



Wisconsin Partnership Program

University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health

MEASURING OUR PROGRESS: THE WISCONSIN PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM EVALUATION

A report by the Evaluation Implementation Subcommittee
of the Medical Education and Research Committee and the Oversight and Advisory Committee

December 3, 2008

University of Wisconsin
School of Medicine and Public Health
The Wisconsin Partnership Program

November 19, 2008

On behalf of the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, it is my pleasure to present this comprehensive evaluation of the Wisconsin Partnership Program (WPP). The purpose of this evaluation is to measure the progress of the WPP toward achieving its vision of making Wisconsin a healthier state for all. As chair of the Evaluation Implementation Subcommittee and as a member of the two governing committees of the WPP, the Oversight and Advisory Committee and Medical Education and Research Committee, I assure you that this evaluation report represents the work of many individuals who contributed countless hours in thoughtful deliberation.

The report represents our commitment to be accountable, transparent, and accessible to the people of Wisconsin and to ensure that we are making the best choices for the use of this valuable resource. Through these efforts, we are reaching a better understanding of how the WPP can accomplish its mission to serve the public health needs of the state. The Program's investments in educating and training our workforce and identifying new and innovative solutions to health and health care has resulted in a more balanced focus on promoting health and treating disease.

We are grateful to the stakeholders interviewed for this report. They provided valuable insight into the Program's progress and effectiveness. It was most gratifying to hear comments from so many individuals who are close to the Program describe their enthusiasm:

"Being part of this is the most exciting thing that has ever happened to me. This is without question one of the most exciting things that I could imagine happening at any medical school in the country right now."

We greatly appreciate all of the individuals who responded to our public survey. Hundreds of people took the time to share their views on how to improve the program and our priorities over the next five years. The many thoughtful responses were indications of the high level of interest in and commitment to our purpose to make Wisconsin a healthier state for all.

This evaluation was a collaborative effort of the Medical Education and Research Committee and the Oversight and Advisory Committee. I am very proud of the work we have collectively done over the past year with committee members, Norman Drinkwater, PhD, Professor, Department of Oncology and Douglas N. Mormann, MS, Director, La Crosse County Health Department. I would personally like to thank Katharine C Lyall, PhD, former president of the University of Wisconsin System and David H. Chestnut, MD, Associate Dean for the Western Academic Campus at Gundersen Lutheran for their thoughtful, responsive, and insightful leadership. We also worked very closely with our evaluation experts Paul Moberg, PhD, Senior Scientist, Department of Population Health Sciences and Maureen A. Smith, MD, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Population at the School of Medicine and Public Health. Without the support and helpful guidance of all these individuals, this report could not have been accomplished.

This evaluation will help guide the WPP for many years to come. And, most importantly, it will aid in the development of a fully integrated School of Medicine and Public Health which, we hope will become, a national model highlighting the importance of both health and health care in creating healthy populations. I trust that you will find this report useful and informative.

Sincerely,



Susan L. Goelzer, MD, MS, CPE
Chair, Professor of Anesthesiology and Population Health Sciences

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To the Joint Oversight and Advisory Committee (OAC) and Medical Education and Research Committee (MERC) Evaluation Planning and Implementation Subcommittees for their time and expertise towards the development and implementation of this Evaluation.

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We also wish to acknowledge the following individuals who contributed to the evaluation:

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DISCLAIMER

Statements or conclusions made by individuals interviewed through this evaluation do not reflect the opinions of the UW School of Medicine and Public Health or the WPP.

Executive Summary

Introduction and Overview

The Wisconsin Partnership Program (WPP) has concluded a formative evaluation of progress toward achieving the goals of the 2004-2009 Five-Year Plan. This executive summary presents the main findings and recommendations of the WPP Evaluation Subcommittee. The Subcommittee analyzed the findings and created eleven central recommendations listed in the table at the end of this summary.

This evaluation report is very timely considering the current financial crisis facing the state and the Program. As we complete the writing of this report, the value of the WPP's endowment has declined, constraining grant making and the development of new initiatives in the short term. However, we remain dedicated to our vision to work in partnership with Wisconsin communities towards becoming a healthier state for all. We will need to monitor our activities carefully by strategically focusing our investments in the most needed areas. We believe that this evaluation will help to provide guidance for those strategic decisions.

This evaluation reports on progress in the implementation of WPP program strategies and processes. It also provides preliminary information on reported grant outcomes. The recommendations emerging from this work will help guide program improvement efforts to increase the effectiveness of our work, and ultimately achieve greater impact. The scope of the evaluation covered in this report includes the following activities:

- Examination of major program strategies and whether key benchmarks were met
- A descriptive and financial analysis of grants and funding decisions in specified areas
- Attitudes and perceptions of UW SMPH faculty and staff, including department chairs, center directors, scientists, and external groups, including providers, students, policymakers, health leaders, and community grantees on the program's performance and priorities in specified areas
- A qualitative review of program documents and individual grant project files
- An assessment of the partnership model as a strategy for the community grant program
- Attitudes and perceptions of community grantees and their faculty or academic partners

- Financial and operations audit of grant management, compliance, program governance and administration
- Baseline assessment of grantee progress towards program objectives
- Summary assessment and reporting of concluding grant results

A major strategy for this evaluation was to gather information on the perceptions, opinions and attitudes of our key audiences within the School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), the University of Wisconsin and other external groups. The extensive stakeholder input reflects our commitment to be responsive to the people of Wisconsin, to be better informed, and to help us establish meaningful partnerships crucial to our success. We accomplished this through intensive interviews with numerous stakeholders representative of our primary audiences, including grantees. Additionally, we gathered information from many individuals through a public comment questionnaire, who shared their views on what our priorities should be and how to improve the program over the next five years.

This evaluation report consists of three major sections.

1. Part One – presents the evaluation of five strategic program areas to measure progress towards stated goals.
2. Part Two – presents the findings from stakeholders on the WPP grant process and priorities.
3. Part Three – reports on collective grant outcomes of all WPP awards that ended as of June 2008.

Program Description

The WPP is dedicated to improving the health of the people of Wisconsin through its grant making programs for public health, medical education, and research projects. The SMPH created the WPP from an endowment provided by Blue Cross/Blue Shield United of Wisconsin in 2004. The program uses income from the endowment to support our mission to serve the health needs of the people of Wisconsin and to close the gap in health disparities.

The WPP operates under a Five-Year Plan that provides a strategic framework for the use of the funds. The Plan is designed to focus on Wisconsin's unique health needs to ensure that the vision of making Wisconsin a healthier state for all becomes a reality. Since 2004, the WPP has awarded approximately \$69 million to SMPH faculty and Wisconsin governmental or non-profit organizations.

The WPP conducts its activities through the Oversight and Advisory Committee (OAC) and the Medical Education and Research Committee (MERC). The OAC funds community academic health partnerships and public health education and training initiatives. The MERC funds medical education and research initiatives that advance population health.

Evaluation Background

The WPP began a comprehensive evaluation planning process in 2006 with an evaluation advisory group of OAC and MERC members, faculty leaders and advisors, and program staff. In 2007, OAC and MERC members approved the evaluation plan developed by the advisory group. The plan's purpose was to assess progress in the implementation of strategic focus areas and to provide guidance for future planning.

The specific evaluation aims were to:

- Strengthen program-wide implementation
- Offer new information about the effectiveness of funding decisions
- Advise on the most effective forms of fund allocation
- Provide direct evidence of program effectiveness
- Assist the program in fulfilling its fiduciary and oversight responsibility
- Inform the decision-making process for future funding initiatives, including further refinement of the WPP's grant making strategies

Audiences

The primary audiences for this evaluation are the OAC and MERC, the faculty and staff of the UW SMPH, UW-Madison, the UW System Board of Regents, the Wisconsin United for Health Foundation, and the UW Foundation. These groups will use the evaluation results to report progress and describe accomplishments to interested parties, including state government, elected officials, health care providers, state and local leaders in public and community health, and the public.

Evaluation Requirements

This report meets the WPP evaluation requirements, which include the Insurance Commissioner's Order, the 2004-2009 Five-Year Plan and expectations from WPP's internal and external audiences.

Methodology

The WPP based this evaluation on data collected from the first four years of implementation using the following five methodologies:

- Document review – WPP staff reviewed official program documents from 39 grant project files. The project files were comprised of applications, agreements, interim progress and final reports, correspondences, and any deliverables produced.
- Stakeholder Interviews – The UW Survey Center conducted interviews with 41 key stakeholders, including representatives from the SMPH leadership, departmental chairs and Center directors, UW faculty, healthcare system executives, WPP grant recipients, researchers, state and local government health officials and other external groups.
- Partnership Interviews – UW Madison researchers conducted interviews with 28 community grant representatives and their academic partners.
- Public Comment Questionnaire – The UW Survey Center developed an open-ended public perception questionnaire targeted to a broad statewide audience - 560 individuals responded to the questionnaire.
- Financial and Operations Review – The WPP leadership commissioned a financial and operation review of grant management and administration practices by two independent consulting firms.

Part One – Findings of the Evaluation of Strategic Program Areas

The WPP evaluated five strategic program areas as described below.

Advancing the Public Health System

The WPP has an important role as a statewide partner to advance the priorities of the state's public health agenda, *Healthiest Wisconsin 2010*. Over the past five years, the WPP has used the state health plan as a guide for funding programs. For this evaluation, we wanted to learn how funded grants tied to the plan's health priorities. We also wanted to understand the views of stakeholders on *Healthiest Wisconsin 2010*'s usefulness as a guide for making future funding decisions. The leading question for this evaluation area was "How is WPP supporting and advancing the capacity of Wisconsin's public health system through *Healthiest Wisconsin 2010*?"

A descriptive and financial analysis of all awards confirms that the WPP is making significant progress in supporting the state health plan, a major goal in the first five-years. The alignment shows both breadth and depth, with \$53 million or 77% of the total amount funded associated with 15 of the plan's 16 priorities.

The OAC's community grant program provides crucial financial resources for the implementation of *Healthiest Wisconsin 2010* and, for many organizations, it is a major source of support. One third of concluding OAC grants have made some baseline progress in measurable objectives for improving access to health care, environmental health, overweight and obesity, nutrition, tobacco use, and alcohol and other substance abuse.

Although there are widespread differences in a working knowledge of *Healthiest Wisconsin 2010*, stakeholders acknowledge and support WPP's efforts to help progress the state's public health priorities. However, stakeholders also view the plan as inherently broad in scope due to its comprehensive and statewide emphasis, thus providing limited strategic direction for the WPP. Stakeholders feel that WPP should continue to support, but place less emphasis, on the state health plan over the next five years. Instead, the WPP should define a narrower set of strategic priorities that align more closely with goals in public health.

UW School of Medicine and Public Health Transformation

The WPP plays a major role in the School's transformation to an integrated School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH). This transformation reflects the redirection from a traditional focus on medical treatment and clinical medicine to a broader focus on health promotion, disease prevention and the delivery of population health care. We wanted to learn from our key stakeholders and grantees, how the WPP is facilitating the transformation of the School. The leading evaluation question for this evaluation area was "How is WPP helping to advance the transformation to an integrated SMPH?"

Stakeholders believe that WPP is central to creating a transformed SMPH. The WPP funds are transforming the School in the following ways, and stakeholders agree that this is a good use of the funds.

- Changing the medical school's curriculum to include the incorporation of public health
- Creating new public health education programs

- Shifting the research agenda by emphasizing translational, applied and collaborative or interdisciplinary research
- Supporting the creation of connections with communities around the state

However, the School lacks the faculty needed to catalyze and sustain the transformation, and some are concerned about how the School's historical strengths in basic and clinical science will fare in a transformed School. Stakeholders noted the dilemma that existing projects, which need sustained funding to show results and realize a return on the money already invested, limit the program's capacity to change and chart a new course.

There is widespread recognition that WPP funding supports all facets of the transformation. Stakeholders believe that although the transformation is just underway, it will require a cultural shift within the institution and will only happen slowly over time. Few predict how long it would be before the school achieves a high degree of integration, but most agree it will take time and depend in part on the willingness of the faculty to embrace the transformation.

Balanced Research and Education Portfolio

A major WPP goal is to promote innovation by striving for a balanced portfolio, which seeks to distribute expenditures across a range of approaches for research and education projects. How funding support from WPP contributed to a balanced research and education portfolio over the past five years was a major interest. The leading evaluation question for this focus area was "To what extent are the MERC awards reflecting a range of research initiatives and education awards by type and approach with a timeline for realization of results and application to individual and population health?"

A descriptive and financial analysis of all MERC awards confirms that the WPP is making significant progress in supporting a broad and more balanced portfolio, a major goal in the first five-years. The MERC funding portfolio shows breadth and depth, with a range of approaches from education to basic, translational, and clinical research, and an increasing emphasis on applied public health. The majority (53%) of MERC award dollars, including education, indicate a less than three-year timeframe for implementation. This supports the Program's emphasis for both short and long-term approaches to innovation and discovery.

The Subcommittee agreed that it was important for the WPP to determine an optimal allocation and what it hopes to achieve through a balanced portfolio over the next five years. Therefore, a regular assessment of how the program allocates funds is important to determine research gaps across disciplines, approaches and timeframe. The WPP would benefit from a MERC framework for evaluating diverse portfolios of scientific work and education into the next five-years.

Community-Academic Partnership Model

The Community Academic Partnership Fund (CAPF) provides funding for community organizations and faculty to form partnerships that address local or statewide health issues. This evaluation explored how funding support from the WPP helped develop partnerships between academic and community partners. We designed the project to learn, from the perspective of both academic and community partners, what partnership characteristics were most likely to lead to success. The leading evaluation question for this area was, “To what extent is the CAPF promoting effective partnerships and how are the partnerships contributing to improvements in population health?”

UW Madison School of Nursing researchers conducted interviews with 28 community and academic partners participating in the community grants program. Overall, the community-academic partnership model is a valued and successful model for promoting collaborations by both community and academic partners. However, the evaluation also identified challenges inhibiting partnership success. The four major areas identified for program improvement include the following:

- Partnership Model – Partnership needs exceed available academic partner time
- Academic Partner “Fit” – Knowledge and expertise of academic partners do not always fit the needs of the community partner
- Partnership Development – Successful partnerships need time to develop and collaborative planning is important to the success of the partnership
- Program Implementation – Clarity of both partners’ needs, expectations, and constraints is important to the success of the project

Governance and Stewardship

The WPP requires the prudent use of financial resources, effective governance, and sufficient administrative oversight to manage the funds appropriately and in compliance with governing documents. We wanted to learn if we were meeting our mandated responsibly to oversee and manage funds and to learn which areas needed improved oversight or attention. The leading question for this evaluation area was, “How is the WPP ensuring sufficient governance and administrative oversight to manage the funds appropriately and effectively, and in compliance with the Order, the grant agreement and the Five-Year Plan?”

The WPP developed both a financial and operations review to assess deficiencies and offer advice for improving the WPP governance and grant management practices. According to the operational review, the WPP staff and the OAC and MERC are working to establish a strong administrative structure. The WPP has already implemented the majority of the operations review recommendations and others are in progress or under review. The financial review of the community grants program has resulted in WPP program management attention to assure that WPP expended funds appropriately. However, WPP could help support community organizations in grant management by providing additional guidance on expenditure policies, accounting best practices, Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures, and creating a clearer definition of the term “non-supplanting.”

Part Two – Learning from the Community - Priorities and Process

This section reports on stakeholder views of WPP funding priorities and suggestions for program improvement. The leading evaluation question was “Where should the WPP invest to advance population health over the next five years?”

For the evaluation, the UW Survey Center interviewed key stakeholders and disseminated a public comment questionnaire. The WPP encouraged an open and responsive approach by offering an anonymous platform for individuals to voice their opinions. As a result, the Program received substantial feedback from over 600 individuals who provided valuable comments and advice for WPP funding priorities over the next five-year period.

Both stakeholders and survey respondents agreed that WPP should prioritize funding towards a public health and prevention focus. The three primary approaches for funded projects include community-based strategies, research activities and educating the current and future workforce. Stakeholders and survey respondents varied in their reaction to recommended health topic areas, but overweight and obesity, alcohol and other substance abuse, mental health, tobacco use, access to health care and socioeconomic factors ranked among the highest.

WPP has a clear opportunity to enhance communications with both internal and external audiences to ensure that the Program is more visible and meaningful to partners and the broader public. Stakeholders acknowledge that WPP can do more to publicize its mission, goals, funding priorities and accomplishments to the School, the wider University campus, and to the public. Survey respondents defined this similarly in terms of improving the public's knowledge of grant opportunities, review criteria, and the results of funded projects.

However, stakeholders differed from survey respondents in suggesting that the WPP should invest resources into hiring new SMPH faculty with public health expertise, encourage medical students to pursue dual advanced degrees and to apply for the new faculty positions, continue to fund promising projects, and expand the Masters of Public Health program. This may reflect a greater stakeholder familiarity with the SMPH and the WPP than external audiences.

Part Three - Reporting on Grant Outcomes

This section reported the results of 39 concluded grants from 176 WPP grants awarded during the first five years. We wanted to learn if we were making collective progress on specific WPP objectives as benchmarks of progress. The evaluation included a WPP staff examination of project files and a written summary of grant outcomes and results. Staff also prepared a summary report of research and community grant awards that provided an important descriptive overview of all completed projects in key program areas.

Overall, the WPP is beginning to observe positive trends in grants that have concluded. The WPP appears to be making progress in soliciting and funding grants towards key performance measures such as contributions to the SMPH transformation, new collaborations, dissemination of grant results, matching or leveraging additional funds, and evidence of a sustained program. For example, the concluded awards have leveraged almost \$20 million from external funding sources, which is a six-fold increase from an original investment of \$3 million. In addition, 72% of the funded community grants reported being sustained one year after the project had ended.

Over the next five years, the WPP will increase its emphasis on measurable improvements in program related health outcomes. Enhanced efforts in the identification and collection of desired performance measurements will strengthen future efforts to assess grantee progress towards WPP objectives. A more systematic process will be required to collect, organize, and report on short and long-term benchmarks of progress going forward.

Summary of Major Findings and Recommendations

The Evaluation Subcommittee identified eleven central findings and recommendations resulting from these findings as summarized in the following table:

Major Evaluation Findings and Recommendations for the 2009-2014 Five-Year Plan

WPP Role in the School of Medicine and Public Health Transformation	<p>There is widespread stakeholder agreement that funding from the WPP is central to a transformed School of Medicine and Public Health.</p> <p>The Five-Year Plan should describe WPP's role in accelerating and advancing the School's transformation through educational initiatives, faculty engagement and development, institutional incentives, research, and community engagement activities. Furthermore, the plan should describe strategies to help the public understand how the transformation will address the evolving health and health care needs of Wisconsin's communities.</p>
Faculty Development	<p>Many stakeholders believe that the School lacks the faculty needed to catalyze and sustain the transformation.</p> <p>The Five-Year Plan should dedicate resources for the development of existing faculty and recruitment of new senior faculty and leaders with public health expertise to support an integrated approach across the School's basic and clinical departments and Centers.</p>
Funding Strategies	<p>Stakeholders noted the dilemma that existing projects, which need sustained funding in order to show results and realize a return on the money already invested, limit the program's capacity to change and chart a new course.</p> <p>The Five-Year Plan should incorporate the following funding approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a review process for current initiatives to determine which projects should be renewed for continuation funding. • Develop specific and consistent criteria for judging future initiatives that place greater emphasis on those that improve the health of the population, address the prevention of disease, and develop collaborative approaches to health and health care. • Identify a set of high funding priorities that align closely with the Dean's strategic transformation goals and public health priorities of the state. These priorities should form the basis for MERC-OAC collaborative programs.
Community Engagement	<p>Participants noted that WPP dollars are supporting the creation of connections with communities around the state.</p> <p>The Five-Year Plan should emphasize community engagement throughout the Program to strengthen the School's capacity and expertise in public health and support the transformation process.</p>
Faculty Engagement and Development	<p>Stakeholders are concerned about how the School's historical strengths in basic and clinical science will fare in a transformed School of Medicine and Public Health.</p> <p>The Five-Year Plan should identify approaches to engage the full spectrum of faculty, including basic science departments, in areas of public and population health. Further, the plan should identify appropriate faculty incentives to promote community engagement.</p>
Education	<p>Stakeholders commend the addition of the Masters in Public Health (MPH). However, expanding the program through distance education is a clear directive. Changing the medical school's curriculum to integrate public health should also be a continuing WPP priority.</p> <p>The Five-Year Plan should allocate resources for expanding the distance education component of the MPH program. The plan should also identify strategies to encourage and support medical student and other trainees, including graduate and allied health students, to pursue degrees in public health.</p>
State Health Plan	<p>There are wide differences in stakeholders' working knowledge of <i>Healthiest Wisconsin 2010</i>. For some it is a touchstone of their everyday work. Others knew little about its contents and it provided little direction for the work that they undertook.</p> <p>The Five-Year Plan should identify strategies to help grantees understand the purpose, goals and objectives of the State's Health Plan (2010 or 2020) to use as a tool for addressing the priorities of the state.</p>

Major Evaluation Findings and Recommendations for the 2009-2014 Five-Year Plan (con't)

Communication	<p>Stakeholders acknowledge that WPP can do more to publicize its mission, goals, funding priorities and accomplishments to the School, the wider University campus, and to the public.</p> <p>The Five-Year Plan should clearly describe funding priorities along with specific grant program goals, with measurable outcomes and strategies that align with the WPP mission, vision and guiding principles. Further, as the School's transformation proceeds, the WPP and the School should take every opportunity to clarify its vision of a fully integrated SMPH as a national model that can aid in guiding a better system of health and health care.</p>
Balanced Research and Education Portfolio	<p>Overall, WPP is making significant improvements in areas set as goals in the first Five-Year Plan. The research and education portfolio shows both breadth and depth. A framework is needed to measure the effectiveness and impact of MERC initiatives in the next Five-Year Plan.</p> <p>The WPP should develop a conceptual framework for award allocation that emphasizes the improvement of overall health and the reduction of health disparities. The framework should be designed to measure the desired impact, direction and balance of future MERC awards by incorporating the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies critical areas of concentration • Seeks to align with the state's most important public health concerns • Commits to a routine strategic assessment of the optimal allocation among multiple dimensions • Defines and applies short- and long-term metrics of success
Community Academic Partnership Fund	<p>There is evidence to support the community-academic partnership model as a framework for promoting collaborations that may contribute to health improvement. The subcommittee recommends that the WPP continue with the partnership model as the basis for the community grants program for the Five-Year Plan.</p> <p>To strengthen the program and ensure the success of future partnerships, the OAC should incorporate the following program strategies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage the diversity of expertise coming from a broad range of academic partners and work toward better matching of partner needs 2. Support networks to engage and offer appropriate incentives to academic partners such as faculty development, recognition and reconsideration of the restriction on salary support 3. Formalize partnership development as an expectation of grant planning activities as an appropriate outcome of development grants 4. Develop support services and build partnership capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and incorporate stronger evaluation components • Communicate partnership successes and raise visibility of the program statewide • Convey WPP grant management processes and expectations for funded partnerships
Governance and Stewardship	<p>The WPP is effectively ensuring sufficient administrative oversight for the management of the funds and in compliance with the Order, the grant agreement and the Five-Year Plan.</p> <p>WPP should exercise due diligence in complying with the recommendations and findings of the operations and financial review where appropriate.</p>