



Tips for Implementing Programming and Conducting Evaluations from Former PREIS and Tribal PREP Grantees

In this tip sheet, we highlight tips and lessons learned from former PREIS and Tribal PREP grantees related to the following topics: (1) using the needs assessment and planning phase; (2) incorporating culturally appropriate content; (3) planning for technology if integrating an app into programming; (4) securing and sustaining partnerships; (5) recruiting and enrolling youth into programs; (6) maintaining youth attendance and engagement during program delivery; (7) hiring, training, and retaining staff; and (8) collecting and managing data from youth.

In 2016, the Family and Youth Services Bureau at the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, funded cohorts of Personal Responsibility Education Innovative Strategies (PREIS) and Tribal Personal Responsibility Education Program (Tribal PREP) grantees. PREIS grantees provided innovative adolescent pregnancy prevention programs to various youth populations, including youth who are pregnant or parenting, from racial or ethnic minority groups, experiencing homelessness, living in foster care or public housing, or involved with the juvenile justice system. PREIS grantees conducted rigorous impact evaluations of their programs. Tribal PREP grantees provided culturally appropriate adolescent pregnancy programs for American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) youth and conducted descriptive evaluations of their programs.

This tip sheet summarizes lessons learned that 12 PREIS and 8 Tribal PREP grantees shared during the fifth year of their grants. The tips are organized into eight topics that might be relevant as organizations implement adolescent pregnancy prevention programming and conduct evaluations of their programs.

For more information on the PREIS grant program, please visit <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/programs/adolescent-pregnancy-prevention/programs/preis>, and for more information on the Tribal PREP grant program, please visit <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/tribal-prep>.



Using the Needs Assessment and Planning Phase

All Tribal PREP grantees used a dedicated needs assessment and planning phase at the start of their grant period to prepare for the full implementation phase. From their experiences, they shared lessons on how to use this time effectively. (PREIS grantees did not have a needs assessment and planning phase so did not report on this topic.)

- **Use this time to foster relationships with tribal leaders.** Grantees noted the needs assessment and planning phase allowed them time to be intentional in communicating with tribal leaders to build buy-in and support. One grantee presented visually appealing summaries of data they collected during this phase to tribal leaders, which helped keep the leaders informed and engaged with the project. Another grantee shared they did not budget enough time for relationship building, so staff did not have sufficient time to interview tribal elders. This grantee recommended that future grantees set aside sufficient time and resources to fully engage tribal elders.
- **Pilot the intervention and data collection measures with the population you serve.** Grantees noted that they had youth review the potential curriculum materials and data collection measures during the needs assessment and planning phase. However, one grantee ran out of time to fully pilot their new measures as they had hoped, which created challenges later during program implementation as they discovered some measures were not working as intended.
- **Gather information on strengths, assets, and potential barriers.** Grantees noted the importance of using the needs assessment and planning phase to find ways to foster youth's strengths and promote resiliency, as well as identify areas in which they might need help.



Incorporating Culturally Appropriate Content

All Tribal PREP grantees created or adapted existing programs to make them culturally appropriate for the AI/AN youth they served. (No PREIS grantees reported on this topic.)

- **Collaborate closely with tribal leaders.** Most Tribal PREP grantees noted they relied on relationships with tribal leaders and elders to ensure their programs were culturally appropriate. For the sections of their program on reproductive health, one grantee asked tribal leaders for information on how the tribe had historically shared reproductive health information so they could address that in the curriculum. The grantee also worked with elders to include cultural activities as part of the program, such as beading, gourd dancing, storytelling, rites of passage, and various ceremonies specific to their tribe.
- **Recognize the importance of a holistic, trauma-informed approach.** Tribal PREP grantees found their curricula needed to have a trauma-informed approach that accounted for historical traumas and recognized the effect trauma has on AI/AN communities. In addition, grantees sought to develop a holistic approach in their curricula to address many risks that youth face, including from sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy, drug and alcohol use, and domestic and dating violence.



Planning for Technology if Integrating an App into the Program

As an innovative strategy to serve youth, five PREIS grantees created or integrated an app into their programs. These grantees shared lessons learned on how to best use apps within youth programs. (No Tribal PREP grantees reported on this topic.)

- **Pilot apps in specific implementation settings to check technology capabilities.** One grantee shared that they pilot tested their app with students but not in the specific schools in which they were implementing their project. The grantee did not learn of school Wi-Fi issues until full implementation, so their pilot was not as informative as it could have been.
- **Expect to update the app over time.** Grantees learned to expect to make frequent updates to their apps, to keep them functioning on Apple and Android devices or to incorporate feedback from youth or staff.



Securing and Sustaining Partnerships

PREIS and Tribal PREP grantees found it beneficial to get feedback from partners, provide partners with support, and have partners serve as program champions in the community.

- **Establish dedicated processes, such as site visits, to obtain feedback from partners.** Several grantees used regular meetings with partners to monitor what was working well and what could be improved in their partnerships. One grantee had semi-annual, in-person site visits with their partners, which allowed deeper conversations with staff at partner organizations, including frontline staff and supervisors, and provided time to acknowledge successes and brainstorm solutions to challenges.
- **Provide stipends to partner sites for their participation in the project.** Two grantees provided payments to their partners to help secure partners' participation. The money helped cover the partner staff's time spent on recruiting youth or supporting the logistics of implementation and data collection activities. However, one grantee found the stipends were not large enough to overcome their partners' capacity issues. They suggested future grantees have a stipend large enough to pay for a half-time staff person focused on the project.
- **Seek a range of partners and draw on existing relationships.** One grantee found having a variety of partners helped their program, as the partners became program champions in the community during the implementation period. Another grantee noted tribal leaders, in particular, had deep relationships with schools and other organizations in their community, and by asking a tribal leader for assistance, the grantee built a relationship with a new partner more quickly.



Recruiting and Enrolling Youth into Programs

Each PREIS grantee established enrollment goals and identified procedures for recruiting and enrolling youth to meet their goals. (No Tribal PREP grantees reported on this topic.)

- **Be flexible and persistent when collecting parental consent forms and consider providing incentives to parents or site staff to encourage them to return consent forms.** Grantees required parental consent forms for youth to participate in the program and the evaluation. During the grant, they adjusted their parental consent procedures to maximize the return rate. One grantee that implemented programming in schools worked with classroom teachers to improve the return rate of the parental consent forms. The teachers agreed to assign the consent form as a class assignment or give students extra credit for returning the form—whether the parent provided permission for their child to participate in the program or not. If 90

percent of a class returned the forms, the grantee gave the teacher a \$50 gift card.¹ During the COVID-19 pandemic, another grantee switched from written consent forms to verbal consent processes with legal guardians, which simplified the consent process for youth in out-of-home care. Two other grantees offered parents incentives for signing the consent form, whether they gave permission for their child to participate or not. For instance, one grantee provided \$10 gift cards to parents who returned the consent form. Overall, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) should review and approve programs' procedures for obtaining parental consent, including any proposed incentives.

- **Develop a tailored recruitment and enrollment plan for each site.** Grantees recognized each site they worked with was unique, so they needed to craft specific recruitment and enrollment processes for each. For instance, when working with schools to recruit students, grantees noted they needed to find the people at each school who had time, interest, and access to youth and their parents, such as principals or parent liaisons.



Maintaining Youth Attendance and Engagement During Program Delivery

PREIS and Tribal PREP grantees identified strategies to encourage youth to attend program sessions and engage in the projects both during and outside of program sessions.

- **Provide transportation assistance or rewards to youth for attending sessions.** Grantees learned that some youth experienced transportation barriers, which made it difficult for them to consistently attend sessions. In response, a few grantees offered participants transportation services. Others used raffles and fun events, such as scavenger hunts or celebrations, to encourage attendance.
- **Be aware and respectful of the needs of youth and communities.** During this grant period, the communities that grantees served faced not only the COVID-19 pandemic but also hurricanes, incidents of gun violence, and other disruptive events. In response, one grantee prioritized a trauma-informed approach when communicating with youth and community members and offered flexibility in the timing of program sessions. Grantee staff also showed support and built trusting relationships within the communities by organizing meal deliveries, attending funerals, and engaging closely with community partners.
- **Use two facilitators to help provide emotional support.** One grantee found their program worked best when two facilitators implemented the program together. One facilitator delivered the lesson's content, and the other monitored students' reactions to the content and offered additional support, if needed. This grantee reported youth noticed the facilitators were looking out for them and felt that this improved youth engagement in the program.
- **Encourage youth to participate in programs, services, or activities outside of the program.** Grantees gave youth opportunities to get involved with their organizations and the broader community outside of the program. This included encouraging participation in youth advisory group meetings, an educational poster campaign, planning for a youth summit, and community service opportunities.

¹ All incentives purchased with grant funds must meet the requirements set by FYSB and must be approved by the grantee's federal project officer.



Hiring, Training, and Retaining Staff

Having well-trained, qualified staff was key to the success of PREIS and Tribal PREP projects.

- **Provide training for facilitators on mental health and sexual health topics.** Grantees recognized that staff needed to be prepared to address youth's mental health needs, including suicide prevention, so staff attended trainings on mental health awareness, trauma, and covering sensitive topics with youth. In addition, some facilitators, particularly from partner sites, were not initially comfortable discussing sexual health topics with youth. In these cases, grantee staff increased support to facilitators and provided dedicated time for facilitators to ask questions and gain comfort with the material.
- **Provide additional support on cultural elements of the curriculum.** When implementing culturally appropriate curricula, some grantees had facilitators from different cultural backgrounds who were not necessarily familiar with the culture on which the curriculum was centered. For instance, one Tribal PREP grantee had non-Native facilitators and found they were less comfortable with the cultural aspects of the curriculum. To support them, the grantee held monthly meetings during which experienced facilitators modeled program delivery, and the grantee connected facilitators with resources and training from the community Wisdom-keeper. The grantee also provided time for the facilitators to brainstorm solutions to implementing cultural content when they did not feel totally comfortable, including having youth take the lead or inviting other Native leaders such as teachers, elders, or parents to assist with those activities.
- **Train more staff than you anticipate needing.** Grantees noted they learned to expect turnover, particularly among partner site staff. To help manage turnover, they trained more facilitators than they expected to need during the grant; they also trained some grantee staff (who were not expected to implement the curriculum regularly) so they could continue to implement despite turnover.
- **Adjust the staffing plan and approach to fit the needs of the program.** Grantees developed staffing plans to complete their projects but recognized they needed to adjust the plans during the grant. For instance, one grantee realized the need to add a new staff member focused exclusively on recruitment to help the program reach its enrollment goals. Another grantee found that although they initially planned to have partner staff help implement the program, the partner experienced high staff turnover. To avoid having to continually train new partner staff, the grantee decided to have only grantee staff implement the program.



Collecting and Managing Data from Youth

To strengthen their impact and descriptive evaluations, PREIS and Tribal PREP grantees used a variety of strategies to collect data from as many youth as possible at program entry and at least one follow-up time point.

- **Maintain a variety of data collection methods to increase response rates.** Grantees recognized they needed multiple approaches to collect data, and no single strategy was always successful. For example, grantees noted the importance of having multiple modes of survey administration, including online, in-person, or phone options. In areas where Internet capabilities might be limited (such as rural areas), having phone or in-person options was essential. One grantee also hosted parties for students to complete entry and program exit surveys in person.
- **Increase incentives for youth for each subsequent completed follow-up survey.** Grantees found it helpful to have larger incentives for longer-term follow-up surveys because it was harder to connect with youth over time.
- **Seek youth feedback on incentives.** One grantee gathered feedback from youth (who were not involved in their evaluation) about the incentives offered. Through this process, the grantee realized their gift card options were not appealing to youth and identified local and regional options that better fit youth's interests.
- **Have two-week survey windows (at minimum) for program exit surveys.** One grantee initially administered their program exit survey on the last day of class but eventually expanded to a two-week survey window to allow more youth to respond, including those who missed the last class.
- **Include data collection responsibilities as part of memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with partners.** If partners are involved in data collection for an evaluation, MOUs with partners should detail these responsibilities, to avoid confusion during the grant period.

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