



EMERGE CONNECTICUT: CONTEXTUALIZING RE-ENTRY SERVICES IN THE PUBLIC HEALTH FUNDING LANDSCAPE

Winnie Ho¹, Yi Jiang¹, Anna Preston^{1,2}, Junpeng Wang¹,
Anna Kapolka¹, Jessica Yu³, Alden Woodcock³, Debbie Humphries, PhD, MPH¹
1 - Yale School of Public Health, 2 - Yale School of Medicine, 3 - EMERGE Connecticut, Inc.

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

EMERGE Connecticut, Inc. (EMERGE) is a New Haven, Connecticut-based social enterprise and nonprofit organization that provides transitional employment and comprehensive supportive services to re-entering, formerly incarcerated individuals with the goal of reducing the systemic inequities that lead to high rates of recidivism. Since 2017, they have received funding from the Connecticut Department of Corrections (DOC) through an often volatile funding relationship, leading to inconsistent funding that has clashed with EMERGE's desire to provide trauma-informed support outside of traditional employment services. EMERGE's reliance on DOC funding has raised tensions among leadership staff about future financial stability and independence. In order to diversify their funding strategies and opportunities, EMERGE proposed an examination of its role and impact on the local public health landscape through a partnership with the Yale School of Public Health (YSPH). Our work not only firmly contextualizes EMERGE's work as a major asset for the public health of New Haven's re-entering community, but also leverages a program analysis of similar re-entry services programs to identify funding diversification strategies and funders that better align with EMERGE's mission and values.

OBJECTIVES

- 1. Contextualize EMERGE's public health impact** with the re-entering community within the current public health literature to establish its role in New Haven's public health
- 2. Analyze the funding profiles and strategies of peer re-entry services programs** in order to identify a diverse range of potential funders and potential partnerships for EMERGE.
- 3. Recommend data analysis gaps and funding strategies** for EMERGE that align with peer programs and potential funders.

METHODS

Literature Review: Public health literature was consulted to contextualize EMERGE's impact, with special attention to obtaining local and state data. Ovid Medline, PubMed, Bureau of Justice Statistics, and Google Scholar were utilized to obtain literature and epidemiological data on impact areas addressed by EMERGE's current programs and its Apricot 360 intake database.

Program Analysis: Four programs that were similar to EMERGE were identified through search strategies deployed via Candid, Google, and exoffender.net within Connecticut and bordering states. A descriptive statistical analysis was performed on the funding information extracted from Foundation Directory Online in order to compare their funding profiles and create a database of past grant makers to support EMERGE's future fundraising strategies.

RESULTS

Our findings indicate that EMERGE's programs address many of the social determinants of health that drive high recidivism rates and health disparities for re-entering individuals, positioning it as a key asset to



improving public health outcomes for New Haven’s formerly incarcerated community. Furthermore, our program analysis demonstrates that compared to the identified peer programs, EMERGE has a higher proportion of its total grant funding from governmental organizations. Additionally, peer programs have received grants listed under a diverse range of subjects. The most common subjects directly mentioned services for the formerly incarcerated, but subjects also included categories such as education, employment and financial services, housing, mental and physical health, youth services and disaster preparedness. This highlights the opportunity for funding diversification.

Figure 1. Bar Chart representing proportions of total funding by grant maker type from EMERGE and its peer organizations.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Leverage EMERGE’s existing data to communicate public health impact. EMERGE’s current metrics of success are primarily about employment outcomes and recidivism. By building out its data collection and analytics to more clearly communicate its success in multiple public health impact areas, EMERGE has the potential to raise its profile as an asset both to the community and to a more diverse range of mission-aligned funders.

Diversify EMERGE’s Funding Strategy based on philanthropic segments. EMERGE’s peer programs have leveraged their success in their wrap-around support services to a diverse range of funders. In particular, it is recommended that EMERGE focus on highlighting its work in addressing mental health concerns amongst its population, as their community members have consistently highlighted this as the heart of their program, and it makes them unique.

Consider building relationships with peer organizations outside of Connecticut. EMERGE should consider building relationships with organizations who have successfully leveraged public health approaches to obtain funding from sources more aligned with the mission and values of EMERGE, to learn from their experience.

LIMITATIONS

Due to the need to scope multiple public health impact areas, our literature review does not achieve the rigor or validity of a full systematic review. The findings are meant to demonstrate the ways in which EMERGE addresses many of the issues identified by existing public health literature as critical to address for reducing recidivism and closing health disparity gaps. Additionally, the sample size of peer programs is fairly small, reflecting EMERGE’s uniqueness amongst many other re-entry programs. Foundation Directory Online may also not be a complete representation of every program’s entire funding profile, but was chosen as this was the only consistent, and standard way to begin conducting a comparison between the groups.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Jessica Yu and Alden Woodcock at EMERGE for partnering with our team this semester. In addition, we would like to thank our professor Debbie Humphries and teaching fellow, Anna Kapolka, for their continued support.