Does providing several community partners with small amounts of CARES Act funding produce sustainable results?

INTRODUCTION: In April 2020, the Montana Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (MGWEP) applied for CARES Act funding to use telehealth to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19. As a GWEP based in a College of Health with limited clinical facilities, MGWEP turned to its community partners to pursue this opportunity. The program ended April 30, 2020, and 18 months later MGWEP queried its partners to determine the sustainability of their projects.

METHODS: A qualitative scripted telephone interview was used to determine the status of the telehealth projects. Each partner was asked about barriers to continuation, changes in project partners, funding, and individuals served.

RESULTS: Five of the six projects are ongoing 18 months after the funding ended.

DISCUSSION: MGWEP was challenged to respond to the funding opportunity on short notice and with no direct access to clinical facilities. Our partners provided such access but led to the question of sustainability for multiple projects. Four of these projects have been successful with ongoing funding, one moderately so, and one did not continue. Depending on future opportunities that arise, MGWEP is confident that it will once again be able to collaborate with community partners to make a meaningful and sustainable difference in their communities.

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