

OUTREACH FUNDING

Health Outreach Partners



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Funding outreach and enabling services has always been a significant challenge for health centers. Many outreach services are non-reimbursable, funded through grants with a limited time horizon, or absorbed by general funds. Through interviews with administrators and questionnaires with outreach managers, Health Outreach Partners (HOP) identified some of the nuances that health centers experience when sustaining and building their outreach programs.

This fact sheet is a component of HOP's *Breaking Down the Barriers: A National Needs Assessment on Farmworker Health Outreach*, a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis on the needs of farmworkers and farmworker outreach programs in the U.S. Please visit www.outreach-partners.org to obtain a PDF copy of the report.



Photo courtesy of Clinicas del Camino Real, Inc.

What are the Challenges with Funding Outreach and Enabling Services?

FINDING 1: OUTREACH IS PRIMARILY SUPPORTED BY FEDERAL FUNDS

- Migrant Health Centers each spent an average of \$1.3 million on enabling services in 2007. On average, 10% of each health center's expenses are attributed to these services (UDS 2007).
- A total of 22 of 24 health center administrators interviewed indicated federal funds were the primary funding source for outreach and enabling services; the remaining funding streams are from state-level sources, private foundations, program income, and donations.
- 59% of migrant health professionals indicated their respective programs were funded by Bureau of Primary Health Care Grants, followed by private grants (32%), other federal grants (29%), and state government (25%).

FINDING 2: OUTREACH AND ENABLING SERVICES ARE OFTEN GRANT DEPENDENT

- Health centers have consistently noted the non-reimbursable nature of outreach and enabling services to be a significant financial challenge across HOP's past three needs assessments.
- According to health center administrators, health centers often are forced to absorb costs or seek grants to support outreach and enabling services because these services are non-reimbursable.

There is no way to get reimbursed for providing these services. FQHC funding is based on the cost of providing direct services and anything not directly associated with a medical visit is not reimbursed. There is no way to keep outreach staff on without grant funding and this is one of the major challenges. – Health Center Administrator, Telephone Interview Notes

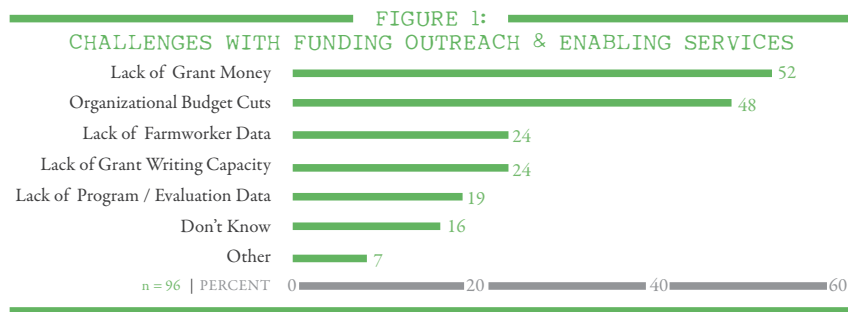
There is always a risk of grants running out. The outreach and enabling services are 98% grant funded through government grants. But, there is always a chance that funding will be stopped especially with ups and downs in the economy.

– Health Center Administrator, Telephone Interview Notes

FINDING 3: FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES ARE OFTEN LIMITED

- Several administrators commented that available grant opportunities only cover short time periods, forcing health centers to continually engage in grant-seeking activities to maintain consistent levels of services.
- Migrant health professionals indicated that the greatest challenge in funding outreach and enabling services was lack of grant money available (Figure 1).

Breaking Down the Barriers: A Deeper Look into...



The administrator shared that their health center has to continue to reapply; if they lose funding for a year, they do not have money to pay that staff person. – Health Center Administrator, Telephone Interview Notes

Not too many people fund outreach and enabling services. These services are only funded for a year or two. There is no source for ongoing funding for education and outreach. Funding is very episodic. – Health Center Administrator, Telephone Interview Notes

What are the Consequences of the Current Funding Structure?

FINDING 4: STAFFING CAPACITY IS LIMITED BY LACK OF AVAILABLE FUNDING

- Many administrators indicated that providing outreach and enabling services was important to providing accessible, quality health care services. Further, the desire to expand existing services was a notable theme.
- Lack of consistent funding reportedly affected organizations' ability to expand outreach and enabling services and hire more staff.
- 31% of health centers reported that lack of staff is a key challenge when providing outreach and enabling services (n=99).

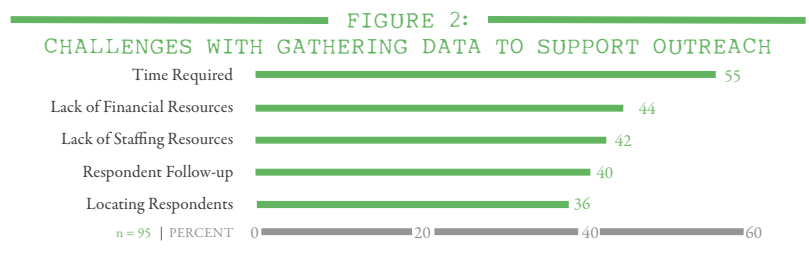
The health center could have as many as two times or three times the workers and have plenty for them to do; they can barely keep up with what they have. – Health Center Administrator, Telephone Interview Notes

The real question is, "Have we received adequate funding?" The health center can never serve all the people that they need to serve. These kinds of services require resources like time and transportation. – Health Center Administrator, Telephone Interview Notes

There are data to suggest that the migrant and seasonal farmworker population is growing by 12% in the health center's service area every year. Nothing else is being done to catch up with that. It would be nice to have expanded staff capacity but the administrator is not seeing funding opportunities available. – Health Center Administrator, Telephone Interview Notes

FINDING 5: STAFFING CAPACITY IMPACTS THE ABILITY TO COLLECT DATA ON OUTREACH

- The two most frequent challenges in collecting needs information were staffing resources (52%) and lack of time (52%) (n=23).
- 56% of respondents indicated more staff time was needed to better evaluate programs (n=66).
- The most frequently cited challenge to gathering information to support outreach programs was lack of internal resources such as time (55%), funding (44%), and staff (42%) (Figure 2).



What Makes Organizations Successful in Securing Outreach Funding?

FINDING 6: STRONG FUNDING APPLICATIONS INCORPORATE LOCAL NEEDS DATA

- 45% of health center participants reported conducting a farmworker needs assessment (n=98).
- Administrators indicated that data assist in developing programs that are relevant to their communities and provide justification for funding requests.

The health center has had success in grant writing because they perform good assessments of what the community needs. Then, the health center is able to deliver services based on those identified needs once the grant funding has been received. The health center's success is because the organization develops programs based on what the community actually needs. – Health Center Administrator, Telephone Interview Notes

The health center has been successful with grants for the following two reasons: Writing good quality applications that are based on data and doing a good job with grant management. – Health Center Administrator, Telephone Interview Notes

FINDING 7: EVALUATING OUTREACH IMPROVES SUSTAINABILITY

- The majority (69%) of health center respondents evaluate the effectiveness of their outreach programs (n=97).
- 44% revealed evaluation data were used to fulfill funder requirements (n=66).
- 30% indicated evaluation data were used to supplement grant applications (n=66).
- Several administrators stated that documenting successes by using evaluation data strengthens funding applications and lends credibility to the organization.

The health center has proven that when there is a considerable investment in outreach, the numbers go up. “We always meet the goals that we set for out for ourselves.” Through the health center's evaluation practices, they've been able to make a case for continued allocation of funds to support the program. – Health Center Administrator, Telephone Interview Notes

The health center creates realistic evaluation measures and this has proven very important to securing funding. “If you can't measure what you're doing, you have no idea if your program is going to be good or bad or whether or not it is meeting its objectives.” – Health Center Administrator, Telephone Interview Notes

FINDING 8: STRONG PARTNERSHIPS BOLSTER ABILITY TO SECURE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- 27% of health center respondents indicated that developing joint funding proposals was one method used for collaborating with other community agencies (n=95).
- Health centers reported that they collaborate with a variety of agencies in order to increase overall effectiveness and supplement services. Top collaborators include Head Start agencies (81%) and health departments (76%) (n=95).
- Partnerships with community agencies appeared to have multiple benefits, including increasing competitiveness in funding applications and opening doors to additional funding opportunities.

The health center's partnerships with other community agencies have given the organization a competitive edge. “Funders want to know that we're maximizing the community's resources.” – Health Center Administrator, Telephone Interview Notes

The CEO looks to see what is coming up and sometimes approaches the local council of community clinics to collaborate on a grant. Because of this type of collaboration, the health center is able to secure grants that they wouldn't be able to secure on their own. – Health Center Administrator, Telephone Interview Notes

The center has been around for 30 plus years, the agency is well known in the community, and the executive staff that raises funds has been there for more than 25 years. They know their way around in the community and the community knows them. – Health Center Administrator, Telephone Interview Notes

FINDING 9: OUTREACH IS MOST SUCCESSFUL WHEN MADE A PRIORITY

- Several administrators suggested funding outreach and enabling services was directly tied to the value the organization places on outreach and enabling services.
- Two out of the top three characteristics that contributed to the success of outreach services were staff dedication (47%) and administrative support (34%) (n=99).

The success is attributed to the fact that the health center has been able to work it into the budget up to this point. The health center realizes that to do without those services would be a huge hindrance to patients who would not be able to access services without this assistance. The health center's recognition of the need for these services is one reason for success. – Health Center Administrator, Telephone Interview Notes

The organization is successful because the health center makes providing outreach and enabling services a priority. Health center staff members believe it is essential and it gets prioritized for grant funding. – Health Center Administrator, Telephone Interview Notes
“It's just a question of priorities.” The CEO makes recommendations about how money is spent and pushes to make outreach a priority. Outreach is what makes a program great. – Health Center Administrator, Telephone Interview Notes

Discussion

Outreach and enabling services are essential components to facilitating access to quality health care for migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The greatest challenge in ensuring that these services are provided at the necessary capacity is funding. The commitment to maintain these services is strong; however, many more farmworkers could be positively impacted if there were more consistent, stable funding sources to support outreach and enabling services.

As seen in the findings, many administrators would like to expand the services offered in their respective health centers, though they are hesitant to increase services. Any program or service implemented has to be sustained through continual grant seeking or by general funds. Given the time-limited and episodic nature of available funding opportunities, sustainability becomes a serious concern when considering new programs or hiring additional staff members.

Another consequence of the current funding structure is that limited staffing capacity affects the quality of data-collection efforts, thereby impacting funding applications. There are not always enough staff available to spend time in the field, fulfill clinic responsibilities, and gather data to support outreach and enabling services. Not only do outreach staff have competing responsibilities, many may not have a clear understanding of the impact that quality data can have on a program's ability to secure funding. For example, administrators indicated that community needs data and evaluation data are key components of successful grant applications, while outreach staff reported that the main reason to collect data is to keep administrators informed.

Establishing the true impact of outreach and enabling services can also be challenging when advocating for additional resources. Currently, there are few shared standards for collecting and using outreach data and each health center is responsible for creating its own methods. Until there is a nationally-accepted standard for outreach evaluation data, these services may not receive the priority they deserve when resources are allocated.

Lack of adequate data to demonstrate community needs and support outreach effectiveness impacts the quality of grant applications overall. This directly impacts the health center's ability to successfully secure more funding to support outreach and enabling services. In addition, not having strong data to establish the effectiveness of these services makes it more difficult to justify existing levels of outreach funding during economically-challenging times.



Photo courtesy of Columbia Valley Community Health

How Can You Increase Your Funding Sustainability?

The following are actions that your outreach program can take to improve its sustainability and find opportunities to secure additional financial support for your efforts. For additional assistance with implementing these strategies, please contact HOP at www.outreach-partners.org.

- Clearly communicate grant objectives and goals with all staff involved with providing the services and collecting data. This will engage staff and emphasize the rationale and importance of documentation and evaluation.
- Perform annual needs assessment activities to determine gaps in services, emerging health and social service needs, and areas of concern for your target population. Use this data to establish organizational priorities and apply for funding opportunities that are responsive to the findings.
- Work with community partners to build relationships and identify potential joint funding opportunities.
- Invest in the development of grant-writing capacity within your organization. Consider training key staff in grant-writing skills and fund development.
- Become familiar with the private foundations in your area. Build relationships with them so that your organization is the first to know when opportunities are available.