

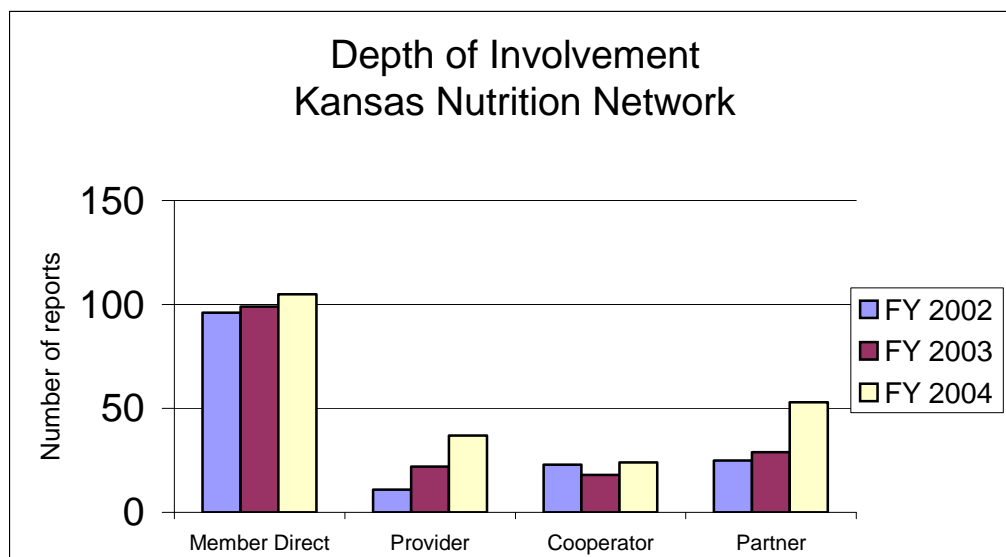
“Long-term success means building partnerships.”

(Alberta Frost, Director, Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation. Conference Highlights, February 24-26, 2003, p. 29 www.fns.usda.gov/nutritionconference)

The Kansas Nutrition Network (KNN) has as its mission to develop and expand partnerships which provide nutrition and physical activity education, and improve access to nutrition resources and nutrition and physical activity education to improve the health of low income Kansans. KNN accomplishes this through a variety of methods, including bi-monthly partner meetings, monthly email newsletters, a web page, and coordinating the State Nutrition Action Plan (SNAP). See www.kansasnutritionnetwork.org. KNN uses two methods to evaluate the strength of its partnerships: Depths of Partnership and partnership self-assessment.

Each KNN partner completes a Depth of Partnership form during KNN meetings. A **member** attends meetings and participates in on-going dialog and information sharing. A **provider** shares brochures, handouts, or other materials from their own organization. A **cooperator** assists with the outreach of other KNN organizations, such as distributing brochures of other organizations, or putting information about other organizations in newsletters. A **partnership** is a collaboration to create something new, such as a joint grant proposal or a joint project.

The number, type, depth, and strength of partnerships involved in the social marketing of nutrition education efforts can be important indicators of change. The greater the number and variety of community partnerships and the deeper the collaborations among these partners, the greater will be the exposure of the target audiences to social marketing messages and affordable and nutritious food (*J Nut Ed* 33 supp 1: S8-S9, 2001).



As can be seen from the graph, the number and depth of the partnerships has been increasing since this tool was first utilized in FY 2002, thus increasing the possible exposure of the target audience to nutrition education messages.

Each of the “reports” on the Depth of Partnership graph has a “story.” For example, one agency reported that they provided space at their booth at the Kansas State Fair for food stamp outreach to be conducted, at no cost to the food stamp agency. This type of partnership is not reflected as “direct nutrition education to the target audience,” but is a vital partnership to help persons who are eligible for food stamps receive that information. Another report reflected in the Depth of Partnership graph is a grant application that was funded to provide nutrition education materials to 5,000 Head Start children and their families. The grant was submitted and overseen not by KNN, but by a partner agency, which contracted with KNN to provide the nutrition materials and training to Head Start staff.

Additionally, KNN tracks “Indirect Member” contacts through the KNN monthly email newsletter and the KNN website. The KNN newsletter reached **924 individuals and organizations during FY 2004**. The KNN newsletter provides information on issues affecting persons in poverty and current nutrition issues such as overweight and obesity.

The second means to evaluate the strength of KNN’s partnerships is through the use of self-assessments. During FY 2004, this was completed using the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool, a reliable web-based tool which assesses how well the collaborative process is working. The tool is provided at no charge by the Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health with funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

The Partnership Self-Assessment Tool assesses the success of a partnership’s collaborative process by measuring the level of synergy. Synergy is a key indicator of a successful collaborative process because it reflects **the extent to which the partnership can do more than any of its individual participants**. Put another way, a partnership’s level of synergy indicates the extent to which the partnership, as a whole, is greater than the sum of its parts (Partnership Self-Assessment Tool, Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health, p. 4 www.partnershiptool.net).

The Early Childhood Action Team (ECAT) is a working group of KNN. ECAT has evolved from the Preschool Task Force of Kansas LEAN, KDHE, into a collaboration of agencies and individuals working on children’s health and wellness issues through KNN. The members of ECAT recently completed a self-assessment of the team, and the findings were reported by the Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies on Health on 09/09/04. **ECAT’s overall synergy score was 4.4 out of a possible score of 5, which reflects the extent to which the participants are accomplishing more together than they can on their own.**

During 2001-2002, KNN contracted with Best Start Social Marketing to conduct interviews of KNN partner agencies to ascertain attitudes regarding KNN’s mission,

relative success at fulfilling that mission, and how to improve efforts to better serve the partner agencies.

What stands out in this series of interviews is the overwhelming positive experiences that partner representatives share regarding their participation in KNN. While ideas and recommendations for future direction of the organization are offered, there are no negative findings in the data, nor negative comments found among interviews. This is highly unusual in studies of partnership and stakeholder relations that Best Start has previously conducted. Partner representatives perceive KNN as an organization that is functioning at a high level in terms of meeting the partner organization's needs, achieving organizational goals, and effectively supporting interaction among partner organizations. (Kansas Nutrition Network Partner Interviews, Best Start Social Marketing, March 2002, p 3)

KNN is all about building partnerships. To more effectively provide nutrition education and improve access to nutrition resources, including food stamps, to low income Kansans, KNN works to build and sustain partnerships. KNN has consistently shown growth in developing and supporting partnerships, and KNN partners report that they perceive KNN as functioning at a high level in supporting partner agencies. KNN helps agencies achieve more by working together through KNN than they can by working independently to improve the health of low income Kansans.

FY 2004 Nutrition Education Highlights:

Head Start program staff were trained in *Berry Berry Good*, a nutrition and physical activity promotion program for preschool age children. Resources were provided for 5,000 children, including classroom books, hoops and scarves, take-home parent materials and scarves. This was provided through a contract with the Kansas Association of Community Action Programs.

In cooperation with the Kansas Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Programs, *The ABC's of Toddler Nutrition Time* was developed, a nutrition education program for toddlers in child care programs. Through CACFP, training was provided to 268 Early Head Start staff, Parents as Teachers staff, CACFP sponsoring agencies, health department staff, and others providing training to child care staff.

KNN coordinated the SNAP for Kansas. In conjunction with Body Walk, nutrition and physical activity promotion events were held throughout Barton County during the month of March 2004. More than 500 WIC, Head Start, senior center, and community individuals and families participated.