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Team Factors that Predict to Sustainability Indicators for Community-Based Prevention Teams¹

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Abstract

Because they often set out with a guarantee of only short-term funding, many community partnerships will face a threat to their sustainability almost as soon as the first money runs out. Research into the factors that enable some coalitions and partnerships to meet the challenge when others fail is limited. This study begins to fill this gap in our understanding by examining influences on the process of sustainability planning in the context of a collaborative partnership focused on youth development. We report on a longitudinal examination of the quality of planning and attitudes underpinning the sustainability of PROSPER community prevention teams whose members implement evidence-based programs designed to support positive youth development and reduce early substance use and other problem behaviors. The current research concentrates on a particular dimension of partnership effectiveness to establish whether perceptions about team functioning in play at six months and 18 months predict the quality of sustainability planning at 36 and 48 months.

How well teams functioned in the early stages was found to be strongly related to the quality of their later preparations for sustainability. Recruitment and integration of new team members, and the encouragement they subsequently received were also found to be key factors. The results strengthen the argument for providing technical assistance to meet the needs of those who promote

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prevention partnerships, and they provide longitudinal empirical data to support the hypotheses of other researchers who have similarly found a correlation between effective sustainability and early planning and support.

Locally-driven coalitions/partnerships are frequently recommended as a viable means of improving the status and future well-being of children, families, and the communities in which they live (Butterfoss, et al., 1996; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995; Foster-Fishman, Berkowitz, Lounsbury, Jacobson, & Allen, 2001; Perkins, Borden, & Hogue, 1998). People with diverse perspectives and experiences are brought together to develop comprehensive planning and action (Gray, 1989; Roussos & Fawcett, 2000) in the belief that sharing resources will generate a versatile response to complex issues beyond the capacity of any single agency (Jasuja, et al., 2005; Perkins et al., 1998).

Such partnerships all too often begin with short-term grant funding, and from the outset face a daunting challenge to their sustainability (Cornerstone Consulting Group, 2002). Some coalitions and partnerships flourish, but many fail to sustain their work once outside funding is withdrawn (Farquhar, 1978; Gomez et al., 2005; Hallfors, Cho, Livert, & Kaduskin, 2002; Hallfors & Goddette, 2002; Mancini & Marek, 2004). Partnerships are likely to have long-term effects on public health only if they are sustained, but our understanding of factors that secure them in that condition is limited. For example, there are calls for sustainability planning as a necessary aspect of establishing a partnership, but there is little in the research about the utility of such planning.

This longitudinal investigation examines coalition processes in a specific university-community partnership project called PROSPER (PROmoting School – community-University Partnerships to Enhance Resilience; Spoth, Greenberg, Bierman, & Redmond, 2004). The focus of this paper is a specific aspect of the larger PROSPER Study in order to examine the factors that influence the process of sustainability planning process within a collaborative partnership focused on youth development.

PROSPER organizes local community teams with the goal of implementing evidence-based programs that are designed to support positive youth development, and to reduce early substance use and other problem behaviors, while building the community's capacity to provide broader prevention services.

The PROSPER Model originated as a federally-funded (NIDA) research project to evaluate the Model. The aims of the overall PROSPER study were: (a) to evaluate the efficacy of a community-based partnership approach to selecting, implementing, and sustaining evidence-based prevention programming for youth and families; and (b) to learn what factors are most important in partnership effectiveness (specifically program implementation). This paper concentrates on a particular dimension of that partnership effectiveness to establish whether perceptions about team functioning in play at six months and 18 months predict the quality of sustainability planning at 36 and 48 months.

Phases of Team Development within the PROSPER Model

We propose that community teams and other partnership models proceed through a series of developmental phases (Chinman, Imm, & Wandersman, 2004; Hawkins, et al., 2008; Hawkins, Catalano, & Arthur, 2002; Livit & Wandersman, 2004; Stevenson & Mitchell, 20003). The first **organizational** phase lasts for between six and eight months. The major tasks are partnership formation activities – including recruiting key members, receiving training in the model, establishing program goals based on local needs and resources, and coalescing as a team (Feinberg, Chilenski, Greenberg, Spoth, & Redman, 2007). During the

second **operations** phase, which lasts between two and three years, the major tasks involve implementing chosen programs and/or policies, applying a monitoring system and initiating sustainability training and planning. The length of this phase depends on the model, the extent of initial funding, and other considerations.

The focus during the third early sustainability phase, which overlaps with phase 2, is on sustaining the effective activities of the local community team. It often involves engaging other community entities to create a permanent structure for the team's operations and sponsored activities (Feinberg, Greenberg, Osgood, Sartorius, Bontempo, 2007; Spoth & Greenberg, 2005).

The final phase, centering on **ongoing operations and sustainability**, involves strengthening the internal and external functioning of community teams and maintaining the quality of program implementation.

We postulate that the relative impact of various internal and external factors varies across the overlapping yet distinct developmental phases of the collaboration model (Spoth et al, 2004; Spoth & Greenberg, 2005). For instance, the importance of securing a well-known and well-respected community decision-maker may be more important during the early sustainability phases, but less so during the ongoing operations and sustainability phase. Hence the need for longitudinal studies to analyze the causal chains of influence in coalition development from initial formation through program implementation and sustainability (Feinberg et al., 2007).

Sustainability

In this work we have adopted an understanding of sustainability conceptualized by Johnson and colleagues (Johnson, Hays, Center, & Daley, 2004). They define sustainability as "...the process of ensuring an adaptive prevention system and a sustainable innovation that can be integrated into ongoing operations to benefit diverse stakeholders" (p. 137). Sustainability is considered to be a multi-faceted, continuous and cyclical process of organizational change. It has four major objectives: continuing project activities within the funded organization, sustaining benefits for the intended stakeholders, maintaining the capacity of a collaborative structure, and maintaining attention to the issues addressed by the program (Scheirer, Hartling, & Hagerman, 2008).

Within the PROSPER Model, sustainability is similarly multi-faceted, but the definition is extended in three directions. It includes the additional objectives of ensuring the community-based team's fidelity to the leadership model in which an Extension educator works alongside a school co-leader. This guarantees that PROSPER is adopted into the mainstream of the two participating organizations, the Extension and Public Schools. Second, the definition requires the implementation of the evidence-based programs to be of a consistently high quality. Finally, sustainability by PROSPER's definition involves extending the program to new communities.

While many community teams struggle to attain this level of sustainability, a number of reports indicate that sustainability of health promotion programming is possible, given substantial planning and support (Berry, Senter, Cheadle, Greewald, & Peason, 2005; Johnson, et al., 2004; Mancini & Marek, 2004; Scheirer, 2005; Shediach-Rizkallah & Bone, 1998). For, example one study found that 60% of university-community partnerships were able to sustain long-term primary prevention activities after the withdrawal of university support and funding (Bracht, et al., 1994). A recent study of 95 *Communities That Care* sites in Pennsylvania found that approximately 60% of sites continued to function four years after state funding ceased (Feinberg, et al., 2008).

A common recommendation is that partnerships should plan early for sustainability (Berry, et al., 2005; Mittelmark, et al., 1993). From a program planning and implementation perspective, it is a critical step, and so a key aspect of research on the PROSPER Model has been to use *proactive* technical assistance (TA) to build strong local teams.

The PROSPER model focuses proactive TA on the development of the teams' leadership, communication patterns, shared vision, and goals and objectives. These concerns are in line with evidence that four main factors are associated with the success and sustainability of collaborations and partnerships (Foster-Fishman, et al., 2001; Wandersman, et al., 2008). We examine three of the four factors: (1) member capacity, which includes the knowledge and skills of individual members; (2) relational capacity, which includes the climate, vision and working process of the collaboration; and (3) organizational capacity, which includes the leadership, work procedures, communication style, resources and improvement orientation of the collaboration (Foster-Fishman, et al., 2001).

The Individual members of community teams bring with them a variety of skills that influence team functioning and sustainability. Their capacity (e.g., professionalism, specific knowledge, and teamwork skills) and attitudes have been linked to team functioning and to sustainability (Darlington & Fenney, 2008; Foster-Fishman, et al., 2001; Greenberg, Feinberg, Meyer-Chilenski, Spoth, & Redmond, 2007; Shearer, 2005). For example, in her review of 26 empirical studies on sustainability, Shearer (2005) found that 12 noted a link between staff members' perceived benefits to themselves and/or to clients and the likelihood of the effort being sustained. Within the PROSPER study, we find that team members' initial attitudes to prevention and substance use are associated with team functioning 18 months on (Feinberg, et al., 2007).

In addition, the longevity of community teams may be affected by the quality of the relationships they engender (measured here by internal climate and level of organizational capacity). Team leaders of coalitions that display a strong task-focused social climate are more likely to rate them as effective and capable of securing support for sustainability (Florin, Mitchell, Stevenson, & Klein, 2000). Another aspect of this "relational capacity" involves the process of collaboration, in terms of systematic self-governance and self-management protocols. In short: does a coalition have a strategy for dealing with the various problems it is likely to encounter? For instance, since all coalitions experience member turnover, the ability of teams to plan for transition and to integrate new members is likely to be a strong indicator of the thoroughness of its early team organization and planning (Feinberg et al. 2007).

Sustainability has been linked to the overall functioning of coalitions/partnerships in terms of organizational capacity. For instance, in the Pennsylvania CTC study, Feinberg and colleagues (2008) found a strong link between the coalition board's overall functioning and the survival and sustainability of evidence-based programs after grant funding ceased. Assessment by board members and TA providers of the importance of this relationship as an indicator of board functioning was consistent.

The PROSPER Model

The PROSPER model has three tiers: local community prevention teams (PROSPER Teams), university-based prevention scientists, and Prevention Coordinators (PC). The primary function of Prevention Coordinators is to give proactive technical assistance, guidance, and consultation to the teams (Spoth, et al., 2004). They also liaise between the teams and scientists, conveying information and feedback. Community prevention teams are relatively small (8-12 members). They are led by university Cooperative Extension Service

(CES) educators and co-led by a representative from a local middle school. The community prevention team also includes representatives of various community agencies (e.g., county-based alcohol and drug prevention agency, mental health and human service agencies), parents, and youth. PROSPER teams are designed to achieve a set of intervention goals across a number of developmental phases, as described in an earlier article (Spoth & Greenberg, 2005).

In the version of the model that provided the basis for this study, the project plan guided PROSPER teams from program selection (Phase 1) and implementation (Phase 2), to seeking sustainable funding (Phase 3) during the first four years. Teams met monthly and all team members were invited to a state-wide cross-team meeting yearly. In year three, the team leaders began meeting between four and six times per year in learning communities to consider agendas generated by PROSPER Team Leaders, the PCs, and the prevention scientist to address relevant needs and solve current and emerging problems. Learning communities created an opportunity to provide Team Leaders with prevention science updates (for example, on the effective use of data, team development, sustainability planning, media and communication planning, implementation fidelity, and evidence-based prevention practices) (Mincemoyer, Perkins, & Santiago, 2008).

Prevention Coordinators provided each PROSPER team with continuous proactive consultation and support in relation to agendas and communication and decision-making processes. Contact included bi-weekly phone calls and face-to-face visits at least quarterly.

During the operations phase, each PROSPER team implemented one evidence-based family-focused intervention and one school-based intervention. Interventions were selected from a menu of three programs appropriate for sixth graders and their families, and for seventh graders in their classrooms. The family-focused intervention was introduced in the first year of the implementation phase and each year thereafter; the school-based program was introduced during the second year of the operations phase, and each year following. It emerged that teams succeeded in the challenging task of recruiting families for the family-focused program (Spoth et al, 2005) and in implementing both types of programs with high quality (Spoth et al, 2006).

Initial findings from the overall research project, which used a randomized group design, indicate more positive effects for PROSPER than for control communities on child-reported proximal family relations (e.g., parental management of child behavior and parent-child affective quality), and substance use (see Redmond et al., 2007; Spoth et al., 2007). All 14 intervention communities secured external support to sustain their programs five years into the project; but levels of sustainability thereafter are very mixed.

The Current Paper

This paper examines whether the characteristics of PROSPER team members, teams, and communities during the organizational and operations phases predict the quality of sustainability planning activity four years into the collaborative project. We draw on data from the larger research study of the PROSPER model to examine the role that team functioning in Phase 1 (organizational) and Phase 2 (operations) played in influencing sustainability factors in Phase 3 (early sustainability), when teams were seeking local funding to continue their work

Drawing on previous research on coalitions and sustainability, we investigate four aspects of sustainability planning – the degree to which PROSPER teams: (a) perceive that they have the expertise needed to sustain their coalition's activities; (b) believe they will be able to sustain their work; (c) have developed effective plans to secure funding; and (d) perceive

that the team leadership supports sustainability. These four points are related to three of the four factors that Foster-Fishman and Colleagues (2001) identify as critical for sustainability. Point (a) is aligned with the membership capacity factor; point (b) is related to member relational factor, and points (c) and (d) address the organization capacity factor.

The central question addressed in this paper is: do global team functioning and other early team indicators at six months (organizational phase) and 18 months (operations phase) predict more effective sustainability planning at 36 and 48 months (during the early sustainability phase)?

Global team functioning includes attitudes to work, goal setting, positive culture, and leadership quality. Other indicators of early team functioning include: the integration of new team members; time devoted to PROSPER work and the involvement of team enablers (e.g., community support and coordination between schools and the Cooperative Extension System). We test these associations using two sources of data: team member ratings and independent ratings by their technical assistance providers (i.e., prevention coordinators). We examine team member and prevention coordinator ratings of team functioning at six and 18 months after team formation to predict sustainability process outcomes at 36 and 48 months after team formation.

Method Procedure

Data for this sub-study were collected from 14 intervention communities (seven in Iowa and seven in Pennsylvania). For the overall PROSPER research study, 28 communities were selected on the basis of four eligibility criteria: (a) school district enrollment between 1,301 and 5,200 students in non-metropolitan areas; (b) a minimum of 15% of families eligible for free or reduced cost lunches; (c) fewer than 50% of the community population employed by or attending a college or university; and (d) no current involvement with other university-affiliated, youth-focused prevention research projects.

After the communities were selected, they were blocked by size and location and randomized into 14 intervention and 14 control communities². Overall, this is a predominantly rural/small town sample with a median household income of \$37,070, and one in which 29% of students receive free- or reduced-cost lunches. The community populations are primarily European American (according to the school district student population – 85% white at baseline, and 5% Hispanic/Latino, 3% African American; (Redman et al., 2007) See Greenberg et al. (2007) for more detailed information on the community selection and randomization process.

Four waves of data collection are included in the analyses (see Table 1). Data from Wave 1 of the PROSPER project (“PRETEST”) have been discussed in previous reports (e.g., Feinberg et al., 2007; Greenberg et al., 2007), and are not included. Here, we examine Waves 2 through 5. Waves 2 and 3 were combined for the current analyses and were collected at six and 18 months after team formation. The two program components (family-based program and school-based program) were not fully implemented until Wave 3 when team operations and program implementation were fully supported by University grant funds. During Wave 2 (organizational phase), teams were planning for the first round of the family-based program, while during Wave 3 (operations phase) they were planning for the second round of the family-focused program and the first round of the school-based program.

²One of the original communities had to be replaced before the baseline assessment took place; thus there was no attrition rate.

Program implementation continued during Waves 4 and 5 (early sustainability phase). By Wave 4, teams were required to financially support a new implementation of the family-based program, but university matching funds were provided if they increased the percentage of families recruited by 5% over the previous year. By Wave 5, teams were responsible for financially supporting the implementation of both programs, but, as an incentive, the additional 5% increase in family recruitment for University matching funds remained on offer. Financially supporting the family-based programs means securing approximately \$3000/group, with the average PROSPER team running an average of between three and five groups per year. Supporting the school-based program involves fewer financial resources – \$200-1000 per year. In addition, there is the commitment of a teacher's time to conduct all the sessions with seventh graders.

Participants

Three types of respondent participated in the project interviews: (1) intervention team members (TM); (2) agency directors of human service organizations (AD); and (3) prevention coordinators (PC; the technical assistance link between the universities and the community teams).

Intervention team members (TM)

This sample consisted of 168 prevention team members who participated in one or more of the four waves of data collection. As described earlier, each team includes a team leader who represents the local Cooperative Extension office; a co-leader from the school; representatives from local human service agencies (e.g., mental health and substance abuse); parents; and youth. An average of 12 team members per community participated (range: 7 - 17), whose age varied between 24 and 59 ($M = 42.5$, $SD = 8.4$). (Although youth were on the team we did not collect this data from them.) The majority of respondents were White (99%), female (70%), had obtained a college degree (88%), and lived in or near the school district participating in their community's PROSPER program (86%).

Agency directors (AD)

The AD sample included 76 individuals, each of whom participated in one or more waves of data collection. ADs were chosen if they were: (1) the supervisor of a team member ($n=39$); or (b) a team member themselves ($n=37$). ADs who were members of a team completed the member survey and answered additional questions found only on the agency directors' survey. An average of five ADs per community participated (range: 4 - 10) whose age varied between 26 and 62 ($M = 46.9$, $SD = 8.6$). Approximately 97% of the sample had obtained a college degree. All ADs were White, and the majority were male (57%) and lived in or near the school district participating in their community's PROSPER program (61%).

Prevention coordinators (PCs)

The nine PCs served as the link between local community teams and university researchers (see Spoth, et al., 2004), and provided technical assistance and consulting regarding team operations. Two-thirds were female, all were White, and they had an average of 19 years previous experience with Cooperative Extension and/or prevention.

Assessments

At each wave, team members and agency directors participated in individual face-to-face, computer-assisted interviews lasting 1.0 to 1.5 hours. The interviews assessed characteristics of the individual, the PROSPER team, the respondent's workplace, and the community. Respondents were compensated \$20 for each wave in which they participated. PCs answered

questions about team dynamics via a quarterly web-based survey. Data were aggregated by taking the mean of responses across all assessments in a given year.

Measures

All of the scales were created by taking the mean of the scale items and aggregating them to the team level. Since each team is associated with a specific community, “the community” is the unit of analysis. Unless otherwise noted, higher numbers indicate stronger endorsement of the characteristic measured. Team functioning data from Waves 2 and 3 were combined (averaged; see Table 2 for reliability), whereas sustainability data from Waves 4 and 5 were analyzed separately.³

Waves 2 and 3: Team functioning

Assessment of team functioning consisted of two global scales – one rated by TMs and one rated by PCs – and five “early team indicator” scales. Response options ranged from two-point to seven-point scales; thus, all responses were standardized prior to aggregation⁴. The Global Team Functioning scales were created by averaging the three subscales. For PCs: Team Focus On Work, Team Goals, and Team Culture (PC $\alpha = 0.91$). These three subscales plus one additional subscale, Team Leadership, were used for team members' responses ($\alpha = 0.90$). Focus on Work (five items; adapted from Moos, 1981) assessed the degree to which a team was work-oriented; for example, “Team members work very hard.” Team Goals (two items; Greenberg et al., 2007) assessed how far the team had developed goals and governance procedures; for example, “The PROSPER team has developed clear goals and objectives.” Team Culture (eight items, adapted from Kegler, Steckler, McLeroy, & Malek, 1998) assessed the degree to which team members detected cohesion, group spirit, and unity; for example, “There is a strong feeling of belonging in this team.” Team Leadership (eight items, Kegler et al., 1998) assessed the extent to which team leadership encouraged collaborative processes and displayed effective interpersonal and leadership behaviors; for example, “The team leadership intentionally seeks out your views.”

Five early indicator scales assessed specific aspects of team functioning. Three of the five scales were assessed solely by TMs (New Member Integration, Team Hours, and Team Enablers), one scale was assessed solely by PCs (Team Member Participation), and one scale was assessed by TMs and ADs (Buy-in). New Member Integration (six items; Taylor-Powell, Rossing, & Geran, 1998) assessed the degree to which new members were effectively integrated into the team; for example, “The PROSPER team has adopted an orientation plan to inform new members about its vision, mission, goals, work, and process.” Team Hours (six items) assessed how long team members spent on monthly activities, such as attending meetings, recruiting program participants, fundraising/grant-writing, and teaching program activities.

Team Enablers (six items) assessed how far good team leadership, active involvement of team members, support from local agencies and businesses, and coordination between the school and Cooperative Extension helped teams accomplish tasks. Buy-In (five items) measured how far school administrators and community agency leaders were committed to and championed the PROSPER project; for example, “Do influential community leaders understand PROSPER and why it is important?” Team Member Participation (five items) assessed how regularly team members participated in meetings, trainings, board meetings, and other team activities.

³Information on all scales and their construction can be obtained from the second author at mef11@psu.edu

⁴Alphas calculated at the subscale level

Waves 4 and 5: Sustainability Planning

Four scales assessed team characteristics, plans, and attitudes related to long-term sustainability at Waves 4 and 5. One scale was assessed by TMs and PCs (Team Expertise), one by TMs and ADs (Team Attitudes)⁵, and two were assessed solely by TMs (Team Funding Plans and Sustainability Leadership). Team Expertise (four items; Wave 4 $\alpha = .71$, Wave 5 $\alpha = .69$) assessed the extent to which the local team had the necessary expertise to fulfill the goal of sustaining PROSPER; for example, “Our local Prosper team has the expertise needed to fulfill the goal of sustaining PROSPER in our community.” Team Attitudes (two items; Wave 4 $r = .52$, Wave 5 $r = .30$ ⁶) assessed the degree to which the local teams are interested in sustaining PROSPER programs; an example item is, “How likely do you think it is that the PROSPER-initiated programs...will continue beyond the funding period?” Team Funding Plans (four items; Wave 4 $\alpha = .85$, Wave 5 $\alpha = .44$) assessed how thoroughly teams had made plans to secure funds for prevention programs beyond the grant; for example, “Has the PROSPER team developed a realistic, concrete sustainability plan for how to continue offering prevention programs when (university) funds cease?” Sustainability Leadership (three items; Wave 4 $\alpha = .73$, Wave 5 $\alpha = .65$) assessed how favorably team and community leadership morale and interest were disposed towards PROSPER; for example (reverse scored), “How much of a problem is... staff morale and interest in your efforts to sustain the PROSPER team?” See Table 3 for inter-correlations of Sustainability Scales.

Results

Descriptive statistics for all scales are provided in Table 2. The reliability of all of the scales is adequate. Given the small sample size ($n = 14$) statistical analysis was limited to Pearson correlation coefficients. However, many of the correlation coefficients reported below were notably strong. We interpret correlations at the community level as meaningful even when not statistically significant if: (1) the associations portrayed a coherent and consistent pattern, and (2) the correlations were above .30. The use of .30 as a cutoff is somewhat arbitrary, but it is considered reasonable, given that an association of over .30 represents about 10% or more of the variance (Feinberg, Greenberg, Osgood, Anderson, & Babinski, 2002).

Early Global Team Functioning and Later Sustainability

Table 4 presents the correlations between Wave 2 and 3 global team functioning variables and sustainability scales at Waves 4 and 5. A number of these correlations were noteworthy. First, early TM-rated team functioning was strongly related to later Team Sustainability Expertise at Wave 4 ($r = .67$) and Wave 5 ($r = .55$). Likewise, early PC-rated team functioning was positively related to Team Expertise at Wave 4 ($r = .56$) and Wave 5 ($r = .49$). Second, early TM-rated team functioning was strongly related to the quality of Team Funding Plans at Wave 4 ($r = .58$) and Wave 5 ($r = .63$). Similarly, Team Funding Plans was also associated with PC-rated team functioning at Wave 4 ($r = .38$) and Wave 5 ($r = .55$), although the correlation at Wave 4 was moderate. Third, early team functioning was associated with Team Confidence toward sustainability rated by TMs at Wave 4 ($r = .35$) and rated by PCs at Wave 5 ($r = .31$). This finding suggests a relation between positive early team functioning and later interest and confidence in sustaining PROSPER, although it is

⁵PC and TM responses have equal weight even though there are more TMs. For the Expertise scale, there are two- items for PCs and 2 items for TMs. The mean of items was taken for PCs (1 per community) and TMs (~5 per community) separately, and then those two means were averaged. However, responses for TMs and ADs (for Team Attitudes scale) were all together and means were taken without splitting them into groups, because about half of our AD respondents are also TMs, and the rest supervise a TM in their agency

⁶Correlations were calculated for this scale, rather than alphas, because there were only two items.

not consistent across raters or time. Note that subscale correlations are provided in Table 4 to assist interpreting the global team functioning findings.

Early Team Indicators and Later Sustainability

Table 5 provides the correlations between Wave 2 and 3 specific team functioning indicator scales and the sustainability scales at Waves 4 and 5. New Member Integration was strongly related to Team Expertise at Wave 4 ($r = .56$) and Wave 5 ($r = .59$). It was also mildly related to Team Attitudes ($r = .34$) and Team Funding Plans ($r = .36$) at Wave 4, and these relationships were stronger at Wave 5: Team Attitudes $r = .53$ Team Funding Plans $r = .74$.

The number of hours invested by team members (Team Hours) was mildly related to sustainability leadership at Wave 4 ($r = .38$) and Wave 5 ($r = .43$). The Team Enablers scale was strongly related to Team Expertise at Wave 4 ($r = .55$) and Wave 5 ($r = .64$), and to Team Funding Plans at Wave 4 ($r = .54$) and Wave 5 ($r = .48$). It was also mildly related to Sustainability Leadership ($r = .31$) at Wave 5.

PROSPER Buy-in on the part of school administrators and community agency directors was moderately related to Team Expertise ($r = .33$), Team Funding Plans ($r = .34$), and Sustainability Leadership ($r = .38$) at Wave 4. Finally, early Team Member Participation was strongly related to Team Expertise at Wave 4 ($r = .67$) and Wave 5 ($r = .62$), and to Team Funding Plans at Wave 4 ($r = .54$) and Wave 5 ($r = .60$).

Discussion

This study investigated the role of team functioning during the earlier phases of the PROSPER process to establish how far it might predict the quality of attitudes, planning and leadership connected with sustainability, and perceptions of expertise approximately two years later. Our comments are organized around the two main sets of predictors: global team functioning and specific team functioning indicators.

Global Team Functioning

We found a strong association between early team functioning, as rated by team members, and expertise in relation to sustainability and team funding plans at Waves 4 and 5. How well a team considers itself to be functioning during the organizational and implementation phases is predictive of how ready in terms of perceived expertise the team will be to address the issue of sustainability two years later. A similar pattern emerged based on an independent rating of early team functioning by the PCs who provide technical assistance to the teams. Thus, it appears that the quality of team functioning early on is strongly related to later preparation and planning for sustainability.

A weaker relationship was found between early team functioning and later Team Attitudes toward sustainability. Team member-rated Team Functioning was moderately associated with Team Attitudes at wave 4, while PC-rated Team Functioning was moderately related to Team Attitudes at Wave 5. Perhaps this inconsistent pattern has more to do with each member's personal values and goals, and less to do with a team's functioning. Or it might result from the fact that the scales for Team Attitudes and Sustainability Leadership had fairly high means with little variability (see Table 2). Another explanation is that the Team Attitudes scale is inadequate because it involves just two-items and has limited variability.

Early Team Indicators

Other early indicators of team functioning predicted several indicators of the quality of later sustainability planning processes. In particular, the recruitment and integration of new team

members, and the encouragement given to all team members to participate may be crucial. We found that New Member Integration was strongly related to team sustainability expertise at both waves. As noted in the literature review, turnover within coalitions is the norm. Well organized teams anticipate change and have a procedure in place for integrating new members. Such teams may be more likely to recruit new members, introduce expertise and facilitate sustainability planning. This focus on member capacity is in line with Foster-Fishman and colleagues' (2001) findings about the influence of member capacity.

Team Member Participation was strongly linked to later Team Expertise and Team Funding Plans at both waves. It is likely that members who attend and actively engage in meetings will increase a team's confidence in its ability to sustain its efforts. This association also supports Foster-Fishman and colleagues' (2001) findings about the importance of team member capacity. Similarly, Darlington and Feeney (2008) found an association between team member capacity and interests associated with sustainability. When teams are fully engaged they are more likely to facilitate proactive comprehensive planning; an absence or low level of engagement on the part of team members inhibits planning across community sectors.

There was a strong correlation between the Team Enablers scale and later Team Expertise and Team Funding Plans at both waves, and a moderately correlation with Sustainability Leadership at Wave 5. Thus, teams who reported strong support from local business and agencies, as well as good coordination between CES and the school (co-leaders of the local team), were more likely to believe that they had the necessary team leadership skills and to have developed sustainability plans. This finding supports Foster-Fishman's finding about the relational capacity of teams. Because teams who experience positive external support spend less time on problem-solving, they may be more likely to focus on increasing program success and so develop a greater capacity for sustaining their work. In addition, when teams perceive themselves to be supported by good leadership and strong local support, they may be more likely to plan ahead and have more confidence in their capacity to secure new funds.

In contrast, the early team indicator of the number of hours provided by team members showed only a weak correlation with later sustainability planning processes, other than sustainability leadership. These largely null results suggest that there may be countervailing relations between the amount of time devoted to the initiative and sustainability processes. Long hours devoted to an initiative may reflect a lack of efficiency on the part of members and leaders. Indeed, the lack of any association based on hours invested may indicate that spending more time on project tasks is not a strong indicator of team effectiveness. Teams that operate effectively and have strong leadership may be much more efficient in their use of time. Overall, hours do not seem to play a role in sustainability planning

Finally, the early team indicator of Buy-In by community leaders was mildly related to sustainability planning at Wave 4 only. This pattern of results may reflect a developmental process in which early buy-in by community leaders has only a short-lived effect on planning processes at Wave 4. Any impact appears to dissipate (by Wave 5) as levels of buy-in change or other salient influences emerge as teams begin to become more engaged in sustainability planning.

In conclusion, these findings clearly indicate the importance of team functioning and team member capacity in predicting the quality of later sustainability planning. Moreover, they support existing hypotheses that effective sustainability is correlated with early planning and support (Berry et al., 2005; Johnson et al., 2004; Mancini & Marek, 2004; Scheirer, 2005; Shediak-Rizkallah & Bone, 1998). In future research, we will examine how far early team

functioning and sustainability planning predict success in terms of actual sustainability, assessed in relation to funding and continued program implementation. There is some evidence for the pathways noted above; for example, a study of another coalition prevention model found that success in attracting funds was related to positive team functioning (Feinberg et al., 2008).

The results of this study are consistent with those of earlier studies (Foster-Fishman, 2001; Wandersman, et al., 2008) and extend our understanding in several ways. First, they highlight the potential importance of early training and ongoing technical assistance to support team leaders and help team members to work effectively together to develop approaches to integration, leadership, active participation, and buy-in. This conclusion is supported by our earlier research that found community teams supported by technical assistance make a better job of implementing and ultimately sustaining evidence-based programs (Feinberg et al., 2004). Collaborations were able to find participants for a family-focused prevention program more efficiently if they received technical assistance on recruitment strategies (Spath et al., 2007). The fact that independent assessments by team members and prevention coordinators produced a similar verdict on the influence of global team functioning strengthens the validity of these findings. This result indicates that teams can accurately identify their strengths and weaknesses in their actions and that such assessments are associated with later outcomes.

Our findings improve our understanding of the lifecycle of PROSPER teams. In earlier studies, we found that the community level of poverty, perceived community readiness, characteristics of local team members (previous collaborative experience) and attitudes toward prevention played a substantial role in predicting the quality of community team functioning at Wave 2 and Wave 3 (Greenberg et al., 2007; Feinberg et al., 2007). However, neither Wave 1 community poverty nor other factors predicted Wave 4 and 5 sustainability planning. Thus, while certain factors “at birth” may affect team functioning over the first year or so, it appears that by Wave 2 and 3 team functioning alone predicts functioning in later phases of coalition development. This finding indicates the importance of support systems that promote team functioning beyond the early stages. In addition, it seems that “effective team processes” that point to successful planning for sustainability are those most strongly based on an early focus on goals and objectives.

Our findings echo those of Foster-Fishman and colleagues (2001) that capacity building among team members to improve the team's ability to function is likely to lead to long-term benefits in terms of sustainability.

As noted earlier, a major limitation of the study was its small sample size. Had it been large enough to permit multivariate analytic models to be used, we would know better which factors are more active in predicting later team outcomes. As things stand, there is a marked risk of Type 1 error, and so caution is called for when interpreting our results. Moreover, because the PROSPER project purposely included only rural and small-town communities, we do not know whether similar factors would operate in urban environments. We cannot say either whether the use of Extension as the lead agency for urban community teams would be as efficient as it has been shown to be in rural and small town areas. However once the right lead institution has been identified, it seems logical to believe that the present findings would generalize to urban settings.

A second limitation concerns the sustainability planning scales created for this study (although they were found to be reliable to an acceptable degree). Further revisions and psychometric work are needed.

To summarize: our results provide evidence that how well teams function during the formative stages of locally-driven coalitions and partnerships is a useful predictor of how sustainable the initiatives they introduce prove to be several years later. Future studies may establish how far the effectiveness of the same team-building processes is related to the level of funding secured in the following years, and to the ability to provide well-implemented evidence-based programs with enduring support.

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Table 1
PROSPER intervention coalition activities and assessment schedule, 2002-2005

Year:	2002	2002	2002	2003	2003	2003	2004	2004	2004	2005	2005
Period of Time	Apr - Jun	July - Dec	Jan - June	July - Dec	Jan - June	July - Dec	Jan - June	July - Dec	Jan - June	Oct - Dec	
Data Collection	W1	W2		W3		W4		W5			
TM & AD Interviews	X	X		X		X		X		X	
PC Ratings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Program Implementation											
Family Program				C2*	C2						
School Program			C1	C1	C1	C2					
Funding Source ⁺											
Team	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
Family Program			G	G	G	O+	G	O+		O+	
School Program										G	

Notes:

* C1 is when the first cohort received family and school programs. C2 is the same for Cohort 2;

⁺ Funding Source: G=Funded solely by grant funds, O+=Funded by team with matching incentive from University grant.

Table 2
Reliability and Descriptive Statistics for Study Scales (n = 14)

	Reliability	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Example Item
Global Team Functioning						
<i>Team Member (TM)</i>	$\alpha = .90$					
Team Focus on Work ^a						
Wave 2		0.93	0.08	0.74	1.00	Team members work very hard.
Wave 3	$r = .45$	0.91	0.09	0.70	1.00	
Team Goals						
Wave 2		3.73	0.19	3.38	4.00	The PROSPER team has developed clear goals and objectives.
Wave 3	$r = .55$	3.50	0.40	2.56	3.93	
Team Culture						
Wave 2		3.58	0.22	3.14	3.90	There is a strong feeling of belonging in this team.
Wave 3	$r = .72$	3.58	0.25	3.11	3.86	
Team Leadership						
Wave 2		3.74	0.14	3.56	3.95	The team leadership intentionally seeks out your views.
Wave 3	$r = .63$	3.70	0.17	3.35	3.93	
<i>Prev. Coordinator (PC)</i>	$\alpha = .91$					
Team Focus on Work ^a						
Wave 2		3.09	0.48	2.27	3.80	(same as above)
Wave 3	$r = .57$	3.13	0.52	2.20	4.00	
Team Goals						
Wave 2		3.22	0.43	2.67	4.00	(same as above)
Wave 3	$r = .63$	3.07	0.64	1.88	4.00	
Team Culture						
Wave 2		3.22	0.39	2.46	3.87	(same as above)
Wave 3	$r = .66$	3.18	0.44	2.31	3.84	
Team Indicators (TM & PC)						
New Member Integration						The PROSPER team has adopted an orientation plan to inform new members about its vision, mission, goals, work, and process.

	Reliability	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Example Item
Wave 2		2.98	0.35	2.30	3.65	
Wave 3	$r = .25$	3.29	0.30	2.65	3.74	
Team Hours						
Wave 2		14.65	5.41	6.09	27.25	Average number of hours per month you have spent engaged in recruitment of families for programs
Wave 3	$r = .70$	18.37	8.68	8.00	36.00	
Team Enablers ^b						How much has your PROSPER work benefited from coordination between school and Coop. Extension?
Wave 3	$\alpha = .80$	3.31	0.30	2.46	3.67	
Buy-In						
Wave 2		3.12	0.28	2.60	3.57	Do influential community leaders understand PROSPER and why it is important?
Wave 3	$r = .81$	3.09	0.25	2.60	3.42	
Team Participation (standardized)						
Wave 2		0.11	0.63	-1.47	0.98	Please rate participation at meeting (making comments, expressing ideas)
Wave 3	$r = .56$	0.12	0.78	-1.44	1.11	
Sustainability						
Team Expertise (TM & PC)						Our local PROSPER team has the expertise needed to fulfill the goal of sustaining PROSPER in our community.
Wave 4	$\alpha = .71$	3.32	0.36	2.80	3.92	
Wave 5	$\alpha = .69$	3.16	0.37	2.40	3.71	
Team Attitudes ^c (TM & AD)						How likely do you think it is that the PROSPER-initiated programs will continue beyond the funding period?
Wave 4	$r = .52$	3.45	0.22	3.06	3.72	
Wave 5	$r = .30$	3.39	0.28	2.85	3.79	
Team Funding Plans (TM)						Has the ... team developed a realistic, concrete sustainability plan for how to continue offering prevention programs when (university) funds cease?
Wave 4	$\alpha = .85$	3.22	0.32	2.54	3.75	
Wave 5	$\alpha = .44$	3.18	0.23	2.80	3.67	
Sustainability Leadership (TM)						How much of a problem is staff morale and interest in your efforts to sustain the PROSPER team? (reversed-scored)
Wave 4	$\alpha = .73$	4.13	0.40	3.22	4.78	
Wave 5	$\alpha = .65$	4.12	0.39	3.67	4.93	

Note. Data presented are team-level data, thus the means provided are the means of team means, etc. Correlations presented are the correlations between Waves 2 and 3 of their respective scales. Alphas and correlations were computed using standardized scales to be consistent with the scales used in analyses; descriptive statistics, however, were computed using unstandardized scales in order to make them more meaningful. An exception to this is the *Participation* scale which was comprised of items with different response scales.

^a Response options for team members were true/false (1/0), whereas options for prevention coordinators were on a 4-point scale.

^b The *Team Enablers* scale was added at Wave 3.

^c Correlations were calculated for this scale, rather than alphas, because there were only two items.

Table 3

Inter-correlations of Sustainability Scales (n=14)

WAVE 4				WAVE 5				
	Expertise	Attitudes	Funding Plans	Leadership	Expertise	Attitudes	Funding Plans	Leadership
WAVE 4								
Expertise	1.00							
Attitudes	0.37	1.00						
Funding	0.55**	0.04	1.00					
Plans								
Leadership	0.06	-0.14	0.33	1.00				
WAVE 5								
Expertise	0.75***	0.00	0.68***	0.14	1.00			
Attitudes	0.63**	0.53***	-0.06	-0.11	0.37	1.00		
Funding	0.72***	0.19	0.72***	0.22	0.68***	0.35	1.00	
Plans								
Leadership	0.44	0.53***	0.43	0.44	0.28	0.44	0.41	1.00

* $p \leq 0.10$;** $p \leq 0.05$;*** $p \leq 0.01$ (2-tailed)

Table 4
Correlations between early global team functioning at waves 2 and 3 and sustainability planning at waves 4 and 5 (n = 14)

Sustainability Planning, Wave 4						Sustainability Planning, Wave 5					
			Expertise	Attitude	Funding Plans	Leadership	Expertise	Attitude	Funding Plans	Leadership	
TM-Rated Global TF			0.67***	0.35	0.58**	-0.18	0.55***	0.14	0.63**	0.15	
Work			0.31	0.65***	0.16	-0.12	0.12	0.17	0.36	0.33	
Goals			0.58**	0.19	0.76***	0.00	0.71***	0.20	0.78**	0.15	
Culture			0.70***	0.22	0.45*	-0.23	0.49*	0.15	0.50*	0.04	
Leadership			0.60**	0.09	0.51*	-0.24	0.46*	-0.05	0.40	-0.04	
PC-Rated Global TF			0.56***	0.20	0.38	-0.29	0.49*	0.31	0.55***	0.15	
Work			0.43	0.30	0.29	-0.34	0.45	0.30	0.37	0.15	
Goals			0.42	0.17	0.22	-0.20	0.34	0.28	0.54**	0.10	
Culture			0.68***	0.09	0.52*	-0.24	0.56***	0.28	0.58	0.18	

* $p \leq 0.10$;
** $p \leq 0.05$;
*** $p \leq 0.01$ (2-tailed)
Note. W2/W3 = Waves 2 and 3 combined

Table 5
Correlations between early team indicators and later sustainability planning (n = 14)

	New Member Integration W2/W3	Team Hours W2/W3	Team Enablers W3	Buy-In W2/W3	Team Member Participation W2/W3
<i>Wave 4</i>					
Team Expertise	0.56**	-0.03	0.55**	0.33	0.67***
Team Attitudes	0.34	0.29	0.03	0.08	0.02
Team Funding Plans	0.36	0.01	0.54**	0.34	0.54**
Sustainability Leadership	-0.19	0.38	0.05	0.38	-0.10
<i>Wave 5</i>					
Team Expertise	0.59**	-0.33	0.64***	0.02	0.62**
Team Attitudes	0.53**	0.09	0.13	-0.08	0.22
Team Funding Plans	0.74***	-0.06	0.48*	0.14	0.60**
Sustainability Leadership	0.34	0.43	0.31	0.11	0.24

*
 $p \leq 0.10$;

**
 $p \leq 0.05$;

 $p \leq 0.01$ (2-tailed);

Note. W2/W3 = Waves 2 and 3 combined