Overview of Evaluation and Impact

Improving Health Through Research, Education and Community Partnerships

The Wisconsin Partnership Program represents a far-reaching commitment by the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) to greatly improve the health of the people of Wisconsin. It exemplifies the Wisconsin Idea—the principle that the University of Wisconsin should reach beyond classrooms and research laboratories to enhance lives of the people of the state.

The Partnership Program supports public health initiatives, prepares the next generation of health providers, and advances research that addresses diverse health and healthcare issues. Its support is enhanced by bringing together significant university resources and expertise with the experiences and assets of local communities and organizations.

Two committees, comprised of faculty and community members, govern the work of the Wisconsin Partnership Program and oversee its grantmaking process. The Oversight and Advisory Committee (OAC) funds community-driven partnerships; the Partnership Education and Research Committee (PERC) funds education and research aimed at advancing population health.

Commitment to Evaluation

The Wisconsin Partnership Program exists in a culture that strongly values evidence to ensure its grant funding is meeting its broad goals. The Program’s basic evaluation tenets rest on testing and assessing theories and outcomes. Evaluation is woven throughout the grant process culminating in grant outcome and evaluation reports which provide a valuable measurement of achievement of goals.

The Wisconsin Partnership Program’s Evaluation Framework guides the evaluation at multiple levels:

- the Partnership Program organizational level
- governance committee-level
- competitive grant program
- requiring evaluation by grantees of their individual grants

The Wisconsin Partnership Program evaluates its impact by measuring the outcomes of its funding. Examples include:

- Proof that the work of grantees is sustained, thereby extending the impact of their grants
- Leveraged funding from external partners
- Publication of grant results to create knowledge and disseminate learning
- Process improvement based on insights gathered from grant reviews

The Partnership Program’s evaluation approach continues to evolve its investment strategies to meet Wisconsin’s evolving health needs.

For more information about individual grant outcomes, see our annual outcome reports at www.med.wisc.edu/partnership-publications.
The Return on Investment

From 2004 to 2017, the Wisconsin Partnership Program invested $206.1 million in 450 grants. Many of the grantees attracted additional funding to sustain, replicate or expand their goals. In fact, Partnership Program grants have generated more than $487 million in leveraged funding. This substantial amount reflects the worth and success of the grant programs and individual grants. Leveraging also demonstrates that other funders believe the projects merit additional support.

Grantees have also produced or supported more than 3600 peer-reviewed publications, numerous presentations and media captures, helping to share the impact of their work with a growing audience and create access to new knowledge.

A Complementary Approach: Research, Education and Community Partnerships

The Wisconsin Partnership Program's founding order, developed with extensive public input, outlined three funding categories. Investments in research, education and community initiatives define the Partnership Program's complementary approach to improving health.
Research

Since 2004, the Wisconsin Partnership Program has funded 151 grants to support innovative research dedicated to health promotion and prevention as well as the diagnoses and treatment of disease. Research, both quantitative and qualitative, expands understanding and approaches to solving some of the state’s most pressing health problems. Many funded research projects have led to new discoveries, new knowledge and attracted new sources of funding. PERC supports two competitive research grant programs.

Grants focus on a wide range of health issues including:
- Cancer
- Infectious disease
- Diabetes
- Infant mortality
- Alzheimer’s disease
- Healthcare delivery
- Tobacco use

In addition to competitive research grants, PERC funds strategic initiatives that provide the infrastructure and resources vital to advancing research and improving health.

HIGHLIGHT:
Institute for Clinical and Translational Research

Grant Type: Strategic Research Initiatives Grant

Awards: 4 grants totaling $40 Million

Need: Innovative research solutions are needed to improve human health. To quickly and effectively translate research to improved human health, support for infrastructure and capacity building that connects, supports and provides resources to researchers and other collaborators is necessary.

Grant Goal: In addition to other funders, the Wisconsin Partnership Program provides funding to the Institute for Clinical and Translational Research (ICTR) to support its goal to bring together scientists from the University of Wisconsin health sciences schools: Medicine and Public Health, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Veterinary Medicine as well as the College of Engineering, with the Marshfield Clinic Research Institute to transform health-related research into clinical practice.

ICTR provides the infrastructure and resources needed to support the work of these researchers, physicians and other faculty as they collaborate in translating scientific discoveries into new approaches to promote health and diagnose and treat disease.

Outcomes: ICTR’s impact is measured in multiple ways. Since 2006, ICTR-supported researchers produced 3,043 peer-reviewed publications and also leveraged $410 million from external funders.

In addition, ICTR awarded more than $7.3 million in pilot community research funding to more than 79 investigators, who in turn leveraged almost $74 million in external funds—more than 10 times the original funding.
Education

Education builds a healthcare workforce that understands the complexities of modern medicine and knows how to apply that knowledge to caring for patients, working with community partners and embracing emerging research. PERC has made significant investments to address the state’s public health and clinical workforce needs. Education initiatives have helped advance local health improvements and the public health workforce, transform medical education and increase the number of physicians and public health practitioners in rural Wisconsin.

HIGHLIGHT:
Transforming Medical Education (TME)

Grant Type: Education and Workforce Initiative Grant

Awards: 4 grants totaling $10.7 Million

Need: The University of Wisconsin’s medical school has long been recognized as one of the country’s best. In its nearly 100-year history, the school has modified its teaching model to accommodate the ever-evolving medical field. Among the most recent changes has been recognizing that public health is inextricably linked with the delivery of traditional medical care.

Grant Goals: SMPH proposed significant and fundamental changes that infuse public health principles and practices—including community engagement and advocacy—into its curriculum. The Transforming Medical Education Grants provided support for these modifications.

Outcomes: The changes help graduates understand how social, economic and policy issues influence the health of patients. To date, 1,575 students have studied under the new TME curriculum. When surveyed, the number of SMPH graduates who rated their public health training as “outstanding” increased. In addition, the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, the first medical school in the nation to become an integrated school of medicine and public health, is an acknowledged leader and national model for its innovative approach to education.
Community Partnerships

The Partnership Program has funded 267 community grants since it began making grants in 2004, supporting work in every county in the state. Communities have requested and received funding for public health initiatives including:

- Addressing the Social Determinants of Health
- Reducing smoking dependence
- Preventing falls among seniors
- Preventing obesity in children and families
- Reducing alcohol consumption among teens
- Improving maternal and child health
- Preventing violence

The Partnership Program’s support of communities and community-engaged research has influenced systems and policies and identified interventions to address complex health issues throughout Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Partnership Program has supported projects in every county in Wisconsin

HIGHLIGHT: Preventing Falls

Grant Type: Community-Academic Partnership Grant Programs

Awards: 4 grants totaling $1.4 Million

Issue: Falls are a significant cause of injury in the United States, especially among older people. Wisconsin has one of the highest rates of falls-related deaths in the United States. Each year falls-related injuries in the state result in about 50,000 hospitalizations and nearly 450,000 emergency room visits.

Grant Goals: Recognizing that falls are a significant—and preventable—health issue in Wisconsin, the Partnership Program funded projects aimed at improving ways to prevent falls and to reduce the risk of falls.

Outcomes: An evidence-based program to prevent falls reduced the risk of falls by 31 percent in more than 8000 elderly adults. The program is offered in senior centers, nursing homes, assisted-living facilities and in hospitals and is currently being adapted to address culturally diverse populations. It has been expanded to 19 states.
Making the Vision a Reality

In 2004, the University of Wisconsin Medical School received an unprecedented gift as part of the conversion of Blue Cross and Blue Shield United of Wisconsin to a public corporation. The intent of the endowment was very specific: to improve the health of the people of Wisconsin.

From basic research targeting the world's most debilitating diseases, to educating medical professionals, to authentically engaging with community partners, the Wisconsin Partnership Program has integrated the tenets of the endowment with the time-honored concept of the Wisconsin Idea, to develop an innovative and evolving approach to advancing health and healthcare.

Next Steps

The Wisconsin Partnership Program's evaluation program continues to evolve. Through the five-year planning process, the Wisconsin Partnership Program is using evidence and community experience to identify new goals and strategies and to develop measurable outcomes that will be used to assess progress in improving health. Based on the five-year plan, the Partnership Program is adjusting its evaluation plan, which will be used to provide annual reports and data as needed to its leadership committees and other stakeholders. Ultimately, the evaluation plan will help the Wisconsin Partnership Program to further understand impact and continuously refine its funding process to address new evidence and information.

The challenges to achieving health improvement in Wisconsin are many. Moreover, they are confirmed by national indicators showing that wide disparity gaps exist in Wisconsin. Since its inception in 2004, the Wisconsin Partnership Program has pledged to collaborate with partners across the state to address health problems through the allocation of resources in ways that are impactful and long lasting. It is through extensive evaluation efforts that the Partnership Program adjusts investment approaches and measures progress toward health improvement in Wisconsin.

For more information visit:

med.wisc.edu/partnership