

Sustaining Impact for Healthier Rural Communities

Organizational Need for Learning as a Strategy

Rural communities face many of the same health challenges as their urban counterparts, but they are faced with fewer resources and tools to address these challenges. The Office of Rural Health Policy (ORHP) provides grant funding through various programs to help rural communities innovate the solutions. For many of the programs, the Community Health Systems Development (CHSD) team at the Georgia Health Policy Center is the contracted technical assistance provider to help these grantees be successful. Within a few years of first starting this work in the late 2000s, CHSD leaders recognized a critical gap: rural communities needed a model on how to plan to sustain the impact of their effort beyond the one- or three-year grant provided by ORHP. They needed the model and they needed meaningful instruction on the planning process. CHSD turned to Vivayic to help design a learning approach that would accompany their technical assistance efforts.



Our Solution to Build Capacity

CHSD uses an adaptive, relationship-based approach to technical assistance, and we knew that a sustainability-planning curriculum needed to align and maximize the opportunities provided in that approach. We conducted an extensive needs analysis, an in-depth study of the target learners, and workshops to define the outcomes of the proposed curriculum. Then, our team proposed the development of a blended-learning approach that utilized CHSD in-person visits to the communities for teaching and coaching, leveraged online/on-demand resources of key topics, and built a new toolkit of templates and references that would support rural grantees in the development of their own sustainability plans.

Results that Matter

Since completing the initial version of the curriculum in 2013, sustainability planning has become a hallmark of the CHSD approach to technical assistance. The curriculum and related resources have continued to evolve. More communities report being better prepared to sustain impact after the grant funding has been expended. Elements of CHSD's Sustainability Framework are now regularly referenced in community health efforts. A longitudinal study of the impacts of the sustainability model and curriculum is underway, but anecdotal evidence from post-grant communications indicate that more communities have sustained their efforts and seen positive outcomes beyond the grant period. We are proud to have helped developed a curriculum that facilitates more durable impact in communities facing some of the greatest obstacles.

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