

## Early Collaboration Measures Among a Cross-Sector Stakeholder Group in a Statewide GWEP

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### INTRO

The AgingME Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) uses collaboration across institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, and healthcare entities to imbed transformational healthcare practice change across Maine, a primarily rural state. The AgingME Steering Committee was formed in October 2019 to provide general program oversight for the GWEP. At the conclusion of the first grant year, a survey was administered to the Steering Committee to identify early collaboration strengths and areas for improvement in both the committee's work and the work of the broader GWEP efforts. Findings from this survey will serve as a baseline measure for subsequent grant year surveys.

### METHODS

- The survey consisted of two components:
  - The Wilder Collaborative Factors Inventory: 44 Likert scale questions representing 22 different research-based factors that underpin successful collaboration
  - Four open response questions designed to measure process-level challenges and opportunities for improvement
- The first section was analyzed by factor while common themes were identified in the open response section of the survey.

### RESULTS

- N = 11 anonymous participants (55% response rate) from the AgingME GWEP Steering Committee.
- None of the respondents indicated any areas where they strongly disagreed with any of the 44 Wilder Collaborative Factors items.

| Highest scoring collaboration factors    | Mean Score (N = 11) (1 low, 5 high) |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Unique purpose                           | 4.41 (SD = 0.06)                    |
| Mutual respect, understanding, and trust | 4.31 (SD = 0.19)                    |
| Favorable political and social climate   | 4.27 (SD = 0.13)                    |
| History of collaboration and cooperation | 4.27 (SD = 0.63)                    |
| Lowest scoring collaboration factors     |                                     |
| Multiple layers of participation         | 3.45 (SD = 0.13)                    |
| Ability to compromise                    | 3.45 (SD = 0.82)                    |

As noted in write-in responses, early challenges to Steering Committee effectiveness were time and scheduling conflicts, as well as the uncertainty brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Early Steering Committee strengths included a foundation of trust and respect among members likely fueled by prior working relationships and collaborations and efforts.

| Open-Response Questions  | Themes  |
|--|---|
| What do you see as the most valuable role that the AgingME project could play in addressing age-friendly healthcare training needs across the state? (N=8) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AgingME has a role in preparing a range of healthcare professionals for better addressing the specific needs of older adults.</li> <li>• AgingME has the opportunity for collaboration across a diverse set of partners.</li> </ul>  |
| What changes would you recommend in the collaboration process to make the group as effective as possible? (N=8)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheduling considerations and the duration and frequency of meetings were highlighted as an avenue for improving effectiveness.</li> <li>• Clarification of the Steering Committee role and the intended outcomes for primary care sites were also recommended.</li> </ul> |
| Do you see any barriers in making those changes? (N=6)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule availability was a common barrier.</li> <li>• The impact of COVID-19 on the ability to schedule work effectively</li> </ul>   |
| Do you have any suggestions for the ways that we can better involve community members in this project? (N=5)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement of community colleges and churches</li> <li>• Surveying existing collaborators</li> </ul>  |

### DISCUSSION

Findings from this survey elucidate the early strengths and challenges faced by a newly formed GWEP Steering Committee overseeing healthcare transformation in a rural state. Survey findings demonstrate that participants value the collaboration due to its ability to better educate and prepare providers working with older adults in order to effectively serve them. Challenges were noted with regard to timing and frequency and content covered during meetings. Suggested changes include the need for clarifying project outcomes and sharing findings. Barriers to addressing challenges include time and scheduling conflicts as well as Covid-19 related challenges.



### FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

This research was supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number U1QHP33080-01-00, Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program, Year One-total award amount \$749,999.00. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by, HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

