The Weakest Link: Strains on Local Government Capacity and Intergovernmental Program Failure

Maureen Berner, PhD
Alex Vasquez, MPA
School of Government
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Example: Summer ‘Feeding’ Programs
SSO and SFSP

Federal Entitlement w/Funding ➔

State Program Administration ➔ DPI

Local Partner Implementation ➔ Gov or Non-Profits

Direct Client Service
Summer ‘Feeding’ Programs

• Established in 1968
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Program has never exceeded 20% participation, closer to only 15% of eligible children served
What is extent of problem?

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• Part of discussion around rising childhood food insecurity, long-term public health, educational achievement
Location of Local Implementation Agencies Meal Sites

Site of local partner agency meal site
Why is the program failing?

Most research focuses on participants – we (academia) study them extensively

My A-HA moment – Asheville’s MANNA Food Bank 4 years ago, information session between State agency staff and local partners
Inter-Governmental Program Success

• NEED

• PROGRAM

• RESOURCES

• WILLING, CAPABLE PARTNERS
Inter-Governmental Program Success

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Inter-Governmental Program Success

• NEED

• PROGRAM – why is it so hard to implement?

• RESOURCES

• WILLING, CAPABLE PARTNERS – do partners have capacity to follow program design?
• In-person, in-depth interviews with sponsors who have left program and those who have stayed – target 15 each
• Document administrative, financial, and other burdens
• Identify the “tipping point”
• Time intensive, exploratory study
Partners – DPI/DHHS, No Kid Hungry

• Active partner/supporters
• State agency focused on program success, constrained by program limits
• Working within a very stressful political environment, lack on own capacity
• NC Kid Hungry is motivated non-profit, encourages change, participation, support
Findings

Local Capacity

- Infrastructure Capital
- Finance Capital
- Human/Administrative Capital
Program Design & Local Capacity
Related study: characteristics of neighborhoods of 2000+ sites

= Site of local partner agency meal site
Sites not located in neighborhoods of greatest need – capacity issue?

= Site of local partner agency meal site
Broader Findings: Environmental Evaluation of Grant Processing for NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund

Found CWMTF, in effort to be customer focused, was doing legal work for partner local governments or non-profits that didn’t have internal capacity
Broader Findings:
Agriculture/Economic Development

2014 Evaluation of Capacity of NC School Kitchens to participate in Federal/state Farm to School Program

Survey of 500+ kitchen administrators found lack of time and personnel at local level was the main constraint in using certain types of fresh NC local produce
Broader Findings: Housing

Exploratory interviews in student research with Section 8 Housing Providers

Suggested significant barrier to program participation by more local landlords was length of time (loss $) to obtain required local inspections
Broader Findings

Regardless of area, local capacity is key but an often overlooked area in identifying successful/unsuccessful policy