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JAMS FOUNDATION MINI-GRANT REVIEW

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY MEDIATION (NAFCM)
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The JAMS Foundation / NAFCM Mini-Grant program provides financial support for the development of innovative and effective programs that can be replicated by community mediation centers (CMCs) nationwide and serve as a pathway to their sustainability and growth. Each year, the Foundation and NAFCM identify specific subject areas for grant funding from within the range of services offered by local and regional community mediation centers. Subject areas are determined based on current research and feedback from local and national leaders in the field that identify otherwise unresolved issues and unmet needs in the communities they serve.

For each designated subject area, 4-6 applicants were selected to receive a “mini-grant” of \$12,000 to \$15,000 per year for up to two years to support the development, refinement, or expansion of programming in that subject area. Mini-grant recipients participated in working groups providing structured peer contact with other grant recipients for the duration of the grant period. Facilitated by NAFCM representatives, these working groups operated as a “learning community,” providing participants with ongoing guidance and support, as well as opportunities to exchange information, explore challenges and promote best practices. Grantees were encouraged to develop programs that build on and incorporate shared lessons learned while remaining responsive to the unique needs of their own local communities.

During the Summer of 2019, NAFCM implemented, with JAMS Foundation support, a brief Key Leader Survey in order to obtain information about the status of the project begun by Grantees during the Two-Year Mini-Grant/ Learning Communities. This Key Leader Survey was implemented by telephone survey between July and September 2019 with representatives of the Grantee (Community Mediation Center) and their community partner agency to find out what products resulted from each CMC’s grant. Each participating CMC was contacted initially by email and then with follow up phone calls to schedule brief interviews about their mini grant experience. The goal was to find out if the systemic change developed and supported by the Mini-Grant process was sustained as a result of involvement in the mini grant and to identify the value added that the mini grant involvement provided for the CMCs and their communities.

One grantee stated, “The community at large benefits from the spreading of peace through the transformative power of mediation.” This sums up the motivation of many CMCs in their work with the mini grant and in their communities.

Mediation in Aging and Elder Care (2017-2019)

This program focused on the development and expansion of community-based programs addressing the needs of the elderly and the resolution of conflicts regarding elder care.

There were a range of similarities among the CMCs serving older adults. All CMCs stated that they found this population in tremendous need of mediation as many other agencies are often not able to provide non-legal assistance to older adults.

Sustainable Benefits:

- Most Community Mediation Centers (CMCs) developed formalized relationships with their local Office on Aging (or similar governmental agency).

- As the CMC partnered with agencies, they became more well-known in their communities as a resource for older adults and their families.
- Partner organizations stated that working with CMCs has helped them make stronger referrals to their clients, has helped them think about how they are reaching people, the resources they are giving to mediators, and the resources they are receiving from mediators.
- The partner organizations feel that working with CMCs has broadened their staff's knowledge of what mediation is, how the partnership can help their clients, and what their clients can expect from the mediation process.
- Some felt that the grant helped to clarify the need for a referral for elder mediation versus a legal referral. Not all issues are suitable or will be completely resolved within the legal system.
- One Mini-Grant CMC has had their work recognized state-wide and locals are now beginning to refer families for older adult mediation to the CMCs.

Navigating Cultural Differences (2016-2018)

This program focused on issues surrounding religious and cultural differences, providing CMCs with new tools to help facilitate dialogue, mediate conflict, and encourage mutual understanding between individuals and groups from different backgrounds.

The initial desired goal of each CMC was met – to have police-youth dialogues to ease community tensions. Each CMC found sustainability by working through established programs at their partner organization and removing the perception that this effort was only a CMC program. The third CMC found a home for their mini-grant program by being part of the community they serve through a newly created community justice program.

Sustainable Benefits:

- CMCs focused work on issues related to immigration and/or with immigrant populations.
- Listening sessions made the CMCs more aware of the issues going on in local immigrant communities.
- Working through the CMCs and partner organizations has benefitted local immigrant populations to navigate language and legal barriers.
- The listening sessions helped immigrant communities to understand they are not alone in their conflicts.

Community-Police Relations (2015-2017)

This program focused on the development and refinement of Community Mediation Center services to improve relations and strengthen connections between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Sustainable Benefits:

- Learned of the importance of collaborative relationships and that it is worth fixing collaborative relationships that have a poor history.

- One CMC found that by partnering with their local Human Relations Council together on this grant the Center is now involved in local activities such as collaborating with the HRC and local police when the Ku Klux Klan marched in their city a few years ago and the Center attended community police council meetings in an unofficial capacity. The grant enabled the CMC in this city, along with other agencies, to become an influential changemaker in their community
- The partner school in another city found the police-youth program to be helpful for the students in becoming more comfortable with police officers.
- One center found that hosting a family fun day including police and the town's largest African American church has increased in attendance each year since the event started in 2016 and has provided awareness of the Center in the community, which was not possible without the mini grant. Attendance at community meetings has also established greater trust in the Center.

Mediation Programs for Veterans and Active Military (2014-2016)

This program focused on the development of specialized mediation services and related programming for veterans, members of the active military and their families.

Sustainable Benefits:

- How to identify veterans during the intake process. One CMC found that adding the question "Are you a veteran or a family member of a veteran?" helped with this issue.
- Increase in number of volunteer mediators who had a strong connection with the military. Ideally veterans would mediate veterans' issues.
- CMCs developed programs to teach mediators on veterans' issues or did cross training with mediators and veteran mentors (who are veterans themselves).