

CURL's Research Findings on Englewood Women's Initiative (EWI)

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Abstract

The Englewood Women's Initiative (EWI) is funded by the Chicago Foundation for Women (CFW) and is made up of 14 community partners that provide a variety of resources for women in the Englewood area, ranging from domestic violence support to job training organizations. These community partners seek to provide women in Englewood the services needed to achieve greater financial wellbeing. Researchers from the Center for Urban Research and Learning (CURL) are seeking ways to help improve EWI. In order to determine how women are moving through the program, CURL has implemented a tracking system through Airtable for partners to track participants progress through the program. Findings show that over 300 women are currently being served or have been served halfway through year 5 of the initiative. Findings also suggest that there is a need for childcare, mental health, and more job training services.

Methods and Research Design

Every month, partner organizations enter their new participants, as well as participant's progress markers, such as completing a training session or receiving a loan into Airtable. This data was compiled from August 2021 to March 2022.

The next method used to assess the efficiency of EWI is by conducting virtual interviews with CFW staff members, who provided their thoughts on the ways that EWI is serving the needs of the participants, and assessing ways that it can be improved.

Monthly virtual meetings between CFW, EWI partner organizations, and CURL researchers allowed groups to bring up concerns about Airtable reporting, intake forms, and general concerns. They also helped to build rapport between CFW, partner organizations, and CURL researchers.

Conclusion

Overall, halfway through year 5, EWI partners continue to provide services to women from the Englewood community. The initiative has continued to persevere through challenges brought by the global pandemic. In the future, CFW would like to track outcomes more closely in hopes of improving participants' experiences in the initiative. Based off the interviews with CFW and the focus group, the CURL team identified that there is a need for increased outreach efforts in order to spread awareness of the services EWI provides to the community. One limitation of this study is that we did not include participant feedback due to concerns regarding COVID. In the future, researchers should include participant feedback in the process to hear about the needs of the participants directly.

Introduction

Englewood is a neighborhood on the Southside of Chicago, IL. Areas such as Englewood have been hit hard and neglected by the city during the COVID-19 pandemic. This community continues to face obstacles such as housing inequality, high rates of unemployment, and lack of access to childcare and mental health services. The purpose of EWI is to provide resources to women in the Englewood area. The participants in the EWI program are primarily Black women and often single mothers, who typically work jobs with low wages and no benefits.

CURL is on Year 5 of working on an evaluation plan for EWI and provides a mid-point and annual report every year. These reports consist of data gathered through focus groups with partners, interviews with CFW leadership, and usually interviews with participants (although this has not been possible due to COVID).

The purpose of this study is to measure how participants move through the programs, utilize EWI partner organization resources, and see how the process can be improved. CURL hopes to provide EWI and CFW with data on what resources are most helpful to participants and provide information on how partner organizations can serve participants more effectively. Through using Airtable, partner organizations are able to enter participants' progression through the EWI program and see what organizations they have utilized within EWI, as well as mark milestones such as starting a new job or completing a training program.

Results

Researchers at CURL found these results analyzing the Airtable data:

- 300 women were or currently are being served by EWI partner organization services
- There were 235 new participants in year 5
- 135 women completed a service or program in year 5
- Programs offered through partners were accessed 193 times
- An EWI partner organization focused on housing was able to help 5 households financially totaling to \$6,610.03 in assistance for rent or utilities
- 40 women were referred within the initiative
- 98 women were referred to external organizations such as food banks, shelter and other social service organizations

In regards to the the focus group feedback:

- There is a need for childcare, mental health, and more job training services
- Making contact immediately and staying in touch with participants who are referred to the partner organization
- Making EWI more known in the community and a hub where participants can contact programs they are interested in

Regarding the CFW Interview:

- CFW staff would like to increase awareness of their role in the initiative
- Desire for increase communication between CFW and partner organizations
- Partners should promote the initiative within the community

Community Partners

All Chicago Making Homelessness History, Allies for Community Business (A4CB), Chicago Furniture Bank, Chicago Women in Trades (CWIT), Dawson Technical Institute (at Kennedy King College), Family Rescue Inc, Jane Addams Resource Corp. (JARC), Lawyers Committee for Better Housing (LCBH), Metropolitan Family Services (MFS), National Able Network, Participant Liaison (Stacey Brown), Sista Afya Community Care, Teamwork Englewood, and YWCA Metropolitan Chicago

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References

Spitz, G., Tan, L., Estrada, A., Farrar, M. (2022). Midpoint EWI Report: 6-Month Review of Year 5 of the Englewood Women's Initiative