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Sierra Health Foundation

REACH Youth Development Program

First Interim Evaluation Report

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Sierra Health Foundation's REACH youth program supports healthy development of youth for their successful transition to adulthood. Through REACH, Sierra Health is committed to helping California Capital Region youth succeed by increasing participation in quality programs and activities, providing opportunities for youth to develop leadership and decision-making skills, and helping communities take positive action for youth. REACH reflects Sierra Health's broader mission to invest in and serve as a catalyst for ideas, partnerships and programs that improve health and quality of life in Northern California through convening, educating and strategic grantmaking. For more information, visit Sierra Health's web site: www.sierrahealth.org.

California Communities Program, UC Davis

The evaluation of the REACH community action initiative is being conducted under the auspices of the California Communities Program (CCP), a statewide University of California Cooperative Extension program affiliated with the Human and Community Development Department at UC Davis. CCP conducts research and evaluation projects on cutting edge issues affecting California communities, with a focus on community governance, leadership, and economic development. For the past 10 years we have conducted major, multi-year evaluations of collaborative community initiatives for state government, private foundations, and community-based nonprofit organizations on topics such as workforce development, healthy communities, and civic engagement. Our approach recognizes the wide diversity of community settings and emphasizes the need to take community context into account by paying close attention to local dynamics, meanings, and perspectives. For more information, visit the CCP website: <http://groups.ucanr.org/CCP/index.cfm>

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adults and youth
working together
in communities
to increase supports and opportunities for all youth.**

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ABBREVIATIONS USED FOR PARTICIPATING COALITIONS

EDH:	Vision Coalition of El Dorado Hills
Galt:	Galt Area Youth Coalition
MDV:	Sacramento ACT Meadowview Partnership
RC:	Cordova Community Collaborative REACH Youth Program
SSac:	South Sacramento Coalition for Future Leaders
WSac:	West Sacramento Youth Resource Coalition
Wood:	Woodland Coalition for Youth

Acknowledgments

We wish to express our gratitude to the REACH site coordinators and to members of the technical assistance team whose ready cooperation and assistance has made our work much easier. All of them have been generous with their time and have responded readily to our many requests for help and assistance. All told, over 140 adults and nearly 50 youth in the seven REACH communities supported this report by sharing perceptive reflections in open-ended interviews.

We are grateful to Sierra Health Foundation for the opportunity to undertake this evaluation. Chet Hewitt, President and CEO, and the Sierra Health board have committed themselves to REACH in order to improve conditions for youth in the greater Sacramento region. We are especially thankful for the support for our work provided by Senior Program Officer Diane Littlefield, Program Officer Matt Cervantes, and former Vice President Dorothy Meehan. They helped create a context in which honest reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the initiative is valued.

Two former members of our evaluation team, Leslie Cooksey and Cathy Lemp, made major contributions to our work. At See Change Evaluation Ashley McKenna provided help with interviews and with this interim report. At UC Davis, John Jones at the Center for Community School Partnerships provided valuable assistance in maintaining the meeting attendance data set and Carrie Matthews helped in preparing this manuscript. We also have received helpful advice from our evaluation advisory committee, including Mark Braverman of Oregon State University, Leslie Cooksey of University of Delaware, Elizabeth Miller of UC Davis Medical Center, and Patsy Eubanks Owens and Dina Okamoto of UC Davis.

Executive Summary

In 2006, Sierra Health Foundation committed almost \$5 million to grantees in seven communities located in the greater Sacramento, California region. Initial nine-month planning grants of \$75,000 gave each community an opportunity to assess their strengths, challenges, and resources, and create an action plan.¹ In late spring 2007, the seven coalitions were awarded implementation grants of \$600,000, distributed over three years.² These community action grants form the centerpiece of a larger funding strategy known as REACH, which has committed \$8 million over four years to support the healthy development of youth.

REACH community action grant goals are to build community capacity and conditions for change and to implement strategies that increase meaningful supports and opportunities for youth (focusing primarily on ages 10 to 15), leading to positive youth development. Youth engagement is a key principle guiding the initiative. Local coalitions have been encouraged to involve youth directly in their planning processes and community change strategies (see REACH Guiding Principles at <http://www.sierrahealth.org/doc.aspx?30>). The framework or theory of change underlying the initiative is the “Community Action Framework for Youth Development” developed by Youth Development Strategies, Inc. (Gambone, Klein, and Connell, 2002; see appendix A).³

REACH Evaluation

Sierra Health Foundation has contracted with an evaluation team based in the California Communities Program at UC Davis to evaluate the REACH program. We worked with REACH stakeholders to design a detailed process study that systematically compares implementation in the seven communities, and an outcome analysis focused on five questions:

- Does REACH nurture viable coalitions and enhance community capacity to support youth development?
- Does REACH promote youth engagement as a strategy to enhance youth development outcomes?
- Does REACH increase meaningful supports and opportunities for youth in local communities?
- Does REACH enhance youth development outcomes?
- Does REACH suggest lessons for foundation practice and the broader field of community and youth development?

This interim evaluation report focuses primarily though not exclusively on the process study and the first two outcome questions. A final evaluation report will

¹ See Erbstein 2007 for documentation of the planning phase.

² In 2008, the foundation expanded REACH Community Action funding with \$75,000 planning grants to coalitions in Vacaville and Yuba City-Marysville.

³ Following the practice of REACH stakeholders, we will often refer to this jointly authored framework simply as the Gambone framework.

follow in about two years.⁴

Context for Interpreting the Findings

The REACH goals are ambitious. Fostering community change, promoting youth engagement, and achieving positive youth development are complex undertakings on their own terms. Trying to combine the three within a single initiative multiplies the difficulty, particularly since it is unlikely that any single grantee will be well versed in all the requisite skills, knowledge, and networks. At the same time, the funding level per grantee and the three-year REACH time frame are relatively modest compared to some initiatives.⁵ Complex change initiatives of this type often require a minimum of five years or more to generate demonstrable results in terms of community-scale changes.⁶

Not surprisingly, REACH implementation has proven quite challenging, presenting grantees with both practical and strategic challenges which we document in this report. Despite all this, there is considerable progress to report. In the remainder of this executive summary we:

- Highlight important accomplishments;
- Characterize REACH participants; and
- Identify major challenges encountered thus far.

Our findings cover the eighteen month period from the beginning of REACH implementation grants in May 2007 through October 2008. We draw on a variety of evidence, including over 190 interviews (47 with youth participants) and over 160 observations of REACH meetings and events, as well as a review of key REACH documents and relevant literature.⁷

Accomplishments to date

Our analysis of early REACH implementation reveals that considerable progress has been made, in six general areas: 1) building and sustaining organizational infrastructure devoted to youth development; 2) directly and indirectly promoting youth engagement in leadership and community change activities; 3) creating settings that foster adult-youth partnerships; 4) spreading knowledge of high quality youth development principles and practices; 5) fostering community change that increases supports and opportunities for youth; and 6) strengthening regional youth development networks.

⁴ A more complete summary of the REACH evaluation design can be found at: <http://groups.ucanr.org/CCP/files/43570.pdf>

⁵ For example, between 1996 and 2006 the Williams and Flora Hewlett Foundation invested \$20 million in three Bay Area neighborhoods (Brown and Fiester, 2007).

⁶ Discussions at a recent forum on place-based anti-poverty initiatives suggested at least a ten-year time frame (University of Chicago, Chapin Hall, December 11, 2008).

⁷ While youth are key stakeholders in REACH, we have written this report with adult audiences in mind. We are open to adapting our evaluation work to youth audiences.

Building and sustaining organizational infrastructure

- Grantees have created new organizational infrastructure to support youth development. This infrastructure is tailored to their community setting and circumstances, often with multiple organizational components that are nested within each other and/or within previously existing coalitions, partnerships, or collaboratives.
- The coalitions have achieved a substantial degree of local visibility and in some cases growing legitimacy as the “place to go” for youth issues and concerns.
- Despite the challenging nature of the work, all seven grantees remain committed to the initiative, have implemented multiple projects, events, and/or activities, and have consistently met most of the objectives in their REACH workplans.⁸

Promoting youth engagement

- Over 100 regular youth participants are planning meetings, speaking in public, and participating in a variety of approaches to community engagement, gaining experiences and skills that research links to higher levels of adult civic engagement such as voting and volunteering (Flanagan and Van Horn, 2001).
- Many more youth (from at least a couple hundred to many thousands, depending on how they are counted) have participated in REACH-related activities, such as attending a youth leadership conference, an arts festival, or a service learning activity, or been served by a program that has received some funding support as a result of REACH.
- Many youth hold formal leadership positions in their organizations (e.g., president, vice-president, secretary). These young people and others participate in tasks associated with conducting meetings such as developing agendas, introducing energizers, facilitating discussions, taking notes, and monitoring the behaviors of the group members.

Developing youth-adult partnerships

Although site coordinators and other lead agency staff have the most contact with REACH youth, many different adults interact with youth during REACH-related events, meetings, and activities.

- Overall, youth report positive relationships with adults associated with their coalitions.
- Some of the most meaningful adult support provided to youth through the initiative has come from adult volunteers who offer rides and befriend young people (including youth from single parent homes where it is difficult for the parent to support their involvement) and adult associates who have worked closely and in genuine collaboration with youth to achieve a particular goal,

⁸ The annual reports summarizing grantee accomplishments are available at: <http://www.reachyouthprogram.org/node/4592>

such as a mural project in Woodland.

Spreading knowledge of youth development practices

- Across the seven local areas, dozens of youth, parents, teachers, and organizational representatives have been trained on core youth development principles and practices, with a particular emphasis on providing versions of the Youth Development Network's Youth Development Institute (YDI) training.
- The importance of listening to youth voice is a working norm within REACH. Site coordinators credit the training and instruction of foundation-provided technical assistance with changing their attitudes and improving their skills. Many youth express appreciation for REACH as a place where they can speak up, in contrast to what they often experience in school or other settings.

Fostering community change

It is not reasonable to hold grantees accountable for systems or policy change in such a short period of time. However, looking across the seven sites, we note modest signs of progress toward that goal, providing some momentum for the future. These include:

- Fostering activities that have resulted in numerous mentions in local newspapers, radio shows, and other media—the positive cast of REACH stories is in marked contrast to the tendency for youth-related media stories to focus on youth crime or on problems that cast youth in a negative light;
- Increasing youth knowledge of how public policy is made and influenced and the roles of various public institutions; and
- Increasing pressure on policymakers to take youth and youth development into account, including efforts to engage youth directly in advocacy efforts.

Among community change activities in which youth have been directly engaged are the following:

- Presenting youth development priorities (garnered from a youth-led survey project) to candidates for Sacramento mayor;
- Advocating and protesting school budget cuts at the state capitol;
- Providing input in local transit planning;
- Writing letters to the editor;
- Being interviewed on radio broadcasts; and
- Making presentations to a city council.

Strengthening regional youth development networks

- The infusion of additional resources into communities via REACH companion strategies (technical assistance, conferences, GABY/HOPE grants, Program Improvement grants, Grizzly Creek Camp) has paid dividends by building network connections, encouraging peer support and learning, and accelerating the diffusion of youth development principles and practices.

- In settings where Program Improvement grants or GABY/HOPE grants were closely coupled with REACH coalitions, they offered immediate opportunities for adult and youth members to strengthen their relationships by engaging in projects that made a difference in their communities.
- Two well-attended summer youth conferences (350 in 2007 and over 500 in 2008) have provided a unique space for bringing together the region's youth development constituents for continuing education, peer support, and networking.

REACH participants

An analysis of meeting attendance data reported by grantees for the period January-October 2008, supplemented by our in-person meeting observations and interviews, reveals the following about REACH participants.⁹

Numbers of adults and youth participating

- The number of adult and youth participants that regularly attend meetings is fairly consistent across grantees, which rely upon the sustained engagement of approximately 12-18 youth and 6-10 non-staff adults per coalition (about 160 regular participants overall).
- From January through early October 2008, approximately 308 youth and 189 adult participants attended meetings (excluding large, one-time community events); more than half of these participants (263 of 497) attended more than one REACH-related meeting.

Nature of youth participants

- Of the participating youth, 42% are in high school, 35% in middle school, and 23% in elementary school. We find that many grantees are tending to work with older youth, including many that are older than the 10-15 year old population that was initially presented as the target group for the initiative. Among the reasons this appears to be happening is that older youth bring certain forms of maturity that make them able to take more responsibility on certain tasks or issues that are part of a community change effort. It also simply reflects the fact that some youth who have stayed committed to REACH since planning began over two years ago have simply gotten older.
- Youth participants are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, home language, and school performance, although this diversity is not always the case at the level of individual coalitions.

⁹ Our method for estimating participation levels is aimed at gauging how many and what types of people are engaged directly in REACH work on a regular basis. The reported totals include all full coalition meetings and regular youth-only meetings reported by coalitions during the time period. Where appropriate, we also included other meetings that were an ongoing element of the youth engagement strategy (e.g. Youth Lead meetings in Galt; Youth Leadership Conference planning meetings and Project Sunday meetings in Meadowview). We excluded attendance data from sub-committee meetings and from large, one-time only community events.

- Youth participants report multiple reasons for getting and staying involved, including their desire to: 1) “help out” the community; 2) meet new people and hang out with friends; 3) participate in activities such as ice breakers, trainings, and camp; and 4) stay connected to particular adult staff and/or specific coalition-affiliated adults. A solid core of youth has been participating in REACH since it began.

Nature of adult participants

- More than one in four adult participants work in schools or education, making it by far the most common sectoral partner in REACH coalitions. As might be expected, grantees in communities with previously existing coalitions, collaboratives, or partnerships have a broader and deeper sectoral representation than the other grantees.
- Adult participants report multiple reasons for getting involved, including general support for REACH youth development goals, specific interest in an initiative that engages youth in meaningful roles, and institutional connections brokered by REACH site coordinators (some of which involve direct funding from the REACH grant).

Staffing

- Grantees spend approximately 80% of their REACH budgets on staff salaries and typically have two to four staff working on REACH, with some of those part-time and/or supported in part with non-REACH funds.
- Meadowview and South Sacramento have hired youth/young adults to REACH staff positions, as youth organizers.
- All but two grantees have experienced turnover of core staff during the implementation period.

Challenges encountered/Opportunities for Learning

In establishing REACH, the foundation hoped to learn not only from the successes but from the challenges encountered in this ambitious community-based work. A central assumption is that there is no single right way to pursue REACH goals and that community change strategies inevitably involve tradeoffs, set backs, and tensions. The following challenges are among the most important to have surfaced during early implementation of REACH. In framing these challenges, we are drawing on existing insights from grantees, technical assistance providers, and foundation staff. We hope to focus and deepen discussions that are already underway.

Finding a strategic focus

- Collectively, grantees report more than 50 separate sub-projects and activities. While the level of activity is laudable, it appears that REACH resources (e.g. fiscal, human, and organizational) are spread thinly rather than being sufficiently focused to achieve significant community-scale impact.

- Youth development is an appealing but somewhat vague term. Grantees are finding that coalition development success is greater where a specific goal/outcome has been articulated, but getting collective agreements on which goals to prioritize is not always easy.
- In generating strategic options and making choices among them, grantees value relevant examples from other localities, since it is difficult to envision what you haven't seen.
- Without a clear strategic focus, it is difficult to know what form a local REACH coalition might best take, or whether outcomes could be reached via less formal partnerships or looser networks, perhaps linked through some regional coordination mechanism.

Putting youth engagement and community change together

- While the Gambone, Klein, and Connell (2002) theory of change offers a framework for increasing developmental supports for youth at a community scale, it is less explicit or clear about why and how youth might be engaged in this process.
- Lacking an explicit conceptual rationale that explains why it is important to engage youth in a community change strategy for youth development, we note a tendency for grantees to conceptualize youth engagement and community change as separate tasks. Some coalitions tilt their energies toward youth engagement, others toward community change, but all struggle to accomplish the difficult task of putting the two together.

Authentic youth engagement takes more time than anticipated

- Authentic youth-adult collaboration—reflecting a belief that all age groups hold critical capacities and that it is important to take the time to build relationships and practices that enable the initiative to build upon those capacities—is a new orientation for most participating adults and youth. Grantees find it takes more time and energy than anticipated, especially when reaching out to more vulnerable youth populations.
- REACH grantees are expected to be exemplary models of youth-adult partnerships, but these can take many forms depending on the focus of the community change effort or the age, maturity, and interests of participating youth. There is no simple cookbook on which to rely.
- Building the capacities of ethnically, culturally, and socio-economically diverse adults and youth with varied life experiences to work in partnership demands explicit attention, time, and support.

Age differences among youth complicate the work

- Consistent with what the literature suggests (National Research Council, 2002), the age differences among participating youth complicate the pursuit of meaningful adult-youth partnerships. Younger youth have shorter attention spans, fewer conscious connections with their communities, and more limited understanding of communities, institutions and systems.
- A number of coalitions are gravitating toward working with somewhat older youth than the originally envisioned 10-15 year old cohort, in part because

these youth have more of the skills and understanding to take on complex community change activities.

Tradeoffs inherent in common youth engagement tactics

- Many grantees rely on a small number of youth for many tasks, especially in public settings where the stakes may be high. In some cases this may create excessive burdens on these young people and/or deny other youth opportunities. Site coordinators face a tradeoff between “going deep” with a handful of youth vs. providing opportunities to more youth.
- We observe adults preparing youth with scripts for public presentations. On the one hand, being scripted can be an appropriate aid to youth self-confidence, but it might also be a way of substituting adult for youth voice.
- Many coalitions offer stipends to encourage youth participation. On the one hand, this seems effective and it can be especially appropriate in low-income communities. On the other hand, does it send the wrong message if the goal is to encourage youth to develop an ethic of volunteerism and civic engagement?

Balancing and coordinating the work of technical assistance providers

- While grantees appreciate the ready availability of technical assistance and the various cross-site REACH activities, they also note that these sometimes have the unintended effect of taking resources away from their community-level work. Finding the proper balance is an ongoing tension in the project.
- Both technical assistance providers and grantees express the need for greater coordination of diverse technical assistance efforts, tools, and approaches.

Situating REACH within pre-existing community structures

- New REACH organizational structures and processes are often nested within structures from pre-existing grants, partnerships or collaboratives. Negotiating these waters to ensure that REACH is seen as complementary is not easy.
- All coalitions struggle to sustain consistent adult participation from individuals with the vision and resources needed to achieve their community change objectives. Commanding attention of key stakeholders can be difficult given competing demands and other community youth development initiatives.

Achieving equity

- Previous research finds that a greater intensity of new outside resources is needed to achieve positive outcomes in less advantaged communities (Schorr, 1988). REACH grantee communities reflect the significant wealth disparities, racial/ethnic diversity, and varied community types that characterize the Sacramento region. Intra-regional inequity is stark, dramatically affecting the nature of youth needs, the level of formal resources available through families and communities for youth (e.g. programs, safe open space, etc.), and the availability of certain types of resources to REACH (e.g. parent time, transportation support).
- REACH was launched with an explicit emphasis on increasing developmental

supports for all youth, including those that are especially vulnerable. To date, grantees have given relatively little focused attention to identifying and serving especially vulnerable youth, including those whose interests are often under-represented such as immigrant and migrant youth, foster and homeless youth, LGBT youth, youth with special needs, youth on probation and previously incarcerated youth, youth who do poorly in school, or young people who are struggling with mental health/substance abuse issues.

Conclusion

The ability of the REACH community action strategy to make significant community-scale changes on behalf of youth depends on continuing progress in addressing questions about purpose, focus, and strategy. It appears to be within the reach of the grantees to achieve greater strategic focus over the next six months to one year.¹⁰ At the end of that period we might expect them to have:

- identified a specific outcome focus that relates to a widely felt community concern or vision;
- recruited/partnered with approximately ten key community, institutional, or organizational representatives who can bring resources that help achieve the outcome;
- crafted a strategy/rationale that answers why and how youth will be engaged in the effort;
- begun tracking a few “primary or headline indicators” that help show progress toward the outcome goal (Friedman 2005, pp. 54-56).

It is important to keep in mind that local communities already have hundreds of efforts to support youth development underway—large and small, public and private, coordinated and piecemeal. For example, there are over 42,000 Little Leagues across the United States and most communities have devoted substantial resources to create and maintain ball fields, basketball courts, gyms, etc. Youth groups run by religious organizations are another ubiquitous presence in communities. In addition, local governments that have developed youth budgets estimate that as much as 30% of their resources are devoted to activities that directly support youth and their families (Gardner, 2005, p. 4).

In this context, better aligning the use of existing resources with unmet needs and community dreams, along with generating new resources to address strategic gaps, are important steps in strengthening local support for young people's development and well-being.

We remind readers of this broader youth development landscape to help keep in perspective what can be achieved in an initiative such as REACH. Even given the relatively large commitment of foundation funds, the total amount is really quite small in the larger scheme of things. This makes the strategic use of foundation resources all the more important. At least, that is the overarching

¹⁰ Our discussion of the need for strategic focus draws directly on the work of Sid Gardner (2005, p. 49).

perspective we have brought to this evaluation, which seeks to promote learning grounded in grantee experiences as they commit themselves to this important work for our region.

Organization of the report

REACH is a complex undertaking with many different players, activities, and guiding orientations. We don't pretend to have covered the full terrain comprehensively. What we have done is collect systematic data that allows us to synthesize and compare what grantees are doing to advance major REACH goals in seven diverse communities.

This interim report is our first attempt to make sense of REACH in a way that informs foundation decisions, grantee choices, and the broader fields of community and youth development. Our findings are organized around several themes found in the following statement, which broadly represents the work of this initiative:

REACH is adults and youth working together in communities to increase supports and opportunities for all youth.

The main body of the report includes five chapters: 1) Adults and Youth; 2) Working Together; 3) In Communities; 4) To Increase Supports and Opportunities for All Youth; and 5) Interim Outcomes. Each chapter examines how these terms and concepts have been defined within the initiative and presents related evidence. Main points of interest are highlighted at the beginning of each chapter.

The appendices contain: A) the Community Action Framework for Youth Development; B) a composite REACH logic model prepared by our evaluation team based on the original workplans of the seven grantees; C) information about companion strategies which have been part of the overall REACH effort by the Sierra Health Foundation; and D) information about our evaluation methods and activities.

I. Adults and Youth

Who is participating and how regularly?

What motivates and sustains participation?

What issues exist related to project staffing?

Headlines:

- The number of regular adult and youth participants is fairly consistent across grantees, which rely upon the regular, sustained engagement of approximately 12-18 youth and 6-10 non-staff adults per coalition (about 160 participants overall).
- Of the participating youth, 42% are in high school, 35% in middle school, and 23% in elementary school. Youth participants are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, home language, and school performance, although this diversity is not necessarily the case at the level of individual grantees.
- More than one in four adult participants work in schools or education, making it by far the most common sectoral partner in REACH coalitions.
- Grantees spend approximately 80% of their REACH budgets on staff salaries and typically have two to four staff working on REACH, with some of those part-time and/or supported in part with non-REACH funds.

This section characterizes REACH participants in terms of the number of adults and youth engaged, the sectors or age groups they represent, their motivations for involvement, and evidence related to the sustaining of participation over time.

Precise counts of participants are difficult. At any given point in time, new adult and youth participants are joining REACH activities while others become inactive. In addition, the money Sierra Health Foundation provides to grantees often is combined with other funds to support activities that attract wider participation than would have been possible with REACH dollars alone. This co-mingling of grant funds is typical in many projects. From a community perspective it represents an important way to coordinate limited resources, but it complicates the process of estimating REACH participation levels. As such, the data we report should be considered careful estimates rather than precise enumerations.

Grantee estimates of youth and adult participation typically take into account any activities in which REACH money or ideas played any role, even indirectly or as a minor part of an effort with other funding. This approach makes sense if the goal is to consider the full range of REACH ripple effects. For example, one coalition estimates that it has reached over 3,000 youth (via small grants to youth-serving organizations) and has more than 300 coalition members; another

reports engaging over 4,000 youth participants through school-based service learning projects and as many as 60 adults attending a coalition sponsored event.¹¹ Other coalition estimates, though no less meaningful, are somewhat smaller than these.

In reporting attendance data for this report, we have taken a more conservative approach, aimed at gauging how many and what types of people are engaged directly in REACH work on a regular basis. These youth and adults form the core of the constituency that REACH has mobilized to create community change. The following section describes how we estimated participation.

Methods for Estimating Participation

The data we report is drawn from an online meeting attendance system housed at UC Davis in the Center for Community School Partnerships. Beginning in Fall 2007, grantees were asked to enter the names of adults and youth attending REACH-related meetings along with some basic personal information about each attendee. The personal information gives us an idea of the types of people that are participating. While it takes some time for grantees to enter this data, it has the advantage of creating a relatively reliable database for estimating the number and type of adult and youth participants. It also can provide evidence about the continuity of their participation over time.

The totals we report in this section reflect meeting attendance data from January through early October 2008. This period of time was selected for reasons of both data availability and fairness to the coalitions, since it coincides with the point at which all coalitions were becoming more comfortable and regular in reporting attendance data using the online system.¹² It also reflects a point six months after the implementation phase of the initiative began, when grantees had moved beyond some basic start-up tasks.

The reported totals include all full coalition meetings and regular youth-only meetings reported by coalitions during the time period. Where appropriate, we also included other meetings that were an ongoing element of the youth engagement strategy (e.g. Youth Lead meetings in Galt; Youth Leadership Conference planning meetings and Project Sunday meetings in Meadowview). We excluded attendance data from large, one-time only community events.

Members of our evaluation team have been present at a majority of the meetings included in the database. Our observations are generally consistent with the numbers reported in the online system.

¹¹ Secondary data prepared for the REACH coalitions shows that between 2,500 and 4,500 10-14 year olds attend public schools in the footprint areas served by grantees.

¹² The exception is West Sacramento, which entered data for only three meetings between January and October 2008. As a result, we have excluded their totals from some of the analyses in this report.

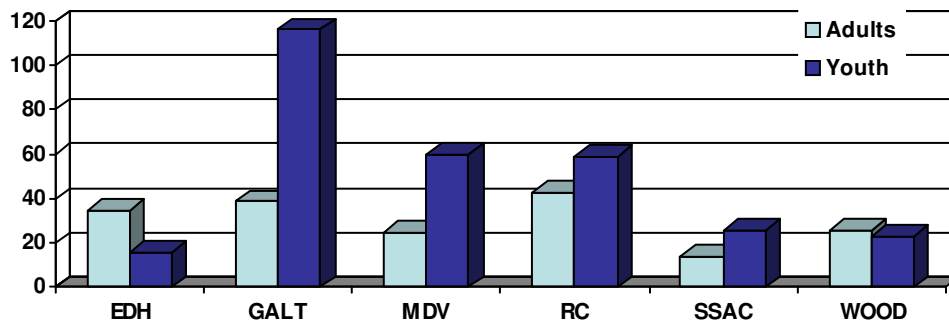
Summary data on adult and youth meeting participants

Overall participation levels

From January through early October 2008, approximately 308 youth and 189 adults attended meetings (excluding large, one-time community events); more than half of these participants (263 of 497) attended more than one REACH-related meeting.

Table 1 shows the adult and youth participation totals for grantees. The totals represent an unduplicated count of anyone who attended at least one meeting between January and October 2008. Staff, including site coordinators and other personnel from the lead fiscal agency, are excluded from these totals.

Table 1. Number of adult and youth participants in REACH meetings, Jan.-Oct. 08



To put these numbers in context, we make the following observations. First, although the grantees report widely varying overall participation levels, these numbers by themselves do not speak to the intensity/regularity of participation. Between our on-site observations and the attendance data, we estimate these regular, ongoing participation levels at about 12-18 youth and 6-10 adults per coalition, excluding paid staff or other lead agency personnel. Thus, the number of adult and youth that sustain participation in multiple meetings over time is fairly consistent across sites.

Second, variation in participation numbers to some extent reflects differences in strategy. The higher youth participation levels in Galt reflect in part their ability to create multiple venues for youth participation, including but not limited to the creation of Youth LEAD groups at multiple school sites. Meadowview's youth organizers are helping facilitate school site programs that engage fairly large numbers of youth in after-school programming, and it also made a big push to involve youth in planning a city-wide mayoral forum and a Meadowview area youth leadership conference. Rancho Cordova gets high numbers of elementary school participants, based in part on their institutional connection to an elementary school principal who also chairs the Cordova Community Collaborative. It appears that institutional connections to schools are one important way to gain greater access to youth participants.

Finally, most grantees are facilitating a fairly large number of regular meetings, particularly meetings for youth. This appears to be a sign of their strong commitment to REACH, and in particular to providing programming for young people. When one considers that we have excluded some meetings from this database, the numbers are even more impressive. The majority of the grantees have at least one and in some cases multiple youth groups meeting on a weekly basis. Sustaining this level of youth work is incredibly time consuming and, unless it is integrated with a community change strategy, directly competes for time and attention with broader community change efforts.

Youth participants

Tables 2 and 3 provide information about the youth participants' school level (elementary, middle school, high school). Of the participating youth, 42% are in high school, 35% in middle school, and 23% in elementary school. Many grantees—especially El Dorado Hills, Meadowview, and Woodland—are tending to work with older youth.

Table 2. Type of School Attended by REACH Youth Participants, Jan.-Oct. 2008

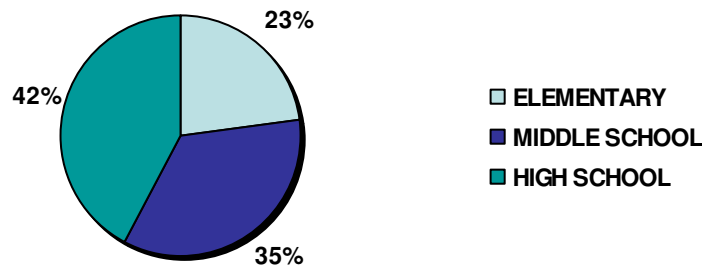
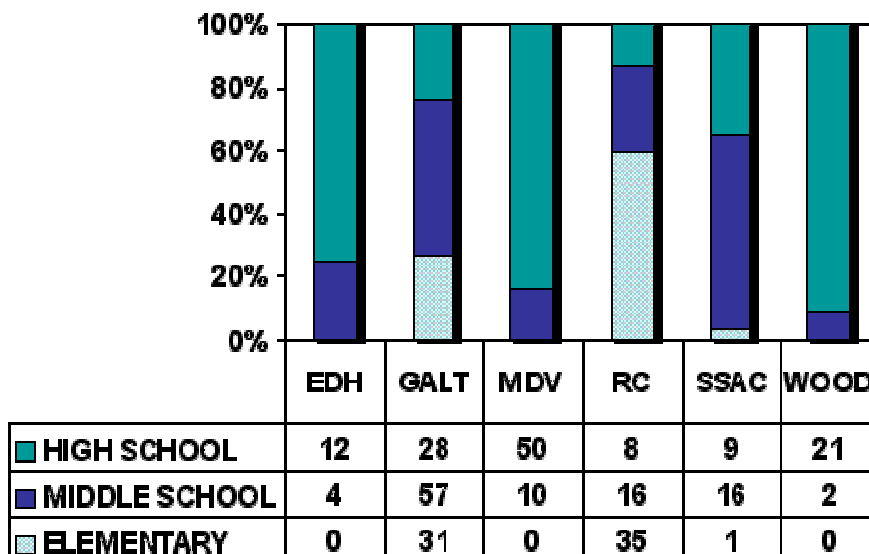


Table 3. School-level distribution of REACH youth by coalition, Jan.-Oct. 08



Based on our youth interviews and our regular observations of REACH youth meetings and events, we know that participating youth across the initiative are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, income levels, and life experience. REACH youth participants include:

- youth living in one of the region's wealthiest communities;
- youth who are current or past members of gangs;
- youth whose families speak little or no English;
- youth whose caretakers are working hard to meet basic needs
- youth who were born outside the United States;
- youth recruited because they show promise as leaders;
- shy youth who have few social outlets;
- youth who have been shot or had family members or friends shot;
- youth who haven't found a home in other after school opportunities.

Within individual coalitions, however, youth populations are in many cases more homogeneous based on a specific characteristic. For example, in Woodland almost all regular youth participants are Latino and for some time in West Sacramento all were male.

Adult participants

Table 4 presents what we know about the sectors represented by adult participants in the different coalitions. These data are based on an unduplicated count of any individual adult who attended at least one full coalition meeting or other core/regular REACH meeting between January and October 2008. Site coordinators, lead agency staff, and evaluation team members are excluded. We coded sectors based on information provided in the online meeting attendance reporting system, supplemented by our direct meeting observations. There was a good deal of vague or missing personal data in the attendance reports. Because of this the numbers in this chart are estimates only. They are best read as measures of the relative engagement with different sectors, rather than as precise counts.

These data prompt a few observations. First, some coalitions may have institutional partners who provide resources but do not or cannot attend meetings. Second, more than one in four adult participants work in schools or education, making it by far the most common sectoral partner in REACH coalitions. Most of these school participants are individuals working in outreach or school-community partnership programs, although this varies across sites. Third, the relatively large number in the parent/family/volunteer category is perhaps somewhat deceptive, since it often includes individuals who are at meetings primarily to play logistical roles (e.g. transportation for youth, bringing food) and have limited or no participation in setting coalition agendas. Finally, as might be expected, the grantees that could draw on previously existing coalitions, collaboratives, or partnerships (El Dorado Hills, Meadowview, and Rancho Cordova) tend to have a broader and deeper sectoral representation than grantees that have had to build connections from scratch.

Table 4. Approximate sectoral representation at regular coalition meetings Jan.-Oct. 2008*

SECTOR	EDH	GALT	MDV	RC	SSAC	WSAC	WOOD	TOTAL
Schools/education	8	16	9	7	2	2	12	56
Parent/family/volunteer	4	5	0	14	2	0	4	29
Faith-related organization	3	0	10	2	0	0	1	16
Other youth-serving nonprofit organization	3	4	1	5	0	0	0	13
Ethnic/cultural organization	0	1	4	1	6	0	0	12
Business	6	1	0	1	0	2	1	11
Health Care/alcohol/drugs	4	0	0	3	0	0	3	10
Elected officials	1	2	0	1	1	0	1	6
Law enforcement/Juvenile justice	3	1	0	2	1	1	1	9
Advocacy/civil rights/housing	0	0	0	3	2	0	1	6
Parks and recreation	3	1	0	1	0	1	0	6
Child welfare/care/family services	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	4
Libraries and museums	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Employment and training	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Research	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Media/public opinion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Philanthropy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	7	1	0	0	0	0	8
Total # adult participants	35	39	25	43	14	7	26	189

* Number of adults attending at least one regular coalition meeting as recorded in the attendance database. Sub-committee meetings and large, one-time only community events are excluded from this count.

Participants: Motivation and Duration of Involvement

This section draws on interviews conducted with adult and youth participants.¹³ Among many other questions, we asked how long they had been involved with REACH and why they were participating.

Youth

Youth interviewees were selected to reflect varying levels of participation, with an emphasis on those who had been involved for at least 6 months. At the time of the youth interviews (December 2007-July 2008), more than one-third (17 of 47, across all seven grantees) reported involvement with REACH since the inception of the initiative, approximately 12-18 months. A majority (22) reported involvement for 6-12 months. Five youth reported involvement for less than 6 months. Two youth were unsure of the length of their involvement.

Like many youth programs, recruitment into REACH often involves youth inviting

¹³ For a discussion of the methods used in these interviews, see Appendix D.

their friends or youth being drawn to adult leaders that they or their parents trust and respect. When asked why they first got involved with their coalition, youth routinely mentioned an adult (15), parent (9), or peer (11) that had invited and/or encouraged them to attend a meeting. Peers identified by youth included cousins, siblings, and friends; these peers encouraged them to attend meetings because they would enjoy the meetings and "it was something to do." Two youth were motivated to participate in part by the coalition's stipend.¹⁴

Adults who recruited youth to participate included REACH coalition members, school faculty and staff, and church members. Some young people recalled being personally recruited by a principal, school staff, church member, or parole officer. These adults believed that REACH would be of particular interest or benefit to the youth. In one interview, a youth recalled that her recruitment to REACH came by being asked to report to the principal's office:

"I was called to the office with a couple of my friends who were like . . . who were thought to be the school leadership people, like people . . . recognized us."

Youth also reported hearing about the coalition through public announcements made at school, in church, or through other public venues.

Youth talked about what motivated their continued participation in coalition activities. Four dominant themes emerged, including a desire to "help out" the community; an enthusiasm about meeting new people and hanging out with friends; participating in activities such as ice breakers, trainings, and camp as a positive alternative to less desirable activities; and a sense of connection and commitment to adult staff and/or specific coalition-affiliated adults.

"Well, we were helping out the community, and like I was happy that some people were interested in [my community] and the surrounding areas, and I also had fun...with the icebreakers and stuff. And I got to meet new people."

"...because I have friends in the program, and also because it's really fun...to get together. And...meet with everybody, and learn a little more about the community."

"I thought it was cool. It was good for me to go there. Instead of just going home...so I decided to keep coming here."

Youth also shared their thoughts about why other youth might choose not to

¹⁴ Three coalitions have offered small stipends to participating youth. In one of these three cases, coalition youth changed the eligibility criteria for the stipend to favor only those youth who had attended a certain number of meetings, since they believed some youth were showing up just to receive the stipend.

participate in their coalition. Many reported that young people were not interested in the types of activities offered through REACH. To describe how their friends view the coalition, words and phrases like “boring,” “waste of time,” “stupid,” “wasn't too interesting,” and “silly” were common responses. They also suggested that some young people have a number of time commitments after school, such as a job, responsibilities at home, or extracurricular activities (e.g. sports) that prevent them from participating in REACH. Some adults noted hearing that youth of non-dominant ethnic backgrounds were feeling uncomfortable and unwelcome, which led them to discontinue their involvement.

Transportation of youth to coalition meetings and other events is an ongoing challenge. It acts as a limiting factor in how many youth can be involved, and also which youth, given unequal access to parents/other adults who have the time and ability to transport them. Coalitions that have worked more with older youth can partially evade this challenge when youth are able to drive themselves to meetings and events.

Adults

Adult participants report multiple reasons for getting involved, including general support for REACH youth development goals, specific interest in an initiative that engages youth in meaningful leadership roles, and institutional connections brokered by REACH site coordinators (some of which pre-date REACH itself). A self-described community activist notes:

"I don't get involved in every initiative that comes along, but REACH is about giving youth leadership roles and opportunities, and that's what I am all about."

Many grantees have reported difficulties in sustaining regular adult participation at some point over the past 15 months, a reality confirmed by site visits and meeting observations. Based on our observations and a limited number of interviews with adults that have chosen to discontinue their participation, the reasons appear to include:

- disagreements over how grant funds have been spent or how staff supported by REACH funds are allocating their time and effort;
- excessive burdens placed on the relatively few adults that are participating such that they begin to burn out;
- having attended meetings but never getting oriented to what the coalition is trying to accomplish and how;
- frustration over the pace at which the coalition is moving forward on its key objectives and anxiety over the fact that REACH funding may run out before the coalition has established itself;
- conflict related to community ownership of the process, particularly when site coordinators or other coalition members are from outside the community; and
- difficulty merging REACH into pre-existing structures in a win-win fashion.

As a result, we observe that many coalitions have entered a somewhat rough period over the past few months. This type of conflict is not unusual in coalition development, which has been said to follow a trajectory from *forming*, to *storming*, then on to *norming* and *performing* (Tuckman, 1965). Site coordinators may be in particular need of troubleshooting advice and assistance during the “storming” part of this cycle.

In general, grantees tend to lack clear mechanisms or processes for recruiting and orienting new members, both youth and adult. This is a common problem in community coalitions, where busy staff often lack the time, inclination, or even clarity to draw members into shared leadership (as opposed, for example, to meetings where staff simply share what is happening or report the results of decisions made elsewhere). Early in REACH, there has been a tendency in some coalitions to see who shows up and let the coalition agenda emerge from them, rather than engaging in active outreach to particular youth/adult populations in light of a specific agenda.

By contrast, more effective coalitions usually have a social mobilization strategy of some sort that targets particular groups for membership based on overarching goals and strategic choices about who is needed to advance those goals.

Elements of such a strategy might include:

- Having a clear mechanism or process for recruiting and orienting new adult and youth members;
- Creating specific leadership roles for members;
- Engaging in active outreach to particular youth/adult populations in light of a specific substantive agenda;
- Targeting particular groups for membership based on overarching goals and strategic choices about the resources that are needed to advance those goals.

An example from REACH is the deliberate effort by the El Dorado Hills coalition to engage with mental health services officials and providers, given their central role in addressing the coalition goal of reducing drug and alcohol abuse. Some limited targeting of this type is evident in other coalitions as well, but in general membership seems to be evolving in a more ad-hoc fashion. It appears that more can be done to think strategically about the types of individuals and organizations that need to be represented at the table if the articulated coalition goals are to be realized.

REACH Coalition Staff

Approximately 80% of the REACH grant funds go to support staff salaries and benefits, averaging about \$141,000 per coalition per year. Most coalitions have been able to support somewhere between 2 and 4 staff positions though not always at full-time status and sometimes drawing on non-REACH funds as well. These “site coordinators” are the working engine of REACH and are responsible for most of what is happening on the ground. They have also been the primary focus of foundation efforts to provide training, coaching, and advice through a

team of technical assistance providers.

Staff turnover

In the case of five of the seven grantees (all except El Dorado Hills and Galt), there has been turnover in one or more key REACH staff. The high rates of turnover are not atypical in the field of youth development, and have been linked in the literature to a range of factors including low salary, job satisfaction, efficacy in the position, and lack of professional growth opportunities (Benson & Pittman, 2001, p.223). It may even be that the valuable training provided to site coordinators during REACH increased their value to new employers. Whatever the reasons, the turnover has certainly slowed the work of building relationships with youth and community members. A clear lesson is the need to expect turnover and have plans in place to minimize negative impacts when it does occur.

During and after staff transitions, the work of the technical assistance team has been particularly important. Along with staff from the foundation, representatives of the technical assistance team have been able to meet with new site coordinators, orienting them to REACH goals and procedures and reminding them of existing workplans and commitments. New coordinators are also able to call on the remaining site coordinators for help and assistance. These efforts, along with the existence of the formal REACH workplans negotiated with the help of the technical assistance team, has helped new coordinators stay on track despite the staff turnover.

However, the successful integration of new coordinators into REACH does not guarantee that coalitions will keep growing in strength. New coordinators sometimes find it challenging to sustain the participation of previously engaged adults. In addition, these coordinators bring new styles and approaches, some of which alter pre-existing patterns of relationship.

As adult and youth participants change, the coalition tends to become more distanced from owning the original strategic planning process and resulting workplan. If one mark of a strong coalition is the ability to survive the inevitable transitions in staff, it may be that there needs to be more focus on engaging youth and adult coalition members in workplan development as these shift over time. Periodic retreats at which workplan goals and objectives are revisited are one strategy grantees have used to deal with this issue. There is a growing recognition among technical assistance providers and others that their help needs to reach deeper into coalitions.

Having more staff helps

We observe that increasing the number of available staff to do REACH work can make a significant difference in how much can be accomplished. From the evidence to date, it appears that coalitions that have three or more staff working full-time or nearly full-time (and with less turnover) have been able to engage larger numbers of participants and conduct more activities. Often these

grantees are using funds from other grants to support their REACH staff positions. Core REACH goals of engaging youth and building community coalitions require time intensive relationship building, and there are limits as to how much one individual can do. Depending on the nature of the lead fiscal agency, some site coordinators can call on other lead agency staff for various forms of assistance, particularly in putting on large events or meetings. On the other hand, we have observed cases where staff hired with REACH money have been asked by their supervisors at the lead fiscal agency to spend significant time on activities that are not directly related to REACH.

II. Working Together

How is the REACH theory of change holding up in practice?

How meaningful are youth roles?

What is the tenor of adult-youth interaction?

Headlines:

- While the Gambone framework offers a strategic model for increasing developmental supports for youth at a community scale, it does not speak specifically to the engagement of youth in this process. An underlying challenge for the initiative—and an area where the REACH experiment will eventually produce useful learning—is the lack of an explicit conceptual rationale that explains why it is important to engage youth in a community change strategy for youth development.
- The importance of listening to youth voice is a working norm within REACH. Site coordinators credit the training and instruction of foundation-provided technical assistance with changing their attitudes and improving their skills. Many youth express appreciation for REACH as a place where they can speak up, in contrast to what they often experience in school or other settings.
- Authentic youth-adult collaboration—reflecting a belief that all age groups hold critical capacities and that it is important to take the time to build relationships and practices that enable the initiative to build upon those capacities—is a new orientation for most participating adults and youth. They find it takes more time and energy than anticipated, especially when reaching out to more vulnerable youth populations.

Tensions Associated with the REACH Theory of Change

A key REACH goal is to catalyze meaningful change strategies that increase community supports and opportunities for youth. The Gambone framework casts this work in ambitious terms such as policy change or institutional reform without specifying where change efforts should be focused, which institutions to include in a coalition, or how and why youth might be meaningfully engaged in community change.

The latter gap appears to be particularly problematic. Youth engagement is complicated on its own terms, as is community change. Wedding the two—along with learning youth development principles—to create youth-led or youth-engaged community change is even more complex. REACH coalitions have been struggling to deal with this complexity. We note a tendency for grantees to conceptualize youth engagement and community change as separate tasks; in most cases, the energies required to do youth engagement take priority over those devoted to community scale change.

We wonder if this trend belies an important missed opportunity—what would it mean and what might be gained if the emphasis shifted to doing both simultaneously? Does engaging youth in community change enhance both youth development and community change outcomes, and do particular youth engagement strategies do this better? Moving these questions from the periphery to the center of the discussion seems to be a promising direction. It can build on what has happened during the first phase of the initiative and contribute to research that is seeking models for how to balance youth action strategies to create both individual and community change (see Irby et. al. 2001). Technical assistance providers, foundation staff, and coalitions might engage in even more focal deliberation regarding *why* it makes sense to engage youth in a community change initiative, the types of substantive strategies that have been pursued in a variety of settings, and what grantees themselves might want to pursue in light of their specific goals and agendas.

Rationales for why and how to engage youth

Drawing on examples from across the seven REACH coalitions and on the research literature, we identify at least six orientations to engaging youth in community change:

- Engage youth as a strategy to model good youth development practice and offer some direct support/training to a cohort of young people.
- Engage youth because they have critical knowledge and insights to contribute to community strategy development.
- Engage youth because they are a strategic constituency that can mobilize peers around promoting important changes in youth practice.
- Engage youth because they are a strategic constituency that can mobilize/organize to change adult practice and policy.
- Engage youth because they are useful/compelling elements of efforts to “make the case” for investment to key decision-makers.
- Engage youth because they offer labor/energy to accomplish specific projects.

These six may not cover the entire range of possibilities, but suggest directions the conversation about why a grantee is engaging youth, and how that engagement will contribute to increased community capacity to support youth development. At stake is whether REACH grantees' engagement of youth becomes primarily a stand-alone youth leadership program, or a significant element of their community change process.

The following two sections address additional aspects of a unified rationale for engaging youth in community change. Both deal with *how* youth are engaged—the first in terms of the relationships between adults and youth and the second in terms of particular youth engagement approaches.

Three distinctions in how youth are being engaged

Across the seven sites, we identify three main distinctions in how youth are engaged, with associated strengths and weaknesses. While these types emerge from our analysis of the grantees, none of the seven can be fit neatly into any

single category.

Type A

Invest energy in establishing deep relationships with youth—meeting them where they are, spending a good deal of time with them, listening to their concerns, discovering their unique gifts and talents. This approach can build relationships of trust and loyalty that have life changing potential. On the other hand, this work is very time-intensive and dependent on cultural sensitivity or connections that may limit who can be in relationship. It also can diminish the focus on community change strategies, unless the two are deliberately intertwined.

Type B

Emphasize creating leadership and civic opportunities for youth, especially those that emphasize short-term, action-oriented projects which youth can move in and out of easily. This approach does not depend on a deep relationship to the coordinator/leader, can create opportunities for greater numbers of youth, and appeals to youth who do not necessarily want to spend a lot of time attending meetings. On the other hand, it does less to build youth attachment and loyalty to the group and may result in youth opportunities being framed based more on adult interests.

Type C

Pursue a community change agenda on its own terms and then look for ways to engage youth to advance this agenda, assuming that youth will benefit from participation in the change process but focusing on community outcomes rather than individual participant outcomes. This approach involves youth directly in real world change efforts of significance, often inserting youth voices directly into public processes such as meetings of elected officials or agency boards. On the other hand, it potentially exposes youth to situations for which they are unprepared or even to put commitment to the broader cause ahead of commitment to the benefit for participating youth.

Approaches to engaging youth with community

With or without a clear rationale for *why* to engage youth in a community change effort, there are a variety of approaches that address the question of *how* to engage youth with the broader community. All of these emphasize community engagement that benefits participating youth, but not necessarily as part of a broader strategy for creating community-scale change.

A recent Finance Project publication identifies eight commonly used youth community engagement strategies (Gray and Hayes, 2008). Table 5 shows which of these are being deployed as a significant part of a particular grantee's REACH work. As the table suggests, most coalitions employ multiple approaches and there is a good deal of variation across grantees in which approaches are being employed as well as their intensity.

Table 5. Approaches to Engaging Youth with Community

	EDH	GALT	MDV	SSAC	RC	WSAC	WOOD
Community service	X	X		X	X	X	X
Service learning	X	X			X		
Youth media and public art	X						X
Youth philanthropy	X	X		X	X		X
Youth-led research			X	X			
Youth civic engagement			X	X	X		X
Youth organizing			X	X			
Youth in governance	X	X					

* All the coalitions participated in a digital storytelling project led by our evaluation team and many have recently begun to develop youth media projects with guidance and support from the technical assistance team.

Both youth and adults find the variety of approaches to youth engagement daunting. “There is no clear way to do it,” says one adult. We observe that only a few of the staff tasked to work directly with youth brought a depth of experience in one or more of these areas. As coordinators learn of new approaches, or as new coordinators come on board, they sometimes experiment with approaches that are different than those with which youth and/or adult participants are comfortable. Finding ways to establish a balance between stability and flexibility is an inherent challenge.

Observed tensions and concerns associated with youth community engagement

Among the tensions and concerns identified during our fieldwork are the following:

- While many youth have been engaged in some form of community activity or issue work, engagement tends to be episodic and piecemeal and is not always couched within a well thought out coalition strategy with measurable goals.
- While it makes sense for coalitions to serve as a feeding mechanism to certain opportunities on local governing boards or committees, care must be exercised lest the youth be placed in situations where they are not properly supported or simply given token roles.
- There is a tendency for some youth to be repeatedly picked for visible community roles, a natural result of their leadership potential and relative degree of comfort in public speaking compared to their peers. We have seen a few cases where quiet and shy youth have blossomed during REACH

and wonder if more might be done to create a ladder of opportunity to ensure that all youth are displaying their special talents and further developing more limited skill areas.

- All grantees report logistical challenges, particularly surrounding transportation of youth.
- All grantees face challenges in finding sufficient numbers of adults with youth engagement skills that are available to play direct supporting roles for youth.
- Finally, we observe that efforts to educate youth about community issues and systems do not appear to be a central focus of coalition activity in most cases.

Youth roles in coalitions and the tenor of youth-adult interactions

Jones and Perkins (2006) distinguish the nature of youth-adult interactions in groups along the following continuum:

- adult-centered leadership
- adult-led collaboration
- youth-adult partnership
- youth-led collaboration
- youth-centered leadership

They found that participants in youth-led collaborations were significantly more positive toward youth involvement than participants in adult-led collaborations. Moreover, adults in youth-adult partnerships were significantly more positive toward youth involvement and youth-adult interaction than those adults in adult-led collaborations.

REACH activities cover this entire spectrum. Individual grantees are not easy to categorize with a single designation since they engage in many different forms of activities, each of which has its own characteristic patterns of adult-youth interaction. Even a single activity, such as a planning committee to plan a youth leadership conference, may evidence different patterns over time as the cast of characters shifts or the group evolves new norms.

Overall, the center of gravity seems to be somewhere toward the vicinity of youth-adult partnership, with very few of the activities reflecting youth-centered leadership or youth-led collaboration. One key variable is time: allowing youth a stronger role in leadership takes more time than if adults run things. The press of deadlines or the understandable desire to meet workplan objectives in a timely way are among the pressures that lead grantees to sometimes revert to adult-centered or adult-led models. But other variables come into play as well including adult skill and turnover, youth turnover, development of clear trajectory of support for youth to take on increasingly complex leadership roles, and finding objectives in which a youth led strategy makes sense. Being youth led is not always the ideal. Both youth development and community development require a mix of approaches—some more youth led, some more adult led, some more partnership—that are selected with sensitivity to the context and to the needs and abilities of different youth.

In presenting evidence related to this topic we draw first on what youth involved in REACH told us in interviews, followed by comments based on our own field observations.

What participating youth say

About their roles in coalitions

In our interviews with 47 REACH youth, the sophistication with which youth articulated their roles varied. Some youth listed specific duties they assume and could discuss these responsibilities in relation to their coalition's larger goals. Many of these youth hold formal leadership positions in their organizations (e.g., president, vice-president, secretary). Often youth talked about responsibilities in terms of tasks associated with conducting meetings such as developing agendas, introducing energizers, facilitating discussions, taking notes, and monitoring the behaviors of the group members. Interview participants also spoke about responsibilities in terms of the proper way to behave at coalition meetings. This is illustrated by the following comments: "keep on task," "behave," "give respect for others," "come to every meeting," "do workshops," "watch your mouth," and be "the bigger person" when conflict occurs.

A few youth provided examples of their responsibilities during coalition events other than meetings. Most of these tasks entailed general assistance such as staffing a registration table or setting up equipment. Other examples included mentoring other youth or discussing an issue in public.

About their relationships with adults

Youth state that one reason they like REACH and keep coming is that it is a place where they get to participate in the conversation rather than simply listening to adults. They were asked explicitly to share thoughts about the extent to which they felt adults in the REACH coalition listened to their contributions. Mostly youth felt they were listened to. In observing adults, they note that adults that listen to youth ask for youth opinions and write things down.

"I think they do listen, because they wouldn't-they wouldn't-if they didn't listen...then they wouldn't write notes. They write notes on almost everything."

"Um, 'cause like they ask us for ideas and stuff, they talk to us about it, and the ideas that we say, they write 'em down and stuff, and...yeah. They don't just talk about what they think, they let us speak also."

Overall, young people appear to value the positive relationships they have with adults in the coalition, although there is great variation in the depth and meaningfulness of their relationships with coalition coordinators and adult members. Nowhere was this more evident than in interviews with youth who had lost or were losing key REACH support staff. One youth expressed frustration with

the change in leadership style that occurred with the transition. Another young person expressed uncertainty about replacing an outgoing coordinator with whom the youth members felt particularly close.

About their community

When they are not spending time with their coalitions, youth interviewees report playing sports, hanging out with friends, and going to the mall. By contrast, there were very few mentions of anything related to the arts (e.g., only one mentioned playing an instrument—guitar). There is little mention of participation of other organizations in the community other than those affiliated with the schools.

When asked about how to improve their community, the youth were inclined to list problems rather than discuss solutions. Gangs (12), violence (8), and graffiti (5) were the most commonly cited issues, but few respondents gave specific suggestions on how to address these issues in the short time that we had together. In general, interviewees seemed to be advocating for spaces where youth can feel more connected to one another as a deterrent to violence. Youth suggest more “programs,” “activities,” “things for youth to do,” and “ways for young people to get to know one another.” Several youth mentioned a desire for a teen center where youth can socialize with friends and “get to know other kids.”

Youth had a difficult time with our question about whether the coalition can make a difference in their community. Those who did answer are generally optimistic. When asked how their coalition is addressing the community concerns, responses varied from role modeling (“setting example for other/younger kids by working in the coalition”) to holding art festivals. A number of youth said getting more youth involved would be helpful in order to make an impact on the issues.

Observed patterns and tensions

REACH has created group settings in which youth have exercised a wide range of roles and ongoing leadership responsibilities. These include helping plan and facilitate coalition meetings, leading energizers at meetings, making public presentations, providing input on decisions, or attending public meetings or events on behalf of the coalition.

The norm of listening to youth voice has been imparted to coordinators and they are endeavoring to respect this norm in their actions. In interviews, coordinators credit the training and instruction of foundation-provided technical assistance with changing their attitudes and improving their skills. It is not surprising that many youth express appreciation for REACH as a place where they can speak up, by contrast to what they often experience in school or other settings.

In many cases youth have been involved in the hiring of new site coordinators, although there is mixed evidence about how seriously their input was taken and in all cases the final decisions rested with the lead fiscal agency.

Often, youth participation at full coalition meetings is limited and it is rare to see an instance of substantive and meaningful youth input, especially in settings where adults constitute the majority of those present. An exception occurred when youth in one coalition stood up to adults and outvoted them on an issue regarding meeting times. This coalition has a rule that balances the number of youth and adults at any coalition meeting. This kind of balance in numbers contributes to a greater chance of meaningful youth participation, although numbers alone are not sufficient. Though it may be happening unobserved, we have seen relatively few examples of adults actively seeking out youth for their knowledge and perspectives nor instances in which adults support youth to develop and articulate their insights.

Some occasions where youth are asked to speak or give reports at coalition meetings appear to be heavily scripted. Arguably, some forms of this type of coaching are appropriate, while others come off as more tokenistic.

Many coalitions use stipends as an incentive or compensation for youth participation. We hear a variety of perspectives on the pros and cons of this approach. Some adults we interviewed have questions about the wisdom of this approach, feeling it may send the wrong message if the goal is to teach youth about the value of community service or civic engagement on its own terms. On the other hand, youth who need to earn money have noted the importance of the stipends both as a source of revenue and justification of their time investment to their families. The rules surrounding who is eligible for stipends and under what conditions have been the subject of ongoing negotiation. For example, one coalition revised the “pay for participation” rules to ensure that only youth that commit themselves to the group and actively participate over time get paid.

Although site coordinators and other lead agency staff have the most contact with REACH youth overall, many different adults interact with youth during REACH-related events, meetings, and activities. Some of the most meaningful adult support provided to youth through the initiative has come from adult volunteers who offer rides and befriend young people (including youth from single parent homes where it is difficult for the parent to support their involvement) and adult associates who have worked closely and in genuine collaboration with youth to achieve a particular goal (e.g. Woodland mural project).

We observe a wide variation in the skill with which different adults work with youth to develop their voice and exercise their leadership. In many instances youth are given prominent roles or opportunities to speak and listened to with courtesy and respect. But we also observe some cases in which adult coalition members interact with youth in ways that take control of planning sessions and projects, mute youth voices, or incorporate youth voice but in a tokenistic fashion. In some cases adults have acted insensitively to the cultural and socio-economic backgrounds of coalition youth and their families. Without intending to, adults can demonstrate a lack of respect for the youth they are trying to

nurture and support.

Consistent with what the literature suggests (National Research Council, 2002), the age differences among participating youth complicate the pursuit of meaningful adult-youth partnerships. Younger youth have shorter attention spans, fewer conscious connections with their communities, and more limited understanding of communities, institutions and systems.¹⁵ A number of coalitions are gravitating toward working with somewhat older youth, where these concerns are less salient and youth have more of the skills and vision to take on complex community change activities, as well as greater capacity to develop them further. Where older and younger youth are mixed together, coordinators face the task of dealing with wide variations in maturity and social-emotional preoccupations. At meetings either the older youth dominate and the younger stay quiet, or vice versa, depending on which age group is in the majority.

A broader observation is that authentic youth-adult collaboration—reflecting a belief that all age groups hold critical capacities and that it is important to take the time to build relationships and practices that enable the initiative to build upon those capacities—is a new orientation for most participating adults and youth. It takes more time and energy than most anticipate, especially when reaching out to more vulnerable youth populations. Funders and coalition leadership need to account for this if it is going to happen.

¹⁵ One report says the following about age differentials: "...the exact extent of structure and adult supervision needed to support positive behavior and development will change as children and adolescents grow older. Younger youth need more structure than older youth; older youth may balk at leadership that is too rigid, over-controlling, or authoritarian. Consequently, structure must permit age-appropriate levels of autonomy. The way this shows up in outcomes studies is as a curvilinear relation between structure and outcomes: both too little and too much adult-imposed structure is related to poorer outcomes than moderate levels of adult-imposed structure. The exact optimal point in the curve moves toward a less adult-imposed structure as the population being studied gets older (National Research Council, 2002, p. 93)."

III. In Communities

How do REACH community settings compare and with what consequences?

How do grantees define their operative community?

Through what organizational structures is the community mobilized?

What variables are affecting coalition development?

Headlines:

- REACH grantee communities reflect the significant wealth disparities, racial/ethnic diversity, and varied community types that characterize the Sacramento region. These differences affect the nature of youth needs, the level of formal resources available through families and communities for youth (e.g. programs, safe open space, etc.), and the availability of certain types of resources to REACH (e.g. parent time, transportation support).
- Grantees have defined the “community” in which they’re working in multiple ways, including ethnic communities, municipal jurisdictions, school districts, and neighborhoods. These different strategies present varying challenges and possibilities.
- Grantees have created new organizational infrastructure in a variety of specific forms, often with multiple components that are nested within each other and/or within previously existing coalitions, partnerships, or collaboratives.

In this section we examine the community settings in which REACH operates, the choices grantees have made to define their operative community and create organizational structures, the variable influencing coalition development, and the relation of the foundation's regional-scale activities to the REACH community action initiative.

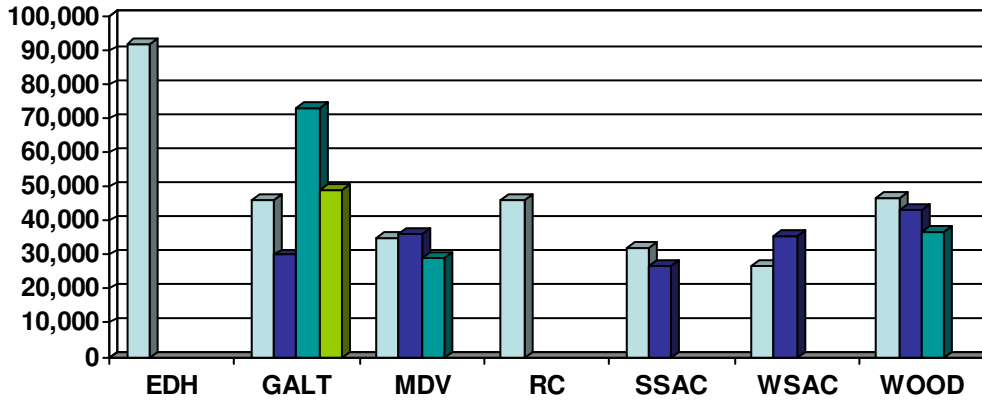
Community context

Previous research focused on initiatives to improve youth and community outcomes suggests that a greater intensity of outside resources is needed to achieve positive results in less advantaged communities (Schorr, 1988). The REACH experience is consistent with this observation. In communities where a broad array of well-financed youth enrichment opportunities pre-date REACH, foundation money can readily be used to create incremental improvements in the existing organizational base. By contrast, less advantaged communities face harder challenges and choices, since needs exist on many fronts, there is often a need to create new supports and opportunities from the ground up, and existing local assets may take more effort to identify and build upon.

Analysis of secondary data reveals that the seven local areas in which REACH is being implemented vary dramatically in wealth, racial and ethnic diversity.

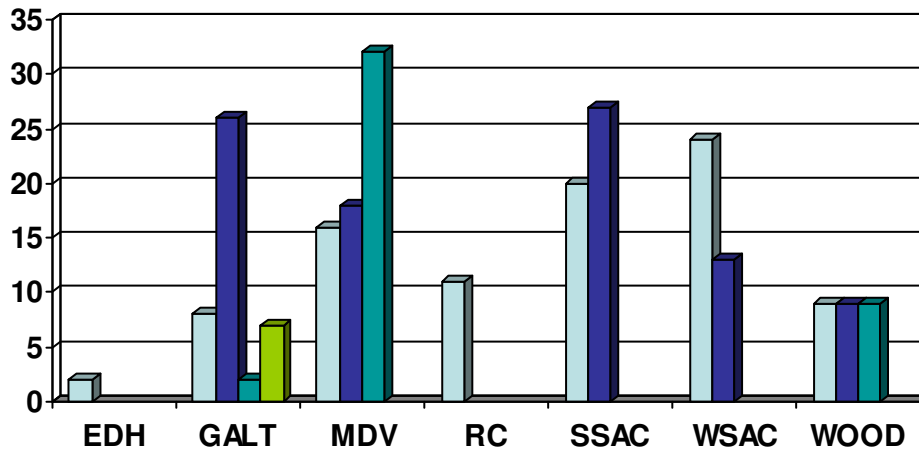
Tables 6 and 7 compare the median income and poverty rates in the seven local areas. Some grantees serve areas with multiple zip codes, and we include this data to highlight important differences within their target populations. As might be expected, the two charts—median income and poverty rates—are essentially mirror images of one another.

Table 6. Median Incomes in Zip Code Areas Served by REACH



Source: U.S. Census 2000

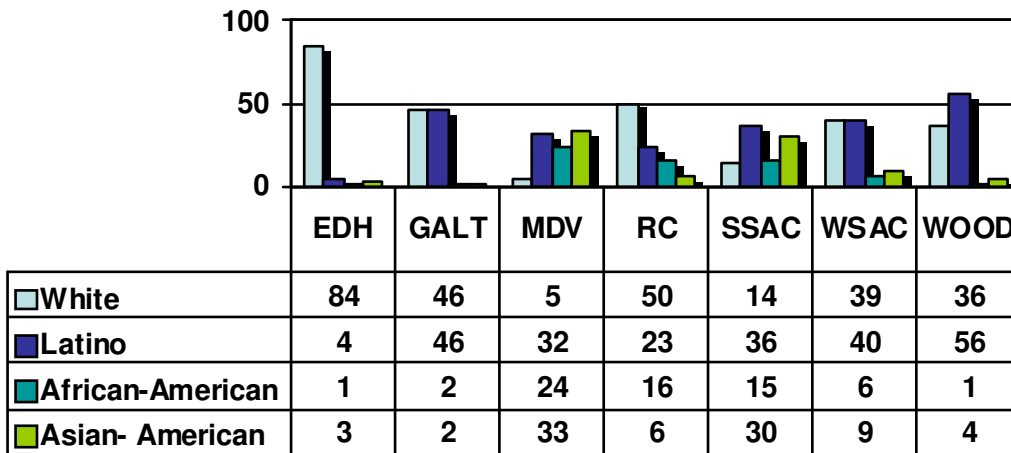
Table 7. Percent of Families Below Poverty in Zip Code Areas Served by REACH



Source: U.S. Census 2000

Table 8 shows the racial and ethnic diversity present in local public schools. Very different patterns prevail: one community is predominately white (El Dorado Hills), three are predominately white and Latino with two of those sporting roughly equal numbers and one a white majority, and the other three mixes that include white and Latinos but also substantial percentages of Asian and African-American youth.

Table 8. Percentage of Four Racial/Ethnic Groups in Local Public Schools



Source: California Department of Education, 2005-2006 school year

What these numbers do not convey are the very different historical dynamics and growth trajectories of these localities. For example, as historically more rural communities, Galt and Woodland grew from an agricultural economic base that has produced sharp economic and racial disparities between land owners and laborers and communities with smaller concentrations of youth programs and organizations. This is quite different from the pattern one finds in the multi-ethnic urban neighborhoods represented by the Meadowview and South Sacramento coalitions. Rancho Cordova and West Sacramento were historically inner ring suburbs with significant middle/low income communities of color that are being affected by uneven growth and gentrification, with older neighborhoods often finding themselves cut off by freeways or other barriers to neighborhood development. El Dorado Hills is experiencing rapid growth, primarily by higher-income populations who have sought to leave more urbanized areas, moving to what is largely a new built environment from which many parents commute.

How community characteristics influence REACH outcomes

Our observations reveal four important ways in which community characteristics influence REACH implementation and outcomes, by shaping: 1) the level of formal resources available through families and communities for youth (e.g. programs, safe open space, etc.); 2) the cultural/linguistic appropriateness of available resources; 3) the accessibility of resources; and 4) the dominant expressions of youth problems/needs.

Some communities have fewer of certain types of resources, and some resources can be accessed only after new relationships, skills, or cultural capital are developed. For example, a key difference between wealthy and less advantaged communities is in the availability of parent volunteers with the time and resources (e.g. available cars and vans) to drive youth to meetings and events, provide food for meetings, or in other ways support REACH activities.

Some site coordinators find themselves spending considerable time providing rides or picking up food themselves. Others can rely on parents for these tasks, either as a matter of course or because they have built a specific relationship. For example, in Woodland the Spanish-speaking site coordinator established a relationship with a young person's parent who was known to be an excellent cook. They worked out an arrangement in which the coalition covered the cost associated with her cooking for the youth, and the coordinator picked up the food at her house en route to meetings.

How grantees define community in practice

REACH grantees define and bound their community in multiple ways, including ethnic communities, municipal jurisdictions, school districts, and neighborhoods. Whatever the formal footprint for the grantee (city, school district, neighborhood), they all make subsequent choices about which sub-groups or institutions within the community to emphasize in recruiting participants and designing activities. The main choices we have observed concern racial, gender, and age diversity. Each choice brings with it emergent challenges and possibilities.

While at first glance it might appear best to favor inclusivity rather than privileging any ethnic groups or geographic areas, this may not be the best approach in all cases. For example, in Woodland the focus on engaging Latino youth can be justified in terms of the need for a space dedicated to Latino youth issues, and the presence in the city of another major youth-supporting coalition with a broader scope. In El Dorado Hills, many of the nonprofit groups given money by the Vision Coalition (using REACH and other grant funds) serve particular youth constituencies. This makes sense given that a broad range (approximately 20) of youth-serving agencies is being supported at any given time. In addition, special effort has been made to include organizations that serve a low-income housing community in the White Rock Village area of the city.

Some coalitions find themselves dealing with inclusiveness issues they could not have anticipated. For example, the West Sacramento coalition experienced the departure of all the formerly participating female youth leaving them temporarily with a single gender group. Rancho Cordova has been so successful in recruiting younger youth to its monthly meetings that it seems to be a somewhat less comfortable setting for the few high school age youth that attend.

Meeting locations and the nature and number of adult leaders also influence who can and does attend meetings. The proximity of meeting locations to school and home affects which youth can and cannot attend meetings, particularly in cases where youth lack easy or reliable transportation options or have parents/caretakers who can provide rides. As in any type of youth work, the nature of the adult leaders—including their gender, racial/ethnic, language and cultural background, but also many other factors such as enthusiasm and rapport with youth—has a great deal to do with attracting youth and adults to

the work. For example, the trust and networks which Woodland's initial youth coordinator had with the Latino community appears to have been instrumental in their youth coalition gaining the support of Latino youth and families, as well as local leaders.

In four cases, REACH footprint areas include entire cities (El Dorado Hills, Rancho Cordova, West Sacramento, and Woodland). While the ability to draw youth into their activities is subject to the variations already described, these four grantees have certain advantages in developing community change strategies, including the relative ease of gathering data, delineating potential partners, identifying community decision making processes and decision makers to influence, and gaining visibility and publicity. However, municipal boundaries do not map exactly on to other key boundaries, such as school districts that serve the municipality, which still presents some data and decision-making challenges.

By contrast, two grantees represent neighborhoods that are subsumed within a larger city and one uses school district boundaries that include multiple jurisdictions as well as unincorporated areas. An example of the tensions caused by mismatch of footprint and political boundaries can be seen in Meadowview. In this case the lead fiscal agency works on citywide issues and has used some REACH resources to support citywide efforts rather than focusing solely on the Meadowview area itself. Arguably this is a wise choice, since the fate of citywide decisions (e.g. election of the new mayor, dedicated tax for youth development) will have significant implications for Meadowview. Indeed, the youth organizers hired with REACH funds testify that their work on citywide activities such as the Mayoral Forum and a Get Out the Vote effort were among their proudest achievements. On the other hand, one can understand the feeling of some Meadowview Partnership members that more of the youth organizers' time should be spent on Meadowview-specific concerns.

The use of school district boundaries, as in Galt, makes sense if school reform or other issues linked to this geography are the key focus. On the other hand, where district lines cross various city and county boundaries it makes coalition development more complicated, particularly if strategic agendas focus on issues within a single jurisdictional boundary.

In these and other ways, some planned and some not, the actual community served by REACH has a tendency to be defined in ways that are different than what the footprint boundaries alone suggest.

Organizational Structures

All seven grantees have spent considerable time during the first year and a half setting up basic group structures and governance procedures, along with identifying and building relationships with local youth participants. They face sometimes subtle choices as they navigate the boundary between being an informal partnership versus developing more formal coalition structures and procedures. Sometimes forcing the latter too early can actually inhibit coalition

development, particularly if sufficient trust does not exist between members or if there have not been small early successes that help cement commitment to the coalition. At the same time, we note that many coalitions struggle to find a balance between the informality people often desire and the need for some formal orientation and decision-making mechanisms that ensure that all voices are heard.

While it has been convenient for all involved in REACH to describe the local grantees as “coalitions,” the grantees use a variety of terms to describe themselves including coalition, partnership, collaborative, steering committee, and council. As noted in the descriptions that follow, the working structures grantees have created vary substantially in how they distribute decision-making power and authority, how frequently they meet and in what configurations, as well as in who participates.

El Dorado Hills

The Vision Coalition is a pre-existing umbrella/intermediary organization that functions to: 1) build community collaboration that supports youth development principles and practices, and 2) obtain grants and distribute money to youth-serving agencies in the city of El Dorado Hills. REACH grant funds are pooled with other grant funds for this purpose. The Vision Coalition is a 501c(3) nonprofit with its own high visible board of community leaders and four paid staff, led by an Executive Director. REACH operates to some extent as a separate grant-funded project within the overall structure of the coalition. A set of three advisory committees has been added to the basic structure, which was created based on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) model used for a grant received earlier. An Executive Advisory Committee made up of community leaders and representatives of youth-serving agencies meets quarterly to provide advice to the coalition. A Teen Advisory Committee meets weekly to plan events and its members advocate for policy change to benefit youth. Using the supplemental \$15,000 provided to each REACH grantee in January 2008, staff formed a Parent Advisory Committee which is sponsoring parent education classes. Formal decision-making and legal responsibility is centered in the Vision Coalition board, however the various advisory committees make autonomous choices about their own activities and participants in large public events are sometimes surveyed to give advice that helps inform future grant seeking or project implementation.

Galt

The Galt Area Youth Coalition is a REACH grant-formed partnership designed to support youth opportunities within the area served by the Galt Joint Union High School District. Participating youth come from the communities of Acampo, Galt, Herald, and Thornton. Supported in part or in whole by REACH funds, three staff from the school district (the lead agency) organize school and community-based youth enrichment activities with help from teachers, parents, grandparents, and other adult allies. The coalition holds monthly meetings of adults and youth during the school year to share information and report on

youth activities. There is no separate youth council; instead, smaller Youth LEAD teams have been established at a number of school sites. A key function of the coalition is to promote service learning activities for youth and to advocate for youth in the broader community.

Meadowview

The Sacramento ACT Meadowview Partnership is a REACH grant-formed affiliate of the broader, pre-existing Sacramento Area Congregations Together/PICO community organizing effort. The partnership, with about 10-20 representatives from churches, schools, and other community-based organizations, along with area youth, has been meeting monthly to share information and to deliberate on future courses of action. It plans and organizes youth development events for the Meadowview neighborhood and joins with other ACT members to plan and participate in community-wide events. There is no separate youth council. Using REACH funds, ACT has hired three youth organizers from Meadowview to work both on community-specific and city-wide activities and events. A small, but very active, core of adult allies is working with ACT staff to plan events and activities. A broader group of adults and youth have been engaged in planning and implementing over 15 specific projects that draw on staff supported by REACH funding. Each project brings together somewhat different teams of youth and adults.

Rancho Cordova

There are two main REACH-related structures. First, the Cordova Community Collaborative is a pre-existing organization made up of representatives of agencies serving children and youth along with other community volunteers. It meets monthly to share information and plan community events, and serves as the de facto REACH coalition, although its agenda is more encompassing than just REACH. Second, the Rancho Cordova Youth Advisory Council was created as a result of REACH and provides a weekly leadership development and after school enrichment program for a small number of youth who help plan activities for a broader group of youth that meet monthly after school. The youth council is coordinated by staff from the Folsom Cordova Community Partnership (the lead agency) and operates to some extent as a project of that agency, but also as an initiative within the umbrella of the Cordova Community Collaborative. Lead agency staff-members make key decisions with input from youth, from collaborative members, and from other adult youth allies in the community.

South Sacramento

The South Sacramento Coalition for Future Leaders was created as a result of the REACH grant. It includes about 30 active representatives drawn from schools, drug and alcohol programs, and other youth-serving organizations. The coalition has organized ongoing working committees of adults and youth to make decisions and implement programs in four areas: jobs, mentorship, safety, and arts. It holds a weekly Youth Leadership Council meeting that consistently draws 20-40 youth, with a smaller group of youth meeting the day before to help plan the meeting. As a result of recently receiving a large federal grant from the

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the coalition will be seeking to expand its membership and community visibility.

West Sacramento

The West Sacramento Youth Resource Coalition was created as a result of the REACH grant. At various points in time, adult steering committee members have included representatives of major city departments that work with youth, the school district, and the non-profit and faith-based sectors of the community. The key organizational structure is a youth leadership team known as the Sactown Heroes, a community group of about 10-20 youth which meets weekly to plan events and activities. The site coordinator is working to create a virtual leadership academy with local partners, such as businesses and non-profits, providing opportunities for youth engagement, such as interning or taking a class. Each time a young person participates in one of these activities they will earn "points," which will be redeemable for things like movies or snacks around the community.

Woodland

The REACH grant created two new structures in Woodland, including the Woodland Youth Council with a consistent group of about 14 youth that meets weekly, and the Woodland Coalition for Youth, with both youth representatives from the youth council and adults that meet monthly. Both structures exist to provide direct and indirect support for youth leadership experiences, training opportunities, service learning projects, and opportunities to affect policy. The Woodland Youth Council also runs a small youth opportunity grant program and has done fundraisers for families in need. The two paid coalition staff are employees of the Yolo Family Resource Center, the lead fiscal agency. Efforts have also been made to organize a parent body.

Key variables influencing coalition development

Four variables are most important in influencing coalition development, including: 1) whether the structures are completely new as a result of the REACH grant or are integrated in some fashion with pre-existing organizations; 2) whether the lead agency is primarily engaged in program delivery for specific populations or in community-scale organizing and coordination efforts; 3) whether the grantee has chosen to organize a separate youth council/group(s) in implementing REACH; and 4) the networks and capacities of coalition staff. Table 9 summarizes key distinctions.

Table 9. Key Distinctions in Grantee Organizational Structures

	EDH	GALT	MDV	RC	SSAC	WSAC	WOOD
Integrated with previous collaborative infrastructure	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Lead agency function and scale of operation	Local drug prevention coalition	High School District that is fed by multiple school districts	Faith-based community organizing with broad membership and city-wide agenda	Municipal social services partnership with some discrete program delivery responsibilities	City housing nonprofit with community organizing bent	Nonprofit that delivers health services in the city	Family resource center with a variety of specific programs and county-wide mandate
Separate youth council	Yes	No [but youth leadership teams at individual schools]	No [but supports youth groups at schools]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Across these seven cases, the first two variables work in tandem. Where REACH grants went to previously existing community coalitions and/or the organizations that support those coalitions, the grantees already had infrastructure devoted to promoting community-scale coordination and policy advocacy. The remaining four grantees were organizations with program delivery responsibilities; these were asked to create a collaborative infrastructure where none previously existed.

We observe the following strengths and weaknesses associated with these two quite distinct situations:

- Pre-existing coalitions have relationships, visibility, and staff capacity that can produce a greater volume of activity sooner. They also have been more likely to focus on community-scale policy or institutional change. On the other hand, their REACH site coordinators often feel torn between competing demands on their time coming from the parent organization and from REACH, and these grantees are somewhat more likely to shape REACH to fit with their pre-existing agenda and approach to youth development.
- Where grantees create new coalition structures from scratch, the foundation investment has a greater potential to significantly alter the pre-existing community commitment to youth development and to do so on terms that are consistent with the foundation's approach and philosophy. However, these grantees face a steep learning curve, a more uncertain path forward, and might not produce as many short-term results focused on community-scale change.

Most grantees have a separate youth council or similar organization. Even the two that do not have these structures in place have some projects or activities

that are organized to serve youth exclusively. Separate youth groups forge a collective youth identity linked to REACH, create a regular venue for engaging youth in decisions, and promote ongoing interaction with adult leaders. On the other hand, these groups sometimes operate like a separate youth after-school program, draining staff energy from the broader community change goals of the initiative and isolating youth from the arenas where decisions related to coalition strategy are being made. Where there is no separate youth council, it can help maintain the focus on creating community-scale change and can integrate youth directly and meaningfully into this work (e.g. Meadowview youth organizers). On the other hand, it is hard to sustain youth participation with no regular venue where they can interact with friends and engage in more youth-oriented activities, as well as meeting preparation and planning. This strategy also may depend on the participation of older youth populations.

IV. To increase supports and opportunities for all youth

What community change strategies are being implemented?

How focused are the grantee goals?

What tensions and challenges need priority attention?

Headlines:

- Many, though not all, of the REACH projects can be subsumed under one of the following substantive areas: college matriculation and dropout prevention, jobs and workforce development, leadership development, safety and violence prevention, drug and alcohol prevention, and arts and youth media.
- Modest progress toward community-scale reforms or policy changes that support youth development is evident, providing some momentum for the future.
- There is great variation in the extent to which grantees have landed on a goal which is sufficiently focused to 1) identify key targets of youth, adult, and institutional mobilization; 2) suggest where current programs can be more strategically aligned; and 3) be disciplined by measurable outcome indicators. The lack of such a focus presents a risk to grantees' ability to sustain efforts and achieve more lasting effects in the community.

In this section we look at the types of activities grantees are pursuing and the degree to which these activities are strategically aligned and focused. The Gambone framework concept of "supports and opportunities" is deliberately vague, potentially applying to anything that might help youth achieve outcomes such as safety, supportive relationships, engaging learning experiences, or meaningful opportunities for involvement and membership. The framework thus leaves many choices to individual grantees.

At the outset we note that all seven coalitions have been relatively successful in implementing activities that correspond to their original workplans. The annual reports prepared by the grantees with the assistance of staff at the foundation provide a good record of those accomplishments, and we will not repeat that information here. Indeed, most grantees are pursuing five or more discrete projects, sometimes sequentially but often simultaneously.¹⁶ Clearly, any problems that exist are not due to a lack of activity or a dearth of good project ideas. Rather, as we discuss below, the challenge is how to focus energy and make effective use of limited resources.

¹⁶ One coalition recently reviewed their activities to date and discovered with some surprise that they have implemented over 15 separate REACH-related projects.

Many, though not all, of the REACH projects can be subsumed under one of the following substantive areas: college matriculation and dropout prevention, jobs and workforce development, leadership development, safety and violence prevention, drug and alcohol prevention, and arts and youth media. These categories are somewhat helpful in identifying areas where the foundation might provide substantive information, or where coalitions might find reasons to support common activities.

It may be useful to consider shifting some technical assistance resources to help coalitions think more strategically about engaging in one or more of these substantive arenas. This complements the earlier assistance that has focused primarily on youth engagement principles and practices, coalition processes, and self-evaluation. This was one of the lessons learned during the evaluation of the 10-year California Works for Better Health initiative, which found that grantees could have used more assistance around substantive approaches to change and somewhat less around organizational capacity (Pastor et. al., 2008).

How focused are the strategies for community change?

The question that concerns us in this section is whether the workplan-related activities coalesce into a coherent community change strategy. According to Gardner (2005, p. 49), elements of strategic policy at the local level include:

- Developing a short list of priorities—things that matter more than others;
- Forging more deliberate program connections rather than allowing fragmentation and isolated programs to be the norm;
- Targeting resources and shaping budgets based on the identified priorities and the opportunities created by program connections; and
- Setting in place outcomes that can be measured and gathering good data to inform decisions about what works and what needs to be changed.

Strategic policy is not primarily about creating new programs; instead it is about how programs fit together and which have priority given feedback about effectiveness. Without strategy every program is equally important and has an equal claim to continue, leading to a patchwork of past good intentions rather than a road map for the future.

Gardner sets the bar very high, and even large public agencies or collaboratives with a great deal more staff and resources than the REACH coalitions seldom meet all of these standards. So our point is not to hold this standard up as what we would expect to find after less than two years of a modestly funded initiative. Nevertheless, the elements of strategy Gardner identifies point in a direction that REACH coalitions need to be moving if they are to have a discernable influence on youth supports and opportunities at the community scale.

Not surprisingly, we find that the grantees with ties to pre-existing community coalitions are farther along in their focus on community change. But in the other sites there are promising developments as well. The following vignettes from

REACH grantees illustrate existing or nascent developments that are promisingly strategic in one way or another:

- Meadowview's REACH-related activities are wide ranging, but gain greater coherence and policy relevance by being linked to the broad Sacramento ACT strategy of reducing school drop-out rates and increasing the number of city youth who graduate and go on to college. By building different constituencies that unite behind these goals, ACT set the stage for its effort to promote a new tax that would provide a dedicated funding stream for youth development programs in the city of Sacramento. Even the failure of this effort on the first attempt raised the profile of youth issues in the community and plans to try again are moving along. REACH youth organizers helped survey youth to identify the types of programs they would want the new tax to support, and youth presented their agenda to candidates for mayor at a forum attended by approximately 1,000 citizens, providing a meaningful avenue for youth engagement in the local policy process.
- In El Dorado Hills, the Vision Coalition represents an umbrella structure that has broad community buy-in focused around the goal of reducing youth drug and alcohol abuse. It works by complementing and expanding the work of existing youth-serving organizations through grantwriting, training, special events, and media activity. Relationships built by the Vision Coalition help spur formal and informal coordination of services in the community and have begun to expand the reach of youth development principles and/or youth voice into agencies like mental health and transportation.

Notice that in both the above cases the work is 1) central to overall youth and community well-being; and 2) sufficiently focused that it would be possible to track specific community-scale outcomes over time (e.g. college matriculation rates in Meadowview and drug and alcohol abuse indicators in El Dorado Hills).

- Galt's REACH strategy is built less around a particular outcome than around an approach to youth engagement—namely, service learning. This emphasis pre-dated REACH and builds upon the potential capacity of a school-led coalition to reach thousands of youth, along with their family members and teachers. A key element of the strategy is the understanding that while area schools work fairly well, there are limited after-school opportunities for youth. The REACH coalition is now the incubator for not only youth development trainings and service learning activities, but for nascent policy discussions aimed at creating a youth master plan for the community.
- In Rancho Cordova the youth members of the REACH-formed Youth Advisory Council (YAC) have become advocates on youth policy issues. They organized a rally on the steps of the State Capitol in protest of proposed school budget cuts. The young people and their adult allies worked closely with senatorial staff to plan the event, which included meetings between six youth and three area legislators where youth were able to voice their concerns about the impact cuts to education would have in their community. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack

O'Connell spoke at the rally, as did many of the 15 participating youth. In a separate activity, the youth were invited to meet with city officials about building a youth investment center in Rancho Cordova. The meeting was successful and youth participants were invited to take part in the ongoing planning process. Perhaps one youth best summed up the strategic possibilities of these efforts when she stated, "We (the YAC) are like the city council for youth."

- Like many of the other coalitions, the South Sacramento Coalition for Future Leaders has become a home for a variety of specific initiatives and a unique place where youth in their area can meet, plan, and act together. They have collaborated on citywide policy issues with the ACT/ Meadowview Partnership, and two of their youth now occupy leadership posts with the Sacramento Unified School District. One serves on a district-wide youth council and the other was selected as the student representative to the school board. With support from a member of another REACH coalition, they put together a successful grant application for multi-year federal funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The funds will help it build partnerships with a broader range of community sectors and solidify its staffing, but also creates the challenge of scaling up their activities and refocusing their goals.
- At a recent Woodland Coalition for Youth meeting, City Council Member and Vice-Mayor Art Pimentel introduced the section of the city general plan focused on Recreational, Educational and Community Services. After explaining that the general plan guides city policymaking and investment, he pointed out that the plan update process, tentatively scheduled for next year, offers an important opportunity for Woodland youth to weigh in regarding their experience and needs. While a brief, adult-youth pair discussion had been scheduled on the agenda, several coalition members spoke up to underscore the importance of this work and urge that more time be allocated to supporting the Woodland Youth Council's review of the materials, as well as seeking other young people's input. As an immediate next step, the Coalition will pursue its tradition of forming a youth-adult action team to lead Coalition engagement in the general plan update process.
- In West Sacramento, REACH has enabled the Sactown Heroes group to expand its scope and activities, reaching more youth with leadership opportunities. Youth help plan and lead special events, many of which are designed to support family, neighborhood, and community connections. This patient work aims to build social capital, which studies suggest can play an important role in offsetting some of the disadvantages faced by youth in low-income neighborhoods (Elliot, et. al. 2006).

Looking ahead

Though substantial when looked at collectively, the money REACH makes available to particular communities is relatively small when one considers the array of possible youth development needs to be supported. While grantees may have good reasons to continue to spread funds thinly over multiple

objectives (or across multiple organizations as in El Dorado Hills), and while this approach has and will likely continue to yield some positive incremental outcomes, it is less likely to make the sort of significant community-scale change suggested by the REACH theory of change.

The planning process that preceded REACH encouraged the grantees to listen to their communities and devise strategies that met articulated needs. While well intended, this process inevitably airs multiple unmet community needs. The temptation to be responsive to a variety of community demands is great, but this flies in the face of the evidence that the most successful coalitions are those that are somewhat ruthless in making hard choices that match available resources to particular targets of opportunity. This, in turn, can make it hard to keep all potential coalition members happy. Tradeoffs abound.

One successful tactic is to identify a clear and strategic community weakness where concerted effort could lead to clearly demonstrable change over the short-to-medium term. Ideally the strategy would be one where youth engagement has a clear purpose, such as framing a problem from a youth rather than an adult perspective. Another tactic is to take advantage of a policy area that is ripe for reform, or a tipping point where a relatively small infusion of resources will be likely to make a larger difference in outcomes. Still another approach is asset based community development, where the premise is that there are underutilized resources within the community that can reduce its dependence on outside funding or bureaucracies.

While elements of these tactics have been included in REACH technical assistance or at site coordinator meeting, our interviews with coalition members have not produced many instances where this level of clarity about strategy and goals is part of the conversation. Instead, we tend to hear responses that range from the minimal "giving youth something positive to do" to the more ambitious "engage youth in framing and creating community change." These broad sentiments clearly provide common ground for attracting a wide range of community participation, but by themselves are not focused enough to engage task-specific actors who can implement a coherent set of activities over time leading to results that matter to the broader public.

Broader scale community change typically requires not just mobilizing individuals but tapping the resources of the institutions in the community. This in turn requires institutional champions who are in a position to provide resources and focused attention on coalition goals by a network of committed individuals. We see a lot of committed activity within REACH, but mostly at the level of specific, time-limited projects or single events. If REACH is just another grant that helps fund these types of short-term activities, it will have been both successful and beneficial, but will not necessarily be a catalyst for more significant institutional reforms or policy changes. To their credit, foundation staff and the technical assistance team have recognized this concern and begun to focus their assistance to coalitions accordingly.

V. Interim Outcomes

Although to date our evaluation has concentrated on providing a descriptive process analysis of REACH implementation, we would like to conclude this interim report with a few general observations about interim outcomes. Our process study suggests that REACH grantees can be looked at in two distinct ways: 1) as collaborative “table setters” that convene and activate partners around youth development goals and objectives; and 2) as service providers that are offering youth leadership programs and experiences. In both guises, grantees attempt to promote active youth engagement and to ground their work in youth development principles, but in terms of accountability the two elements presume different scales. The first element presumes accountability at the community scale (i.e. an impact on conditions for all youth, or on the level of focus, urgency, and coordination with which youth development outcomes are being advanced). The second element presumes accountability for program performance based on indicators from the youth directly engaged.

Caveats

Four caveats are in order in considering interim REACH outcomes. First, as in most community change work, REACH outcomes are partial, relative, and open to debate. Given the wide-ranging nature of what grantees are doing, we have not attempted to provide precise outcome measurements as happen in some evaluations. We can, however, speak to evidence-based trends and make comparisons concerning the relative degree of success in achieving various intended outcomes.

Second, our original design anticipated that the coalitions would be providing a significant array of outcome data based on their internal evaluation activities. We had hoped that this data might provide a more detailed way to compare the efficacy of particular REACH strategies. So far, coalitions have either not been focused on generating evaluation data or have provided data mostly related to outputs rather than outcomes. While their reports are very useful for getting a feel for the content and reach of their activities, they are less useful for outcome analysis.

Third, we note that complex community initiatives of this type typically require a minimum of five years or more to generate demonstrable results in terms of community-scale changes; discussions at a recent forum on place-based anti-poverty initiatives suggested at least a ten-year time frame (University of Chicago, Chapin Hall, December 11, 2008). Foundation staff-members recognize that creating significant community change takes time; at the same time they are interested in learning whether early REACH efforts are laying the groundwork for meaningful change.

Fourth, a good deal of the information below restates in a more concise and outcome-oriented fashion observations already made in the process analysis

sections of this report.

Examples of interim outcomes

Using the outline provided by the composite REACH logic model (see appendix B) created by our evaluation team, Table 10 provides examples of key REACH-related activities and outcomes at three levels of analysis: individual youth, organizational practices/community norms, and community systems, and the analysis below follows that outline. Further discussion of each of these levels follows below.

Table 10. Interim REACH-related Activities and Outcomes*

* These are self-reported data culled from the 2007-08 REACH annual reports prepared by the seven coalitions. The examples presented here are illustrative rather than exhaustive. Activities and outcomes reflect work in which REACH resources played some role, though not necessarily the only or the major role.

	Examples of Interim Activities and Outcomes		
Level of analysis	Individual	Organizational	Community systems/ Policy change
Workplan Objectives			
1. Engage youth in coalition and community	Free, fun, safe events for 100+ youth (e.g.skate/pool parties, bowling) (RC) 100+ youth regularly engaged by REACH	Formal youth advisory body to REACH grantee (ED, GT, RC, WS, WD) Paid youth organizers on staff (MW, SS)	Youth contact with elected officials (all) Increased local youth awareness of public policy, systems, policy change strategies (all)
2. Develop youth leaders/ leadership skills	Two, week-long camps offered 100+ youth leadership training (all) Many REACH youth connected to related local, regional, or state initiatives (all) Many REACH youth plan/lead local meetings, events, activities (all)	New mini-grant programs engage youth in philanthropy (ED, GT, RC, SS, WD) Youth LEAD groups at 4 schools (GT)	Community forum for 1000+ with Sacramento mayoral candidates raised youth development issues (MW, SS) Youth-led survey data used to promote Sacramento parcel tax for youth (MW) 15 youth held state capitol rally on school budget cuts (RC)
3. Develop youth programs Jobs	50 youth trained in soft employment skills (MW) 29 youth received pre-employment training/summer job search assistance (19 secured employment) (SS)	40+ business and elected officials learned about options for hiring local youth (MW)	Partnership with SETA, City of Sacramento increased youth enrollment in pre-employment training from 95 to 189 (MW)

	Examples of Interim Activities and Outcomes		
Level of analysis Workplan Objectives	Individual	Organizational	Community systems/Policy change
Service learning	School-based service learning engaged 4000+ youth in environmental stewardship (GT) REACH youth engaged in a variety of local service projects (EDH, GT, RC, WD)	170 teachers attended service learning professional development training (GT)	Conversations initiated to infuse youth development and service learning principles into a local youth master plan (GT)
Safety	Of peer mediation participants, 77% report increased school attendance and 86% maintained/increased test scores (SS) 45 of 50 youth enrolled in 1:1 intervention program successfully detached from gangs (SS)	New peer mediation and anger management classes: Hiram Johnson High School reports decreases of 501 suspensions and 395 disruptive incidents since last year; Will C. Wood Middle School reports similar decreases (SS)	
Other		New soccer program created for youth in Winters migrant worker housing (WD)	
4. Engage/inform adults in coalition/community	New grantee-sponsored parent-specific activities (ED, GT, RC, WD) Adults attend local REACH events (all)	Luther Burbank High School doubled home visits to 400; evaluation links visits to improved student performance (MW) Public forum for 150+ on underage drinking that linked organizations and informed parents (ED)	Local press coverage of coalitions (all)
5. Provide youth development training	Parents trained in youth development and parenting skills (ED, GT)	YDI training for 40+ organizational representatives (ED); 23 teacher workshops (GT)	Planning county-wide youth development training for Mental Health providers (ED)

Individual youth outcomes

REACH hoped to achieve the following short-term outcomes both for the youth directly engaged and for other youth in the local area:

Youth experience increased supports/opportunities (on an equitable basis)

- *for involvement and membership*
- *supportive relationships with adults and peers*
- *sense of safety*
- *sense of efficacy*
- *new learning/ skills/ responsibilities (civic, social, vocational)*

Programs/services achieve intended outcomes

- *increase job skills*
- *decrease bullying/violence*
- *increase civic engagement*
- *enrichment (arts, sports, etc.)*
- *academic achievement*

In considering impact on non-REACH youth, we know that many youth (from at least a couple hundred to many thousands, depending on how they are counted) have participated in REACH activities, such as attending a youth leadership conference, an arts festival, or a service learning activity, or been served by a program that has received some funding support as a result of REACH. In most cases this funding went to pre-existing programs in the community, but in others coalitions created new youth programs that serve both REACH engaged youth and other youth in the community. Examples include a school-based peer mediation program in South Sacramento, a summer jobs program in the city of Sacramento, and a summer youth activities program in Rancho Cordova. We have no way of knowing how meaningful these programs are to non-REACH youth, but the activities being provided certainly fit within one or more of the outcome categories above.

Drawing primarily on our interviews with 47 REACH engaged youth, we have some direct evidence on outcomes for youth engaged by the initiative. Overall,

- Youth report positive relationships with adults associated with their coalitions.
- Most youth feel the coalition is a safe space to express their opinions.
- Youth credit their participation with improving their skills in public speaking, meeting planning, problem-solving, and decision-making.
- A small number of youth report engaging in leadership opportunities on school boards, city councils, and in other community decision-making contexts.

Gaining new skills, relationships, experiences

Youth talked about a variety of positive experiences they have been exposed to as result of their participation in REACH. They enjoy meeting new people and spending time with friends. They appreciate providing service to the community and the opportunity to have a space to share their opinions. They are enthusiastic about improving their skills in public speaking, meeting planning, problem-solving, and decision-making, skills which research links to a greater likelihood of becoming politically and civically engaged as adults (Flanagan and Van Horn, 2001, p. 3).

"I like it most because it's giving young kids like us a chance to speak our minds, and things. Get out there, get our voice out, and with our opinions on what is going on, and everything."

"The best part is...I get to be a leader, basically, I don't have to ask for permission to do something, like I can use my own opinion, my own thoughts, I can work on a job by myself...without having any authority over me, like at school..."

"Yeah. Because like sometimes I can get up and like I'd be doing the ice breaker or something, usually I don't normally do something like that."

Youth were also asked to talk about what they did not like about REACH. They generally reported being satisfied with the activities and the opportunity to participate. Most said there was nothing that they would change, although we should add that we did not interview youth who had chosen to leave REACH.

"I don't think there's nothing I don't like...I do like everything pretty much."

"I don't have a least favorite part."

"There's really nothing I don't like about REACH."

One youth's story

Lupita has become an active and vocal representative of the coalition and her community. Participating in REACH has given her social capital and community connections that were not available to her parents as recent immigrants in the United States. Whereas their limited English skills prevented them from accessing schools and other resources, her new connections are creating new opportunities and opening new doors. Many of the skills that Lupita learns at the coalition are skills which her parents are unable to help her develop. Lupita's parents recognize the value of her new information and knowledge, which they recognize are essential to facilitating her entry into higher education. Consequently, her mother has also become an active member of the coalition despite her limited English proficiency. Lupita is now better able to navigate U.S. society and culture, while maintaining her identity as a Latino. She has also been

able to pass some of this knowledge on to her family.

Organizational Practices and Norms

REACH sought the following short-term outcomes related to the organizational practices and norms of youth-serving organizations:

Increase in attitudes, skills, and commitment related to YD among coalition members

- *begin to view youth as assets*
- *learn to engage youth meaningfully*
- *start to volunteer or mentor youth*

Lead organizations/key partners

- *trained in youth development*
- *youth voice encouraged*
- *youth-driven programs*

As documented in the reports of technical assistance providers, there has been a concerted and quite successful effort to provide substantial training to grantee staff. In many cases this effort has extended to include representatives of partner organizations in local coalitions and/or other organizations not directly involved in REACH.

Our adult interviews provide a good deal of evidence that this training and instruction has succeeded in creating improvement on the intended outcomes. In general, grantees have expressed genuine appreciation for the foundation's investment in technical assistance, and for the energy, commitment, and skill that providers bring to their work. Inculcating youth development principles and practices has been one of the primary goals of the technical assistance effort.

Our observation of grantees' activities reveal many instances in which youth and coordinators are clearly making use of ideas and materials shared by the technical assistance team. At the same time, many challenges remain, not the least of which is ensuring that new adult members of coalitions or new staff are brought up to speed on the ideas.

To date, it appears possible to build the intended organizational capacities and attitudes in multiple types of institutional settings. However, in an initiative that makes heavy demands for both youth engagement and community/institutional mobilization, having strong capacity in at least one of these areas at the outset may create more ability to build capacity in the other. And, as we have noted earlier, there may be some trade-off between the time devoted to youth development training and the time required to mount a community change effort.

Many coalitions continue to grapple with challenges in these outcome areas,

and the devil is often in the details. The work encouraging authentic youth voice is not easily captured in simple recipes—all youth are unique and each setting is different. Put somewhat differently, the work is more about practical judgment than it is about applying a proven technology or set of best practices. In this regard it is notable that grantees have expressed special enthusiasm for the mutual support generated amongst the coordinators themselves. We saw evidence of coordinators talking by phone, emailing, and getting together to share ideas, and heard the importance of sharing both challenges and solutions. There appears to be significant potential in supporting the development of networks that enable sharing of resources and strengthening of work.

Community systems

It is not reasonable to hold grantees accountable for systems or policy change in the first couple of years. However, looking across the seven sites, we can note signs of progress toward that goal, including:

- increased pressure on policymakers to take youth and youth development into account;
- increased knowledge of coalition development methods;
- efforts to engage youth directly in advocacy efforts; and
- outreach to educate the community about youth development and coalition activities.

The short-term outcome identified in the REACH logic model is to build viable community coalitions with the following characteristics:

- *focused on specific goals*
- *community visibility and legitimacy*
- *engaged youth*
- *mobilized/coordinated resources*
- *institutionalized/sustained*

Since we have addressed coalition development in detail elsewhere in this report (see chapter on Working Together), we will limit ourselves here to a concise synopsis of relative strengths and limitations to date.

First, as one might expect, grantees that are connected with pre-existing coalitions fare better on most of these outcomes than the others, with the exception of engaging youth.

Second, we think all the grantees can do a better job of focusing their efforts strategically and of mobilizing the resources within the community to realize their goals. To date they have had minimal success in attracting the attention and resources of key institutional stakeholders or potential champions, despite the promise of youth development as a popular cause. We see somewhat more progress on this front in cases where the coalitions have defined a community problem (e.g. drug and alcohol abuse, drop out rates) in a broad enough way to elicit various problem-solving activities by partners, but not so broadly that it is

impossible to track progress at the community scale. One lesson may be that “youth development” by itself is too loose and vague a term to use as a centerpiece for community mobilization. Indeed, national efforts such as Ready By 21 and the Pathways Mapping Initiative have moved in the direction of framing positive outcomes such as “ready for college, work and life” and identifying important indicators of positive youth trajectories.

Third, all of the coalitions have achieved a substantial degree of local visibility. Their legitimacy as the “place to go” for youth issues and concerns, or as centers of a focused strategic effort, is an ongoing work in progress. With effective assistance from foundation staff they have produced professional looking outreach and marketing materials and their activities have resulted in numerous mentions in local newspapers, radio shows, and other media. The positive cast of REACH stories is in marked contrast to the tendency for youth-related media stories to focus on youth crime or on problems that cast youth in a negative light.

Finally, regarding sustainability, one must be clear about exactly what might be sustained after the grant ends. It could be ideas about good youth development, it could be specific projects, it could be the coalition itself, or some morphed form of the coalition. At this time it remains an open question whether REACH will create an institutional home for youth development work that is not dependent on the moment to moment intentions of particular individuals or on particular grants. Achieving this outcome seems to us to depend on defining—in a fashion that is both clear and that attracts people and their resources—the answers to the questions of “what should be done,” “why do we need youth to do it,” and “who can bring resources to the table.” REACH site coordinators and other participants are already exhibiting tremendous levels of commitment to youth development goals. The challenge is to create broader community containers that channel their sense of urgency into tangible strategies aimed at particular outcomes.

Questions for Deliberation as REACH Moves Forward

Based on our cross-site analysis and a review of research on youth engagement and community change, we believe the questions below are especially pivotal and warrant thoughtful reflection and deliberation as REACH moves forward. In posing many of these questions, we are drawing on existing insights from grantees, technical assistance providers, and foundation staff and merely hope to stress the importance of deepening discussions that are already underway. Other questions may be new to at least some stakeholders.

We hope to gather evidence that provides greater clarity regarding some of these questions as our evaluation continues. On the other hand, some questions require choices and value judgments that will benefit most from broad and deliberate conversation among all REACH stakeholders. We have organized the questions into two groups: 1) those for which the foundation is the key decision maker, and 2) those for which grantees and their community partners are the key decision makers.

Foundation

1. Supplementing or modifying the underlying conceptual framework

While the Gambone, Klein, and Connell (2002) theory of change offers a framework for increasing developmental supports for youth at a community scale, it is less explicit or clear about why and how youth might be engaged in this process. Lacking an explicit conceptual rationale that explains *why* it is important to engage youth in a community change strategy for youth development, we note a tendency for grantees to conceptualize youth engagement and community change as separate tasks. Some coalitions tilt their energies toward youth engagement, others toward community change, but all struggle to accomplish the difficult task of putting the two together.

- What has been learned about the strengths and weaknesses of the Gambone model? What theory/concepts about why and how to engage youth in community change can be used to supplement or modify the Gambone framework?
- Can technical assistance focus more on helping grantees deal with the strategic considerations around particular substantive strategies for community change, including but not limited to the question about the role of youth in the effort?¹⁷
- Can there be greater attention to presenting models and lessons from similar initiatives around the country, such as happened at the past two summer youth development conferences? Youth and adults may benefit from seeing how others have engaged youth to create substantive changes in their communities.

2. Adjusting expectations or increasing grantee resources

The foundation has stated clearly that REACH is not just about creating another youth program. Sierra Health Foundation expects youth engagement to be meaningfully linked to coalition development and community change strategies. A key finding thus far is that authentic youth-adult collaboration—reflecting a belief that all age groups hold critical capacities and that it is important to take the time to build relationships and practices that enable the initiative to build upon those capacities—is a new orientation for most participating adults and youth. It takes more time and energy than most anticipate, especially when reaching out to more vulnerable youth populations.

- Within the limited resources REACH provides, is it realistic to expect grantees to organize youth groups and activities (as many have been doing) *and* to mobilize a community coalition (as many are struggling to do)?
- If not, what new resources and/or alternative strategies might be necessary and how will the foundation ensure that the combined focus on youth

¹⁷ A recent evaluation of the California Works for Better Health initiative of the California Wellness Foundation makes the point that grantees often want and need more help on substantive change strategies than they get from most process-oriented technical assistance providers (Pastor et.al., 2008).

- engagement in community change is given priority by grantees?
- How can the foundation work with grantees to use the youth group structures and activities they have put in place thus far as a launching pad for a more intentional effort to promote community change?

3. Coordination and balance in cross-site activities and technical assistance provision

Overall, grantees appreciate the provision of technical assistance and the various cross-site and regional-scale REACH activities as positive aspects of REACH. If they have a complaint, it is that the sheer volume of these activities and the time and resources required to participate in them can have the unintended effect of taking resources away from their community-level work. Finding the proper balance is an ongoing tension in the project. Also, both technical assistance providers and grantees express the need for greater coordination of diverse technical assistance efforts, tools, and approaches.

- What can the foundation do to work out issues grantees have with the volume/timing of cross-site activities?
- What can the foundation do to ensure better and more strategic coordination of technical assistance efforts?

4. Institutional home

While it has been convenient for all involved in REACH to describe the local grantees as “coalitions,” grantees have in fact adopted a variety of organizational structures and processes. These are often interlaced with or nested within structures from pre-existing grants, partnerships or collaboratives. In comparing grantees in terms of their structures and lead agencies, the following questions have surfaced:

- How important is it to locate community change work in independent nonprofits, key public agencies, or the office of an elected official, rather than in lead agencies whose primary mission is to provide specific programs or services?
- If this is important, how can the foundation support those grantees which would benefit from creating a new institutional home that is separate from the lead fiscal agency and whose mission is explicitly about creating community-scale coordination and change related to youth development?
- How important is it for every community to have formal coalitions to advance the youth development agenda? Might it be possible to get to the same outcomes via less formal partnerships or looser networks, perhaps linked through some regional coordination mechanisms?

5. Equity considerations

Previous research finds that a greater intensity of new outside resources is needed to achieve positive outcomes in less advantaged communities (Schorr, 1988). REACH grantee communities reflect the significant wealth disparities, racial/ethnic diversity, and varied community types that characterize the Sacramento region. Intra-regional inequity is stark, dramatically affecting the

nature of youth needs, the level of formal resources available through families and communities for youth (e.g. programs, safe open space, etc.), and the availability of certain types of resources to REACH (e.g. parent time, transportation support).

- Should the greater need and relative lack of existing resources in less advantaged communities warrant higher levels of foundation support, and vice versa?
- What steps might help ensure that, both within local groups and at regional gatherings, all participants feel safe, supported, and respected, including those whose interests are often under-represented such as immigrant and migrant youth, foster and homeless youth, LGBT youth, youth with special needs, youth dealing with the juvenile justice system, youth who do poorly in school, or young people who are struggling with mental health/substance abuse issues?

Grantees and community partners

6. Strategic focus for community change

Youth development is an appealing but somewhat vague term. Grantees are finding that coalition development success is greater where a specific goal/outcome has been articulated, but getting collective agreements on which goals to prioritize is not always easy. Building on what has already occurred:

- Can grantees engage in substantive, sustained youth-adult discussion about young people's experiences of their local environment, as a way of honoring youth voice in setting goals?
- Given their access to both formal resources and informal community assets, can grantees articulate a specific coalition goal that clearly indicates which youth, adults, and institutions will need to be mobilized in order to achieve it?
- Can grantees identify 3-5 key indicators by which they can track progress toward meeting the goal?
- If one or more of these steps has already been accomplished, is it time to reassess or to make adjustments to become even more strategic in the coming months?

7. Rationale linking the why and how of youth engagement

Consistent with what the literature suggests (National Research Council, 2002), the age differences among participating youth complicate the pursuit of meaningful adult-youth partnerships. Younger youth have shorter attention spans, fewer conscious connections with their communities, and more limited understanding of communities, institutions and systems. A number of coalitions are gravitating toward working with somewhat older youth, where these concerns are less salient and youth have more of the skills and vision to take on complex community change activities. REACH grantees are expected to be exemplary models of youth-adult partnerships, but these can take many forms depending on the focus of the community change effort or the age and

maturity of participating youth.

- Can grantees work with youth to develop and communicate a straightforward rationale that states why and how youth of different ages are being engaged?
- Can grantees link this rationale to the use of specific approaches for youth community engagement (e.g. community service, youth art and media production, service learning, youth research, youth philanthropy, civic engagement, youth in governance, and/or youth organizing)?
- Can grantees deliberately recruit adults with the capacity and commitment to engage youth in these ways, so that the responsibility for adult-youth mentoring and relationship building is shared more broadly rather than resting primarily on site coordinators?

8. Specific youth engagement approaches and tools

A few questions about specific youth engagement approaches and tools might benefit particularly from youth perspectives.

- Many grantees rely on a small number of youth for many tasks, especially in public settings where the stakes may be high. Does this create excessive burdens on these young people? Does it deny other youth opportunities? What is the proper balance between “going deep” with a handful of youth vs. providing opportunities to more youth?
- We observe adults preparing youth with scripts for public presentations. When is being scripted an aid to youth confidence building, and when is it just a way of substituting adult for youth voice?
- Under what conditions are youth stipends an effective element of youth engagement strategies?

9. Focus on the most vulnerable populations

REACH was launched with an explicit emphasis on increasing developmental supports for all youth, including those that are especially vulnerable.

- Have grantees adequately identified the community's most vulnerable youth populations?
- Have grantees engaged representatives of these populations in ongoing coalition planning?
- Have grantees engaged adults who have a strong capacity to help create a safe environment for typically under-represented youth populations?
- Have grantees adopted strategies that reflect the insights, needs, and resources of these populations?

Final thoughts

REACH is proving to be a fruitful opportunity to learn how foundations can work with community partners to promote positive youth development. We look forward to continuing our partnership with REACH stakeholders to document and assess REACH strategies, outcomes, and lessons learned. Our next formal report on REACH is planned for November of 2010.

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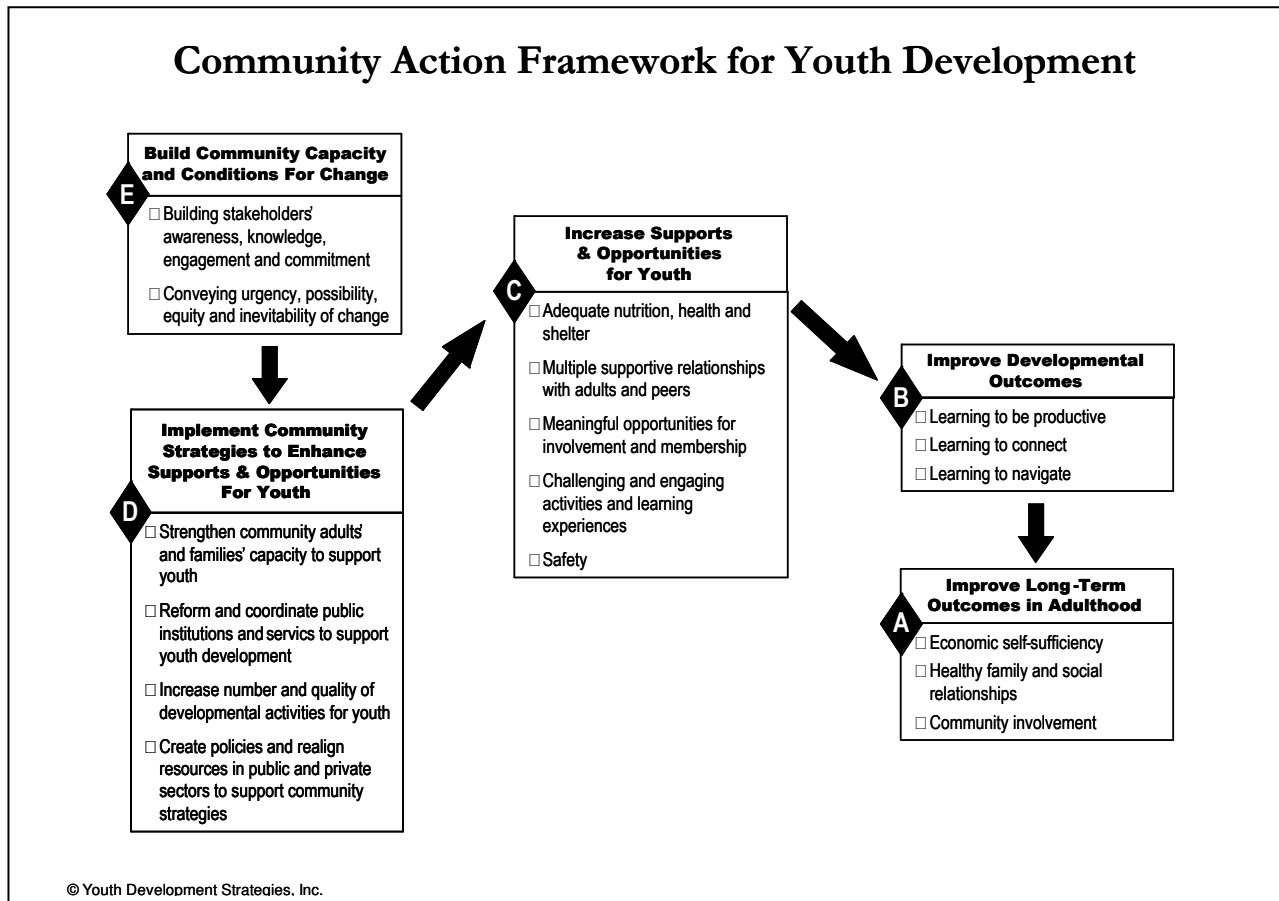
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Appendices

Appendix A. Community Action Framework for Youth Development



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Appendix B. REACH Coalition Strategy Logic Model

Appendix B. REACH Coalition Strategy Logic Model					
Inputs	Coalition Activities	Outputs	Outcomes		
			Time	Short-term	Long-term
			Level		
Foundation Funding Training/TA Companion strategies GABY Grizzly PI grants Media Staff focus and attention	1. Engage youth in coalition & community	# and profile of youth participating; # and nature of activities	Individual Youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> those directly engaged other youth in local area 	<i>Youth experience increased supports/opportunities (on an equitable basis)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> for involvement and membership supportive relationships with adults and peers sense of safety sense of efficacy new learning/ skills/responsibilities (civic, social, vocational) <i>Programs/services achieve intended outcomes</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase job skills decrease bullying/violence increase civic engagement enrichment (arts, sports, etc.) academic achievement 	<i>Developmentally sound youth who...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are productive/responsible connected to supports able to engage in diverse communities able to navigate systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to and from middle school graduate high school attend college/get job <i>...and become successful adults</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> economically self-sufficient healthy family and social relationships community involvement
	2. Develop youth leaders/ leadership skills	# and profile of youth participating; # and nature of leadership development opportunities			
	3. Develop youth programs— jobs, service learning, etc.	# and profile of youth participating; # and type of new programs			
Coalition Staff focus and attention Members (adults & youth) focus and attention	4. Engage/ inform adults in coalition & community	# and profile of adults reached; # and type of activities to raise awareness	Organizational practices and community norms	<i>Increase in attitudes, skills, and commitment related to YD among coalition members</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> begin to view youth as assets learn to engage youth meaningfully start to volunteer or mentor youth <i>Lead organizations/key partners</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> trained in youth development youth voice encouraged youth-driven programs 	<i>Increase in attitudes, skills, and commitment related to YD on a community scale</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> begin to view youth as assets learn to engage youth meaningfully start to volunteer or mentor youth <i>Among community youth providers</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> YD/YE is norm stronger youth organizations and youth development workforce policies/practices ensure equal access
	5. Provide youth development training	# of trainings; # and profile of participants; # of orgs reached			
Community Resources Economic Social Physical Institutional Networks	6. Build/ develop coalition	#, profile, and stability of adult/ youth engaged	Community systems	<i>Viable coalitions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> focused on specific goals community visibility and legitimacy engage youth mobilize/coordinate resources institutionalized/sustained 	<i>Systems change</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> policies and public spaces promote YD adequate quantity/quality youth programs strong youth voice in planning more/better coordinated youth resources local YD data informs planning
	7. Create policy and institutional change	# and type of institutional or policy changes # and profile of youth in decision-making roles			

Appendix C. REACH Companion Strategies

Inherent in the REACH community action strategy is the belief that a key way to promote regional change is one community at a time. The assumption is that foundation money can spark and complement the natural tendency of communities to invest in their own youth and in local institutions. At the same time, there is a sense that local grantees can benefit from regional connections and support. The foundation has sponsored a variety of activities with the goal of helping the community action grantees and others in the region to advance youth development goals and build stronger regional networks, including:

- hosting the first and second annual REACH youth development conference, bringing together youth and adult representatives of REACH coalitions along with many other youth serving agencies and interested parties in the region (350 attended in July 2007 and over 500 in July 2008);
- inviting each grantee to bring 10-14 youth to Grizzly Creek Camp for a week of activities and training for the past two summers;
- convening regular meetings of the site coordinators and REACH technical assistance providers, and a separate convening with just the technical assistance providers;
- maintaining listservs for technical assistance providers and site coordinators;
- providing money for REACH companion strategies including Program Improvement Grants and GABY/HOPE grants;
- initiating discussions with representatives from organizations with the power to influence regional youth development policies and awareness;
- partnering with UC Davis researchers to build a database on regional youth outcomes.

REACH is much more than just the sum of what is happening at the local community level. From the standpoint of the site coordinators, the various cross-site and regional-scale activities have built new network connections, provided additional money to support specific youth engagement activities in and beyond their communities, and created rich opportunities for peer learning and problem-solving. Local youth have benefited from joint training experiences, exposure to youth from different communities, and from venues where they can share their own projects and ideas with other youth and adults. The foundation sees a growing constituency in the region to advocate for and support positive youth development.

Overall, the cross-site and regional-scale activities are viewed as positive aspects of the project by grantees. If they have a complaint, it is that the sheer volume of these activities and the time required to participate in them can have the unintended effect of taking time away from their community-level work. Finding the proper balance is an ongoing tension in the project. Attempts to remedy this tension by labeling some activities as optional and others as required do not by themselves appear to have succeeded. It may be more helpful to consider carefully the number and duration of site coordinator meetings, the spacing/ scheduling of events that require coordinators to drive youth to the foundation or other locations outside of their communities, and the amount of time provided for local coalitions to work together at certain cross-site

events like Grizzly Creek camp.

During the next phase of our evaluation we will continue to examine the extent to which there are emergent links between local and regional scale foundation investments and the ways/extent to which they reinforce each other. The following sections describe and analyze some of the important elements of the overall REACH companion strategy effort.

Youth Development Conferences

In July 2007 and again in July 2008 Sierra Health Foundation sponsored regional youth development conferences in Sacramento. While REACH community action grantees were a core audience, the conferences were widely publicized and attracted a wide range of attendees with interests in youth development. Attendance grew from about 350 in the first year to over 500 the second year.

Nationally known keynote speakers such as Karen Pittman and Davis Mohammed shared basic principles and ideas about youth development and representatives of innovative youth development initiatives elsewhere in the country presented their approaches.

Breakout sessions addressed a wide range of topics, including college readiness, digital storytelling, the Ready by 21 initiative, summer jobs, program quality, and youth-adult partnerships. REACH grantees played a larger role in planning the second conference, with youth leading some breakout sessions and showcasing their musical and artistic talent. One youth spoke to the entire conference about his past experiences with gangs and his current role as a youth organizer for the Meadowview Partnership, a REACH grantee.

The conference provides a unique space for bringing together the region's youth development constituents for continuing education, peer support, and networking.

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance has been a central feature of the REACH Initiative's Community Action Strategy. The following section describes and assesses the technical assistance provided based on interviews with site coordinators, foundation staff, and the technical assistance providers themselves, as well as our evaluation team observations.

Technical assistance provision has been welcomed by grantees and produced clear learning within the initiative. On the other hand, there is ongoing difficulty in coordinating different facets of technical assistance across multiple provider organizations, sequencing activities, and making sure they do not work at cross purposes or in ways that are too overwhelming for adult or youth participants.

Technical Assistance Offerings

During the first eighteen months of the initiative, the foundation invested approximately \$270,000 in core technical assistance that generated a range of supports, including coaching, training, learning communities, coalition coordinator convenings,

tools/materials, a website and other online tools, secondary data on each coalition community, and information on relevant grants, regional events, regional conferences, and publications. The primary emphases of this technical assistance included youth development and youth engagement, coalition development, and evaluation and use of data. Additional topical areas included policy advocacy, marketing/media, youth media, and youth and community change.

Providers

The REACH Initiative has contracted with three primary technical assistance providers, which work collaboratively to identify and address coalition needs: UC Davis Center for Community School Partnerships, Youth Development Network (formerly Youth Services Provider Network), and Center for Collaborative Planning. Jim Keddy, Executive Director of PICO and Sacramento ACT, offered training and coaching focused specifically on policy advocacy. In addition, the foundation itself provided direct assistance to community action grantees via media training, reporting mechanisms that also serve as marketing materials, and adherence to a conceptual framework that was introduced during the planning phase of the initiative.

Activities/Dosage

Technical assistance was provided to REACH grantees in multiple forms, including via email and the website, local meetings with coordinators and coalitions, phone consultations, and convenings. Table 10 shows examples of the convening schedule through September 2008.

Table 11. Examples of Technical Assistance Convenings, May 2007-Sept. 2008

Date	Training	Focus
5/9/07	Coordinator office hours	Identifying TA needs, coalition assets
9/18/07	Coordinator meeting	Learning Communities, Policy workshop
10/22/07	Coordinator conference call	Addressing transportation issues
10/16/07	Youth/Adult workshop	camp planning follow-up,, talking about diversity
10/22/07	Learning community team	Implementation, evaluation of LCs,
11/9/07	Learning community team	LC planning
11/14/07	Coordinator meeting	support/resources needed for parent engagement, youth engagement, policy work
12/12/08	Learning community team	LC planning
2/13/08	Coordinator meeting	
3/18/08	Youth/Adult workshop	Forum/event planning
3/25	Learning community team	Parent engagement
5/1/08	Learning community team	Parent engagement
5/14	Coordinator meeting	
5/20	Youth/Adult workshop	Creating authentic youth voice
Spring/Summer2008	Camp planning meetings	
Summer/Fall 2008	Youth media project/trainings	Youth-led video projects
7/9/08	REACH Regional Conference	Youth Engagement/Youth Development
7/28-8/1	Grizzly Camp	Team Building
Summer 2008	Coordinator/Coalition training	Non-profits and policy advocacy
Summer/Fall 2008	Youth media projects	Youth-led videos

Technical assistance providers asked coalitions to make use of multiple tools that were generated on their behalf, such as a coalition assessment tool, a youth action planning template and an internal evaluation planning template. Information about additional tools—for example, the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation's Youth Program Quality Assessment—was also made available via email.

Assistance has shifted from more formal and frequent cross-initiative trainings during the planning phase to a more locally tailored strategy. While technical assistance providers often offer some sort of activity in response to coordinator interests at the quarterly coordinator meetings, increasingly they have focused on responding to local coordinator requests for support around particular challenges. In this context, some coalitions appear to be seeking regular support, while others rarely initiate contact with providers. There is some evidence of REACH coalitions turning to other technical assistance providers for support, including cases where grantees were already engaged in other networks via their fiscal sponsors (e.g. a Galt coordinator engages regularly with service learning networks, El Dorado participates in SAHMSA programs, and Sacramento ACT is affiliated with statewide faith-based organizing initiatives).

In comparison with the planning phase, coalition coordinators have increasingly turned to each other for support, ideas, and resources during this first phase of implementation.

Coordinator meetings have been designed to facilitate the sharing of ideas and a "learning community" was initiated to focus on parent engagement.

One helpful tool supporting networking is the email listserv. The listserv served as a means for the foundation to communicate with all the site coordinators and also has provided a venue for the coordinators to communicate with one another. The listserv is used frequently and appears to be an important support to coalitions. Much of the correspondence pertains to professional opportunities (including funding opportunities), staff development opportunities, and youth development literature. There also has been less frequent use of the listserv to promote individual coalition events or share accomplishments.

Contributions, Challenges, and Next Steps

In general, grantees have expressed genuine appreciation for the foundation's investment in technical assistance, and for the energy, commitment, and skill that providers bring to their work. Our observations of grantees' activities reveal many instances in which youth and coordinators are clearly making use of ideas and materials shared by the team. The following section highlights emergent themes and lessons based on interviews with providers, coalition youth and adults, and foundation staff, as well as evaluation team observations. This analysis starts with observations that might be of primary interest to the foundation, and followed by observations for providers and then grantees.

Foundation:

Assistance Makes a Difference

To date, it appears possible to build capacity for this type of work in multiple types of institutional settings. However, in an initiative that makes heavy demands for both youth engagement and community/institutional mobilization, having strong capacity in at least one of these areas at the outset may create more ability to build capacity in the other.

Assistance a Source of Continuity

During and after staff transitions (caused by site coordinator turnover in five of the seven grantees), the work of the technical assistance team has been particularly important. Along with staff from the foundation, representatives of the technical assistance team have been able to meet with new site coordinators, orienting them to REACH goals and procedures and reminding them of existing workplans and commitments. New coordinators are also able to call on the remaining site coordinators for help and assistance. These efforts, along with the existence of the formal REACH workplans negotiated with the help of the technical assistance team, has helped new coordinators stay on track despite the staff turnover.

Utilizing Assistance Takes Time and Resources

Several interviewees suggested that the time required to participate in the variety of technical assistance activities was not fully disclosed by the foundation. While these activities are officially voluntary, many coordinators note receiving mixed-messages.

Some highlighted the sense that time spent on technical assistance and reporting was time not spent “on the ground” with youth and community members. One interviewee’s comments framed activities such as camp planning and attendance as a sort of “unfunded mandate.” This has become a core element of the initiative, but costs such as staff time required for planning meetings and attendance, youth transportation, etc. had not been originally budgeted in the proposal. Efforts to offer “youth-friendly” training are appreciated, although coordinators note that transporting youth to trainings at the foundation continues to present a challenge for some coalitions, and not all youth find the cross-site gatherings equally valuable.

The Power of Mutual Assistance

Coordinators expressed enthusiasm for the mutual support generated amongst the coordinators themselves. We saw evidence of coordinators talking by phone, emailing, and getting together to share ideas, and heard the importance of sharing both solutions and the fact that they face difficult challenges. There appears to be significant potential in supporting the development of networks that enable the sharing of resources and strengthening of work. An emergent question, in light of this expressed enthusiasm, is whether/how such opportunities affect local practices.

Coordinating Technical Assistance

Increased coordination of technical assistance would be welcome by providers and grantees. Although the foundation convened core providers regularly, during this first fifteen months there was no clearly defined mechanism for overall coordination, including tracking of coalition needs and whether they were addressed, ensuring that providers were deployed in ways that made best use of their skills, resources, and availability, and facilitating a coherent approach to engaging coalitions. More explicit coordination strategies might also lay the groundwork for partnerships that extend beyond REACH into region.

Potential Additional Needs

Technical assistance gaps in light of initiative goals have continued to be: (1) community change processes and strategies for engaging youth in them, particularly in ways that build upon their knowledge and expertise about the experience of growing up in their community; and (2) youth-relevant policy, policy advocacy, and use of data. If the initiative is to pursue efforts to engage under-represented youth populations (e.g. immigrant youth, undocumented youth, foster youth, homeless youth, LGBT youth), additional training around key capacities and commitments, as well as potential local resources, would also be useful.

Some grantees are operating in contexts where fiscal sponsors’ expectations of their relationship with the coalitions and with REACH funds differ from foundation expectations. In future initiatives, more explicit mechanisms and safeguards should be in place during the grantmaking process; at this stage, foundation staff might explore how to best support coalitions to resolve such institutional challenges.

Structuring Technical Assistance: The Challenge of Trying to Be All Things

The current strategy has centered on relying upon a team of core providers to both identify assistance needs and respond to as many of them as possible. We have been

impressed with the capacity of providers, in collaboration with coalitions, to identify assistance needs and respond to a broad spectrum of them. However, we have also noted a pressure inherent in being the “core” providers to address coalition needs even when they might lie outside those areas in which providers have a depth of expertise and experience. In light of the complex demands of this initiative and the variation in coalition capacities and assistance needs, it may be that the core team might play a more active role in working with coalitions to identify needs for training, coaching, materials, etc., and brokering access to other resources when the demands fall outside team core competencies.

Providers:

Past Topics and Next Steps

Adult and youth interviewees expressed appreciation for the substantive topics taken up as well as the tremendous commitment of providers to making information accessible and relevant. Almost all coordinators and youth were able to point to specific instances in which technical assistance made a difference in their ability to do their jobs. They also noted ongoing challenges in the areas of coalition building, youth participation, and assessing the effects of their work. Coordinators expressed an interest in more support in the areas of grant-writing, parent engagement, understanding and affecting the policy environment, and youth-engaged community change strategies.

All coalition coordinators note that the introduction to youth development and youth engagement concepts was important to them early on. As providers consider next steps, topics centered on supporting youth engagement in community change are a possible priority. While recognizing that diversity has become a more explicit focus of assistance during the implementation phase, specific strategies/models for engaging under-represented youth populations (e.g. English learners, foster youth, homeless youth, youth of specific ethnic backgrounds) has received much more limited attention. Of particular note is the ongoing challenge of creating environments both within coalitions and at REACH convenings that are safe enough to take up difficult, yet pressing, topics in meaningful ways: for example, issues faced by undocumented youth in the Latino community.

On a somewhat parallel note, while coalition-building activities have in many cases entailed outreach to the major youth-serving institutions, asset-based community development training might support and encourage outreach to organizations, networks, and individuals that can bring important and under-represented perspectives and resources.

Balancing Process and Content

To date we note some tendency for providers to emphasize process (e.g. creating coalitions, evaluating programs, engaging youth) over content (e.g. policy emphases that have proven effective, key funding mechanisms for youth services, concerns/questions raised by local data on youth well-being, examples of successful youth-driven community change efforts, approaches to creating ladders of opportunity for youth in coalitions) that might inform strategy development. Other evaluations have found that grantees often value assistance with substantive strategies for change (Pastor, 2008).

Follow-through on Particular Tools

Coordinators appreciate provision of particular tools (e.g. surveys, assessments, local data), yet sometimes wish there were fewer tools and more help in making sure that tools are used effectively or in a way that is more coordinated with other tools. For example, the link between youth action planning, local youth outcomes and inputs data, coalition assessment, and evaluation plans has not been as clear as it might be, as these activities tended to work on parallel tracks rather than building on one another. In this way coordinators echo the desire of providers themselves for a more coordinated strategy.

There appears to be a need and desire to continue increasing the local delivery of assistance, which addresses the dependence on coordinators to “bring back” lessons learned as well as expenses associated with attending technical assistance convenings during the day and outside the community (for example, one school teacher noted needing access to funding for a substitute in order to attend a training, but funds were not available). This would have the potential to build more local capacity and shared understanding, not just capacity of site coordinators—which is particularly important in the context of high coordinator turnover.

Coalitions:

Coalitions that make active use of provider resources by articulating their needs—or at least a general need for support—appear to be deriving the most benefit from foundation investment in technical assistance. While initiating a request for support can present a challenge for multiple reasons, including (1) concern about “putting on a good face,” (2) being overwhelmed by other demands of the work, and (3) not knowing exactly what would be helpful, the foundation and providers appear to be genuinely committed to being responsive to locally defined needs.

REACH Program Improvement Grants

As part of the overall REACH Initiative, the Sierra Health Foundation launched Program Improvement Grants in 2006. Grants of up to \$10,000 are awarded in the Capitol Region to increase the reach and impact of existing youth programs and promote the development of new programs. Grantees must reflect REACH youth development principles, focus primarily on youth ages 10 to 15, and engage this youth population in program and organizational planning and decision-making (<http://www.reachyouthprogram.org/node%252F67>).

REACH Coalitions were notified about the Program Improvement Grants via site coordinator meetings, announcements at foundation-sponsored trainings and events, and email. Since initiating the REACH Community Action program, Program Improvement Grant proposals have been solicited five times.

Findings

Since Winter 2007, the foundation has received 145 applications for funding; 39 were submitted by organizations working in REACH Coalition communities. Of the 46 Program Improvement grants offered during this period, 20 were made to organizations in

coalition footprint areas.

Table 12. Number of Program Improvement Grants Made to Coalition Areas (2007-2008)

	EDH	GALT	MDV	RC	SSAC	WSAC	WOOD	% All PI grants
W2007	xx		x					37.5
S2007				xx	x	x		66.7
F2007	xx			x	x	x	x	54.5
W2008	x				x		x	30.0
S2008	xx						xx	36.4

While there has been a steady increase in the overall number of Program Improvement Grant applicants, the number of applications submitted by and made to organizations in coalition areas has remained fairly stable over time.

One coalition community appears to be increasing its application rate over time, another has been the source of just one application, and others have submitted from 4 to 7 applications over the two years.

Program Improvement Grants have played a critical role in supporting important coalition-linked activities in some settings, such as in the case of the Woodland Youth Council Mural project. In other cases, grant-funded activities have been less integrally linked to the coalitions. Table 13 lists the projects that have been supported in coalition areas.

Table 13. Nature of Program Improvement Grants Made to Coalition Areas, 2007-2008

Grant Cycle	Area	Coalition Member Organization	Project
Spring 2008	EDH	Mercy Housing (White Rock Village)	Youth leadership program
	EDH	Shenandoah High School	Learning through internships
	WOOD	Woodland High School Peer Mediators	Enhance, expand mediator program
	WOOD	Yolo County Health Department	Leadership training in outlying areas
Winter 2008	EDH	Family Connections El Dorado	Middle school anti-bullying program
	SSAC	SCUSD / Healthy Start	Teen outreach and assessment
	WOOD	Yolo County Housing Authority	Migrant youth soccer league
Fall 2007	EDH	El Dorado Hills Community Vision	Diversity, anti-teasing program
	EDH	El Dorado Women's Center	Anti-harassment program
	RC	Camp Fire USA	Develop youth advisory council
	SSAC	Community Pride Project	Mentoring program evaluation
	WSAC	CommuniCare Health Centers	Neighborhood beautification, safety
	WOOD	UC Davis	Woodland Youth Council mural project
Spring 2007	RC	Camp Fire USA	Develop youth advisory council
	RC	Mills Middle School	Develop intramural sports league
	SSAC	Hmong Women's Heritage Association	Youth-led surveys on social issues
	WSAC	Campus Life Connection (Collings Center)	Internet-based programming evaluation
Winter 2007	EDH	Family Connections El Dorado	Middle school - HS transition program
	EDH	UC Cooperative Ext./ED Youth Commission	Youth mentor-communication program
	MDV	NextGen Youth Ministry	Safe places for issues discussion

Next steps

Program Improvement Grants have offered an important source of revenue for some REACH coalition communities. In settings where funded grant activities were closely coupled with REACH coalitions, they offered immediate opportunities for coalition adult and youth members to strengthen their relationships by engaging in projects that made a difference in their communities.

However, this evidence also raises questions about why REACH coalitions do not appear to be consistently increasing the number and quality of local applications for Program Improvement Grants. There is limited evidence that coalitions are making

regular use of the program as part of a strategic approach to building local youth-serving program capacity.

Finally, these data raise questions for the foundation to consider about the geographic distribution of grantmaking. Of the 20 grants made to coalition settings, more than one-third (7) were directed to El Dorado Hills, which is arguably home to the smallest population of disadvantaged youth.

GABY/HOPE Grants

For the past six years the Sacramento Regional Community Foundation has managed a youth philanthropy program called GABY (Grants Advisory Board for Youth), with funding support from the Sierra Health Foundation. A board of youth ages 12-19 review grant applications for youth-led projects in the community, make decisions on which will be funded, and then conduct site visits to see the projects in action. The grants are now known as Youth HOPE grants (Helping Other People Excel) and the maximum award is \$2,500.

REACH sites were made aware of the GABY grant opportunities through multiple channels, including emails, site coordinator meetings, and workshops at the annual summer youth development conference. The hope was that grantees would promote the GABY opportunities in their communities, sparking more applications and funded projects. In particular, it was hoped that REACH might promote greater awareness of GABY in less advantaged communities.

Findings

Table 14 shows the change in the number of GABY grants awarded in coalition footprint areas or to coalition partners between 2006-07 and 2007-08.

Table 14. Number of GABY grants awarded in coalition areas (2007-08)

	EDH	GALT	MDV	RC	SSAC	WSAC	WOOD	Total/% of all GABY grants
Grants received 2006-07	3	0	2	0	2	0	0	7 24%
Grants received 2007-08	0	0	6	0	3	0	2	11 46%

During the 2007-08 grant cycle, 24 GABY grants were awarded. Almost half of these (11) were from REACH grantees or partners. This included two from Woodland, six from Meadowview, and three from South Sacramento. [Note: Two listed here as Meadowview area grantees are also partners with South Sacramento].

By contrast, during the 2006-07 cycle only 7 of 29 grantees (about a quarter) came from the REACH footprint areas or from organizations that would become REACH grantees or

partners. Of these 7 grants in 2006-07, three came from El Dorado Hills, which became ineligible to apply for the grants because El Dorado county has created its own GABY-like youth philanthropy process.

The Meadowview Partnership site made increasing GABY grant applications a key objective. They held a well-attended Saturday workshop in September 2007, in advance of the grant application deadline. The workshop resulted in a number of new applications and increased in the number of grants in the area. In addition, the workshop provided a good occasion to gather community members and organizations with youth development interests, to engage in discussion about what it means to create a “youth-led” project, and to build connections that the partnership can take advantage of in pursuing other objectives. Both the upswing in grants coming into the community and the beneficial side effects of the workshop show the potential synergies that exist between the GABY grant program and REACH.

Next steps

This evidence suggests that REACH is having the intended effect of expanding GABY opportunities to REACH grantees or their community partners, particularly in less advantaged communities. Focused and intentional outreach and support from Sacramento Regional Community Foundation staff may be needed to keep this momentum going in the future.

Expanding beyond community service focus

One interviewee noted that most existing GABY/HOPE grants are for community service projects, and wonders if the program should consider thinking about how to make funds available in ways that fit with the objectives of broader community change initiative like REACH. Judging from the thumbnail descriptions on the SRCF website, it appears that the REACH-related grants already may incorporate elements that move beyond a narrow community service orientation. The most recent call for proposals for GABY/HOPE grants (due February 28, 2009) specifically solicits projects with an environmental emphasis (see more at <http://gaby.strangecode.com/>).

Mini-grants sponsored by REACH grantees

A number of REACH grantees, including El Dorado Hills, Rancho Cordova, and Galt, have or are developing mini-grant processes. These differ in the nature and extent of youth involvement and it will be important to monitor these efforts for lessons related to youth development. An interviewee familiar with the GABY grant process notes that it takes more time and staff effort than most realize to implement these grants in ways that promote genuine youth engagement, rather than token participation. It may also be important to discuss whether and how the REACH grantee efforts relate to the effort to decentralize the GABY grant process from the regional to the county or other local level.

Table 15. Nature of GABY Grants Awarded in Coalition Areas (2007-08)

Coalition area	Grantee	Project
Woodland	Woodland Youth Council: Yolo Family Resource Center	Improve the quality and safety of Grafton Park
	Yolo County Youth Leadership Conference Planning Team: Yolo Family Resource Center	Host a Youth Leadership Development Academy
Meadowview	The Met Sacramento: Sacramento ACT	Create a student lounge with resources
	About Face Network: Luther Burbank High School	Produce a live, traveling hip hop show
	NextGen Youth Group: Genesis Church	Host a youth conference focused on healthy friendships, college training, and building self-esteem and ongoing tutoring
	Drama Club: Samuel Jackman Middle School	Host a film contest
	Youth with Purpose: New Direction Christian Church	College/Career Fair and Benefit Concert
	Hmong Women's Circle: Hmong Women's Heritage Association	Literacy workshop to recently arrived Hmong refugees and their families
South Sacramento	Mien Club of West Campus High School: United lu-Mien Community, Inc.	Host the lu-Mien Student Conference
	Funky Fresh Crew: Sacramento Mutual Housing	Host a dance show, talent show, and competition
	Youth Against Drugs and Alcohol (YADA): Asian Pacific Community Counseling	Create a free youth lounge

Source: SRCF website: <http://www.sacregfoundation.org/doc.aspx?50>

REACH Camp at Grizzly Creek Ranch

Over the past two summers, the Sierra Health Foundation (SHF) hosted a weeklong summer youth development camp for REACH coalitions at its Grizzly Creek Ranch retreat facilities in Portola, California. Located 130 miles east of Sacramento, Grizzly Creek Ranch is set in the Sierras of Plumas County and encompasses 1,500 acres of forests, streams and meadows. Grizzly Creek camp for REACH grantees is part youth development conference, part community organizing workshop, and part traditional summer camp. The focus of the first Grizzly Creek session was to familiarize coalition adults and youth with general practices in the youth development field. The activities centered on cultivating youth voice and leadership skills. The second year, in response to feedback on the first year camp experience by adult and youth participants, a greater emphasis was placed on active youth leadership in the planning, coordination, and delivery of camp activities. Themes for each of the days were developed by youth and adults with support from technical assistance providers, and facilitation of each day's activities were delegated to the different coalitions. Young people from each of the coalitions led workshops with the support of their adult chaperones.

Camp Description

In late July 2007 and again in 2008, adults and youth from the seven REACH coalitions arrived at the Grizzly Creek Ranch and participated in an array of team-building, youth development, and community change activities. Camp was comprised of four groups: Grizzly Creek Ranch staff, members of the REACH technical assistance team and Sierra Health Foundation staff, and adult chaperones and youth from the seven coalitions. The Grizzly Creek Ranch staff provided maintenance, ropes course training and supervision, dining and other administrative support. This group appears to be made up both of full-time staff members who work at the camp year-round and seasonal members (mainly college-aged adults) who work at the camp during the summer months. Grizzly Camp staff and REACH technical assistance providers ran the camp together. Sierra Health Foundation provided its own camp leadership made up of members of the REACH technical assistance team. Both sessions of camp had a camp director and a support team. Two local spoken-word artists with whom the TA team had worked in recent workshops were brought to the camp to provide general assistance.

Each coalition was responsible for providing transportation and adult chaperones. Approximately 70 youth and 20 adults participated in camp both years (see Table 15). During the first year, many of the youth were not familiar with the coalition or the adults. In some of the newly formed coalitions, many of the youth who attended camp had not previously been participants in their community's coalition, which had just begun their implementation phase work. The second year, in most cases youth who were invited had been participating in their coalitions. Adults selected youth to attend camp. In both years, most youth participants were in middle and high school.

Table 16. Grizzly Creek Camp Attendance by Year, Coalition and Gender

Coalition	Year 1 M/F	Year 2 M/F
El Dorado Hills	6/8	3/6
Galt	5/9	7/7
Meadowview	0/11	3/7
Rancho Cordova	1/8	4/5
South Sacramento	4/1	1/4
West Sacramento	8/0	7/2
Woodland	7/5	6/4
	31/42	31/35
Total	73	66

The camp program included four settings in which activities took place: large group (entire camp), coalitions, cabins, and ropes course. There were large group activities in which all youth and adults participated on the same activity. The first activity was "morning circle" in which the whole camp comes together to talk about the activities of the day. All meals were provided in the cafeteria. Mealtime provided key opportunities to make announcements. During the first year, campers nominated peers and adults to be recognized for good deeds during dinnertime. Youth were provided with free time during times in the schedule designated as "Activities of Your Choosing." These activities included swimming, canoeing, fishing, archery, arts and crafts, volleyball and basketball. The youth were also placed into ropes course groups, which were led

by college-age Grizzly Creek Ranch staff who worked with the youth and adults on team building activities. Adult chaperones had the option of taking a break, though many opted to participate in or supervise the free time activities. Each night a large group activity was scheduled such as a bonfire, talent show, and night hike. A "closing circle" concluded camp with announcements and reflections on the day. The youth were separated into cabins by gender and age. Camp staff believed that an important component of camp was the opportunity to get to know youth from other communities and that the cabin experience could facilitate these connections, although at times, conflicts arose over camp youth who wanted to be placed with their friends. At least one adult chaperone was placed in the cabins with the youth.

Among the more important developments of the first year of camp were discussions among coalition adults on their role at camp and how to work with youth in their coalitions. The first year at Grizzly Creek Ranch, the adult chaperones arrived without any orientation and at times were openly frustrated about the lack of clarity of their roles, particularly since there were numerous other adult authority figures to listen to including the camp staff, technical assistance providers, and ropes course instructors. This surfaced concerns about working with youth that transcended the camp experience and generated a lot of discussion about ways to work with youth.

Grizzly Creek Ranch provided a supportive environment for youth to engage in leadership activities, practice leadership skills, discuss issues in their communities and strategize on how to create lasting change. Both camps provided activities aimed at youth engagement in community change. Workshops addressed topics such as: communication, handling conflict, youth-centered event planning, and networking. Most youth were engaged during these workshops, however, at times the content seemed to be inaccessible to younger youth and non-native English speakers. This was observed more during the first year than the second.

During the second year, each grantee was responsible for planning and leading a workshop for the other camp attendees. The youth-centered emphasis on engaging youth in the process of developing and presenting the workshops marks a shift from the previous year. A technical assistance provider was assigned to each team to provide on-site support. Youth seemed to enjoy sharing their experiences about their communities and many led impressive and sophisticated sessions. At times, however, youth were asked to develop workshops on topics and skills with which they have limited or no experience or expertise. The more successful workshops seemed to be those where youth and adults presented and there was a balance of knowledge and experience and active participation among youth.

Coalitions played a larger role in the second camp than the first. By the end of the first camp, some of the coalition coordinators expressed that they had hoped to have more time working in their coalitions. A community action plan exercise that occurred towards the end of camp was the only coalition activity in the camp's program. More emphasis was placed on the coalitions during the second camp. In addition to planning a community project, individual coalitions were responsible for facilitating workshops for the other campers.

Planning for Camp

Based on feedback received after the first camp, adults and youth began planning the second camp several months in advance. Through a series of monthly meetings, coalition adults and youth helped make decisions that led to significant changes to the structure and focus of camp. Monthly camp planning sessions were arranged by members of the technical assistance team and took place at Sierra Health Foundation or other Sacramento area venues. Most sessions began between 4:30 and 5:00 and started with dinner. Icebreakers or energizer activities marked the beginning of the meeting. Those attending typically included the same youth each month. Many of the youth who helped to plan the camp had attended the year before. The main focus of the meetings revolved around planning the activities of the five-day long camp. Themes were chosen for each day, and each coalition was responsible for facilitating activities related to their day. Some of the changes that were implemented the second year involved the following:

- Camp orientation – Parents and guardians of campers were required to attend an information session at the foundation prior to camp (an optional orientation held during the first year was poorly attended). In addition, a conference call was held with adult chaperones to discuss their roles and responsibilities while at camp, and answer any questions they might have.
- Free time for youth – Camp was extended from four to five days. Transition times between activities allowed youth time to take a break. Daily opportunities for youth to choose their own activities were also added.
- Free time for adults – Camp organizers provided a break room for adults.
- More time to work in coalitions – Coalition youth and adults facilitated workshops and planned community projects together.
- Less time in large groups – Whole group activities were conceptualized for active participation among youth and often involved breaking up into smaller groups.
- Youth-led workshops – Youth and adults would conceptualize workshop activities.
- Anticipating Conflict – An adult conflict mediator was designated among the chaperones.

Key Observations

- Camp provides a context for REACH youth to understand the initiative beyond the work of their coalition.
- Camp provides youth with an audience with whom to share the work they are doing or hope to do in their communities.
- Camp provides an important opportunity for relationship development amongst youth and adult participants within coalitions.
- Camp provided opportunities for adult coalition members to interact with adults and youth from different communities. Many youth enjoyed making friends with young people from other communities and different backgrounds. However, tensions amongst youth across communities also highlighted the importance of an intentional focus on relationship-building across race, culture, class, and geographical communities.
- Youth played a significant role in shaping the camp's program in Year two. Changes made from one year to the next increased youth sense of ownership of

camp.

- At times, engaging youth of different ages and language backgrounds in workshops was challenging.
- Camp provides youth opportunities to develop leadership skills and engage in strategic planning. However, there may be some tension in developing significant plans at camp since there is limited representation from grantee coalitions/networks.
- It is unclear the degree to which activities and events planned by youth at Grizzly Creek Ranch were implemented back in their local communities.

Appendix D. REACH Evaluation

Goals and Purpose

Sierra Health Foundation has contracted with a research team organized by the California Communities Program at UC Davis to evaluate the REACH community action initiative. The purpose of the evaluation is:

- to examine the degree to which the REACH initiative has accomplished its intended goals;
- to promote learning that is relevant to the needs of REACH initiative stakeholders and to the fields of community and youth development; and
- to inform future Sierra Health Foundation investment decisions.

The evaluation includes a detailed process study that systematically compares implementation in the seven communities, and an outcome analysis focused on five questions:

- Does REACH nurture viable coalitions and enhance community capacity to support youth development?
- Does REACH promote youth engagement as a strategy to enhance youth development outcomes?
- Does REACH increase meaningful supports and opportunities for youth in local communities?
- Does REACH enhance youth development outcomes?
- Does REACH suggest lessons for foundation practice and the broader field of community and youth development?

Evaluation Methods and Activities

Our primary evaluation activities to date include:

- semi-structured interviews with:
 - site coordinators;
 - adult coalition members (continuing, new, former);
 - youth participants;
 - non-participating community members;
 - technical assistance providers;
- observations of REACH meetings and events including those hosted by grantees and cross-site events hosted or supported by the foundation and/or the technical assistance team;
- participant observation of Grizzly Creek Camp (Summer 2007 and 2008) and observation of Year 2 planning
- review of meeting and event attendance data;
- review of documents and reports created by grantees, technical assistance providers, and the foundation;
- workshops to support digital stories created by youth REACH participants; and
- review of relevant literature.

Table 16 summarizes the number of interviews and observations in each site and with foundation staff and technical assistance providers.

Table 17. REACH External Evaluation Activities, as of October 2008

Coalition	Adult Interviews	Youth Interviews	Observations of meetings and events
El Dorado Hills	20	3	7
Galt	20	10	15
Meadowview	21	8	20
Rancho Cordova	17	8	21
South Sacramento	20	6	26
West Sacramento	13	3	9
Woodland	10	9	33
All Coalitions	121	47	131
SHF	10	-	21
TA Team	12	-	10
All foundation	22	-	31
Totals	143	47	162

Youth Interviews

Between December 2007 and August 2008, the external evaluation team interviewed 47 youth that had participated in REACH activities. We began by asking site coordinators to distribute a parental consent form to participating youth from their coalition. In many cases, we did not receive a parental consent form. For youth that returned a signed parental consent form, we scheduled phone or in-person interviews. A little more than half of the interviews were completed by May 2008 and the remaining ones took place during the Grizzly Creek camp.

The number of interviews conducted varied by coalition based on availability of youth and the number of consent forms returned (See Table 17). In all, the evaluation team conducted interviews with 30 females and 17 males. The majority of participants were in high school (24), followed by middle school (17). Three of those interviewed were in elementary school and another three have recently graduated high school. Youth participated in semi-structured interviews either individually or in groups of two or three. Usually, though not always, the evaluation team member assigned as the lead field researcher for each coalition conducted the interviews. Youth were asked to explain in their own words their motivations for participating in the coalition, any roles and responsibilities expected of them as a group member, an assessment of their experience, and any expectations they have about the ability of their coalition to make a difference in their community.

Table 18. Youth Interview Participants By Coalition, Gender, and Grade Level

	El Dorado Hills	Galt	Meadowview	Rancho Cordova	South Sacramento	West Sacramento	Woodland	TOTAL
GENDER								
Female	1	5	6	8	5	0	5	30
Male	2	5	2	0	1	3	4	17
GRADE LEVEL								
Elementary	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
Middle	1	9	2	2	1	0	2	17
High	2	1	4	2	5	3	7	24
Post-High School	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
TOTAL	3	10	8	8	6	3	9	47