BLENDING, BRAIDING, AND LAYERING FUNDING SOURCES FOR SHARED RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTOR APPROACHES

A FRAMEWORK FOR INJURY & VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Prepared July 2023
In recent years, the fundamental questions at the root of public health have shifted from addressing single, specific issues to focusing on the system that holistically supports wellbeing.

Many sectors contribute to our health and quality of life, including economics, housing, transportation, social services, and education. Although these sectors use different vocabularies and concepts, they all have core connections that unite them. Understanding the root causes of public health and expanding resources in a way that proactively prevents multiple issues at once improves the way people live, work, and play.

For injury and violence prevention (IVP) professionals, this shift upstream has been characterized by the increased focus on shared risk and protective factor (SRPF) approaches. A “shared risk and protective factor approach” – defined as efforts to improve multiple population health and quality-of-life outcomes by aligning diverse, multi-sector interventions that positively and equitably impact the social determinants of health (SDOH) is relevant not only to IVP, but to public health and wellbeing more broadly.
Shared risk and protective factor (SRPF) approaches are crosscutting, spanning across injury and violence topical areas as well as the layers of the socio-ecological model (SEM). SRPF approaches acknowledge that risk and protective factors are interconnected, and their impacts can be both universal and iterative, as risk and protective factors are influenced by the conditions in which we live, learn, work, grow, and age.

In recent years, states and territories navigating limited and/or siloed funding have begun to look at the braiding and layering of funding streams to leverage existing resources to achieve population-level impact through SRPF approaches. These approaches lend themselves well to braiding and layering funds since they span across multiple program areas and ultimately work to positively impact multiple outcomes.

This resource was developed to clarify what is meant by “braiding, layering and blending of funds,” as well as to identify opportunities to maximize SRPF approaches in IVP.
What is "Blending, Braiding and Layering?"

Blending, braiding, and layering refers to using two or more funds in a coordinated manner to achieve a common set of goals. Using these funding mechanisms allows states to implement crosscutting initiatives while achieving the program goals set forth in categorical cooperative agreements and grants. The terms are often used together and usually with little definition between the three.

To help clarify, we have included the definition and characteristics of each method.

**Layering Example**

- Fund Source 1
- Fund Source 2
- Fund Source 3

**Braiding Example**

- Fund Source 1
- Fund Source 2

**Blending Example**

- Fund Source 1
- Fund Source 2
- Fund Source 3

Single Budget for Program
BLENDED FUNDING

Blending of funding involves merging the funds in one source. When funding is blended, it goes into a “pot,” and when it is taken out to pay for an expense, there are no means for the financial manager to report which funding source paid for what expense. To blend your funding, you must work closely with your funders to ensure you can meet their reporting requirements.

Why Blended Funding

- Program reporting may be separate or combined and may include broader initiative goals.
- Blending funding can be less challenging to administer, but it requires funders to be on board.

Things to Keep in Mind About Blended Funding:

- Funds from multiple sources are coordinated to support a standard set of goals.
- Some funding sources cannot be blended based on funding requirements.
- Less detailed information about how funds have been spent means that ongoing and clear communication with funders is essential for explaining the work.
- Funds may or may not be awarded through a single contract.
- Reporting with blended funding systems involves including how the collective funds are being used.
**BRAIDING FUNDING**

*Braided funding* involves multiple funding sources utilized to pay for all the services needed by a given population, with careful accounting of how every dollar from each funding source is spent.\(^8\)

The term braiding is used because the multiple funding sources, which initially are separate, are brought together to pay for more than any one funding source can support. These funds are then carefully identified so the program can report to funders how the money was spent.

**Why Braiding Funding**

- Braided funding ensures that a funding source only pays for those things directly associated with the intent of the funding.

- It is often more appropriate for federal funding because those mechanisms require careful tracking of staff time and expenses.

**Things to Keep in Mind About Braided Funding:**

- Funds from multiple sources are allocated to support a single contract or initiative.
- It ensures that each funding source is only paying for activities eligible under that source.\(^9\)
- It is important to know the reporting and auditing requirements of each funding source. You must know exactly for what each funding source can and cannot pay.
- Staff must have the authority to decide which services will be paid for by which funding sources.
- Development is usually based on the funding specifications and then the public health needs.
- Combined, detailed reporting ensures accountability to funders. Tracking systems must include how every dollar is spent, including things such as personnel time and supplies.
Layered Funding is a newer term. Like braiding, layering includes combining multiple funding sources aligned around a single program or outcome. With layered funding, revenue is allocated, and expenditures are tracked by the categorical funding source.

Why Layered Funding

Layered funding includes different layers of funding: the foundational layer which allows a program to operate and additional layers, that fill in the gaps.

Things to Keep in Mind About Layered Funding:

- Funds from multiple sources are combined around a single outcome.
- Layered funding usually includes a substantial foundational layer, which allows a program to operate.
- The principle with layered funding is to “supplement not supplant.”
- With braiding, if you remove one funding source or part of the braid, it falls apart. However, with layered funding, you can take out one layer and still have the remaining layers to maintain efforts.
Funding Coordination

STEPS FOR FUNDING COORDINATION

Using your funding in strategic ways requires active planning, coordination, and vision across your team. Leadership, programmatic, and administrative team members all play a role in identifying opportunities, implementing efforts, and conducting monitoring and reporting activities for funds to be braided, blended, and/or layered seamlessly.

To help with the process of coordinating funding strategically, outlined below are general steps a program can take to get started. These steps have been developed with the help of resources from the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) as well as various research focused on early education and public health financing.

**Define Your Vision**

- What risk or protective factors are you trying to impact?
- What outcomes/key performance indicators (KPIs) must you achieve, and how will you evaluate them?
- What does your program currently look like, where are there gaps, and where is there coordination? Consider leveraging existing initiatives with some resources or infrastructure already in place.
- What is the length of time this would be implemented? When are the start/stop times of funding being used?
- Are you prepared to let go of less impactful program interventions in order to leverage braided funding initiatives?
- What programs and people do you need to pull in?
- What administrative infrastructure is needed to support this work?
Funding Coordination

Identify your partners to help achieve this vision

- Funders
- Leadership
- Administrators/budget coordinators
- Programmatic staff who are contributing or that are tied to outcomes
- Surveillance/data personnel
- External partnerships

Develop your coordinated financing plan

- **Identify funding streams.** List the funding sources you believe would serve your population or risk/protective factor(s) of interest. Some of the funding sources you will have access to already, while others may be external funding sources that organizations in your community or at the state level already access and might be willing to contribute to your program.

- **Explore gaps in funding as it relates to your vision.** What/who is each funding stream serving? Where do the gaps occur? Where are there overlaps? Do you have a clear understanding of what each funding source could fund to carry out your vision and SRPF approach?

- **Analyze Funding Streams.** Once you have an idea of the funding streams you want to pursue to build your coordinated financing plan, take time to explore the allowable and non-allowable costs for each funding source. Collect information and discuss allowable expenses, documentation of expenses, and reporting requirements. This may include meeting with your funders to ask questions, doing background research, or downloading fiscal guidance from funders' websites.

- **Finalize your coordinated financing plan.** If you have completed the steps above, much of a coordinated plan is already taking shape. A completed financing plan will increase everyone's confidence that funding is being used appropriately. A coordinated financing plan helps apply cost allocation and collaborative budgeting. Some technical features of a coordinated financing plan include:
  - The budget for the approach
  - How cost sharing will be carried out – ensure financial systems are aligned
  - The tracking and reporting systems that will be used for finances, as well as programmatic evaluation
Funding Coordination

Implement, track, and improve.

- Create regular meeting opportunities for program managers to update one another on current projects and encourage collaboration around program vision and goals.
- Establish ongoing communications and maintain relationships with leadership and funders. Communicate about changes and updates to the project as soon as possible.
- Train staff and develop procedures for new staff to ensure a common vision and understanding.
- Consider ways to incorporate a quality improvement process into this work.
- Check out our lessons learned from the field for more improvement ideas!
WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?
The following pages include an example of how one IVP Program might braid two funding streams together to support a specific SRPF approach.

VISION
Our state IVP program is pooling resources together across the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Title V Block Grant and Center for Disease Control (CDC) Core State Injury Prevention Program (Core SIPP) funding streams to scale up our SRPF approach of choice: community coordination of resources.

OVERVIEW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Stream</th>
<th>Core State Injury Prevention Program (SIPP)</th>
<th>Title V Block Grant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding Availability</td>
<td>$250,000 Annually</td>
<td>(Portion of) $16,000,000 Annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funder</td>
<td>Centers for Disease Control (CDC) National Center for Injury Prevention and Control</td>
<td>Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IVP Focus</td>
<td>- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) - Transportation Safety - Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) - Local Priorities</td>
<td>Access to Quality Maternal &amp; Child Healthcare Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managed By</td>
<td>State Health Department (Injury &amp; Violence Prevention Program)</td>
<td>State Health Department (Maternal &amp; Child Health Program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>Annual Report (starts in October)</td>
<td>Quarterly Report (starts in January)</td>
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Example at A Glance

SRPF FOCUS
Community coordination of resources is a shared protective factor for multiple outcomes of interest that are relevant to both funding sources, including intimate partner violence (Title V Block Grant), adverse childhood experiences (Core SIPP), and suicide (Core SIPP). By focusing our work around this shared protective factor, we aim to ensure that ample resources are dedicated to this effort.

Our set coordinated funding plan will track funding, as well as measure our impact. By doing this we will be able to demonstrate to all funders that we are making progress towards preventing multiple forms of injury and violence.

The focus for the seed grants will be on aligning local services with community needs, improving health outcomes (specifically suicide, IPV, and ACEs), and addressing social determinants of health. Grantees will utilize the funds to develop a coordinated approach to prevention specific to their community. A state IVP program manager will manage the overall work. Grant applications will be developed and shaped by partners.

The goal - increase access to community resources for populations most disproportionately impacted by inequities.
Example at A Glance

Partners for This Work
- IVP Program Manager
- IVP Epidemiologist
- Maternal Child Health coordinator
- Suicide Prevention Coordinator
- Rape Prevention Coordinator
- Title V Project Director
- Local Community Partners
- Fiscal Administration
- Funders

Socio-Ecological Focus: Community

SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES
To advance our focus on enhancing community coordination of resources, we will:
- Identify measurable outcomes for the grants that show impact to funders and partners.
- Identify activities suggested by the CDC as accepted activities for the funding program in CORE SIPP and the Title V Block Grant that impact community coordination of resources.
- Align funding stakeholders to help them see how coordinating resources across the community will affect their topic of interest.
- Identify, engage, and collaborate with partners who have the expertise and reach with populations disproportionately affected by ACEs, intimate partner violence, and suicide to expand the reach of our seed grant applications.
- Ensure the seed grant reports include actionable data from surveillance, assessments, and evaluation activities to inform public health actions.
- Designate and align funding for identified activities in Title V Block Grant and CORE SIPP so that they strategically focus on community coordination of resources. We will look specifically at:
  - Milestones and deliverables based on respective project periods.
  - Identifying a way to measure progress.
  - Ensuring the spend-down funds are appropriately set and each grant is billed correctly.
  - Ways in which we can continue efforts if one funding stream drops and/or others come on board.
## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Below is an example of what it looks like when we map out the resources each funding source can provide for our effort. It also maps out the outcomes our funding sources are seeking to achieve connected to our effort.

### Our Focus: Community Coordination of Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources CORE SIPP funding can provide</th>
<th>Resources Block Grant funding can provide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 FTE staff position</td>
<td>2 FTE staff positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipients can use up to 25% of their award to address local priority injury topics (IE: drowning, older adult falls, or suicide)</td>
<td>Encourages states to blend and braid funding in order to support quality improvement efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of funding goes to data surveillance</td>
<td>Qualitative data collection activities are included in the funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection to statewide collaborations in different IVP topics</td>
<td>Oversee a steering committee focused on child neglect Early Childhood Action Plan development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oversite and connections to partner-led community-level programs</td>
<td>Connections to cross-program initiatives lead by a Children’s Developmental Service Agencies (CDSAs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Outcomes for Core SIPP that connect to our Vision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes for Core SIPP that connect to our Vision</th>
<th>Outcomes for Block Grant that connect to our Vision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase knowledge and utilization of emerging data sources for injury surveillance</td>
<td>Improve access to high quality integrated health care services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase understanding of injury among populations at risk</td>
<td>Improve access to mental/behavioral health services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase stakeholder inclusion in program planning, implementation, and evaluation</td>
<td>Increase health equity, eliminate disparities, and address social determinants of health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase integration among multi-sectoral partners with shared commitment to injury prevention</td>
<td>Promote safe, stable, and nurturing relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase understanding of risk and protective factors for identified disproportionately-affected populations</td>
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There are some common misconceptions about coordinated funding. Below are some counterpoints worth considering if you are going to pursue this approach!

“I can’t do that with my funds.”
Braiding and layering are not mechanisms for commingling funds. Detailed budgeting and reporting processes should be used to ensure accountability. Talk with leadership and funders about the process, and keep them engaged. Talk with others who have used braiding to fund their work.

“My grant requires funding evidence-based interventions only and doesn’t allow innovation.”
The interventions will still be there, but how we fund and discuss their impact will look different.

“This doesn’t impact me.”
This type of approach involves the whole team. We often begin with programs with common elements and expand as needs and synergies become apparent. If you work in the administration- ensure the inclusion of braiding, layering, and allocation language. If you work in surveillance- help find the data that builds support for the vision and goals. If you are programmatic – look for commonalities and shared upstream links between your programs and others.

“How do I even start this?”
Consider starting small. Find programs, grants, and interventions with common elements or overlap, and expand over time. Look for natural opportunities to expand a pilot (e.g., competitive grant cycles) or link up with others whose programs share similar upstream root causes.
“Grants are so rigid!”
Use your voice and advocate for more flexibility in funding. Advocate for business processes that ensure accountability but provide the necessary flexibility to implement the initiative. Set the tone for others, too- if you are developing a grant opportunity, include braiding, layering, and allocation language.

CONCLUSION

With the growing emphasis on shared risk and protective factors, so is the need to coordinate services across sectors. Blending and braiding funds can provide an innovative approach, ensuring a seamless system of services that optimizes health and well-being.20

State IVP programs need to be able to embrace and operationalize SRPF approaches to make themselves effective and sustainable in their prevention efforts. By bolstering states’ abilities to weave funding streams and focusing on relationships between outcomes, the approach supports the sustainability of prevention programs to be maintained over funding cycles and as funding streams start and stop.21

Despite the promise of this approach, implementation challenges remain, and creative approaches are needed for blending or braiding funds. This document is just one source outlining the process. More examples from states will follow as efforts connected to this topic continue.

Prevention partners wanting to implement this type of effort within their programs should engage with colleagues nationwide to share their experiences, learn from others, and advance the field.
REFERENCES


The following Safe States team contributed to the design and development of this resource:

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