The value of a cost-benefit analysis in empowering BackTrack staff to conduct program evaluation

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Presentation aims

Capacity strengthening that occurred through a collaboration of program staff, evaluation researchers and health economists:

1. Backtrack program
2. Project collaboration
3. Cost-benefit analysis (CBA)
4. Collaborating on the CBA
5. Value of collaboration for BackTrack staff
6. Value of collaboration for health economists
1. What is BackTrack?

Community-based multi-component program for high risk youth in Armidale, NSW

AIM: To offer young people who have lost their way an opportunity to reconnect with their education and training, to become work ready, find jobs, lead happy and productive lives and participate fully in the community.
1. What is **BackTrack**?

www.backtrack.org.au

5 core components comprised of flexible activities:
e.g. Ironman Welding, Ag Lads, Paws Up, Links to Learning, BackTrack school, Youth forum...

*Flexible attendance*
2. The project collaboration

- 2006 Bernie Shakeshaft starts BackTrack
- 2012 NHMRC grant awarded to NDARC (UNSW) – program evaluation; HMRI health economists – economic evaluation
- NDARC researchers: **UNSW ethics** - BackTrack staff must conduct data collection for evaluation
- BackTrack staff
- HMRI health economists
3. Cost-benefit analysis (CBA) – Why?

- Policy advocacy and program sustainability
- A CBA assesses whether the monetary value of the benefits is greater than the costs of obtaining these benefits, expressed as a benefit cost ratio.

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\text{BCR} = \frac{\text{5 year monetary value of benefits}}{\text{5 year program costs}} = \frac{\$10,000,000}{\$3,000,000} = 3.3:1
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e.g. 5 \text{ year program costs} = \$3,000,000.
5 \text{ year monetary value of benefits} = \$10,000,000.
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4. Collaborating on the CBA

**DEMAND:** Disengaged high risk young people – 14 - 17yrs

**COST:** $12,000 per person

**ACTIVITIES:** Paws Up, Ironman Welding, Ag Lads...

**OUTCOMES:** Self knowledge; sense of belonging; life skills; engagement with family & community; education; work ready skills; self esteem...

**END USERS:** participants; teachers; police; community members; service providers...

**IMPACTS (Benefits):** reduced risks of crime & incarceration, homelessness, suicide; reduced health service utilisation; improved rates of employment, income, community safety...

- Identifying real **costs**, not just $$ - $20,000 per person per annum; more about translation (e.g. The Shed)
- Identifying benefits e.g. homelessness, suicide, belonging
- Discussions re data & how better to collect it
- Request – find out how much community value BackTrack - discrete choice experiment (DCE)
4. DCE

- Survey conducted on the streets of Armidale
- How much were community willing-to-pay for a program like BackTrack to address antisocial behaviour and youth crime?
- BackTrack chosen 75% of the time
- $150/ household/year
5. Value of collaboration - BackTrack staff

- Value of evaluation research and rigorous methods
- Data collection skill strengthening
- Data integrity – (bias, quality, choice of measures)
- Value of prospective data collection
- Opportunity to contribute to data collection methodology & design & incorporate in day to day work
- How a CBA comes together
- Purpose of a CBA – policy advocacy -> program sustainability
- Empowerment to prepare for and contribute to future economic evaluation
- Translation; scalability
6. Value of collaboration - Economists

- Greater understanding of the BackTrack program
- Appreciation of the challenges and complexities of a multi-component program for high risk youth
- Insights into what participants value
- Insights into broader benefits – what families & the community value
- Practitioner knowledge & how to engage them in the CBA process
- More comprehensive economic evaluation
The concluding message

1. Respect
2. Opportunity
3. Collaboration
4. Empowerment

Capacity strengthening
Thank you

Questions?