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Faith in Action: Using Interfaith Coalitions to Support Voluntary Caregiving Efforts

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P/PV

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Public/Private Ventures is a national nonprofit organization that seeks to improve the effectiveness of social policies and programs. P/PV designs, tests and studies initiatives that increase supports, skills and opportunities of residents of low-income communities; works with policymakers to see that the lessons and evidence produced are reflected in policy; and provides training, technical assistance and learning opportunities to practitioners based on documented effective practices.

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Executive Summary

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) created Faith in Action to support efforts to serve people in need of home-based care. Programs funded through Faith in Action rely on two powerful community resources: volunteers who provide direct care to those in need, and coalitions involving faith-based organizations, which, RWJF believes, can provide the volunteers, community presence and support that the programs need to survive over the long term.

In the early 1980s, RWJF funded 25 programs through three-year grants of up to \$50,000 per year, and their experience suggested that groups of different faiths could successfully work together and enlist volunteers. Subsequently, a different group, the Public Welfare Foundation, tested a variation of the program model by funding approximately 60 interfaith coalitions through one-year grants of \$20,000; most of these seed-grant recipients also attracted sufficient numbers of volunteers.

The success of these two efforts together with recognition of the national need for in-home care and the low likelihood of widespread federal funding in this area, prompted RWJF to expand its funding of similar programs using a seed-grant strategy. By awarding many smaller grants rather than a few large ones, it hoped to help establish and strengthen many coalitions nationwide.

Between 1993 and 1999, Faith in Action awarded \$25,000 grants to 1,091 volunteer-based programs supported by coalitions of diverse religious congregations and health, social service and civic organizations.¹ Faith in Action also offered limited technical assistance and an opportunity to apply for a \$10,000 supplemental grant, intended to help coalitions develop stable long-term funding.

RWJF asked P/PV to assess how well this funding strategy worked and to identify characteristics associ-

ated with program survival through analysis of data collected from a survey of all 1,091 grantees. The study was not intended to address questions regarding program impacts or quality, and its design does not allow us to address issues of causality in analyses of program survival. Available data do, however, allow us to answer the following eight questions:

- Did the Faith in Action funding strategy succeed in identifying and funding sustainable programs?
- Are volunteers willing to provide the services needed by Faith in Action clients?
- Are Faith in Action services affordable?
- What factors are associated with program survival?
- What strategies do surviving programs use to recruit and retain volunteers?
- What strategies do surviving programs use to raise funds and minimize costs?
- What strategies do surviving programs use to gain community support?
- What characteristics of program directors are associated with program success?

The P/PV Study

P/PV mailed brief organizational surveys to directors of all the 1,091 programs that received Faith in Action grants from 1993 to 1999. Directors returned 787 surveys (72%) reporting that 676 programs (62%) continued to serve clients at the time of the survey, and 111 (10%) were no longer active; 304 programs (28%) did not complete the survey.

The study also used information from the programs' original grant applications and progress reports collected by Faith in Action's National Program Office six months after each program received the grant.

¹ Programs funded through the Faith in Action grant are run either by a coalition of faith groups through a 501(c)(3) governed by its own Board of Directors, or through a social service or other type of agency (e.g. hospital, hospice, university) governed by the agency Board, or the program's own Advisory Committee.

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Did the Faith in Action funding strategy succeed in identifying and funding sustainable programs?

A primary goal of Faith in Action was to select and fund programs that could sustain themselves beyond the grant period. Survey results show that at least 62 percent (and as many as 78 percent)² of the Faith in Action grantees continued to serve clients when surveyed, and had been doing so for an average of four-and-a-half years since receiving the grant. Future survival also seemed likely for a majority of currently active programs, most of which have in place many of the elements that contribute to enduring volunteer-based programs, such as volunteer screening, training and supervision, as well as active and supportive leadership from a Board of Directors, a coalition and a program director.³

There are no existing standards for what level of survival to expect from these types of grantees, and we do not have a group of programs that did not receive a Faith in Action grant with whom we could compare survival rates of funded versus non-funded programs. Nevertheless, given the relatively low financial investment in each site together with the limited investment of time in grantee selection, we believe that a survival rate of at least 62 percent of the original grantees indicates success. At least 676 grantees remained operable when surveyed in 2001, suggesting that RWJF's seed-grant strategy successfully addressed their goal of establishing and strengthening hundreds of coalitions nationwide.

—2—

Are volunteers willing to provide the services needed by Faith in Action clients?

Counter to concerns that programs might be unable to find volunteers willing to provide the

kinds of services needed by clients, the wide range of services provided by the programs suggests otherwise. Over 90 percent of programs involve volunteers in providing such basic services as home visits and telephone calls, transportation, shopping, and household chores; and over 70 percent care for ill and disabled clients through respite care, hospice care and help with activities of daily living. Not only do volunteers fill these needs but they also do so for extended periods, with an average of almost 60 percent of Faith in Action volunteers providing direct services for more than a year. Programs also rely on volunteers for other kinds of help: about 10 percent have volunteers who serve as full-time office staff, while close to two-thirds rely on part-time volunteer staff to fill clerical positions.

Half of the surviving programs had more than 40 volunteers and 60 clients when surveyed, and close to two-thirds served clients for an average of a year or more. Moreover, in line with central Faith in Action goals, both volunteers and clients reflected the racial diversity of the communities in which programs were located.

—3—

Are Faith in Action services affordable?

With their reliance on the efforts of volunteers and non-cash contributions (such as office space) from coalition partners and others, the programs were able to provide services for a relatively modest median cost of \$5.77 in actual cash expenditures per hour of client service provided. From the perspective of clients who incur no personal costs, Faith in Action services are clearly affordable. In Philadelphia, for example, comparable services would cost clients approximately \$16.00 per hour, a prohibitive figure for many on fixed incomes. Reliance on fundraising allows Faith in Action programs to provide these services for free to those who may not otherwise be able to afford them.

² Overall, 676 grantees (62%) responded that they were still serving clients. Limited contact between P/PV staff and an additional 176 grantees (16%) who did not complete the survey suggested that they also continued to serve clients.

³ Although surviving programs show some signs of strength, programs also reported facing many significant challenges, and our survey was only administered at one point in time. Surveying the programs at a later date in a more difficult economic environment may yield a lower survival rate.

—4—

What factors are associated with program survival?

The programs undertook a variety of strategies to ensure that their programs continued, but program survival was associated most strongly with the following four factors:

- **The number of volunteers recruited and retained.** Programs that recruited at least 15 volunteers annually and retained at least 20 percent of their volunteers for more than a year were more likely to survive than were programs with fewer volunteers or lower retention rates.
- **Sufficient annual funding from diverse sources.** Programs with total annual budgets of at least \$25,000 (the amount of the original Faith in Action grant) from at least three different funding sources were more likely to survive than were programs not meeting this threshold.
- **The number of services provided.** Offering multiple services was important both in volunteer recruitment and in fundraising.
- **The support of the coalition in fundraising and volunteer recruitment.** Programs that received fundraising and recruitment help from their coalitions were more likely to survive than were those that did not. On average, 80 percent of coalition members are congregations.⁴

Ninety-five percent of programs that recruited at least 15 volunteers annually, retained at least 20 percent of their volunteers for more than a year, relied on their coalition for help in recruitment, and provided two or more services survived. In contrast, only 19 percent of programs that did not meet these goals survived.

In addition, 97 percent of programs that raised \$25,000 or more annually from at least three sources, provided three or more services and enlisted their coalition's help in fundraising survived, compared with only 47 percent of programs that met none of these criteria.

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What strategies do surviving programs use to recruit and retain volunteers?

Similar to the experiences of other volunteer-based programs, recruiting and retaining volunteers were among the biggest challenges facing Faith in Action programs: 47 percent of directors of closed programs and 37 percent of current directors reported that they had difficulty recruiting volunteers, and almost 25 percent of directors of open programs noted that retention was challenging.

When faced with these challenges, surviving programs pursued strategies that helped them meet their goals:

- **Programs relied on their coalition members to recruit volunteers.** Grantees whose coalition members helped solicit volunteers identified more new volunteers each year than did programs without such assistance.
- **Programs required pretraining.** Volunteers are more willing to participate in a program that adequately prepares them for serving clients. As a result, programs that required pretraining were able to recruit more volunteers than were programs without this requirement.
- **Programs matched at least some clients with a team of volunteers.** Team matching encourages potential volunteers to participate by giving them the opportunity to serve without having full personal responsibility for client care. Also, volunteers may see social benefits in being part of a team.
- **Programs supervised volunteers at least quarterly.** Supervision not only ensures that volunteers are following good practice but also permits the development of strong relationships between volunteers and program staff. Supervision may foster a sense of satisfaction and loyalty to the program and, as a consequence, a willingness to continue to serve.

⁴ The religious faiths and denominations most prevalent nationally were most frequently represented in the affiliated coalitions.

—6—

What strategies do surviving programs use to raise funds and minimize costs?

Because the original Faith in Action grant provided funds for just 18 months, and the supplemental grant contributed only \$10,000 more, both fundraising and cost conservation quickly became program concerns. Almost two-thirds of the directors of closed programs cited fundraising difficulties as a key factor in their program's failure.

Successful programs used the following strategies to improve their fundraising capacity or provide services more inexpensively:

- **Program boards met at least quarterly and helped raise funds.** Boards that met at least quarterly were more likely to help their programs raise funds. Members of boards that meet frequently may be more attuned to program needs and more committed to addressing those needs.
- **Programs maintained large coalitions.** Coalitions of 16 members or more were valuable in both raising funds and reducing costs per service hour. Larger coalitions include more congregations that may be able to provide funding either through their operating budgets or special offerings of congregants. Large coalitions may reduce costs per service hour by providing more potential sources of in-kind support.
- **Programs recruited most of their volunteers from congregations.** Recruiting at least 85 percent of volunteers from congregations reduced the programs' costs per service hour. Congregations offer a consistent source of volunteers without the cost and staff effort required for more widespread recruiting strategies.
- **Programs retained at least 20 percent of their volunteers for more than one year.** Volunteer retention results in the most substantial reduction in costs per client service hour. Retention may reduce costs through reduced investments in recruitment, screening, training and early supervision, which is likely more intensive than supervision of more seasoned volunteers.

- **Programs raised funds from at least one of three community resources—congregations, private donations, and such local agencies as the United Way.** Funds from these sources indicate program success at raising community awareness.

—7—

What strategies do surviving programs use to gain community support?

Support from both faith-based organizations and the broader secular community were integral to program success in both creating a strong volunteer pool and raising funds. Directors of about half the closed programs cited a lack of support from faith-based organizations as leading to their closing, and 42 percent credited a lack of community support.

Directors who demonstrated success in this area recommended the following strategies for garnering this invaluable support:

- **Educating community members about the program's work.** Successful programs publicized their services through networking and such public relations efforts as news articles, radio announcements, presentations and fundraising events. Directors also worked to educate the community about the needs of the program's clients.
- **Maintaining contact with congregational leaders.** Frequent contact with congregational liaisons helped them establish and sustain ownership of the Faith in Action program. This investment of time most likely paid off in increasing sources of volunteers, clients, funds and in-kind support.
- **Monitoring community needs.** Programs mentioned the importance of assessing community needs by holding community forums, attending community events and networking. Directors also stressed the importance of adapting to changing community needs; programs that provided overly focused services and lacked flexibility experienced difficulty surviving.

—8—

What characteristics of program directors are associated with program success?

Directors' prior experiences in the following areas were associated with programs' success:

- **Directors experienced at working with faith communities contributed to successful fundraising through their ability to build larger coalitions.** Leaders with prior experience may be more adept in persuading groups from different traditions to work together, and in recruiting groups without a history of helping others outside their congregation.
- **Prior experience with voluntary caregiving reduced the cost per hour of service provided.** Directors with such experience may be familiar with strategies for encouraging volunteers to contribute more hours, and may know how to train, manage or recruit volunteers with less staff effort.
- **Prior experience with voluntary caregiving and training and supervising volunteers is associated with program practices.** Directors with voluntary caregiving experience may recognize the need for creative strategies to interest volunteers in their programs and, therefore, are more likely to match clients with teams of volunteers. Similarly, directors with prior experience in training and supervising volunteers are more likely to recognize the importance of these practices and, as a result, to implement them in their new position.

In conclusion, the Faith in Action grantees are providing needed services to their communities' residents; and affiliated interfaith coalitions are helping to keep operating costs low, and to identify volunteers whose efforts fill critical service gaps nationwide. Overall, these grantees have implemented many of the practices important for the growth of strong programs, and, accordingly, can serve as models of sustainable efforts for both funders and future grantees.

Introduction

The frail elderly and chronically ill number in the millions, and many lack the financial resources to pay for in-home care. In some cases, family members step in: in a recent survey, about a fifth of all U.S. households reported having at least one adult who was a caregiver to a relative 50 years or older at some point in the year prior to the survey (National Alliance for Caregiving/AARP, 1997). But many of those in need lack relatives willing or able to assist, and family members who do provide care often need outside help.

One way to address this need would be to use public funds to provide paid services for these individuals. But the costs of these services would be extensive. Recent estimates suggest that replacing informal caregivers with paid home-care staff would cost our nation between \$45 and \$94 billion per year (ASPE and AOA, 1998). Rising costs of medical care and increasing numbers of older Americans could drive these costs even higher in the future.

Volunteers provide an alternative to paid services. Americans have traditionally volunteered in large numbers. In 1998, over 109 million Americans volunteered; almost a quarter providing direct services to those in need (Kirsch et al., 1999). However, it is unclear whether enough volunteers would be willing or able to provide the wide range of extensive services needed by these individuals. Social service agencies often report that they have difficulty recruiting and retaining a strong volunteer base, and this may be particularly true when serving the chronically ill.

Faith-based organizations may be one route through which this barrier could be overcome. Because most religions encourage members to help others in need, congregations foster volunteerism and may

provide some of the volunteer resources needed to fill this service gap. A recent national survey shows that 63 percent of congregation members volunteer compared to 40 percent of nonmembers, and almost a fourth of all volunteers first learn about their volunteer activity through their religious congregations (Kirsch et al., 1999).¹ In addition, faith-based organizations have a firm grounding in communities throughout the country. They are trusted, integral and steadfast parts of communities, making them ideal candidates in efforts to draw on various community resources to serve those in need.

The Birth of Faith in Action

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) created the Faith in Action grant program to unite these two immense resources—faith-based organizations and volunteers—in filling the need for in-home care. RWJF surmised that funding carefully selected coalitions involving congregations of different faiths and denominations would allow them to foster the development of volunteer care programs nationwide. The support of congregations would then help provide the volunteers and community presence needed to sustain the programs over the long term.

In 1983, RWJF explored the viability of this approach by funding 25 programs with relatively large grants² through the Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers program, “Generation I” of Faith in Action.³ The demonstration showed that congregations of different faiths could work together, that enough congregations and volunteers would come forward to make the program successful, and that programs could continue after the grants ended (18 continue to serve clients today). A replication of this program financed by the Public Welfare

¹ This was derived from the following findings: 43.5 percent of all surveyed volunteers learned about their volunteer activities through participation in an organization or group; of those, 56.1 percent reported that this organization was their religious congregation.

² Grants through the Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers program were up to \$150,000 over a three-year period.

³ Under the definition adopted by the Faith in Action program, “interfaith” can mean a coalition of different denominations, not just religions. For instance, the program would categorize a coalition including Baptists, Methodists and Catholics as interfaith. Use of the term follows the program’s definition throughout the report.

Foundation tested whether this strategy could be implemented at a lower cost, by providing technical assistance and smaller seed grants to a larger number of programs. That program also succeeded in attracting sufficient numbers of volunteers.

In response to these successes, RWJF began funding Generation II of the Faith in Action program in 1993. Faith in Action offered 18-month grants of \$25,000 to programs supported by interfaith coalitions—groups of diverse religious congregations, health, social service and civic organizations—that used volunteers to provide informal care for community residents with chronic physical or mental disabilities.⁴ The program also offered some limited technical assistance and an opportunity to apply for a \$10,000 supplemental grant, intended to help coalitions develop stable long-term funding.⁵

RWJF implemented Generation II of this national program through 1999, financing 1,091 interfaith voluntary caregiving programs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. As Generation III of the project began in 2000, RWJF wanted to determine the success of this strategy, what factors made a program most likely to succeed, and what kind of assistance programs might need to sustain their efforts.⁶

The Current Study

In Spring 2001, Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) began following up with the Generation II grantees to determine how many of the original grantees were still serving their communities, the number of volunteers and clients involved with the programs, the services they provided, and whether the programs had grown since receiving their funding. Addressing these issues would not only help the development of Faith in Action but would also help the broader field understand the potential of this funding strategy—and this caregiving approach.

P/PV also considered the evaluation an invaluable opportunity to explore other issues that would be relevant for the broader field, such as the operations of voluntary caregiving organizations, effective practices within these organizations, and the benefits and challenges of partnerships involving congregations. P/PV designed the study to examine:

- Steps programs can take to increase their chances of survival;
- Operational characteristics that are associated with a program's cost per client service hour;
- Challenges inherent in interfaith voluntary caregiving programs; and
- Technical assistance that would help strengthen these programs.

To conduct the evaluation, P/PV mailed brief organizational surveys to directors of all 1,091 programs and followed up by telephone with programs that did not respond by mail, eventually obtaining surveys from 787 grantees, or 72 percent—676 of these programs continued to serve clients at the time of our survey; 111 were closed. P/PV also used information from the program's original grant application and progress reports collected by Faith in Action's National Program Office six months after each program received the grant. (Please see the Appendix for more details about our methodology.)

This study tells the story of these programs (those that were able to sustain themselves and those that were not), the challenges they faced, their successes and how their experiences can guide voluntary caregiving efforts nationwide.

In Chapter II, we discuss the reach and functions of the Faith in Action programs that continued to serve clients at the time of our survey. In Chapter III, we discuss the practices and characteristics that distinguish those programs that survived from those that did not. We also estimate the cost of providing

⁴ Programs funded through the Faith in Action grant are run either by a coalition of faith groups through a 501(c)(3) governed by its own Board of Directors, or through a social service or other type of agency (e.g., hospital, hospice, university) governed by the agency board, or the program's own Advisory Committee.

⁵ Technical assistance in Generation II of the project was less extensive than that being offered in Generation III. In Generation II, technical assistance focused mainly on help with applying for the original Faith in Action grant.

⁶ Generation III offers 30-month grants of \$35,000. Generation III grantees are also provided with mentors, regional technical assistance and, in some cases, targeted technical assistance.

Faith in Action services and the practices programs can implement to help them provide more client service hours on a given budget. In Chapter IV, staff of closed programs discuss the reasons their programs folded, and successful directors discuss practices crucial to their survival and their strategies for overcoming key challenges. Conclusions are presented in Chapter V.

Voluntary Caregiving through Faith in Action: A Description of Open Programs

While many grants require grantees to operate within narrow parameters, Faith in Action imposed very little structure on grant recipients. As a result, grantees vary in most aspects of their programs, allowing the programs to build on the strengths of their communities and provide for the needs of these communities, which vary substantially nationwide.

In this chapter, we use data from our survey and progress reports collected six months after each program received Faith in Action funding to outline key program characteristics of the 676 surveyed programs that continued to serve clients as of Summer 2001. By focusing only on open programs, we describe the range of Faith in Action programs in existence at the time of our survey—their size, reach, organizational strength and growth since receiving funding. This description is intended not only to help outline the potential of this type of program to serve its community, support itself and grow over time but also to provide a context for understanding the organizational characteristics

that help to predict the programs’ likelihood of success, which will be discussed in Chapter III.

We address the following questions:

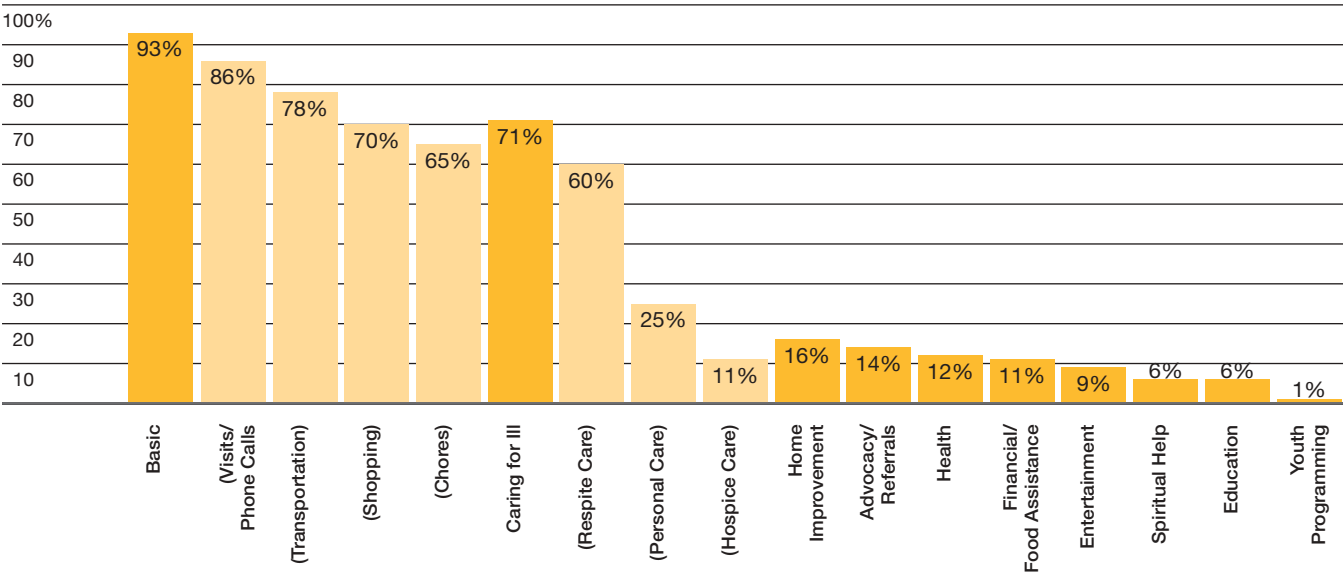
- What services do existing Faith in Action programs provide to their communities?
- Who are the clients and volunteers?
- How are the programs staffed and led?

Faith in Action Services

Faith in Action programs support their clients with a range of services (see Figure 2.1) and appear to fill service gaps in their communities: in 70 percent of cases, Faith in Action programs report that they are the only agencies in their service areas providing these types of care at no cost.

Ninety-three percent of the organizations provide basic services, which encompass four key areas

Figure 2.1
Types of Services Provided



often provided to the elderly and other home-bound individuals to help guard against feelings of isolation, while preserving their ability to maintain independent homes:

- Home visits and telephone calls;
- Transportation;
- Shopping; and
- Household chores.

The second most common service category is care for ill or disabled clients, provided by 71 percent of programs. These services include:

- **Respite care.** Volunteers spend time with a homebound client to allow the regular caregiver time away from the home.
- **Personal care.** Volunteers help with activities of daily living, such as grooming, bathing, feeding and walking.
- **Hospice care.** Volunteers visit terminally ill clients and their families, aid in client care and provide grief counseling after a client's death.

Other services include a wide range of types of assistance, such as home improvements, advocacy and referrals, health-related care, and financial assistance. The vast majority of programs (86%) offer two or more services, with seven being the largest number reported by a single program.

Faith in Action Clients and Volunteers

Faith in Action programs try to address the needs of their clients through their most important resource—their volunteers. This section examines client infirmity, client and volunteer ethnicity, the number of clients and volunteers involved, the importance of congregations in client identification and volunteer recruitment, and the length of client and volunteer involvement.

Faith in Action clients most frequently suffer from physical illness; 76 percent of programs serve these individuals. Clients who are disabled, afflicted with AIDS or homebound are most common; each are served by a little over 10 percent of programs.⁷ Almost half of Faith in Action grantees serve clients with mental illness, most commonly those with Alzheimer's or dementia. Slightly less than 40 percent of programs serve both clients with physical illness and those with mental illness.

In the average program, close to three-quarters of the clients and 80 percent of the volunteers are white, but their ethnicity is quite representative of their communities and so meets RWJF's goal for ethnic diversity. Almost all the racial composition of volunteers and clients (i.e., the percentage who are non-white) is explained by the racial composition of the surrounding community: on average, for every 1 percent of community residents who are non-white, .92 percent of clients and .90 percent of volunteers are non-white as well. Also, almost all programs involve community members representing more than one ethnic group.

Some program characteristics, however, are associated with client and volunteer diversity even after accounting for the racial diversity of the community. Programs that reach the most diverse clients and volunteers are more likely than those that reach less diverse community members to be run by directors with backgrounds as congregational leaders or community activists, to involve faith-based organizations in their coalitions, and to reach 50 percent or more of their volunteers through congregations.

From their initial grant date through the time of the survey, over 70 percent of surviving Faith in Action grantees extended their reach to greater numbers of clients and volunteers (see Tables 2.1 and 2.2).⁸

⁷ Programs were asked to indicate specific targeted illnesses in an open-ended format. Thus, their actual responses likely underestimate the total number of programs serving clients with specific illnesses.

⁸ Since receiving their Faith in Action grant, some programs have expanded the range of services they offer beyond the voluntary caregiving services funded through the initial grant. When tracking their volunteers and clients, many of these expanded programs do not distinguish between those providing or receiving caregiving and those participating through other services. As a result, we are unable to determine exactly how many clients and volunteers participated exclusively in voluntary caregiving activities across all grantees.

Table 2.1
Number of Clients

At 6 Months:

Number of clients served	Percentage of all programs
1-14	32%
15-29	29%
30-49	16%
50-99	14%
100-199	8%
200+	1%

Median: 22

At Survey:

Number of clients served	Percentage of all programs
1-14	11%
15-29	15%
30-49	15%
50-99	22%
100-199	18%
200+	18%

Median: 60

Average Growth per Year:

Number of additional clients per year	Percentage of all programs
0 or loss of clients	20%
0.2 to less than 10	33%
10 to less than 30	24%
30+	23%

Median: 8

Table 2.2
Number of Volunteers

At 6 Months:

Number of volunteers	Percentage of all programs
1-14	27%
15-29	35%
30-49	19%
50-99	14%
100-199	4%
200+	1%

Median: 22

At Survey:

Number of volunteers	Percentage of all programs
1-14	15%
15-29	21%
30-49	19%
50-99	22%
100-199	14%
200+	10%

Median: 40

Average Growth per Year:

Number of additional volunteers per year	Percentage of all programs
0 or loss of volunteers	27%
0.1 to less than 10	39%
10 to less than 30	22%
30+	12%

Median: 5

- **The median open program grew from 22 clients, six months after receiving the grant, to 60 at the time of our survey.**⁹ At six months, only 9 percent of programs served 100 clients or more, and almost two-thirds of those programs fell under an umbrella organization, had served clients before receiving Faith in Action funding, or both. In contrast, when surveyed, more than one-third of the programs served at least 100 clients. The median growth in clients served per year is eight.¹⁰

- **The median open program grew from 22 to 40 volunteers.** At the later time point, almost a quarter of programs involved 100 volunteers or more. The median growth in volunteers per year is five.¹¹

At the time of our survey, the median open program served a little more than one client (1.25) for each volunteer, but the ratio varies extensively, with 3 percent of programs serving more than 10 clients per volunteer. The volunteer-to-client ratio was similar across all major services.¹²

⁹ We report the more conservative medians here because, unlike the means, they are not likely to be affected by extreme values that may be produced by programs that have expanded their services beyond voluntary caregiving (see footnote 8).

¹⁰ Growth for closed programs was far more modest, from a median of 16 clients at six months to 20 when closing. The median growth in these programs was two clients per year.

¹¹ Closed programs experienced little growth in volunteers, from a median of 15 volunteers at six months to 17 when closing. The median growth per year was less than one volunteer.

¹² Exceptions are those programs providing entertainment, which served fewer clients per volunteer, and programs providing financial assistance, which served more clients per volunteer than other programs.

Figure 2.2
Percentage of Programs Identifying Indicated Range of Clients through Congregational Referrals
 (mean percentage of clients from congregations = 32%)

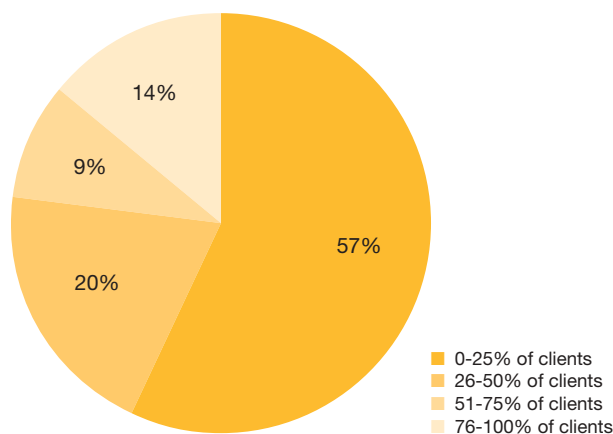


Figure 2.3
Percentage of Programs Identifying Indicated Range of Volunteers through Congregational Recruitment
 (mean percentage of volunteers from congregations = 63%)

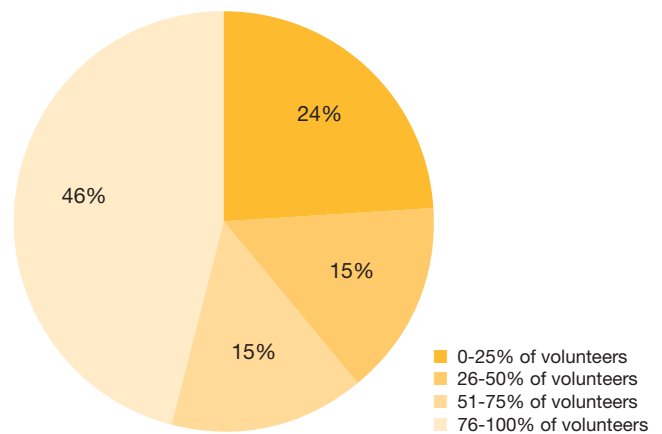
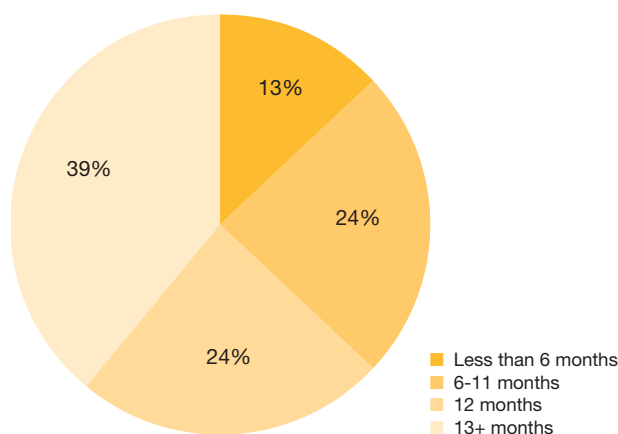


Figure 2.4
Percentage of Programs Providing Indicated Average Months of Care to Clients

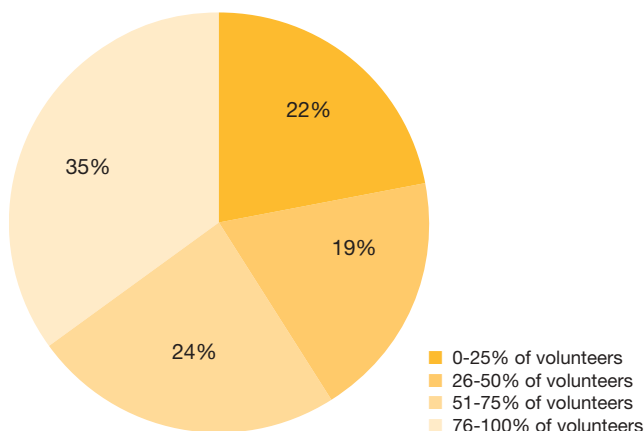


Close to two-thirds of Faith in Action programs provide clients with care for a year or more, on average (see Figure 2.4). Very few programs provide short-term care. Thus, even though most Faith in Action programs serve modest numbers of clients, they provide these individuals with care for a significant period of time. This is especially important when considering the needs of these clients, which are generally long term; Faith in Action programs seem to be responsive to these chronic needs.

Where long-term care is the norm, volunteer continuity may be especially valuable to clients. Faith in Action programs are often able to provide this continuity due to fairly successful retention efforts. About 35 percent of programs retain more than three-quarters of their volunteers for over a year (see Figure 2.5), and an average of 58 percent of volunteers provide services for more than a year. Surprisingly, retention did not vary by types of services provided.

The average program recruits a third of its clients and close to two-thirds of its volunteers through congregations (see Figures 2.2 and 2.3). Almost half of the programs rely more heavily on these organizations for volunteers, recruiting 76 to 100 percent from congregations.

Figure 2.5
Percentage of Programs Retaining
Indicated Range of Volunteers for over
One Year



Program Practices to Support Volunteers

Providing volunteer-based services requires significant coordination and effort. Faith in Action programs are no exception; all implement at least one practice critical for running successful volunteer-based programs, and 93 percent screen, train and supervise volunteers.

- Ninety-five percent use at least one method to screen volunteers, with the average using 3.2 methods (see Figure 2.6).
- Ninety-three percent train their volunteers. Pretraining, prior to service provision, is required by 72 percent of programs. Another 10 percent offer only ongoing training, after care has begun. Twenty percent require both.
- Almost all (99%) provide at least some supervision of volunteers (see Figure 2.7). The largest group, 43 percent, checks in with volunteers at least once a month.

Program Leadership

To function smoothly, Faith in Action programs rely on leadership from three sources: the program director, the Board of Directors and the interfaith coalition. This section outlines the characteristics and roles of these leadership bodies. As will be discussed in Chapters III and IV, each plays an important role in sustaining the program.

Faith in Action program directors often bring a range of experiences and skills to their positions.

About two-thirds came to their position with experience in program administration. A little more than 60 percent worked previously with faith communities, while a similar number had volunteer caregiving experience. About half brought experience in training and supervising caregivers to the program. However, less than half came to Faith in Action with fundraising experience; and only 28 percent had prior experience in board development. As we discuss in Chapter III, these prior experiences are important in predicting a program's success.

Leadership Characteristics of Faith in Action Programs

Faith in Action program leadership comes from three main sources:

A Program Director

- The average director works 26 hours per week on Faith in Action;
- Two-thirds are responsible for other programs; and
- Their average tenure is close to three years. At least 43 percent of programs have seen no turnover in the position.^a

A Board of Directors

- Present in 90 percent of programs;
- The average board has 13 members;
- 48 percent convene at least monthly; and
- 45 percent are responsible for only Faith in Action.

A Coalition

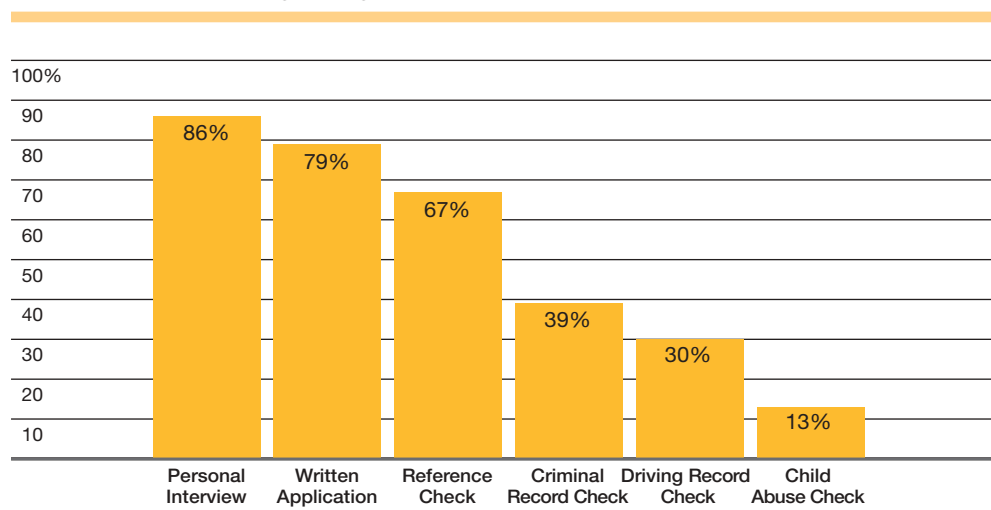
- Present in 96 percent of programs;
- 97 percent include faith-based congregations; 54 percent include other faith-based organizations; 68 percent include secular organizations;
- The average coalition has 25 members, consisting of 20 congregations, two faith-based organizations and four other organizations;^b and
- Coalitions added an average of 1.6 new members each year since receiving funding.

^a The percentage of programs with no turnover is probably slightly higher than 43 percent. Some programs reported that two directors had run Faith in Action since receiving the grant, but noted that these two staff members were a single team.

^b The average number of coalition members of each type sums to more than the average number overall due to rounding.

Figure 2.6**Volunteer Screening Strategies**

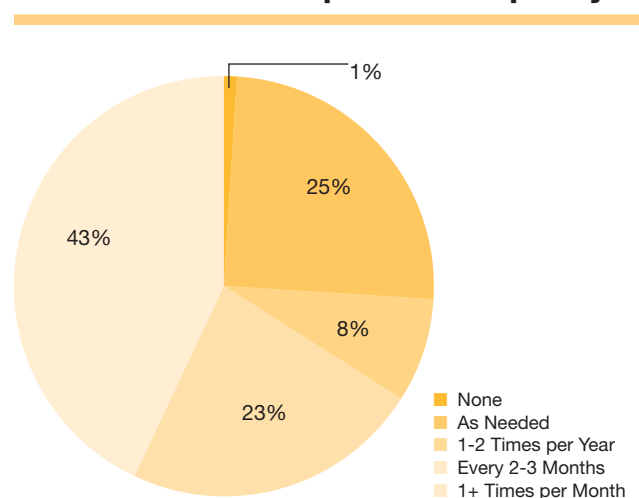
(mean number of screening strategies = 3.2)



Many programs have an active Board of Directors. As we discuss in Chapter III, this is an important asset, in particular, when the board focuses on raising program funds—over 60 percent help with this task. Most boards also help with increasing community support and policy development (see Figure 2.8).

The composition of the coalitions suggests Faith in Action generally achieved its goal of representing the religious diversity of Americans. The faiths and denominations most frequently represented in the coalitions are those represented by the largest percentages of U.S. adults. For example, Catholics make up the biggest percentage of the U.S. population and are represented in the largest number of coalitions (see Table 2.3).

Although most coalitions cross denominational boundaries, for example, involving more than one type of Christian congregation, only 39 percent involve both Christian and non-Christian members. The remaining 61 percent include only Christian congregations. Protestant congregations are most prevalent, appearing in 91 percent of coalitions (see Table 2.4) with an average of 3.9 denominations in each coalition (see Table 2.5), followed by Catholic congregations in 73 percent of coalitions and Jewish congregations in 25 percent.

Figure 2.7**Percentage of Programs Supervising Volunteers at Each Specified Frequency**

The coalitions have provided crucial assistance to Faith in Action programs. More than three-quarters develop community support for the programs or recruit clients or volunteers (see Figure 2.9). Almost two-thirds of the programs rely on the coalitions for help with fundraising.¹³

¹³ When holding coalition size constant, the composition of the coalition is not associated with the extent to which it helps the program in these areas.

Figure 2.8
Board Responsibilities

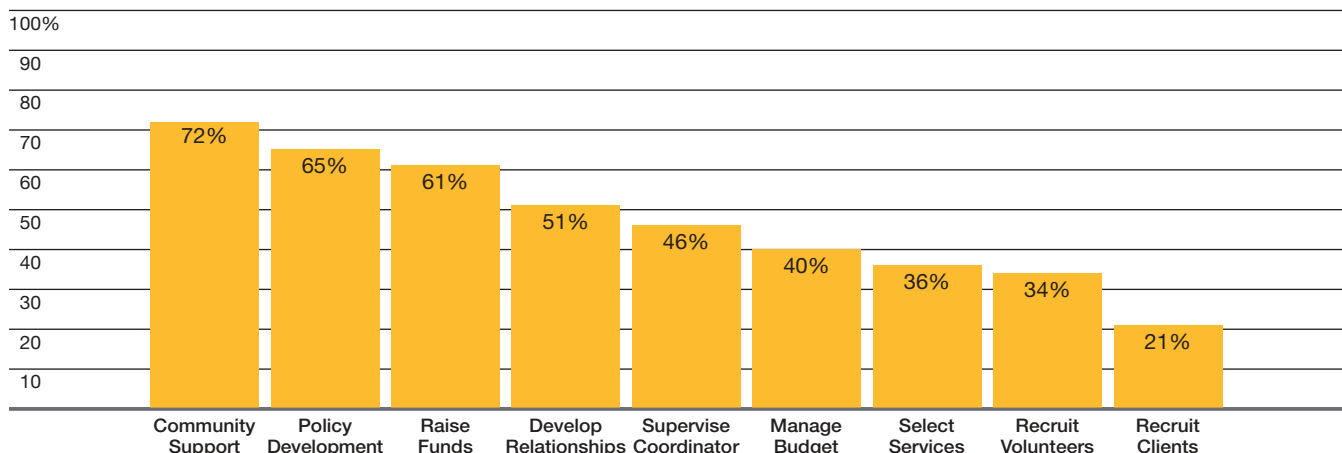
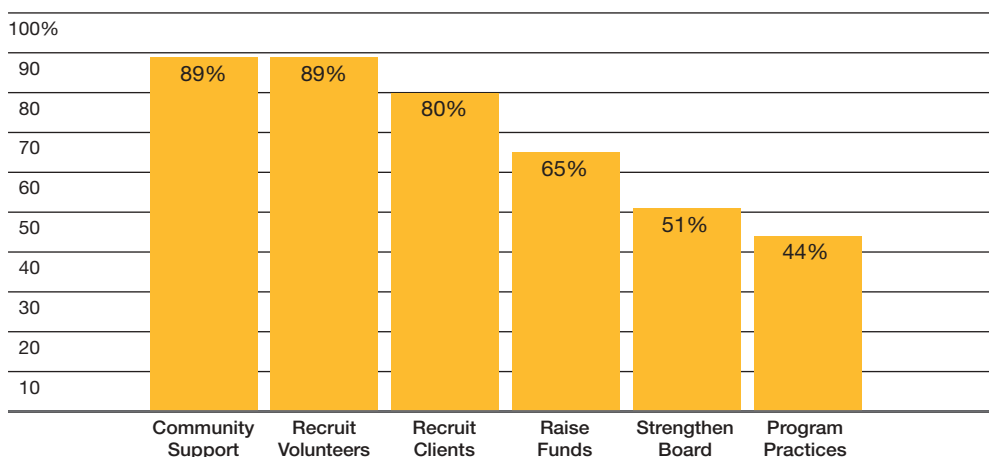


Figure 2.9
Help from Coalition



Implications for Policy and Practice

At the time of our survey, Faith in Action programs were providing community residents with a wide range of fairly long-term services and growing over time, both in the number of people they were reaching and in the size of their coalitions. Their accomplishments support the success of the Faith in Action funding strategy to select and fund many programs that could provide their communities with needed services and grow over time.

They also show the potential of interfaith community-based coalitions to develop and support a wide

range of programs. Participating congregations were especially valuable, referring one-third of clients and helping to recruit almost two-thirds of volunteers. These contributions have two important implications. First, congregations offer an important referral source for volunteers and clients for these programs and may be able to play a similar role in other collaborative efforts. And, contrary to early concerns that congregations may be more willing to provide access to clients than volunteers (Rog et al., 1997), congregations refer a substantial percentage of the programs' volunteers. Second, most Faith in Action clients and a significant proportion of volunteers come from the broader community, suggesting that

Table 2.3
Prevalence of Faiths and Denominations in Faith in Action Coalitions and Ranking by Number of Adherents Nationwide

Faith/Denomination	Percentage of Coalitions	Percentage of U.S. Adults ^a
Catholic	72%	24.5% (1) ^b
Methodist	60%	6.8% (4)
Baptist	56%	16.3% (2)
Lutheran	54%	4.6% (5)
Christian/ Non-Denominational	46%	6.8% (3)
Presbyterian	41%	2.7% (6)
Episcopalian	30%	1.7% (7)
Jewish	24%	1.3% (8)

^a American Religious Identification Survey (Kosmin et al., 2001).

^b The numbers in parentheses indicate the relative ranking of the faith or denomination according to the number of adherents nationwide.

Table 2.4
Faiths Represented in Faith in Action Coalitions

Faith	Percentage of Coalitions
Protestant	91%
Catholic ^a	73%
Jewish	25%
Unitarian Universalist	8%
Buddhist	6%
Muslim	5%
Baha'i	4%
Mormon	4%
Christian Science	1%
New Age	1%
Hindu	1%
Native American	1%
Wiccan/Pagan	< 1%
Atheist ^b	< 1%
Followers of Meher Baba	< 1%
Jehovah's Witness	< 1%
Sikh	< 1%

^a Following the definition of the National Program Office, Catholic and Protestant are included as separate faiths.

^b Although not recognized as a faith, programs reported atheist groups as part of their coalitions.

Table 2.5
Protestant Denominations Represented in Faith in Action Coalitions

Protestant Denomination	Percentage of Coalitions
Methodist	60%
Baptist	58%
Lutheran	56%
Christian/ Non-Denominational Christian	47%
Presbyterian	42%
Episcopal	32%
Pentecostal	16%
United Church of Christ	12%
Assembly of God	8%
Congregational	6%
African Methodist Episcopal	5%
Disciples of Christ	5%
Protestant	4%
Evangelical	4%
Nazarene	4%
Reformed	3%
Greek Orthodox	3%
Full Gospel	2%
Quaker	2%
Brethren	2%
Independent	2%
Salvation Army	2%
Apostolic	1%
Unity	1%
Mennonite	1%
Bible	1%
Moravian	1%
Metropolitan Community Church	1%
Wesleyan	1%
Missionary Alliance	1%
Anglican	1%
New Covenant	< 1%
Berean	< 1%
CME	< 1%
Russian Orthodox	< 1%

the programs provide a resource known and valued in their communities, and are not relying exclusively on congregations for recruitment or referral.

Involving congregations was also associated with increased volunteer and client diversity: programs that reached the most diverse community members were more likely than less diverse programs to reach half or more of their volunteers through congregations.

The range and intensity of services provided also attest to the versatility of volunteers: volunteers are willing to provide a host of services to community members; and an average of close to 60 percent provide these services for over a year. Most programs provided the less taxing visiting and transportation services, but fully 71 percent of programs offered more challenging types of care for ill and disabled clients.

Most Faith in Action programs benefit from strong leadership; most have coalitions and boards that help in key areas, and directors who have stayed with the program long-term. The programs also generally employ fairly strong practices, incorporating aspects of infrastructure that other studies have suggested are important in developing strong volunteer-based programs.

The programs thus seem to have some key ingredients for success. But have these practices actually helped the programs succeed? If so, how? What practices could programs implement to help increase their chances of survival and the amount of service they are able to provide clients within a given budget? By examining programs that did not survive along with those that did, we were able to quantitatively address these questions—the subject of the next chapter.

Program Practices Associated with Success

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation designed Faith in Action funding around a relatively uncommon premise: providing small, short-term seed grants to many promising programs supported by interfaith community-based coalitions would, over the long term, be as effective in identifying and supporting sustainable programs as providing larger, long-term grants to fewer programs without a collaborative support base.

The funding strategy did identify many programs that survived after the grants ended and, as we saw in Chapter II, most grew in their number of clients and volunteers, and adopted strong leadership and program practices. But many questions about the success of these programs and others like them have yet to be answered. Most important, how did they succeed? And, what practices can other programs put in place to help them succeed?

Studies suggest that successful programs should have solid infrastructure and strong leadership. But quantitative evidence that pinpoints the specific components that matter and exactly how they can be cultivated is lacking, particularly for interfaith voluntary caregiving programs. Also lacking are specific guidelines and thresholds that programs and funders can use to help determine a program's likelihood of success. A central goal of this study was to help fill this void.

In this chapter, we explore associations between program characteristics and program success.¹⁴ We define success in two distinct ways: whether the program continued to serve clients at the time of our survey and a relatively low cost per client service hour.¹⁵ The focus on sustainability highlights characteristics programs should consider instituting to help foster longevity. The focus on cost efficiency outlines characteristics that may help programs provide more client service hours on a given budget.

After a brief discussion of methodology, we address three main questions:

- How many Faith in Action programs have managed to survive past the grant period?
- What practices can programs put in place to increase their likelihood of survival?
- What program characteristics are associated with increased cost efficiency?

Methodology

The findings in this chapter regarding program practices associated with survival and cost efficiency are based on statistical analyses that hold two key program characteristics constant:

- The size of the community; and
- Whether the program served clients prior to receiving the grant.

In addition, some program characteristics, such as the size of the coalition, the number of volunteers and the size of the budget, are likely to be greater the longer a program has operated since receiving the grant. Thus, when we predict these program characteristics, we hold constant the number of years the program has served clients post-grant.

By including these “control” variables in the analyses, all of the results presented in the survival and cost efficiency sections are true even after the effects of the control variables are taken into account (see Appendix for a more detailed description of these analyses).

In our presentation, we discuss and present in diagrams hypotheses regarding which program characteristics are associated with specific program outcomes. However, because the survey data were

¹⁴ In this chapter, figures in the sustainability section refer to all surveyed programs, including the 111 that closed. Figures in the cost efficiency section refer only to open programs.

¹⁵ Cost per client service hour is calculated across all open programs as (Total budget)/[(Number of volunteers)*(Average hours volunteered per week)*(52 weeks)].

collected at only one point in time, our analyses can support, but not confirm, the causal direction of associations between program characteristics.

Faith in Action Sustainability

Across the 787 programs that completed our organizational survey, 111—or 10 percent of the 1,091 original grantees—have closed; 676—or 62 percent—continue to serve clients.¹⁶ However, these are very conservative estimates—as many as 78 percent of the original grantees may still serve clients.¹⁷

The surviving programs had operated for an average of four-and-a-half years after receiving the grant, and most were confident they could sustain their programs for at least another year. Closed programs served clients an average of two-and-a-half years after receiving the grant.

Sustainability did not differ depending on when the original grant was received: those organizations that were funded in the first three years of the project were just as likely to be open at the time of our survey as those that were funded in the last three years of the project. Thus, the survival of Faith in Action grantees does not seem to be dependent on how recently they received Faith in Action funding.

Sustainability did differ, however, depending on whether the program existed *prior* to receiving the Faith in Action grant. Just over 40 percent of the Generation II grantees served clients prior to receiving the grant; half of these served clients for less than two years pre-grant, and half served clients for more than two years before receiving the grant. Those programs using the grant to build on existing programs were more likely to survive (91% survival rate) than those starting a new program (84% survival rate).

Although none of the programs involved in our survey were still receiving the original Faith in Action

Do you believe your Faith in Action program will survive another year?

Definitely	70%
Probably	27%
Probably or Definitely not	4%

grant, 15 percent were receiving Faith in Action supplemental grants, making questionable their inclusion in discussions of “sustainable” programs. However, because these grants were awarded in 1999 through 2001, when recipients had already managed to sustain themselves for an average of about three-and-a-half years since receiving the original Faith in Action grant, programs receiving supplemental grants are included in all of the following analyses predicting survival.

Program Practices Associated with Survival

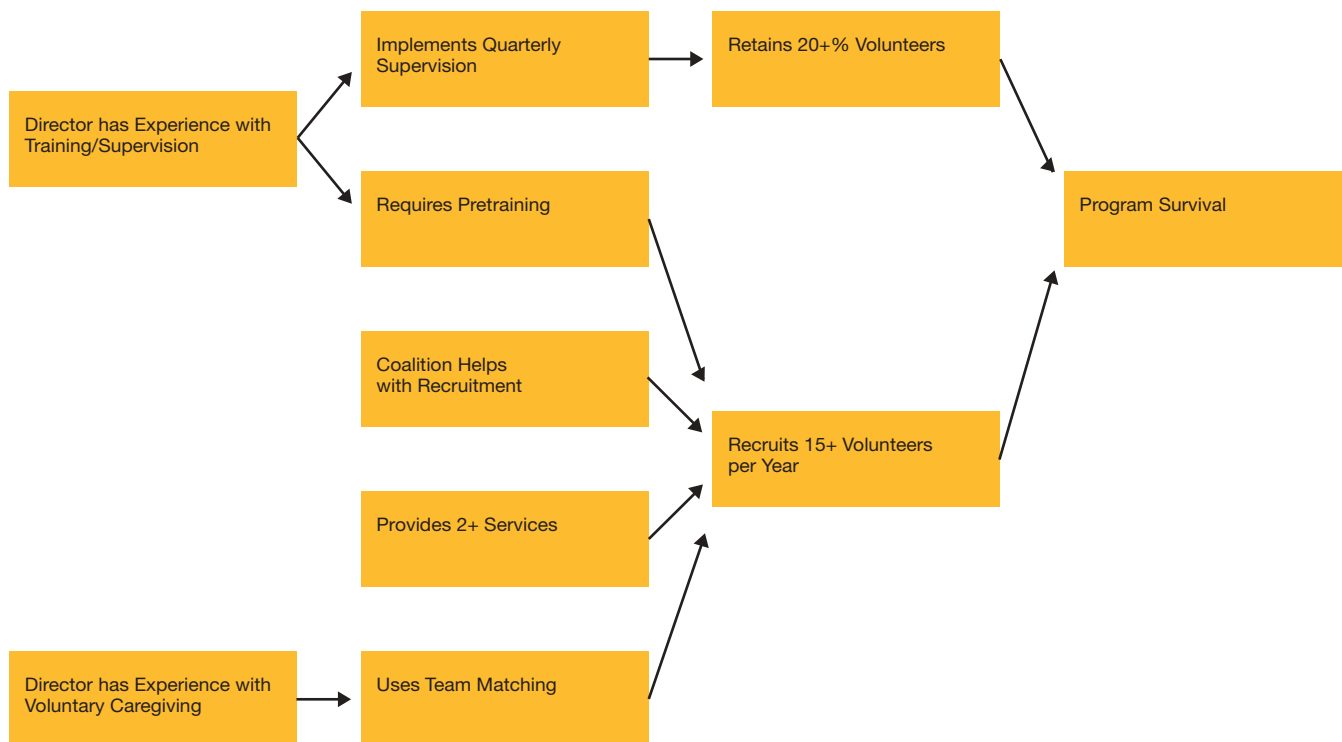
Sustaining a volunteer-based program requires attention to two key areas: building a strong volunteer pool and building a solid funding base. Programs that succeed in these two areas are more likely than those that do not to continue to serve clients over time. But these are complex feats. The following sections examine the characteristics of programs successful in these areas.

Building a Strong Volunteer Pool

Programs that are interested in expanding their reach or simply replacing departing volunteers to sustain existing services must continue to recruit new volunteers. In addition, holding on to existing volunteers can improve the continuity of service offered to clients, and lessen recruitment and training efforts required to replenish those who leave.

¹⁶ Throughout this report, the responses of open programs refer to their last year of operation prior to completing the survey; those of closed programs refer to their last year of operation prior to closing.

¹⁷ We reached staff at an additional 174 programs, and two programs had new telephone numbers, but in most of these cases, we could not determine if the original Faith in Action component survived. Counting these additional programs as “open” would bring the number to 852, or 78 percent. We also estimate that of those not surveyed, at least an additional 95 are closed (including, for example, 22 programs that told us they were closed, 36 with disconnected phone numbers, and 20 surveys that were returned to us with no forwarding address); the status of 33 programs was unclear.

Figure 3.1**Links to Program Survival: The Importance of a Strong Volunteer Pool**

Note: When multiple arrows point toward a box, all characteristics in the preceding boxes have a statistically significant association with the program characteristic in the latter box, even when all are considered simultaneously.

A number of practices are associated with strong volunteer recruitment and retention (see Figure 3.1).

To increase their likelihood of survival, programs should try to recruit at least 15 new volunteers per year.¹⁸ Among programs that met this goal, 94 percent survived, compared with 83 percent of programs with lower levels of recruitment. Slightly less than half the surveyed programs reached this goal.

Several program practices can increase a program's likelihood of surpassing this threshold.

- **Offer Team Matching.** *While 56 percent of programs using team matching met the recruitment threshold, only 36 percent of those without team matching did so. Almost half of Faith in Action programs match some clients with a team of volunteers rather*

than providing services exclusively on a one-volunteer-to-one-client basis. The strategy may give volunteers an opportunity to serve clients without having full personal responsibility for their care. Also, volunteers may see social benefits to being part of a team in addition to the altruistic benefits typically accrued through volunteerism.

- **Provide Pretraining.** *Among programs that required volunteers to attend training before serving clients, almost half met the recruitment threshold compared with about a third of programs that did not require pretraining. Volunteers may be more willing to commit to a program that will properly prepare them for serving clients. Overall, almost three-quarters of Faith in Action programs require pretraining.*

¹⁸ Clearly, the number of new volunteers needed to sustain a program's current service level depends on other program characteristics—for example, how many clients the program is trying to serve. However, the specific 15-volunteer threshold continues to predict program survival even when holding the number of clients constant.

- **Hire a Program Director with Relevant Experience.** *Directors experienced in training and supervising caregivers are more likely to require pretraining of all new recruits, perhaps because they recognize the importance of this practice.* Seventy-six percent of programs with experienced directors require pretraining, compared with 65 percent of programs without experienced directors. Directors with experience in supervision and training led about half of the Faith in Action programs.

Previous experience also appears to help recruitment through its association with team matching: just over half of the program directors with voluntary caregiving experience use team matching compared with 40 percent of those without such experience. Across all Faith in Action programs, 58 percent of directors have prior experience with voluntary caregiving. Such experience may have introduced directors to different methods of matching and helped them recognize the need for creative strategies to interest volunteers in their program.

- **Provide Diverse Services.** *Forty-eight percent of programs offering two or more types of client services recruit at least 15 new volunteers per year, compared with only 32 percent of the programs that offer one type of service.* Not all volunteers are interested in providing the same types of care. As a result, programs that provide multiple services to clients may have an advantage in attracting volunteers.
- **Involve Coalition Members in Recruitment.** *Half the programs receiving coalition help reached the recruitment threshold, compared with only 17 percent of programs without this help.* Overall, 84 percent of coalitions provided assistance in this area.

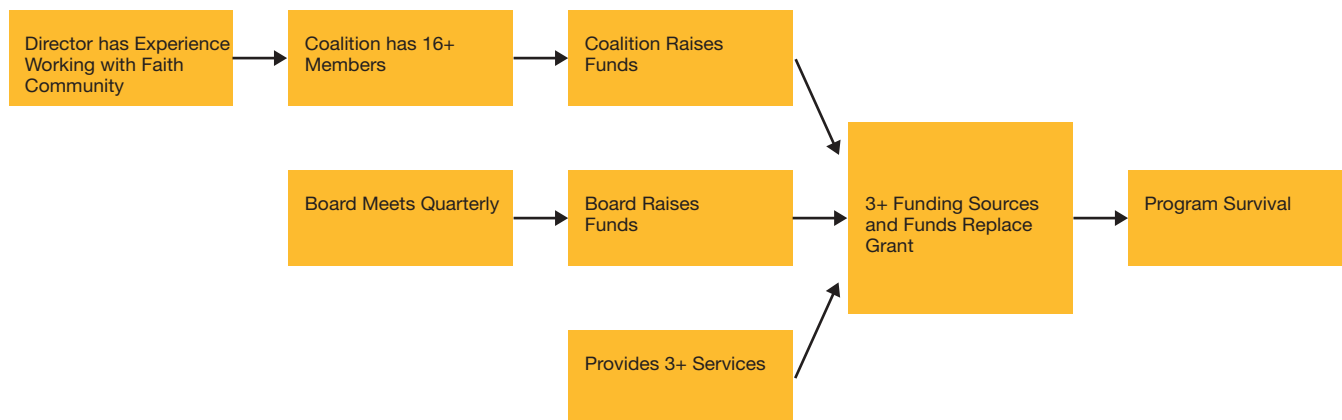
Programs should retain at least a fifth of their volunteers for over a year. Ninety-three percent of the Faith in Action programs that met this goal survived, compared with just 69 percent of the programs with lower retention rates. Across all surveyed programs, 82 percent reached this level, suggesting the goal is fairly easily met.

Our analyses suggest that two factors can increase the likelihood that programs will surpass this retention threshold:

- **Implement at Least Quarterly Supervision.** *Eighty-five percent of programs with at least quarterly supervision achieved the 20 percent annual retention threshold, compared with 77 percent of programs with less frequent contact.* Regular contact with volunteers gives program staff a chance to recognize and acknowledge volunteer efforts and develop positive relationships with them. It also provides volunteers with valuable opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback on improving volunteer coordination. In this way, supervision may help engender satisfaction and loyalty to the program and, as a consequence, a willingness to continue to serve. Overall, two-thirds of Faith in Action programs supervise volunteers this frequently.
- **Hire a Program Director with Relevant Experience.** *Directors experienced in training and supervising caregivers are more likely than directors without this experience to run programs that provide at least quarterly supervision of volunteers.* Sixty-nine percent of programs led by directors with this prior experience supervise volunteers at least quarterly, compared with 60 percent of programs without such experienced directors.

Programs achieving all of these volunteer-related goals were five times more likely to survive than those meeting none of these goals. Among programs meeting none of the recommended goals for building a strong volunteer pool, only 19 percent continued to serve clients when surveyed. In contrast, 95 percent of programs meeting all nine continued to serve clients.¹⁹ When the effects of all nine program characteristics on program survival are considered simultaneously, four emerge as most important: using the coalition to recruit volunteers, providing two or more services, retaining at least 20 percent of volunteers, and recruiting at least 15 new volunteers per year. Only 25 percent of programs meeting none of these four goals served clients when surveyed, compared with 93 percent of programs meeting at least three.

¹⁹ These nine goals are: (1) recruit at least 15 new volunteers annually; (2) offer team matching; (3) provide pretraining; (4) hire a program director with experience in training and supervising caregivers; (5) hire a program director with experience in voluntary caregiving; (6) provide two or more services; (7) involve coalition members in recruitment; (8) retain at least a fifth of volunteers for over a year; and (9) implement at least quarterly supervision.

Figure 3.2**Links to Program Survival: The Importance of Building a Strong Funding Base**

Note: When multiple arrows point toward a box, all characteristics in the preceding boxes have a statistically significant association with the program characteristic in the latter box, even when all are considered simultaneously.

Building a Solid Funding Base

Reliance on volunteers to provide services may reduce funding requirements, but cannot eliminate them completely. Because the Faith in Action grant was intended to offer financial help for only 18 months, programs had to move quickly to develop their own funding base. Voluntary programs need funds to cover the salaries of program directors and office staff, to undertake formal publicity, and to pay for office space, phone service and supplies. This section outlines program practices that contribute to a solid funding base (see Figure 3.2).

Programs should develop a diverse funding base and raise enough funds to replace their initial grant.

Programs that successfully drew on diverse funding sources were more likely to survive than those that did not. Funding diversity is important because programs that rely too heavily on a single source may be unable to continue operating if those funds become unavailable. In addition, diversification may be an indication of a program's ability to raise community awareness, which can help sustain strong client and volunteer bases.

Analyses further suggest that drawing funds from at least one of three community resources—congregations, private donations, or local agencies such as

the United Way—is key, perhaps because it reflects a program's firm grounding in the community: programs that drew funds from at least one of these sources were more likely to succeed than those that did not.

Of course, multiple funding sources are insufficient in cases where these funding amounts do not surpass a certain minimum. Among programs meeting the three-source goal and reporting that their funding, without in-kind contributions, totaled at least \$25,000 (the amount required to replace the original Faith in Action grant), 95 percent continued to serve clients at the time of the survey, compared with 81 percent of those not meeting both funding goals.²⁰ Just over half of all surveyed Faith in Action programs met these funding guidelines.

Several program practices can increase a program's likelihood of surpassing this combined funding threshold:

- **Provide Diverse Services.** *Programs that provide at least three services are more likely to meet the funding threshold than those providing fewer.* Perhaps offering a variety of services qualifies programs for funds from a larger variety of sources. Among programs that provide at least three services, 61 percent achieved the funding threshold, com-

²⁰ The correlation between size of the budget and number of funding sources is 0.24 ($p < .0001$).

pared with only 48 percent of those providing fewer services. About 41 percent of grantees provided three or more services.

- **Enlist Fundraising Help by the Board and Coalition.** *When the board or coalition raised funds, 62 percent of programs achieved the funding threshold, compared with only 40 percent without board or coalition help.* Across all Faith in Action programs, 42 percent received help from both the coalition and the board, and 32 percent got help from only one of these sources. Having help from both did not significantly increase the chance of reaching the threshold beyond the boost received when either one or the other provided help.

When developing a Board of Directors and coalition, programs should evaluate the ability of prospective members to fulfill the crucial role of fundraising and consider making this responsibility explicit.

- **Ensure that the Board Meets Frequently.** *Boards that meet at least quarterly are more likely than those that do not to help the program raise funds.* Among boards that meet at least quarterly, 71 percent help raise funds, compared with only 37 percent of those that meet less frequently. Across all surveyed programs, 87 percent of boards met at least quarterly.

Boards that meet regularly may be more attuned to the needs of their programs. The frequency of meetings may also indicate the commitment of board members and their willingness to get involved in critical areas of program activities. Boards that met at least quarterly were more likely to help manage the budget, select program activities and services, hire and supervise the director, and aid in policy development. However, these boards were less likely to be dedicated exclusively to Faith in Action tasks.²¹ While 44 percent of boards that met quarterly focused only on Faith in Action programs, 67 percent of boards meeting less frequently were dedicated boards.

As should be stressed with all of the findings in this chapter, but is particularly evident here, causality and the temporal ordering of these

Early Characteristics that Predict Success

Data provided by programs six months after receiving the grant together with our survey data suggest that programs should meet five early goals to improve their chances of survival. By six months post-grant, programs should strive to:

Involve at least five congregations in the coalition.

Meeting this threshold indicates that a program has already begun to establish community support, which can translate into help with volunteer recruitment, in-kind support and fundraising.

Recruit at least 25 volunteers. The ability to recruit volunteers early may be an indication of a program's long-term organizational capacity to make connections in the community and attract volunteers.

Train at least half of the volunteers within the first six months of funding. Individuals may be more likely to volunteer for a program that promises to train them sufficiently; and volunteers can begin providing services more quickly if they are trained soon after recruitment.

Target volunteers who are not employed full-time.

The median weekly commitment for volunteers is about 2.5 hours. At that level, many individuals who work full-time can fit volunteering into their schedules. However, because full-time employees may be less flexible in scheduling their volunteer hours and accepting extra clients, programs seem to benefit from recruiting at least 65 percent of volunteers who do not work full-time.

Draw funds from at least three distinct funding sources.

Programs that demonstrate early success in this area lay the groundwork for subsequent fundraising efforts.

associations cannot be confirmed with these analyses. Thus, requiring a board to meet more frequently will not guarantee that they get involved in fundraising; yet, boards that are actively involved in fundraising may have to meet more often to have time to undertake fundraising activities. The board's involvement in fundraising is likely causally dependent on several other factors, including the composition of the board, the experiences and interests board members bring to the group and the program's encouragement in this area.

²¹ Programs with non-dedicated boards were more often associated with an umbrella agency than those with dedicated boards. Thus, these non-dedicated boards were most likely affiliated with the program's umbrella agency.

- **Develop a Large Coalition.** *Larger coalitions are more likely than smaller coalitions to help with fundraising.* Larger coalitions typically include more congregations, each of which may directly offer funds. In addition, larger coalitions have contact with more community members and organizations, each of which may choose to finance a worthwhile cause. Among programs with coalitions of 16 or more members, 70 percent provided fundraising help, compared with only 53 percent for programs with smaller coalitions. Overall, slightly less than half of all Faith in Action coalitions included 16 members or more.
- **Hire a Director who has Experience Working with the Faith Community.** *Almost half the programs with experienced directors achieved the coalition threshold of having 16 or more members, compared with 39 percent of programs without experienced directors.* Experienced directors may be more adept at persuading groups from different traditions to work together and at recruiting groups without a history of helping others outside of their congregations. They may also have pre-established relationships with leaders in the faith community that may encourage their involvement. Overall, 59 percent of programs had directors with experience in this area.

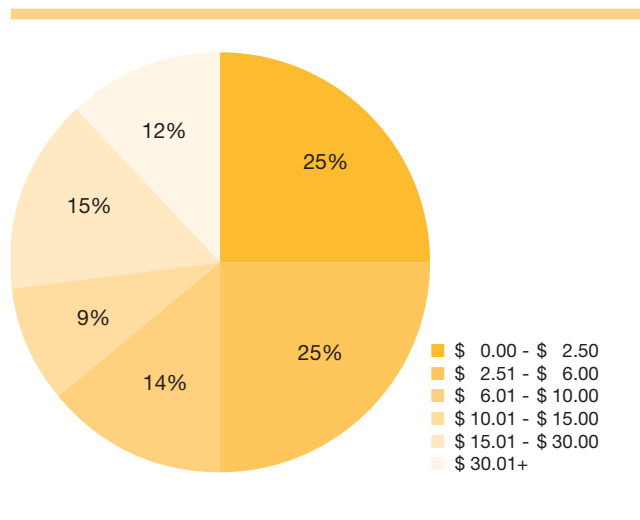
Programs achieving all of these funding-related goals were twice as likely to survive as those meeting none of these goals. Among programs meeting none of the recommended goals for building a strong funding base, 47 percent continued to serve clients when surveyed. In contrast, 97 percent of programs meeting all seven continued to serve clients.²² When the effect of all seven program characteristics on program survival are considered simultaneously, three emerge as most important: enlisting coalition help in fundraising, providing three or more services, and receiving at least \$25,000 from three or more sources. Sixty-two percent of programs meeting none of these three goals served clients when surveyed, compared with 95 percent of programs meeting at least two.

Program Characteristics Associated with Increased Cost Efficiency

In this section, we discuss programs' cost per client service hour, that is, the cost of an hour of client service given the program's total cash budget and the total number of hours of service provided to clients. Our estimates consider only costs that are covered by cash contributions, excluding the value of in-kind contributions that would be included in a full-cost estimate, like building space, materials and donated time of board members. These latter contributions are substantial for some programs and would very likely increase our estimates.

With their reliance on the efforts of volunteers and non-cash contributions from coalition partners and others, the programs were able to provide services for a relatively modest median cost of \$5.77 in actual cash expenditures per hour of client service provided. In addition, reliance on fundraising allows Faith in Action programs to provide free services to those who may not otherwise be able to afford them. In Philadelphia, for example, compa-

Figure 3.3
Percentage of Programs Providing Services within Indicated Range of Cost per Client Service Hour
(median = \$5.77 per hour)



²² These seven goals are: (1) raise an annual budget of at least \$25,000 drawn from at least three sources; (2) provide at least three services; (3) actively involve the coalition in fundraising; (4) actively involve the board in fundraising; (5) ensure that the board meets at least quarterly; (6) develop a coalition with 16 or more members; and (7) hire a director with experience working with the faith community.

rable services would cost clients approximately \$16.00 per hour, a prohibitive figure for many on fixed incomes.

Across all Generation II grantees, however, the cost per hour of service varied widely. One-quarter of the programs provide services for \$2.50 or less and another quarter provide services for more than \$15 per hour (see Figure 3.3). Several factors account for differences in the cost of services: location, services provided, leadership structure and volunteer recruitment and retention.

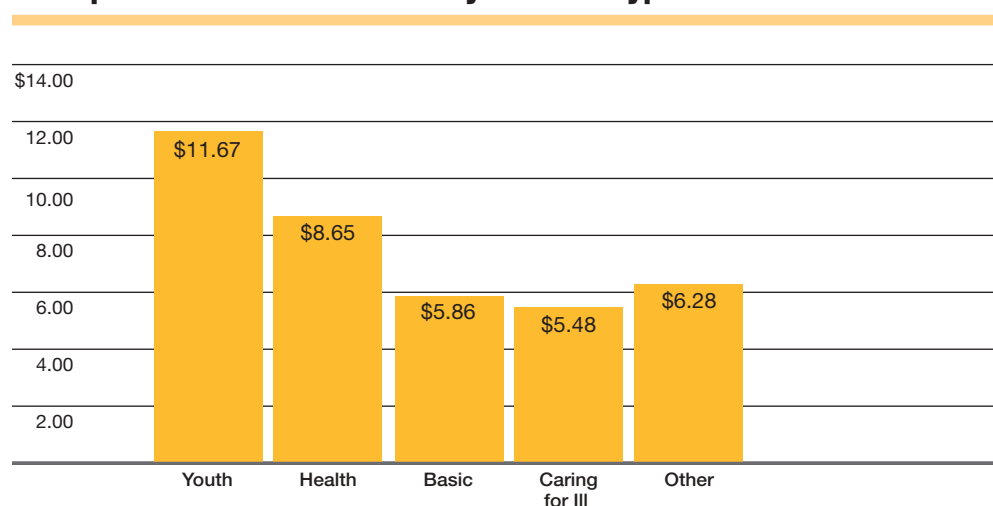
Programs located in communities with populations of 250,000 or more cost more to operate than those in smaller communities. This most likely reflects the higher property costs in urban areas and is particularly relevant for programs that must rent office space. The higher cost of living in cities is also likely to make urban programs more expensive due to higher salary requirements for staff, and while small communities may rely on informal networks to publicize a program, urban areas may require more formal and costly approaches to publicity.

Costs vary by the services provided. Programs that provided basic services and those providing care to ill or disabled individuals and their families cost the least to operate (see Figure 3.4). With many of these services, volunteers require relatively little training, few “start-up” skills, and few to no supplies.²³

At the other end of the cost spectrum were programs that provided direct health services, such as health screening, medical equipment and nursing visits,²⁴ or youth programming, including childcare. Health services often require the purchase of specific supplies and identification of volunteers with specialized skills; finding and training such volunteers may require a large investment of staff time and advertising dollars. Childcare programs may require additional supplies to entertain children and ensure their safety, and programs for older youth may include costs for transportation or admissions to local attractions.

Program leadership is associated with costs. Program costs are associated with program leadership at two levels: the program director and coalition.

Figure 3.4
Cost per Client Service Hour by Service Type



²³ A notable exception is hospice programs that often use medical supplies and provide fairly intensive services to terminally ill clients.

²⁴ These services are beyond the scope of services approved for funding under the Faith in Action grant.

- **Among programs with a director experienced in voluntary caregiving, the average cost per service hour was \$5.76, compared with \$6.57 for programs lacking a director with this experience.** Directors who bring voluntary caregiving experience to their positions may need less time getting a new program off the ground or acclimating themselves within an existing program. They may be familiar with strategies to encourage volunteers to contribute more hours, or they may know how to train, manage or recruit volunteers with less staff effort.
- **Costs are reduced when directors focused exclusively on Faith in Action.** Programs with a dedicated director cost an average of \$5.03 per client service hour, compared with \$6.81 for programs without a dedicated director. We hypothesized that this might simply reflect the number of hours per week the director dedicated to the Faith in Action project, but the data did not support this hypothesis: the number of official hours devoted to the project was not associated with cost. Perhaps, directors who juggled Faith in Action tasks with other responsibilities could not always make the program their first priority. Where Faith in Action was only a piece of their larger job, their attention to Faith in Action might have suffered, even if the number of hours paid by the program was similar to that of other directors.
- **Programs involving coalitions with 16 or more members spend less out-of-pocket funds to run per service hour than those with smaller coalitions.** Programs with larger coalitions averaged \$5.30 per service hour, compared with \$6.76 for smaller coalitions. As the size of the coalition increases, programs have more potential sources of in-kind support, an especially valuable resource for programs operating on relatively tight budgets. Each organization added to a coalition is another possible source of office space, temporary secretarial support or even paper supplies, each of which helps reduce costs. As discussed in Chapter II, coalitions were also helpful in other less tangible ways that can decrease the amount of staff time and effort needed for specific program tasks, including volunteer and client recruitment, fundraising, and building community support.

Effective volunteer recruitment and retention efforts reduce costs. When programs develop successful strategies to meet recruitment and retention goals, they benefit in two ways: they gain valued human resources and reduce the program's hourly service costs.

Collaboration with organizations, particularly congregations, can offer a consistent source of volunteers without intensive follow-up efforts and the costs they entail. Programs that relied on congregations for 85 percent or more of their volunteers cost an average of \$5.30 per service hour, compared with \$6.76 for those in which congregations shouldered less of the recruitment burden.

Retaining volunteers over multiple service years also reduces costs significantly. In fact, of all of the program practices outlined, retention is the factor associated with the biggest cost savings. Programs that hold on to their volunteers save time and money on recruitment, screening, pretraining and early supervision, which may be more intensive than supervision of more seasoned volunteers. Programs that retained at least 20 percent of their volunteers for over a year cost an average of \$5.30 per service hour, compared with \$9.78 for programs with lower levels of volunteer retention.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Sustainability. The Faith in Action funding strategy succeeded in identifying and funding many programs that were able to sustain themselves past the grant period. However, many questions about the funding strategy remain. For example, our study cannot determine the extent to which Faith in Action funding *led* to the survival of these programs; many may have survived on their own without the grant. Determining for how many of these programs this is true and, more important, for which programs it is true, will be a critical test of the effectiveness of the program in *creating*, as opposed to simply *identifying*, sustainable programs.

Program practices linked to sustainability and cost.

Examining data from both Faith in Action programs that continued to serve clients at the time of our survey and those that did not allowed us to

address critical questions about program characteristics and practices linked to sustainability. In addition, information from open programs allowed us to outline the program characteristics that contributed to lower costs per hour of service provided.

Analyses exploring both issues highlight the importance of selecting a program director with prior experience in relevant areas and the benefits of retaining volunteers. The importance of the coalition was also clear: programs involving larger coalitions not only provided more client service hours on a given budget but also received more help from the coalition in fundraising, a key to program sustainability. Even six months after the grant was awarded, coalition size was important in predicting whether a program survived.

Analyses suggest that other program practices also may play a role in program survival, including:

- Implementing such rigorous volunteer practices as pretraining and at least quarterly supervision;
- Providing diverse services;
- Developing an active coalition and Board of Directors; and
- Developing a diverse funding base that includes community resources.

Critical Issues Facing Interfaith Voluntary Caregiving Programs

In the last chapter, we used statistical methods to identify practices that contributed to program survival. In addition to conducting these analyses, we also asked program directors to outline the factors most critical to their programs' survival or those responsible for their programs' closing (see text box).²⁵ There was considerable agreement between what directors reported as critical and the results of our statistical analyses, with the most frequently cited factors being a strong budget and sufficient numbers of volunteers.

In this chapter, we examine in greater detail the conditions that made meeting the goals outlined in Chapter III more challenging. We also examine strategies that some directors undertook to resolve challenges and the areas in which programs may need technical assistance.

Fundraising

Raising funds was reported most frequently as a critical factor contributing to programs' success or demise, cited by almost two-thirds of programs. The median program budget at the time of our survey, excluding in-kind contributions, was \$35,000.²⁶ Raising these funds was difficult for programs, requiring constant staff efforts, often at the expense of other program operations. Because funding is often tied to specific program components, some programs also found attracting unrestricted funding difficult. Programs had difficulty raising funds for administration and operating costs, supplies and equipment, transportation (particularly critical in rural areas), recruitment, and building community awareness.

Critical Factors in the Success or Failure of Faith in Action Programs

Closed programs cited the following factors most frequently as critical to their closing:

- Raising funds (65%)
- Recruiting volunteers (47%)
- Gaining support from faith-based organizations (47%)
- Gaining community awareness and support (42%)
- Hiring qualified staff (39%)
- Creating a strong board (33%)
- Gaining support from their umbrella agency (20%)
- Identifying and recruiting clients (15%)
- Director issues (13%)
- Death or departure of a key person (13%)
- Quality of services (9%)

Open programs cited the following most frequently as critical to their survival:

- Raising funds (63%)
- Recruiting volunteers (37%)
- Gaining community awareness and support (34%)
- Hiring qualified staff (24%)
- Commitment and retention of volunteers (23%)
- Gaining support from faith-based organizations (17%)
- Gaining support from their umbrella agency (17%)
- Director issues (13%)
- Collaboration and coalition support (13%)
- Quality of services (13%)
- Creating a strong board (12%)

Note: All responses for open programs were coded from their open-ended responses; most responses for closed programs were from forced-choice questions. Thus, the absolute percentages of responses in open and closed programs should not be compared directly.

²⁵ We asked the directors of closed programs whether difficulties in any of eight areas contributed to their programs' closing and asked directors of open programs to outline, in their own words, the factors most critical to their programs' survival.

²⁶ Program budgets came from an average of four sources. On average, the Faith in Action supplemental grant continued to provide 19 percent of program revenue, while 17 percent came from government funds, 15 percent from other foundations and 10 percent from congregations.

Serving Clients with More Intensive Needs

Programs targeting certain types of clients face specific challenges. Targeted programs—such as those serving people living with AIDS or mental illness, and the terminally ill—mentioned the following as critical for their success:

- Educating their community and congregations about the specific illness to overcome stigmas;
- Providing volunteers with extensive training and educational opportunities;
- Making timely matches between volunteers and the terminally ill to give families the help they need and volunteers the satisfaction that comes with making a difference;
- Volunteer support and retention efforts, particularly when working with dying clients;
- Building trust with clients who may fear religious agencies; and
- Diversifying services—a few AIDS programs mentioned that their specific type of service was no longer needed with medical advancements in AIDS care.

Fundraising and financial issues were also the most often requested areas for technical assistance.²⁷

Specific examples included help with:

- Fiscal management and accounting;
- Endowment development;
- Direct-mail campaigns; and
- Grant writing.

Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers

Recruiting volunteers is challenging, and it is not surprising that close to 40 percent of directors mentioned volunteer recruitment as critical. In addition, close to a quarter of the directors of open programs

mentioned retention as a critical factor.²⁸ Recruiting clients was a challenge reported much less frequently, cited by only about 6 percent of directors.

Directors reported a number of related challenges: they struggled to recruit volunteers for such services as housekeeping and transportation, as well as services that require specific skills from volunteers. They also struggled to find volunteers who were willing and able to care for clients with special needs, including terminally ill clients or AIDS patients.

We know, however, that many programs succeeded in recruiting and retaining large numbers of volunteers, despite these challenges. In addition to the factors we identified in the previous chapter, such as the experience of the director and the number of services that were provided, directors shared other strategies with us. Although we were not able to test the effectiveness of these strategies statistically, there is support for most of them in the literature. Strategies included:

- Carefully interviewing, screening and defining activities to volunteers before they got started (Grossman and Furano, 2002);
- Providing opportunities for volunteers to contribute in more than one way based on their availability, interests and skills (Grossman and Furano, 2002; Walker et al., 1999). Opportunities should include ways to involve older volunteers and those with limited mobility, and may involve different ways to provide care, office assistance and leadership within congregations, as well as helping with fundraising;
- Carefully matching and developing trust between volunteers and clients;
- Offering targeted training and creating opportunities for volunteers to interact and learn from each others' experiences;

²⁷ We asked respondents an open-ended question about the kinds of technical assistance that would have been helpful to their program. Less than half (43%) completed this question. However, suggestions from those who responded provide good examples of ways programs could be helped, so we list them, although very few programs mentioned each suggestion.

²⁸ A comparison of closed programs citing recruitment as a challenge and those not mentioning it showed little difference in the number of active volunteers or new recruits, but those citing recruitment as a challenge retained only 21 percent of their volunteers for more than a year, while those not citing this challenge retained 45 percent. Thus, although these programs reported difficulty with recruitment, they seemed to have particular difficulty holding on to volunteers.

- Allowing volunteers to contribute a limited number of hours (Herrera et al., 2000; Herrera et al., 2002);
- Implementing team matching (close to half of Faith in Action programs match at least some clients with a team of volunteers);²⁹ and
- Accurately documenting and tracking volunteer assignments and participation to ensure that contributions are recognized and rewarded.

Support from Faith-Based Organizations

Our analyses in Chapter III suggest that support from faith-based organizations is important in determining a program's likelihood of survival, particularly with respect to assistance with fundraising and volunteer recruitment. But this support was not easily achieved, and many programs closed as a result of related challenges.

Directors of about half of closed programs cited a lack of support from congregations and other faith-based organizations as leading to their closing. Congregations were occasionally resistant to providing volunteers to serve people from outside their congregations. Many were overtaxed with providing for their own congregants or with involvement in other community initiatives. Some programs found themselves competing with other social service agencies to collaborate with congregations. Coordinating the involvement of several congregations was also challenging; some reported that churches of different denominations had difficulty working together.

Yet, many programs were able to overcome these challenges. In fact, 17 percent of directors from open programs mentioned gaining support from faith-based organizations as critical, emphasizing the importance of three steps in working with congregations: finding willing congregations, getting them

interested and involved, and keeping them invested.

Directors discussed the importance of expanding the size of their coalition by constantly reaching out to new congregations. Educating congregations about the programs' work and the populations they served was important, particularly when working with special-needs clients. Directors also mentioned the importance of showing churches how they could benefit from collaborations.

Ensuring that congregations actively support and take ownership of the program by providing volunteers, clients, funding, increased visibility in the community, and, in some cases, office space or other in-kind contributions was also seen as critical. In fact, creating large coalitions may be important, mainly because it increases the chances of finding a few highly involved congregations.

Once a congregation is actively involved, directors said, programs needed to support continued involvement by, for example, communicating with congregational liaisons frequently and implementing lay leadership within the congregation to provide structure to the congregation's effort.

Community Support

About a third of program directors considered community support and awareness critical, for example, by providing programs with volunteers, clients, links with other organizations and funding. Responses suggested this support comes through two routes: making the community aware of what the program offers and understanding what the community needs.

Making community members and agencies aware of program services and how they can benefit from them is critical. Directors believe services need to be clearly defined, distinct from those offered by other community organizations, and varied; the

²⁹ This strategy could serve several important functions. For example, potential volunteers may want opportunities that provide them with support from other volunteers. Teams that alternate caregiving responsibilities could also reduce the hours of service for volunteers, but the data show no difference in hours of weekly service between programs that do and do not use teams. In addition, clients receiving team services may receive more total hours of care than clients receiving one-on-one services; however, they may also receive less opportunity for one-on-one relationship development. Our data do not allow us to test these ideas or weigh their relative importance to clients. Thus, despite their potential, it is unclear exactly how teams are currently being used in these programs and how they may benefit volunteers, clients and programs, overall.

directors of 45 open programs talked about their survival hinging on filling a “service gap” in the community. Successful programs work hard to inform others of their services through networking, news articles, radio announcements, presentations and fundraising events. Gaining community support takes time, directors said, requiring programs to build a strong reputation in the community for providing reliable, high-quality services.

To succeed, programs should also stay in tune with changing community needs. Programs mentioned the importance of assessing these needs by holding community forums, attending community events and networking. Programs that provided overly focused services and lacked flexibility experienced difficulty surviving; in their open-ended responses, 11 directors of open programs attributed their flexibility in adapting to changing needs as crucial for their programs’ survival.

Program Staff

Faith in Action programs depend heavily on strong leadership from a director. To support this position, the average program has one to two additional paid staff members. Volunteers also play an important role in program administration: almost 10 percent rely on full-time volunteer staff, and 62 percent rely on part-time volunteer staff.

About a quarter of program directors said that filling these positions with qualified staff played a key role in their programs’ success or demise. Having a sufficient number of qualified staff is important, but directors also highlighted other valued staff characteristics, such as diversity, commitment and a willingness to stay with the program long term. Persistence, patience, resourcefulness, creativity and a genuine desire to carry out the programs’ mission are also important. Because many programs operate on very small budgets, staff’s dedication and willingness to work many hours, often evenings and weekends, in a very stressful position with little or no pay, and sometimes with little job security were often mentioned as critical.

Programs with very few staff need a director with all of these characteristics and, as stressed in Chapter III, several specific skills. Thirteen percent of all

surveyed programs discussed the director as critical in sustaining their programs, saying the leaders needed to be visible and active in the community and possess administration, management, public relations and leadership skills. However, hiring multit talented directors within a program’s budget proved difficult or, in the case of at least two closed programs, impossible.

The directors’ willingness to work part-time or, at times, without pay, also helped keep some programs afloat, as did the director’s flexibility in taking on whatever tasks were needed to sustain the program. One program reported that having a director who “viewed the job as a ministry, regardless of the actual hours and pay” was essential to its success.

Several programs relied so heavily on their directors’ strength and commitment that the programs collapsed when the director left. Even when the departing director was replaced with a competent leader, much time and progress were often lost in making the transition. One representative of an open program suggested technical assistance would be particularly valuable when a program begins or a new director takes over.

These findings suggest that while programs need to focus efforts on recruiting and retaining strong, committed leaders, programs also need to prepare for unforeseen staff transitions, as reported by a director of an open program:

The sustainability of an interfaith volunteer caregiver program needs [support for] the ongoing and successful administration [of the program] so that all the parts of the program can be established in a legacy format that doesn’t depend on a person, but instead on the system.

Creating a Strong Board

Representatives of about a third of closed programs and a little more than 10 percent of open programs cited board strength as critical for their operations. For closed programs, “strength” seemed to reflect size: programs citing difficulty with the board had significantly smaller boards than the other programs (8.9 versus 11.7 members). Developing active, dedicated boards that meet regularly and

help with program tasks (both stressed in Chapter III as crucial to success) was also challenging.

Programs need cohesive boards that work well in committees and include at least one very strong and active member. Board members should be committed, make the program a priority and, as one program reported, be willing to “help, not just dictate.”

Gaining Support from a Parent Agency

Representatives of close to a fifth of programs cited support from their parent agency as crucial.

Open programs emphasized the ongoing financial support from the agency—occasionally, the larger agency conducted most or all fundraising, leaving more time for program staff to focus on services. Others discussed receiving a boost from the agency’s “proven track record.”

Closed programs, however, noted difficulty gaining this support. Problems included competition among subsidiary programs for funding and volunteers within the parent agency, shifting priorities and missions, and difficulties gaining agency staff’s support. One program mentioned the need for technical assistance to teach program staff how to help agency staff members understand the importance of the program.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Faith in Action programs face many challenges that are similar to those faced by other non-profit service providers, including fundraising, creating a strong staff and Board of Directors, and fostering community awareness and support. However, some of their biggest challenges, including those with volunteers and coalition building, also reflect their status as interfaith volunteer-based programs. Specific challenges and how programs overcame them, together with results from quantitative analyses on program sustainability, suggest several areas in which programs may benefit from either a director’s focused effort or outside technical assistance.

Challenging issues that would benefit from technical assistance include:

1 Fundraising

- Fundraising in small, rural or economically disadvantaged communities;
- Involving boards and coalitions in fundraising;
- Developing a diverse funding base that includes unrestricted funding; and
- Community-based fundraising that targets congregations, local agencies and private donations.

2 Volunteer Recruitment and Management

- Recruiting volunteers in small, rural communities;
- Recruiting and supporting volunteers who work with special-needs clients;
- Developing training opportunities; and
- Making strong matches between clients and volunteers.

3 Working with Faith-Based Organizations

- Effectively marketing and educating congregations about program services;
- Developing teams and leaders within congregations; and
- Helping congregations of different denominations and faiths to work together.

4 Community Support

- Assessing community needs; and
- Networking and public relations.

5 Staffing

- Recruiting qualified, dedicated staff;
- Hiring directors with a diverse range of skills within a small budget; and
- Helping new directors take over leadership of a program.

Conclusions

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Faith in Action program uses an innovative and ambitious strategy designed to involve faith-based congregations and volunteers in caring for community residents in need. By surveying close to 800 of these programs, P/PV has provided an early assessment of the results of the project. We have also begun to address several questions of interest to the broader field regarding the role of collaborations involving faith-based organizations, how to reach and retain volunteers, how to serve more clients on a given budget, and, most important, how to run a program in a way that contributes to its survival. The following highlights findings in these and other key areas.

The number of surviving Faith in Action programs suggests that the project's funding strategy succeeded in supporting a large number—at least 62 percent of the original grantees—of sustainable programs. The small amount of start-up money provided to Faith in Action grantees did succeed in getting a majority of programs off to a good start. The programs have also shown some growth even without ongoing Faith in Action funding, increasing in size by a median of five volunteers and eight clients per year.

Despite this success, several questions about the funding strategy remain. Although Faith in Action was clearly able to *identify* many programs that survived, it is unclear to what extent the grants actually *led* to their survival. How many of these programs would have survived without this initial boost, perhaps finding funding from other sources? Which ones? And how essential was the \$10,000 supplemental grant in contributing to their survival? It is also important to note that although surviving programs show some signs of strength, programs also reported facing many significant challenges, and our survey was only administered at one point in time. Surveying the programs at a later date in a more difficult economic environment may yield a lower survival rate.

Another important issue concerns how funders can improve this strategy. Generation III of Faith in Action is trying to build on some of the lessons garnered from Generation II, most notably, by providing more extensive technical assistance to grantees. Following these new grantees to see the effects of this change will be invaluable as funders continue to hone their efforts in ways that can help sustain organizations over the long term.

Surviving Faith in Action programs involved a median of 40 volunteers who provided a wide range of services to a median of 60 clients when surveyed. Seventy percent report being the only program in their service area providing these services at no cost.

At least 25 percent of programs involve volunteers in respite care, home visits and telephone calls, transportation, shopping and household chores, or helping with activities of daily living, such as grooming, bathing and feeding; and programs retain an average of over half (58%) of their volunteers for more than a year. Programs also relied on volunteers for other kinds of help: about 10 percent involve volunteers as full-time office staff, while close to two-thirds rely on part-time volunteer staff. This attests to the versatility of volunteers and counters concerns that the needs of the chronically ill may be too overwhelming for volunteers.

Yet, programs that provide services, such as house-keeping or transportation or services requiring very specific skills, and those working with clients needing more intensive care occasionally experienced difficulty finding or keeping volunteers. To overcome these challenges, the programs used strategies ranging from educating community members about the specific illness they serve to providing extra training, support and encouragement to volunteers.

In the average program, close to three-quarters of the clients and 80 percent of the volunteers are white, but their ethnicity is quite representative of their communities. Almost all of the racial composition of volunteers and clients is explained by the

racial composition of their surrounding community. Also, almost all programs involve community members representing more than one ethnic group. Thus, individual programs are succeeding in reaching community members who are ethnically representative of their communities. However, for Faith in Action to achieve its goal of reaching ethnically diverse clients and volunteers nationwide, it will have to fund programs located in more diverse communities.

Using volunteers makes the cost of Faith in Action services relatively inexpensive; the median program provides an hour of service for an estimated \$5.77. But these costs vary widely depending on the services and do not consider in-kind contributions provided by parent agencies and coalitions, as well as other expenses incurred by volunteers for supplies and transportation—all of which would increase the total costs of these services.

Across all services, our analyses suggest that programs may help lower costs by implementing the following practices:

- Hiring a director with voluntary caregiving experience who has only project-related responsibilities;
- Developing a coalition with at least 16 members;
- Recruiting at least 85 percent of volunteers from congregations; and
- Retaining at least 20 percent of volunteers for at least a year.

The Faith in Action coalitions serve a range of functions, including recruiting volunteers and referring clients, increasing community support and awareness, fundraising, and strengthening the board. By serving such critical roles, congregations may help to sustain these programs and may even contribute to cost efficiency. Programs with coalitions active in volunteer recruitment and fundraising experience more success in these areas giving them a better chance of survival. Programs with more congregational recruitment also provide more client service hours with a given budget.

Programs added an average of one-and-a-half new members to their coalitions annually. However, many programs encountered challenges in recruit-

ing congregations, encouraging their active involvement and sustaining their interest. Representatives of 47 percent of closed programs cited their inability to achieve these goals as a primary reason for their programs' demise.

These challenges raise some important questions: If these programs had not been required to involve congregations might they have survived by, for example, making more extensive efforts to reach out to other types of organizations early on? Or, is their failure to involve congregations indicative of other problems, such as an inability to develop relationships and network with community organizations or raise community awareness? Do the clear benefits of involving faith-based organizations outweigh the difficulties of gaining and sustaining this involvement? Answering these questions will be crucial as Faith in Action and other programs involving congregations consider how to involve these organizations in ways that help programs the most.

The importance of congregations in contributing to the success of these programs combined with the difficulty many programs had in achieving and sustaining their involvement illustrates the need for technical assistance in this area. Successful programs offered strategies to help reach, retain and increase the involvement of congregations, including:

- Educating congregations about the program's work and the clients served;
- Highlighting how the congregations could benefit from the collaboration;
- Communicating with congregational liaisons frequently; and
- Implementing lay leadership within the congregations.

Programs may increase their chances of survival by implementing several critical program practices associated with developing a strong volunteer and funding base. Following up with both open and closed Faith in Action grantees yielded rare and valuable insights into practices associated with program success and failure. Although we were unable to confirm causality because most variables were collected at one time point, our findings are consistent with associations found in other studies between strong program practices and program success, as

well as common wisdom about what makes a program succeed.

In efforts to recruit and retain volunteers, past research has stressed the importance of three aspects of volunteer infrastructure: screening, training and supervision (Grossman and Furano, 2002). The vast majority of Faith in Action programs have these elements in place: all but 7 percent screen, train and supervise volunteers.

Our analyses similarly support the importance of strong volunteer infrastructure, as well as several other key practices in contributing to successful recruitment and retention. To meet the outlined recruitment and retention goals, successful programs:

- **Chose directors experienced in voluntary caregiving, and training and supervising caregivers.** Directors with prior experience in these areas were more likely to implement effective program practices.
- **Supervised volunteers at least quarterly.** Programs with at least quarterly supervision retained more volunteers than those with less frequent supervision.
- **Required pretraining of volunteers.** Programs that trained volunteers prior to service provision recruited more volunteers per year.
- **Matched some volunteers in teams.** Programs that used team matching were also able to recruit more volunteers annually.
- **Provided multiple services to clients.** Programs that provided multiple services to clients also provided multiple service opportunities to volunteers, possibly reaching recruits with various interests.
- **Enlisted the help of collaborative partners in recruitment.** Programs that received help from their coalitions recruited more volunteers than programs without this help.

Respondents' descriptions of strategies they used to develop and retain consistent, enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers highlight several additional strategies as helpful in retention:

- Defining activities clearly to volunteers and providing them with opportunities to contribute in

more than one way based on their availability and interests;

- Carefully matching and developing trust between volunteers and clients;
- Offering targeted training and creating opportunities for volunteers to interact and learn from each others' experiences; and
- Accurately documenting and tracking volunteer participation and assignments to ensure that contributions are recognized and rewarded.

Successful programs not only raised enough funds to replace the original Faith in Action grant, but also attracted funding from multiple sources.

Focusing some fundraising on community resources, such as private donations, congregations and local agencies, appears to be particularly important. To raise sufficient funds from multiple sources, successful programs:

- **Chose directors with experience working with the faith community.** Directors with prior experience in this area had larger coalitions.
- **Increased the size of the coalition.** Larger coalitions were more likely to help raise funds.
- **Had at least quarterly board meetings.** Boards that met frequently were more likely to help raise funds.
- **Provided multiple services to clients.** Programs that provided multiple services to clients had stronger funding bases than those providing fewer services.
- **Enlisted the help of leadership—both the coalition and board—in raising funds.** Help from both sources was associated with achieving the funding threshold.

The biggest challenges reported by Faith in Action programs center on those areas most critical for program success: fundraising, and volunteer recruitment and retention. For many closed programs, these challenges proved impossible to overcome and, according to program staff, caused the programs' downfall. Staff of close to two-thirds of closed programs cited an inability to raise sufficient funds as critical to their closing, while 47 percent cited an inability to recruit volunteers.

Both closed and continuing programs also cited as crucial building community support and awareness, hiring qualified staff, and garnering support from faith-based organizations.

Our findings further suggest some practices that could be improved or expanded in these programs. For example, programs were less successful involving non-Christian than Christian congregations. And, although most coalitions have involved several faith-based congregations, other types of faith-based and secular organizations were less frequently involved. These organizations may be rich and relatively unexplored resources for these programs, particularly in providing inroads into the surrounding community.

Additionally, although experience working with faith communities, as well as training and supervising caregivers may help directors develop strong funding and volunteer bases for these programs, only a little over half brought these skills with them prior to running the program. And less than half came to the program with experience in fundraising and board development.

Recruiting directors or other staff members with these skills, although clearly important, is likely very difficult given the limited budgets of these programs. Technical assistance in where and how to recruit these staff members, and how to provide early training to staff in these crucial areas would be very helpful. The extent to which other staff or leadership bodies, such as the board or coalition, can compensate for a lack of skills in these areas was not assessed in this study, but is also an important issue for examination in future studies.

Although the Faith in Action programs continue to struggle with many issues, they clearly have made great strides in providing needed services to people in their communities. At the same time, they also have implemented many of the practices important for the growth of strong programs. As programs continue to increase their collaborations with faith-based organizations and their use of volunteers in filling critical service gaps nationwide, the successes and challenges of these programs can serve as valuable models.

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Appendix: Methodology

Data Sources

The data in this report come from three sources: (1) the application submitted by all programs receiving funding in Generation II of the Faith in Action program; (2) an update completed by each program six months after receiving the Faith in Action grant; and (3) an organizational survey administered by P/PV in Summer 2001. Each is described below.

Program Application

All potential grantees submitted formal applications for Faith in Action grants before receiving funding. Data from these applications were used to determine:

- Ethnic diversity of the surrounding community;
- Population of the surrounding community; and
- How long the coalition had existed prior to applying.

Six-Month Update

Each grantee also submitted updates on their program activities 6 and 12 months after receiving the grant. Only data from the six-month updates were used in this report, including:

- The number of volunteers and clients involved;
- The percentage of volunteers and clients recruited from congregations;
- The size and composition of the coalition;
- The number of volunteers trained;
- The employment status of volunteers; and
- Funding sources.

Organizational Survey

P/PV developed a brief organizational survey in Spring 2001. Survey items were designed to reflect past research on strong program practices and were derived, in part, from items used in an organizational survey developed and administered to Faith in Action grantees by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (Fishman, 1997).

Survey Administration and Response Rates. As part of survey development, we administered four pilot surveys by phone, all of which were included in our final sample. In early Summer 2001, the final survey was administered by mail to the rest of the 1,091 Generation II Faith in Action grantees—504 programs returned completed surveys as a result of this mailing. We attempted to contact by phone those programs that did not respond; for those we were unable to contact, we conducted brief Internet searches.

To improve our success in reaching programs that were no longer operating, in August 2001, we selected those programs that had not returned surveys and seemed to be closed (e.g., their phone number was not in service and our Internet search had not yielded helpful information)—99 programs fit these criteria. Of those, we randomly selected one in four (24) for intensive follow-up. For those 24 cases, we did more extensive Internet searches for current and past directors and board members using information from their program applications. Four of these programs eventually completed surveys.

We then compiled all programs that were not selected in that group of 24 and had not completed a survey (about 420 programs). Of those, we again selected one in four (for a total of 105) for intensive follow-up and conducted more extensive Internet searches for these programs—42 of these programs eventually completed surveys.

These processes—phone contact and intensive follow-up for a subset of programs—yielded a total of 279 additional completed surveys. Most were mailed in or faxed; over 50 were completed by phone.

Thus, of the 1,091 Generation II programs:

787 completed surveys

- 676 continued to serve clients at the time of our survey
- 111 were closed

304 did not complete surveys (5 of those refused)

- 95 appear to be closed
 - 22 gave us information suggesting or indicating they were closed
 - 5 reported they were closed in The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's 1997 survey (Fishman, 1997)
 - 20 were returned with no forwarding address
 - 36 phone numbers were not in service or "wrong numbers"
 - 12 additional programs could not be reached
- 176 appear to be open
 - 15 gave us information suggesting or indicating they were open
 - 159 were contacted either by leaving a message or speaking with staff
 - 2 had new phone numbers
- 33 were unclear in their status

Data Analyses: Program Survival and Cost

The findings presented in Chapter III regarding program survival and cost per client service hour are based on statistical regression analyses. Findings regarding cost are based on a single regression model, using cost per client service hour as the dependent variable and the program characteristics discussed in the cost section of Chapter III as the explanatory variables. Other explanatory variables were included in the model in addition to the control variables discussed in Chapter III, but only those with statistically meaningful results are reported.

Findings regarding survival are based on a series of sequential regressions. In the first model, open/closed status was the dependent variable, and volunteer recruitment, volunteer retention, the program's budget and number of funding sources were explanatory variables. Again, other explanatory variables were included in the model in addition to control variables, but only those with statistically meaningful results are reported. Those variables significantly associated with open/closed status in this

analysis were then used as the dependent variables in a series of regression equations with explanatory variables as shown in Figures 3.1 and 3.2 (i.e., all variables with arrows pointing to the dependent variable of interest). This process continued with results depicted in Figures 3.1 and 3.2.

In cases where the dependent variable is continuous (e.g., cost per client service hour, the size of the coalition, the frequency of volunteer supervision, the number of volunteers recruited each year), OLS regression is used as follows:

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots b_iX_i + e$$

where: Y = value of the dependent variable;

X = value of the explanatory variable;

a, b = coefficients; and

e = a stochastic disturbance term with a mean of zero and a constant variance.

In cases where the dependent variable is dichotomous (e.g., whether the program is open or closed, whether the coalition raises funds, whether the program has a budget of \$25,000 or more from at least three funding sources), logistic regression analysis, using maximum likelihood estimation, was used by specifying a linear function for the logit (the logarithm of the odds) of having a positive response on the dependent variable as follows:

$$\log(p/[1-p]) = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots b_iX_i + e$$

where: p = the probability of having a positive response on the dependent variable;

1-p = the probability of having a negative response on the dependent variable; and

a, b, X and e are defined as in the OLS equation above.