to the well-being of the community.

- 8 Community Improvement Challenge teams, total of 55 team members;
- 94% of team members agreed that Rural Action's advisory hours improved their team's ability to build partnerships outside the community, to identify resources and to carry out project plans;
- Community projects and interventions included: park improvements (e.g., new workout stations, new playground, art installation, and a new park and town event space), community infrastructure projects (e.g., fixing public electrical lines, installation of "Children at Play" signs and speed bumps, built and installed Little Free Libraries across the community), and health fairs;
- 79% of team members perceive they can influence decisions made in their teams and 71% are satisfied with the extent of influence they have over decisions made; and
- 1,749 advisory hours staff spent on recording meeting minutes and publishing them for teams to better track progress; providing grant-writing workshops; budgeting support; and staff's leveraging of their social and governmental networks to help identify local and external resources.

Miami Valley Housing Opportunities (MVHO)

MVHO increased their Employment Specialist from part-time to full-time staff in order to serve homeless youth, chronically homeless individuals/families, and other individuals/families exiting homelessness that need intensive service.

- 6 tenants with one-on-one job readiness and goal-setting coaching;
- 6 tenants with one-on-one soft skills coaching;
- 2 tenants with referral to addiction counseling;
- 2 tenants gained and maintained employment, one being promoted and receiving a raise; and
- 83% of tenants agree that they have employment goals and a plan to achieve their goals. 60% of the tenants agree to strongly agree that they are able to maintain a positive attitude at work, keep their job, and have the social skills to succeed in interviews.