

Spotlight On: Working With Grantees – transcript

Presenters: Matt McGuire, Child Welfare Program Specialist, Children's Bureau, Washington, DC; Catherine Nolan, Director, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, Children's Bureau, Washington, DC

Matt McGuire: [00:00:13:29] The Children's Bureau's discretionary grant programs are true demonstration programs that really want to see these programs demonstrate success, and the ones that do demonstrate success and positive outcomes for children and families in the child welfare system are the programs that we're going to look to sort of replicate and sort of broaden the knowledge base in the child welfare field.

Catherine Nolan: [00:00:37:04] There has been a real evolution around the way that we create our discretionary grant programs and the way that we manage them. Just the technology around what we're able to do in keeping that communication going and creating those learning communities has really evolved very nicely.

Matt McGuire: [00:00:54:12] The Children's Bureau's work with the discretionary grant programs is really paralleling what we're seeing in the field in terms of modeling programs and working for programs that are really evidence-based, evidence-informed, that really are getting at stronger outcomes in programs and activities that can be replicated more broadly.

Catherine Nolan: [00:01:16:00] My staff works very hard with their respective grant clusters in terms of not only just, you know, helping them to carry out the requirements of the grant but really this level of sophistication around, you know, what is the substance of the work that they're doing and what are the lessons learned, good or bad, which then we can disseminate to the field, and we ask them. We have a very substantial dissemination requirement now on all of our discretionary grants. And that's the way that we can help move the field along.

Matt McGuire: [00:01:47:19] I feel that technology has enhanced the Children's Bureau's ability to transfer knowledge to the field--not just pushing information out but getting information back in from not just the Federal Government but from the universities and the private institutions and essentially anybody who works in child welfare. It's really helping to sort of make that knowledge transfer and knowledge management loop a true sort of circle, if you will.

Catherine Nolan: [00:02:14:04] The use of technology--at least for, you know, OCAN, and I think others would agree--is that it allows us, in the absence of being able to physically travel to visit our grantees, it allows us to have really good communication with our grantees. It allows us to create community within each of the grant clusters, which is another goal of ours.

We do require each grantee in all of our discretionary grants to have an evaluation component, and we have technical assistance through another contract to help those grantees with that requirement. And really, I think that all of those evaluation findings are just so helpful to us and so I think it's not just research but research and evaluation and again, as I say, that the rigor of those has really improved over the years. And I think for the grantees, they also are very engaged in the whole research and evaluation process.

One example is our Regional Partnership grants where, again, legislatively they were required to report on performance indicators every month. We have a very sophisticated electronic data submission system that was created by one of our contractors, and just the wealth of the data and the numbers in terms of sample sizes are huge. And so we can really mine that data and really learn from that and really turn those lessons around, again, back to the field to help them with their future work.

Matt McGuire: [00:03:47:12] One of the unique aspects of a lot of the discretionary grant programs that we administer at the Children's Bureau is the fact that they are cooperative agreements, which give us as Federal project officers the ability to work hand-in-hand with the grantees. We're not just handing over a pot of money and saying here, go do what you said you'd do in your grant proposal. We are working really hand-in-hand with them to test out some of the newer approaches, some of the newer ideas that they've come up with, and really look to get positive outcomes for the kids in the child welfare system.

[end audio]