Conducting a Program Evaluation: Lessons Learned From Senior Friendly Neighborhoods

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What Does the Northwest Baltimore Community Look Like?

- Multiple housing types
- Center of the Orthodox Jewish community
- African American and Latino residents
- 2,600 older adults in the area (1/3 of the total households)
- 30% of households over age 65 live below the poverty level
The Development of Senior Friendly Neighborhoods

1. Senior Friendly Apartments

2. AOA Expansion- Senior Friendly Neighborhoods (SFN)

3. Post AOA funding
Current SFN Agency Partners

- THE ASSOCIATED: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore
- Comprehensive Housing Assistance, Inc.
- Jewish Community Center
- Jewish Community Services
- LifeBridge Health
- Edward A. Myerberg Senior Center
Current SFN Services

- Recreational Activities
  - Central locations, buildings, and Warm Houses

- Social Services
  - I & R, case management, and counseling

- Health Education
  - Group and individualized services

- Transportation
  - Shuttles, volunteer drivers, & subsidized taxi vouchers
Senior Friendly Profile

- Serves over 1,300 in an average month
- Staffing level of 10.75 FTEs
- 1/3 of participants are Russian immigrants
- 1/3 of staff are bilingual in English and Russian
- Annual budget of @ $700,000
Why Evaluate?

- Ensure good program management
- Establish best practices and refine approaches
- Provide accountability to stakeholders
- Meet requirements of funders
Funding the SFN Evaluation

Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation

- History of funding SFN operations
- Operating funds tied to evaluation
- $100,000 in support of evaluation
- Required new evaluator outside SFN program
Selecting an Evaluator

- Request For Proposals
  - Be specific about what you want and when!

- Responding to requests for information
  - The better the researchers understand your program, the better the proposals they can create for you!

- Selection Committee
  - Involve your stakeholders!
Setting Goals

- Begin with your program goals
- Senior Friendly will:
  - Assure that basic human needs are met
  - Encourage participants to be active members of a vibrant community
  - Optimize mental and physical well-being
  - Promote independence
Creating A Logic Model

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<th>Goal</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Methods</th>
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| SFN will provide services that promote independence and encourage seniors to live to their fullest potential. | 80% of participants will report they have access to transportation to take them where they need to go. | SFN will provide:  
  - Reserve-a-Ride (50 riders/mo.)  
  - NW Senior Shuttle (400 riders/mo)  
  - Taxi Vouchers (15 users/quar.) |
Figure out what you want to learn

For SFN:
- Usage of program (by service and location)
- Impact and effectiveness of program
- Build SFN’s future program evaluation capacity

Go back to your program and evaluation goals regularly! It’s easy to get sidetracked!
Selecting Study Methods

How to organize the project to meet study goals?

Two systems to merge
- SFN - a complex and dynamic system
- Research project - requires careful advanced planning to avoid “fatal flaws”

Because each system requires unique knowledge, GW proposed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach
Participatory Action Research (PAR)

- Based on a consultant model
  - System is best understood by a hybrid team composed of key participants
  - Participants determine the focus and actual methods for meeting project goals

- PAR team included representatives from 4 SFN agency partners and 4 GW researchers
  - Met 3-4 times as a group but much communication occurred between individual representatives (Mary P and Joe B)
PAR Team-Developed Methods

- Study questions developed by team
  - Based on the project goals established by SFN
- Study questions best answered via mixed methods
  - Describe processes and outcomes of SFN (survey and focus groups)
  - Screen SFN residents for health needs (survey)
  - Develop a system of ongoing evaluation (focus groups)
Survey

- Administered face-to-face by trained and certified interviewers (small number self-administered)
- 1 hour, in-home, mix of open and closed ended
- To date N=229

Considerations
- Required English and Russian speaking interviewers
- Timing important: recruitment peaked later than expected – interviewers less available
- Need to control data and process of interviews imposed some extra steps
Focus Groups

- Three categories
  - SFN service users (10-20 participants total)
  - SFN service non-users (5-10 participants total)
  - SFN service providers (12 participants)

- Purpose
  - Story behind the numbers
  - Ideas related to ongoing evaluation
Working with the IRB

- GW team members submitted all recruitment and data collection materials to IRB for approval
  - Required language that didn’t promote recruitment
  - Required multiple resubmissions - IRB eventually made some concessions to needs of project
  - Translation and back-translation required for Russian version of survey
  - Alerts
Add in extra time for IRB process! It moves slowly.

Do we speak the same language?

- Be alert to potential conflict between IRB’s need to protect study subjects and creating recruitment materials that generate an interest in participation.
Recruitment Methods

- Created 1-800 number to call for interview
- Advertised in the monthly newsletter
- Disseminated flyers around the community and in apartment buildings
- Solicited staff involvement
- Created recruitment committee of senior leaders
- Presented at community association meetings
- Offered incentives: $10 gift card!
Effectiveness of Recruitment Methods

- Most effective: Committee and staff appeal
  - Why? Personal

- Least effective: “Cold” flyer distribution and community meeting presentation
  - Why? Impersonal

- More effective to sign people up on-the-spot, rather than leaving them to call the # directly
Recruitment Challenges

- Difficult to create recruitment materials that met IRB approval and were appealing to participants

- Challenge to convey the message to the Russian speaking community

- Time consuming for SFN staff! It’s not something that can be done easily by the university staff.
Results of Recruitment Efforts

- 229 surveys completed to date
- Informal advertising of SFN program and services
- Positive “buzzword” created about the survey increases interest in program
Data Analysis

- Data drop-off points established
- Retrieved and transported by GW member of team
- Entered into Excel which allowed import into other programs
- Using SPSS for survey analysis
- Using thematic coding for open-ended and focus group responses
Selected, Preliminary Results

- Gender: 66% female
- Russian-speaking: 75%
- Single: 65%
- Participated in SFN in past year: 66%
Transportation Services
Utilization and Satisfaction

- Northwest Senior Shuttle
  - 12.4% used; 82.6% satisfied

- Taxi vouchers
  - 7.9% used; 92.9% satisfied

- Volunteer Drivers
  - 16.4% used; 96.7% satisfied

- Reserve-a-Ride
  - 21.6% used; 93.3% satisfied
Service Utilization and Satisfaction

- Social Services: 65.% used; 98.7% satisfied

- Activities:
  - JCC: 44.7% used; 100% satisfied
  - Myerberg: 14% used; 100% satisfied

- Warm Houses: 4.4% used; 90% satisfied

- Health Services: 20.4%; 98% satisfied
How has SFN made a difference in your life?

- 62.4% (146) opted to answer this question, which is a very high percentage.

- Of that number (146):
  - Zero responded negatively.
  - 18 (12.3%) neutral responses ("Pretty minimal. I am not a particularly outgoing person and I think that’s part of it rather than blame it on SFN") or stated that they needed more information or did not have access.
  - 128 (87.6%) positive responses.
Positive Responses

- 83 (64.8% of those responding positively) indicated an **overall and generally** positive impact ("They made our life easier and more interesting." “They help us with everything we need.” “Life is easier thanks to it.” “It is such a great program. It helps us a great deal”)
  - 57 (44.5%) named **activities**, social events, and promoting a sense of community.
  - 29 (22.6%) named **social work services** as beneficial in helping them to get acclimated to the neighborhood/country, obtaining services or products (glasses), completing forms, or determining eligibility.
  - 14 (11%) named **transportation** specifically.
  - 6 (5%) named **health related services** or the nurse specifically ("The nurse has made a difference").
Disseminating the Results

- It’s critical to share results with your stakeholders
  - PAR Team
  - Agency Staff
  - Board Committees
  - Participants
  - Funders
  - General Community
Using the Results for Change

- No evaluation is good unless the results are used!
- Integrate results into strategic planning processes
- Create recommendations for refinements or changes
- Incorporate new ideas into funding applications
- Implement positive programmatic changes
SFN GWU
PAR Team Members

George Washington

- Dr. Joseph Bocchino
- Dr. Mary Corcoran
- Dr. Ellen Costello
- Dr. Cathy Turley
- Dr. Ozgur Ekmekci

Senior Friendly

- Rachel Elliot (CHAI)
- Elaine Kitt (JCS)
- Amanda Partington
- Mary Pivawer (Assoc.)
- Lisa Shifren (JCC)