

UNITED WAY OF KING COUNTY

A Qualitative Analysis of

FY2015 Year-End Report Narratives from
UWKC's Grantees

Nicole Gilmore

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This report aims to summarize the narrative responses of the FY2015 outcome data by focusing on trends or themes in the answers provided by the agencies from the following prompts:

1. Describe any trends, significant changes in population served or need for services.
2. Describe any issues that affected services.
3. What did you learn this year about the effectiveness of your services, the characteristics of the people you served, and how you might improve future results?
4. Describe what you were able to do as a result of United Way of King County funding.

A qualitative coding process was used to develop the themes, which were then aggregated and interpreted. A total of 148 agencies are represented in the analysis, across 61 different program types separated by our impact areas of Early Learning, Ending Homelessness, Family Support, and Strengthening Our Community.

Trends, Significant Changes in Population Served or Need for Services

Based on the responses provided by grantees, there were various trends and significant changes that occurred in the populations served. *Figure 1 demonstrates the general responses made by grantees of the trends and significant changes they experienced in their programs.* As it is shown, one of the most prevalent responses was that there was an increase in participants with both high needs and high barriers requesting services. Many report that there has also been an increase of individuals who are experiencing not just one issue, but multiple.

Figure 2 shows a breakdown of these trends based upon individual need. Agencies explained that they addressed this change through a more individualized, comprehensive approach, which helped to address the multiple facets impacting clients' lives. The aim of many agencies was to meet each client where they currently are and address those needs to best achieve program success.

While program results demonstrate that grantees have been successful in addressing trends and significant changes in program services, grantees additionally stated that there needs to be greater collaboration among partner agencies to maximize impact. Agencies agreed that this would help in creating wrap around services that would decrease the likelihood of clients' having to utilize piecemeal services that keep them dependent on various programs' services. This would, in turn, help distribute resources among programs that may be resource-thin in providing tools to increase skill development, knowledge, and improve overall quality of life.

Figure 1

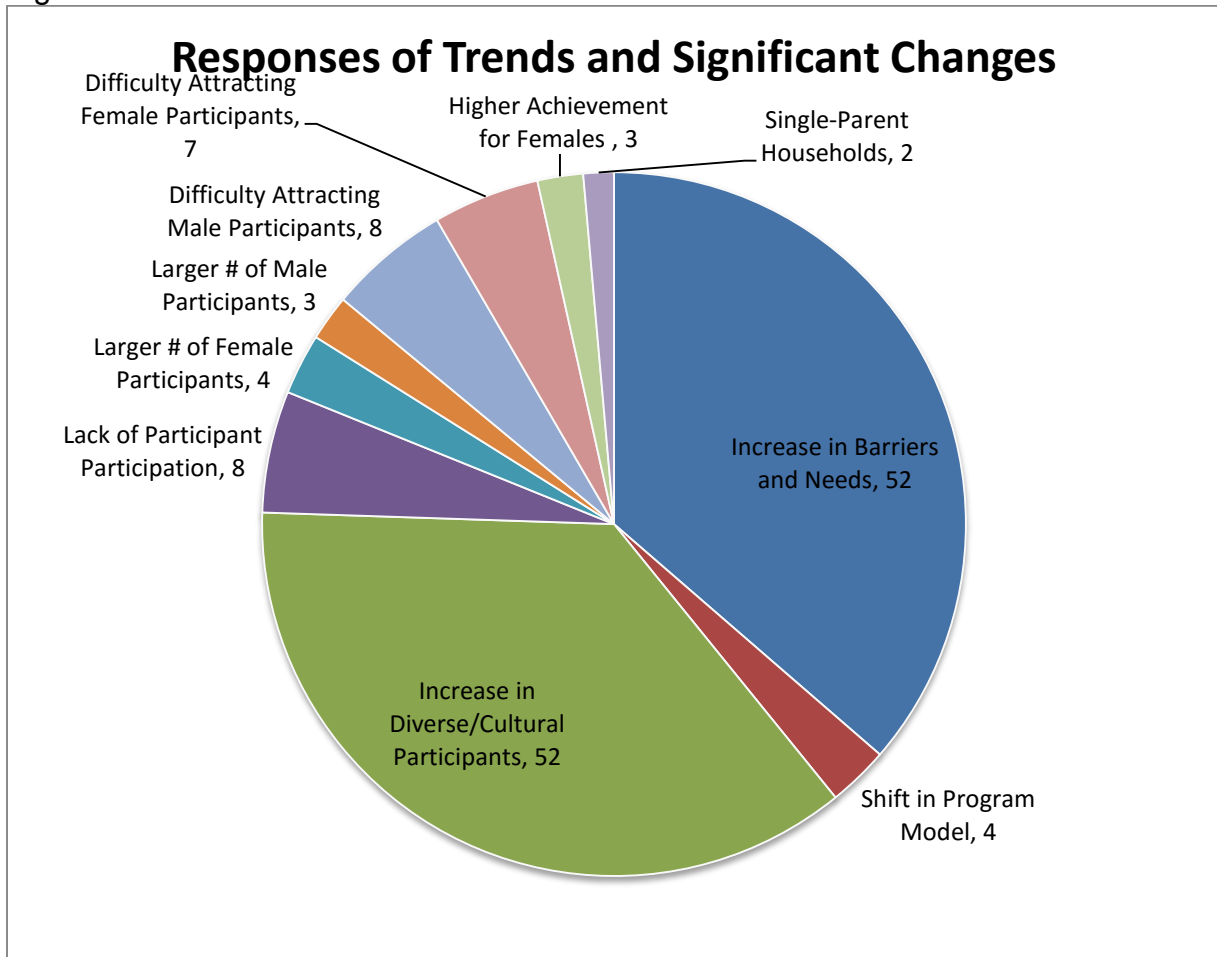
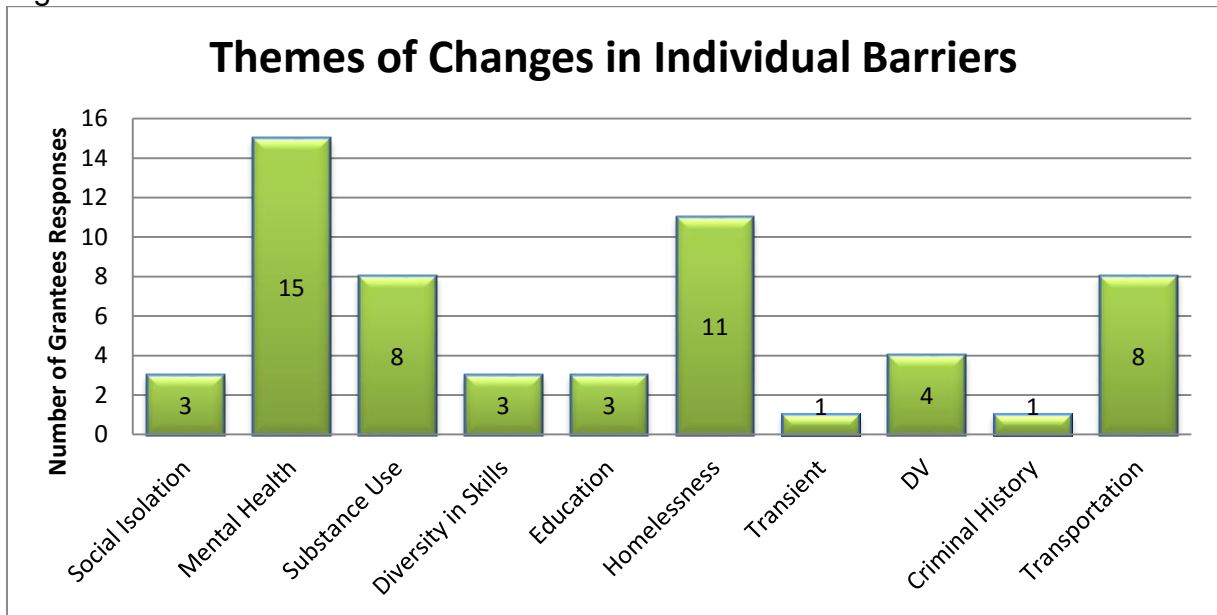


Figure 2



*These graphs show the problem areas that were reported to have increased in FY14

Cultural concerns have also grown due to increased caseloads consisting of people of color and immigrant/refugee populations. Populations that were specified by grantees include: African American, Latino, Southeast Asian, East African, Russian/Ukrainian, and American Indian/Alaskan native. Agencies explained that there was a strong need for staff to be cognizant of various cultural systems and how it impacts their social service delivery systems, and that they are continuously working towards providing culturally relevant services that work on behalf of their clients. Language has been a primary barrier in outreach to diverse communities, as well as recruiting and retaining employees who are able to effectively communicate with various diverse populations.

Alongside cultural needs, another trend that grantees have been struggling with is the difficulty in attracting male participants. This was demonstrated most commonly in programs concerning children and youth, which fall into the impact areas of Early Learning and Strengthening Our Community. Programs believe this could be a result of cultural and social influences as well as the lack of positive adult male role models and male staff or volunteers in their programs. While most programs stated that they have a larger number of female participants in comparison to males, females were described as having obstacles in regards to cultural practices, mental health, and the family system for which they may be the primary caregiver or the only parent in the household.

Specific Challenges

Building on the trends and changes in populations served, there are also specific challenges that grantees faced when working with their target populations.

Client Barriers

Barriers to client participation was one of the largest challenges to address, with agencies stating that the largest hindrances were in regards to access to transportation, lack of services addressing cultural needs, affordable housing, wait-lists, basic needs, stigma, increase in drug use, increase in chronic mental illness, and increase in movement/relocation of residents. *Figure 3 shows the general responses made about challenges to individual barriers in programs.*

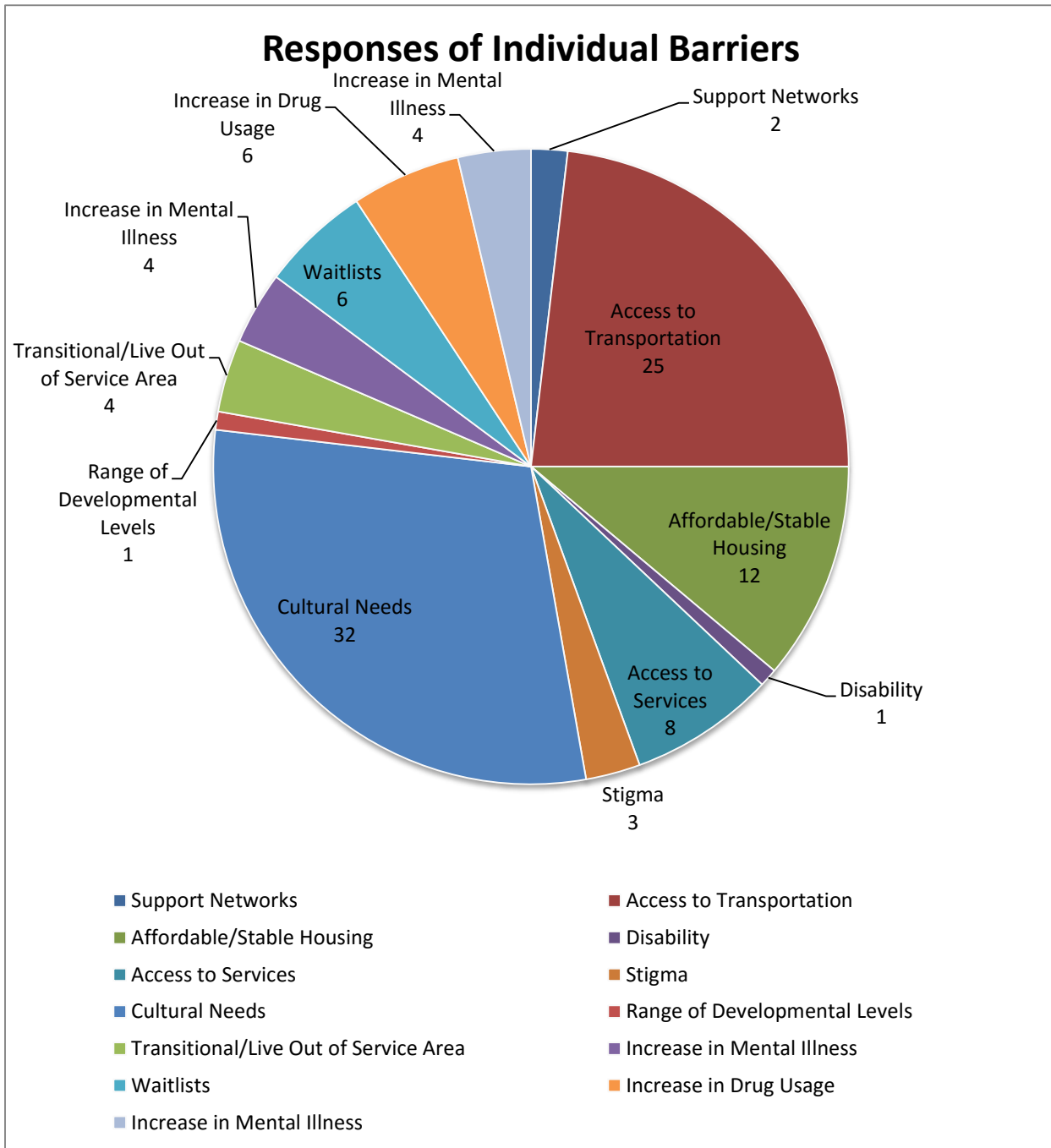
The largest concern held about grantees was about cultural awareness, language barriers, and the need for translators. With the increase of clients from diverse populations, organizations have struggled in the ways to effectively outreach and market their program as well as provide services that demonstrate cultural competency. Many programs lack the capacity to provide services in the participant's first languages, and have had to rely on volunteers which are often times not as reliable as paid staff.

Access to transportation was another large concern for clients, with responses centering on accessibility and reliability of transportation options due to their locations and increasing costs.

Many also encountered the increase in the chronicity of mental illness in combination with higher incidences of substance use. This made it more difficult to assist clients, who may be experiencing comorbidity in disorders.

Affordable and stable housing was connected with this, as well, in working with individuals who may not only be experiencing mental illness or substance use problems, but also experiencing homelessness. As rents continue to rise in Seattle, housing has become less affordable for low-income families and individuals. The lack of housing has increased lengths of stays for individuals in transitional housing and shelters as well as created longer waitlists for low-income individuals in King County.

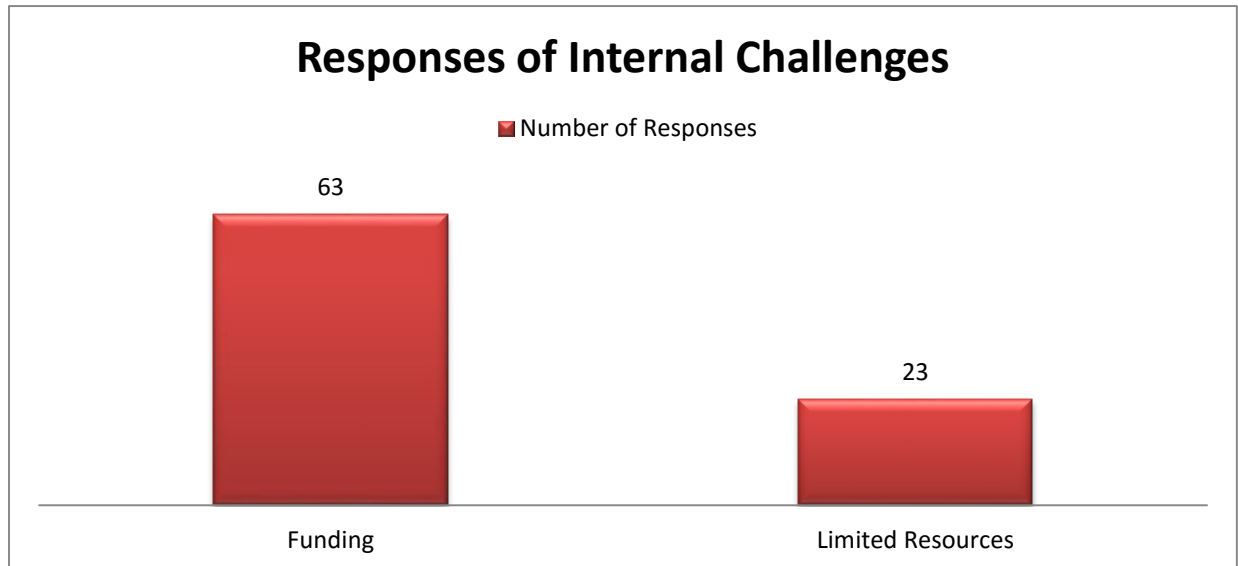
Figure 3



Internal Challenges

Internally, the biggest issue for grantees was with funding/budget cuts, followed by limited resources. Included in the funding count are issues such as delays or lack of government reimbursement (2 responses) and increase in operating costs (2 responses). *Figure 4 shows the number of responses made by grantees in regards to fiscal concerns.*

Figure 4



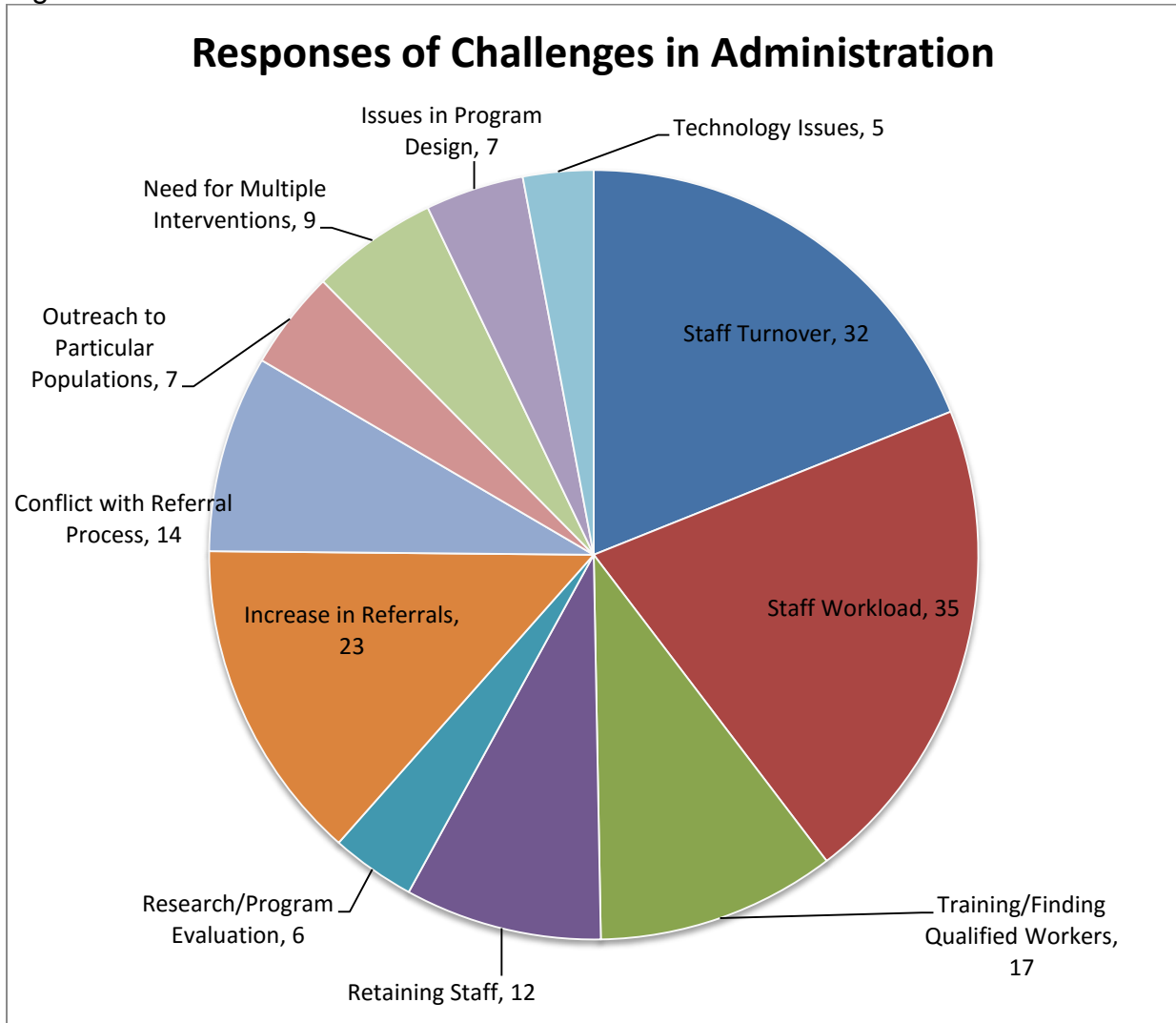
As caseloads continue to increase, limited resources were explained as being problematic in that agencies were unable to assist all the individuals seeking help. In the impact area of Ending Homelessness, specifically, organizations that received donations stated there was a decrease in the amount of donations received. To resolve this issue, organizations have been attempting to build collaborations with other service providers to continue ongoing support for clients in need.

Figure 5 then describes the other challenges in administration. For administration, the greatest concern was in staff workload with the second largest concern being in turnover and loss of key staff and leadership. Limited staff, as well as finding qualified staff for job positions, has also been an increasing concern. Grantees stated that the lack in funding has caused a large stress on staff as it has had an impact on their workload. Having limited staff has also been a challenge as it has led to workers being spread thin to assist a larger number of cases, with fewer resources, in a limited amount of time. For grantees assisting individuals experiencing intersections of homelessness, chronic mental illness, and substance use, it has also required increased efforts in outreach and engagement.

The loss of key staff has further been problematic since agencies must use their time and resources to recruit, train, and maintain staff rather than focus intently on the

populations that they are aimed to serve. In losing staff, this has caused internal challenges in building rapport with partner agencies, along with effectively coordinating the internal communication of various staff within the agency. Staffing issues tend to be more prominent within the impact areas of Early Learning and Strengthening Our Community.

Figure 5



The referral process among grantees has also been problematic. Many state that there has been an influx in incompatible referrals being made, which has lengthened the time for which appropriate referrals are then able to be addressed. Others state there have also been many late referrals, which have caused problems for their programs. This challenge is more pertinent to the impact area of the Ending Homelessness though it does appear in cases in Early Learning and Strengthening Our Community as well.

Due to the increasing barriers and intersections of individual needs, consistent attendance and participation in programs has also proven difficult. Similarly, evaluation

and data collection has been a challenge due to difficulties retaining program participants and small sample sizes.

Building/Physical

As related to building and physical needs, programs have faced challenges as a response of capacity or size, new locations, building damage/repairs, and increased cost of facilities. Capacity or size was the most expressed among agencies, with new locations as the second most expressed challenge.

Access to transportation was also addressed by agencies with grantees describing issues with increased costs of travelling, size and quality of agency vehicles, and location.

External Challenges

Along with assessing the trends and challenges faced by agencies, environmental factors will also need to be analyzed. The main systems impacted by grantees include healthcare, education, and the legal system, with poverty being a large contextual force within all these systems. Poverty directly impacts client well-being and their ability to create positive change in their lives as it stems from factors such as poor job history, credit, rental history, parenting skills, and child care that social service agencies are working with them to address. Cultural and social influences also play a major role as individuals may be absent from class sessions or other program activities due to local events that disrupted their access to transportation, school observances for which they were unable to find child care, or cultural/religious holidays.

As specified above, the challenges circumventing the healthcare system was a large concern for the impact areas of Ending Homelessness and Strengthening Our Community. They described that external challenges were significant due to the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid cuts, and decrease in access to mental health and other health services. The focus of most grantees was on how the decrease in funding for mental health and healthcare needs has caused there to be a decrease in services provided in the community, with many programs concerned about how to address these needs given the increase of caseloads.

For grantees in the impact area of Early Learning, their challenges were very different. They described that the primary challenges to education were linked to issues such as school bureaucracy, differing school departure times, change in school assessment tools, change in common core state standards, and no longer being able to access student information.

Differences in Achievement

As reported by UWKC's grantees, most stated that there was no significance difference in achievement rates based on group characteristics such as such as gender, age,

income, or race/ethnicity. Rather, achievement was based on the complexity of goals and the severity of the individual's challenges to accomplishing their achieved outcome.

Differential rates of achievement were most common across programs in Early Learning and Strengthening Our Community, however. Among the grantees that showed differences in achievement rates, girls were often showed to have higher success rates than boys. Younger students were also shown to have higher achievement compared to older students, and white students did better in comparison to students of color. For students of color, the overall graduation rate was considerably less due to increased barriers that influence participation and access to program services. Those with lower annual incomes also carried a much higher likelihood of facing challenges that would be a hindrance to their completion of the program.

Accomplishments

Accomplishments of grantees include being able to leverage other sources of funding, as well as use UWKC's dollars as flexible funding for their organization. This was beneficial in helping organizations expand their projects to help more clients. Additionally, by offering more flexible funding to grantees, organizations were better able to fill the gaps between more restrictive funding sources, and provide the wraparound support that clients need to succeed.

Through UWKC's assistance, grantees have been able to serve more people more effectively, accomplish their organizational missions, provide critical outreach and education efforts to bilingual/bicultural communities, offer a greater number of classes and class topics, hire more qualified staff, provide more training sessions, expand and improve their program evaluation, and create new or stronger partnerships and collaborations with other nonprofit agencies.

Results and Discussion

Overall, the results of this evaluation indicated that the largest challenges lie in the increase of individuals experiencing high barriers and high needs, as well as the capacity for agencies to incorporate culturally competent services into their current practices. Funding and staff turnover also continue to play a large role in service delivery. Compared to FY2013 narrative outcomes report, many of the outcomes appear to be a continuous trend, though new themes can be drawn upon mental health and health needs in regards to lack of funding, as well as the importance of transportation for both clients and agencies.

Based on the findings of the report, more research will need to be conducted on the role of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Medicaid, and other health care systems on agencies providing health-related services. In the new strategic plan, funding for health-care related services will be eliminated with funding instead being focused on the four new strategic plan goals. While agencies reported that ACA and other programs are decreasing funding opportunities for mental health services, the assumption held by

United Way and other agencies are that these sets of policies are providing healthcare coverage to more people to reduce the need to serve uninsured clients. Follow-up questions may need to be asked to determine the actual impacts on agencies.

Transportation could additionally be another source of further discussion. Recognizing the importance of public transportation for low-income households and the lack of adequate and reliable public transportation in King County, especially in areas such as South King County, can be particularly useful in understanding the impact that it has on individuals' and families' and their engagement with social service programming.

All of these components will need to continue to be assessed in the next planning cycle.