Reviewer’s report

Title: Evaluability Assessment of “Growing Healthy Communities,” a Mini-grant Program to Improve Access to Healthy Foods and Places for Physical Activity

Version: 0 Date: 05 Apr 2019

Reviewer: Thomas Schmid

Reviewer's report:

This is a well written and carefully conducted evaluation of "Growing Healthy Communities" my primary suggestion is to reemphasize the purpose of the evaluation and clarify your findings under your purpose statement. Page 2 lines ~26-32

My interpretation of your findings is that #1 --"is the program ready for evaluation" is no and your main discussion focuses on # 2—" inform similar programs".

In the abstract lines ~41-46 I found it hard to understand the meaning of your categories such as Organizational Capacity and if collaboration, limited time and measurement integration were sub set of capacity. Latter in the manuscript this is clarified. But, I still do not understand your category "measurement integration". (see also page 13)

If word limits are an issue in the abstract there issues can be further clarified in the body of the paper.

Page 6

"Evaluability assessment

Your expansion of the definition/terms for EA to include Exploratory and Pre-evaluation is useful and helps explain how your work is not tightly bound by traditional EA methods/conclusions.

I did not find clear response to the questions you posed in this section

Line ~41 "These challenges include stakeholder disagreement, lack of understanding of logic or theory of change ( of the target program) unrealistic program goals and unclear outcomes.

You outline some of these evaluation goals in the section on EA assessment steps 1-10 Page 7-8, but it is not clear to me how much of these are included in your results/conclusions

Was you goal to address/answer these questions? If so please clarify in the results and or discussion section.
Line 24 if possible please provide a brief explanation for "content saturation".

Conclusions

Is your primary suggestion that future mini grant programs should build in technical assistance around evaluation via a central entity (external evaluator)?

I believe it is also important for the grant making entity or their client to determine the level of evaluation appropriate to the investment. Outcome evaluation for many of these programs is likely more expensive than the actual intervention. As one colleague, told me, do process evaluation - always, outcome evaluation -- selectively and when cost effective.

Some guidance to the reader on how these decisions should be made would be helpful.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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