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INNOVATIVE RESEARCH & DESIGN CONSULTANTS

# Coalition Policy Synthesis Project

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# Community Based Organizations

- Historically - program “pass-throughs”
- Recently - data-driven comprehensive strategies

# Evidence-Based Program Development

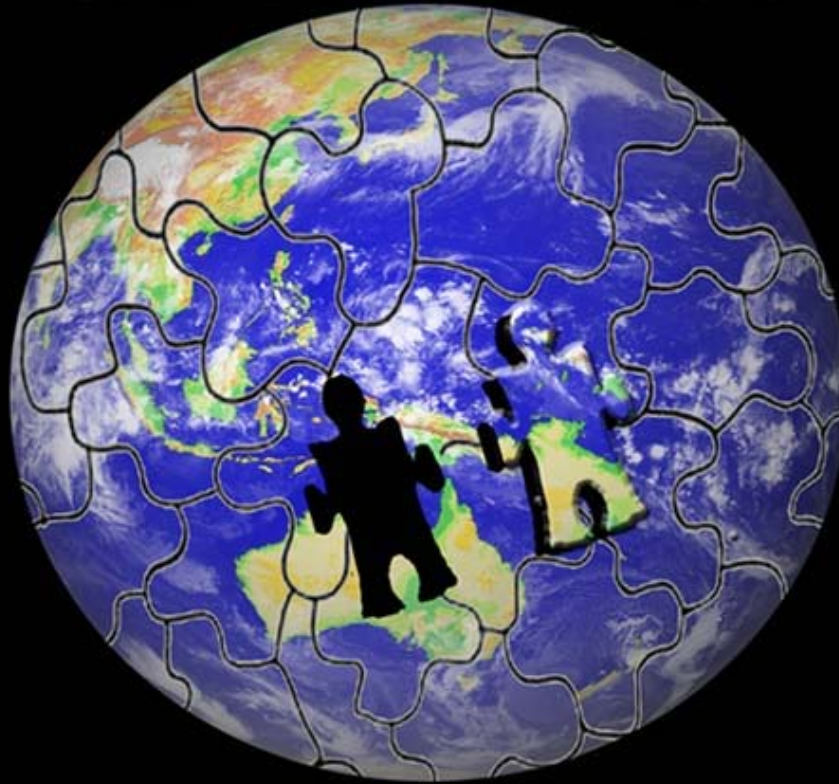
- Well-funded research protocols
  - Designed to *insure fidelity*
- Recorded sessions reviewed by supervisor
- Supervision with feedback minimizes “drift”





# What really happens?

**PROJECT REAL WORLD**



**Why is it so difficult to show  
“what works”?**

# Community Initiatives

- Ambitious, expensive, complex commitments
- Multiple organizations
- Outcomes must be produced





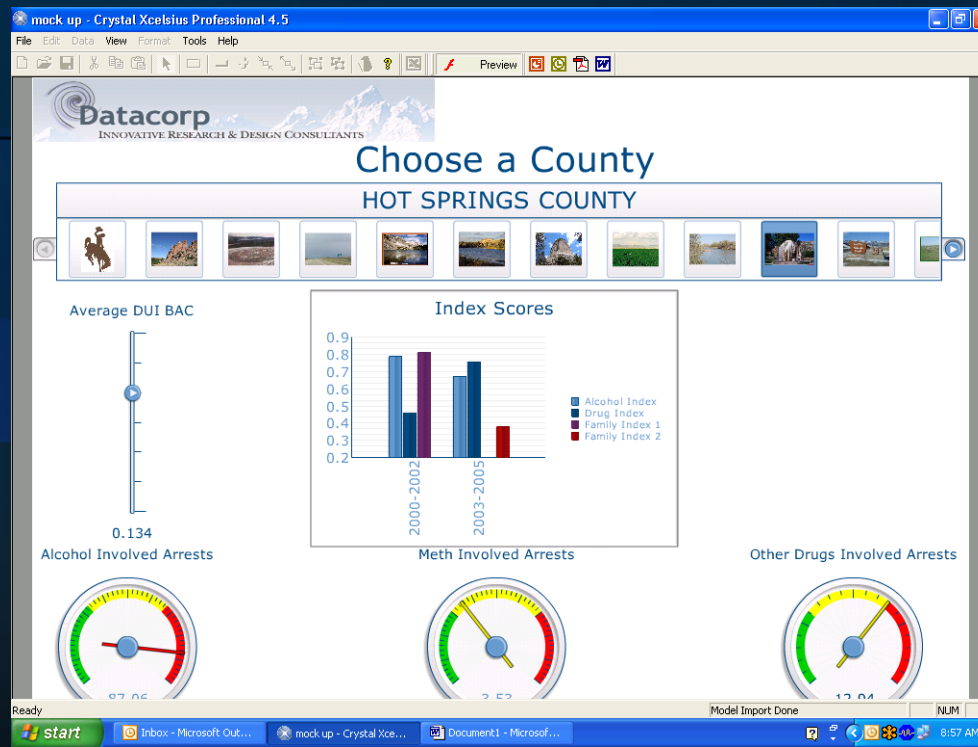
# How will we show coalitions are effective?

- Effectiveness is rarely tested
- Primarily process evaluations
- Few evaluations of population-level change



# How Do We Know If It Works?

- Activities that move the needle
- Large scale community undertakings







What makes coalitions effective?

# Key CPSP Activities

- Literature review to distinguish
  - What we know
  - What we don't know
  - What is cutting-edge
- Cull our own experience for "What works?"



What does the literature say  
about “what works”?



# What Does Research Say?

Coalitions are popular vehicles to address various public health concerns

**BUT**

Evidence is limited

# Fighting Back Initiative

- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded
- Evaluation by Hallfors et al., 2002
  - Unfavorable findings
- Green & Kreuter, 2002 - "we've oversold what coalitions can do"

# FB Coalition Contributions to Reductions in Alcohol-Related Fatal Crashes

Hingson et al. (Injury Prevention, 2005)

- Retrospective study of 5 Fighting Back sites that attempted to reduce alcohol availability and expand substance treatment
- FB sites experienced significant reductions in alcohol-related fatal crashes



# FB Coalition Contributions to Reductions in Alcohol-Related Fatal Crashes

## Lessons learned:

- Coalitions had clear goals and plans to address alcohol-related problems
- Implemented evidence-based interventions targeting alcohol-related problems and/or interventions with plausible mechanisms to do so

# Fighting Back Initiative - Coalition Factors that Foster Organizational Capacity

Zakocs & Guckenburg (Health Education & Behavior, 2007)

- Retrospective study of Fighting Back sites
- Organizational capacity - “the ability of local orgs to respond to systemic problems by offering new/modified policies, programs or services”

# Fighting Back Initiative - Coalition Factors that Foster Organizational Capacity

7 Characteristics of FB sites with greater organizational capacity:

- Received more funds for coalition-building
- Delayed establishing a new lead agency
- Supportive lead agencies
- Stable, participatory decision-making bodies
- Collaborative leadership
- Active involvement from government agencies
- Effective, long-term project directors



# Fighting Back Initiative - Coalition Factors that Foster Organizational Capacity

- But does greater organizational capacity lead to lower rates of alcohol abuse or related problems?
- One interesting observation:
  - 4 out of the 5 coalitions in the Hingson study were coalitions that had the highest levels of organizational capacity

# Relationship Between Coalition-Building Factors and Measures of Coalition Effectiveness

Zakocs & Edwards (American Journal of Prevention Medicine, 2006)

- Reviewed 26 articles
- 26 different ways to conceptualize coalition effectiveness (measuring coalition functioning and community changes)
- Found 55 coalition-building factors associated with coalition effectiveness

# Relationship Between Coalition-Building Factors and Measures of Coalition Effectiveness

- Five or more studies indicated the following coalition-building factors were positively associated with indicators of coalition effectiveness
  - Formalization/rules
  - Leadership Styles
  - Active member participation
  - Diverse Membership
  - Member agency collaboration
  - Group cohesion

# Coalitions and Evidence-Based Prevention Programs

Collins, Johnson and Becker (Substance Use & Misuse, 2007)

- Significant but small reductions in cigarette, alcohol and binge drinking rates among 10<sup>th</sup> graders
- The # of evidence-based programs implemented do not have an impact on substance use outcomes
- Some risk factors (friends' drug use and perceived availability) help explain the relationship between use of evidence-based programs and reductions in use rates



# Why is evidence limited?

Merzel & D'Affitti (American Journal of Public Health, 2003)

- Methodological Issues
- Limitations of the Intervention
- Limitations of Theory

# Evidence of Effectiveness of Collaborative Partnerships

Roussos & Fawcett (Annual Review of Public Health, 2000)

1. Coalitions can affect more distal population-level outcomes.
2. Coalitions can help bring about community-wide behavior change.
3. Coalitions can help bring about changes in the community and systems.
4. Certain factors affect a coalition's capacity to create community and systems change.

# Factors Affecting Rates of Community and Systems Change

- Clear Vision and Mission
- Action Planning
- Leadership
- Documentation and Feedback
- Technical Assistance
- Resources to Sustain the Work
- Making Outcomes Matter

# Rethinking Coalition Effectiveness

Effective coalitions can document their contributions toward population-level outcomes

Effective coalitions help bring about community changes

Effective coalitions build strong organizational capacity



# Next steps

- What should coalitions be held accountable for?
- How do we build capacity of coalitions?
- How do we measure appropriate indicators of coalition contributions?

# Download the Presentation

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