Panelists:
Crystal Collins-Camargo
Elliott Graham
Michele D. Hanna
Shannon Rios

Please note: The following is a direct transcription and has not been edited.

Speaker 1: Welcome everybody good morning. So, well we were joking earlier, we thought well maybe nobody will show up in doing it. But now there are actually are more audience members. We've reached the critical mass, where there are more audience members.

Speaker 2: And they keep coming.

Speaker 1: Then there are members of the panel and more people come.

Speaker 2: If there were only couple of people out there, he was about to kick one of us off the panel so we would have balanced, yeah.

Speaker 1: So now we have to do the presentation, but we're actually really glad that people have come. It's the last day of the conference this morning, so we really do appreciate people coming to hear from this panel. So welcome everybody again. And just so you know make sure that you are in the right session. This, name of this session is Practical and Creative Solutions to cross-cutting challenges to the evaluation of Children's Bureau Diligent Recruitment projects.

Now I'd just curious show off hands how many people here work for agencies that have a Discretionary Grant for the Children's Bureau. So okay, so a couple, okay, so working as evaluator or on the program side. I'll provide a little bit more of background information about the Discretionary Grant program and how that fits into the evaluators for this particular grantee class of the Diligent Recruitment grantees in a little, in just a minute.

Before we get started though I'm supposed to read this disclaimer about the recording of these sessions or audio recordings that are being made of these sessions. So I am going to read this statement to you. As a reminder, the audio for this session will be digitally recorded and once formatted for accessibility standards will be made available through the some website in the letter of written consent. Participants who ask questions or provide comments during the session will be giving their permission or "consent" to this recording, if you have any questions about this recording, please feel free to talk with some of the – some support staff.

So if you ask any questions or giving your tacit consent to being recorded. So, if you don't want to do that then don't ask any questions. So, but hope everyone.

Speaker 2: Can you ask how many evaluators?

Speaker 1: Are in the room? How folks in here are evaluators or working at evaluation capacity. Okay, so are they so couple of you want to – you are an evaluator for a Discretionary Grant project. And then how about you.

Guest: For a SAMHSA funded project.

Speaker 1: For a SAMHSA funded project, and…

Guest: I'm evaluating the quality and treatment [indiscernible] [00:02:36]

Speaker 1: Okay, so you're with one of the QICs. So we have people who are working on a variety of different projects, some of them are Discretionary Grant projects. So well thank you again, welcome to everybody and the – I'll give you a little bit more background about the purpose of this session and a little bit more background about these particular – does this particular Discretionary Grant cluster that my colleagues are working as evaluators for.

But before we begin I first just wanted to introduce the panel, and tell you little bit myself. My name is Eli Graham. I work with James Bell Associates. We are a consulting firm in the DC area that has a contract with the Children's Bureau to provide evaluation technical assistance to Children's Bureau Discretionary Grantees, including the grantees in this particular Discretionary Grant cluster, the Diligent Recruitment grantee cluster.

So through that the contract, I've had the privilege of working with my colleagues and over time really what I found is that they are giving me as much TA as I'm giving them TA if anything. It's really more of I would say, a consultative and colleague relationship more than anything else. I've learned just as much from them, as I may have learned. I talk to something about logic models right, Shannon. So I feel I actually provided some useful TA. [Laughter]

So, but what I was asked to do today was just facilitate this discussion in which the panels are going to talk about some creative and practical solutions that they've come up to some very common evaluation challenges that all of you in this room who have worked as evaluators have likely faced at some point or probably facing right now. And they – so they are going to talk about some of these challenge in the context of these particular Diligent Recruitment projects that they are working on. And if they haven't actually come up with solutions at least how they've been able to frame the issue and tackle it initially and so that they can make some initial progress in addressing that issue.

So before we begin though, then I – what I would like to do is, I would like to actually introduce the panelist, first I would like to introduce Dr. Shannon Rios. Dr. Shannon Rios works for the Oklahoma Department of Human Services and several applied research and evaluation roles as had conducted social science research for over 11 years. She current serves as lead evaluator for several Federal Child Welfare Grants, including the family connections project and diligent recruitment demonstration.

Her research interest include concurrent planning, resource family recruitment and retention, diligent research practices and process improvements in the Child Welfare system. And then I would like to introduce Dr. Michelle Hanna. Dr. Hanna is currently an Assistant Professor or Associate Professor now, Associate Professor. When I wrote this it was still assistant [Laughter] but now – now she's gotten tenure, congratulations. Yes, Associate Professor at the University of Denver graduate school of social work and serves as a evaluator for the Denver's Village Diligent Recruitment Grant that's the name of Denver's Diligent Recruitment project.

Prior to receiving her doctorate from the University of Texas at Austin Dr. Hanna worked for the Oklahoma Department of Human Services for 14 years as a case worker, supervisor and administrator. Dr. Hanna's research interest including Child Welfare, Foster Care and Adoption, with her most current research focusing on young adults adopted from the Foster Care system.

Michelle Hanna: And something, if you know any, problem talk to me, please [Laughter].

Question: What do you consider young adults?

Michelle Hanna: 18 to 25, adopters for foster care and adoption.

Speaker 1: So these are adult adoptions.

Michelle Hanna: No they were adopted after the age of 8 on foster care.

Speaker 1: Oh I see.

Michelle Hanna: And they are currently between the ages of 18 and 25, I'm recruiting. [Laughter].

Speaker 1: Recruiting for?

Michelle Hanna: For participants.

Speaker 1: Oh I see.

Michelle Hanna: For subjects.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Michelle Hanna: I hate that word participant.

Speaker 1: Shameless recruitment.

Michelle Hanna: Shamelessly recruiting, shamelessly.

Speaker 1: And next I would like to introduce Dr. Crystal Collins-Camargo. Dr. Crystal Collins-Camargo is on the faculty at the University of Louisville and directs the National Quality Improvement Center on the Privatization of Child Welfare Services, where she conducts multi-site research on public, private child welfare partnerships. She also evaluates Kentucky's Diligent Recruitment Foster and Adopted Families Demonstration project and directed the Southern Regional Quality Improvement Center on Child Protection, which research the impact of clinical supervision on Child Welfare Services.

And we would also like to make a call out to our colleague Dr. Amy D'Andrade at the San Jose State University School of Social Work. She was unable to participate in the evaluation summit, but she made some valuable contributions to this particular session. She is the evaluator for Santa Cruz Country California's Diligent Recruitment project. So we're actually going to be incorporating some of her ideas into the session as well. So even though Amy couldn't be here today, we didn't want to recognize her contributions. So she is with us in spirit.

So before our panel begins I just wanted to provide you a little bit more background information about the Children's Bureau Discretionary Grant program and then specifically about this grantee cluster and then a little bit of background information about some of the specific evaluation challenges that the panel is going to be addressing.

So you may have heard or you may know already that one of the things that the Children's Bureau does is every year they give out grant funding to state and local child welfare agencies, non-profit agencies, tribal agencies to implement innovative demonstration projects in a variety of different areas that are of particular interest to the federal government in promoting the federal governments child welfare goals.

So these discretionary grants as they are called are opportunities for local and state and other child welfare organization to try innovative new things to really advance our state of knowledge in child welfare practice and policy making and programming.

And so one of the areas that the Children's Bureau has been interested in recent years is recruiting to fostering the recruitment and retention of Foster Care and Adoptive Families in Public Child Welfare Agency Systems. And so we sometimes refer to these in short had has the Diligent Recruitment projects. So they are programs that are that focus on child specific recruitment, on targeted recruitment, on general recruitment activities on improving customer service to facilitate the recruitment and licensing process and the training process for resource families.

So in 2008 the Children's Bureau awarded grants to eight different organizations nationwide and we have four of the grantees represented here, three are actually here and then Amy as I mentioned represents Santa Cruz project. The four projects that are represented are Denver Department of Human Services and Michelle is the evaluator for that project. The Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, and Crystal is the evaluator for their Diligent Recruitment project. And then the Oklahoma Department of Human Services and that is Shannon's project. She is serving as the evaluator for that project.

As I mentioned what these grantees are doing is they are implementing a mix of child specific targeted and general recruitment activities. And there currently are almost I'm at the third year, I believe the third year, these are five year discretionary grants, so they are currently ending their third year, they are going to be going into their fourth year on October. And so they are right now in about the middle of the whole evaluation and data collection process.

And the grantees are implementing a wide variety of different evaluation methodology, so I think amongst the grantees here we sort of got a mix of comparison group, comparison site in the longitudinal evaluation designs is that accurate, I would say. So there is a mix of different evaluation methodologies and data collection methods. And in the process of doing that, my colleagues haven't countered a lot of the same challenges that all of you have likely encountered in the process of implementing evaluations that you're involved in.

The three challenges that we're going to be talking about this morning are, one is the whole issue survey fatigue and low response rates. Especially with certain kinds of research subjects, like people in the control group one incentive did they have to be involved in data collection, the resource family themselves, agency managers and executive busy child welfare people who don't really have time to sit down with you to do an interview or fill out a survey.

This is something that is a chronic problem and in the work I have done with child welfare agencies, you see this all the time where people will have response rates of like 10% or 15% to a survey and people are happy about that. [Laughter]. And so this is sort of this chronic problem that I think a lot of people face particularly in the child welfare field and it's not something that it's also an issue that they had to address. So they have not been immune from that issue as well.

I think another major challenge that a lot of grantees in this particular cluster have had to face, is this whole issue of evaluating and moving target, evaluating the program that's constantly changing. You just get to your evaluation design figured out and you get to data collection and figure out and then we'll hope to turnaround and the programs change.

They've eliminated a component or they've added a component or they've modified a component. Now it's no longer the same program, how am I supposed to evaluate that, if you've got a moving target. What do I do, how can I make sure that the evaluation maintains its integrity and that I still have something that at the end of the day is still the same thing that I started evaluating when I started.

So I think this is another perennial challenge that a lot of evaluators face, particularly in with child welfare programs that are operating in very complex and very unpredictable kinds of organizational contextual environments.

The last challenge that the panel is going to talking about Crystal, I think that's going to be the focus of your talk is addressing bureaucratic and institutional barriers to primary data collection, for example getting access to case records and other plant level data sources while still abiding by laws and policies governing data privacy and data confidentiality. I'm sure that some of you in this room have had to do with this issue as well.

I know there is a lot of good quality information there, but how do I get bureaucrats or child welfare managers and officials to work with me to facilitate access to that information. Sometimes this is really critical information and its, but it's trying to strike that balance between maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of vulnerable populations. While making sure that you get the information you need to answer the research questions that you need to answer as part of your evaluation.

So none of these challenges are unique to the diligent recruitment grantees, I mean these perennial challenges that everybody in this room is probably had to address at some point or another. So there is nothing unique about them, but the reason that we wanted to highlight them was because, I think that the – my experience in working with these grantees that they've come up with some real creative and practical ways of addressing them or at least framing the problems, so that they can start coming up with solutions.

And I think the other thing that I wanted to point out about, and this is been my experience in working with this grantee clusters, I think the structure of the cluster has been such that its facilitated a lot of peer learning and peer communication, which I think we really a whole lot of credit to Heidi Staples, who is the former FPO for this particular grantee cluster, creating mechanisms to foster peer learning and peer information, dissemination and networking.

So that these kinds of challenges could be addressed, I mean there is a lot of knowledge within this grantee cluster and a lot of experience. And so this cluster I think its done a particularly good job at putting together mechanisms to facilitate peer learning and information sharing and networking, so that they've all been able to help one and other in addressing some of these kinds of very common, but sometimes seemingly intractable evaluation challenges.

So, I think that's something that has been I think really special in my experience in working with these particular grantees. So with that little bit of background information to just frame the discussion, I would like to begin by turning it over to Dr. Rios, who is going to talk a little bit about her experiences dealing with survey fatigue and survey response rates.

Shannon Rios: Hi, okay so we're -- I'm so glad to Elliot reminded me that we're mid-way – we are in a mid-way plan with this grant, because every time I prepare for one these presentations I'm constantly overwhelmed with what we still have left to do. And so to hear that we're only in the middle, still have two years left that's very competing.

Okay, Oklahoma's project is a statewide project, one thing that we've had to kind of learn about and overcome has differences between the different grantees is that some are county administered projects that are only countywide and then some like Oklahoma are statewide initiatives where, we're looking at very different kind of scope to the project. So I wanted you to know that Oklahoma's project is a statewide effort, which has Eli had mentioned began in October of 2008.

And one thing that's been very beneficial to the grantee, the grant process that we've been involved in with this cluster, is that year one was a planning phase. And so during year one we were allowed to collect a lot of data, use data to create an implementation plan and then identify developed training or support implementation. So we were able to and I did collect an enormous amount of data in your one that we used to inform that project.

So I just want to tell you a little bit about Oklahoma's project so you can kind of see my comments about surveys in that context. During years two to five our goals for the project included implementing customer service interventions with staff, increasing core skills and capabilities of resource families, community partners and child welfare staff through training.

Implement systematic process improvements to increase program recruitment, retention and the completion of the approval process for families. Incorporate and continue to develop public and private partnerships and to integrate grant initiatives with other existing grants, projects and recruitment activities throughout the state to ensure system change and sustainability.

So these were the goals and objectives originally written within our proposal, and just so you kind of have an idea of some of the activities, we created a bullet point less for me to share with you a few of the things of the top of our heads that are, have been products or things that we have worked on under these goals and objectives.

We created and sustain a web portal for families to access local resources training and information. We have a customer support center or a call center, where two staff are dedicated to being immediately available via phone and email to all resources parents or parents who are navigating the approval process.

We helped our counties create, county level recruitment plan, so we are in a – helping to support and enable the counties to have their own localized recruitment plans and initiatives. We are currently engaged in market segmentation within our grant, we have social media policy and a usage plan that we're working with adopt you as kids to create. We have data collection around that initiative as well

Process improvement, we have pilot projects that are happening currently and then we'll be taking the initiatives statewide, we're looking from the time a parent enquires to become a resource parent to the time that they are approved and the child is placed in their home, working on process improvements for that, with an urban county and a rural county and then we'll take it to a statewide level.

And we use the six sigma methodology for process improvement for that, for those initiatives. We have several trainings that were a result of data collection from year one, where we were able to ascertain what we needed our staff and our families to be trained on. And one of the biggest one that we created for that is customer service training.

And we also have training on psychotropic medications, legal training on intentional visitation, training on trauma-informed care and also handbook and contract training. And we are using the Kirkpatrick model to evaluate training effectiveness. We have conducted rapid improvement events on different topics within the – under the grant structure. We distribute and use a DVD from Adopt U.S. Kids called the road which the perspective of foster and adopted parent and kids, we have incorporated that, as well as created an Oklahoma version of answering the call, family pocket guide from Adopt U.S. Kids into our increate packet that families received after they've made a phone call or sent an email that they are interested in becoming a resource parent.

We have a faith-based campaign, which is collaborative with the Oklahoma's office of faith-based and community initiatives. And we're working with tribes on a video for recruitment which is a joint effort between Oklahoma Department of Human Services and the tribes. So that's just quick all of the different, some of the different things that we are going on under our grant project.

Some outcomes that we are tracking just to get a little bit into evaluation. We – of course I had to learn very early which I hope this one step on Michelle's toes too much about an ever changing project. I do learn early that you really don't have to evaluate everything. That was part of well I was doing wrong is feeling like every time there was any little, anything I needed to evaluate it. And you know really I had to back off of that, because number one that wasn't possible with the resources that we have.

And number two, it wasn't going to be as valuable to have, just a flooding of information so I had to try to narrow down what we wanted to evaluate and I used our logic model to get there. I did not put the logic model in here, because it's way too much information. But, just to point out a few outcomes to you guys that we're interested in tracking over time. I mean we have long term outcomes that are CFSR measures as well as grant specific measures that we were, as a cluster needed to evaluate for long term measures that others just quickly that are for Oklahoma.

Present a number of families accessing personalized support systems, decrease and withdrawn families and what we're calling withdraw families is those who start the approval process, but then they change their minds and withdraw themselves from that process for some reason.

Present a number of staff with increased customer awareness improved customer service, coordinated and streamlined statewide training curriculums, reduced timeframes for bridge approval starting with increate application and present a number of bridge families, which bridge resource families or what we call our resources parents in the State of Oklahoma, because they have dual purposes, plans for foster care and adoption and they work with biological families as mentor. So it's a concurrent planning approach and we call them bridge resource families.

So we use a lot of our data comes from our kid system which is Oklahoma SECUWA system. We during year one we collect – conducting 11 focus groups and we used the data from focus groups to craft survey instruments, because I started out going, I don't even know how to create a survey instrument, because I don't know what the answer choices are. I know what questions we want to ask, but I don't have anything to provide them for a pick list.

So we started out with focus group, so I can kind of figure out what we needed to measure and what the appropriate answer choices were and then I could quantify some of the information within those focus groups using survey instruments. Since January of 2009 we have used 21 different instruments that we have create.

Yeah, so Michelle tells me that survey queen, but we are yes, we have done 21 different instruments and that includes one that data collection ended yesterday on about social media. And 11 of those are ongoing meaning that we're using them every three months or every six months or once a year and so just an enormous amount of survey data collection.

And we have done focus groups and conducted survey research with our frontline staff, our child welfare supervisors, our administrators and leadership within the grant project, our county directors of which they are 71. We resource and pre-resource families, community partners including tribes, so we have cast a very wide in terms of data collection and make sure that we are getting the perspective captured from all different angles when it comes to the topics that recruitment and retention that we have under the grant structure.

So great deal there is also a great deal of measurement associated with process improvement projects. The whole point of that kind of project is to use the data to inform what you want to do, how you want to shape your process to make it and to find opportunities for improvement by looking at the data.

So there is a lot of kids data and survey data that was related to is related to that effort as well. And as I mentioned we are using Kirkpatrick model to evaluate training effectiveness and those surveys I didn't count in the 21, so actually we've had 23. Yeah, using and then using the data to inform training that's been another really, so we the data that we collected hasn't only been about those outcomes, it's also been about shaping the work that happens on a day-to-day basis. So what trainings do we need to develop, what content that we need within those trainings.

Using the data that we've collected to educate staff, so we're not just saying you need to do x, y, z in terms of customer services. We're saying we serve at our resource parents and they said and we're giving it to them, so that they can see that this is actually happening within the State of Oklahoma we heard this from our families. So we're using the data specific within the training structure as well.

Okay I'm probably already on my 15 minutes on time. Okay and I told early, oh I won't take 15 minutes, yeah I just, I find so many other things to say once I get going, okay. [Laughter]. So measurement with families, we have one of the large groups that we have done multiple service with is directly with our resource parents.

And in 2009 we completed a survey with current bridge resource families and we did a random sample of 764 current parents that were selected from our kids database, of course we have all the parents listed in kids that we pulled out a random sample of 764 and we ended up with email addresses for a 135 of them.

So we emailed a survey out to those that had an email address listed in kids and then we mailed the other 629. And we were very, very disappointed with a 19% response rate. And so we had – we ended out with a small sample and a very bad response rate. And so it really kind of just blew the quality and purpose of the random selection out of the water right from beginning, because we had such a small sample size and with that response rate, the introduction of selection effect and all of those problems.

And so I had to learn, I had to immediately say, okay what we are we going to do different in the future. We had done a drawing for an iPod shuffle, so we had let them into their name if they've completed the survey; they got to enter their name for the chance of a drawing for an iPod shuffle. We didn't have enough budgeted for like giveaways for every single person that did it. So we did a drawing that didn't really seem to matter.

And we also realized that our emailed surveys gotten much higher response rates than our mailed survey. So when we looked at the email ones, our response rate was much better like into the 60%, but then overall it was only 19%. So we realized that where we were really failing to do a good job of data collection was through the mailed surveys. And so then when we realized that as we went on, as we went on to measure, we – the same thing we, the next time we had to do a large scale survey with bridge resource families which was in 2010.

We did not do random selection, we – I just decided, there is not really any value in that, if you're only going to have a 156 people who do it. So we just scraped that plan and we ended up collecting email addresses in advance. We decided since we had a better response via email, we were going to stick with an email survey. And so that now we needed to get a lot more email addresses into our system to have them to choose from.

And so that met some collaborative effort with the national resource center for youth services which is in Oklahoma. And they do our training for us, our resource parent training and they had an email list kind of database for our family. So we cross reference that got us many email addresses from that as we could. And we sent a post card to all of our families saying, hey we're going to do some data collection and we would really like to hear from you. So please give us your email address that you haven't done so already, because this will be in electronic survey that we email out to families.

And so we got some more emails incorporated into our SECUWA system after that initiative, and we need to do that, we're going to have to do that again before the next round of this data collection. So having done all of that, we ended up with sending an email link to 2516 parents and we ended up with a sample size of 549. So we solved to some extent, our sample size problem which was a bonus, but we still only ended up with a 21% response rate.

So we still had a very, just a very mild improvement in response rate. So we're continuing to work on strategies of how we can do that differently. And one of the things that we did was to do a demographic comparison at this sample versus the general population of parents in our SECUWA system. So we could go okay, who is responding to these email links and who is not.

So that next time we know that we can do some over sampling of the families to some like stratified random sampling of the families who are not responding, so that we can get – make sure we get more of a representation from those folks or we can start to do something different. So, what we were trying to look at was hypothetically, if we're not getting a response from the Hispanic families may be we need to go do some focus groups in the Hispanic community or something like that.

Get that data some other way, if surveys aren't the right way to do it. And so that's another big sort of self-evaluation that I've been doing is, may be surveys aren't the right way to get this information from folks. And so we – I'm going kind of revisiting the idea of focus groups and looking at what groups we are surveying that aren't really responding to us.

And having that comparison demographic comparison allowed me to see who I need to target and try to collect data with a little bit differently or in an over sampling kind of way. Okay, oh, crap let me – okay let's get up. And we want to build in sentence back in like we didn't – in this one we did our chance to -- a chance for a drawing that we are thinking we need to do something that's like $10 per person or something like that. So that we can get more – have those incentives really work for us.

Okay, measurement with administrators this is another place where I have really struggled. Originally when we first started, I have an implementation report that's process evaluation instrument that we have asked our administrators and leaders within the grant to work on. And so the first year we had 100% completion on that. However, it took six weeks to get that data. So it was me just nagging and nagging and nagging which was not fun at all for me or them. And also the quality of the responses is really poor, it lacked detail, they weren't you could just tell their hearts were not in it they didn't understand the purpose of it. They did not to put the time and effort into it. They are busy and other things to do.

And so we started in, but of course, I didn't give up, I tried again year two, and we only got a 54% response rate from our leaders within the grant structure, okay, and within the children and family services division. So only 6 of 11 participated and it – that it took me three weeks to even get to 54%. So then I was getting a ton of complaints and so was Hillary, Bushart [phonetic] [00:31:27] she is having to defend me. And so we just – I just gave up after three weeks and went okay, it is what it is obviously I shouldn't have tried to do this again that was my mistake so I will just back up and will redo this very differently next time. So we and again the quality of the responses was not well we had hoped for.

So what I did was go to the meeting that we had, the Grantees Meeting and when we were having our session for evaluators, we got to do a question-and-answer session so this is the problem I have here try this, this is the problem I had, here try this. So I said okay I'm having this problem with my leadership team not wanting to complete this implementation report and Michele Hanna says, feed them, they will come, and so I did, we did. And so we provided lunch and did it in a focused group setting instead. And we had a 100% response rate a couple of people who are not able to attend, we are asked to do it via survey and they did because they had been given that opportunity and we did not have to nag at them to get that data. And we had a much more – we had more people 15 instead of 11 contributing and we had rich detail with high quality responses and so that was another one of those times where I just had to acknowledge that surveys weren't necessarily the right way to go.

With staff we've had a great deal of success, we always have between 87 and 90% response rate around that range with our field staff and so that's not something that's really I have felt like was a survey fatigue issue. But I want to quickly share with you our process so that if that is something that you struggle with, you can kind of see how we are handling it and what we do is random sample, I always do a random sample of our staff, so I get a list of all child welfare specialists and supervisors in the state and I will pull a random sample from that.

And what we do in advance is, I will send out or our field operations division director will send out an email in advance saying to the County Directors you should expect for some of your staff to get selected into a random sample and this is what the survey will be, and this is when it will go out and this is what purpose it serves.

So then the County Director who the employee trusts can give say hey, beyond the lookout for this survey and you have my permission to fill it out and encourage them to do so. And it is really working well in the State of Oklahoma to have that local support for the data collection effort and let them know that legitimacy and encourages participation and that's working for us. And then when I send out the leagued staff. I'm very careful to tell them who they can contact for questions, what the data will be used for, why we are collecting it, whom it will be collected for and who is going to see it and use it. Ensuring confidentiality as a person that's not within the – their chain of command and then how much time it will take for them to complete this. So they know what to expect when they sit down and click on the link.

Santa Cruz, okay, so Eli had mentioned that we got information from Amy D'Andrade from Santa Cruz county and one of the contributions that she made to this, was to tell us about some of her issues with survey, fatigue and some of the things that she has done to try to deal with the issue of response rate as well.

This slide is a little bit of information about the Roots and Wings Project that I will let you guys read over later since I'm in a hurry now, since, I have talked too much. Okay, so there are initial survey strategy in Santa Cruz worked with counties was to work with counties to keep surveys as brief as possible. And then they determined that email would not work with foster caregiver population. They mailed a survey instead. So they kind of took it with their county, they felt like a mail survey was the better way to go whereas we have had a bad experience with that a couple of bad experiences.

They are using Dillman survey processes which is very similar to what I'm doing with our staff which is an inter-letter from the County Head, a letter with survey a few days later and then a thank you card about a week after that and then follow up letter and survey to non-respondents. So they are going – they are doing it in a couple of different ways to go ahead and that information. And they offered coffee gift cards an incentive in year one. And then they had a 40% response rate with their families which you know Amy thought was a really poor response rate and I said who, who, who, right.

Okay. And then during year two they had – they offered an incentive of stamps they included stamps for the people to keep and they also entered them in a drawing for $100 gift card to a clothing store if they – if the response is received. And they had a contribution to non-profit aiding foster youth in the name of Santa Cruz County Caregivers have the response rate hit 50%. So they were saying if we can hit this goal, we are going to make this charitable contribution in the name of foster parents and they were able to get a 50% response rate with those efforts.

And then this year what they plan to change is to more clearly explain the purpose of the pretty stamp so like there was a little confusion and some of them didn't know that they were theirs to keep, you know, they were not really sure what to do with those pre-stamped things, because they were like using them to send back their survey on a pre-stamped envelope. So we got to clarify that a little bit Amy said. But also they are going to look at contribution to the non-profit rate if the response rate hit 60%. So the increase in their response goal to make that charitable contribution and then they include, they want to include a two page summary of prior surveys with the initial letter which I think I'm going to take that suggestion that saw from Amy as well to say this is what we used the data for in 2010.

Here are some ways -- improvements that we made based on your feedback last year so that they can see that the information is being used and it's treated in a valuable manner. And then each year drop of question or two that was useful so if it's something that they asked and they are actually finding that they didn't use that information in any way they can shorten and tie in their instrument over time.

And I have done the same thing at the end of our survey instruments we even asked them where these the kinds of questions you thought we should ask did we ask anything that we didn't that you thought that we should have asked like three quality control issues on the instrument itself so that we can change the instrument and make it better over time.

Okay, and now I will turn it over to Michele from Denver.

Host: Just quickly to if you didn't notice there are some handouts at the back of the room that you can – we are trying to reduce paper for these conferences, but if you do want a copy of the handouts there is some on the back chair.

Michele Hanna: All right, so I'm going to talk about evaluating the moving target and the project that I work with this Denver's Village. They have an extension to that name wrapping families around communities support but we never say that so it's Denver's Village.

This is basically the information about the project as far as who is who. The Standup For Me just so you know that's their tagline we created a tagline, it's a Standup For me, be a foster parent.

Denver's Village is a community based data driven improvement model that focuses on keeping children in their own neighborhoods and recruiting resources to reflect the race and ethnicity of the children in care. The major components of course are recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents. They focus primarily on foster parents because like most jurisdictions the majority of the adoptions are by foster parents. However, with Denver they have a really high value on kinship and so they do a lot of work with the kinship families as we will talk a little bit about and again they focus on foster parents but they also include adoption. So our resource families are included in their project.

They are really looking at an agency cultural shift trying to get the agency as a whole to value the resource families and to support the resource families and that's really leads into their retention goal. Permanency and concurrent planning of course are part of the project and then data management.

The grant strategies, this is a community project it's based on, it was actually based on a previous infrastructure which is one of the issues that we are going to talk about with the family to family projects. They were one other family to family of regional sites and from those sites they created what they are calling Community Based Resource Teams or CBRTs that are include their CCPCs, we laugh a lot because they have a lot of acronyms in most of them begin with C. And the CCPCs, I don't even remember what all that stands for but there are larger community agencies in which the CBRTs are housed.

Within the CBRTs are Community Outreach workers, which was a change that happened within the grant. Other community members and Denver DHS staff and their primary goal is to recruit and retain families within that community. One of the efforts or strategies to engage the ethnic communities specifically focusing on African American community, the Latinos, Hispanic community and the native American community which all of which are very highly represented in the community. Engaging the community resource families that's one of the things that I think has been a really positive strategy with this grant throughout all of the initiatives that I'm going to talk about the resource families are the table. And involved and engaged in what everything they do. And engaging youth at all opportunities and engaging the DHS staff.

The evaluation, like all evaluations is process and outcome focus we have observations, we have interviews, I can't remember what you said your instrument was but one of the instruments that we use is called a progress towards goal instrument that's the instrument that we used with the grant staff to kind of – you called an implementation…

Shannon: Implementation report.

Michele Hanna: Implementation report it's similar to that to kind of get an idea from the staff how they think things are going and whether or not they think the project is moving the way it should be. And then resource family surveys and I have to laugh because what you said is exactly what we experienced. We did all of the things that you are supposed to do. We got the forms translated by professional translator, we have them read by our Spanish liaison within the grant to make sure that they were saying what we wanted and so we did all this information within our Spanish invitations to participate in survey. We got one.

So we are now getting ready to embark. We are in the process. We have – we've done kind of exactly what you did, we actually sent, we have a very active Spanish liaison and she has meet and greets, she has focused groups and she has prior joining she does Pride in Spanish and so I sent out my assistance to the Meet and Greet and they did marketing. And then they are going to the Pride and they hand carry the surveys and then we are going to invite them to a focus group and ask they open into questions at the surveys because we need their response because they are a large contingency of the resource families.

And then at the outcome level, we are looking at community level data, county level data. Colorado is one of those county administered states and this is a county grant. So this grant only deals with Denver County and so at the county level we are comparing to the other large counties in Colorado that are similar to Denver to see if – to see the differences in the resource families.

Now, when we talk about the moving target Crystal's, this is one of her slides that I stole because it really is perfectly exactly what I'm talking about. Child welfare in and of itself is a moving target. This is a five year grant, if it's been around for any length of time you know that five years in the life of child welfare can be a lot of change. Within Denver we have already seen reorganization. The Mayor of Denver became the Governor of Colorado, they have become a new Mayor in Denver and the Manager of Denver Human Services is an appointed position and so as of July 18, I believe every appointed person who is appointed by the previous Mayor resigned. And so and now they have an Interim Manager, they are still waiting to find out who the new Mayor is going to appoint and with every Manager change is change, and so that's definitely part of the problem.

Reorganization, leadership change, physical challenges prior to the Mayor becoming the Governor, they had 83 staff laid off in Denver County Human Services and so for one county office we have maybe 500 people, 83 people are gone. And so that was an impact.

The physical challenge is within Denver as I said, the project was built on the family to family to structure while those economic change the family to family monies that they thought they had built a sustainability plan which were these grants. You all know you have sustainability plans, while the sustainability went away because the money went away and the family to family structure went away. And so the grant had to restructure for this grant and so that was a challenge, staff turnover again the layoffs, shifting priorities with every new leadership comes a new priority and then just the concurrent implication of multiple initiatives, Denver probably has 8 or 9 different initiatives going on. This is one county and they are competing. And they don't necessarily even in that one small county talk to each other. And so through this grant we actually have one meeting where everybody that was involved with all the different initiatives was in the same room. And it was just amazing how they are going to really, we could use that really we can do that, but they haven't gotten back together to figure out how they can do that. So that's a challenge. And that's a challenge with staff because staff are like one more survey, one more meeting, which initiative is this? I don't know what this means and they don't understand how all these different initiatives fit together.

So in the Manhattan City, what does it mean to have this moving target, I liking it to altitude sickness, if you ever been to Colorado or been to Denver or been to Ohio altitude you know that that you have to drink lots of water and you have to be prepared because it can be a little disconcerting. So major evaluations challenges that I have experienced with this grant is the competing goals for year one, then talk a little about each of the years as we come in but with year one as Shannon said it was supposed to be a planning year while for Denver there was a pre-existing county goals that have been put in place just in case they didn't get the grant because they really didn't think that they are going to the grant, while the goal, the pre-existing goals were way over the top of the grant goals and they had to meet them because they have promised to use it that they would and so we spend our planning year meeting those pre-existing goals which is a challenge.

Administrative data, I know Crystal is going to talk a lot about that as you may or may not have picked up, I worked in Oklahoma for almost 15 years before my second life year. And I was there when the kid system was built, I miss kids. Can I just tell you, I miss kids, please go tell them all, it's a wonderful system. I wish that I had it everywhere. Anyway getting a hold in administrative data in Colorado is challenging.

And the again the initiatives, there are lots and lots of initiatives, I have my staff consist of myself, a Ph.D., student which now I'm on my third and whatever MSW student decides or interested. So I don't have a lot of staff. So with everything that's happening not only the initiatives outside of the grant but the initiatives within the grant as Shannon said you can't evaluate everything but even with these things that I have to evaluate, I can't be but at one place at one time and so it is challenging. So I have to prioritize.

So here is my year one, my project manager Margaret Booker likes to say that for year one, we were driving the car without an engine because of those pre-existing county goals basically they had set a goal to increase their resource families by 50%. The grant costs were increasing by 10, I think percent but they had set a 50% goal in year one. They made it. Don't ask me how, they made it, they will never do it again. So we are now more – in a more realistic mode. But, and you have also have to understand they started I can't remember what the actual number is. So 50% for them was a big jump but they still have to retain those families and keep those families. So the pre-existing goals were definitely a challenge for the first year because we are trying to figure out how we are going to plan at the same time how do you plan when you got this other stuff going on.

The pre-existing infrastructure the family to family system there was I ran a couple of focus groups at first year with the staff to talk about implementation and process and what have you, and they were so confused, how is this different, what is this, how does this fit? And so trying to even though it was a good idea to use this pre-existing infrastructure trying to explain to staff how the pre-existing infrastructure fit into this current grant was very difficult. So in some ways the fact that the physical structure – the monies were pulled out from under – really helped the grant because it gave the grant its own identity and it actually helped us to do some planning and he is going to tell me I'm out of time here, okay.

Host: Fine.

Michele Hanna: You are making me nervous. Okay. [Laughter]

Host: You are fine.

Michele Hanna: Okay. So basically once we got through that initial chaos, we were able to actually spend year two doing a little of planning. And again the moving target, the fact that the infrastructure was pulled out was actually a blessing in disguise. They were able to restructure and one of the things that they did they moved to the CCPCs instead of the family, the family sites and they moved to having one physical agent to help with the Community Outreach Workers which they call COWs remembers I told you about those acronyms. The Community Outreach Workers actually came out with that themselves, I have to explain they owned it, all except for one. And he is the only male and he actually happens to be a preacher so he is the holy COW. And he is excited about that. He accepts that.

So they are Community Outreach Workers and so each person, each community, each CBRT has a dedicated Community Outreach Worker prior to the restructuring they had one person from the family to family site who was giving 10% of their time to the CBRT. And then you all know that the reality was they weren't being able to focus on it as they should have. So this is actually worked out really better.

The grant objectives and goals, year two really became about what is the logic model, again for our grant, we ended up doing a lot of things in year two especially for those six months that we should have done in year one. And went back to what is the logic model, what is realistic, what can we really do because even though they met that 50% goal it was the staff work done, I mean, it was a really hard task and I'm not so sure that many of those families stayed. So they've had a lot of challenges with that.

Year three has been the year of initiatives again as I said Denver has a very high value on kinship and they have both paid and unpaid kinship as so they developed what they call the Kinship DREAM Team and they just recently as of last week renamed themselves so now they have some acronym which doesn't begin with C, it begins with K I believe. And the Kinship DREAM Team that has been one that I have actually followed very closely. And that's one of those where I've really seen that value of bringing the resource families to the table. They brought in the non-paid kinship as well as the kinship families to the table and this just a month or so go they had a kinship celebration and they had over 350 people at the park and it was just an awesome time and it was again the non-paid predominantly non-paid kinship. And so they have really focused on that and that really is good.

The customer service initiative as Shannon said that's part of many of the grants to focus on customer service to resource families and then the targeted African American recruitment. These are the initiatives, this is what I've really been focusing on and as Shannon said I had to learn early as well actually I think I was one of the last people to figure this out that you can't evaluate everything. Because again with this moving target with all these things popping up, it was like how am I going to evaluate that? And I was having trouble because I would go to a meeting say the Kinship DREAM Team and my project manager will stand up and say we are doing this and we are doing that it would be the first time I heard about it, and I will be like okay. You know things were happening so fast behind the scenes that couldn't keep up.

This is the Denver's Village Project, so this gives you some idea of and this happened because I couldn't keep up, I was like stop the presses, I need to know what's going on. And so we really went back to the drawing board and said what are we doing? How does this all fit together and again this was something that I put together for myself and my staff and the grant management staff was thrilled because many of them didn't understand how all these pieces fit together. And so along with the logic model, I used this. I'm like if it's not on there, I'm not doing it.

Because again this is year three, we've really got one more year of good data collection and implementation and then we are into wrapping this grant up. So really to start something new at this point would be difficult. But that kind of gives you an idea of what I'm dealing with.

So my priorities again when I went to the – as I said we as a evaluators had a wonderful meeting and we were all talking about our different issues and this was my issue and what I heard and I know Shannon said in a couple of others just go back to your logic model and one of the challenges I had been having if you remember was the data. I was having difficult to getting the data that I needed and so when I went back to my logic model to figure out what I needed to evaluate, I also looked at what data do I really need and knowing this Colorado system and this Denver system where do I need to get it from. So again with it being a county administers state, you have our, what they call trials which is their kids system their SECUWA system and then every county as their own database. And they have like 10 of them, it's very interesting. And so it's like which database is going to give me what I need and so I was able to sit down with the data person take my logic model and tie the data elements into database and now I think we are finally where we need to be. Those kinship surveys again we did that one year that really turned out to go -- do very well it was actually a project of one of the MSW students and so we are going to redo that.

The resource family surveys, I definitely was taking notes on a couple of things that I can do even now to try to increase my rate, I think I have it like 10% response rate and so we are definitely going to try to increase our Spanish speaking focus groups and I have one minute.

One other new things that we are doing and at first I didn't want to involve anything new but again it came back to what was on that big chart and with the customer service they let me do placement exit surveys where at the time a placement ins we are going to survey the foster family and the case workers and get their perspective on some customer service related issues. And then we are going to continue with the observations.

So here is my recommendations, you have to be guided by the logic model that was like the best piece of advice I got from my peers, and it's funny, I was even saying yesterday when I was in MSW school and I was learning about logic model it made no sense to me. I was like whatever this all bunches of boxes and arrows, you know, what's the point.

And it wasn't until I actually did one of my first projects and actually and was post Ph.D., and I actually sat down to do one that it made sense and now with this experience I'm even getting more of an understanding of the value of those boxes and arrows that when again -- when I got my MSW I thought this people were crazy. So you have to understand that is really a good tool, it's not just something you have to fill out to get the grant. It really is your math.

Ongoing communication with the grant management again especially the first year and a half I would be so frustrated, I would go into meetings, I would go to the grant team meeting and she will stand up and present and I heard things for first time and I'm like what is going on and so I was like this has got to stop so now we meet every other week we have our management team meeting, Shannon and I are on speed dial with each other now she – we have been laughing because we literally talk just about every day. Because I was like this is not working, I mean, to know what's happening so I can make a decision is this something that I need to evaluate or is this something I just need to make a note of.

You need to prioritize. You need to know your limitations. There was a time were we had some T&TA come in and they did like 10 or 11 focus groups in a one week period and several of them, couple of them more at the same time, I can't be there. So I hired some MSW staff and what have you trained them and they went out and did those observations for me because I just couldn't do that. So know your limitations know what you can and can't do.

Everything needs to be related back to the goals and objectives of the grant i.e., the logic model and become a little logic model. And then you got to be flexible. That's the other thing even in the midst of that you don't want to be so rigid it's not on the logic model because again like with these excess surveys that we are getting ready to do when all of that came up my first thought was I don't want to add one more thing but then I thought about the value of it and how valuable that's going to be for the project as well as even for the field ones we get the results. So I was like okay we can make this work. So you have to have some flexibility in there.

Did I go the wrong way?

Host: No.

Michele Hanna: Okay. Here we go.

Host: Here we go.

Michele Hanna: Thank you.

Host: Thank you. Oh, sure and Crystal?

Crystal Collins-Camargo: Yes.

Host: Our last speaker.

Crystal Collins-Camargo: Good morning. I was just thinking if Shannon is the survey queen and Michele is the logic model queen, I don't know what kind of queen I am. I leave that to you all to figure out I guess. One of the things that was challenging about this presentation is all of these topics are so tightly interrelated that we've really struggled to not kind of walk all over each other's topics and so, there is a little bit of overlap, but I think that that's okay. Without going into a lot of detail, Kentucky is a -- has nine service regions in child welfare system. We are implementing our interventions in four of those and four are our comparison group. And we had selected the four that would be intervention randomly and we've purposefully used the service region as a unit of analysis because so much of this work is about the culture, the organizational culture and how the team in a region works together.

The only piece of the state that's really not directly involved in Jefferson County, Louisville, which really has no peer in the state so we kind of left them out. You can see we're doing a lot of the similar kinds of things that we've talked about. So, I'm not going to go into too much of our interventions except with examples of where they've come back to plague me as we move forward. We have five distinct or at least started with five distinct interventions and like Michele we really struggled with how they all fit together and then that's been a real issue in the agency when you put those in context with all the other initiatives that are going on in the agency.

We have data collection for some other methodology state wide. Others are specific to the intervention regions and we collect data from both staff and resource parents from both the public and private sector. In Kentucky about half of the kids in out of home care are in homes that are maintained by private child welfare agencies. Although the public agency maintains case management we have a vast number of private agencies that actually recruit, train, select and maintain homes.

So, you've heard a little bit about this. You know one of the things and I will tell you I'm drawing some of what I'm going to talk about not only from the work related to the diligent recruitment project, but also to my thought improvement center work because in each of those I was working with multiple child welfare agencies. And I really thought when I began this having some of that under my belt with two QICs that it was going to be so much easier to do this in my own state where I had all of these relationships with the public agency. I work there for years you know not so much. I mean the same challenges are still there and although I've been able to use as relationships I think to try to deal with them.

Because there is so much going on in the agency, the best laid evaluation protocols are out the window pretty quickly you know with how timelines are going to go you know we you know planned ahead we're going to do this survey at this time where we're going to do these focus groups at this time and then we find out, know the agencies furloughing staff and you can't send people out there to collect data right now or you would really have to be I think flexibility is probably the most important thing that you can do plan flexibility I guess. This piece about rolling out promising practices I think is a huge issue in child welfare because our agencies are so desperate to find things that work. We planned from our initial application to one of our interventions involved sharing child welfare data with the courts in the regions in terms of the extent to which outcomes for kids are being met, timeframes in the court system that sort of thing to try to really engage the court which really is so integrally involved in whether or not outcomes can happen. That was part of our initial plan. That was something that we demonstrated in our first planning year was absolutely a need.

The state took that and rolled it out state wide after the first year of our working on it. And it was no longer something that we could do any sort of comparison on. So, those sorts of things you know it's really an issue. And so, I am constantly saying to the administration can we hold our fund in this or you know how can we manage this without you know without tainting the ability to really make a comparison, because of the rise we have no real way of knowing whether what we're doing is really making a difference.

The other thing that was a struggle really from our initial application was how were we going to pick where the interventions would take place. I think that there is a tendency to either want to cherry pick because they know that these regions have innovative leaders and they're going to be willing to do it or to send the troops in to the places that are struggling the most. And so it was kind of a tough sell to do the random assignment and maintain that, but I think once they bought into it that you know that didn't seem to be too big of an issue for us.

Michele mentioned that child welfare data system piece obviously state MIS systems vary tremendously, some of them are really filled with worker data entry err and we certainly have to deal with ours I would say probably some of them all of them have issues associated with that. In my QIC work I've had two states right in the middle of data collection change their SACWIS system totally, go from one system to another system that really did not talk to each other at all, did not measure data in the same way. You know and so those sorts of things can also be a challenge. It's not been an issue with the diligent recruitment project fortunately, but one of the challenges that we do have you know five years sounds like a lot of time. And then you have your planning year, so it's really four years.

And when you're looking at recruitment and training of families and placement stability and permanency, a lot of those data indicators take a fairly long time to mature and really know whether or not you're making a dent. And we've been collecting data from our MIS system quarterly sense baseline and it actually I have no complaints about that. I just have to send them an email saying it's time to send me the data and they send me I think five different datasets and they come in the XL spreadsheets. It's I mean I don't even know how many variables. It's way, way more than we need, but basically to avoid not getting what I needed I said just give me the whole thing pull out the identifiers which is what our IRB wanted us to do and then what we wanted to do. That's probably been the biggest challenge is that sometimes they forget to pull a data, pull the identifiers out, so I'm like okay, you know I'm deleting this, send it to me again please and take the names of the kids out and their socials and that sort of thing, but you know I think it really helps if you can have that kind of relationship with the people that you know have access to that data and really they've been more than willing to give us this.

Part of what the challenge has been there though was that from fairly early on in the process they wanted to know are we doing better in our intervention regions on some of these things, on recruitment or retention of homes or whatever. And really all I've really held the line really hard that until right now for our October report we are going to actually do some statistical testing, but up till now all I've been willing to do is trend, show them trend lines comparing because you know it just would be too soon to tell and there is such an anxiousness to try to get that.

The other challenge that we've had is our data related to resource homes when they enquire about becoming a parent when they enter training, when they complete training, when they're approved, all of that is a totally separate data system than the system that maintains records on the kids. And very complicated to try to link any of that information they don't have a common linking variable. The kids' information does not have like a case number for the resource family. We don't have the ability, one of the things that we wanted to be able to tell is how long is it between approval of the foster family and when they are receiving their first placement. There is no way to get that data out. And I'm like what do you mean there is no way to get that?

I mean basically we would have to do a comparison of we've 8,000 kids in care. We'd have to do like a comparison somehow and it just was not even feasible to do that. So, I think that there are lot of challenges with that that we have to sometimes just say okay well, we're just going to track different things. It's already come up. You all already know this that getting to frontline workers and getting and enticing them to give you survey data or participate in interviews our focus groups is tremendously impacted, not because they don't want to, but because they just don't have time to do it. And because of the you know I think probably all of these projects have been impacted by the economy and what's happened in the child welfare systems Michele talked about lay-offs. We've been having furloughs. We've been having a lot of positions not filled. We have private agencies who are teetering on the edge of closing their doors because the public agency has tried to pull a lot more placements back internally to their own homes.

So, this has been a huge issue for us. We chose not to get into the survey piece too much, but for the survey aspects of our work, we chose to use electronic surveys almost exclusively. If we had a resource parent that says I really we would send a postcard out saying here is the link you know in addition to using email addresses, we found that the data that the public agency maintain for email contact of resource parents was tremendously inaccurate. And so we've really had to add in that postcard piece to mail it to their address because that was an issue.

And even bigger issue for us was the private agency side there is no central way to get information, contact information on private agency foster parents. Each agency maintains their own list. The agencies may -- some of -- we have a couple agencies that gave us whatever we asked for. A lot of them, you know we're not going to give you the addresses for our foster parents even if the public agency says we want you to do this. They you know they won't give us that. They want us to kind of funnel it through their manager and you know what that means. You know so if you say here is the survey, we please ask your resource parents to do it, and then you're -- you know you've lost that ability to have that kind of contact.

One thing that we were that we did do and we still struggle tremendously with both getting private agency resource parents to come and participate in focus groups as well as to complete surveys was that we do, if a child is placed with in a home, we have a name and address for the resource parents we could use the cards. There is no central information on the staff of the private agencies either, but what we did know is we know who the case manager even though they really have case management responsibility, the primary worker in the public agency was for each child and we were able to construct likely email addresses based on the kind of the way that email addresses are handled and the agency whether it's their first name dot last name or whatever to try to get some approximation of that.

And then the other thing is this issue of timing. One of our interventions is about bringing public and private resource parents and workers together in a local community two per region monthly -- not monthly quarterly to look at their own data, learn about best practices on whatever the topic is if it's targeted recruitment or if it's placement stability, develop action plans, you know report back each time, if we had these meetings at night and we collect the data directly at those, we go there, you can get a 100% response rate if you go and do it if they show up that day. But it's been from an intervention standpoint if they have those meetings in the evening when it's convenient for resource parents, the workers don't come and vice versa. And it was really something that they wanted to do to bring those folks together and really build that collaborative relationship and that's been an issue.

We also had an issue and this is really part of the rollout sort of one of that other, one of our other interventions is child specific recruitment with family finding. Within I would say three months of our beginning our family finding intervention, the state began rolling out permanency roundtables that Casey comes in and facilitates. It's not exactly the same thing as family finding but it's really close. And they actually started using the same search company that we use. They would not restrict it to that. What we said is can you at least restrict it to the other half of the state that were not doing you know or not used the same kids even and we could not get them to even say they wouldn't refer the same kids. So, it's just become as really convoluted.

I mean all we can do is collect data on what we have and really hope for the best. I think that there are Institutional Review Board issues as well. In our agency we have our public agency has their own IRB in addition to the one at the university. They see things very differently than the university IRB. We got with our surveys we had to go through some real negotiation because the public agency said you cannot use that scary language in your informed consent because nobody is going to want to do this. You know that language where it says there may be unforeseeable risks that you know and then the universities said you absolutely must use this. You cannot change this wording at all and we got into this you know and basically I had to talk the agency into letting me do it because there was no way that I can, and even I am the IRB at the university and they would not they're like this is the language. So, that's a challenge.

So, some of the strategies, I think it's really important much of our intervention is actually performed by staff that are hired in two of our other universities. They're actually doing a lot of the intervention. Project manager is in the public agency and has proven to be really, really important to have someone at a relatively high level as the project manager in this, to really run interference for us and we've really noticed the difference. For the first couple of years of the project, the branch manager for All Adoption Services for the state was our lead. He helped to write the application. He was very, very engaged. He has the kind of personality that everybody around the state loves him. He is really funny and adopt you as kids stole in six months ago and you know always work on the national level and we still don't have someone that's been permanently assigned. We have kind of an interim.

And here we are at this really critical crux of the -- and we've got somebody that you know if we really need something she'll do it. It's not that. It's just that this is sort of an add on. And so that's been a challenge. And I think if we had I think it would have been a very good idea for us to really push for two representatives from the state level agency from the beginning for all of it to the extent that it was possible. I do think it's important to not put data collection too much in the hands of the public agency folks. We do most of that ourselves, but we use them to help us market like these folks talk about the director, the agency sends emails you know that sort of thing will get on the agenda of their management team meetings with the regional supervisors and say you know the surveys are coming out what can you do to help us with this sort of thing.

But I think one of the other things that was important is recognizing early on that as an evaluator or a researcher our way of thinking about this whole, all of this work is very different than the agency's way of thinking about it. Why they're doing this work? You know we, I certainly want to improve child welfare services in my state just like they do, but I also want to have a really strong evaluation, I want to contribute to the knowledge base, I want to do all that. So, we have to talk about that a lot very purposefully, how can we meet all of our objectives in this process. And I think you know it only took about a year to get that first project manager to the point where every time he had bad news to tell me. You know he would say you know Crystal I know you're going to get really angry about this with their rolling out the permanency roundtables and they won't do this or they've you know done this or whatever and he said I know that's going to ruin our comparison design, isn't it? He said that's our quasi experimental design is going to be ruined by that.

So, you know with I think it helps when you can have those kind of conversations, so at least they you know they really have a sense of where we are with that. I think leveraging leadership often is important in high level leadership as well as middle leadership. I think Shannon mentioned that you know it's one thing to have the director of the whole state to do something. It's another thing to have the regional manager do it as well in combination. I think relationships are very important. Believe me I have leveraged every relationship that I have in that agency at different times to say you know we really have to work this out, what can we do to work this out, and it would be much more difficult to fight if we didn't have those.

The other thing that I do is I compare regions shamelessly and openly in meetings, you know we competition in a healthy way is a very effective thing. So, whenever we have a Board meeting and our regional directors are there and the public agencies are there, we are always sharing interim evaluation data and I whenever I can in a way that's not going to hang anybody out, we'll put the comparison data up right there and it is amazing how you know the region is not responding to something will go home and the next time they want to have their data way up here. They want to look better and I think that that's a positive thing.

I think it's important to keep the evaluation on the table all the time. I tried I have besides myself I have two other people who are part of the evaluation team for part of their time. We try really hard not to allow any project implementation meeting to happen without one of us being there for exactly the reason Michele was talking about so that we know if any decision is being made when it's being made and can at least try to you know sometimes we can mediate what's going to happen or at least we know about it and can adjust for it. Every project meeting has evaluation on the agenda and we talk about what's coming when we can we talk about data.

We tried to tie in our first year the goals of the project to the program improvement plan that this state had and I used that. When they say well we may not be able to do this I'm like well isn't that in your pep, you know and I know that it's part of the comparison design but I think that's important. Lots of different data points and multiple methodologies because some of them are going to fall apart and that's all I had. So, I'm right on time. I thought I have one more slide. So, we got a little time for questions.

Elliot Graham: Thank you, Crystal. Well, we don't have a lot of time, but what we did want to make sure that anybody who had a question or a comment or an observation for the panel had some time to address that. I know Shannon you said you had a comment or observation in general…

Shannon Rios: Well, I thought of some things when…

Crystal Collins-Camargo: Yeah.

Shannon Rios: Crystal and Michele were speaking that I thought I would mention quickly. Number one, I'm the only one on this panel that's an internal evaluator and I should have mentioned that. I think I'm the only one within our cluster that's an internal evaluator. Meaning, I am an OKDHS employee. There is one more Michele said. So that makes my access to the data, I don't have any of those problems because I'm internal. I don't have competent you know issues with. I'm already bound by confidentiality all those things are already taken care of.

So, when you're planning this kind of project, if you can have someone that is internal to that state agency either partner on the evaluation or be a liaison to the evaluation piece, you will find that the partnership between agency and evaluators will be much, much stronger and you'll be able to navigate those things much more smoothly. So, I would strongly encourage that. Another thing, anyone who you think will be working on the grant project or the project should be involved in the planning that's another thing that's been very difficult within my project is all of the team members that we have of which there are about 15 who serve as leadership for this grant project, I'm the only one who actually help write the grant proposal. And so that's really challenging that we didn't have that and of course it's hindsight 20/20 to know who to get involved in the writing process, but the more you can have people in the writing process that are going to be doing the work you'll find that that's very, very helpful.

I want to echo Michele's logic model enthusiasm. It will very much help you stay on track. It helps you explain how the evaluation fits into the project. So, even if you're doing a small project a logic model will be very helpful to keep everyone on the same page and focused on goals. It helps you to not get off on tangents that you know where you're chasing rabbits and things. As an evaluator be very involved, attend things, attend meetings, even if you, even if it's not there is not an evaluation component, if you have the time do it, because it puts you in their minds that you're a part of the team and not get, so you're not forgotten. And then also it allows you to see the bigger picture of the project where you're just listening and observing, so you see how that fits in with the work that you're doing.

And then also have program staff, something I had found to be very valuable is that I have program staff and specifically our project manager Hillary Winn who is in the audience give me feedback on all my instruments. So, I say this is what I think you're going to want to measure. I think these are good questions. Tell me what you think. And I always adapt those suggestions into my instrument. So, I've created buying with our project staff in the instrument and the data itself so then when I come back and say here are the results, they already know you know what we're measuring and why we're measuring it. So, they're not shocked by the results that I'm giving them. And then also I share the results on a regular basis. So, either I do or Hillary does or my research assistant, we go to meetings and tell them what we found. And so they see that continue a loop of communications really valuable.

Okay so that's all I have.

Elliot Graham: Thank you, Shannon. Well, any questions or observations from any audience members regarding any of the issues that were discussed, you know the survey fatigue, response rate issue, the moving target issue, the institutional barriers issue, questions, comments, observations, yes.

Speaker 2: This question is for Shannon. Did you consider telephone surveys I don't know.

Shannon Rios: No, I didn't. I haven't had the resources to do that. We've done some in smaller groups where we had you know like we did a small sample of 200 or something like that and we've done some telephone, but not on a large scale.

Speaker 2: Did you have better response rate for that or?

Shannon Rios: No.

Michele D. Hanna: Can I answer that?

Shannon Rios: Yeah, go ahead.

Michele D. Hanna: We actually have one DR grantee who did a telephone customer service survey. They had an excellent response rate.

Elliot Graham: That was Ramsey County.

Michele D. Hanna: Ramsey County and...

Elliot Graham: Yeah. It was like 80% or 90%.

Michele D. Hanna: Yeah. And actually I'm in the process of kind of trying to do something similar, but again that becomes an IRB issue at least for me, because my IRB is not set up to have that immediate access that way, but I think they had their setup and they're also the county where they have the internal and an external evaluator and I think it was their internal person who did the help facilitate that. So, they were able because of…

Shannon Rios: Yeah.

Michele D. Hanna: Not having the confidentiality issues to do that.

Shannon Rios: And we've done in small scales with you know like measuring why families have withdrawn from the process. That's specifically one in our support center staff help us with those phone calls, but it's on a small scale. And we have not had a higher response rate which is why we, one of the reasons why we haven't tried it large scale.

Michele D. Hanna: What we have, what I have personally done just recently is we took all of our surveys where because we have a longitudinal set up or they're supposed to do three, six months, 12 months, and so everyone that we had and heard from, we're calling and we are actually getting responses by calling them and my students are encouraged to either ask them do you want us to redo it or do you have time, we'll do it with you over the phone, because we already have their consent at that point and that has really helped us at least with the follow-up.

Shannon Rios: Yeah, I know.

Speaker 2: Also, one of the staff has said if you don't have email and then you have the state call list…

Shannon Rios: Call list. That's right.

Speaker 2: And we'll have it in for you.

Shannon Rios: That's right.

Michele D. Hanna: Yeah, I wanted to say one more thing to about something Crystal said and that's getting the staff and the project manager and everyone to understand the importance of what you're doing, my big thing is documentation. We have all these recruitment events and really getting and for me the challenge has been the frontline workers, getting them to document who's there, how many people are showing, I mean just getting them to tally how many people walk by your booth and now it's become this funny thing with them, because I've been trying to figure out a way to make it a user friendly simple form. One of the things that I've learned with the staff is it has to be short. Don't ask them to do a five-page report.

It has to be something short and easy for them to do and now the minute I open my mouth and say well I really need you, they go document, document, so but it's been three years of me preaching we have to doc -- if we don't document we can't, you're doing all this for nothing, but getting them at frontline level to understand the importance of documenting their activities has been really challenging but I think we're down the rope you know on the downhill side I think we're finally getting there. I wish these projects are like seven years, because I feel like we're just now really getting a handle on what we're doing and how to really get the data and how to really, a lot of these things are working out.

Shannon Rios: That's very true. We have found ourselves looking at short term intermediate and long term outcomes like all at the same time, because what we thought were you know…

Michele D. Hanna: Yeah.

Shannon Rios: Short term we didn't actually have the opportunity for that data until just you know six months ago or something.

Michele D. Hanna: Yeah.

Elliot Graham: Any last questions or comments, observations, so…

Speaker 2: I'm just glad to know that there how many people that have these same problems.

Michele D. Hanna: Yeah.

Speaker 2: And then we I was talking about we have several fair evaluators and federal grants and that's the same across I mean it was…

Michele D. Hanna: Yeah.

Shannon Rios: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Make them probably built it or prevent, we've done all these interim evaluations and it's I mean especially with these federal it's where you're kind of giving liberty to do it and implement you would like and you know the moving target really did something right now, so. Thank you.

Michele D. Hanna: Well, I think you have our contact information on your back.

Elliot Graham: That's right. It's on the last slide.

Michele D. Hanna: Yeah.

Elliot Graham: So, if anyone has follow-up questions for any of the panelists you know feel free to contact them directly.

Shannon Rios: Please email.

Elliot Graham: Yeah, email, phone number.

Michele D. Hanna: shannon.rio@okdhs.org.

Elliot Graham: So, thank you all for coming and participating.

Michele D. Hanna: Thank you.

Elliot Graham: So.