

FCP Key Informant Interview Report

2013 - 2014

Background

In August 2013, Drexel University School of Public Health was hired by Foundations Community Partnership (FCP) to evaluate the foundation's grant making after seven years. The evaluation design included a quantitative online survey of past and current grantees, and qualitative interviews of key FCP stakeholders. The "key informant" portion of the FCP evaluation aimed to gather descriptive information from a broad range of Bucks County community members, including those who may not have extensive experience with FCP or its programs.

Methods

Key informants were split into 6 categories. From February to May 2014, the Drexel School of Public Health team conducted 13 phone interviews within these 6 FCP key informant categories:



13
key informant
interviews were
conducted

- Community Leaders (2)
- Donors (2)
- Board Members (2)
- Summer Youth Corps Participants (2)
- Host Agencies (2)
- Grantees (3)

The Drexel team obtained contact lists for each of the six categories, and then selected interviewees within the stakeholder groups at random to control for selection bias. Each selected interviewee was contacted three times by phone and email in order to give equal chance for participation. If selected interviewee did not respond, another individual from within that category was selected until at least two individuals were interviewed in each category. The Drexel team scheduled and conducted the 15-20 minute long interviews. Questions covered topics such as the participants' history with FCP, perceptions of FCP, and provided the opportunity to reflect on FCP's impact in the community or ways to improve their impact. A core set of questions were common to all interviewees, and a subset were specific to each key informant group.

The results of these interviews were analyzed using NVivo qualitative software to identify major themes and trends within and across all key informant groups. Participant quotes that illustrate these major themes are displayed throughout this report.

Results

Key issues facing Bucks County

Participants were asked what they see as the major issues affecting Bucks County. One theme discussed across participant groups was **county-wide economic and geographic disparities**.

Many participants referred to the regional perception of Bucks County as a wealthy area, which masks the pockets of need that have been neglected by services and programs. Participants also discussed the wide deviation of socioeconomic status within areas of Bucks County, where services should be focused accordingly.

"[Bucks County] is viewed as a wealthy county... which hides the fact that there are a substantial group of people in the county who are struggling"

Affordable housing was another major concern of respondents. Inflated housing prices have contributed to the rising rates of homelessness in Bucks County, which has increased the strain on local social service agencies. Participants described how the lack of affordable housing affects not just disadvantaged Bucks County residents, but also has a major impact on the future growth of the area as well.

Poverty and mental health services were two other County issues participants discussed. When asked whether and to what extent FCP's work is aligned with these issues, participants reported that **FCP is addressing these Bucks County issues** by funding needed social services, and providing capacity building to County organization applicants and grantees.

"[FCP is an] outstanding program, Bucks County is becoming increasingly reliant on them as federal/state dollars drop off..."

Strengths as an Organization

Participants were asked to describe FCP's strengths as an organization. FCP was generally viewed as a community member tuned in to the needs of the community, with the ability to adapt as these needs change. Another repeated theme was FCP's ability to nourish local relationships through clear communication and community events and workshops.

Participants identified several common attributes:

Community focus:

- FCP is perceived as involved and supportive in Bucks County community

"Since they visit organizations, they have their finger on the pulse of what is happening in the county"

- The annual luncheon is a valuable event that brings together grantees and Bucks County residents

"FCP is very community minded, they act as a benevolent arm of the community and they take responsibility to build community very seriously"

"Everyone at FCP is very interested in the growth of the organizations they have invested in"

FCP staff:

- Grantees described staff as responsive and communicative
- Participants across all key informant groups considered staff to be friendly and warm, with genuine interactions
- Staff is perceived to be invested in FCP and its mission, as well as grantee organizations

"Very professionally run organization with very bright, hardworking people- good follow-through and clear, timely communications"

Capacity-building:

- Grantees and non-grantees alike mentioned FCP's role as a professional resource for local non-profits.
- Participants were aware of the assistance offered to organizations by FCP, including: grant writing workshops, capacity building with grantees, and technical assistance for non-profits beyond funding

"Love the fact that they offer technical assistance to organizations and provide funding that allow organizations to strengthen capacities"

"They have expertise and knowledge that they are willing to share to improve the field of social services"

Mission:

- The majority of participants were able to recall FCP's mission without being prompted.
- The mission was seen as integral to the direction of FCP and its decision-making as an organization

"It is helpful that their mission is clear and concise-- it is their largest strength"

- Participants connected to FCP’s mission and see it as an asset. One board member participant has utilized the mission and vision in their work with other community organizations.

"FCP is strongly mission driven... they closely scrutinize in terms of [Bucks] county's needs"

Key Informant Concerns about FCP

While the majority of feedback was overwhelmingly positive, there were several shared areas of concern. These topics overlapped in their connection to FCP's future and financial viability.

Visibility was the most common concern of participants in many stakeholder categories. FCP was considered to be well-known by those in the non-profit and social services communities, but largely unfamiliar to the wider Bucks County region. This was especially concerning to respondents in the context of FCP's perceived future funding efforts.

"We would like to see them become more of a force... more visibility"

Participants considered **future funding** as a separate potential issue for FCP. There was a mix of concern and appreciation that FCP does not publicly fundraise, with the perception that FCP could use additional funding in their grantmaking, and that fundraising would improve the organization's viability. However, respondents acknowledged that in lieu of fundraising activities, board members are left free to focus on distributing funds, and community members may already suffer from 'donor fatigue'.

"Non-profits are aware of FCP but other communities may not know who they are. From a marketing/fundraising standpoint, do they have the capacity?"

FCP leadership was perceived as strong and trustworthy; many respondents identified FCP management as a significant strength. Specifically, participants recognized Executive Director Ron Bernstein as the 'strong voice' behind FCP's effective decision-making. They were appreciative of his hard work and experience, but expressed concern about the impact of his eventual retirement on the organization.

"One perspective has a very strong voice, other voices aren't as strong... not as in false steps, but it could be a weakness"

"Ron connects with people very well, therefore FCP is able to connect with people"

"FCP has a small staff led by an Executive Director who isn't far off from retirement, and there is no transition plan in place. This could be a potential weakness"

Other Themes

Breadth of funding:

- Participants considered FCP's funding to be well diversified.
- Board members and community participants differed whether or not FCP funding strategies should change in the future, such as:
 - FCP funding should be focused on one topic, rather than a range of community issues
 - FCP should make larger grants to fewer organizations, in order to have a larger impact

"There are a variety of levels of grants--other agencies have one level, while FCP is able to tackle different levels of need"

Summer Youth Corps

FCP was seen by respondents as an excellent facilitator of the Summer Youth Corps (SYC) program. Interns and host agency participants reported that expectations of them were clear, and the program experience was enhanced by FCP staff involvement and weekly meetings. Participants who were not direct participants (host agencies or interns) reported that SYC has a strong reputation in the community due to its significant positive impact on local youth and non-profit agencies.

Summer Youth Corps intern feedback:

- The orientation was valuable. The information prepared interns for new and challenging situations, while providing them an opportunity to meet the other participants
- Interns felt they achieved their goals.

- Interns felt supported by their host agencies.
- Interns appreciated the opportunity to learn about non-profits and special needs populations.
- SYC intern alumni would recommend the program to friends.
- An intern suggested that earlier notification of the internship would allow students to receive college credit for the internship.

"FCP gives young adults an opportunity to imagine a future in the non-profit sector"

Summer Youth Corps Host Agencies:

- Supervisors praised the high caliber of SYC interns, and their positive impact on host agencies & the populations they serve
- Site visits were seen as valuable opportunities to expose other interns to the work of the host agency.

Conclusions

The qualitative phase of the FCP evaluation has demonstrated that FCP has established a strong, positive presence in Bucks County over the last seven years. FCP plays a unique role in Bucks County by filling a local need with a depth of services. Grantees praised FCP staff and the organization's commitment to capacity-building, while board members commended the multi-level approach to funding. Due to the hard work of the staff and FCP board, this evaluation documents FCP as a highly regarded and professional agency, poised to make a significant and sustainable impact in the Bucks County community.

"They are unique in Bucks County, an organization that has a focus on mental health but able to see the broad range of what mental health means for everyone in Bucks County"

Recommendations

Based on respondents' feedback, the Drexel team has several recommendations to further FCP's mission and impact:

1. Increase visibility to broad, external audiences through increased media, social media, regional networking, and other promotional efforts
2. Take advantage of FCP's position as a convener and funder by facilitating interagency collaboration, identifying and unifying cross-agency collaboration and grant requests, and identifying needed policy change or other emerging themes across grantee experience to communicate to County and regional leaders.
3. Determine a strategy to produce and disseminate annual brief reports on Bucks County behavioral health needs and FCP grantee impact as synthesized from grant proposals and grantee reports

"Would appreciate reflection based on requests they get-- where they perceive the needs to be in the county"

"There are a lot of non-profits in Bucks County, there could be more collaboration... [FCP is] the perfect type of agency to do just that, it should be part of their mission statement"



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