

Small Business Support of Youth Physical Activity

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Introduction

One of the strongest environmental correlates of physical activity in youth is the presence of youth physical activity opportunities (YPAO), including sports programs, parks, facilities, and playgrounds. Unfortunately, not much is known about YPAO and therefore it is difficult to create innovative strategies for getting more, better quality YPAO into communities.

Small businesses (< 500 employees) comprise over 97% of all employers, and thus, represent a potentially substantial resource for supporting community initiatives, including those that target YPAO.

Study Objective: Describe YPAO in KC, MO and the characteristics/reasons small business either support or don't support these YPAO.

Methods

Design: We used a cross-sectional approach to gather quantitative and qualitative data on small businesses (size, community involvement) and the YPAO they support (type, costs). Data was collected in 15% (n=8) of the neighborhoods located in KC, MO having a land-use mix of at least 50% residential and 10% retail/commercial. Each community was randomly assigned to a data collection period of one month. Data collection periods were between March and December.

Small Business Surveys: All small businesses (n=280, Mean 35 ± 10.7 businesses per community) in the 8 study neighborhoods were located using data base searches and by canvassing the areas. Businesses for each area where then randomly ordered to develop visitation/interview schedules. A trained interviewer visited the businesses by area starting with the first business listed. The interviewer continued visits, working down the list, until an interview was completed with an owner at 20% of the small businesses in the area.

Statistical Analysis: Descriptive statistics are presented as Means ± SD or as percentages. Quantitative data was analyzed with Chi Square and t-test analyses. Qualitative data was subjected to review to identify common themes.

Results

•86.0% of all businesses located in the 8 areas were small businesses and they represented all SIC divisions (e.g., agriculture, retail) except mining.

•The 56 small business owners interviewed were mostly male (70.7%), represented both non-minority (54.8%) minority (45.2%) categories, middle-aged (48.4 y), and had children (90.3%).

•100% of businesses supporting and 93.7% of those not supporting YPAO felt small businesses should support YPAO.

•48.2% (n=27) of businesses currently offered support for YPAO and 41.2% of the se YPAO were in the neighborhood where the business was located.

•There were a total of 77 community initiatives supported by small businesses. And 44.2% (n=34) were YPAO.

Table 1: Neighborhood Characteristics.

Characteristic	Mean	SD
Population	1903	708
Yearly Household Income	39,449	10,661
%Commercial/retail	28.7	8.1
%Residential	59.2	6.9
%Female	52.5	2.1
%Youth (< 18 y)	30.3	6.3
% Minority	45.3	34.8
% High School Education	21.3	4.8
% in Poverty	20.6	14.2

Table 2: Descriptive Profile of YPAO.

Types		
Teams (football, baseball, soccer, hockey)		83.3%
Time (volunteerism)		16.6%
Costs		
Equipment/supplies (water bottles, uniforms)		16.6%
Dollars (\$100-\$2000)		50.0%
Time (volunteerism)		16.6%
Don't know		16.6%
Reasons		
Know someone on team (kid, brother, neighbor)		55.6%
Give back to community		44.4%

Table 3: Characteristics of Small Businesses Supporting and not Supporting YPAO.

	Support (n=27)	Don't Support (n=29)
Total initiatives supported	2.3 ± 1.1	1.3 ± 1.1**
Total employees	12.1 ± 16.1	13.0 ± 20.7
Years in business	17.5 ± 18.2	16.6 ± 17.0
# marketing forms used	2.2 ± 1.5	1.4 ± 1.0*
Offer employees health programs	42.9%	45.0%
Have space for YPAO	19.0%	30.0%
Economy affected support	58.3%	41.7%
Owner age	47.2 ± 12.9	49.6 ± 8.3
Sports background owner	66.7%	33.3%*
Owner have children	90.5%	90.0%
Business should support	100%	93.7%
Minority owner	50.0%	50.0%
Female owner	41.7%	58.3%

*p<0.05; **p<0.005

Qualitative Responses from Small Business Owners

1. Why are you NOT supporting YPAO at this time?

•The majority (52.6%) of owners simply stated that they have not been asked to support YPAO.

•Other reasons given were related to not having the funds (15.8%) and being a new business (10.5%).

2. What most likely influences whether this business offers support for community initiatives?

- Economy: The better the economy the more likely to support
- Sense of responsibility: Give back to the community
- Initiative characteristics: Tax write-off, need for initiative, positive impact on returns
- Owner characteristics: Likes the initiative, asked to support an initiative, know what initiatives are in area

3. What are the reasons you support YPAO

- To teach sports, sportsmanship, and parents commitment.
- Bringing family and friends together
- Promote character development, sportsmanship, spiritual guidance, and fun for children of all ages.
- Provide athletic programs for youth.
- To make a difference in lives of Kansas City children
- Initiative displays a need (poor families).

Summary of Findings

1. Current support mechanisms for YPAO

Most are general funds that may or may not support YPAO. Therefore, business donors do not have the discretion as to where their support goes. Their support to general fund organizations cannot be tracked and they do not receive recognition. Also, they are unaware of YPAO to support in neighborhood

Solution: Develop a support mechanism specific to YPAO. All support offered to this mechanism goes to supporting existing and new YPAO. Develop a strategy for recognizing donors and advertising the YPAO support mechanisms.

2. Trust Factor and Culture of Support

Credibility is an issue. Non-minority businesses in minority areas are not likely to support because they are detached from the neighborhood culture and do not understand the social environmental factors that influence trust levels for giving back to neighborhood. For example a minority standing on the corner could mean to them there is a culture of laziness and crime in the area and any support for neighborhood initiatives will not be used for legitimate purposes. Minority businesses in minority areas have more experience and a better understanding of the neighborhoods social environmental factors. They would see conditions in a more positive light and have greater levels of trust.

Solution: YPAO champions are a key component for getting small businesses to lean towards supporting YPAO. They have heavy influence with business owners and can reduce trust barrier. Thus, they can sway the culture of giving within a neighborhood.

3. Sales points for small businesses to support YPAO

REDUCE COSTS: Supporting YPAO could result in healthier kids which could contribute to lower taxes down the road for dealing with unhealthy kids.

INCREASED REVENUE:

- Reduced costs of customers for health care resulting in more disposable income to spend at business
- Improved small business image leading to increased customers
- Low cost advertizing in local area – local advertising better to bring in customers (majority of customers of small businesses from local area)

GOOD WILL: Provides a much needed health service for youth.