

EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AN INNOVATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND HEALTH COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

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Background and Aims: There are gaps in the scientific knowledge on the effectiveness of community-university environmental justice (EJ) and health partnerships. We will highlight how the West End Revitalization Association's partnership was used to address the lack of basic amenities, EJ issues, and public health issues in underserved black communities in North Carolina.

Methods: Self-administered surveys (N=37) and semi-structured interviews (N=35) were used to evaluate the effectiveness of WERA's partnership and use of the community-owned and managed research (COMR) approach and collaborative problem solving (CPS) model to address EJ and health issues. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Descriptive statistics and survey results were analyzed using SPSS v. 17.0.

Results: Analysis of interview and survey data has shown that WERA's partnership, particularly COMR, was effective in improving environmental literacy and addressing EJ and health issues in WERA neighborhoods. Survey respondents generally agree that WERA's COMR approach can be used to help build the community's trust in the scientific research process and also can be used to effectively address local environmental justice and health issues. There is more disagreement among survey respondents about the utility of the CPS approach in addressing local EJ and health issues. Analyses of interview data reveal that WERA's community-university partnership has been effective at addressing local EJ and health issues. Interviewees think COMR is a great way for communities to address their local EJ and health issues. Study participants generally agreed that the COMR approach can be adopted by other communities to address local EJ and health issues.

Conclusions: This evaluation provided information on the efficacy of WERA's COMR approach to address EJ and health issues and revealed barriers to participation and some key lessons learned that may be useful for others trying to address environmental health issues using a partnership approach and exposure assessment methods.