



Resident Opportunity & Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) Program Final Report

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Introduction and Background

The City of Tucson and the Pima County Consortium identified the need to increase income opportunities for low-income families in their Consolidated Plan Five-Year Strategy 2000-2005 (City of Tucson, 2000). With this goal in mind, the City of Tucson Community Services Department (CSD) applied for Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding in 2004 to develop the Resident Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) Family program. Funding was awarded, and the program began in 2005. In March 2006, the City of Tucson contracted LeCroy & Milligan Associates, Inc. to conduct the project's evaluation.

The primary purpose of the ROSS program is to provide employment and job retention assistance to public housing residents in order to promote self-sufficiency within this community. The City of Tucson incorporates a variety of activities through partnering with existing services in the public housing community. Through partnerships with local providers, ROSS makes referrals to the following types of services, with a primary focus on the first two types:

- **employment & training;**
- **job retention & career advancement;**
- financial literacy;
- homeownership;
- family strengthening;
- youth character & community skill building; and
- youth development/delinquency prevention.

In addition, the ROSS program provides transportation, childcare, and educational supply reimbursements for participating families. The program consists of this constellation of services, which is meant to provide the necessary support for families to become more self-sufficient.



The Community Services Department offers several self-sufficiency programs. Also funded through HUD, the Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) program provides a variety of services to public housing residents including education, employment, financial literacy, homeownership, and supportive services for youth. There are several incentives the FSS program has to encourage participation. One motivating factor is the ability to create an escrow account with the City matching contributions throughout the process. This incentive increases active participation and encourages participants to stay in the program for the five-year duration. In addition, the FSS program has scholarship money for participants and emergency assistance funds. The ROSS program has no such lasting incentives but does have reimbursements for transportation, childcare, and educational materials. Both programs recruit public housing residents interested in self-sufficiency services and consequently many residents are dual-enrolled in both programs. Evaluating the effectiveness of the ROSS program alone became complicated when these additional services through FSS come into play.

This report summarizes the ROSS program evaluation activities through August 2008. Specifically, this report provides a review of the program and information about the participants enrolled, program services provided, focus group findings, and interview summaries from the ROSS case managers. Conclusions and lessons learned are noted at the end of the report to encapsulate the program and provide useful information for planning upcoming projects.



Evaluation Framework

The evaluation of the ROSS program included both process and outcome components. The evaluation plan measured HUD's key success indicators and provided a larger framework for the program evaluation.

Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan reflected HUD's central questions for the ROSS program objectives. The following evaluation questions focused on assessing the program's main goals:

- 1) Does providing employment and training services result in *increased* employment?
- 2) Does providing employment and training services result in *sustained* employment?
- 3) Sub-analysis: Do the constellation of services provided help families become more self-sufficient?

The following exhibit helps illustrate how the evaluation questions map to the objectives and proposed outcomes. The first evaluation question assesses families who become more self-sufficient, where indicators such as acquired employment and participants' wage and salary history measure progress toward this goal.

The last two questions are specifically linked to the proposed outcomes for the employment and job retention referrals. Since the quarterly reporting provides employment and salary information, the second question examines the number of participants who became employed and the number who increased their salaries while a ROSS participant (defined as having completed an Individual Training and Service Plan - ITSP). For the third question, participants' employment history provides information about continuity of employment, which indicates their ability to retain employment over time.



Exhibit 1: Evaluation Questions for the ROSS Project

Evaluation Questions	Objectives	Proposed Outcome
Does providing employment and training services result in increased employment?	Provide employment and training services to public housing residents	Increase the awareness and usage of employment training services. Increase employment
Does providing employment and training services result in sustained employment?	Provide job retention & career advancement services to public housing residents	Increase the awareness and usage of job retention & career advancement services. Increase sustained employment
	Offer transportation, childcare, and educational supply reimbursement to all public housing residents enrolled in ROSS services	Increase the number of residents receiving stipends to facilitate service usage
	Provide financial literacy services to public housing residents	Increase financial literacy within this group Increase the number of residents trying to correct their credit problems
	Offer services to enable public housing residents to purchase homes during program participation	Increase homeownership within this group
	Provide the <i>Family Strengthening</i> curriculum to improve family relationships among public housing residents	Improve strengthening family skills such as parenting, communication, stress coping, and goal setting
	Offer youth character and community skill building services to all youth in public housing	Improve leadership, personal, and social skills in youth
	Provide youth development and delinquency prevention programs to all youth in public housing	Improve youth development skills



Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation plan utilized a variety of process and outcome evaluation methods to report findings and assess the program's progress. The following section outlines the evaluation techniques used. The evaluation included a database review for data entry, quality assurance, and service outputs; staff interviews; and monthly workshop attendance as well as a thorough review of the database for outcomes demonstrating self-sufficiency.

Data Collection and Quality Assurance Review

Data collection occurred through two primary methods. First, data were collected on all public housing residents accessing any ROSS services. Partnering agencies reported these numbers to ROSS in aggregate. The second method was more intensive and followed ROSS participants throughout their enrollment in the program. ROSS participants were defined as any public housing resident who completed an Individual Training and Service Plan (ITSP). For these participants, case managers collected intake data through the ITSP and maintained regular contact with them. To recruit for this effort, the City of Tucson sent all public housing residents advertisements for the ROSS program with postage-paid surveys to solicit interest. From the returned surveys, the City generated waiting lists for the program from which they selected participants.

During the initial assessment, participants identified key goals for themselves, and case managers referred them to relevant services with agencies partnering with the program. Each partnering agency collected data and reported back to the ROSS case managers both in aggregate and by individual participant. Specific data collection strategies for each partnering agency are detailed in the *Outcome Evaluation Results* section of this report. ROSS case managers followed up at least quarterly with participating families to collect more individual data. Since generating the initial waiting list, the ROSS case managers followed up with interested public housing residents and sent out additional recruitment mailings.



Program administrators and evaluation staff assessed all data collected and entered for analysis. The database was thoroughly reviewed prior to analysis and follow-up questions were explored to provide the most accurate data for data analysis. Scheduled data review meetings identified data-related questions and provided opportunity for solutions throughout the process.

Process Evaluation

The evaluation used several different techniques to assess the ROSS program and its services. The strategies employed included evaluating the program's monthly workshops, conducting a participant focus group, and interviews with program case managers. Key findings from these activities are presented in the *Process Evaluation Results* section.

Monthly Workshops

In August 2007, program staff worked with Jewish Family and Children's Services of Southern Arizona to conduct a focus group with ROSS participants. Program participants expressed a desire to have monthly meetings where they could learn more about life skills topics, which in turn, would enhance their program experience and promote self-sufficiency. As a result, the program contracted with Jewish Family and Children's Services of Southern Arizona (JFCS) to have a licensed therapist facilitate group workshops once a month for three hours per session. Based on feedback from participants, the workshops covered the following topics: budgets, parenting skills, relationship-building skills, stress management, socialization, and other related topics for both the participants and their families. Jewish Family and Children's Services of Southern Arizona provided lunch and childcare on-site to encourage participation. With input from LeCroy & Milligan Associates, JFCS developed a post-only assessment to capture participants' feedback and regularly provided survey results to the ROSS program administrators. The assessment included questions about knowledge acquisition, the usefulness of the workshop, and the perceived value of the material covered.



Participant Focus Group

In June 2008, the evaluation conducted a focus group with program participants to gain insight into their experiences with the ROSS program. The evaluation team worked with program case managers to locate and recruit ROSS participants for the focus group.

Staff Meetings and End-of-Program Interviews

ROSS program staff and the evaluation team were in regular contact to address data collection and evaluation questions for the program. Program progress was assessed through both informal conversations and scheduled program update meetings. More formal interviews were conducted with case managers to assess challenges, successes, and lessons learned from implementing this program.

Outcome Evaluation

The evaluation analyzed participant outcomes on two different levels. For public housing participants accessing ROSS services (other than the employment and training services, which are only for ROSS participants with an ITSP), primarily output data was collected and reported to HUD. This type of reporting included frequencies organized by type of service (e.g., homeownership) and activities within each service (e.g., purchasing a home). The outcome evaluation also analyzed information at the participant and family level for those who signed an ITSP and received ongoing quarterly case management. For these families, more outcome information was collected such as current employment status, income, and job retention.



Process Evaluation Results

The process evaluation findings include information from the program's monthly workshops, participant focus group, and interviews with program case managers.

Monthly Workshops

The ROSS program held monthly workshops from December 2007 through October 2008, with plans to continue them through the end of the program. Provided by Jewish Family and Children's Services of Southern Arizona, these workshops covered life skills topics to enhance participants' program experiences and promote self-sufficiency. To date, 95 participants attended the workshops, with many returning to attend several different sessions. Of those who attended, 93% of participants (n=88) completed a post-survey. Participants responded favorably or were neutral to all the questions asked. Participants reported the following for these key questions:

- 95% (n=84) felt the workshop increased their knowledge in the topic;
- 98% (n=86) felt they will be able to use the information in their daily lives; and
- 97% (n=85) thought the workshop addressed their specific issues or problems.

Overall, program participants were pleased with the workshops offered and the content covered. ROSS case managers who worked closely with Jewish Family and Children's Services of Southern Arizona felt that the agency was keenly aware of participants' needs. For example, when participation waned in Fall 2008, JFCS changed their meeting time to Fridays to accommodate participants' schedules. This flexibility and attention to detail enabled the monthly workshops to become a significant part of the ROSS program.



Participant Focus Group

In June 2008 the evaluation conducted a focus group with program participants to gain insight into their experiences with the ROSS program. The evaluation team worked closely with program case managers to recruit participants, knowing that attendance would be challenging. Food and an incentive, a \$20 gift card to Borders bookstore, and translation services were offered to get participants to come. The location was the Santa Rosa Library, and it was also specifically chosen to be convenient for attendees. However, of the 8 participants who confirmed they would attend, four came to the focus group. Since attendance was relatively low, the information gathered from the focus group is not presented in aggregate but rather through the following noteworthy quotes.

When asked, "Did the services help you reach the goals you set for yourself in the ROSS program?", respondents replied:

- *It helped with the goals I'd set forth in the FSS program (to stay off welfare and food stamps). It helped me buy a home and maintain employment.*
- *My goals are to get my GED and start CNA classes. The ROSS program helped me apply for financial assistance and scholarships [to reach these goals].*
- *The program helped connect me with a GED class offered in Spanish.*
- *I was connected with employment services and the contact there continues to look for jobs for me. She helps me quite a bit.*

Overall, participants spoke of the program highly and felt the services, particularly the financial reimbursements, were very useful. They also reported having good relationships with their case managers that provided useful referrals to community resources. However, it should be noted that findings from only four attendees can not be extrapolated to all ROSS participants.



Staff Meetings and End-of-Program Interviews

ROSS program staff and the evaluation team were in regular contact to address data collection and evaluation questions for the program. Program progress was assessed through both informal conversations and scheduled program update meetings. More formal interviews were conducted with case managers to assess challenges, successes, and lessons learned from implementing this program. Major themes are delineated below.

- The *major challenges for program participants* to actively participate were transportation issues and maintaining motivation to seek services. Over time, however, the case managers realized that stipends served as a motivator for some participants and began using the stipends as an enticement to get participants to follow through.
- The *major challenges for the case managers* included: getting participants to do the quarterly reviews; having enough time to do paperwork and complete data entry; and cases were more labor intensive than initially thought. Furthermore, some agencies did not hold regular classes, which made making referrals difficult. It was also challenging to keep participants motivated, especially when lack of time was a barrier for the participants.
- The *most successful parts* of the program included: the reimbursements for childcare, education, and transportation, which helped participants get more excited about the program and enabled them to participate in more services. Specific agencies worked especially well with ROSS participants such as Lutheran Social Services, Boys & Girls Club, and the YMCA. The case managers felt that their teamwork helped identify successful processes and strategies for working with participants, which benefited the program.

The process evaluation activities provided insights into the challenges and successes seen in the outcome evaluation findings.



Outcome Evaluation Results

The following section provides results for the ROSS program from July 2005 through August 2008. Information presented includes participant recruitment and program services for ROSS adults and youth.

Participant Recruitment

The City of Tucson advertised the ROSS program to all public housing residents in late 2005. This advertisement included information about the services offered through ROSS and provided basic contact information. Interested residents completed and mailed an attached survey where they selected the services most relevant to them. From these responses, ROSS program administrators generated waiting lists for the program. Over the course of the program, the residents on waiting lists were all contacted and offered the chance to be in the program. Families involved in the program were contacted quarterly to track their employment status and wage and job industry details, if applicable. In June 2007, the ROSS program was having difficulty meeting its goals for the number of participants served. They requested goal modifications from HUD; and HUD approved both their decreased numbers and a six-month extension to their contract through December 2008. See *Appendix A* for a description of the request and a delineation of the approved modifications.

As of August 2008, a total of 135 families have participated in the ROSS program since its inception, with 46 participating in only the ROSS program and 89 participating in both the FSS and ROSS programs. Of those who participated, 15% (n=20) dropped out of the program. The following exhibit details the number of families who participated in ROSS and those that left the program. Of the families who dropped out of the program, 13 participated only in the ROSS program and seven participated in both ROSS and FSS, as shown in the exhibit below.



Exhibit 2: Current ROSS Participation and Drop Out Data (February 2006 – August 2008)

	Total # of Families	FSS & ROSS programs	ROSS program only
Actively participating or graduated	115	82	33
Dropped out of program	20	7	13

Program Services

The primary goal of the ROSS program is to link public housing residents with services that will enable them to be more self-sufficient. As shown in Exhibit 3, the ROSS program collaborates with a diverse group of partner agencies to provide services that address the needs of participants and their families.

Exhibit 3: ROSS Service Types and Partnering Agencies for Each Service

Service Type	Partnering Agency
Employment & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pima County One-Stop ▪ Lutheran Social Ministries of the Southwest (LSMS)
Job Retention & Career Advancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lutheran Social Ministries of the Southwest (LSMS)
Financial Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pio Decimo ▪ United Way of Tucson & Southern AZ
Homeownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family Housing Resources
Family Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CODAC
Youth Character & Community Skill Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Boys & Girls Club of Tucson
Youth Development/Delinquency Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Triangle YMCA



The next section of the report details the various ROSS services provided and any additional information about the number of public housing participants who have accessed these services as of August 2008. Exhibit 4 provides a summary of the number of public housing participants engaged in ROSS program services to date.

Exhibit 4: Number of ROSS participants by service type (February 2006 – August 2008)

Service Type	Total # of Participants	Program Goal	% of Goal Met
Employment & Training	56	55	100%
Job Retention & Career Advancement	22	35	63%
Financial Literacy	72	60	100%
Homeownership	18	15	100%
Family Strengthening	74	80	93%
Youth Character & Community Skill Building	185	200	93%
Youth Development/Delinquency Prevention	100	100	100%

As seen above, the program reached many of the performance goals set forth in the grant. The areas of employment and training, financial literacy, homeownership, and youth development/delinquency prevention were all completely met. The program continues to make progress in the family strengthening and youth character and community skill building sections. The challenges of initiating the job retention and career advancement component are evident in their lower numbers served. The following sections provide greater detail about each service type.

Employment & Training

Pima County One-Stop (PCOS) and Lutheran Social Ministries of the Southwest (LSMS) provided most of the employment and training services for the ROSS participants. Services from both agencies included skills assessments, pre-employment workshops, basic education, vocational training, job search and placement assistance, and job retention and career advancement services. Data from both groups were collected on a monthly basis. The aggregate data reported include the number of pre-employment



skills trainings completed, work plans developed, job searches in progress, those placed in employment, and participants who obtained higher paying jobs. Individual data are tracked for training completion, salary information, and employment status over the duration of their participation. In addition, participants who worked toward their General Education Diploma (GED) or received English as a Second Language (ESL) training were also included in the employment and training category.

From February 2006 to August 2008, 56 ROSS participants were enrolled in either employment and training services or worked toward their GED or received ESL training. Of those 56 participants, 33 were enrolled in either PCOS or LSMS; 12 were enrolled in GED classes; and 11 received ESL training. Overall, 30 ROSS participants have completed employment and training services, which was the goal of the program. Of those who completed employment and training services, approximately 70% (n=21) received employment placement assistance.

Employed Participants

By the end of August 2008, 46 participants were currently employed. These participants report working between 12-48 hours per week on average, with most working 40 hours per week. The pay ranged from \$6.00-\$16.84/hour with the mean being \$10.52 per hour. During the program, employed participants work in a variety of different industries such as: social work, childcare, cosmetology, parks & recreation, manufacturing, medical & dental, education, law enforcement, retail, and housekeeping. They also hold a range of job titles that include: caregiver, case manager, administrative assistant, customer service representative, Certified Nursing Assistant, dental assistant, probation officer, cashier, hair stylist, hostess, and teacher. Eighteen of the 30 participants who completed employment and training services through either PCOS or LSMS either became employed or began earning higher wages.



Reimbursement Assistance

The ROSS program provided participants with reimbursements for daycare, transportation, or educational materials to help residents complete the program services. Throughout the program, 81 participants qualified and received reimbursements for one or more of these expenses. The following exhibit provides a breakdown by type of reimbursement received.

Exhibit 5: Frequency of Reimbursement (February 2006 – August 2008)

Reimbursement Type	Number of Residents*
Transportation	74
Daycare	36
Education Materials	12

* Residents often received more than one type of reimbursement. A total of 122 reimbursements were distributed to the 81 participants eligible.

The program goal was to provide 19 participants with any of the offered stipends. The program has greatly exceeded its goal by providing 81 participants with reimbursements to encourage on-going participation in the program.

Job Retention & Career Advancement

In December 2006, the City of Tucson’s Housing Authority selected Lutheran Social Ministries of the Southwest to provide the ROSS program’s job retention and career advancement services to 50 program participants. Due to difficulty recruiting public housing residents for this component, in June 2007, HUD agreed to reduce this goal to enroll 35 families in job retention services. The services included intake services (i.e., review of personal career goals, current resume and skill set, working preferences), ongoing case management, work plan development, job searching services, and incentives for continuous employment. The number of ROSS participants accessing these services was collected on a monthly basis. The primary flow of ROSS participants with LSMS was from the employment and training component to the job retention and career advancement stage. Once ROSS participants were referred for LSMS services, they received the training and help necessary to identify, keep, and hopefully advance within a given job. LSMS also received referrals from other employment and training service providers (e.g., Pima County One-Stop) participating in the ROSS program.



In August 2008, 22 residents had participated in the job retention services, out of the program's revised goal of serving 35 participants. All 22 had completed Advanced Career Development Work Plans with 15 having received services for six months or longer.

Financial Literacy

Pio Decimo, Family Housing Resources, the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona, and Lutheran Social Ministry Services provided the financial literacy services for ROSS participants. Services provided include budgeting and credit repair classes, credit reviews and counseling, and establishing Individual Development Accounts. Data were reported to ROSS staff monthly following completion of each class. As of August 2008, 72 ROSS participants had utilized financial literacy services. Approximately 90% were referred for general financial literacy classes.

Of the 72 referred, 83% (n=60) completed both the Basic Budgeting and Banking and the Understanding Credit and Credit Repair classes. Twelve participants completed either one of the two classes. Thirty-two participants reviewed their credit reports and 12 participants received credit counseling. Three participants developed corrective action plans to deal with existing credit issues. To date, the program met its goal of providing financial literacy services to at least 60 public housing residents.

Homeownership

Family Housing Resources (FHR) provided most homeownership training and counseling classes for ROSS participants. The program goal was to enroll 15 participants in the homeownership training and counseling services with 20% of those who complete services going on to purchase a home. As of August 2008, 18 ROSS participants had completed homeownership services. Two participants continued on to purchase homes and one of those accessed IDA funding to purchase the home. Overall, the participants met the HUD goals for the homeownership component.



Family Strengthening

CODAC provided the Strengthening Families 10-14 program to ROSS participants and contracted with the ROSS program to enroll 80 participants. The goal was to improve family strengthening skills such as parenting, communication, stress coping, and goal setting. Data were collected and reported back to the ROSS program following the 7-week program. In addition to attendance data, pre- and post-test data were collected to assess the number of adults and youth who show improvements in key areas. These areas included parenting skills, communication skills, dealing with stress, and goal setting for adults. For youth, target areas were improving interpersonal competencies, personal competencies, responsible behaviors, and dealing with peer pressure.

As of August 2008, 74 enrolled and completed the Strengthening Families program. Participants completed surveys of their experience to measure improvement in key areas covered during the Strengthening Families training. Exhibit 6 details the results for both adult and youth participants.

Exhibit 6: ROSS Family Strengthening Post-test Survey

Goal	% Attainment
Adults (n=30)	
80% improve parenting skills	67% (20/30)
80% increase communication skills	77% (23/30)
80% learn to deal with stress and strong emotions	40% (12/30)
80% strengthen goal setting skills	70% (21/30)
Youth (n=44)	
80% gain/improve interpersonal skills	48% (21/44)
80% gain improve personal competencies	52% (23/44)
80% develop responsible behavior	36% (16/44)
80% improve skills in dealing with peer pressure	39% (17/44)

While the program did not reach its goals of reaching 80% improvement for either adults or youth in these areas, progress was made in improving parenting, communication, and goal settings skills for adults. While youth appeared harder to influence, over 50% reported improvement in personal competencies.



Reportedly, families enjoyed the services and the time spent with their family members. Both adults and youth provided some positive feedback about the program and what they learned:

- “I learned how to show love to my son and daughter and also to my grandchildren, but yet set limits and build trust between us.”
- “I learned what alcohol and drugs can do to you, and that I can have fun with my parents.”
- “It’s nice to spend time with my family without worries or concerns besides having fun and enjoying spending time together.”
- “I learned to respect my children more and to tell them everyday that I love them.”

Youth Character & Community Skill Building

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Tucson initially agreed to provide services to 150 ROSS youth during the project, then increased their commitment to 200 after additional funding was allocated. The services provided assistance on improving youth leadership, personal, and social skills. Data were reported semi-annually at both aggregate and individual levels. Club attendance and frequency of attendance per week were tracked for youth participants. Post-only surveys were administered to collect information about positive relationships, self-concept, self-confidence, team building, technical skills, and school activities. These data are used to assess positive youth development. By August 2008, the Boys & Girls Clubs in Tucson served 185 public housing residents through the ROSS grant. The program is on target to serve an additional 15 youth by the program’s end.

Youth Development/Delinquency Prevention

The Triangle YMCA agreed to provide one-week camp sessions to improve youth development skills. Throughout the program, 100 weeklong scholarships were awarded to families involved in the ROSS program. See Appendix B for a detailed list of all questions asked and their respective responses. In total, 100 Public Housing youth have attended the YMCA week long camp during this program.



Of the 100 youth, 57% (57 campers) completed a youth post survey, which is designed to assess the following concepts: self-confidence, personal responsibility, leadership, and social skills. The post-only survey was adapted from the American Campers Association survey used nationally with similar age groups, ages 7-17 (2006). The average age of ROSS youth who completed the post-only survey was 10 years old, with a range of 7-15. Of those respondents, gender was split between 56% female and 44% male.

There are five questions measuring self-confidence on the survey. Among all respondents, at least 85% somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

1. I feel good about myself.
2. I am good at a lot of things.
3. Other kids think I am fun to be around.
4. The people at camp helped me feel good about myself.
5. At camp, I did things that I was afraid to do at first.

The following three questions measure leadership on the survey. At least 85% of all respondents somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with these statements:

1. I help lead a club/team.
2. I am a good leader.
3. I get other kids together for activities.

Similarly, there are four questions measuring social skills. At least 90% of all respondents agreed with the following statements:

1. I like meeting new kids.
2. I get along well with other kids.
3. Camp helped me make new friends.
4. Camp helped me get to know kids who are different from me.



Personal responsibility was the final construct measured and consists of two questions. At least 90% of all respondents agreed with the following statements:

1. I spend time helping others.
2. I know how to make good decisions.

Overall, most campers felt that camp was a good experience. Approximately 90% of all respondents (n=57) ranked their camp experience as an 8 or above on a scale of 0 (Terrible!) to 10 (Excellent!).

Limitations of the data

The focus of the evaluation questions was placed on determining whether providing employment and training services results in increased or sustained employment. With relatively few participants who were involved with either the employment and training services offered through PCOS or LSMS or job retention services, more advanced data analysis methods initially conceptualized became inappropriate for answering these questions. The evaluation results do indicate that 60% of participants (18 of 30) who completed employment and training services through either PCOS or LSMS either became employed or began earning higher wages. Furthermore, 88% (14 of 16) who completed job retention services at LSMS were employed for at least 6 months while being part of the program. Future program planning should be aware of the challenges to recruiting public housing residents for such services.



Conclusions

Overall, the ROSS program provided numerous services to public housing residents in need. Through this program, many participants gained employment and retained it for at least six months, increased their financial knowledge, and sent their children to YMCA camp or Boys and Girls Club after-school recreation. Additionally, the ROSS program increased the sense of community and bonding among participants by creating monthly workshops especially for them. As one case manager remarked, there is a large need for services and the ROSS program worked successfully to address that need.

Through the process of program implementation, program staff and the evaluation learned much about administering the ROSS program. As both a summary of lessons learned for this project and for future project planning, the major themes are described below.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Future Projects

- *Allow sufficient time for program planning:* The grant contract did not allow much time for establishing the program. However, with such a sizable program and one with many collaborating agencies, significant time was required for program planning. As a result, the ROSS program requested a reduction in their target numbers served and a six-month extension. Future projects should allow an appropriate amount of start-up time with complex, multi-partner projects.
- *Commitment from partnering agencies:* The partnering agencies initially were able to commit to offering services to ROSS participants and some were able to provide in-kind matching of funds. As the grant progressed, it became increasingly difficult for some agencies to allot the necessary time and resources to fulfilling those obligations. Future projects should consider their partnering agencies carefully and should contract with those best able to meet the grant needs.



- *Increase partner communication and accountability:* At the beginning of the grant, partnership meetings were held quarterly. Over the course of the first year, attendance at the quarterly meetings dwindled and consequently, there was less direct contact with partnering agencies. In some cases, the decreased communication correlated with a perceived lack of accountability among the providers. The program could have benefited from increased accountability from partnering agencies to increase participation in the process. Future projects might increase communication between the other agencies and the program through establishing better feedback loops of information and reporting. By embedding such processes, the partnering agencies might feel more accountable for the program's success.

- *Improve the process of data collection:* The ROSS program modified an existing data collection system for organizing information. While this system was useful in many ways, it became tedious to update and was challenging to extract the data necessary for reports. Future projects should consider the database management tool selected and the technical support available for more sophisticated, timesaving options. Furthermore, enough time should be allotted for doing data entry and data management.

- *Increase incentives:* One of the most successful parts of the ROSS program was the strategic use of the stipend reimbursements for supplemental services. Once the program streamlined the reimbursement process and paperwork, participants accessed the stipends more regularly. Program case managers would meet with these participants monthly to process paperwork and check-in with them. Case managers noted that they had a closer relationship with participants who utilized the stipends and that those participants were more active in the program as a whole. Future programs should carefully consider the role of stipends as incentives for participation and for improving program outcomes.

Overall, the program experienced many challenges and successes similar to other comparable programs and should incorporate the lessons learned into future agency planning.



References

American Camping Association (2006). National Research Project. Available at: <http://www.acacamps.org/research/>.

City of Tucson & Pima County Consortium (2000). Housing Element of the City Comprehensive Plan: Five Year Strategy July 1, 2000 – June 30, 2005.



Appendix A

Although the program increased its outreach and recruiting efforts during 2007, the program faced low enrollment rates after contacting their initial waitlist and continued recruitment attempts. In June 2007, the program coordinator requested an adjustment to the program goals and a grant extension for an additional year. HUD approved the program goal modifications and agreed to extend the program for six additional months. Adjustments were made to the following service types: employment and training, job retention, financial literacy, and homeownership (see table below). No adjustment was requested for family strengthening or the youth programs since program staff felt these sections were on-target to reach their goals. The grant extension took the program funding to December 2008.

ROSS Goals Updated Projected Numbers Approved by HUD, July 2007

Goal Category	Original Goal (July 2005)	New Goal (July 2007)
Employment & Training		
Enrollment in employment training program	105 participants	55 participants
Regular attendance	75 participants	35 participants
Develop job development work plan	100%	85%
Complete employment/training program	60 participants	30 participants
Receive placement assistance	50 participants	25 participants
Become employed or obtain higher wage job	40 participants	25 participants
Job Retention & Career Advancement		
Enrollment in job retention & career advancement	75 participants	35 participants
Financial Literacy		
Access credit report/receive credit counseling	100%	25%
Homeownership		
Enrolled in homeownership training/counseling	40 participants	15 participants
Purchase a home after receiving homeownership training	20%	5%



Appendix B

The following table provides detailed responses to each question in the YMCA post-test survey.

Frequency of Responses to the YMCA Camper’s Post-test Survey (n=57)

	Agree a lot	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot
Self confidence				
I feel good about myself.	88% (n=50)	11% (n=6)	1% (n=1)	0% (n=0)
I am good at a lot of things.	51% (n=29)	37% (n=21)	5% (n=3)	7% (n=4)
Other kids think I am fun to be around.	62% (n=35)	36% (n=20)	2% (n=1)	0% (n=0)
The people at camp helped me feel good about myself.	81% (n=44)	11% (n=6)	8% (n=4)	0% (n=0)
At camp, I did things that I was afraid to do at first.	74% (n=40)	18% (n=10)	6% (n=3)	2% (n=1)
Leadership				
I help lead a club/team.	71% (n=41)	27% (n=16)	2% (n=1)	0% (n=0)
I am a good leader.	53% (n=28)	40% (n=21)	5% (n=3)	2% (n=1)
I get other kids together for activities.	45% (n=24)	43% (n=23)	4% (n=2)	8% (n=4)
Social skills				
I like meeting new kids.	83% (n=45)	17% (n=9)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
I get along well with other kids.	75% (n=42)	20% (n=11)	5% (n=3)	0% (n=0)
Camp helped me make new friends.	70% (n=38)	28% (n=15)	0% (n=0)	2% (n=1)
Camp helped me get to know kids who are different from me.	74% (n=40)	24% (n=13)	2% (n=1)	0% (n=0)
Personal responsibility				
I spend time helping others.	58% (n=31)	38% (n=20)	4% (n=2)	0% (n=0)
I know how to make good decisions.	54% (n=29)	39% (n=21)	7% (n=4)	0% (n=0)

