Higher Education and Engagement: Conducting Community Impact Assessment

Henry R. Cunningham, PhD – Director
Office of the Vice President for Community Engagement
Vicki Hines-Martin, PhD, RN, FAAN – Director
Office of Health Disparities & Community Engagement
School of Nursing

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Objectives

1. Identify key elements of community partnership for measurement
2. Describe the development of the community impact instrument
3. Discuss the importance of community partners in the process of tool validation and pilot
4. Discuss methodology appropriate for community impact assessment
Community Outreach & Engagement

“Campuses that have demonstrated their deep engagement with local, regional, national, and global communities...are improving teaching and learning, producing research that makes a difference in communities, and revitalizing their civic and academic missions. We are seeing renewed institutional commitment, advanced assessment practices, and deeper community partnerships.”


Assessing Community Partnerships

What is the targeted community?

What is the purpose of assessment? IMPACT

How do we develop a successful assessment plan?

How do we communicate?

Who must be partners in the assessment process?

How do we build a foundation for ongoing assessment?
The Targeted Community for the Community Impact Survey

The Signature Partnership Initiative in west Louisville, Kentucky
Approximately 60,000 urban residents
Primarily low income
Majority African American
Over 100 university-community partnerships with the University of Louisville

Purpose

1. What is the impact of these partnerships from the perspective of the community partners?
2. What are the benefits of the partnership for the community partner?
3. In what ways can we deepen our existing partnerships?
4. What are key indicators for ongoing assessment?
Building a Foundation for Ongoing Assessment

- Focused on key areas resulting from an initial 2010 study conducted by an external evaluation team through a series of interviews with SPI community members.
- Incorporated suggested questions from Assessing Service-Learning and Civic Engagement (Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, & Kerrigan, 2006).
- 2013 Community Impact Survey study included both quantitative and qualitative data collection –
  - Open-ended interview questions (Edward & Hines-Martin, 2013).

Community Partners throughout the Process

- 2010 – Partner data and feedback used in development of 2013 study.
- Partners with more than one partnership with the university and/or longstanding partnerships were involved in the development and validation of the 2013 instrument.
  - 8 involved in development/validation.
  - 27 involved in impact measurement.
Initial Interviews

- Interviews held with the initial eight partners
- After interviews were conducted, individuals and their organizations were asked questions regarding clarity, comprehension and applicability of survey
- The interviewees provided suggestions to improve the instrument.

Finalizing the Instrument – Qualitative data

- Recurring themes and saturation of data were evaluated
- Management and initial coding of qualitative data was conducted using NVivo data management software
- Audiotapes of survey interviews were transcribed by the researcher and verified by others on the research team for accuracy
- Descriptive coding was conducted in order to organize, categorize and contextualize data (Richards & Morse, 2007)
- Modifications to the survey instrument were made based on recurring themes and feedback from initial survey
Building a Foundation

- The final phase consisted of interviews with 27 partners using the modified survey instrument.
- The 27 partner groups/organizations were randomly chosen from the list of community partners meeting criteria (multiple/long term partnerships).

Foundation for Ongoing Assessment - Methodology

- Quantitative Data
- A 22 item survey with dichotomous and multi-point formatted questions was developed based on this process.
- Internal Consistency/reliability measuring the average correlation of items (variables) within the instrument. Using SPSS software program.

Cronbach Alpha coefficient - .89 (good)
Communication

- Reports to the university
- Presentation to the University-Community board *
- Communication to partners and community residents
- Professional presentation

* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZoQdw7CtcM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZoQdw7CtcM)

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How do we develop a successful Assessment Plan?

- Further validation/psychometric analysis using the instrument (e.g. factor analysis, descriptive and inferential stats, etc.)
- Identification of trends, consistency
Findings

- The university has established a process for measuring community impact, community perceptions, and strengths and weaknesses of partnerships
- Several challenges in partnering with the university were identified
- Suggestions were made focused on enhancing partnerships
- Benefits to community partners identified
- Findings provided a roadmap for the university to build on existing partnerships

Conclusion

Developing your Assessment

- What would you like to assess at your institution regarding community partnerships?
- What is important to your institution as it relates to community impact?
- Write down at least one thing you would like to assess at your institution
FOR MORE INFORMATION

Henry R. Cunningham, PhD
Director, Community Engagement
Phone: (502)852-6626
E-mail: h.cunningham@louisville.edu

Vicki Hines-Martin, PhD, RN, FAAN
Professor & Director
Office of Health Disparities and Community Engagement
School of Nursing
Phone: 502.852.8511
E-mail: vphine01@louisville.edu

www.louisville.edu/communityengagement