

Ardmore Institute of Health **Report Abstract for Awarded Grant**

Organization Name

Oklahoma Alliance of YMCAs

Project Title

"Step It Up!" Oklahoma Alliance of YMCAs Spring Fitness and Walking Challenge

Amount

\$53,600

Project Start Date

02/12/2018

Project End Date

06/30/2018

Anticipated Number of People Impacted

350

Actual Number of People Impacted

386

Project Overview

In 2016 the Oklahoma Alliance of YMCAs adopted a statewide initiative to promote the health benefits of walking and walkable communities. For the past three years, this effort was supported with funding from YMCA of the USA in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control. In 2018, the Alliance used funding from Y-USA/CDC and the Ardmore Institute of Health (AIH) to host an 8-week team-based fitness and walking challenge. "Step It Up!" YMCA's Spring Fitness and Walking Challenge consisted of two separate challenges running concurrently. The first Challenge incentivized teams to meet two specific goals around participation and active minutes. The second challenge was a "Top Teams Challenge" and encouraged teams to compete against each other for the most steps, with the top three teams earning an additional donation for their YMCAs.

Both Challenges were hosted using the online platform MyInertia. The Challenge involved 386 participants on 20 teams from 9 different Oklahoma YMCAs. Throughout the Challenge YMCA teams hosted group events to encourage people to walk more and log more active minutes.

Results

The Alliance set specific goals for the 2018 “Step It Up!” Oklahoma Fitness and Walking Spring Challenge. Below is a breakdown of the outcome of each goal as well as a narrative explanation.

Goal 1: Minimum of 350 participants recruited to participate in the challenge
Outcome: Met – 386 people participated in the Challenge.

Goal 2: 320 participants reach their participation goal of logging steps each week during the 8-week challenge.

Outcome: Unmet – An average of 300 participants each week logged their activity.

Goal 3: 90% of teams reach their weekly average active minutes goals (equal to or greater than 75 minutes), each week during the 8-week challenge

Outcome: Unmet – 75% of teams met their weekly active minutes goal.

Goal 4: 70% of participants in the challenge complete the post-challenge survey sent out by the Alliance; 60% of survey respondents report an increase in their daily walking/fitness activity as a result of participation in the challenge.

Outcome: Unmet – 15% of participants responded to the survey; 76% of survey respondents reported an increase in physical activity throughout the Challenge.

In hindsight, many of these goals were overly ambitious and did not account for usual rates of participant attrition or survey response.

Use of Funds

Total Budgeted Project Cost: \$57,600

Ardmore Institute of Health: \$53,600

YMCA of the USA/Centers for Disease Control: \$4,000

Ardmore Institute of Health Funds

\$19,320 – Fitness Trackers

\$10,000 – Team Incentives (Projected)

\$8,424 – MyInertia team memberships

\$37,744 – AIH funds expended

Oklahoma Alliance of YMCAs Funds

\$1000 Prizes for Team Competition

1st place - \$500, Edmond YMCA

2nd place - \$300, Guthrie YMCA

3rd place - \$200, Cleveland County Family YMCA

\$2000 Team Stipends (\$100 per team @ 20 teams)

\$1000 Administrative support

\$4000 – Alliance of YMCAs funds expended

Key Challenges

Key challenges throughout this process centered around a few common issues: staffing capacity, communication, and technology challenges. All of these factors likely contributed to the decline in participation and failure of many teams to meet their incentive goals.

Staffing Capacity: The project was set-up with one main lead staff person, realistically it probably required 2-3 staff people overseeing different aspects.

Communication: Communication started out strong during the team recruitment process and at the start of the Challenge, but dropped off significantly which could have been a factor in low participation rates at the end of the Challenge.

Technology: The use of an online platform and fitness tracking device proved challenging for some participants, who often waited until they could meet with their team captain in person to address the issue, this led to a lag in activity tracking and data uploading.

Key Learnings

The “Step It Up” Challenge, was one of the Alliance’s first endeavors in offering a statewide program for Y employees, members, and volunteers. Prior projects conducted by the Alliance were at a much smaller scale and did not require the

level of coordination and communication the “Step It Up” Challenge did. In reflection upon this project, it is apparent that a more robust staffing structure will need to be in-place for other statewide initiatives to advance. It was evident through the survey responses and other feedback received that participants really enjoyed this opportunity and that one of their favorite aspects of the Challenge was working as a team and competing against other YMCAs. Many participants reported that one of their favorite parts about the Challenge was getting to work together as a team with other people within their Y community. The opportunity to participate in the challenge also resulted in 72% of survey respondents indicating that they felt more connected to their YMCA as a result of their participation and 86% reported increasing their physical activity. The team aspect and Y-to-Y challenge were the two most popular aspects of the challenge.

Recommendations for Future Projects

A written-out communication plan would have benefitted both team captains and the program administrator. 80% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that their team captain was in regular communication with their team; however, the content of that communication was clearly not enough to promote continued participation. A plan provided to team captains, which outlines when to communicate with team members and what to communicate would be helpful. Additionally, a team approach to staffing would have ensured there were no breaks in communication and that the responsibility for implementation did rest with just one person.

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