Change Often
Social Innovation Firm
I M P A C T   A N A L Y S I S

UNCG Project Resilience

to improve is to change...
to perfect is to Change Often.

Prepared for

Dr. Erica Payton Foh

Associate Professor &
Faculty Fellow, UNCG
Center for Housing &
Community Studies

Edpayton@UNCG.edu

Point of Contact

Cyril Jefferson

Principal Consultant,
Change Often - Social
Innovation Firm

Cyril@ChangeOftenLLC.com

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Project Summary

Project Resilience was an 8-week resiliency and youth violence prevention program led by the collaborative efforts of the University of North Carolina Greensboro's Center for Housing & Community Studies, Change Often - Social Innovation Firm, D-UP Inc., and Resilience High Point. Youth participants in grades 6-12 and their college mentors met to attend weekly workshops to engage in mentoring activities and to develop skills in resiliency & advocacy.

Our intentions were to build on previous work being done in this area by **creating a community intervention initiative that targets youth who are at risk for, are involved in, or have been victims of community violence**. We used a community empowerment approach by leveraging curriculum from the Community Resiliency Model (CRM) as a framework for developing the program. To ensure sustainability, Project Resilience used a leadership development system designed to help at-risk youth, young adults, and survivors of violence become agents of change in their community.

Key elements of this project included:

- **Involvement of community leaders and residents** as advisors in the development and implementation of the program.

- Determination of program effectiveness through **measurements of anticipated behavior and overall health outcomes** (e.g. increased levels of conflict resolution and resiliency skills and reduction in youth violence and victimization). These will be measured at 3, 6, and 12-month time points.

- Youth participant involvement in **community events advocating against violence and for policies to address structural issues** (e.g. neighborhood poverty, food & housing insecurity, racism, and lack of access to quality health care & mental health services) that exacerbates racial/ethnic disparities in homicides and firearm injuries.

- Development of a mentoring program in collaboration with a youth serving organization (D-UP, Inc.) and other community partners to **increase protective factors known to reduce the risk for community and youth violence** (e.g. provide connections to caring adults & positive role models, exploration of career options, and development of leadership, entrepreneurial, conflict resolution, and resiliency skills).

Role of the C.O. Team

Change Often provided expertise & tactical support for the purposes of program development and delivery, which included **leading the CRM Training** (curriculum development, course planning, teaching, student enrichment, and assessments / evaluation).

It also included **planning the Photovoice Showcase event** (stakeholder engagement and strategic communications services). Our team also **facilitated project team meetings** with all collaborators to provide regular updates, assess timely delivery of project needs, offer critical insight, and build organizational capacity for purposes of project completion.

Finally, Change Often provided **stewardship within the community to develop relationships and engage critical partners** to secure their investment in the project for the purposes of achieving desired goals and objectives.

Anticipated Project Outcomes

Anticipated Outcome 1: Learn about the physical and mental effects of trauma on the human body

Action Taken: During CRM training, a point that is fiercely highlighted is that the effects of trauma are biological - not mental weakness!

The UNCG Project Resilience **participants were taught about the biological responses to trauma,** scientific research supporting how to build resiliency, and tools to help them identify the parts of their brain that are being overly stimulated as a response to a traumatic event (survival, emotional, or rational).

Change Often also provided the UNCG Project Resilience participants with theoretical and practical knowledge about **strategies to stabilize one's nervous system** and recognize how trauma impacts students through biological sensations and triggers.

Anticipated Outcome 2: Explore strategies that aid in overcoming the lifelong impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

Action Taken: UNCG Project Resilience participants were given the opportunity to complete the **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) quiz** during the CRM training.

 The ACES quiz is used as an indicator of how likely a person is to face physical, mental, and emotional challenges later on in life that were brought on by traumatic childhood experiences.

Participants were guided through analyzing their ACES score and identifying areas of impact and growth. Change often introduced participants to concepts and skills to help **combat the effects of trauma on the body** such as Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) and tips from the book *The Body Keeps The Score*.

Anticipated Outcome 3: Be given tools and the opportunity to practice responding to stress & negativity in a way that produces more favorable outcomes

Action Taken: The opportunities to practice strategies introduced during the CRM training sessions are some of the most impactful and memorable moments of the program. Research shows that participants who engage in active learning are more likely to apply that knowledge in their everyday lives. **People increase their chance of learning new skills when they teach someone else** and/or have the chance to use them immediately.

Throughout CRM training, wellness skills to help build resilience such as Tracking, Resourcing, and Grounding were explained and demonstrated by C.O. staff, and the participants practiced it. Group discussions and activities were facilitated to help the participants share insight and best practices with each other. They also were intentional with ensuring they understood the tools introduced and how they could be applied when working with their students.

Anticipated Outcome 4: Identify natural triggers that we can experience when engaged in a stressful situation or experience

Action Taken: Sensation words are terms in the Community Resiliency Model that are introduced to participants as this helps them describe how their body naturally responds in a situation. These sensations, for example, could be an increase in heart rate, sweaty hands, and sensitivity to light.

Ultimately, these sensations that are felt in the body are biological triggers. Thus, participants **practiced identifying what their triggers are**, as well as noticing when someone else, like a peer, could potentially be triggered by something. Participants participated in exercises to destress and decompress triggers, and were given ways to ground themselves.

Anticipated Outcome 5: Create a self care plan that helps you continue building resilience through the Community Resilience Model

Action Taken: Throughout the CRM training, Change Often created a safe environment for participants to be vulnerable in recognizing the impacts of trauma and build resilience skills to combat them. To assist with this resilience journey beyond CRM training, C.O. provided an opportunity for participants to create a *Self Care Plan* to take home with them. This **self care plan helps individuals identify when they are being triggered** and assist in refocusing their natural sensations to a more pleasant state where they are resilient. Upon completing their self care plan, participants were encouraged to share it if they felt comfortable. This allowed them to deepen their sense of community by sharing what works for them and also hearing what works for others.

Project Highlights

Pre- and post-assessments were given to measure the participants' growth in the understanding of the content delivered. The results below reflect the influence that the CRM training had on the participants' capacity to perform within each measuring point.

- 80% of participants increased their usage of the 6 CRM wellness skills by an average of 230%.

- Participants showed a 10% increase in knowledge of the 6 CRM wellness skills.

- 60% of participants created a Self- Care plan for the first time.

Participant Reflections and Comments:

- "I learned how to properly breath and calm down when stressed."

- "I can use what I learned about CRM in school."

- "Through this program, I learned that my community needs me just as much as I need it."

The comment below was extracted from an *impact partner review* completed by UNCG Faculty Research Fellow & Project Lead, Dr. Erica Payton-Foh, following the project:

> *"Consultants at Change Often went above and beyond providing the CRM training as well as offering up suggestions for implementation of the project. I really enjoyed working with Raven and Tiffany. They were very easy to work with, flexible when we had to reschedule meetings, and provided excellent assistance and feedback on the implementation of the project. Change Often's services and the delivery of the services are impeccable. I would gladly recommend Change Often to others."*