

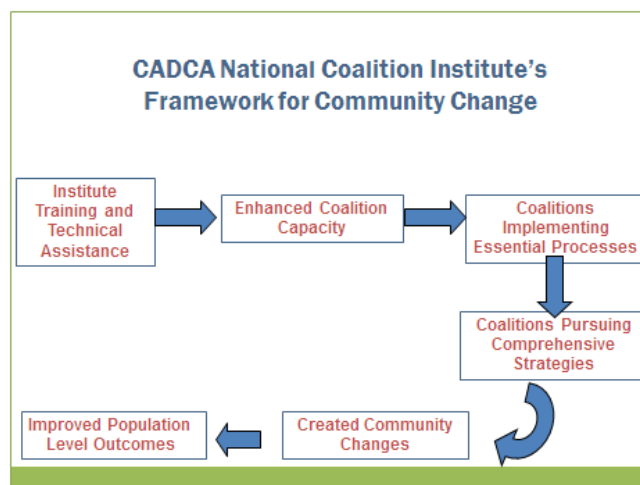
Defining Coalition Effectiveness: Lessons Learned from CADCA’s Annual Survey of Coalitions

CADCA’s Annual Survey of Coalitions (Annual Survey) is a rich and valuable data resource in understanding what makes coalitions effective and helping CADCA better support the coalition field. The CADCA Annual Survey has been used to support CADCA’s National Coalition Institute’s external evaluation to understand the impact its training and support services have on coalition success. Led by Dr. Pennie Foster-Fishman of Michigan State University, the independent evaluation defines critical elements of a community problem solving process for coalition effectiveness. The findings also indicate that coalitions trained by the Institute evolve into effective community problem solvers with strong potential to impact substance abuse outcomes.

The Institute trains coalitions using The Framework for Community Change (Figure 1). This evidence-based model describes the community problem solving process by which coalitions contribute to population-level decreases in targeted substance abuse problems. There are four critical elements assessed for coalition success:

- Enhanced Coalition Capacity (e.g., strong leadership, culturally competent, expanded membership)
- Use of Essential Processes – (e.g., developing strategic and action plans, implementing quality intervention, evaluating the coalition, using quality coalition planning products)
- Implementing Comprehensive Strategies – (i.e., implementation of a comprehensive set of behavior change strategies to address substance abuse)
- Facilitation of Community Change – (i.e., facilitating new or modified programs, policies and practices focused on substance abuse prevention)

Figure 1: CADCA Institute’s Framework for Community Change



In Dr. Foster-Fishman’s prior 2008 Institute evaluation, analyses using data from the 2007 CADCA Annual Survey indicate coalitions receiving training and technical assistance from the Institute notably demonstrate the core elements in the Framework for Community Change. In contrast, coalitions that did not receive training or technical assistance from the Institute were significantly less adept in achieving the critical Framework elements deemed necessary for success. Additionally, the evaluation indicates Institute training and technical assistance trigger the foundation for a community problem solving framework. This suggests the Institute not only possesses a robust model for community change, but also the Institute’s training and technical assistance play a significant role in a coalition’s success.

In an attempt to better understand the effect of cumulative CADCA support on coalition development, in 2009 the Institute initiated a longitudinal evaluation of coalitions receiving funding from the federal Drug-Free Communities Program. This evaluation targets DFC grantees first funded in FY 2009. DFC grantees participated in a 3-part training process with the Institute: January, 2009 in Washington, DC; April, 2009 in San Diego, CA; and July, 2009 in Louisville, 2009. This evaluation examines CADCA Annual Survey data over a multi-year period, and the findings are used to help the Institute perfect its training and support system.

According to the most recent findings from the longitudinal study, the FY 2009 DFC coalitions trained by the Institute increased capacity in each element of CADCA’s Framework for Community Change. Using the 2008 CADCA Annual Survey of Coalitions results as a baseline, researchers have examined data in four waves during the first year of the study. Coalitions showed statistically significant growth in coalition capacity, essential processes, comprehensiveness of strategies, and facilitation of community change within the first 12 months. Figures 2-5 describe how coalitions involved in the longitudinal evaluation are improving over time.

Figure 2 – Coalition Capacity Over Time

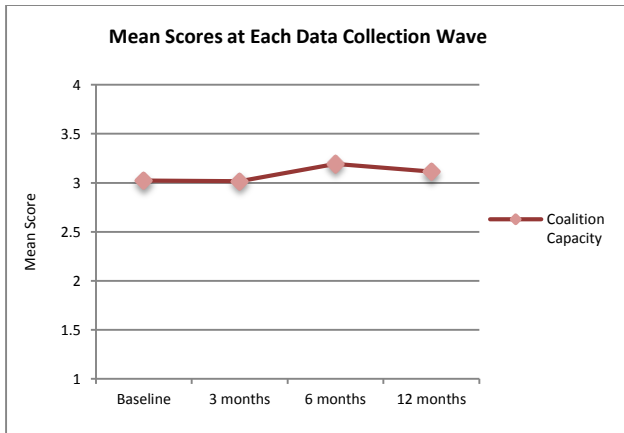


Figure 3 – Essential Processes Over Time

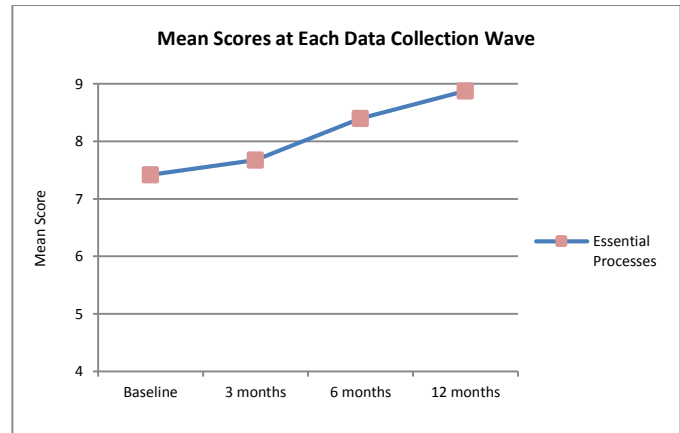


Figure 4 – Comprehensiveness of Strategies Over Time

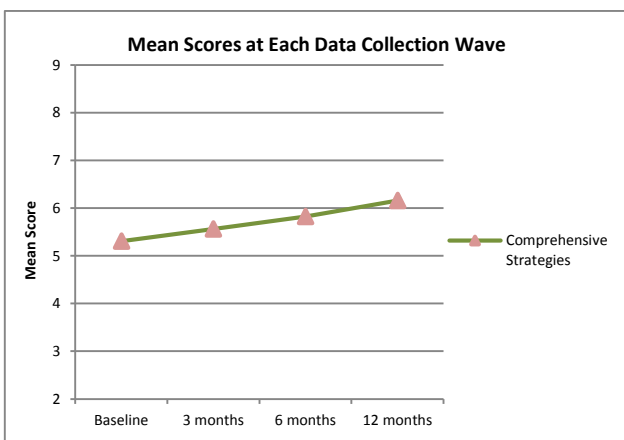
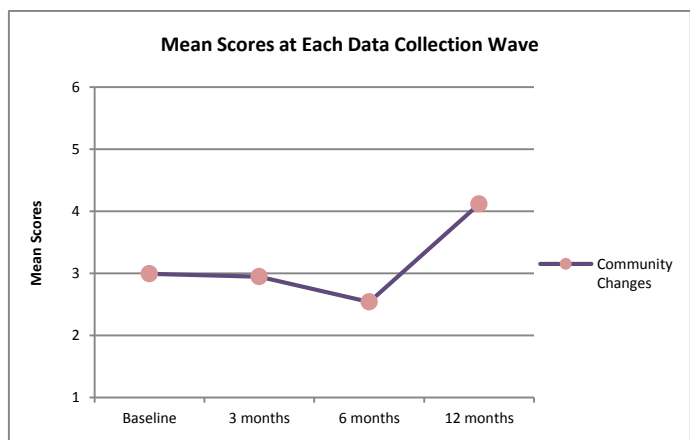


Figure 5 – Community/Systems Change Over Time



Overall, it appears that DFC Grantees grew in all of the elements of CADCA’s community problem solving model. Following CADCA’s new grantee training process, DFC grantees increased their overall levels of:

- Coalition capacity, primarily their problem solving capacity and membership base.
- Essential Processes, including their development and use of a logic model, action agenda, intervention plan, and evaluation plan.
- Comprehensive Strategies, including the amount of programmatic and systems change activities.
- Community Changes, specifically the creation of programmatic changes.

The findings also provide some insight into the process of change over time:

- By 6 months, new DFC grantee coalitions that participated in CADCA’s training appear to be making important progress in building their capacity, implementing essential processes, and pursuing comprehensive strategies.
- By 12 months, community changes are starting to emerge.

The findings also provide additional validation of CADCA’s Framework for Change model. Analyses demonstrate that a coalition’s ability to master the first element of the Framework for Change is related to their ability to master subsequent elements in the model, making them more likely to achieve the final goal of reducing substance abuse in their community. These evaluation results impact CADCA and the coalition field by determining the most effective approaches to build competence in critical areas efficiently.

The next step in the study will look at data from waves five and six, collected via the 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 Annual Survey of Coalitions and also linking all this information to Core Measures data submitted to COMET in order to provide a more complete picture of how the different elements affect each other and the extent to which the Framework accurately depicts the process by which coalitions impact population-level outcomes.