Conclusions

The Mentorship Program had the groundwork for successful program implementation that mentors described as complex. Experienced mentors helped mentees navigate the conformance process, while NACCHO staff provided valuable tools, resources, encouragement, and opportunities for networking. Mentees shared resources and used them to work towards conformance and to improve other elements of their food safety programs. The Mentorship Program provided tools for mentees to grow their confidence with the framework, and positive experiences with the framework increased mentees’ motivation to continue pursuing conformance of standards.

Methods

Data

Data were drawn from pre-post questionnaires (cohorts 7-10), final site profiles (cohorts 7-10), final site cohort summaries (cohorts 1-6), and the FDA VNRFRPS database (cohorts 7-10). Due to changes in the pre-post questionnaires across cohorts, combining survey data for all cohorts was not possible.

Qualitative Themes

Mentors are important to provide guidance, clarification, and accountability.

“The major strength we realized was the mentor. It was valuable for us to have someone who would answer our questions and were familiar with the Food Safety Regulations that we use. The program provided the resources and a plan to identify the health program could follow to put forth time and effort to work towards compliance of the Standards. The program help make the Retail Standards a priority in our everyday work for our food safety program.”

Mentees valued networking opportunities.

“The biggest strength of the NACCHO Mentorship Program that we other funding sources have been able to provide is the networking opportunities and mentorship provided.”

Mentees strengthened internal capacity and infrastructure in their organizations.

“New SOPs written during the time in the Standards will be continually used by our program going forward. We did not have actual written procedures for certain processes until we joined the Mentorship Program. It seems that every year that we have been enrolled we made some progress on improving our inspection program.”

Mentees improved the food safety environment in their communities by just the scope of the program by training staff and other stakeholders in their food safety systems.

Figure 1. Number of Participants Across the 10 Years of the Mentorship Program.

Figure 2. Location of Mentees Across the 10 Years of the Program.

Figure 3. Association of FRS mentorship program aspects with the number of Verification Audits completed by LHDs.

Figure 4. Number of Participants Across the 10 Years of the Mentorship Program.

Figure 5. Location of Mentees Across the 10 Years of the Program.

Figure 6. Association of FRS mentorship program aspects with the number of Verification Audits completed by LHDs.

Future Work

The following topics warrant further investigation:

• Expanding program participation across the U.S.
• Tracking mentee capacity to track changes and progress attainment to program participation
• Strength of networks and peer interaction
• Evidence for sustainability
• Best or promising resources to support progress through the VNRFRPS

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What’s the Story?

Ten years’ worth of program and evaluation data is a big deal at NACCHO. Most funding for programmatic work is on an annual basis, with no guarantee that a program will continue for a second year or longer. Measuring short-term outcomes can be a challenge and most of it. Even extremely rare that we can track a program’s progress throughout the project. Due to such an occurrence happens, we are thrilled and want to make the most of it.

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