

Quarter/Dates of Activity: Q2 October 2007 through December 2007
Seed Grant: San Joaquin Valley eHealth Network Project
Grantee Organization: School of Natural Sciences, University of California, Merced
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Description of Quarter's Activity/Impact on Partnership Goals & Objectives

The goals planned for the 2nd quarter included:

Completion of the 1st quarter's unfinished activities, including:

1. Recruiting a project manager and data analyst
2. Coordination of two regional stakeholder meetings

Progress on the next steps in the planning process, including:

1. Conducting needs assessments for SJV sites
2. Site visits and analysis of data
3. Finalization of site selections and equipment specifications for each site, and
4. Recruitment of project coordinators

Some of these goals have been completed, while others are in progress.

Major new opportunities in telemedicine for California were realized during this reporting period. The University of California system was awarded a large grant from the FCC to create a California Telehealth Network. This project includes funds for statewide site assessment for telemedicine, development of connectivity and implementation plans for a large number of potential telemedicine sites in California. The statewide coordination of this project is being managed by the University of California Office of the President (UCOP). We provided listings of 90 potential sites in the San Joaquin Valley, 60 of which were included in the grant proposal. The site assessment tools that are under beta testing this week are the same that we will use in our site assessments. Thus activities around leveraging these new partnerships and collaboration to maximize opportunities with the FCC with those of the seed grant funded network are under way.

Furthermore, the planning and development of a California-wide Telehealth network has resulted in a new way of thinking about telemedicine for the Valley and how UC Merced can most effectively leverage its telemedicine resources to support the eHealth Centers to be implemented during the funding period.

Second Quarter Activities

Staff Recruitment

Status: Completed / In Progress

- Telemedicine Project Manager – Hired, December 17
- Data Analyst – Cancelled; position no longer needed due to FCC project (see below). A new budget will be prepared to reflect the change and provide more on site assistance for education and training on the eHealth Center sites to ensure sustainability is established.
- Site Coordinator/s: on hold; to be recruited at site locations once sites are selected

Regional Meetings

Status: Postponed

- Regional meetings will take place after the data from the site assessment survey of Valley site is completed (see below).

Site Assessment

Status: In Progress

Site assessment lagged somewhat behind the initially anticipated timeline due in part to delay in recruiting a telemedicine project manager and the necessity for us to coordinate our survey/assessment efforts with the FCC/CTN project, which is being coordinated by the University of California Office of the President (UCOP).

The FCC survey tool is now in the final stages of completion. This survey will cover 135 rural/underserved sites located within the SJV, and was expanded (from 91) in order to take advantage of the opportunity to leverage FCC funds to fully understand the needs and interests of as many providers in our area as possible, in relation to their interests in using telemedicine.

Our combined survey process is expected to be completed towards the end of January, 2008, at which time site visits will ensue to develop deeper local relationships and to assess equipment/connectivity needs in order to determine our site-selection. UC Merced's four project sites for eHealth Centers are anticipated to be selected by the end of February, 2008 and will be among those identified to be high priority in the regional assessment and connectivity plan.

Connectivity Planning

Status: In Progress

A meeting with UCD, focused on technical implementation design for the FCC project, was held in December. The technical plan for a "flat, open" network across the state of California is under development, and will be further evaluated based on the questionnaire responses received, which will soon be forthcoming. It will be important for UC Merced to coordinate our selected sites with the goals of this larger connectivity plan. It is expected that a clear picture of the FCC/CTN plan will be completed in the next couple of months.

Coordination of Statewide Telemedicine Efforts & Resources

Status: In Process

A Project Planning Team Meeting (UC Merced, UCSF-Fresno, UCD, OSHPD) was held in November 2007 to discuss project timelines and how UC Merced's telemedicine efforts could synergize with FCC Project activities. Subsequent meetings focused on planning coordination of resources and overall telemedicine goals between the funding sources recently received by UC Merced, UC Davis, and the UCOP. It is generally agreed that the massive, multiple-source funding for California telemedicine received as of late requires a prudent, coordinated effort by the University of California, so as not to duplicate efforts, waste valuable funding or encourage competition. It is expected that UC Merced will participate in the state's larger efforts in telemedicine as a key player for the SJV. We believe that the simultaneous telemedicine efforts now taking place in California will greatly strengthen our original project and provide the SJV with greater opportunities to participate in telemedicine than we previously expected.

Planned Activities for next 3-6 months:

1. Complete statewide questionnaire process including 135 sites in the San Joaquin Valley
2. Conduct nine on-site assessments of potential SJV sites
3. Finalize site selections and equipment specifications
4. Create telemedicine website
5. Create telemedicine marketing plan
6. Project manager attends UCD Center for Health & Technology training
7. Hire on-site project coordinator/s
8. Re-budget Seed Grant to reflect changes in needs re: equipment and staffing

Challenges/Problems/Bottlenecks/Feedback

Major challenges ensued in two areas during the 2nd quarter:

1. Delays in identifying qualified individuals to manage the Telemedicine Initiative continued to be a problem for us last quarter. The position of Project Manager was filled on December 17th with the hiring of Jennifer Smith, who has extensive experience in operating rural clinics, so the project is now proceeding rapidly.
2. It is critical that we coordinate our efforts with UCOP's efforts with FCC funds, in order to avoid confusion and duplication of site evaluation, analysis and connectivity efforts. The FCC funding will install broad telemedicine ready access in the SJV and this is expected to greatly minimize assessment and implementation costs for us. Now that the FCC assessment tool is developed, the project is expected to move forward swiftly.