

THE BENEFITS OF PARTNERING
WITH THE
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
TELECENTER NETWORK

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University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by
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THE BENEFITS OF PARTNERING WITH THE
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI TELECENTER NETWORK

Presented by Vivian J. Mason

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***"Take nothing for granted and
take everything as possible"***
--Katherine Dunham, 2006

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to describe the Telecommunication Community Resource Center (TCRC) Collaborative and its participation in collaborations/partnerships within the community, and examine the benefits to the TCRCs, partners, and the local communities where the Centers are located throughout Missouri.

Procedures: The design of this study was evaluation research. The Wilder Collaboration Factor Inventory which is designed to inventory group strengths and weaknesses was the primary tool used in this study.

Conclusions: The TCRC Collaborative has successfully demonstrated its ability to come together for a unique purpose and establish TCRCs throughout Missouri; the study suggests that the TCRC Collaborative has benefited all of the partners and the local community; and the partners involved in the Collaborative consider partnering/collaborating to be important to community development.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In 1993 the University of Missouri Outreach and Extension developed what was then a unique concept to create technology centers in rural communities throughout Missouri. It was planned that these university centers would serve as regional information technology centers for local faculty and staff and for the citizens of the various communities. The University of Missouri Board of Curators in 1994 considered the establishment of Telecommunication Community Resource Centers (TCRCs) to be fundamental to its Outreach 2000 strategic plan for University Outreach and Extension. By establishing these centers it would develop community-based facilities which, in turn, would link citizens to information, education, and expertise throughout the world (University of Missouri Board of Curators, TCRC Status Report, 1994, p. 4).

These technology centers became known as the University of Missouri Telecommunication Community Resource Centers (TCRCs) with the primary goal of community-based facilities that provided two-way interactive video, satellite, and computer networks to the residents of Missouri (University of Missouri Board of Curators,

Advisory Committee on Telecommunications Technology, Slide #1, 1996).

Prior to the TCRC concept, telecommunications began to take on importance for our country as it sought to compete in a global economy. According to the first telecommunications director for University Outreach and Extension, the late Dr. James C. Summers, it was a time when we were "living in an economy driven by dramatic growth of human knowledge and great advances in information technology" (University of Missouri, Section: TCRCs Outside Missouri, 1994).

In the Telecommunication Community Resource Brochure (University of Missouri), it was noted that in 1993, several states were reviewing their telecommunications rules and regulations in order to better respond to competitive pressures to promote world class investments, to attract telecommunications-dependent businesses, to encourage new services, and to bring the benefits of telecommunications to the public (Section: TCRCs Outside Missouri, 1994). Common driving forces behind these concerns were education, health care, and rural economic development.

Also during this time, many states such as Minnesota, Iowa, Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina were leading

the telecommunications campaign to connect their universities and campuses. The state of Missouri was following close behind and took the connectivity issue one step further by developing a partnership/collaborative model to connect community to community and community to university. Through this model, the TCRC concept was born - developing regional partnerships in each of the selected communities where a TCRC would be established. The University of Missouri Outreach and Extension has a long history of developing and cultivating partnerships for programming, human, and financial resources. For example, University of Missouri Extension has developed partnerships with county councils, local farm bureaus, local and state agencies related to youth, agriculture, community development, business and industry, and families, to name a few.

The TCRC concept was somewhat unique in that it asked local partners to have a vested interest in their TCRC by providing funding, facilities, and time to ensure overall success. The local partners would need to help build awareness, understand the implications of having such facilities in their communities, help establish advisory boards, define the vision for the local centers, develop business plans, conduct needs assessments, and select space

where the facilities would be housed. Moreover, the local partnerships would have to believe that the concept was a good fit for their communities and share the common goals and purposes of bringing educational opportunities and other types of technology services to the local communities through these proposed technology centers.

Theoretical Base

Building healthier communities involves local people working together to transform the conditions and produce outcomes that matter to them (Francisco et al., 2001). This philosophy was central to developing TCRCs and involving local partnerships. Education, a sense of community, training, and economic development were what made the TCRC concept so viable and important to the local communities. Core values and mutual benefit helped to make the TCRC concept one that all parties (University of Missouri, partners, and the local community) saw as a win-win situation.

As a result of this concept, through the partnerships established, a way was created to link public and private interests to help accomplish goals needed in each of the participating communities. The partnerships established would be community-based and it was hoped that this relationship with the community and the University would

empower, strengthen, and ensure resources with local leadership. Also, local ownership of the TCRCs would ensure that community needs were being met and that learning opportunities would be provided that might not have been available in the past. James L. McHugh, chair of the Board of Curators Advisory Committee on Telecommunications Technology, stated in 1994 that the TCRC concept could be successful because of the "collaborative relationships with a broad range of provider organizations and other stakeholders" (The Board of Curators, TCRC Status Report, p. 2).

A review of the literature indicated that developing partnerships and/or collaborating together is one of the best ways to connect people, ideas, and resources (Francisco et al. 2001, Nelson et al., 2001). Further, Christopher Campbell (1995) in his study of Community Technology Centers wrote "collaboration and cooperation are important in the development of rural telecommunication and computing infrastructure and services because by their very nature, rural communities tend not to produce the economies of scale that make it less expensive to provide an advanced telecommunications infrastructure" (p. 3).

Partnerships are very valuable because of the collaborative process that brings different kinds of people

and organizations together, which makes it possible for them to accomplish much more than they can on their own (Gajda, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

The literature revealed that partnerships are seen as valuable in the areas of academia, mental health, nursing, youth development, medicine, community education, and the arts, to name a few. The primary purpose for bringing these groups together is the need for combining resources (human and financial), educational opportunities, provide medical treatment, and to ensure that local citizens are getting the best possible services by combining resources and working together for one common purpose.

Much has been written about the value of partnerships and what it means to be part of a partnership. However, the University of Missouri Outreach and Extension has never formally evaluated the Telecommunication Community Resource Centers, particularly the partnerships that have been developed at each of the 10 local communities. During the start-up of the TCRCs, it was planned that some type of evaluation would be conducted to collect information related to enrollment, implementation, use of the centers, numbers of people trained, skills acquired by local citizens, financial sustainability, effects of the

partnerships in each of the TCRC communities, and the TCRCs' responsiveness to local needs.

An evaluation of the views of the various partnerships and the benefit of the centers on the local communities needs to be conducted in order to know whether or not the Telecommunication Community Resource Centers have been successful from the partners' point of view. This evaluation should include data related to the financial contributions made by the partners and information about the 10 community Centers to ascertain whether or not the particular partnership's goals of providing educational opportunities and technological advances have been achieved.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the TCRC Collaborative and its participation in collaborations/partnerships within the community, examine the benefits of the collaborations/partnerships at the 10 Telecommunication Community Resource Centers (TCRCs) throughout the University of Missouri TeleCenter Network, and discuss the perceived benefits to the TCRCs and the local communities where the Centers are located.

Research Questions

1. What is the composition of the partnerships and how do the partnerships differ at each of the Telecommunication Community Resource Centers (TCRCs)?
2. How many people have been served, at all sites, since the inception of the TCRCs?
3. How many programs have been offered at all sites?
4. What was the initial TCRC funding level as compared with the current funding level for each of the TCRCs?
5. To what extent do the partners consider the benefits of collaboration/partnering to have been influenced by the types of financial contributions made to the TCRC (financial, in-kind, or both)?
6. To what extent is there a difference in participation levels regarding collaboration/partnering between the partners and the TCRC staff members?
7. To what extent has collaboration/partnerships developed at the TCRCs benefited the community and the partners?
8. To what extent has the partnership contributed to the operation of the local TCRC?

Definition of Terms

Collaboration - involves working jointly with others on a project, where the participating agencies take on specified tasks within the project and share responsibility for its ultimate success (Ansari, 2003, p. 146).

Community - Community is defined as the group of people located in a specific TCRC region impacted by the local TCRC in terms of skill building, economic development, and educational opportunities that were not available prior to the TCRC being established.

Infrastructure - the facilities, electronic devices (hardware), and software that serve a set of users and purposes. In telecommunications, infrastructure is the total of these facilities that are owned by all types of telecommunications providers.

Impact - "The effect of one thing upon another" (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, p. 658). Specifically it is defined to "assess the impact of the treatment on the outcomes" (Crawford, 1997, p. 10)

In-Kind Contributions - defined as any contributions other than cash [facilities, utilities, connectivity (e.g., Internet, bandwidth), equipment, and/or local television access], provided to each of the TCRCs.

Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) - a formal written agreement that was prepared by all partners entering the partnership of each local TCRC. This agreement stipulated that there must be unanimous agreement among all partners. This formal agreement outlines responsibilities of all the partners.

Partnerships and partners - "a formal alliance of organizations, groups, and agencies that have come together for a common goal" (Ansari, 2003, p. 136). The TCRC Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) considers the TCRC a university/community partnership (Mexico Memorandum of Agreement, 1996, P. 1).

TeleCenter Network - comprises the 10 Telecommunication Community Resource Centers (TCRC) (Camdenton, Kirksville, Mexico, Mineral Area, Jefferson City, Salem, Nevada, Poplar Bluff, Delta Center, Reeds Spring) and the four campuses of the University of Missouri System (Columbia, Rolla, St. Louis, and Kansas City).

Telecommunications - Broadly refers to electronic communications systems including telephones. To put in context of the TeleCenter Network, it means the mechanism by which the TCRC's are provided connectivity to transmit information and programming geographically (at a distance).

Telecommunication Community Resource Centers (TCRCs) - With 10 local centers located in rural communities throughout the state of Missouri, the TCRC is a community-based facility that provides two-way interactive video, satellite, and computer networks to the residents of Missouri (University of Missouri Board of Curators, Advisory Committee on Telecommunications Technology, Slide #1, 1996).

University of Missouri Outreach and Extension - the outreach and extension of the four campuses of the University of Missouri and Lincoln University to all counties in Missouri as part of the land-grant mission of the Universities.

Limitations

1. Participants were not randomly assigned to treatment groups. This had some impact on the statistical analysis that was performed.

2. Respondents were individuals who have had direct responsibility for the local TCRC at the community level (partners, TCRC staff, University of Missouri System and University of Missouri Extension Administrators).

3. This study was limited to only 71 individuals that were part of the TCRC Collaborative, of which 39 actually filled out the survey, thus this study cannot generalize to

individuals involved in a collaborative similar to the TCRC Collaborative.

Assumptions

1. All study participant responses to survey questions were answered honestly and candidly.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter presents a review of the literature related to the evaluation of community technology centers. The review of literature incorporates the major aspects of the study which included partnerships and collaboration.

Partnership and Collaboration

In reviewing the literature it was not uncommon to see the words "partnership" and "collaboration" used in the same sentence. According to Gajda (2003) collaboration has many names, one of which is "working in partnership". She goes on to say that "the terminology used to describe collaboration includes: joint ventures, consolidations, networks, partnerships, coalitions, collaboratives, alliances, consortiums, associations, conglomerates, councils, task forces and groups" (p. 68).

Ansari (2003) defined partnership as "a formal alliance of organizations, groups, and agencies that come together for a common goal" (p. 136). Mattessich, Murray-Close, and Monsey (2001) defined collaboration as "a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. The relationship includes a commitment to mutual

relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards" (p. 59).

Halliday, Asthana, and Richardson (2004) described the principles of partnership as key dimensions:

1. Recognize and accept the need for partnership;
2. Develop clarity and realism of purpose;
3. Ensure commitment and ownership;
4. Develop and maintain trust;
5. Create clear and robust partnership arrangements;
6. Monitor, measure and learn;
7. Nurture a partnership culture in individual partner organizations and groups;
8. Involve all relevant stakeholders in a meaningful way; and
9. Develop effective communication. (p. 288)

Holland, Gelmon, Green, Greene-Moton, and Stanton (2003) in discussing community-university partnerships defined a successful partnership as:

1. Two- or three-way (depending on who is involved) in partnership;
2. Mutually agreed upon set of goals, operating principles, expectations;
3. Clarity of communication, leadership, power sharing, decision-making;
4. Sustained commitment, willingness to learn together and collaborate for long-term; and
5. Sharing of roles - co-teachers, co-learners, co-facilitators. (p. 5)

Berkowitz (2000) pointed out that the term collaboration has multiple definitions and that when utilized, collaboration is a method to help communities and

other organizations work together on a particular purpose or goal. Berkowitz's definition follows:

1. Organizations or members of an organization joining together to improve the success or enhance the benefit of an action through a collective effort;
2. A social change process of building relationships and sharing decision-making authority; and
3. Exchanging information, alternative activities, sharing resources, and enhancing the capacity of another for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose. (p. 68)

Berkowitz elaborated further that "collaboration is an action-oriented method; decisions are made, resources are shared, and activity brings about success and benefit. Whether or not collaboration occurs because of external or internal factors, research has found that certain conditions and values exist that strengthen the opportunities for success" (p. 68), such as the following:

1. The collaborative is community-based and is influenced by the values and beliefs of the members.
2. Problems and assets are defined by data and through narrative and anecdotes from community members.
3. Members are selected who support the mission of the collaborative.
4. Power and decision-making are shared and may vary depending on governance within the organization and community.
5. Assessment and evaluation tools are user-friendly.
6. Goals are implemented through plans developed by the collaborate and are supported by community members. (pp. 68-69)

Serena Seifer, during a community-university partnership symposium in San Diego, California, in April 2003, commented that:

Community-University partnerships are gaining momentum across the country as a powerful force for revitalizing communities, fostering civic engagement and strengthening the core missions of higher education. The landscape of community-university partnerships includes service-learning, community-based participatory research and partnerships focused on solving a particular problem or achieving a particular goal. The evidence base about these partnerships, factors contributing to their success and failure, and their impact on participating students, communities and campuses is growing, as demonstrated by the increasing number of multi-site evaluation studies, peer-reviewed empirical journal articles, and meta-analyses in the past five years alone. (p. 2)

Collaboration and/or partnering are good for communities and higher education for a number of reasons. Chema (1995) discussed partnership development as a way to strengthen any endeavor that a community might be involved in. Chema concluded that any kind of partnership that relates to each other in the broadest sense will create a network of interdependent values for mutual benefit that will grow as individual partner entities compete for funding, audiences, and attention.

Donaldson and Kozoll (1999) suggested that "that there are many types of partnerships; however, these can be classified on a continuum based upon their level of

intensity and degree of formality" (p. 3). They further pointed out that when entities consider collaboration efforts that there are three types of relationships "based on the major purposes they serve":

1. Mutual Service Consortia, in which organizations come together, for instance, to purchase equipment;
2. Value-Chain Partnerships, in which suppliers and customers develop a relationship to achieve the complementary goals of ensuring markets for products and an uninterrupted supply of resources; and
3. Joint Ventures, in which organizations enter partnerships to develop joint products or programs or to share markets for them. (p. 4)

Donaldson and Kozoll further noted that the partnerships developed at the local level can also be categorized by their formal or informal structure (degree of formality). Formality is driven by how the partnerships view their reasons for coming together and according to Donaldson and Kozoll, whether or not a partnership is considered formal or informal is based upon whether these reasons for partnering or collaborating are mandatory or voluntary. Additionally, while a partnership may start out as informal, it could later be decided that the partnership must develop formal structures for various reasons. The authors pointed out that "the evidence does not suggest that this formalization changes the nature of the

relationship among the partners, but it does ensure that the collaboration arrangements have long-term survival" (p. 5).

The literature revealed other reasons why communities decide to collaborate or partner. Nelson, Prilleltensky, and MacGillivray (2001) suggested that one key reason is the ability to pool resources in an attempt to maintain services. They also suggested that lack of resources, both financial and human, are crucial reasons why communities decide to partner or collaborate. Francisco, Fawcett, Schultz, Berkowitz, Wolff, and Nagy (2001) expanded the possible reasons by suggesting that communities' partner because of the mere fact that other agencies can provide training in the areas of collaboration and leadership that will help stakeholders and citizens build community capacity.

Mark, Cornebise, and Wahl (1997) further suggested that "community impacts include building collaborations with other community agencies which result in reaching a broader population and exploring revenue generating options to decrease reliance on "soft" money" (p. 3).

Reiniger (2003) pointed out that partnerships are complex approaches to organizing work because they blend

different missions, cultures, work styles, deadlines, financial concerns, and expertise. She goes on to say:

A successful partnership depends on building and sustaining communication mechanisms among the various partners. It is important to acknowledge value in each partner to feel comfortable articulating his or her needs. The partnership relationship facilitates the reciprocal transfer of knowledge, skills, capacity, and power and successful partnership matures through continual adjustments in complex relations. (p. 16)

Reiniger also explained that partnerships are strengthened when they come together for the long term and when they are committed. She concluded that there are three important ingredients that make partnerships work: a) partnerships that have common missions and goals; b) partnerships that have one key person and one institution responsible for starting up and stewarding the partners and the partnership; and c) partnerships that foster developing personal relationships with one another.

Emphasizing the point, Reiniger further stated:

Successful collaboration entails the investment of time and attention to detail. The key is continually making sure that all sides are treated fairly and that they are getting something out of the partnership. When this occurs trust is established. Partners' first allegiance is to their organization - if there is a common and specific goal, it can supersede individual interests. With hard work and a willingness to listen and work together, a partnership will become greater than the sum of its parts to the benefit of all. (p. 21)

As mentioned earlier, another important aspect of collaboration and partnership is seen in the areas of healthcare reform, nursing, mental health, and community-based senior health. Gajda (2004) pointed out that collaboration between these entities (including businesses, not-for-profits, and educational institutions) are being advocated because working together is a powerful strategy, since what can be achieved together would not be possible doing so independently. Gajda further pointed out that there is a real need for individuals, educational institutions, government agencies, not-for-profits, community, and businesses to come together on a continual basis and address the enduring problems confronting our society.

Gajda also suggested that the way to solve these problems is through collaboration and partnerships, working together to pool scarce resources, eliminate duplication of effort and share the same vision rather than everyone doing so in a separate fashion. Gajda elaborated further by stating that "with collaboration, the personal is as important as the procedural, it is the basis for trust not only between individuals, but also for the partnership" (p. 69).

Gadja also pointed out that partnering involves three primary factors: a) sharing resources to address common issues, autonomy between/among organizations but supportive to reach mutual goals together; b) ensuring decision mechanisms are in place; and c) creating opportunities for community system and formal information channel development.

Himmelman (2002) wrote that collaboration only enhances organizations' capacity to ensure that there is mutual benefit and common purpose for working together. Further, "collaboration is a relationship in which each organization wants to help its partners become the best that they can be at what they do" (p. 3). This definition also assumes that when organizations collaborate they share risks, responsibilities, and rewards, each of which contributes to enhancing each other's capacity to achieve a common purpose. Collaboration is usually characterized by substantial time commitments, very high levels of trust, and extensive areas of common turf.

In an article from the *Community-Based Public Health Policy and Practice* (2003), "Bending the Ivory Tower: Communities, Health Departments and Academia" the question was asked "Why academia needs communities?" In the same way that communities need collaborators/partners to

leverage limited resources and increase community services, academia's reasons for becoming involved at the community level are very similar; namely, for services, reputation, funding, and for providing educational opportunities.

Accordingly, academia benefits from partnering because: a) that partnering can provide academia with a deeper and more authentic understanding of a community; b) partnering can be both immediate and long-term; and c) partnering helps with the sharing of resources (human, facility, equipment, policy, and advocacy) (p.3).

Evaluation of Community Technology Centers

Three studies were found relating to the evaluation of community technology centers.

The first study, conducted by Christopher J. Campbell (1995), focused on community technology centers in Massachusetts and reviewed technology centers being developed in Kentucky and Nebraska. Using Kentucky and Nebraska as models for establishing such centers in Massachusetts, Campbell focused on potential user groups in Massachusetts including local government, business, and education, asking specific questions about how these groups communicated, received or distributed information, telecommunications, and their computer usage.

The second study (Mark, Cornebise, and Wahl, 1997) evaluated community technology centers that have already been developed and the impact of access through using these centers on individual participants as well as on the communities in which these centers were located. The study focused primarily on five community technology center network sites in Brooklyn, New York, Somerville, Massachusetts, Burlington, Vermont, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and East Palo Alto, California. The study interviewed 131 participants from all of the sites. Among the areas covered in these interviews were:

- individual and community impact (access to technology);
- job skills and access to employment opportunities;
- education and improved outlook on learning;
- technological literacy as a means to achieve individual goals;
- new skills and knowledge;
- personal efficacy and affective outcomes;
- use of time and resources;
- civic participation;
- community impacts; and
- concerns about technology.

The third study, conducted by Dara O'Neil (2002), provided an in-depth review of evaluations of community networks and community technology centers to bridge theories of outcomes for community informatics projects in five key areas:

- strong democracy - includes theories of increasing democratic participation with a meaningful association of citizens within a civic community;
- social capital - includes features of social organization such as social networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit;
- individual empowerment - includes discussions of information literacy and information and community technologies access for disadvantaged communities so that all people have opportunities for meaningful participation in an increasingly digitized society;
- sense of community - includes discussions of increasing community involvement and commitment to geographic communities; and
- economic development opportunities - includes theories about the use of information and community technologies to encourage economic activity.

All three studies provided information related to community technology centers from three specific views, but with very similar outcomes. Campbell's study provided information on centers that have been developed in Nebraska and Kentucky and used these centers as possible models for the state of Massachusetts to follow. The study conducted by Mark, Cornebise, and Wahl focused primarily on access and the impact these centers have on local communities. O'Neil's study provided information on various evaluations that have been conducted on technology centers and technology networks throughout the United States and Canada

in order to discover if project impacts could be determined using the five key indicators discussed previously.

While the focus of each study was different, the outcomes were quite similar. For example, all three studies indicated that technology centers provided computer access or access to technology to a majority of people who do not have technology access elsewhere or to users who generally don't have the requisite technology (equipment) or software available to them at their homes. All three studies indicated that collaboration and cooperation were important in the development of these centers, and that community impacts included building collaborations with other community agencies which resulted in reaching a broader population and exploring revenue generating options to decrease reliance on "soft" money (Mark, Cornebise, and Wahl, 2003). They went on to say that "technology centers are a diverse collection of organizations and agencies that provide technology access to individuals, communities and populations that typically wouldn't otherwise have places to use computer and telecommunications technologies" (p. 5).

Campbell elaborated further by pointing out that "an important part of developing telecommunications and computing in rural places is organizing people and

organizations to work together and to pool resources and demand" (Part 2, page 3). All three studies pointed out in their own way that collaboration and partnerships increased support for the technology centers not only from the number of participants who walked through the doors, but also from a financial perspective. Another important finding of all three of these studies was the local communities must see value for these types of projects in order for them to succeed.

Purpose of the Evaluation

Michael Quinn Patton (1996) wrote that "corporations, philanthropic foundations, and nonprofit agencies are increasingly turning to evaluators for help in enhancing their organizational effectiveness" (p. 15). Taylor-Powell, Rossing, and Geran (1998) pointed out that "evaluation is seen as a process of inquiry that facilitates learning rather than merely a tool to determine success or failure" (p. 2). They write further that "evaluation is a shared process among collaborative members and other key stakeholders (clients, represented agencies, citizens) that helps guide decisions and enhances communication" (p. 2).

In describing the importance of evaluation, Taylor-Powell, Rossing, and Geran stated that:

Evaluation can foster not only continuous learning but deeper learning. Surface learning resolves obvious symptoms of problems. Deeper learning addresses the more basic beliefs, practices, and structures that underlie and perpetuate problems, and thus leads to more lasting solutions. To learn continuously and deeply is not easy. It means facing the unknown, recognizing that we do not possess all of the answers, conceding that we often do not know what to do, and admitting that past decisions and actions may no longer be valid. It also means questioning the basic assumptions we have held about operating organizations and solving problems, and making ourselves vulnerable amid the political dynamics that pervade all organizations and collaborative ventures. (pp. 2-3)

Evaluation and outcomes are important as ways of providing an opportunity for stakeholders to reflect on what has been done or what can be done in the future to improve continued work or ensure continued funding. Also, evaluation can help stakeholders (partners) "tell the story" of the specific project to their own agency (e.g., letting their own agency know what they have been involved in and the importance of that involvement).

Summary

The literature review focused on partnerships and collaboration. Partnering/collaboration are important strategies for almost any entity that has limited resources to meet the needs of citizens.

Several important points were revealed by the literature relating to partnership and collaboration. Partnership and collaboration often are used interchangeably, even though they have somewhat different meanings.

It might be suggested that one of the distinguishing factors between partnership and collaboration may be the formalization of the partnership/collaboration (the degree of formalization) as Donaldson and Kozoll (1999), suggested. Still, after reviewing the literature, it becomes evident that both partnership and collaboration have similar principles that guide them which include:

1. Agreed upon missions and goals;
2. Mutual trust and commitment;
3. Partnership/collaboration members bring various strengths and assets to the table;
4. Power is balanced and/or assigned;
5. Communication lines are clear between partners;
6. Roles are determined;
7. Success and failure is shared; and
8. Collaboration is long term.

Three studies were presented that evaluated community technology centers in Kentucky, Nebraska and Massachusetts. Understanding how these centers collaborated and partnered with others is an important key to understanding why collaboration and/or partnering can lead to success.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the benefits of the collaborations/partnerships of the 10 Telecommunication Community Resource Centers located throughout Missouri in terms of perceived benefit to the TCRC and the local community. The following sections describe the procedures followed in conducting this study, including specific descriptions of the research design and procedures related to organization, data collection, and data analysis.

Design of the Study

The design of this study was evaluation research. Taylor-Powell, Rossing, and Geran (1998) described evaluation as a "shared process among collaborative members and other key stakeholders (clients, represented agencies, citizens) that helps guide decisions and enhances communication" (p. 2). Evaluation is also seen as a way to systematically collect, interpret and analyze information in response to questions asked that are critical to better understanding a specific program or in making decisions about a program's value in the future. Further, "evaluation provides the focus, feedback, and learning to

support continuous progress and ongoing adaptations" (p. 3).

Research Questions

The research questions for this section are identified as follows:

1. What is the composition of the partnerships and how do the partnerships differ at each of the Telecommunication Community Resource Centers (TCRCs)?
2. How many people have been served, at all sites, since the inception of the TCRCs?
3. How many different programs have been offered at all sites?
4. What was the initial TCRC funding level as compared with the current funding level for each of the TCRCs?
5. To what extent do the partners consider the benefits of collaboration/partnering to have been influenced by the types of financial contributions made to the TCRC (financial, in-kind, or both)?
6. To what extent is there a difference in participation levels regarding collaboration/partnering between the partners and the TCRC staff members?

7. To what extent has collaboration/partnerships developed at the TCRCs benefited the community and the partners?

8. To what extent has the partnership contributed to the operation of the local TCRC?

Population

The population for this study was all those persons who were initially listed as partners and those who continued to serve as partners at each of the 10 Telecommunication Community Resource Centers (TCRCs), all TCRC staff (coordinators, information technology specialists, and administrative assistants--past and present), and selected University of Missouri and University of Missouri Extension administrators (past and present) who were involved in the start-up of the TCRCs. The total number of possible participants for this evaluation was 71.

Instrumentation

The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory (2001) was used in this evaluation (see Appendix A). The questionnaire is designed to "inventory a group's strengths on the factors that research has shown are important for the success of collaborative projects" (p. 37). The Inventory uses a five point scale where 1 = *strongly*

disagree, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neutral or No Opinion*, 4 = *Agree*, and 5 = *Strongly Agree*.

The creators of the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory, Mattessich, Murray-Close, and Monsey, along with the Wilder Research Center (2001), identified in their Inventory 20 factors that influence the success of collaboration and then grouped these factors into six categories asking survey participants to respond to 40 questions. These categories or factor groups are listed below:

Environment

- History of collaboration or cooperation in the community
- Collaborative group seen as a legitimate leader in the community
- Favorable political and social climate

Membership Characteristics

- Mutual respect, understanding, and trust
- Appropriate cross section of members
- Members see collaboration as in their self-interest
- Ability to compromise

Process and Structure

- Members share a stake in both process and outcome
- Multiple layers of participation
- Flexibility
- Development of clear roles and policy guidelines
- Adaptability
- Appropriate pace of development

Communication

- Open and frequent communication
- Established informal relationships and

communication links

Purpose

- Concrete, attainable goals and objectives
- Shared vision
- Unique purpose

Resources

- Sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time
- Skilled leadership

The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory is based on research on collaboration conducted in 1992. Mattessich, Murray-Close, and Monsey (2001) described in-depth the procedures used to determine the factors influencing successful collaboration:

First, we [authors/Wilder Institute] identified all the research we could find related to collaboration. We searched through computer-based bibliographies, contacted researchers interested in the topic, and tracked down bibliographic references in each document obtained. The scope of the search included the health, social science, education, and public affairs arena. From 133 studies examined, we screened out studies that were general "how-to" manuals, did not meet our definition of collaboration, or failed to meet other research criteria. After the screening, eighteen studies remained.

Second, we [authors/Wilder Institute] carefully reviewed each of the eighteen valid and relevant studies and identified factors that the studies reported as influencing the success of collaboration.

Third, we [authors/Wilder Institute] blended together the findings from the studies. We determined, for example, whether two researchers were using the same words to describe different factors, or different words to describe the same factor. As a result, nineteen factors that

influence the success of collaboration were identified.

After the research was completed, we [authors/Wilder Institute] presented the nineteen factors at a conference on collaboration in the Twin Cities in May 1992. Participants suggested interpretations and added to the implications section for each factor.

Our [authors] most recent review of collaboration research employed the same methodology. In the first stage of the project, we identified 281 studies related to collaboration and screened out those that did not meet criteria for validity and relevance. We then examined the remaining twenty-two studies for findings that confirmed, contradicted, or added to the information presented in the first edition of this work. The process led us to retain the original nineteen success factors and to identify one additional factor: An appropriate pace of development. (pp. xiii-xiv)

The authors also pointed out that "the research was pursued with careful attention to rules established for the study" and that "in this way, the research gains the greatest possible validity" (p. 66).

In a recent study conducted by Derosé, Beatty, and Jackson (2004) where the Wilder Institute Survey was used, it was pointed out that although the study was adapted to include issues "germane to our study", the questionnaire "consisted primarily of the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory, a tool used to assess the elements of effective collaboration" (p. 51). Additionally, Derosé et al. (2004) further stated:

We chose this inventory because it has a clear evidentiary base (i.e., its development was rooted in the research literature) yet is still concise and simple to use. Furthermore, the survey instrument was designed to be a diagnostic tool for collaborative groups, to be used throughout a project's lifespan. We preferred the assessment approach of identifying strengths and weaknesses with respect to the factors that influence collaborative success, since this type of information is more useful as feedback than is an overall score of collaborative success or potential for success. (p. 52)

Several additional questions were also asked related to demographic information, views on collaboration, views on technology, and partnership perceptions of benefit (see Appendix A). The entire survey (Wilder Institute Survey and additional questions) was given to five individuals (two with a great deal of knowledge regarding the TCRCs, two with some knowledge of the TCRCs, but possessed knowledge related to collaborating/partnering, and one individual who knew nothing about the TCRCs or collaborating/partnering within the community). From these completed surveys, an average time to complete the survey was ascertained and changes were made to some of the questions to make them more clear and concise.

It was also planned that this survey and additional questions would be provided to the group based on their choice of format - either via e-mail or through regular postal mail, once the signed consent form was received from

the participant. For those who requested regular postal mail, a self-addressed stamped envelope was provided for ease in responding. The University of Missouri's Institutional Review Board approved the research proposal application on June 30, 2006.

After receiving the signed consent form (see Appendix B) and survey format preference back from each participant, the survey was sent to respondents based upon their format preference. All surveys were coded and participant names or addresses were not included on the survey itself. A second survey was created especially for e-mail recipients, it was also coded. The returned surveys were sent to a home e-mail account and once the survey was received, the email was deleted. The modified survey allowed participants to download, open in Microsoft Word, and check the appropriate box for each question asked or to simply type in written words when requested and return the survey as an attached file.

Two follow-ups were instituted after the deadline date based upon coded returns from the first mailing between August and September regarding participation in the survey (consent form). As a result, 46 individuals agreed to participate in the survey and fill out the survey questionnaire (65 percent).

The questionnaire was then sent to those 46 individuals who consented to complete the survey. Two follow-ups were conducted between August and September. Thirty-nine questionnaires were returned (85 percent), of which all were used for this study.

Related Descriptive Variables

Other important information will be collected from survey participants related to:

Demographics - Information will be included in this study related to the length of time participants have been involved with their local TCRC or with the TCRC concept in general; the length of time the participants have lived in the local TCRC community will provide some insight into how much collaboration/partnership involvement the participants have been involved in; and finally, information about the type of partners associated with each of the TCRCs will be provided to show the importance of community collaborations/partnerships to each of the local TCRCs.

TCRC - Information will be collected related specifically to what the local TCRCs have been able to provide to the local communities from its inception to Fiscal Year 2005-2006. Specifically, information about the number of individuals served, number of programs offered

and the funding levels provided by the University of Missouri Extension and local partners will be reported.

Data Analysis

Programs from SPSS for Windows PC Computer (version 13.0, Ser. 9613943) were used to analyze the data.

Descriptive statistics, frequency, mean, standard deviations, modes, medians and range were gathered for background information and scale scores.

Summary

This chapter described and presented the design, research questions, information on the instrumentation used and described the process of collecting data for the study.

Chapter 4

Analysis and Presentation of Data

The purpose of this chapter is to present descriptive information collected for this study. Data presented is based on 39 responses from the TCRC Collaborative.

The survey for this study consisted primarily of the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory, which is a tool used to assess the elements of effective collaboration. The inventory's authors identified 20 factors that contribute to the success of collaboration. These factors were developed through a systematic review of empirical studies of collaboration and were grouped into six categories: environment, membership characteristics, process and structure, communication, purpose, and resources. Each factor corresponds to one to three survey questions.

The second part of the survey related to collaboration, technology, financial contributions, and benefits to forming a partnership/collaboration to create a TCRC in the local community. A total of 39 responses were received from the survey and met the criteria of being a member of a partner group.

Research Questions

The research questions and findings are as follows:

1. *What is the composition of the partnerships and how do the partnerships differ at each of the Telecommunication Community Resource Centers?*

The TCRC partners at each of the TCRCs is different in terms of the number of partners, but very similar in terms of who chose to come together and develop the TCRC in the local community.

Table 1 provides information about the partners represented by the respondents which included the

Table 1

Percentage of Partner Representation in Survey, N=39

Type of Partner	Total Number of Group Respondents	Percent of Group	Percent of Total Responses
University of Missouri Extension	7	58	18
TCRC Staff	21	84	54
University of Missouri (Rolla, St. Louis, Columbia, Kansas City)	1	33	3
Local College or University	4	33	10
School District	1	25	3
City Official	4	80	10
Financial Institution	1	33	3

University of Missouri Extension, the University of Missouri System, local colleges and universities, local school districts, city officials or their representatives, and financial institutions. Figure 1 provides a list of the 10 TCRCs and the make-up of their partnership.

Figure 1

Composition of Partnerships at each of the 10 TCRCs

TCRC	Partners (number per site)
Jefferson City	Lincoln University, Missouri National Guard, University of Missouri (Extension, Columbia, Rolla, and St. Louis) (6)
Kirksville	City of Kirksville, Kirksville R-III School District, Truman State University, University of Missouri Extension (4)
Mexico	City of Mexico, Moberly Area Community College, Linn Technical State College, University of Missouri Extension (4)
Nevada	Cottey College, Crowder College, Missouri Southern State College, Nevada Area Economic Development Commission, Nevada R-V School District, Southwest Missouri State University, University of Missouri Extension and Kansas City, Missouri National Guard (9)
Park Hills	Mineral Area College, University of Missouri Extension and St. Louis (3)

Figure 1 (Continued)

Poplar Bluff	City of Poplar Bluff, Three Rivers Community College, University of Missouri Extension (3)
Portageville	Delta Center Advisory Board, First State Bank of Caruthersville, Security Bank of Caruthersville, University of Missouri Extension and Columbia (5)
Reeds Spring	Reeds Spring R-IV School District, Skaggs Community Health Center, University of Missouri Extension (3)
Salem	Alliant Foodservice, Bank of Salem, City of Salem, Salem R-80 School District, Salem Memorial District Hospital, Town and Country Bank, University of Missouri Extension (7)
Camdenton	Lake of the Ozarks Employment Services, University of Missouri Extension (2)

The University of Missouri Extension serves as the managing partner for all of the TCRCs except Camdenton. Camdenton chose to raise local funds and receives no funding from the University of Missouri Extension. Managing partner means that all of the TCRCs are governed by the University of Missouri Board of Curators. As such, each TCRC receives a large share of their budget from the University of Missouri Extension and all TCRC staff are

considered University of Missouri employees. General operations and policy approval for each of the TCRCs is the responsibility of the Executive Committee which consists of each partner or their designee.

Every TCRC has at least two partners and as shown in Figure 1, some have as many as nine.

2. How many people have been served, at all sites, since the inception of the TCRCs?

Table 2 provides a breakdown by year of the number of people served by the local TCRCs. The number of people served includes local business people, lawyers, doctors, state agency staff, University of Missouri students, University of Missouri Extension staff, local citizens, youths, and various others who needed training or wanted additional educational opportunities.

As a matter of background, the first TCRC was established in Poplar Bluff, Missouri, in 1993. There were several TCRCs in the planning stages at that time; however, no new TCRCs were added until 1996, when the Camdenton TCRC began operation. In 1997, four TCRCs signed memorandums of agreement in the communities of Kirksville, Nevada, Tri-Lakes and Mexico. In 1998, Mineral Area TCRC began operation, followed by Portageville and Salem in 2000 and Jefferson City, the last TCRC, in 2001.

Table 2

Breakdown, by Year, of the Number of People Served by the Local TCRCs

Year of Operation	Number of People Served
1993	Start-Up Year (no data available)
1994	348 ^a
1995	435 ^a
1996	550 ^b
1997	675 ^c
1998	5,288 ^d
1999	9,988
2000	5,477 ^e
2001	7,637 ^f
2002	11,557
2003	10,857
2004	21,942
2005	21,783
2006	16,697
Total for all Years	113,234

^aOnly includes data for the Poplar Bluff TCRC

^bOnly includes data for the Poplar Bluff and Camdenton TCRCs

^cOnly includes data for the Poplar Bluff and Camdenton TCRCs (Kirksville, Mexico, Nevada, Reeds Spring were in start-up)

^dStart-up for Mineral Area TCRC (data for this site is not included)

^eStart-up for Salem and Portageville TCRCs (data for these sites are not included)

^fStart-up for Jefferson City TCRC (data for this site is not included)

3. How many programs have been offered by all sites?

The variety of programs offered at all of the local TCRCs have ranged from credit courses offered from various colleges and universities from around the state of Missouri and other states to non-credit programming offered to those in need of continuing education units or customized training to local business and manufacturers to programming offered specifically to local citizenry to update skills or simply for the "need to learn" something of interest.

Table 3 shows all programs, by year, which has occurred at the TCRCs since 1993 and is separated into three primary categories of: credit courses, non-credit programs, and computer courses, primarily because these are the three areas where the bulk of the programming occurs.

Table 3

Number of Programs, by Year, Offered at all TCRC Sites

Year	Credit Courses	Non-Credit Programming	Computer Training	Total Offerings
1994 ^a	8	9	6	23
1995 ^b	5	10	16	31
1996 ^c	20	15	9	44
1997 ^d	18	25	12	55
1998 ^e	12	71	10	83
1999	88	99	114	301
2000 ^f	95	338	173	606
2001 ^g	172	457	258	887
2002	190	726	265	1,181
2003	171	1,045	263	1,479
2004	249	1,103	258	1,610
2005	252	910	221	1,383
2006	258	1,037	336	1,631
Totals	1,538	6,736	1,941	10,215

^aThe Poplar Bluff TCRC began its first full year of operation in 1994, thus there is no data available for 1993.

^bOnly includes data for the Poplar Bluff TCRC

^cOnly includes data for the Poplar Bluff and Camdenton TCRCs

^dOnly includes data for the Poplar Bluff and Camdenton TCRCs (Kirksville, Mexico, Nevada, Reeds Spring were in start-up)

^eStart-up for Mineral Area TCRC (data for this site is not included)

^fStart-up for Salem and Portageville TCRCs (data for these sites are not included)

^gStart-up for Jefferson City TCRC (data for this site is not included)

4. What was the initial TCRC funding level as compared with the current funding level for each of the TCRCs?

When asked about the type of contribution the partners made to the local TCRC in their area, the majority of respondents indicated that both financial and in-kind contributions were made to the local TCRC, 43.6 percent. Only 17.9 percent of the partners made just a financial contribution and 5.1 percent of the partners made just in-kind contributions. When asked to what extent collaborating/partnering to establish a TCRC in the local community was influenced by the type of contribution, 35.9 percent indicated to a great extent and 15 percent indicated to a very great extent, see Table 4.

Table 4

Percentage of Collaborations/Partnerships Influenced by the Type of Contribution, N=39

No Extent	Very Little Extent	Some Extent	Great Extent	Very Great Extent
2.6	2.6	12.8	35.9	15.4

Note: The majority of the TCRC Staff did not respond to this question as they would not typically make a contribution to their local TCRC

All of the TCRCs (except Camdenton, since that site receives no funding from UME) receive the bulk of their funding from the University of Missouri Extension. Extension provided funding for start-up (purchase of all equipment, furniture, and connectivity). All monies not used during the start-up phase was then included in each of the TCRC budgets as their "beginning balances" for general operation. Each of the TCRC partners then provided either cash or in-kind contributions to balance out the TCRC budgets. Table 5 presents information related to 9 of the 10 TCRCs' funding levels, comparing the first year of operation funding to fiscal year 2005-2006 funding. Again, Camdenton is not included in the figures since they do not receive any funding from the University of Missouri Extension.

Overall, the combined UME, local partners, and in-kind contributions to nine of the TCRCs totaled over \$1.7 million dollars during the first year of operation. During fiscal year 2005-2006, the combined contributions totaled over \$1.5 million. This amount equates to an 18.2 percent decrease in funding from year one through fiscal year 2005-2006. The in-kind contributions stayed the same from year one through fiscal year 2005-2006.

Table 5
Funding Levels Compared with Year 1 of Operation and Fiscal Year 2005-2006

TCRC	Year 1 of Operation			Fiscal Year 2005-2006			Percentage Change +/-		
	UME ¹	Local Partners	In-Kind	UME	Local Partners	In-Kind	UME	Local Partners	In-Kind
Jefferson City	\$11,000	\$15,000	0	\$11,000	\$15,000	0	Same	Same	Same
Kirksville	\$122,972	\$47,986	\$22,000	\$94,073	\$32,188	\$22,000	-24%	-33%	Same
Mexico	\$103,750	\$50,000	\$40,000	\$79,369	\$52,000	\$40,000	-23%	+ .04%	Same
Nevada	\$124,000	\$29,819	\$101,512	\$118,575	\$28,186	\$101,512	- .04%	- .05%	Same
Mineral Area	\$90,000	\$7,214	\$77,500	\$112,838	\$3,500	\$77,500	+25%	-51%	Same
Poplar Bluff	\$162,300	\$1,978	\$119,520	\$124,200	0	\$119,520	-23%	-100%	Same
Portageville	\$180,774	\$2,262	\$42,000	\$122,922	\$12,500	\$42,000	-32%	+4.5%	Same
Reeds Spring	\$141,577	\$30,000	\$31,000	\$108,306	\$30,000	\$31,000	-24%	Same	Same
Salem	\$135,000	\$46,000	\$60,000	\$103,275	\$53,250	\$60,000	-24%	+16%	Same
Totals	\$1,071,373	\$230,259	\$493,532	\$874,558	\$226,624	\$493,532	-18%	- .02%	Same

¹UME = University of Missouri Extension

Since the first year of operation, the majority of the TCRCs have decreased funding from both the University of Missouri Extension and the local partners. The average UME contribution has decreased approximately 18.8 percent for eight of the TCRCs, with one TCRC (Mineral Area), seeing a 25 percent increase from year one to fiscal year 2005-2006. The average local partner contribution decreased approximately 33.4 percent for four of the TCRCs (Kirksville, Nevada, Mineral Area, Poplar Bluff), with two TCRCs (Jefferson City and Reeds Spring) remaining the same, and three TCRCs (Mexico, Portageville and Salem) with approximately a 6.8 percent increase during the same time period.

Table 6 provides information related to the University of Missouri and local partners cash investment per participant for 2005 and 2006.

Table 6

Cash Investments by UME and Local Partners, Per Participant, Years 2005 and 2006

Operation Year	Number of Participants	Dollar Amount	Total Per Participant
2005	21,783	\$1,101,182	\$50.55
2006	16,697	\$1,101,182	\$65.95

Currently UME and the local partners are contributing over 1.1 million dollars to the TCRCs at a cost of \$65.95 for every person that participates in any type of programming that is offered. Each of the TCRCs generate income from user fees collected for programming, facility use, and miscellaneous items such as faxing, copying and printing. These fees are not included in Table 6. However, it is important to note that if these fees were included the cost per person would decrease.

5. To what extent do the partners consider the benefits of collaboration/partnering to have been influenced by the types of financial contributions made to the TCRC (financial, in-kind, or both)?

As stated earlier, the majority of contributions to local TCRCs were both financial and in-kind, 43.6 percent. Those partners that contributed just financial contributions were 17.9 percent and those partners that contributed just in-kind contributions were 5.1 percent. There was general agreement (64.1 percent) that benefits of collaboration/partnering was influenced by the type of contribution (financial, in-kind, or both). However, 2.6 percent indicated very little extent or no extent. Overall, based on the partner responses, the benefits of collaboration/ partnering within the TeleCenter Network are

influenced by the type of contribution made to the local TCRC.

There are several benefits related to having a TCRC located in a community from the perspective of the partners, the community itself, and from the TCRC staff.

Table 7 presents data about benefits from the partner perspective.

Table 7

Percentage of Agreement or Disagreement Regarding the Benefits of Having a TCRC, Partner Perspective, N=39

Benefits	Strongly Disagree (Percent)	Disagree (Percent)	Neutral or No Opinion (Percent)	Agree (Percent)	Strongly Agree (Percent)
Presence in Community			5.1	53.8	41.0
Support for partner educational offerings			12.8	48.7	38.5
Opportunities for Collaboration with other partners		7.7	20.5	48.7	23.1
Support for training facilities at TCRC		5.1	5.1	59.0	30.8
Support for technology in community			12.8	48.7	38.5

It is important to note that most respondents agreed or strongly agreed (94.8 percent) that the TCRC Collaborative was known in the community which could serve as a benefit on an individual basis and also was beneficial for the agency the partner represented.

Another important point to make is that 71.8 percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that having a TCRC located in the community provided opportunities for collaboration with other partners, 20.5 percent had no opinion, and 7.7 percent disagreed with the statement.

Additional comments made by respondents are listed below related to partnership benefits from having a TCRC located in the community:

- TCRC location is such that extension faculty and staff from multiple regions utilize the facility. As such, there is greater collaboration across regional lines and thus more effective use of Extension resources by enhanced collaboration.
- Increases overall education/training opportunities for the community as a whole.
- Collaboration by the partners involved local citizens and provided a much greater opportunity for educational benefits in one location.

- The opportunity to serve audiences that might not have happened if not for the TCRC.

Since the beginning, the TCRC concept has been all about community - bringing educational opportunities to areas that would not otherwise have them available without having to leave the local area. Table 8 presents data about benefits from the community perspective.

Table 8

Percentage of Agreement or Disagreement Regarding the Benefits of Having a TCRC, Community Perspective, N=39

Benefits	Strongly Disagree (Percent)	Disagree (Percent)	Neutral or No Opinion (Percent)	Agree (Percent)	Strongly Agree (Percent)
Economic impact (drawing card for businesses)		17.9	23.1	46.2	12.8
Educational opportunities not otherwise available		2.6	7.7	33.3	56.4
Access to technology not otherwise available such as Videoconferencing		2.6	12.8	33.3	51.3
Public access to the Internet		12.8	23.1	38.5	25.6
Office Services (faxing, copying)	5.1	10.3	51.3	30.8	2.6

When asked if there were benefits to the community by having a TCRC present, 89.7 percent either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that educational opportunities not otherwise available to the community was a benefit. The most prevalent benefits related to technology: access to technology not otherwise available, such as videoconferencing, 84.6 percent and public access to the internet, 64.1 percent.

In addition to the above benefits, respondents provided some other possible benefits for having a TCRC in the community:

- TCRC staff being involved in community service work and helping other organizations and businesses.
- Youth related programs both for 4-H and other youth/school organizations. Also "community created" programming that is delivered to other locations, TCRCs, libraries and other schools. Local extension programming that could be delivered intra-region. TCRCs can be creative locations, expanding program opportunities beyond simply receiving programs.
- Emphasis on and value of education to community members.
- Meeting place for community, state and regional organizations.

The local TCRCs have various opportunities to impact the communities in which they serve (educational opportunities, meeting space, technology, etc.). Table 9 presents data about the benefits of having a TCRC located in the communities they serve.

Table 9

Percentage of Agreement or Disagreement Regarding the Benefits of Having a TCRC, TCRC Perspective, N=39

Benefits	Strongly Disagree (Percent)	Disagree (Percent)	Neutral or No Opinion (Percent)	Agree (Percent)	Strongly Agree (Percent)
Broker for educational opportunities			12.8	38.5	48.7
Available resource for informational technology			7.7	56.4	35.9
Facility for local citizens to have meetings and attend trainings			12.8	35.9	51.3
Informational source		2.6	10.3	61.5	25.6
Direct line to Extension projects		7.7	25.6	51.3	15.4
Public Access Computers with high speed connectivity		2.6	20.5	33.3	43.6

In general there appears to be agreement that the TCRC is providing benefit to the community by providing educational opportunities, 87.2 percent; serves as a resource for informational technology, 92.3 percent; serves as a facility for local citizens to meet and gather, 87.2 percent; and, serves as a resource for current technological resources, 84.6 percent.

With regard to technology, when developing the TCRCs and throughout their 13-year existence, much of the technology housed at each of the TCRCs was considered state-of-the-art (i.e., high speed connectivity and interactive video) and new to the community. The TCRC Collaborative was asked to respond about the effectiveness of the technology used by their local TCRC in delivering educational programming, see Table 10.

Table 10

Effectiveness of Technology in Delivering Educational Programming

Very Ineffective (Percent)	Somewhat Effective (Percent)	Neither Ineffective nor Effective (Percent)	Effective (Percent)	Very Effective (Percent)
	2.6	2.6	38.5	56.4

Of the responses, 56.4 percent agreed that the technology was very effective, 38.5 percent thought it was effective, and 2.6 percent had no opinion or considered the technology to be somewhat effective in delivering educational programming. Interestingly, none of the respondents considered the technology to be ineffective in delivering educational programming.

An additional comment made by one of the respondents was that having a TCRC in the community provided opportunities for other businesses to consider developing new partnerships with either the TCRC or with partners that are already a member of the TCRC Collaborative.

6. To what extent is there a difference in participation levels regarding collaboration/partnering between the partners and the TCRC staff members?

Overall, the partners and staff involved in the local TCRCs have been involved in at least 1-3 partnerships/collaborations in their careers. Table 11 provides a breakdown of the various levels of involvement reported by both the partners and TCRC staff.

The breakdown between the local partners and TCRC staff that completed the survey instrument is 18 (46.2) for partners and 21 (53.8) for TCRC staff. Thirteen (61.9 percent) of the TCRC staff have been involved in at least

1-3 partnerships/collaborations throughout their careers. Many of the local partners have been involved in over 10 partnerships/collaborations (44.4 percent) throughout their lives. Overall, however, less than one percent of both the partners and TCRC staff have had no involvement in partnerships/collaborations.

Table 11

Levels of Involvement in Partnerships/Collaborations by the Partners and the TCRC Staff, N=39

Level of Involvement	Number of Local Partners	Number of TCRC Staff	Percentage of Total Involvement
1-3 Partnerships/ Collaborations	5	13	46.1
4-6 Partnerships/ Collaborations	4	4	20.5
7-10 Partnerships/ Collaborations	0	1	2.6
Over 10 Partnerships/ Collaborations	8	2	25.6
No Involvement in Partnerships/ Collaborations	1	1	5.1

When asked to what extent the partners and TCRC staff have been involved in other partnerships/collaborations in their communities, 46.1 percent of the respondents were involved in partnerships/collaborations in their community

to either a great or very great extent and 46.2 percent indicated some extent of involvement.

Further breakdown regarding partnerships/collaborations within the community showed that TCRC staff indicated some extent, 67 percent, and local partners indicated great extent, 44 percent. In general, the local partners have been involved in other partnerships/collaborations more consistently than the TCRC staff. Table 12 provides a breakdown of the involvement local partners and TCRC staff have had in their communities.

Table 12

Number of Partner and TCRC Staff Involved with Partnerships/Collaborations in their Community, N=39

Range	Local Partners N=18	Percentage of Involvement	TCRC Staff N=21	Percentage of Involvement
No Extent	0	0	0	0
Very Little Extent	1	6	2	9
Some Extent	3	17	14	67
Great Extent	8	44	4	19
Very Great Extent	6	33	1	5

In terms of how successful the respondents felt their partnerships/collaborations were in the community, both the local partners and the TCRC staff indicated that the

involvement in their community partnerships/collaborations was either somewhat successful (51.3 percent) or very successful (30.8 percent). Only 7.6 percent of the respondents indicated that the partnerships/collaborations that they were involved with in the community were either very unsuccessful or somewhat unsuccessful and 5.1 percent had no opinion.

When asked if the TCRC respondents had been involved in a partnership/collaboration, 46.2 percent indicated that they had been involved in at least 1-3 partnerships/collaborations; 20.5 percent indicated between 4-6; 2.6 percent indicated between 7-10; and 25.6 indicated over 10. However, 5.1 percent of the respondents indicated that they have had no involvement in partnerships/collaborations. The previous question about collaboration/partnership related to involvement in general. An additional question asked about involvement in collaboration/partnership within the respondents' community and 46.1 percent indicated great to very great extent; 46.2 percent indicated some extent, and 7.7 percent indicated very little extent. In addition, 82.1 percent of the respondents indicated that the partnerships/collaborations they were involved within their community were either somewhat successful or very successful.

When asked how the TCRC Collaborative rated their overall success in working with other partners in their community to establish a local TCRC, 79.5 percent rated their partnership/collaboration as either somewhat successful or very successful. Over 15 percent indicated a neutral opinion and 5.1 percent indicated somewhat unsuccessful.

The majority of the TCRC partners and staff have lived in the primary community/ county where the TCRC located for over 20 years (35.9 percent). Between 0-20 years, 38.5 percent of the respondents live in the community/county and 25.6 percent of the respondents do not live in the community/county where the TCRC is located. The average length of time that the respondents have been involved with the local TCRC is 6.5 years.

7. To what extent has collaboration/partnerships developed at the TCRCs benefited the community and the partners, individually?

Based on results of the Wilder Institute Survey and the benefits of having a TCRC in the community from the partner and community perspective, there seems to be agreement that expectations have been met regarding whether or not the collaboration/partnerships that have been developed at the TCRCs has been of benefit.

Each item in the Wilder Institute inventory was given as a statement and respondents were asked to respond using a five-point scale: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral or no opinion (3), agree (4), or strongly agree (5). The factors were scored according to the Wilder Inventory guidelines, which recommended averaging across all ratings for items within a given factor. The scores were interpreted as suggested by the authors of the inventory:

- Scores of 4.0 or higher show strength and probably don't need special attention;
- Scores from 3.0 to 3.9 are borderline and should be discussed by the group to see if they deserve attention; and
- Scores of 2.9 or lower reveal a concern and should be addressed (p.42).

Using SPSS, the factors under each factor group were combined to determine a mean and then corresponding reliability (Cronbach's alpha) which measures the reliability of the scale or how much the ratings on these items were correlated was used. Where there was only one question associated with a factor, Cronbach's alpha is denoted with a N/A. Table 13 presents the scores for each factor examined in the Wilder Institute Inventory.

Table 13

**Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory Scores for
Collaboration Survey of Telecommunication Community
Resource Center Participants, N=39**

Factor Group	Factor (Number of Questions asked for Item)	Score on Scale of 1 to 5	Scale Reliability (alpha)
Environment	History of collaboration or cooperation in the community (2)	4.0	.82
	Collaborative group seen as a legitimate leader in the community (2)	3.7	.52
	Favorable political and social climate (2)	4.1	.83
Membership Characteristics	Mutual respect, understanding, and trust (2)	3.9	.62
	Appropriate cross-section of members (2)	3.3	.58
	Members see collaboration as in their self-interest (1)	4.1	N/A ¹
	Ability to Compromise (1)	3.1	N/A ¹
Process and Structure	Members share a state in both process and outcome (3)	3.7	.80
	Multiple layers of participation (2)	3.7	.24
	Flexibility (2)	4.2	.85

Table 13 (Continued)

	Development of clear roles and policy guidelines (2)	3.8	.70
	Adaptability (2)	3.9	.53
	Appropriate pace of development (2)	3.8	.47
Communication	Open and frequent communication (3)	3.8	.81
	Established informal relationships and communication links (2)	3.8	.77
Purpose	Concrete, attainable objectives (3)	3.9	.81
	Shared Vision (2)	4.2	.72
	Unique purpose (2)	4.2	.07
Resources	Sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time (2)	3.2	.26
	Skilled leadership (1)	4.2	N/A ¹

¹N/A indicates there was only one question asked related to this factor.

Most factors fell within the scale of 3.0-3.9 which the Institute considers to be a factor that may require attention or borderline, approaching strength. Factors that fell in the 4.0 or higher category (show strength and probably do not need special attention):

- History of collaboration or cooperation in the community;

- Favorable political and social climate;
- Members see collaboration as in their self-interest;
- Flexibility;
- Shared vision;
- Unique purpose and
- Skilled leadership.

Some of the factors that fell in the 3.0-3.9 category, which are considered borderline and depending on where they fell on the scale could be cause for concern include:

- Appropriate cross-section of members (3.3);
- Collaborative group seen as a legitimate leader in the community (3.7); and
- Sufficient funds, staff, materials and time (3.2).

None of the factors received scores in the 2.9 or lower category.

Table 14 provides the percentages associated with the respondents' scores for the Wilder Institute Survey.

Table 14

Respondents' Scores on Survey, by Percent, N=39

Factor	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
History of collaboration or cooperation in community	1. Agencies in our community have a history of working together.		10.3	2.6	53.8	33.3
	2. Trying to solve problems through collaboration has been common in our community. It's been done a lot before.		10.3	10.3	56.4	23.1
Collaborative group seen as a legitimate leader in the community	3. Leaders in our community who are not part of our collaborative group seem hopeful about what we can accomplish.	2.6		33.3	56.4	7.7
	4. Others (in our community) who are not part of this collaboration would generally agree that the organizations involved in this collaboration project are the "right" organizations to make this work.		5.1	23.1	61.5	10.3
Favorable political and social climate	5. The political and social climate seemed to be "right" for starting a collaborative project like this one when we began.		2.6	7.7	61.5	28.2
	6. The time was right for this collaborative project.		5.1	12.8	48.7	33.3
Mutual respect, understanding and trust	7. People involved in our collaboration always trust one another.	2.6	17.9	17.9	43.6	17.9
	8. I have a lot of respect for the other people involved in our collaboration.		2.6	2.6	48.7	46.2

Table 14 (Continued)

Factor	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Appropriate cross section of members	9. The people involved in our collaboration represent a cross section of those who have a stake in what we are trying to accomplish.		10.3	7.7	64.1	17.9
	10. All the organizations that we need to be members of this collaborative group have become members of the group.	2.6	51.3	17.9	23.1	5.1
Members see collaboration as in their self-interest	11. My organization will benefit from being involved in this collaboration.		2.6	17.9	48.7	30.8
Ability to compromise	12. People involved in our collaboration are willing to compromise on important aspects of our project.	2.6	7.7	2.6	76.9	10.3
Members share a stake in both process and outcome.	13. The organizations that belong to our collaborative group invest the right amount of time in our collaborative efforts.		28.2	30.8	35.9	5.1
	14. Everyone who is a member of our collaborative group wants this project to succeed.		2.6	12.8	48.7	35.9
	15. The level of commitment among the collaboration participants is high.		17.9	17.9	51.3	12.8

Table 14 (Continued)

Factor	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Multiple layers of participation	16. When the collaborative group makes major decisions, there is always enough time for members to take information back to their organizations to confer with colleagues about what the decision should be.		23.1	10.3	51.3	15.4
	17. All of the people who participate in decisions in this collaborative group can speak for the entire organization they represent, not just a part.		12.8	17.9	51.3	17.9
Flexibility	18. There is a lot of flexibility when decisions are made; people are open to discussing different options.		2.6	7.7	66.7	23.1
	19. People in this collaborative group are open to different approaches as to how they can do our work. They are willing to consider different ways of working.		5.1		59.0	35.9
Development of clear roles and policy guidelines	20. People in this collaborative group have a clear sense of their roles and responsibilities.		15.4	17.9	56.4	10.3
	21. There is a clear process for making decisions among the partners in this collaboration		5.1	12.8	64.1	17.9
Adaptability	22. This collaboration is able to adapt to changing conditions, such as fewer funds than expected, changing political climate, or change in leadership.	2.6	5.1	12.8	59.0	20.5
	23. This group has the ability to survive even if it had to make major changes in its plans or add some new members in order to reach goals.		7.7	15.4	61.5	15.4

Table 14 (Continued)

Factor	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Appropriate pace of development	24. This collaborative group has tried to take on the right amount of work at the right pace.		10.3	17.9	64.1	7.7
	25. We are currently able to keep up with the work necessary to coordinate all the people, organizations, and activities related to this collaborative project.		10.3	5.1	64.1	20.5
Open and frequent communication	26. People in this collaboration communicate openly with one another.		15.4	10.3	53.8	20.5
	27. I am informed as often as I should be about what goes on in the collaboration.	2.6	7.7	15.4	51.3	23.1
	28. The people who lead this collaborative group communicate well with the members.		10.3	15.4	56.4	17.9
Established informal relationships and communication links	29. Communication among the people in this collaborative group happens both at formal meetings and in informal ways.	5.1	5.1	7.7	66.7	15.4
	30. I personally have informal conversations about the project with others who are involved in this collaborative group.	5.1	15.4	2.6	53.8	23.1

Table 14 (Continued)

Factor	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Concrete, attainable goals and objectives	31. I have a clear understanding of what our collaboration is trying to accomplish.		5.1	7.7	53.8	33.3
	32. People in our collaborative group know and understand our goals.		7.7	25.6	51.3	15.4
	33. People in our collaborative group have established reasonable goals.		7.7	23.1	53.8	15.4
Shared vision	34. The people in this collaborative group are dedicated to the idea that we can make this project work.		2.6	23.1	51.3	23.1
	35. My ideas about what we want to accomplish with this collaboration seem to be the similar to the ideas of others.	2.6	2.6	15.4	66.7	12.8
Unique purpose	36. What we are trying to accomplish with our collaborative project would be difficult for any single organization to accomplish by itself.	2.6		7.7	41.0	48.7
	37. No other organization in the community is trying to do exactly what we are trying to do.		7.7	10.3	41.0	41.0
Sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time	38. Our collaborative group has adequate funds to do what it wants to accomplish.	7.7	46.2	20.5	20.5	5.1
	39. Our collaborative group has adequate "people power" (number of people) to do what it wants to accomplish.		20.5	10.3	51.3	17.9
Skilled leadership	40. The people in leadership positions for this collaboration have good skills for working with other people and organizations.		5.1	7.7	46.2	41.0

Environment

Environmental characteristics describe how “effectively groups have worked together in the past, the current political and social climate in which the groups work and the community’s perception of the legitimacy of the collaboration’s leadership” (Derose et. al., 2004, p. 59). According to the TCRC participants, the history of collaboration and the political and social climate of the community were rated 4.0 and 4.1 respectively. There does appear to be some concern among TCRC participants in terms of whether or not the TCRC Collaborative is seen as a legitimate leader in the local communities (3.7 rating). The reliability scale for this item was lower (.52) than the other two scales in this factor group. While the respondents agreed or strongly agreed (64.1 percent) to the question of whether or not the leaders in the community who are not part of the collaborative seem hopeful about what the TCRC partnership can accomplish and 71.8 percent agreed or strongly agreed to the question related to whether or not others who are not part of the TCRC collaboration think that the right organizations are involved to make the collaboration/partnership work, there does seem to be a wider range of responses to both questions where respondents had no opinion to offer (33.3 and 23.1 percent

respectively). Overall only a total of 7.7 percent of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with both statements.

Membership Characteristics

Membership characteristics describe the respect and trust members of the collaboration have for one another, whether or not members are diverse, why members are involved, and whether or not all members are willing to compromise for the good of the collaboration. This factor group had four factors associated with it consisting of a total of six questions. The TCRC Collaborative had a mean score of 3.9 for both items related to mutual respect, understanding, and trust (61.5 percent and 94.9 percent for both questions related to this factor) and a score of 3.1 for ability to compromise (87.2 percent) but an overall mean score of 3.1 for the question under this factor. Also, a mean score of 3.3 was seen for the factor appropriate cross-section of members (81.9 percent). All three mean scores are considered borderline or areas that may need some attention. Of particular concern is the factor "appropriate cross-section of members". While the respondents agreed or strongly agreed (81.9) that the people involved in the TCRC Collaborative represented a cross-section of those who have a stake in what the

collaborative is trying to accomplish, only 28.2 percent agreed or strongly agreed that all of the organizations that need to be members of the TCRC Collaborative are members and 53.9 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. The overall alpha score for both questions in this factor was .58. Rated second highest in the factor related to whether or not members saw the TCRC Collaborative as in their self-interest (79.5 percent).

Process and Structure

Process and structure is the largest of the factor groups and includes factors such as member sharing in process and outcome, multiple layers of participation, flexibility, clear roles and policy guidelines, adaptability, and appropriate pace of development. TCRC respondents ranked all factors in this factor group in the 3.0-3.9 category except flexibility (4.2). Of particular interest in this category is the factor "multiple layers of participation". Both questions included in this factor had an alpha score of .24, which suggests that the variance between the two questions asked is small among the TCRC Collaborative scores regarding whether or not all parties involved in the collaborative are the right people that need to be involved for its success. The first question in this factor "when the collaborative group makes major

decisions, there is always enough time for members to take information back to their organizations to confer with colleagues about what the decision should be", yielded 66.7 percent of the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Over 10 percent had no opinion and 23.1 percent disagreed with the statement. For the second question "all of the people who participate in decisions in this collaborative group can speak for the entire organization they represent, not just a part", had 69.2 percent of the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. However, 17.9 percent had no opinion and 12.8 percent disagreed. Other areas of potential concern are "adaptability" with an alpha score of .53 and "appropriate pace of development" with an alpha score of .47. Both of the questions under "adaptability" had general agreement (79.5 percent and 76.9 percent) that the TCRC Collaborative is able to adapt to changing conditions and its ability to survive even if it had to make major changes in order to reach its goal. However, additional responses to both questions ranged from strongly disagree to no opinion (20.5 percent and 23.1 percent). The two questions under "appropriate pace of development" also had general agreement (71.8 percent and 84.6 percent). These questions also showed evidence of low variance between

collaborative responses with 28.2 percent and 15.4 percent of the responses in the disagreed or no opinion category on the scale.

Communication

Communication refers "to the channels used by collaborative partners to send and receive information, keep one another informed, and convey opinions to influence the group's action" (Mattessich et al., 2001, p.23). The communication factor group consists of two factors with a total of five questions. For the factor "open and frequent communication", the TCRC Collaborative agreed or strongly agreed (74.3 percent) to whether or not people communicated openly with one another. A little over 10 percent of the respondents had no opinion and 15.4 percent disagreed with the statement. Regarding the question related to how often a collaborative member is informed about what is going on at their local TCRC, 74.4 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the lines of communication was flowing properly; 15.4 percent had no opinion, and 10.3 disagreed or strongly disagreed to the statement. As to whether or not the leaders of collaborative communicate well with all those involved, 74.3 percent either agreed or strongly agreed, 15.4 percent had no opinion, and 10.3 percent disagreed

that the leaders are not communicating well with the rest of the collaborative.

For the second factor in the communication factor group "established informal relationships and communication links", the TCRC Collaborative agreed or strongly agreed (82.1 percent) that communication among the collaborative happens both formally and informally. Almost 8 percent had no opinion and 10.2 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed to the statement. In addition, 76.9 percent either agreed or strongly agreed that on a personal level, conversations about the local TCRC are had with others involved in the collaboration on an informal basis. Over two percent had no opinion and 19.5 percent either agreed or strongly disagreed that they have no conversations on an informal basis with others involved in the collaboration. For both items related to the factor group communication, the TCRC Collaborative had a score of 3.8 which is considered borderline, but approaching strength.

Purpose

According to Mettessich and others (2001, p. 25), purpose "refers to the reasons for the development of a collaborative effort, the result or vision the collaborative group seeks, and the specific tasks or projects the collaborative group defines as necessary to

accomplish. It is driven by a need, crisis, or opportunity".

The TCRC Collaborative rated "shared vision" and "unique purpose" high (4.2 respectively). The purpose factor group consists of three factors: concrete, attainable goals and objectives, shared vision, and unique purpose. A total of seven questions were asked related to the three factors. The TCRC Collaborative generally agreed that they have a clear understanding of what the TCRC Collaborative is trying to accomplish (87.1 percent). With regard to shared vision, 74.4 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the collaborative members are dedicated to ensure success. Almost 80 percent agreed or strongly agreed that individual ideas are similar to the ideas of others. Under "unique purpose" 89.7 percent of the TCRC Collaborative responses agreed or strongly agreed that it takes several organizations to achieve success versus one organization doing it alone. Also, 82 percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that no other organization in the community is doing what the TCRC Collaborative is doing. It is important to note that the alpha rating for this the factor "unique purpose" was significantly lower than all other items (.067). As stated above there was significant agreement for this item, but

10.3 percent had no opinion and 7.7 percent disagreed with the statement.

Resources

Resources refer to the human and financial capital required to ensure that the collaborative can be sustained over time. The respondents rated whether or not the collaborative had adequate funds, staff, materials and time to accomplish its goal at 3.2 (low end of the suggested interpretation scale). The alpha rating was .26. Only 25.6 percent agreed or strongly agreed that resources were adequate. About 21 percent had no opinion and 53.9 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. When responding to whether or not the collaborative felt that people in leadership positions had good skills in working with people and organizations as it relates to the TCRC Collaborative (4.2 rating), 87.2 percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Over 7 percent had no opinion and 5.1 percent disagreed.

Overall the TCRC Collaborative group was positive regarding the work that has been accomplished. Based on the Wilder Institute's rating scale, there were a number of factors that fell in the borderline category (3.0-3.9), but approaching strength such as mutual respect, understanding and trust, adaptability, multiple layers of participation,

and concrete, attainable objectives. While there were no factors rated in the 2.9 or lower category (cause for concern), there were two factors that were on the low end of the borderline category (i.e., appropriate cross-section of members, and sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time). Several items fell in the high (no cause for concern) category such as: history of collaboration or cooperation in the community, members see collaboration as in their self-interest, flexibility, shared vision, unique purpose, and skilled leadership.

8. To what extent has the partnership contributed to the operation of the local TCRC?

The partnerships that have been established at each of the TCRCs have contributed to the operation of the local TCRC in a number of ways. One important contribution is the partnership, itself, that has come together in each of the communities to develop the TCRC. Another important point is the way in which the partnership has interacted with the community that builds trust in what the TCRC is trying to accomplish or having a presence in the community. The TCRC Collaborative indicated that this was considered an enormous benefit (94.8 percent), refer to Table 7. The TCRC Collaborative rated the level of commitment for establishing the local TCRCs to be 64.1 percent (refer to

Table 14). This level of commitment helps to ensure that the community sees the TCRC operation as one that is long-lasting and hopefully beneficial to the citizens.

Summary

This chapter discussed the findings from the Wilder Institute Survey and the additional questions asked related to collaboration, technology, financial contributions, and benefits related to having a TCRC located in the community. Descriptive statistics was used and analyses of data were performed calculating the mean, standard deviation, and the alpha scale where appropriate.

Chapter 5

Summary, Summary of Findings, Discussion, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations for Further Research

This chapter presents a review of the study. It includes an overview of the research study, summary of findings, discussion, conclusions, implications and recommendations for further research.

Summary

The purpose of this dissertation was to describe the TCRC Collaborative and its participation in collaborations/partnerships within the community, examine the benefits of the collaborations/partnerships at the 10 Telecommunication Community Resource Centers (TCRCs) throughout the University of Missouri TeleCenter Network, and discuss the perceived benefits to the TCRCs and the local communities where the Centers are located. The partnerships/collaborations established at each of the 10 TCRCs are unique in that community leadership came together with the University of Missouri Extension to bring technology and educational opportunities to local communities that would not otherwise have these opportunities available.

However, the TCRCs have been in existence since 1993 and there has been no formal evaluation conducted regarding

the views of the various partnerships and the benefit of these Centers on the local communities.

Summary of Findings

The research questions addressed in this study and the summary of findings are as follows:

1. What is the composition of the partnerships and how do the partnerships differ at each of the Telecommunication Community Resource Centers (TCRCs)?

- There are 46 partners associated with the TCRC Collaborative.
- Every TCRC has at least two partners and some have as many as nine.

2. How many people have been served, at all sites, since the inception of the TCRCs?

- The 9 TCRCs, collectively, have served over 100,000 individuals since 1994.

3. How many programs have been offered at all sites?

- The 9 TCRCs, collectively, have offered, provided, or facilitated over 10,000 programs since 1994.

4. What was the initial TCRC funding level as compared with the current funding level for each of the TCRCs?

- The initial TCRC funding from the University of Missouri Extension for 9 of the 10 TCRCs totaled \$1,071,373. In fiscal year 2005-2006 that funding has decreased to \$874,558. An 18 percent decrease in funding has occurred over the 13 year period.
- The local partners' funding for 9 of the 10 TCRCs totaled \$230,259 initially and in fiscal year 2005-2006 totaled \$226,624. This was a decrease of less than a half percent over the 13 year period.

5. To what extent do the partners consider the benefits of collaboration/partnering to have been influenced by the types of financial contributions made to the TCRC (financial, in-kind, or both)?

- The majority of respondents (partners) provided both financial and in-kind contributions to the local TCRC.
- Over half the partners that responded indicated that the decision to collaborate/partner was influenced by the type of contribution made to the local TCRC.

6. To what extent is there a difference in participation levels regarding collaboration/partnering between the partners and the TCRC staff members?

- The majority of the participants indicated that they have been involved in at least one partnership in their career. Only 5.1 percent of the respondents indicated no involvement whatsoever.
- When asked about community involvement in partnerships/collaborations, 92.3 percent of the respondents indicated a range of great to some extent.
- Over 82 percent of the respondents said the partnership/collaborations they have been involved with were successful.
- The majority of TCRC partners and staff have lived in the primary community/county where the TCRC is located between 0-20 years.

7. To what extent has collaborations/partnerships developed at the TCRCs benefited the community and the partners?

- The majority of respondents felt that the technology housed at the TCRC is effective for delivering educational programming.

- The local TCRC was considered to be a benefit to the partners, the local community, and the TCRC staff.
- The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory revealed that the respondents rated the Telecommunication Community Resource Center collaborative strong in several factor groups (4.0 or above):
 - Environment
 - History of collaboration or cooperation in the community
 - Favorable political and social climate
 - Membership Characteristics
 - Members see collaboration as in their self-interest
 - Flexibility
 - Purpose
 - Shared vision
 - Unique purpose
 - Resources
 - Skilled leadership
- The majority of the responses by the TCRC Collaborative were rated as borderline (3.0 to 3.9), which indicates a possible cause for concern or in many cases approaching strength:

- Environment
 - Collaborative group seen as a legitimate leader in the community
- Membership Characteristics
 - Mutual respect, understanding, and trust
 - Appropriate cross-section of members
 - Multiple layers of participation
 - Development of clear roles and policy guidelines
 - Adaptability
 - Appropriate pace of development
 - Ability to compromise
- Communication
 - Open and frequent communication
 - Establish informal relationships and communication links
- Purpose
 - Concrete, attainable objectives
- Resources
 - Sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time
- None of the factors scored in the 2.9 or lower range.
- While there were several factors within the factor groups that were rated high, the alpha score

associated with some of the factors indicate that the variance among the factor questions when combined, was low and thus the alpha score was low indicating that these factors were not reliable. This is seen in the factor group scores of "membership characteristics", the factor that asks about multiple layers of participation (.24); "resources", the factor that asks about sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time (.26); and the factor group score of "purpose", the factor that asks about the collaborative's unique purpose (.067). These alpha scores were noticeably lower than all of the other scores in the Inventory.

- Factors that were scored at the lower end of the 3.0 to 3.9 range were:
 - Membership Characteristics
 - Appropriate cross-section of members (3.3)
 - Ability to compromise (3.1)
 - Resources
 - Sufficient funds, staff, materials and time (3.2)

8. To what extent has the partnership contributed to the operation of the local TCRC?

- The TCRC Collaborative indicated (94.8 percent) that the way in which the partnership has interacted with and having presence in the community was an enormous benefit.
- The TCRC Collaborative rated the level of commitment for establishing the local TCRCs at 64.1 percent.

Discussion

The development of the TeleCenter Network was designed to bring educational and technological opportunities to communities that were rural enough that these opportunities were not readily available to local citizens. Communities and local stakeholders were presented an opportunity to leverage resources with higher education and enter into a partnership/collaboration that could be beneficial to everyone involved.

The TCRC Collaborative, overall, considered the work they are doing to be of benefit to all involved. The group felt that the environment was conducive to collaborate with those entities involved and possibly with others in the future.

An area of possible concern is that at least 75 percent of the scores in the Inventory fell in the middle

of the rating scale. While this doesn't necessarily indicate that the collaborative should be concerned, it does point out that there are several issues that may need to be addressed if the collaborative is going to continue to move forward. This is especially true for those scores below 3.5 on the rating scale.

Because there were only three of the factors that fell in the 3.2 and 3.3 ranges, this may be an indication that the TCRC Collaborative is operating as it should. What is important and of concern, however, is that all three factors (sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time and appropriate cross-section of members, ability to compromise) do play very important roles in whether or not a collaborative will be or continue to be successful. Considering that the TeleCenter Network, overall, has suffered a 18 percent decrease in funding between year one of operation and fiscal year 2005-2006, is a telling indicator that this is a major issue for the TCRC Collaborative. This decrease in funding could be seen from local partners and TCRC staff as an indication of lack of support from University of Missouri Extension, since they are the managing partner and because the bulk of the financial resources come from this partner. This perception could lead to low morale from staff and a number

of other issues that could begin to erode the TCRC Collaborative.

With regard to the factor appropriate cross-section of members in the partnership, this could be an indication that other potential partners perceive the TCRC Collaborative as an unwelcome environment and thus don't feel positive about requesting membership in the already-existing collaborative.

Because the factor "ability to compromise" is rated at 3.1 on the rating scale, this could also be of concern to the future of the TCRC Collaborative. If the partners associated with the TCRC Collaborative are concerned that people within the Collaborative are not willing to compromise on important matters related to the local TCRCs, this could also begin to erode the Collaborative and breakdown trust.

Overall, the TCRC Collaborative represents 46 partners. Of those 46, the University of Missouri Extension and the University of Missouri-St. Louis are the only two partners that are represented at one or more sites. The TCRC Collaborative indicated that there needs to be wider representation or that there are entities in the community that should be a part of the collaborative and are not, this may be another signal that the

Collaborative is not doing all it can to bring others into the collaboration. These are two issues that the TCRC Collaborative should look into further.

In response to the questions related to benefits from the perspectives of the partner, community, and TCRC, there was overall agreement that the TCRCs are of benefit. There were, however, a number of responses in the "neutral or no opinion" category. These responses could be an indication that there are other issues that are concerning the respondents and don't feel free to share them or that the respondents simply had no opinion to offer on the particular statement asked. Whatever the case, these are areas that should be discussed further by the TCRC Collaborative.

The initial philosophy of the TeleCenter Network was "build it and they will come". The number of people served from year one through 2005-2006 has been over 100,000. Between years 2005 and 2006, the Network has seen over a 23 percent decrease in the number of people participating in programming offered at the local TCRCs and just a two percent increase in credit course offerings. Programming has increasingly become very difficult to come by, especially from the University of Missouri System (it was the expectation early on that the majority of the credit

courses offered through the Network would come from the University of Missouri). These offerings have not occurred and while the Network has seen an increase in credit courses (eight in year one to over 258 in year 13), the majority of these courses have come from other partner and non-partner higher education institutions in Missouri and out-of-state.

Conclusions

Within the limitations and assumptions of this study, the following conclusions were drawn concerning the TCRC Collaborative:

1. The TCRC Collaborative is successful in assisting groups to come together for a unique purpose and establish TCRCs throughout the state of Missouri.

2. The TCRC Collaborative benefits the local partners and the University of Missouri Extension, the local communities, and the TCRCs in those communities.

3. The partners involved in the TCRC Collaborative consider partnering/collaborating to be important to community development.

Implications

The evaluation study of the benefits of partnering with the University of Missouri TeleCenter Network suggests that the partners have been effective in creating a

partnership that embodies the philosophy of partnering and collaboration which is to come together for a common goal and to leverage resources to create something that one entity possibly could not create alone.

Findings from this study can be useful for other collaboratives who are contemplating coming together for a specific purpose. The findings from the Wilder Institute Inventory helped to put into context the strengths and weaknesses of the TCRC Collaborative and it can help those groups that are just beginning the collaboration process to help determine their readiness to do so.

The Wilder Institute suggests that organizations should try to have the big picture in mind when reviewing the scores from the Inventory. They further suggest that scores, if possible, should be broken down by organization, particularly if the scores were considered to be on the low side of some of the ranges, and attempt to find out why one organization scored a factor one way versus why another organization scored another way. By doing this, it will help all of the organizations that are part of the collaborative to have a better understanding of the variances in scoring and why these variances exist. As a result, some discussions can then take place that will

hopefully head off any conflicts that could occur and potentially lead to erosion of the collaborative.

With that said, it is important to note that while the Wilder Survey provided some results regarding the TCRC Collaborative's strengths and weaknesses, the Survey produced mixed results in terms of reactions to the questions from the participants which resulted in low internal consistency on a number of the questions. As a result, more research needs to be conducted on the use of the Wilder Institute Survey to validate its reliability and validity issues.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following questions or suggestions derived from or related to this study may provide a basis for further research:

1. This study concerned the partnerships/ collaborations that have that have taken place at each of the TCRCs. The study does not include information from actual participants such as students, community citizens, or local businesses. Information from these groups could increase the base of knowledge related to the benefits of having a TCRC in the local community.

2. This study did not include face-to-face interviews. Including this format into the evaluation would

certainly help to augment what we know about partnerships/ collaboration; but it would also be helpful in further understanding some of the different responses from the respondents.

4. The Wilder Inventory revealed several issues that were considered in the middle of the range of scores and some issues that bordered on concern (lack of resources, material, and time and appropriate cross-section of members). Further research might be to interview the TCRC Collaborative again and find out how these issues were addressed and/or resolved.

5. More research should be conducted on the Wilder Institute Survey instrument to better refine the questions and factors for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of collaborations/partnerships.

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APPENDIX A

Survey Instrument

INSTRUCTIONS

On the following pages, are two sets of questions. The first set, questions 1-40, is an inventory of the TCRC collaboration/partnership strengths on the factors that research have shown are important for the success of collaborative projects. The second set, questions 41- 55, are questions on collaboration, technology, and benefits related to having a TCRC in your community. The questions ask you to circle or check the choice that is closer to your opinion.

There are no right or wrong answers. Your opinions are important, even if they are very different from the opinions of others.

Please follow these instructions:

- Read each item.
- Circle or check the number that is closer to the way you feel/your opinion on each item/question.
- Return your questionnaire as instructed in the cover letter.
- If you feel you don't know how to answer an item or that you don't have an opinion, circle the "neutral" response (the number 3).
- If you feel that your opinion lies between two numbers, choose the number that is closer to your opinion. *Do not circle two numbers.*

Sample Question:

Reading from left to right, read the factor associated with statement number 1, and then circle the whether you: 1. *Strongly Disagree*; 2. *Disagree*, 3; *Neutral/No Opinion*; 4. *Agree*; or 5. *Strongly Agree*. Proceed to mark each statement related to the factor for each section. See sample question below:

Factor	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
History of collaboration or cooperation in community	1. Agencies in our community have a history of working together.	1	(2)	3	4	5
	2. Trying to solve problems through collaboration has been common in our community. It's been done a lot before.	1	2	3	4	(5)

Definition of Terms:

Collaboration/collaborative – involves working jointly with others on a project, where the participating agencies take on specified tasks within the project and share responsibility for its ultimate success.

Partner/Partnering – a formal alliance of organizations, groups, and agencies that have come together for a common goal. The TCRC Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) considers the TCRC a university/community partnership.

The name of the Collaboration/Partnership referred to in the items below is the:
Telecommunication Community Resource Centers (TCRCs)

Factor	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
History of collaboration or cooperation in community	1. Agencies in our community have a history of working together.	1	2	3	4	5
	2. Trying to solve problems through collaboration has been common in our community. It's been done a lot before.	1	2	3	4	5
Collaborative group seen as a legitimate leader in the community	3. Leaders in our community who are not part of our collaborative group seem hopeful about what we can accomplish.	1	2	3	4	5
	4. Others (in our community) who are not part of this collaboration would generally agree that the organizations involved in this collaboration project are the "right" organizations to make this work.	1	2	3	4	5
Favorable political and social climate	5. The political and social climate seemed to be "right" for starting a collaborative project like this one when we began.	1	2	3	4	5
	6. The time was right for this collaborative project.	1	2	3	4	5
Mutual respect, understanding and trust	7. People involved in our collaboration always trust one another.	1	2	3	4	5
	8. I have a lot of respect for the other people involved in our collaboration.	1	2	3	4	5
Appropriate cross section of members	9. The people involved in our collaboration represent a cross section of those who have a stake in what we are trying to accomplish.	1	2	3	4	5
	10. All the organizations that we need to be members of this collaborative group have become members of the group.	1	2	3	4	5
Members see collaboration as in their self-interest	11. My organization will benefit from being involved in this collaboration.	1	2	3	4	5

Factor	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Ability to compromise	12. People involved in our collaboration are willing to compromise on important aspects of our project.	1	2	3	4	5
Members share a stake in both process and outcome.	13. The organizations that belong to our collaborative group invest the right amount of time in our collaborative efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
	14. Everyone who is a member of our collaborative group wants this project to succeed.	1	2	3	4	5
	15. The level of commitment among the collaboration participants is high.	1	2	3	4	5
Multiple layers of participation	16. When the collaborative group makes major decisions, there is always enough time for members to take information back to their organizations to confer with colleagues about what the decision should be.	1	2	3	4	5
	17. All of the people who participate in decisions in this collaborative group can speak for the entire organization they represent, not just a part.	1	2	3	4	5
Flexibility	18. There is a lot of flexibility when decisions are made; people are open to discussing different options.	1	2	3	4	5
	19. People in this collaborative group are open to different approaches as to how they can do our work. They are willing to consider different ways of working.	1	2	3	4	5
Development of clear roles and policy guidelines	20. People in this collaborative group have a clear sense of their roles and responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
	21. There is a clear process for making decisions among the partners in this collaboration	1	2	3	4	5

Factor	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Adaptability	22. This collaboration is able to adapt to changing conditions, such as fewer funds than expected, changing political climate, or change in leadership.	1	2	3	4	5
	23. This group has the ability to survive even if it had to make major changes in its plans or add some new members in order to reach its goals.	1	2	3	4	5
Appropriate pace of development	24. This collaborative group has tried to take on the right amount of work at the right pace.	1	2	3	4	5
	25. We are currently able to keep up with the work necessary to coordinate all the people, organizations, and activities related to this collaborative project.	1	2	3	4	5
Open and frequent communication	26. People in this collaboration communicate openly with one another.	1	2	3	4	5
	27. I am informed as often as I should be about what goes on in the collaboration.	1	2	3	4	5
	28. The people who lead this collaborative group communicate well with the members.	1	2	3	4	5
Established informal relationships and communication links	29. Communication among the people in this collaborative group happens both at formal meetings and in informal ways.	1	2	3	4	5
	30. I personally have informal conversations about the project with others who are involved in this collaborative group.	1	2	3	4	5

Factor	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Concrete, attainable goals and objectives.	31. I have a clear understanding of what our collaboration is trying to accomplish.	1	2	3	4	5
	32. People in our collaborative group know and understand our goals.	1	2	3	4	5
	33. People in our collaborative group have established reasonable goals.	1	2	3	4	5
Shared vision	34. The people in this collaborative group are dedicated to the idea that we can make this project work.	1	2	3	4	5
	35. My ideas about what we want to accomplish with this collaboration seem to be the similar to the ideas of others.	1	2	3	4	5
Unique purpose	36. What we are trying to accomplish with our collaborative project would be difficult for any single organization to accomplish by itself.	1	2	3	4	5
	37. No other organization in the community is trying to do exactly what we are trying to do.	1	2	3	4	5
Sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time	38. Our collaborative group has adequate funds to do what it wants to accomplish.	1	2	3	4	5
	39. Our collaborative group has adequate "people power" (number of people) to do what it wants to accomplish.	1	2	3	4	5
Skilled leadership	40. The people in leadership positions for this collaboration have good skills for working with other people and organizations.	1	2	3	4	5

41. How many other partnerships/collaborations have you been involved in?
(Please check only one)

- 1-3 partnerships/collaborations
- 4-6 partnerships/collaborations
- 7-10 partnerships/collaborations
- Over 10 partnerships/collaborations
- No involvement in partnerships/collaborations

42. To what extent have you been involved in other partnership/collaborations in your community? (Please circle your response)

<i>Very Little Extent</i>	<i>Some Extent</i>	<i>No Extent</i>	<i>Great Extent</i>	<i>Very Great Extent</i>
1	2	3	4	5

43. If you are/were involved in other partnerships/ collaborations in your community, how successful are/were these other partnerships/collaborations?

<i>Very Unsuccessful</i>	<i>Somewhat Unsuccessful</i>	<i>Neither Successful Nor Unsuccessful</i>	<i>Somewhat Successful</i>	<i>Very Successful</i>
1	2	3	4	5

44. How often do you have or did you have discussions about the TCRC outside of the regular Executive Committee meetings of the TCRC?

<i>Never</i>	<i>Almost Never</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Very Often</i>
1	2	3	4	5

45. How would you rate your success in working with the other partners in your community to develop the TCRC?

<i>Very Unsuccessful</i>	<i>Somewhat Unsuccessful</i>	<i>Neither Successful Nor Unsuccessful</i>	<i>Somewhat Successful</i>	<i>Very Successful</i>
1	2	3	4	5

46. How would you rate the effectiveness of the technology used by your TCRC in delivering educational programming?

<i>Very Ineffective</i>	<i>Somewhat Effective</i>	<i>Neither Ineffective nor Effective</i>	<i>Effective</i>	<i>Very Effective</i>
1	2	3	4	5

47. Listed below are several benefits related to having a TCRC located in your community. What is your level of *disagreement with or agreement* with the benefits listed below with respect to their importance to **you as a partner** in the TCRC Collaborative?

Benefits	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/ No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
<u>As a Partner:</u>					
Presence in Community	1	2	3	4	5
Support for partner educational offerings	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunities for collaboration with other partners	1	2	3	4	5
Support for training facilities at TCRC	1	2	3	4	5
Support for technology in community	1	2	3	4	5

47a. If there are additional benefits (with respect to you as a partner) other than those listed above in question 47, please include them here:

48. Listed below are several benefits related to having a TCRC located in your community. What is your level of *agreement with or disagreement* with the benefits listed below with respect to **your community** in the TCRC Collaborative?

Benefits	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/ No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
<u>Your Community:</u>					
Economic impact (drawing card for businesses)	1	2	3	4	5
Educational opportunities not otherwise available	1	2	3	4	5
Access to technology not otherwise available such as videoconferencing	1	2	3	4	5
Public access to the Internet	1	2	3	4	5
Office Services (faxing, copying)	1	2	3	4	5

48a. If there are additional benefits (with respect to your community) other than those listed above in question 48, please include them here:

49. Listed below are several benefits related to having a TCRC located in your community. What is your level of *agreement with or disagreement* with the benefits listed below with respect to **your local TCRC** in the TCRC Collaborative?

Benefits	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/ No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
<u>Your Local TCRC:</u>					
Broker for educational opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
Available resource for informational technology	1	2	3	4	5
Facility for local citizens to have meetings and attend trainings	1	2	3	4	5
Informational source	1	2	3	4	5
Direct line to Extension projects	1	2	3	4	5
Available resource for current technological resources	1	2	3	4	5
Public Access Computers with high speed connectivity	1	2	3	4	5

49a. If there are additional benefits (with respect to your local TCRC) other than those listed above in question 48, please include them here:

50. What type of contribution has your agency made to your local TCRC?
(Please check only one)

- Financial contributions
- In-Kind contributions
- Both financial and in-kind contributions
- No contributions of any kind have been made
- N/A

51. If your agency contributed to your local TCRC, to what extent do you consider the benefits of collaboration/partnering to have been influenced by the type of financial contribution your agency provided?

<i>No Extent</i>	<i>Very Little Extent</i>	<i>Some Extent</i>	<i>Great Extent</i>	<i>Very Great Extent</i>
1	2	3	4	5

52. What is your county of residence?

_____ (County)

53. How long have you lived in the community where the TCRC is located? (Please check only one)

- 0-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- Over 20 years
- Do not live in community

54. What type of partner do you or did you represent? (Please check only one)

- University of Missouri Extension Administration
- TCRC Staff
- University of Missouri (Rolla, St. Louis, Columbia, Kansas City)
- Local College or University
- School District
- City Official/Representative
- Economic Development Commission
- Employment Service
- Hospital
- Financial Institution
- Advisory Board
- Local Business
- Other (please specify) _____

55. About how long have you been or were you involved with the TCRC?

_____/_____
Years/Months

Appendix B
Consent Form

1424 Hickory Hill Drive
Mexico, MO 65265

Date

Name
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear :

Thank you for considering participating in my study of benefits of partnering with the University of Missouri TeleCenter Network. This study is being conducted as my doctoral dissertation research in Career and Technical Education at the University of Missouri-Columbia. The findings from my research will be reported in my dissertation and potentially disseminated to a wider audience through professional and scholarly conferences and publications. This study will examine the partnerships/collaborations that have taken place at each of the ten Telecommunication Community Resource Centers (TCRCs) throughout the state of Missouri. The second purpose of this study will be to explore the perceived benefits of partnering/collaborating to the TCRCs, local communities, and local partners.

The anticipated benefits from this study include advancing the understanding of partnerships/collaborations with local communities, the University of Missouri Extension, and local TCRCs and how leveraging resources can be beneficial when entities come together for a common purpose.

The risk associated with participation in this study is minimal because it is not an evaluation of the participants, but an evaluation of the partnerships/collaborations that have been formed. However, there is some risk related to answering questions about the work you do and the perceptions of the organizations represented with a potential breach of confidentiality. The study has been designed to minimize your risk and protect your confidentiality.

Before you make a final decision about participation, I need to explain how your rights as a participant will be protected.

- **Participation in this study is completely voluntary.** You may withdraw from participation at any time you wish, including during or after you complete the survey instrument. If you decide at a later time that you do not want me to use your completed survey, I will respect that decision. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any concerns or questions about your participation. You may reach me via e-mail at masonv@missouri.edu or telephone at any of the following numbers: 573-581-4874 (office), 573-582-0234 (home). You may also reach my doctoral dissertation advisor Dr. Robert Stewart at

stewartb@missouri.edu. In addition, if you have questions, you may contact the Compliance Office, University of Missouri Institutional Review Board at 573-882-9585.

- **Your identity will be protected in reporting of my findings.** I will use a code or pseudonym rather than your real name in all reporting of findings. I will maintain copies of all pertinent information related to the study, included but not limited to, copies of written informed consent agreements and any other supportive documents for a period of three (3) years from the date of completion of the study.
- **E-mail responses will only be seen by the researcher.** All email responses (completed survey) will be saved to a separate file and the email sending that file to me will be deleted from my home computer.

If at this point you are willing to participate in the study, please complete the consent form on the next page. A self-addressed stamped envelope is included for returning the consent form. Keep this part of this letter for future reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Vivian J. Mason

Consent Form for Evaluating the Benefits of Partnering with the University of Missouri TeleCenter Network.

I, _____, agree to participate in the study exploring the partnerships/collaborations that have taken place at each of the ten Telecommunication Community Resource Centers (TCRCs) throughout the state of Missouri, conducted by Vivian J. Mason. I understand that:

- This interview is for use in research which will be published.
- My participation is completely voluntary, and I may withdraw at any point in the study.
- My identity will be protected in reporting of the findings.
- Your relationship or work status within the organizations involved in this study or benefits otherwise entitled will not be affected by your participation (or lack of) within the study.
- All pertinent information related to the study, included but not limited to, copies of written informed consent agreements and any other supportive documents will be maintained by the researcher for a period of three (3) years from the date of completion of the research.

Additionally, please make a check below as to how you would like to receive the survey:

_____ via e-mail, in which case I will need your e-mail address; or

Email address

_____ via regular postal service (hard-copy sent to an address you provide)
(Please provide your complete mailing address below. If the address is the same as the address you received this consent form, please leave blank).

Signed: _____ Date: _____

VITA

Vivian J. Mason is the coordinator of the University of Missouri Extension, Mexico Telecommunication Community Resource Center (TCRC), located in Mexico, MO. The TCRC provides educational opportunities to citizens that would not normally this type of access – our centers bring educational opportunities closer to home. The TCRC is one of 10 located in various rural communities throughout the state of Missouri.

Mason has worked for the University of Missouri for over 22 years and has been afforded several opportunities to develop leadership skills by participating in the North Central Extension Leadership and Development (NELD) program and the Missouri Extension Leadership Development (MELD) program.

Degrees completed include an Associate of Arts and Bachelor's of Science Degrees from Columbia College, a Master's Degree in Higher and Adult Education and a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Career and Technical Education with an area of emphasis in Adult Education from the University of Missouri-Columbia.