



A Contextual Look at SRTS Implementation in Texas: Results of Qualitative Interviews

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Background

- **Texas Childhood Obesity Prevention Policy Evaluation (T-COPPE)**
8 year project designed to evaluate the statewide implementation of:
 - Safe Routes to School Program
 - Revised WIC Food Package
- **During final year of data collection:**
 - Schools still implementing SRTS grant
 - Some clarification was needed
- **Interviews conducted** to understand the SRTS grant process and implementation



Purpose

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of the SRTS program in Texas, including:

- Grant planning process
- Implementation
- Future plans for the SRTS program
- Other school safety programs





Sample



- **Community Level Interviews (n=31):**
 - Selected from 8 Texas communities that received 2007 SRTS grants and were part of the T-COPPE sample
 - Infrastructure: n=15
 - Non-Infrastructure: n=16
- **State Level Interviews (n=3):**
 - TxDOT Bicycle Advisory Committee members



Design

- **February to May 2014**
 - Developed structured phone interviews
 - Conducted Interviews
 - Recorded and transcribed
 - Transcribed responses organized and grouped according to thematic elements

- **Interview questionnaires**
 - Series of open-ended and multiple-choice with follow-up
 - Separate for community and state-level





Design

Interview Structure

Planning

Implementation

Sustainability





Results - Planning

- Why did communities apply?
 - Saw a need to improve safety at their schools, especially in low-income neighborhoods; and/or
 - Wanted to increase opportunities for physical activity by enhancing the built environment around the school.
- SRTS Teams included multiple city/community partners.
- All sought public input and received
 - strong opinions; or
 - very little input.

Results - Implementation

- Achievements:
 - Improved infrastructure
 - Perceived increased walking to/from school
 - Enhanced neighborhood pride
 - Improved commitment from schools
- Barriers:
 - Lack of communication with granting agency/community
 - Changes in construction design standards
 - Regulatory issues
 - Lack of up-front funding





Results - Implementation



- Mostly positive reactions from parents, students, and teachers.
- SRTS Plan used through process but seen as a “living document.”
- Multiple outreach strategies:
 - School presentations,
 - Community meetings, and
 - Advertising/PSAs.
- Most did not conduct formal evaluation.
- Believe environment safer for students to walk/bike to/from school.



Results - Sustainability

- Continue to look for more funds:
 - Sustain safety/education programs, and
 - Create improvements at other campuses.
- Use grant writers or city/district staff to locate and write grants for more funds.
- Believe the program is important and needed in Texas:
 - Need dedicated funding, and
 - Open to more communities.





Conclusions

- Communities in Texas want to provide their students with a safe environment to walk and bike to and from school.
- SRTS program was perceived as beneficial due to providing funds for infrastructure and education projects.
- Challenges with communication and navigation through approval processes and policies caused delays in the completion of the project.





Implications for Practice and Policy

- Implementation without subsequent technical assistance and support is difficult and inefficient.
- Communities that had dedicated grant writers or resources, viable partnerships with local decision-makers, and community support were more likely to report more favorable results.
- Future grants should include at least partial funding up-front, rather than relying totally on cost reimbursement policies, especially in smaller communities with less resources.



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