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Nonprofits and Government Agencies Addressing the Needs of Mental Health Community

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work.

<u>Abstract</u>

Nonprofit organizations have been utilizing cross-sector collaboration to address problems that are not able to be solved on their own. A partner to make said collaboration can be with any organization, business, or volunteer who has the same goals as the nonprofit organization. Mental health nonprofit organizations specifically need more partners due to how little the world knows about mental health and mental illnesses. The government is one partner many mental health organizations aim to collaborate with. Government contracts have been known to help with the many challenges nonprofit organizations face like funding and services. Previous research has suggested this collaboration has swayed nonprofit organizations from their mission due to competition and hindrances that come about in the collaboration. Nonprofit organizations need to stay on track with their mission and not worry about competition. Therefore, this collaboration could be a negative one. This study uses qualitative data from interview questions asked to employees in mental health nonprofit organizations, to analyze if there is a connection between mission fulfillment and government collaboration in the mental health nonprofit community. The findings have shown a little towards the previous research of the competition, but not enough to say if it is true or not. There are some themes showing a good relationship in the partnership as well, indicating this collaboration could be a good one for nonprofit organizations to consider.   There needs to be more research done to conclude if the collaboration has been efficient. Persons in the nonprofit community can take this research into their nonprofit organizations, deciding if this collaboration could be used for their own. Policymakers could also take this research into account for future collaborations with nonprofit organizations. The findings hope to help shape what nonprofit organizations and researchers do in the future, to help with the never-ending problem of mental illness.

Keywords: nonprofit organizations, government collaboration, mission fulfillment, mental health, partners

Chapter 1: Introduction

Mental illnesses are apparent everywhere. One out of five adults in the United States suffer from a mental illness, but about 60% of them do not receive treatment for their illness (Puac, 2021). Mental illness is a large problem in this country, but finding treatment for these illnesses is an even larger one. Nonprofit organizations are trying their best to help, but they can't do it alone. Organizations look to collaborations to find the most efficient and best possible means to reach their missions, whether it be to speak for those who suffer with mental illness or to help treat those who can't find support or do not have the funds to pay for support. The state government collaborates with nonprofit organizations through contracts and grants so nonprofits can obtain the funds they need for their services. Research has shown that this system of government support brings both upsides and challenges for nonprofits.

Problem: Is Government Collaboration the Right Route?

Groups, teams, and alliances have all proven to be better sources for making creative and efficient plans and ideas compared to planning on own. Nonprofit organizations make alliances to find better values and services for the mission fulfillment. Looking to the government for help is a natural and obvious path for collaboration. During the last forty years, the number of government agencies contracting with nonprofit organizations to help with services has risen (Smith, 2016 as cited in Renz et al., 2016). There are several challenges that come with this collaboration. Sometimes collaborations can be hard to fulfill due to the many guidelines built into government contracts. Government contracting can impact how the nonprofit organization runs its governance, program innovation, and the relationship of agencies to their local communities (Smith, 2016 as cited in Renz et al., 2016). Competition can also be seen in the process due to the increasing number of organizations competing for similar benefits. All these

challenges lead to the main question, which is: is government contracting helping with mission fulfillment?

There are two parts to this problem. Government contracting with any nonprofit organization can cause competition and of course just trying to end mental illnesses. The government alone has been trying to address the mental illness problem for a long time, even looking for nonprofit organizations to help. The relationship between nonprofit organizations and the government needs to be a cooperative, understanding unit to help with mental illness. The goal is not to just have an effective collaboration but to work most effectively towards the goal of helping anyone in need of struggling with mental health.

Mental Health in America Today

The term mental health is used frequently in many different contexts and terms, and there is not one single definition of it. A general definition of mental health is related to the health and functioning of the mind (Peterson, 2019). Many people conflate mental health and mental illness, which is not correct, they have two different meanings. A person can have poor mental health but not be diagnosed with a mental illness. Likewise, a person can be diagnosed with a mental illness but sometimes have periods of physical, mental, and social well-being. Mental health is not necessarily good or bad while mental illness conveys something is wrong. Mental illness is a state of mental health.

Mental health is so important due to how much it impacts our daily lives, affecting everything from how we feel, to how we think, and how we act. Everything we do is affected by our mental health, including how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices (CDC, 2021). Mental health also has an affect at every stage of life from childhood to

adulthood. Mental health also has a connection to physical health as a mental illness such as depression increases the risk of diabetes, heart disease, and stroke (CDC, 2021). Similarly, the presence of chronic conditions can increase a person's risk for mental illness (CDC, 2021).

As previously stated, mental illnesses are very common. More than 50% of Americans will be diagnosed with a mental illness some point in their lifetime (CDC, 2021). And it is not only common in adults: one in five children have had a seriously debilitating mental illness (CDC, 2021). We are still learning why mental illness is so prevalent in our country. This illness is not easy to fix and seems to just keep growing.

There are nearly 300 mental disorders known to the medical field (HealthDirect, 2020). This is one factor that complicates treatment as the number of different disorders means a great number of potential treatments. There are seven main groups of mental disorders: mood disorders, anxiety disorders, personality disorders, psychotic disorders, eating disorders, trauma-related disorders, and substance-abuse disorders (HealthDirect, 2020). Not only is there a lot of different treatments but not one person is the same, everyone reacts differently to treatments, therefore adding more challenges. As you can see, there are many different moving pieces in the mental health community that make the goal of helping treat this terrible illness very difficult to achieve.

Government Collaboration with Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations are trying to find the best partners who share similar goals and missions to achieve the best program and services. This means looking for companies, schools, public services, other organizations, and government to make a partnership or alliance with. Almost all successful nonprofit organizations and businesses are engaged in multiple

collaborations. Many people think a collaboration is just a "nice thing to do;" however it is a critical strategic strategy for generating better value for the organization or business. David O. Renz defines collaborative value as "the transitory and enduring multidimensional benefits relative to the costs that are generated due to the interaction of collaborators and that accrue to organizations, individuals, and society," (Austin, 2016, as cited in Renz et al., 2016). The number of organizations using the collaboration process has been growing in the past forty years.

One way a nonprofit organization collaborates with the government is through a contract. This is where both parties spell out specifically how they want to organize the collaboration, including any financial or service agreements, and definitions such as what the fulfillment of contract guidelines will look like. The reason for the interest specifically in government collaboration has many factors. Pressure in costs for public services is reduced, volunteerism becomes more apparent, social innovation is increase, and community engagement is elevated (Smith, 2016 as cited in Renz et al., 2016). Not only does the possibility of collaborative agreement interest nonprofit organizations, but it also intrigues policymakers. Nonprofit organizations are often diverse and local. This means policymakers can enhance the responsiveness and representativeness of public services. This will help them make a deeper impact on urgent social problems or concerns (Smith, 2016 as cited in Renz et al., 2016).

Throughout the whole history of government collaboration adaptation has been apparent. Early on, nonprofit organizations were reluctant to accept government contracts due to the thought that collaboration may undermine the mission of nonprofits; nonprofit organizations were worried that the government would be more concerned about the financial side of the collaboration than the service side. Ultimately, nonprofit agencies eventually accepted government contracts (Smith, 2016 as cited in Renz et al., 2016) because initially, federal

revenues did not have strict accountability requirements. Many organizations could agree to the contract without having to worry too much about compliance requirements, thus letting the organization manage its own agency just as it was prior to the contract. Examples of nonprofit-government collaboration can be seen as early as the 1960s. The idea expanded in the 1970s due to the success of the grants and few accountability requirements (Smith, 2016. as cited in Renz et al., 2016). After several years more competition for grants developed, leading to more changes in accountability requirements. More organizations started to agree to some government contract requirements, often changing the autonomy of those nonprofits, which leads us to ask what the benefit of collaboration is for nonprofits currently.

Significance for Nonprofit Community

Nonprofit organizations are trying their best to reach their missions and goals as best they can. Mental illness nonprofit organizations are working to fight against the disease, with many different collaborations and alliances. There has been concern that when nonprofit organizations collaborate with the government, mission fulfillment is diluted or shifted due to requirements made in contract and in competition with other nonprofit organizations instead of coming together to fight for similar mission.

This is very significant because if mission fulfillment is not staying strong due to bad collaborations, mental health help will not be as effective. The concerns being brought up may also just be being careful to make sure everything is correct, there could be no shift in reaching for the goals with government collaboration, but it is still not crystal clear. For mental health nonprofit organizations to continue with government collaboration there must be no worries about the changing autonomy of organization.

Preview of Study

The purpose of this study is to understand what nonprofit organizations and government agencies are doing to help the mental health community. The study aims to identify specific obstacles that small nonprofit organizations face when trying to collaborate with government in contracts. The expectation is to find organizations in Minnesota that both have government collaboration and do not have government collaboration. The study will identify how both organizations are moving smoothly in their mission fulfillment strategic plans. In the end, the hope is to answer the question: what is the relationship between government collaboration and mission fulfillment, specifically in mental health nonprofit organizations?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Nonprofit collaboration is not a simple system that has a step-by-step guideline or plan as to how to have an effective partnership. In fact, there are more challenges than one would think in obtaining a perfect collaboration. In David O. Renz book *The Jossey-Bass Handbook of Nonprofit Leadership and Management,* Stephen Rathgeb Smith talks about how there are many challenges nonprofit organizations face when trying to collaborate with government. Smith writes:

> Government contracting can have profound effects on nonprofit organization governance, program innovation, and the relationship of agencies to their local communities and the citizens using their services (Smith, 2016, as cited in Renz et al., 2016).

However, Smith notes that many nonprofit organizations still look to government contracts to help with many different challenges. Government contracts can offer greater resources for the organization, improved legitimacy to the organization's community, and the potential to have broader and deeper impact on urgent social problems or concerns. Government agencies, too, have interest in the success of their nonprofit collaborators as nonprofits represent diverse communities and local citizens and can allow policymakers to enhance their responsiveness and the representativeness of public services (Smith, 2016, as cited in Renz et al., 2016).

Mental health has been a crisis for a long time and many nonprofit organizations are trying their best to address the needs of communities who are struggling. Has the government been helping with the crisis? Are nonprofit organizations collaborating with them to help? From time to time, many people have mental health concerns, but a mental health concern can become a mental illness when the signs become ongoing which causes frequent stress and affect your

ability to function. One in five U.S. adults experience mental illness each year. One in six youth

aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year (National Alliance on Mental Illness,

2021). No one is alone in this terrible disorder and help can be found for anyone experiencing

mental illness.

Mental Health

Poverty seems to be linked with mental health. Adults who have a mental illness often

do not know where to go for help, due to their current state of income. Adults with mental

illnesses whose income is under the poverty line are often uninsured or enroll in government

funded programs as well as relying on nonprofit organizations (Han, 2015). Furthermore, severe

mental illness increases the likelihood of experiencing poverty (Santiago, 2013). If someone

who is struggling financially, they be more susceptible to mental illness issues sadly. Vice versa,

someone who is struggling mentally may head towards the poverty line. Not only is their mental

health being affected, their physical health, specifically in children, diminishes as well (Park,

2011). Research has shown that children's cognitive development does not reach their full

potential when dealing with low income and mental health. Therefore, high-quality mental

health services are particularly needed for low-income families (Park, 2011).

The variety of mental health disorders often makes diagnosis, which is needed for

treatment, difficult. Depression, alcohol use disorders, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorders

alone are present in 10% of the adult population (Parul, 2018). The need for treatment, therefore,

is great.

Treatment: Public Lens

Treatment for any mental illness varies from person to person. Even when the condition

is the same between two people, they each will have different experiences, needs, goals, and

objectives for treatment (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2021). This means it can be hard to find the right mixture of treatments in the recovery process. There is no set-in-stone perfect way to treat each mental illness. Thanks to innovations in the medical field, there are many different routes to choose from for medication and lifestyle adjustment, thus making wellness a very reachable reality.

There are four main tools that can help on the road to wellness: medication, counseling/therapy, social support, and education (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2021). Mental health medications come with a lot of hope and some risk. Psychiatric medications influence the brain chemicals, regulating a person's emotions and thought patterns. Most medications are more effective when they are combined with psychotherapy. For example, some medications help depression which eases symptoms like loss of energy and lack of concentration. This will help the patient to engage more in talking and to have more energy. However, these are all hypotheticals. Not one person has responded the same way as another with the medication. It can be difficult to decide on which medication may work better for the person. Therefore, it is very important to talk with a doctor to go over records making sure the medication is the perfect fit. This is also the time to go over the risks if the medication does not go to plan. Sometimes the medication does not work, resulting in a relapse making it important to have your recovery treatment team around while going through it.

Psychotherapy, like talk therapy, is when a person speaks with a therapist in a safe environment to explore and understand feelings and behaviors while gaining coping skills. The National Alliance of Mental Illness says their studies have found psychotherapy to be effective at improving symptoms in a wide array of mental illnesses. As previously mentioned, many studies show having both psychotherapy and medication in your recovery treatment plan tends to be

more effective (Mayo Clinic, 2021). During talk therapy sessions the conversation is usually led by the therapist and can touch on topics such as past or current problems. The therapist is there to make connections and to provide insight for the person. This is so the patient can learn more about themselves as well how to cope with their problems.

Social support and education are two-fold when it comes to mental illness. The recovery treatment team and the person with the mental illness should together seek to learn more about the condition they are dealing with. The best way to do that is to talk with mental health professionals. The first professional is a psychologist, who is trained to evaluate a person's mental health using clinical interviews. They can make diagnoses and provide treatment and education. There are of course therapists, counselors, and clinicians who are trained to evaluate a person's mental health. These professionals can lead to symptom reduction and better ways of thinking (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2021). Like psychologists, psychiatrists can also diagnose mental health conditions. They are licensed medical doctors who have complete psychiatric training. Some have even completed additional training in child and adolescent mental health.

These treatments are different pieces to the puzzle, but as you can see there is a lot of intertwining with the treatments. Every person who is dealing with mental illness can just use one of these treatments, but many seem to go together, like medication and therapist sessions, for example. One person can use every single treatment in the doctor's suggestions and can work great while another can just use one treatment and eventually reach wellness. It all comes down to how the person reacts to each scenario; the recovery team needs to figure out what is working and what is not, then continue with the right path to quickly reach wellness.

Treatment: Nonprofit Organization Lens

Nonprofit organizations have been working in the mental health field since the late 1940s (Karlsson, 2012). What is their role and how do they impact the lives of people dealing with mental health? Nonprofit organizations in general advocate for prevention services, symptom prevention, and plans of action to decrease the course of mental health. Many nonprofit organizations use the basic of nonprofits through volunteering and mutual support through community engagement. Throughout their history some have had the ambition to change laws, public policies, and mental health practices (Karlsson, 2012). Nonprofit organizations can be either, or both a voice for the mental health suffering and an organization providing services for their members.

Service-oriented organizations use professional help in their strategic plan instead of using volunteers and personal experience (Karlsson, 2012). They tend to be stronger, easier to sustain, as their structure relies on being in collaboration with mental health agencies. For example, some nonprofit organizations are connected with a university since there may be many cases of mental illnesses around campus. Basically, the goal of a service-oriented organization is to find other groups who have the same goals as the mental health nonprofit to create an extended professional model that will diminish the course of mental health.

When the mental health nonprofit organization is more of a voice for mental health patients, the organization often uses personal experience, particularly the method of mutual sharing. This type of organization, like a service-oriented organization, is based on ideology or set of ideas. The difference between the two is the voice-oriented often challenge professional knowledge. This means they question their actions to identify whether they are going in the right path with their policies or interpretations (Karlsson and Markström, 2012). This enables them to

use the professionals most effectively and allows them to be a voice for the patients they work with, and to advocate for change.

Magnus Karlsson and Urban Markström, in an article entitled "Non-Profit Organizations in Mental Health: Their Roles as seen in Research", seek to identify the most common role for nonprofit organizations. Do they mostly take a service-oriented approach, or do they try to advocate for the people asking for help? Karlsson and Markström went through many databases looking for key terms that fit the mold for mental health nonprofit organizations. The two observed whether the organization in question provided services or if they were more of a voice, lobbying for specific interests. After identifying 127 articles, the two researchers concluded that most nonprofit organizations focused on collaborating with other public services, service-oriented organizations (Karlsson and Markström, 2012). They even argue that many of the organizations in the peer-reviewed articles are as good as, or even better than, existing public services. This means nonprofit organizations have been moving in the right direction with their treatment for those who need help.

Nonprofit Collaboration

Another problem is that people may know what treatments they need but are not able to obtain them due to a lack of insurance or finances. Nonprofit organizations or government funded programs can fill that void, although it is a difficult task. Not every business or ally is a perfect fit for a collaboration. A useful framework for identifying effective collaborations may be the Collaborative Value Creation Framework (Austin, 2016, as cited in Renz et al., 2016):
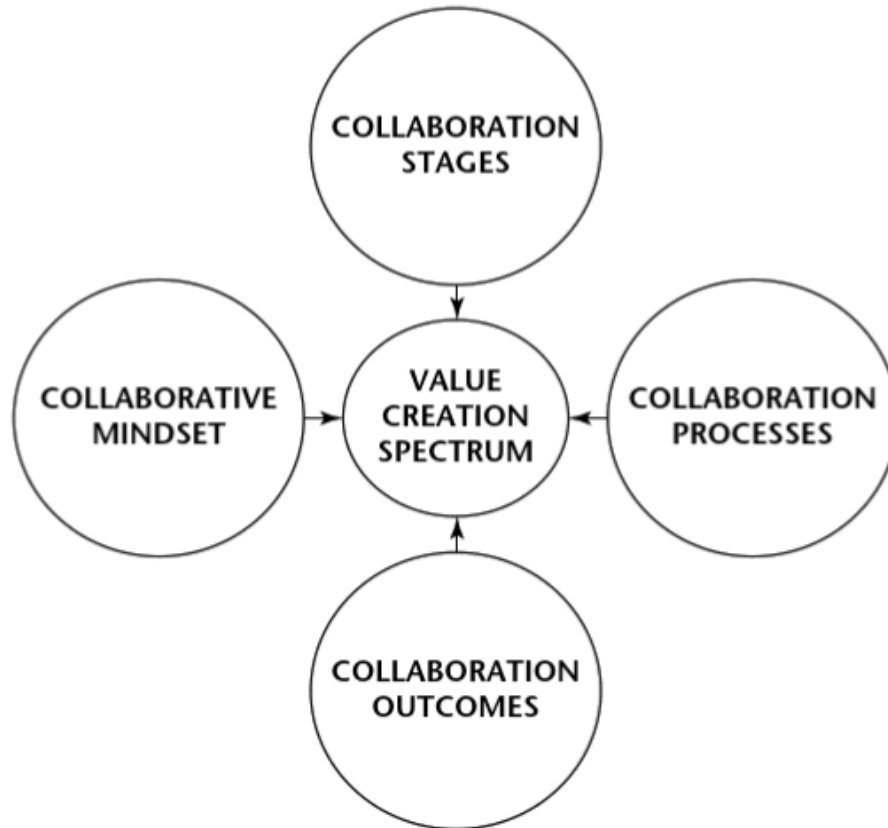
This collaboration framework provides organizations with an analytical and managerial tool to create more value in their collaboration along with enabling a deeper understanding of the process (Austin, 2016 as cited in Renz et al., 2016). This framework has five components: value creation spectrum, collaborative value mindset, collaboration stages, collaboration processes, and collaboration outcomes.

The value creation spectrum is where the value is. For an organization to get the best value they must ask two fundamental questions: where does the value come from and what kinds of value get created? To answer these questions the organization needs to pull the four outer circles to find the perfect values for their collaboration.

The collaborative value mindset unpacks the value and mindset of the partner. The businesses and companies involved in the collaboration have many different ideas and plans that either may fit or not with the nonprofit organization. These mindsets have seven dimensions:

1. Breadth, which means how broad is the potential view of the value offered by collaborator.

2. Interrelatedness, looking at each potential view of the collaborator's view of relatedness of all potential types of value.

3. Compatibility, that is, how compatible are the views of the collaborator?

4. Focus, which means the broadness or narrowness of collaborator's perspective of the values.

5. Outlays, how are the resources in collaborator's view?

6. Timeframe, making sure the expected time frame fits both or multiple parties.

7. Lastly, purpose, are the purposes and perceptions made with the collaborators the same? This is the starting point to making a great collaboration.

The collaboration stages are where partners' cross-sector interactions examine the nature of the relationship according to each value. All parties involved talk through what their plans are for providing for collaboration and how value may change throughout the process.

Collaboration processes and outcomes are where the gears and engines are. Processes are made through the literal collaboration of the partners. Finalizing the values put together through each of partners' goals and missions. Then, implementing the values through the processes made by selection after formation. The outcomes are then identified out by defining exactly who benefits, what value is produced, and what are the key measurements. This would then end the

roadmap to maximize the value of making a great collaboration through organizations and businesses that have the same goals in mind (Austin, 2016, as cited in Renz et al., 2016).

Mental health nonprofit organizations can find partners through this roadmap, both in a service-oriented or voice-oriented framework. There are many hospitals, schools, and services that value mental health, which means nonprofits can collaborate accordingly. This collaboration is the main reason why nonprofit organizations have been known to either be just as good as public treatment or even better than public treatment. If nonprofit organizations can extend this trend of collaboration, more people can obtain the help they need.

Past research also has found what makes cross-sector collaboration most effective. Smith (2020) identifies four basic areas: a supportive system, good structure of collaboration, strong internal processes, and having leaders in partnership. A supportive system context is first needed for an effective collaboration. When there is an environment involving more support towards the goals of the network more action is shown along with network capacity bolstering. Second, the structure of the collaboration needs to be in good alignment with goals. This also depends on the size of the networks involved, large complex networks (nonprofit and government serving nation) should have a different system than small, less diverse networks (nonprofit and government serving local community). Third, one of the most important areas, it is pivotal that the network has strong internal processes. Communication, shared understanding, and trust are what build a great partnership and team. Without these there is no partnership and just becomes more of a job compared to passion and goal-driven support. Lastly, leaders of the partnership are critical in the success of the management of the collaboration and in the executing of services. However, with many parties involved, for each one there needs to be an identified leader whom

everyone can trust, making sure tasks are staying on track along with goals being reached in the right way (Mosley, 2021).

Government Contracts

As, previously stated, collaborating with the government is not an easy task. The values may be aligned when going through the process of the collaboration, but there is more to success when it comes to government contracts. One of the first barriers that needs to be addressed is competition. There are now high levels of expectation based on performance for nonprofits in government contracts (Smith, 2016, as cited in Renz et al., 2016). Many contracts the government willingly approves are performance-based. Often, the government specifies the program targets for the nonprofits. If the organization does not reach the specified target, there will be no reimbursement for the services being done (Desai, 2012). This may be a challenge for the nonprofit organization, but government is not trying to burden the organization, but to give the organization more drive to reach for success. The payments for the contact drive the vendors to reach the desired outcomes instead of just reaching for the best they can do. This way they have a goal in mind, not just assuming they reached their best with the government contract (Desai, 2012).

These performance-based contracts are a part of the movement called pay-for-success (Smith, 2016, as cited in Renz et al., 2016). This movement is not necessarily aligned with the purpose of the nonprofit organizations. There now is a monetary value on the services which may distract from the mission of the nonprofit organization, instead of allowing them to maintain a singular focus on providing services, regardless of outcome. Therefore, the pay for success movement is very controversial in the nonprofit organization community. There is the positive

of getting the revenue needed for the programs to get the services you want, but on the downside, there may be termination if the definition "success" is not met.

Due to the fright of not reaching the specified target from the government, nonprofit organizations have an incentive to compete with their fellow agencies to grow through additional contracts (Smith, 2016, as cited in Renz et al., 2016). These additional contracts are mostly for funding so both organizations can then reach the success the contract requires. This competition sounds like a for-profit scheme where they need to find the best funding and most successful organizations around to just reach the requirement in the contract.

Many current forms of government support are tied to the client rather than the agency. This means the agency or organization that is a part of the contract is reimbursed for providing the services to the client. The organization's reimbursement rate is only a vendor rate where the vendor rate is made at the start of the contract. This means the organization gets the vendor rate regardless of outcome, even if the services cost more than the vendor rate (Smith, 2016, as cited in Renz et al., 2016). One example is Medicaid. The vendor rates encourage competition for more clients so they can get more reimbursement since more clients means more services, which means more reimbursement. This competition can sway nonprofit organizations into the wrong mindset of getting more services not for the mission, rather for getting vendor rates for reimbursement of the government contract.

Conclusion

Program and service effectiveness is the main goal of any nonprofit organization. In the case of mental health nonprofit organizations, the mission is addressing the needs of individuals who are struggling with serious mental illness. The treatment for this disease is complex, but any small amount of treatment helps and can be given to the less fortunate through the great

collaborations of nonprofit organizations along with the government. Nonprofit organizations in the mental health community have evolved to fit the many needs of mental health patients. Service-oriented organizations are here to help with those who are struggling on a professional, hands-on basis, giving members of the organization who either can't afford insurance or health care the professional help they ask for. Also, nonprofit organizations are here to help give a voice for mental health patients who want a different way to be treated or wanting to challenge health professionals to keep learning and making their knowledge of the disease even bigger.

Nonprofit organizations have been able to evolve and continue to do this through collaboration of other agencies or values. These values have a strict process that can't be taken lightly and need to be a part of any strategic plan. This process can be obtained through the use of the Collaborative Value Creation Framework. This framework gives all nonprofit organizations a tool to reach a great agreement with other agencies who have the same values, making both parties even stronger, and allowing both parties to fulfill their mission and goals.

The government does help mental health nonprofit organizations through contracts, allowing nonprofit organizations to obtain the revenue needed for their services. However, these government contracts have been pushing the organizations in more competitive scenarios which make organizations question which mission they should be reaching: the mission of their own organization of program and service effectiveness or the mission of reaching the "success" requirement needed for reimbursement of government contracts. Nonprofits will need to continue to adapt in both ways of program effectiveness and organization sustainability and competitiveness. Therefore, nonprofit organizations, specifically mental health nonprofit organizations, may have a different looking framework in their future.

Chapter 3: Method and Findings

Introduction

Since the 1990s, nonprofit organizations have been utilizing cross-sector collaboration (Renz, 2016). This policy trend is where nonprofits and government come together to address problems that cannot be solved by one sector alone (Mosley, 2021). Then comes the question, is there any relationship between government collaboration and mission fulfillment? This is not a simple yes or no answer. There are some judgement factors to be considered when analyzing the data. Most of the data will be qualitative data in the form of categorized interview content, this will help identify similar characteristics and traits between mental health organizations and government contracts. The goal will be to find themes that will determine whether government collaboration is hindering or helping mental health organizations achieve their mission.

Method

The idea of the study was to interview mental health nonprofit organizations asking questions to collect data about their collaborations, including not just partnerships with the government, but also whoever they find fit to help them achieve their goals. We can then compare the two different collaborations (governmental and non-governmental) to see if there is a gap between the two. One of the best ways to collect this data is to do interviews through online video conferences with the nonprofit employees. This gave a great insight to how their systems work. The questions also find how they feel about their partnerships and collaborations, the limitations, and the benefits from each relationship. Some questions included: What was the process like when collaborating with the government? Did it go smoothly or complicated? Overall was the process with the collaboration worth it in terms of reaching your mission? These

questions along with some more similar ones can help identify if there is a connection with mission fulfillment and government collaboration.

The sources of the data collected include mental health nonprofit organizations in the Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota area and their employees. The organizations were chosen based on location, lifespan of organization, and the fact that their mission included mental health. The employees asked to question for the interview must be in a director type role, so that the person interviewed had a first-hand understanding of the organization's grants, contracts, and partnerships. The final sample then was a mental health nonprofit organization located in Minneapolis/St. Paul area with a lifespan of 5 plus years. The employees identified for data included director of operations, executive director, and human resource members.

Once organizations were identified, many did not respond to the recruiting message sent out to see if organizations would like to participate. Some could not find time in their busy schedules to interview so some organizations asked if they could respond to questions through email. The responses in email did not get as deep of an understanding to the answers as desired. Even in the video conference interviews there were challenges due to the awkwardness of not being in person. Lastly, like many other research studies, there was hope of more data being found. There were only four responses to the recruiting efforts, but only two eventually made it to the interview process with one canceling and another going dark.

After going through my method of reaching out to organizations for an interview, conducting the interview through Zoom, and hearing the subjects' answers on the questions there are some things that could have been done differently for maybe more of an effective project and data obtainment. Maybe instead of conducting a twenty-to-thirty-minute interview for each organization, a better route would have been to try using surveys, which may have enabled more

organizations to answer instead of seeing an email about an interview. Even doing both interviews and surveys may have optimized data collection.

Limitations

The fact that all the nonprofit organizations included in the study were located in Minnesota may have been a limitation. Every state government has different regulations and ordinances for contracts with nonprofit organizations. Many nonprofits in one state could have a great experience with the government, while those in a different state with practically the same mission and contract have a terrible experience. For future research a study could be done comparing collaborations of nonprofits with different state governments to see if some states produce better collaborations for mission fulfillment compared to others.

The questions asked in the interview were a perfect fit for what the study was looking for, government collaboration and mission fulfillment. For future research when asking questions to the nonprofit organization, more questions about the organization's other collaborations that are non-governmental could be asked. In the current study there were questions asked about their other collaborations and how they have been going, but questions were not asked which compared the two. Another limitation in the interview process was the fact the interviews had to take place through videoconference. The conversation may have gone longer if the interview was face-to-face, thus getting a more understanding of the data collected.

Another limitation was the fact that organizations selected for inclusion in the research sample were more established, which may have skewed the data a little. Organizations which have been in existence for some time may have better chances at being approved for the contracts or grants being applied for, due to the staffing and size of the organization. It would be

interesting to see the involvement of organizations who have just started with government collaboration. There are standards for some government contracts and younger organizations may be just learning about them.

Finally, a significant limitation was the recent pandemic. The pandemic has changed a lot for organization's planning on certain funding scenarios and committing to government contracts due to the stay-at-home act. In the future when the pandemic is finally in the rear-view mirror, it would be interesting to see if collaboration with the government increases after everyone finally feels recovered, in an organizational standpoint, from the pandemic.

Themes and Findings

After reviewing the data collected from the interviews there have been some common themes in the answers given by the leaders in the nonprofit organizations. Both organizations asked has done some sort of collaboration with the state government. The biggest reason found as to why mental health nonprofit organizations rely on the government is funding. Insurance is one of the nig reasons along with medical assistance for the people involved in their services. One organization even said, "We try to get as many insurances as we can," (Director of Nonprofit Organization, 2021). Sustainability is a major key in nonprofit organizations. Every nonprofit wants to fulfill their mission to the best as their abilities while also being able to sustain their projects and services. All these services are not free so the organizations must budget and find ways to fund their actions. "Cost should never be a barrier to treatment," according to one child mental health nonprofit organization executive director.

The first theme of funding was found in both organization's interview another theme was the fact that every organization had some sort of positive news when dealing with government

grants or contracts. One organization made it clear that having this collaboration with the government does indeed help achieve their mission. This means whenever the grant or contract has been established with the nonprofit organization the service being paid for or given to the nonprofit organization has without a doubt made the organization closer to fulfilling its mission.

When asked if they would recommend other nonprofits who are working on mental health issues to collaborate with the government, both said yes. This is a good sign because researching on organizations and government collaboration before the data collection has shown some doubt. Competition and guidelines have shown to hinder organizations to apply for government contracts, thus stopping organizations from continuing with their services because of the money needed to carry on with the treatment. The data shows some support to hinderances due to the guidelines but not enough for these organizations to stop with applying to the collaborations. The data has also shown there has not been much competition with getting government contracts, but for sure has shown the guidelines have made mission fulfillment harder to reach. The reason being for less competition in government grants and contracts seems to be due to how in mental health nonprofit organizations there are not as many similar services and programs. For example, one organization provided services for people who have had brain damage while another provided services for child mental illnesses. This means once these organizations applied for grants there were not many other organizations with the same model as theirs applying for the same grant. Therefore, showing when a nonprofit organization has more specific missions it seems they have better success of not having much competition for government collaboration.

The process of government collaboration is not perfect. There are some negatives with the collaboration. Sometimes, when the contract lists off the guidelines the organization does not

understand clearly on what everything in the contract means. Then, when making sure they understand the contract clearly, it takes even more organizational time for a response as to confirmation of the guideline. One organization said when responding to a guideline "One person told me to do it this way while another told me the complete opposite way when checking off a guideline to the contract." Some organizations said there are mandates the government gives that aren't funded for so the organization itself must figure out how to fund this operation.

Conclusion

Is government collaboration helping mental health nonprofit organizations reach their mission? The answer is still not completely defined. Many organizations show the government has shown signs of helping, but do the guidelines negatives, such as more stress on the nonprofit organizations, outweigh the positive? Mental health organizations will always need help due to how expensive mental health treatment is, along with how little the world knows about these treatments. Having more external requirements to fulfill contract and grant obligations only slows the process down.

However, the data shows many positive signs with the government collaboration. It appears as if nonprofit organizations need these collaborations to sustain their services. Having all the organizations say they recommend any organization to collaborate with the government is great. However, some said to make sure to look elsewhere in collaboration or partnership, proving that collaboration is one of the best ways to fulfill one's mission whether it is with the government or not. This should be one of the biggest takeaways for all in the nonprofit community. Fulfilling a mission alone is probably not the best, efficient route. Having a support system who is willing to help, give support, and collaborate with you helps immensely.

       Funding seems to be the biggest motivation in government collaboration. When a nonprofit is in dire straits the organization may look for government grants and contracts because it may be a great way to both have help for funding and fulfilling their mission. This is because government collaboration seems to give what they want for finances and services. Nonprofit organizations just need to be aware that some of the guidelines of the government contract may outweigh the positives. The answer to the research question needs to both be researched on more and talked about more in order to be confident in saying government collaboration helps with mission fulfillment.

Chapter 4: Discussion

Introduction

With the problem of mental illness being so hard to treat, having as much help as possible is needed to reach the goals of helping with this illness. Nonprofit organizations look for many different partners and collaborations to find the most efficient route to reach missions. Again, the government is one of the most used partners in any organization, specifically mental health nonprofit organizations. Has this collaboration of government and mental health nonprofits been heading in the right direction, or has it been more of a problem than an asset?

The project was designed to explore the connection between government collaboration and mission fulfillment. Before the project many other studies have shown how this collaboration has both helped and hurt nonprofits. Studies have shown the great impact the government can give by the funding provided, knowledge given, and treatment founded. Other studies have shown there has been a competitive culture brought up in the nonprofit community due to the effect government contracts have on their funding and sustainability. Every organization seems to want these contracts so the competition to obtain them becomes apparent. This of course is the opposite of what nonprofit organizations should be worrying about, not "Will we get this grant?" but instead, "How do we achieve our mission?" The interviews with nonprofit organizations have provided some evidence.

Findings Recap

Going through the interviews there have been several clear themes shown. Funding seems to be apparent in every organization's reasoning for having a collaboration with the government; in fact, it is often one of the main reasonings. This is where the previous studies of showing competition can be seen. Every organization needs to be sustainably found in order to

reach their missions. The point of cost should not be a barrier to any organization's treatment, meaning it is not strange how there are so many organizations wanting to collaborate with the government.

Another theme found in the interviews showed the benefits in government collaboration. Every organization interviewed had something positive to say about mission fulfillment related to the partnership with the government. One suggested they would not be prospering now without the help they have received. Therefore, government collaboration can be very important for any organization when trying to achieve their mission. As might be expected, having a partnership that helps immensely with goals does not mean the collaborating organization will just give the nonprofit organization everything they want for nothing. More work comes with the partnership, for example, the government will give guidelines in the contract so certain will be met. Succession in collaboration comes down to finding the right contract and agreement for both parties.

Lastly, another theme was how whenever the question came up suggesting a partnership with the government, every time an organization was interviewed, they said yes. While there may be some hiccups along the way that any organization will have, it turns out to often be the right decision due to how things end up with the collaboration, providing more steps towards mission fulfillment.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings of the project bring many different interpretations for how nonprofit organizations, communities, and people should analyze collaborations. It seems the findings are a good sign for organizations who have been involved in collaboration for a long time. Due to how the organizations reacted to the questions it seems this collaboration tactic should continue.

The organizations represented in this study seem to love their partnership and have been making strides to their mission for many years now while having the government contracts with them for most of the ride.

The program design of looking for a partnership with the government seems to be working. If mental health organizations know there has been big strides to mission fulfillment this process should continue. The only thing that seems to be hindering government collaboration, for those who were studied, are when guidelines need to be met for the government to carry on with whatever the contract entails. Organizations sometimes have trouble with certain measures needing to be met, like money guidelines for when funding is provided, or certain requirements for how things are done with the organization's services.

Implications

The implications for the findings in this research can relate to many groups in the nonprofit, mental health community. For starters if anyone who is in the nonprofit field needs any sort of help with mission fulfillment, asking the government can be a huge addition to their strategic planning. Organizations can stay afloat when times are tough, the services will continue and sustain for long periods if the organization can meet guidelines, and making sure mission stays on the right path is the end all be all for any nonprofit organization. The reason these conclusions can be seen are thanks to organizations who have stuck through the hard process of collaboration. It is not easy, and the organizations interviewed have been going for at least 20 years, proving that this collaboration has been working. Now these conclusions can be assumed a different way too, meaning there are signs of hardships in mission fulfillment when partnering with the government. The evidence for this is how sometimes taking longer steps and adding more guidelines, makes mission fulfillment harder to reach. Therefore, making the

problem worse. However, you must go by case-by-case because sure there may be guidelines, but there must be positives as to why the organization made the agreement in the first place to then do these requirements.

Another group to be impacted are stakeholders who are worried when hearing the word government and collaboration. Going into the research there were assumptions that there would be a lot of negatives heard in the interviews based on past studies. Participants did not speak about competition in the interviews and although concern about guidelines being hard was seen, it was not enough to end the partnership. If people who are just learning about collaborations and are trying to find good partner examples, specifically in the nonprofit community, the government can be a great ally.

Policy makers may be impacted as well when understanding this research. If they can see guidelines need to be agreed upon and understood, things can go even smoother in the nonprofits mission fulfillment goals. Executive directors in organizations want what is best for their mission and want it as effective as possible, if both sides can understand this in the partnership there may be no hinderance in government collaboration at all.

Future Research and Recommendations

Future research for the problem of government collaboration and mission fulfillment should start with trying the same idea, but focusing in a different community instead of mental health specifically. There may be more competition in different nonprofit communities. A different nonprofit organization could be looking for many different grants or contracts because so many are looking for the same ones as they are, whereas a mental health nonprofit specifically in brain damage does not have as many similar counterparts.

Another future research idea would be to try this study in a different state like Virginia. These organizations were in the state of Minnesota which obviously has different state guidelines. Another state may have totally different results when it comes to this problem, or they could have very similar results and thus the conclusions would be even more reliable.

One recommendation would be to interview as many organizations as possible; having a limited amount respond did not find as many themes as wanted, but it did show conclusive ones. Having more subjects could provide more evidence to the opposite side of these conclusions which would only help future program designs.

Future Considerations

As far as next steps organizations should continue with this collaboration and try to make sure guidelines are 100% understood and agreed upon. Nonprofit organizations do not want to slow down on reaching their mission. If everyone stays fully committed and gets what both sides of the collaboration want, the mission could be reached even sooner. The next steps for addressing the mental health problem should include the government. It seems the tools they have given to the organizations have helped more than hurt. However, more research should be done to see if that is totally true, as in seeing if there is a better, more efficient strategic plan than a government collaboration. This does not mean nonprofit organizations should stop these partnerships due to not knowing fully if there is a complete link to mission fulfillment, because there are signs of it working.

Conclusion

Mental illness is a problem in the United States that will not be going anytime soon. The government should understand this and help as best as possible when it comes to services and treatment for this illness. Nonprofit organizations are fighting as hard as they can to help

patients who are hurting. Both parties mentioned want to work together and have been working together.

Mission fulfillment in nonprofit organizations is a way to see if it has been working. When certain organizations say themselves, it has been a great success, it shows signs of a great collaboration. Now of course that is just two organizations. No one will be able to see if every single nonprofit organization in the mental health community has the same opinions on the matter. More research is needed to determine a link between mission fulfillment and government collaboration, there can be answers as to why there are great partnerships and why there are bad partnerships. Then, the process of applying improvements to those that are bad and continuing with those that are good, will make nonprofit organizations more efficient and help diminish the mental health crisis.

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