

# **Health Research in Kosciusko County**

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## **Introduction**

Kosciusko County is a vibrant community, rich with social, recreational, and service opportunities. This community has a long history of improving the lives of all its members, no matter their background or status. Yet despite all these efforts we still wonder, are we doing the most important things that meet the highest needs? And, are our initiatives working?

The purpose of our project is to specifically ask these questions as it relates to providing long-lasting health and wellness benefits to citizens of the community. Are we effectively meeting the wellness needs for Kosciusko County citizens? How do we know? What programs are working and which are failing? In order to best steward community and organizational resources, we believe there is a need to develop better methods of evaluating health initiatives, of educating citizens about wellness, and of networking various health related entities toward common goals.

## **Background**

Health and wellness have been and continue to be important to Kosciusko County. However, throughout our history we have struggled to really define the problems and solutions that would best benefit the health and wellness of Kosciusko County citizens. That is why we believe there is the need for a central community health research institute. Before further establishing the need and presenting solutions, let's look at both the current offerings and the history and importance of health and wellness in the County.

Kosciusko County is an attractive place to live because of the wonderful recreational activities available to residents. With more than 100 lakes, residents enjoy an abundance of opportunities to enjoy the water through skiing, swimming, kayak/canoeing, and many other water activities that have our county buzzing with activity throughout the warmer months. Residents are also fortunate to have a wonderful and growing trail system. With more than 180 miles of bikeways, 5 miles of greenways, and close to 10 miles of mountain bike trails, Kosciusko County hosts multiple opportunities to be active and healthy. In addition to the many natural resources, many community events are held throughout the warmer weather months (e.g. Fat and Skinny Tire Bike Festival and Optimist Triathlon). These various events provide ample opportunities for community members to stay active. Recently, our community came together to complete the latest addition to our trove of healthy-living resources, the YMCA of Warsaw, providing indoor as well as outdoor activities for members.

With approximately 77,000 residents, Kosciusko County is not large by population standards. However, the county contains two large, health related industries making up the majority of employers in the county: orthopedics and agriculture.

Warsaw is the Orthopedic Capital of the World. Its rise to global prominence started when Revra DePuy began his company in Warsaw in 1895. DePuy employee, J.O Zimmer expanded Warsaw's orthopedic reputation when he started his company in 1927. The final of the big three, Biomet, was established in 1977 by Dane Miller and a few colleagues (Biocrossroads, 2009). Many other thriving orthopedic enterprises, small and large, call Kosciusko County home; all of them riding the wave of growth powered by these quality-of-life industries. Today over 45% of the county's employees, nearly 13,000, are connected to the Orthopedic industry (Orthoworx, n.d.). Often overlooked is the agricultural industry in Kosciusko County. From small, family farms to Warren Buffet owned Chore-Time Brock, the County's agricultural industry feeds millions and provides jobs for a large number of residents.

Kosciusko County has a rich history of caring for the health needs of its community members. There are hundreds of health related services available to county residents. United Way, the Community Foundation,

OrthoWorx, and numerous generous individuals have all contributed to funding many health and wellness services throughout the county. Many would agree, however, that K21 Health Foundation (K21) is the financial backbone for health related services in our community. K21 is a private foundation focusing on opportunities to improve the health and wellness for the citizens of Kosciusko County. The assets of the foundation came from the sale of the non-profit hospital. Each year the Board of Directors distributes millions of dollars to fulfill their mission, "K21 Health Foundation exists for the benefit of Kosciusko County citizens to ensure health care services are provided, and to advance prevention and healthy living. This will be accomplished by identifying health needs in our community, and maintaining an endowment so funding is available, through investments and grants, for those needs" (K21 Health Foundation, 2015).

## **The Problem**

As the health needs of Kosciusko County have continued to evolve over the years, the challenge of meeting those needs has become multi-faceted. We see the problem in two specific areas of focus for the county. First, as organizations such as the K21 Health Foundation are uniquely poised to assist in meeting health needs, the problem has now become how to assess which programs to fund, as well as how to determine if the intended impact is taking place. Secondly, as funding has become available, the importance of proactively assessing community health needs becomes paramount.

Over the course of 2013, the K21 Health Foundation allocated almost \$2.4 million in grants. In 2014, that number jumped to approximately \$3.4 million. With such a large amount of funding being designated to programs that improve health and wellness for members of Kosciusko County, the challenge becomes how to best direct that funding, and how to determine the impact of the funding. On average, K21 receives between 60 and 100 grant requests each year (personal communication). While a majority of these requests are approved, some are rejected. The main criteria for receiving grant approval has been whether or not the request fulfills the mission statement of K21. As the number of requests has increased, the need for additional assessment and evaluation of the requests for funding has become even more important.

Similarly, after an organization has been granted funding, the challenge becomes showing how the monies have been put to positive use, accomplishing the goal established by the organization. Often, programs with a high potential for positive impact are underutilized, and not as effective as they could be. An example of this is the "Kids Smile Kosciusko" program, which has been implemented by Medication & Dental Assistance. The program, funded by K21 and United Way, provides free dental exams and follow-up care for children 3<sup>rd</sup> grade or younger who come from uninsured and low income families. While the program proves very beneficial to those who are recipients of the services, it is severely underutilized as a whole. Without proper assessment and review of the initiative, there is difficulty in determining the reasons why the program has not seen increasing participation and what the barriers to success might be (personal communication). Additional assessment is needed to solve this problem. Formal assessment and evaluation is needed to identify barriers and propose the necessary changes to more effectively steward public and private funding.

Finally, as organizations continue developing strategies to meet the health and wellness needs of the community, research must be done to determine what the highest priority needs of Kosciusko County really are. While funding exists to help benefit the health needs of the county, identifying and targeting funding toward high-impact needs is necessary. Furthermore, projecting future needs for the county is also crucial to establishing and maintaining effective health programs in the community.

## **Health Institute of Kosciusko County**

Our group believes the best method to identify, measure, and evaluate health initiatives in Kosciusko County is to establish a community-focused health research institute, which takes the next step in continuing the tradition of improving healthy living in Kosciusko County. This proposal presents the following as necessary in establishing such an institute: goals, organizational structure, leadership and governance, staffing ideals, and initial budget. This “institute” models a collaborative approach to the planning, assessment, and evaluation of health-related initiatives, striving to meet and overcome health-related challenges for the citizens of the community.

### *Goals of health research institute*

A health research institute would help to assess the health needs of a Kosciusko County’s residents and companies and assist in the development of innovative healthcare solutions. We need a continual presence in the community working from an academic angle to address these research challenges with the time and expertise they require.

#### **Goal #1: Assessment and Evaluation of Health Needs and Current Programs**

A rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of current health related services and projects would increase the effectiveness of limited funds. Granting organizations, companies, and donors want to know their funds are working toward desired results. Research based evaluation would be a great benefit to the health organizations as well since third party validation of their success could open up other funding sources and increase community support.

Health priorities can change from one community to the next and are dynamic over time. A local institute would have the ability to gather data and make recommendations specific to the health needs of Kosciusko County. Some health data already exists like the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s County Health Rankings and Roadmaps (2015). The institute would have the expertise to turn this data into action.

#### **Goal #2: Education and Prevention**

A health research institute would be focused on proactive solutions for the residents of Kosciusko County. It would increase awareness about health issues in our county. Initiatives could include helping local companies evaluate their healthcare needs, conducting community health education and training, creating a website designed for health and wellness information, and partnering with local universities to allow for student-practicum experience in the health research field.

#### **Goal #3: Innovation and Intervention**

Complicated health needs require innovative solutions. The role of the institute would be not only to assess but also to recommend proven solutions. A success story of this type of work was conducted by Grace College Professor of Behavioral Science, Dr. Kevin Roberts. Dr. Roberts worked with doctors at Kosciusko County Hospital to conduct a Responsive Integrated Treatment Matching (RITM) program, with the hopes of improving adherence for Type 2 Diabetes patient. The study concluded the RITM program had a statistically significant impact on lowering HbA1c levels for patients with Type 2 Diabetes. (Roberts, 2013). This drop in HbA1C level based on the scope seen in research literature would result in reduction in medical costs associated with their diabetes anywhere from 10-45%. Additional studies will likely yield significant community impact.

### *Organizational Structure*

The organizational structure of this health institute follows in a common frame for most “small” not-for-profit helping organizations. The proposed structure is presented via responsibilities rather than by title with the exception of Executive Director (ED). The ED will likely fulfill most (if not all) the responsibilities necessary for the institute to operate in the early stages of establishment. Areas where the ED is not capable or competent to fulfill, it is desirable for the institute’s board to support the work necessary for the institute.

- Board: Initial responsibility of the Board is to establish and adopt sound governance and financial policies, ensure adequate resources, and hire the Executive Director. Additionally, the Board has three legal “duties”: Care (being prudent in following and caring for the organization, including people and its effectiveness), loyalty (make decisions in the best interest of the organization), and obedience (ensure all laws are followed and actions are ethical).
- Executive Director: Possesses breadth and depth of knowledge and personal skills related to and necessary to achieve organizational purposes; Effective and competent leader, able to motivate and encourage, fulfill many organizational responsibilities not limited to: Creating vision, leading and managing, engaging the community, ensuring financial capability, supporting the board.
- Finance: Establish and maintain fiduciary controls, policies, and accountability. This is an area where Board involvement is critical in the early stages and can evolve into part- or full-time positions as the organization grows and increases in complexity.
- Operations/Administration: A primary day-to-day role for the ED, managing the organization and seeing to the planning and functioning needs.
- Research: Given the purpose of this health institute, research competency and professional practice are hallmarks of the organization, including quantitative and qualitative experience and expertise. Portions of this function may need to be “farmed out” until the needs of the organization warrant the hiring staff with specific expertise areas like health economics.
- Fundraising: Similar to research, in order for the institute to grow and thrive, the ability to raise funds and communicate effectively toward that end is critical to the success and future of the institute.
- Programming: Based on sound research and identified community needs, programming will be those activities which the institute “produces”. These are the activities which are to be measured for effectiveness.
- Communications/Public Relations: Encompasses the multiple methods and modes of communicating the purpose, programs, and outcomes of the institute; for the purpose of encouraging continued community involvement, volunteerism, and reporting.
- Administrative Assistant: As necessary, this role would help support the ED and other staff as appropriate. This role might also fulfill some of the duties listed above.  
(McNamara, n.d.)

### *Leadership and Governance*

The proposed health institute will require both leadership oversight and governance. This oversight most often comes in the form of a Board. The Board can take the form of either a Statutory Board or Advisory Board, depending on their form of corporate governance.

The most common form of oversight for non-profit organizations is that of a statutory Board, or Board of Directors. This Board structure applies to organizations that are a standalone entity. A statutory Board is typically made up of volunteers from the community and staff members of the organization. The board of

directors has overall responsibility for the conduct of the organization

The second form of oversight for non-profit organizations is that of an Advisory Board. An Advisory Board differs from that of a Statutory Board in that the Advisory Board has no legal responsibility for the organization. They act merely as a non-binding strategic advisor for management. The formal legal management for these types of organizations comes from their parent company or affiliate Board of Directors that oversees the organization.

Regardless of the structure, for a community health research institute to function well, the board must be able to fulfill the following roles and responsibilities (National Council of Nonprofits, 2015):

- Developing an understanding of community health needs and the health research center
- Provide unbiased insights and ideas from a third point-of-view
- Encourage and support staff
- Connect to other organizations, community members, or business that can support and benefit from the health research center
- Monitor performance

#### *Composition of board*

While the potential structure of a board for the health research institute may vary dependent upon the organizational model chosen for the institute, the makeup of individuals who would serve on such a board does not. With either model, a diverse group of individuals is needed to properly facilitate leadership of the institute. The board needs to consist of members whose skills contribute to the responsibilities that are tasked to the board.

As such, it is proposed that a health research institute board should consist of approximately twelve to fifteen members with the following professional backgrounds:

- Healthcare/Medical: Due to the focus of the institute, it is recommended that approximately five to six members come from the healthcare or medical sector.
- Legal: The need for legal council necessitates that at-least one member on the board come from the legal sector.
- Financial: To help manage budget items and weigh in on financial topics, at least one member should come from the financial or banking sector.
- Marketing/PR: In order to assist with the promotion and fundraising needs of the institute, it is recommended that at least one member come with a background in public relations, marketing, or fundraising.
- Human Resources: With the potential impact of the institute extending into the corporate world and impacting companies in human resources capacity, at-least one board member should represent the HR sector.
- Community Non-Profit: Because the institute will likely help support the non-profit organizations to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs, and will itself be a non-profit, it is important that one or two board members possesses a background in non-profits.
- General Business Leadership: As a general business acumen is needed to lead or advise the institute as a member of the board, two to three members with experience in general business are needed.
- Executive Director: The Executive Director of the institute will serve as a member on the board of the organization.

**Budget**

One of the key items to consider in establishing a health research institute is the ability to fund the up-front and ongoing operating costs of the institute. The initial cost of establishing the institute would require funding from either this project or a local community organization that would undertake the implementation of the institute. The ongoing costs of the institute would come either from self-funding raised by staff of the institute, community fundraising, or both.

Below is a proposed budget for the institute. This represents a more long-term budget given the hiring of both an Executive Director and staff assistant. It also assumes outside research is required by health economists or the like. We felt it would be cheaper for the institute to employ a non-PhD researcher Executive Director because the compensation required to fill such a position to accomplish both leadership and research for the organization would be more cost prohibitive than would be hiring outside research consultants.

| Institute for Health Research<br>Operating expenses for one-year |                  |   |
|--|------------------|---|
| Line item  | Amount           | Explanation   |
| Salary- Director   | \$65,000         | Typical professor salary plus stipend to make it a 12 month position                            |
| Salary- Part-Time assistant                                      | \$13,520         | 20 hours a week at \$13/hour  |
| Staff benefits   | \$31,408         | Salaries multiplied by 40%  |
| Rental Space and Utilities                                       | \$14,400         | 500-700 sq feet of rental space   |
| Supplies- operating  | \$5,000          |   |
| Telephone - other  | \$1,000          | Cell phone reimbursement  |
| Printing   | \$5,000          |   |
| Postage  | \$3,000          |   |
| Travel   | \$4,000          |   |
| Food Expense   | \$2,000          |   |
| Seminars & Conferences   | \$3,000          | Approx. 2 conferences per year  |
| Promotions   | \$7,000          |   |
| IT and Software  | \$8,000          | Hardware and software   |
| Consultants - professional services                              | \$18,000         | Health Economist or other medical/legal expertise needed for research (\$1,000/day for 18 days) |
|  |                  |   |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>\$180,328</b> |   |

## **Next Steps**

With the purpose of the Health Research Institute well established, the following next steps are necessary to see this important resource realized:

1. Identify potential members of a “working group” to further discuss the need
2. Facilitate meeting of the Working Group
3. Gather “support” for Institute
4. Secure initial funding
5. Establish timeline, first priorities, and outcomes for Institute
6. Identify and employ staff

## **KLA Funding / Future Vision**

Quality of life is intricately tied to the health of a community. Imagine if we in Kosciusko County could develop a health research institute to target needs, education citizens, and develop innovative approaches to improving the health and wellness of our community. Imagine if the Kids Smile Kosciusko program knew why their program was underutilized and could affect change in our young students. Imagine if innovative solutions to community health needs were able to be implemented on a consistent basis. Imagine if we employed the health related talent and treasure of Kosciusko County in the most effective manner possible. We believe the development of a health research institute is the first step in turning imagination into action.

Our team has already consulted with leadership and Grace College, K21 Foundation, Kosciusko County Hospital, and other health related entities to take first steps toward gauging community support for the establishment of this institute. We have invited numerous community leaders to join us for a health research Working Group on May 19th, 2015, for further brainstorming this idea and developing an action plan. In order to facilitate this process, we request use of the Jean Northern Award funds (\$1,000) to be deployed in the following manner:

1. Funds will be utilized to host and facilitate the initial meeting of the Working Group, and will cover items such as print materials, rental of meeting space, and refreshments for the meeting.
2. Funds not required for the meeting will be utilized to cover additional costs incurred for any further communication, surveys, contracted research, or other services needed to evaluate the feasibility of a health research institute, and preliminarily begin the process of launching the institute.

Long-term, we see an institute developing that would be similar to the Center for Lakes and Streams at Grace College. Though determination for hosting the health research institute at Grace College has not been finalized, it would be a logical extension from work already being conducted at the school. Based on our research and interview with leadership in this community, we believe support exists to establish and maintain an institute with the capabilities expressed in this white paper.

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