# Early Team Functioning Predicts Later Sustainability Funding for PROSPER Community Prevention Teams

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## Introduction

- The availability of adequate funding is an important aspect of program sustainability (Gomez, Greenberg, & Feinberg, 2005), but it is unclear what aspects of team functioning relate to successful resource generation.

- Often coalitions that obtain initial funding to implement prevention or promotion programs cease programming a few years after funding ends (Bracht, et al., 1994).

- Previous research on PROSPER community prevention teams, catalyzed and led by Cooperative Extension local educators, indicated that team functioning in the first two years of operation predicted sustainability planning during the third and fourth years (Perkins et al., 2009).

- **The next step is to examine whether early team functioning predicts actual funding procured by community teams years later when local sustainability is a necessity.**

## The PROSPER Project

- PROSPER (PROmoting School-Community-University Partnerships to Enhance Resilience) is a large-scale longitudinal, randomized effectiveness trial of interventions to prevent youth substance abuse (Spoth, Greenberg, Bierman, & Redmond, 2004)
    - 28 communities in Pennsylvania & Iowa
    - 14 communities per state (7 intervention & 7 control)

- PROSPER utilizes the pre-existing Cooperative Extension System (CES) as the infrastructure for prevention teams and activities

- **Key Components of PROSPER**
    - A team of local community stakeholders (e.g. school principal, human service agency directors or staff, parents, etc.), led by a Cooperative Extension Educator
    - 6th grade family-based prevention program (Strengthening Families Program: 10-14)
    - 7th grade school-based program (All Stars, Project Alert, or Life Skills Training)

## Methods

*Procedure*
- Data on quality of local team functioning during the project's first two years, and teams' fundraising success during the 3rd and 4th years, were collected from the 14 rural/small town PROSPER communities. Data on team functioning were utilized to predict team success in fundraising.

*Participants*
- Team Members (TMs; n = 168)
- Agency Directors (ADs; n = 76) of human service agencies
- Prevention Coordinators (PCs; n = 9), the technical assistance link between community teams and university researchers (Penn State & Iowa State universities)

*Measures*
- **Funding**
    - Amount of money and in-kind contributions raised by teams from external sources (i.e. non-research funding) was reported by PCs and Team Leaders and summed to calculate annual funding
    - Totals were divided by communities' 7th grade enrollment to estimate the amount of funding per child.

**Global Team Functioning (GTF):** composite measure of subscales assessing:
- *Work Focus*: work-orientation of team (5 items)
- *Team Goals:* development of goals and governance procedures (2 items)
- *Team Culture:* member perception of unity, cohesion, and group spirit (8 items)
- *Team Leadership:* leader encouragement of collaboration and interpersonal effectiveness (8 items)
    - Reported by TMs ($\alpha$ = .90) and PCs ($\alpha$ = .91); only TMs reported on Leadership items

**Member Participation:** member participation in meetings and team activities (5 items; PC-rated; r = .56)
**New Member Integration:** effectiveness of integration of new members into the team (6 items; TM-rated; r=.25)
**Hours:** number of hours/month team spent on all activities (attending meetings, recruiting participants, fundraising/grant-writing, and teaching program activities (6 items; TM- rated; r = .70)
**Enablers:** degree to which strong leadership, active team involvement, and local community, school district and CES support helped teams accomplish tasks (6 items; TM-rated; $\alpha$ = .80)

*Note:* Ratings for the first two years were averaged. Scores were aggregated to the community/team level (n = 14).

## Results

### Figure 1. Average Annual Sustainability Funding (n = 14 communities)
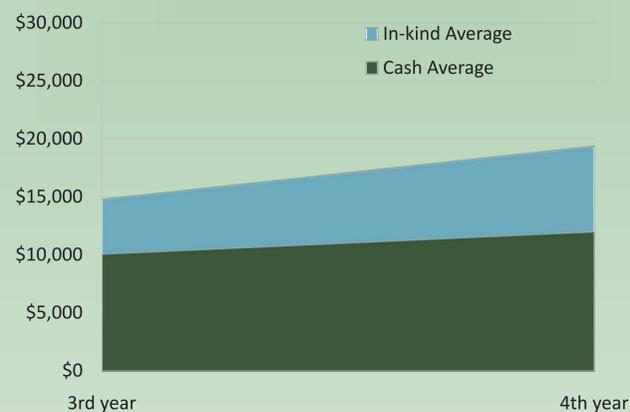


*Average levels of funding raised indicate greater monetary than in-kind contributions, and an increase in funding over time.*

**Early Team Functioning and Prediction of Later Funding Outcomes**
- Global Team Functioning (GTF), as reported by both Team Members (TMs) and Prevention Coordinators (PCs), is a significant predictor of later funding (*Table 1*).

- Correlations between funding and *subcomponents* of GTF indicated that for:
    - *Team Members*: Goals, Culture, and Leadership drove the relationship between Funding and GTF (but not Work Focus)
    - *Prevention Coordinators*: Culture and Work Focus drove the relationship between Funding and GTF (more so than Goals)

- Thus, overall, there was evidence for the importance of all 4 subcomponents.

### Table 1. Correlations between early team functioning (first two years) and later sustainability funding (third & fourth years)

| | Global Team Functioning (TM-rated) | Global Team Functioning (PC-rated) | Member Participation (PC-rated) | New Member Integration (TM-rated) | Hours (TM-reported) | Enablers (TM-rated) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Y3 In-Kind | 0.29 | 0.20 | 0.41 | -0.04 | 0.12 | 0.59** |
| Y3 Cash | 0.67** | 0.52* | 0.65** | 0.36 | -0.45 | 0.64** |
| Y3 Total | 0.66** | 0.51* | 0.69*** | 0.29 | -0.34 | 0.74*** |
| Y4 In-Kind | 0.32 | 0.35 | 0.20 | 0.40 | -0.24 | 0.37 |
| Y4 Cash | 0.31 | 0.09 | 0.27 | 0.50* | -0.28 | 0.20 |
| Y4 Total | 0.38 | 0.23 | 0.29 | 0.56** | -0.33 | 0.32 |

*Note.* *p < .10, **p <.05, ***p < .01; n = 14 communities

- In addition to GTF, Member Participation in team activities and Enablers of team success significantly predicted later funding.
    - Though not statistically significant, New Member Integration was also positively related to funding.
- Contrary to expectations, Hours worked by Team Members were inversely related to later funding.
- For all scales except New Member Integration, relationships with early functioning were stronger for Year 3 than Year 4 funding.

## Conclusions & Future Directions

- Quality of team functioning during the first two years of operation was significantly related to non-research funding procured during the third and, to a lesser extent, fourth years of operations.

- Thus, strong functioning early in the life of community prevention teams appears to be important to long-term sustainability, specifically with respect to having:
    - Clear goals, objectives, and procedures
    - A positive team culture combined with a strong work orientation
    - Effective team leadership
    - Active member participation
    - Explicit orientation for and integration of new team members
    - "Enablers" such as local support and coordination between different PROSPER partners (e.g. school and Cooperative Extension)

- It is theorized that the inverse relationship between hours worked by team members and funding reflects greater efficiency on the part of well-functioning teams; teams operating smoothly and well may complete tasks more quickly than those that are struggling.

- Future analyses will include prediction of funding for subsequent years of program operations and explore reasons for the stronger prediction at Year 3 than Year 4.

## References

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