
MODELS FOR PRACTICE

FOCUS AREA: EDUCATIONAL AND COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS

Program Name: PRO Hampton County, Inc.

Location: Varnville, South Carolina

Problem Addressed: Community Health Development

Healthy People 2010 Objective: 7

Web Address: http://www.iopa.sc.edu/turningpoint/new_page_5.htm

SNAPSHOT

The mission of PRO (Pride, Respect, and Opportunity) Hampton County, Inc. is to foster pride, respect, and opportunity for all Hampton County citizens by empowering the community to work together for an improved quality of life and by opening doors for communication, collaboration, and volunteerism. PRO Hampton County meets its goals through community forums; task forces; projects that address educational concerns; health and lifestyle issues; improvement of intergroup relations; and economic well being, growth, and opportunity for the citizens of Hampton County. It is a countywide, grassroots, organization that makes the voices of Hampton County citizens heard in order to create an overall healthier community.

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THE MODEL

Blueprint: PRO Hampton County (PROHC) is a 501(c)(3) organization that focuses on the needs of the county, particularly of those in the county who are underprivileged or at risk. At the initial forums, the stakeholders of PRO Hampton County identified the issues of economics, education, health and lifestyles, and inter-group relations to be of great importance for the community. They accomplished this through the utilization of statistical data and various tools of community analysis. Since then, task forces for each issue have moved forward to address the specific strategies. A few examples of the needs that PRO Hampton County has addressed are support for Department of Social Services Family Independence programs, parenting training for parents of children from pre-natal to five years of age, at-risk students in middle school, citizens at risk for diabetes, and racial harmony through shared experiences and building trust.

The project is a collaborative effort with numerous partners involving churches, schools, private and public organizations, businesses and industries, governmental agencies, banks, law firms, utility companies, and others. The level and nature of the participation depends upon the work and activities of the four task forces. PRO Hampton County has been very

fortunate to attract the support of two major funders—The Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation and The Duke Endowment. Because each task force works on its individual projects, PRO Hampton County has had a variety of partners in specific projects. Each project brings in a new set of volunteers and helps reach new areas of the community.

PRO Hampton County's by-laws are a channel by which new issues and/or strategies can be brought before the board of directors or the task forces. Their most effective means of delivering messages is through events designed to target the specific issue, i.e., the Baby Fair or the Diabetes Connection Screening Day. They also utilize local media and, in the case of "Communities in Schools," have after-school programs for middle schoolers. Today, PRO Hampton County has a stakeholder list of almost 1,000 names and a volunteer list in the hundreds.

PRO Hampton County takes place in the community—on the steps of the First Baptist Church, in the schools, at the National Guard Armory, and at the local hospital. Its offices are located in a medical/health consortium office building. The program serves the rural county of Hampton, which has a population of 19,000, a heavy tax burden, covers 562 square miles, and 28.14 percent of the population lives below poverty level.

Making a Difference: The organization is a work in progress. Measuring whether or not the program is successful is difficult, and they feel that success is intangible. PRO Hampton County consults with various community development experts to help design measurements and various surveys and questionnaires. Its most reliable measure is the number of participants in the projects.

PRO Hampton County recently completed its five-year Strategic Plan (2002-2007). Three areas are considered critical issues: financial stability of the organization, human resources, and community outreach. Currently, PRO Hampton County is in the process of reviewing its goals and objectives for each of the task forces, making sure that they are measurable. Each task force is responsible and is to complete a program evaluation on each of its projects. This is done by several methods, including surveys, focus groups, storytelling, direct observation, board of directors' random telephone selection, and previous data analysis.

Beginnings: PRO Hampton County is a grassroots organization that began in 1995 by involving citizens from all areas of the county. Four major issues—economics, education, health and lifestyles, and community relations—were identified through a series of public forums. A task force was formed to address each of the issues. An executive director, with support staff, and a 12-member board of directors supervise each independent task force. The founders of the organization were the local hospital, Hampton Regional Medical Center, and the citizens of Hampton

County. Low Country Area Health Consortium partnered with the project and provided office space, clerical support, mailing and telephone budgets, and moral support.

PRO Hampton County's paid full-time staff includes an executive director position paid by the organization through grant funding, a financial officer position paid by Hampton Regional Medical Center, a secretary position paid by the organization through grant funding, and a communities-in-schools director position paid by the grant. Part-time staff includes a volunteer support person, who is paid by a combination of grants, as well as many volunteers.

Challenges and Solutions: PRO Hampton County, Inc. encountered several challenges, ranging from financial to human resources. The largest challenge has been getting organized legally and understanding the roles that the various staff need to play. PRO Hampton County, Inc. dealt in-depth with policy decisions, decisions on how to proceed as a board, the role of the task forces in relation to the board, the duties of the executive director, and the recruitment of volunteers. It receives help from several consultants in holding retreats for the purpose of establishing policies and understanding roles.

PRO Hampton County, Inc. also had to define its role in the community. Again, diligent efforts by the board and some members of the task forces helped examine the organization and how it can continue to serve the community.

PROHC elicits the support of major funders and local "parents," the Hampton Regional Medical Center and Low Country AHRC. Additionally, two regional foundations, The Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation and The Duke Endowment, support PROHC. However, with the lose of two non-local funders, PROHC currently seeks additional funding to sustain the organization. In this effort, it pursues grant applications, prepares videos for distribution to potential funders, and personally contacts many large organizations.

PRO Hampton County's reputation as an innovative grassroots organization is helpful. The small rural community has limited means of marketing for PRO Hampton County, yet it utilizes local radio stations, newspapers, billboards, and the U.S. mail. PRO Hampton County also sponsors floats in local parades, flyers, posters, and it made a video to share with other community organizations. Because of its affiliation with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control and the National Healthy Communities movement, PROHC enjoys an excellent rapport with state organizations. In addition, PRO Hampton County staff travel to conferences and meetings advocating the healthy communities' philosophy.

PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

Annease R. Goodman
PRO Hampton County, Inc.
1000 Pine Street
Varnville, SC 29944
Phone: (803) 943-3620