

Pennsylvania Department of Health Final Performance Summary Report Formula Grants

Overview of the Health Research Project Performance Review Process and Criteria

An applicant that receives a health research grant under Tobacco Settlement Act / Act 77 of 2001, Chapter 9, is subject to a performance review by the Department of Health upon completion of the research project. The performance review is based on requirements specified by Act 77 and criteria developed by the Department in consultation with the Health Research Advisory Committee.

As part of the performance review process, each research project contained in a grant is reviewed by at least three experts who are physicians, scientists or researchers. Reviewers are from the same or similar discipline as the research grant/project under review and are not from Pennsylvania. Reviewers use the applicant's proposed research plan (strategic plan), the annual progress report and final progress reports to conduct the review. A grant that receives an unfavorable performance review by the Department may be subject to a reduction in funding or become ineligible for health research funding in the future. The overall grant evaluation rating is based on the ratings for the individual research projects contained in the grant.

This performance review report contains the outcome of the review for the grant as a whole (outstanding, favorable, or unfavorable), strengths and weaknesses of each research project, as well as recommendations for future improvement.

The following criteria were applied to information submitted by research grant recipients:

- **Criterion 1 - How well did the project meet its stated objectives? If objectives were not completely met, was reasonable progress made?**
 - Did the project meet the stated objectives?
 - Were the research design and methods adequate in light of the project objectives?
 - Consider these questions about data and empirical results: Were the data developed sufficiently to answer the research questions posed? Were the data developed in line with the original research protocol?
 - If changes were made to the research protocol, was an explanation given, and, if so, is it reasonable?
 - Consider (only for clinical research projects) the extent of laboratory and clinical activities initiated and completed and the number of subjects relative to the target goal.
 - Were sufficient data and information provided to indicate or support the fact that the project met its objectives or made acceptable progress?
 - Were the data and information provided applicable to the project objectives listed in the strategic research plan?

- **Criterion 2 - What is the likely beneficial impact of this project? If the likely beneficial impact is small, is it judged reasonable in light of the dollars budgeted?**
 - What is the significance of this project for improving health?
 - Consider the value of the research completed towards eventual improvement in health outcomes.
 - Consider any changes in risk factors, services provided, incidence of disease, death from disease, stage of disease at time of diagnosis, or other relevant measures of impact and effectiveness of the research being conducted.
 - Consider any major discoveries, new drugs and new approaches for prevention, diagnosis and treatment, which are attributable to the completed research project.
 - What are the future plans for this research project?

- **Criterion 3 - Did the project leverage additional funds or were any additional grant applications submitted as a result of this project?**
 - If leveraging of funds were expected, did these materialize?
 - Are the researchers planning to apply for additional funding in the future to continue or expand the research?

- **Criterion 4 - Did the project result in any peer-reviewed publications, licenses, patents, or commercial development opportunities? Were any of these submitted/filed?**
 - If any of the above listed were expected, did these materialize?
 - Are the researchers planning to submit articles to peer-reviewed publications, file for any licenses, or patents or begin any commercial development opportunities in the future?
 - Consider the number/quality of each.

- **Criterion 5 - Did the project enhance the quality and capacity for research at the grantee's institution?**
 - Were there improvements made to infrastructure?
 - Were any new investigators added or were any researchers brought into the institution to help carry out this research?
 - Were funds used to pay for research performed by pre- or post-doctoral students?

- **Criterion 6 - Did the project lead to collaboration with research partners outside the institution, or new involvement with the community?**
 - Are the researchers planning to begin any collaborations as a result of the research?
 - For clinical research only: consider the number of hospitals and health care professionals involved and the extent of penetration of the studies throughout the region or the Commonwealth.

Overall Evaluation Rating

An overall evaluation rating is assigned to each research project. The rating reflects the overall progress the project attained in meeting the stated goals and objectives. The rating is based on a scale of 1–3, with 1 being the highest. An average rating is obtained from all the reviews (minimum of 3) of each project and is the basis for the determination of the final overall rating for each project as follows:

1.00 – 1.33 = *Outstanding*

1.34 – 2.66 = *Favorable*

2.67 – 3.00 = *Unfavorable*

The grant level rating is an average rating from all projects as above. The numerical rating appears in parentheses for the grant and each project in the ***Overall Grant Performance Review Rating*** section of the report.

Overall Grant Performance Review Rating

Grant Rating: Favorable (2.00)

Project Rating:

Project	Title	Average Score
0865301	Program Quality Measures for a Consumer Guide to Adolescent Addiction Treatment	Favorable (2.00)

Project Number: 0865301
Project Title: Program Quality Measures for a Consumer Guide to
Adolescent Addiction Treatment
Investigator: Cacciola, John

Section A. Project Evaluation Criteria

Criterion 1 - How well did the project meet its stated objectives? If objectives were not completely met, was reasonable progress made?

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Reviewer 1:

The project made very good progress towards its ambitious goal of creating psychometrically sound interviews for producing a consumer guide to adolescent treatment programs. Stage 1 objectives were fully achieved (a major strength). They developed the DSQI-D, established its excellent test-retest reliability (although agreement beyond chance was not reported) and identified less reliable items. Stage 2 testing of the DSQI-P was less successful, since only four adolescents participated (a weakness); this aspect will be continued in the larger National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) grant. Stage 3 was not initiated (another weakness) because of an overlap of the planned Treatment Services Review for adolescents (TSR-A) with the DSI-P.

Reviewer 2:

Based on my review of available documents, the researchers either met or made at least reasonable progress with regard to all four project objectives. However, a number of weaknesses were noted (see below). One major strength of the study, however, was in regard to the creation of the DSQI-D, which was based on both a systematic review of the literature and meetings with an expert advisory panel. In terms of the DSQI-D's testing, however, a weakness of the project is that it did not clearly describe the process for recruiting of programs and directors (see page 13 of the final progress report). For example, they note that the first 6 of 17 Philadelphia programs that treated 5+ adolescents per month were contacted, with 7 (which is more than the 6 listed above) directors agreeing to participate and only 5 actually completing the test/re-test portion of work. Moreover, the text goes on to describe that 2 of these 5 were from directors outside of the initial 17 Philadelphia County programs. The lack of clarity in describing this process is a weakness of the project.

Another weakness of the project was the inability to conduct the originally proposed focus groups with adolescents as part of the development of the DSQI-P (Objective 2). Nevertheless, the group did appear to make reasonable progress with regard to this objective by hiring Dr. Meyers, author of the Comprehensive Adolescent Severity Inventory (CASI), to lead the development of the DSQI-P. Another weakness regarding Objective 2 was their ability to recruit only four adolescents for testing of the DSQI-P. Objective 3 was subsequently deemed

unnecessary due to considerable overlap between the TSR-A and the DSQI-P. This seemed reasonable. Finally, although the researchers made reasonable progress with regard to Objective 4, a weakness was their ability to interview only eight parents.

Reviewer 3:

The project did not fully meet its stated objectives. A number of unanticipated barriers to participant recruitment were identified. Although the investigators found solutions to these barriers, they were able to recruit only about half of the participants that they intended to recruit initially. There were some changes to the initial protocol in order to improve data collection, most notably a successful Institutional Review Board (IRB) request to obtain a parental waiver of consent. This change was necessary based on the fact that parents were not always as involved in the treatment process as originally believed. Not only could this parental waiver of consent improve data collection efforts, but it might have the added benefit of generating more representative samples in the future.

Despite the unanticipated barriers that resulted in a much lower than anticipated sample size, this project made some significant progress and had some important strengths, including: 1) generating an updated and more comprehensive list of key elements and components for adolescent substance abuse treatment; 2) the addition of onsite audits to increase the validity of responses to the revised DSI-D; 3) a revised DSI-P that includes key element areas that can be understood by youth; 4) a compilation of regional substance abuse treatment programs with program-level information; and, 5) improved methodology based on experiences with the current project that will increase the likelihood of achieving the ultimate goal of developing an updated and comprehensive consumer guide to adolescent substance abuse treatment.

Criterion 2 - What is the likely beneficial impact of this project? If the likely beneficial impact is small, is it judged reasonable in light of the dollars budgeted?

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Reviewer 1:

These funds provided the pilot information to establish the instruments and their reliability and obtain a larger NIH grant to further develop the consumer measures. If valid and reliable, these instruments are potentially highly significant and impactful if they can reliably measure the quality of adolescent treatment programs and provide that information to consumers.

Reviewer 2:

Although the likely beneficial impact of this project is relatively low, this appears reasonable in light of the dollars budgeted.

Reviewer 3:

The project is significant in that its results have led to a considerably updated and more comprehensive list of key elements and components for adolescent substance abuse treatment programs and the development of improved measures for evaluating adolescent substance abuse treatment programs. These are beneficial outcomes of the project that are likely to provide important information to parents and adolescents, which will allow them to make informed

decisions when choosing a treatment program. Finally, despite problems with participant recruitment, the progress that the investigators made on the project allowed them to secure significant NIDA funding to continue working toward development of an online consumer guide to substance abuse treatment programs. This is a major strength of the project.

Criterion 3 - Did the project leverage additional funds or were any additional grant applications submitted as a result of this project?

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Reviewer 1:

An NIDA grant (\$1.8M) was obtained to further develop and test the DSI-D and DSI-P and to beta test the consumer guide in the Philadelphia area (a major strength). Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funds were further leveraged by the project.

Reviewer 2:

In addition to leveraging \$42,971 in SAMHSA/Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) funds and \$37,237 in NIDA funds, project researchers were successful in acquiring additional NIDA funding to continue this research as part of a Center grant. That this project led to NIH funding which provides additional evidence that the project objectives were significant. Hopefully, the waiver of parental consent will improve the ability to recruit participants.

Reviewer 3:

The researchers have plans to continue to work toward achieving their goals and extending their work to the development and testing of an online consumer guide to adolescent substance abuse treatment programs in the Philadelphia area. To this end, and based on the preliminary work completed on the current project, they successfully secured NIDA funding to continue this line of research. This is a major strength of the project.

Criterion 4 - Did the project result in any peer-reviewed publications, licenses, patents, or commercial development opportunities? Were any of these submitted / filed?

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Reviewer 1:

The consumer guide will have commercial possibilities, but these have yet to be realized at this early stage of development. No publications are reported.

Reviewer 2:

Despite stated intentions to submit results to peer-reviewed academic journals (see page 9 of the research plan), no manuscripts had been submitted at the time the final progress report was written. This is considered a weakness.

Reviewer 3:

The researchers indicated that their progress would be marked by submissions to peer-reviewed journals. There were no publications at the time the final report was generated, although there are

plans to write a manuscript following completion of the NIDA-funded project based on the results of whether evidence-based practices are linked to program-level and client outcomes. Some results were disseminated at two regional conferences, which is a strength.

Criterion 5 - Did the project enhance the quality and capacity for research at the grantee's institution?

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Reviewer 1:

Dr. Meyers joined the Treatment Research Institute as a senior scientist after serving on the scientific advisory panel, and she has a significant role in the NIDA grant.

Reviewer 2:

A strength of this project was that it led to Kathleen Meyers, Ph.D., who is an adolescent expert, joining the Treatment Research Institute as a senior scientist.

Reviewer 3:

This project did not appear to enhance greatly the quality and capacity for research at the grantee's institution. Although the investigators hired an adolescent expert who had served on the project's advisory board, meetings of the advisory board were primarily funded by other granting agencies. No pre- or post-doctoral researchers were hired or trained. This is a slight weakness because it is unclear to what extent there was potential to use project funds to hire and train new investigators.

Criterion 6 - Did the project lead to collaboration with research partners outside of the institution or new involvement with the community?

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Reviewer 1:

As a result of this work, the Treatment Research Institute is now a member of Philadelphia's Office of Addiction Services (OAS) Advisory Board and an OAS-sponsored workgroup (strength). There was also considerable collaboration with adolescent treatment experts nationally.

Reviewer 2:

It is considered a strength that the project led to members of the team joining Philadelphia's OAS Advisory Board and OAS-sponsored Outpatient Treatment Workgroup, given that this represents new involvement in the community.

Reviewer 3:

This project has led to enhanced collaboration with the community. As a result of the project, the investigators are now members of Philadelphia's Office of Addiction Services (OAS) Advisory Board and an OAS-sponsored Outpatient Treatment Workgroup. These community links are critical to the success of the investigators' goals and can lead to improvements in the quality of

regional adolescent substance abuse treatment programs resulting from the addition of the investigators' expertise as members of these community groups. This is a major strength of the project.

Section B. Recommendations

SPECIFIC WEAKNESSES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reviewer 1:

1. The inability to recruit sufficient adolescents for reliability testing of DSI-P is a weakness. Parental consent in these settings is notoriously difficult to obtain and could reasonably have been anticipated. The plan for waiver of consent for non-involved parents is a good plan going forward. Another approach might be to seek a waiver of consent by administering the instrument anonymously and using an anonymized identifier to link the forms across time.
2. Analyses of reliability should include not only percent agreement, but also agreement beyond chance.

Reviewer 2:

1. Specific weakness: The recruitment of programs and directors (see page 13 of the final progress report) was not described clearly and contained inconsistencies.

Recommendation: Develop a flowchart that describes the flow of participants through the project.

2. Specific weakness: The inability to recruit adolescents for the focus groups and for testing the DSQI-P is a weakness.

Recommendation: Obtain waiver of parental consent. This is the approach subsequently used as part of the NIDA grant.

3. Specific weakness: The inability to recruit parents for interviews is a weakness.

Recommendation: If parents are not responding to telephone or mail attempts, try going to their homes.

4. Specific weakness: No manuscripts had been submitted at the time the final progress report was written.

Recommendation: It is understandably difficult to submit a manuscript when the number of participants is very low. Nevertheless, it may be possible to submit a descriptive paper for publication. Surely, publications will result from the NIDA grant.

Reviewer 3:

1. The sample size was significantly lower than the stated goal, and the problems encountered with recruitment dramatically slowed the progress of the project. However, the problems

proved to be informative, leading to solutions that are likely to improve recruitment efforts in the future. As a result, there are no recommendations for improvements in this area.

2. There were no publications at the time the final report was generated. The investigators suggest that they will publish results following completion of the NIDA project. The lack of publications is not unreasonable given the length of the project, but there appears to be no plan for additional dissemination of information gained from the current project beyond a couple of completed presentations. It is recommended that the investigators discuss other possible avenues for dissemination of information from the current project.
3. This project did not appear to enhance significantly the quality and capacity for research at the grantee's institution. This is a slight weakness because it is unclear to what extent there was potential to use project funds to hire and train new investigators. The investigators should provide comments on why there was no hiring or training of new investigators.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Reviewer 3:

Overall, this project had a number of strengths including: 1) generating an updated and more comprehensive list of key elements and components for adolescent substance abuse treatment; 2) the addition of onsite audits to increase the validity of responses to the revised DSI-D; 3) a DSI-P that includes key element areas that can be understood by youth; 4) a compilation of regional substance abuse treatment programs with program-level information; and, 5) the establishment of solid links to the community. Although the inability to achieve the participant recruitment goals may be viewed as a weakness, the problems the investigators encountered with recruitment and the identified solutions led to improvements in the methodology that will be useful for future research. Most importantly, the progress made by the study resulted in significant NIDA funding to continue this work. Some weaknesses were identified, but none appear to be major weaknesses, and the strengths outweigh the identified weaknesses.