
MID-POINT EVALUATION RESULTS: FIT FOR LIFE PROJECT

Prepared by Val Haboucha, Evaluation Consultant, July 2018

vhaboucha@gmail.com

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BACKGROUND

The Fit For Life (FFL) Project is a three-year project that seeks to expand on existing programming to enhance equitable and accessible older adult fitness programs. The five components of the FFL project are:

1. To train and support peer leaders to become senior fitness instructors, pole walking instructors, and tiered exercise facilitators
2. To deliver eight FFL low-impact fitness classes, eight pole walking sites, and four tiered exercise program sites
3. To develop and deliver Healthy Living Workshops on chronic conditions, exercise, and mental wellness
4. To develop a professional city-wide network for certified Seniors Fitness Instructors
5. To organize an “Active Living” conference in 2018

The FFL project is being evaluated in order to assess whether project goals and objectives were achieved (see evaluation framework in the Appendix). This mid-point evaluation covers the time period from the project start to January 2018 and seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Were the project components implemented as planned?
2. Was the target population (people ages 55+) reached?
3. Did participants improve their functional fitness?

In addition, feedback from participants of the healthy living workshops are included in this report.

WERE PROJECT COMPONENTS IMPLEMENTED AS PLANNED?

Progress reports from the FFL team to the funder show that project components are being implemented as planned.

WAS THE TARGET POPULATION REACHED?

As of January 2018, 3,903 people had participated in the different FFL project components (for a total head-count of 13,933). Of these, 603 people participated in pole walking groups and low-impact fitness classes, 2,168 participated in healthy living workshops, 92 participated in SFI Network Workshops, and 1,040 participated in one-time events.

The age and sex of low-impact fitness class participants was collected in order to perform functional fitness tests. Based on discussion with the FFL project team, it is believed that participants in the fitness classes are demographically representative of participants across FFL activities.

Sex: 90% of participants were female and 10% were male.

Age: Participants ranged in age from 43 to 90 years old, with 97% of participants falling in the target age range of 55+. The average age of participants was 71 years old.

DID PARTICIPANTS IMPROVE THEIR FUNCTIONAL FITNESS?

The FFL team, who completed a continuing education course from Human Kinetics on how to conduct the Senior Fitness Test, trained 10 peers and volunteers to help with administering the test. The FFL team, peer leaders and volunteers assessed participants' functional fitness levels with six tests from the Senior Fitness Test: Chair Stand, Chair Sit-and-Reach, Arm Curl, Back Scratch, 2-Minute Step, and 8-Foot Up-and-Go. Each test measures a different dimension of functional fitness: either strength, flexibility, or endurance. Initially, the tests were administered at 3- to 6-month intervals, which was later changed to 6 months. Due to time constraints within the program and limitations with space, the 2-Minute Step test was discontinued in newer project sites, and is therefore not reported here.

Overall, 74% of participants improved on the Chair Stand, 74% improved on the Chair Sit-and-Reach, 80% improved on the Arm Curl, 43% improved on the Back Scratch, and 71% improved on the 8-Foot Up-and-Go. Table 1, below, represents a summary of fitness test results.

Considerations for interpreting the data: While interpreting the results, it should be noted that people have participated in the classes for varying lengths of time, ranging from 3 months to 2.5 years. Due to some sites being newer and having completed only a baseline functional fitness test as well as some participants of the other sites missing follow-up tests for various reasons (such as health or travel), only 35 of the 140 participants are included in the analysis below. Due to the small sample size, and the fact that only three sites have participants for whom multiple fitness test results were available, the results of this mid-point evaluation should be interpreted with a degree of caution.

Participants in all groups were consistently least likely to have improved on the back scratch test—a measure of upper-body flexibility. A possible explanation for these results may be measurement error (this test can involve either a negative or a positive result and it is possible that some volunteers or peers who assisted in the administration of the tests have not recorded the +/- sign).

Table 1: Low-impact fitness class participants who showed improvement between first functional fitness test and most recent functional fitness test: % (n)					
<i>Fitness Group</i>	Chair Stand	Chair Sit-and-Reach	Arm Curl	Back Scratch	8-Foot Up-and-Go
Fairview Lutheran Church (3:15 class) # of participants with more than 1 fitness test: 8	63% (5)	88% (7)	63% (5)	25% (2)	75% (6)
Fairview Lutheran Church (2:00 class) # of participants with more than 1 fitness test: 17	65% (11)	59% (10)	76% (13)	47% (8)	76% (13)
Leaside Towers # of participants with more than 1 fitness test: 10	100% (10)	90% (9)	100% (10)	50% (5)	60% (6)
<i>Overall</i> # of participants with more than 1 fitness test: 35	74% (26)	74% (26)	80% (28)	43% (15)	71% (25)
<i>Data from all sites should be available for analysis for the final evaluation report.</i> <i>The following sites could not be included in the analysis above, as only a baseline functional fitness test has been completed so far: Anne Johnston Health Station, Mornelle Community Hub, Neighbourhood Information Post, Oriole Community Centre, Parkdale Community Health Centre, and Victoria Hub.</i>					

HEALTHY LIVING WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

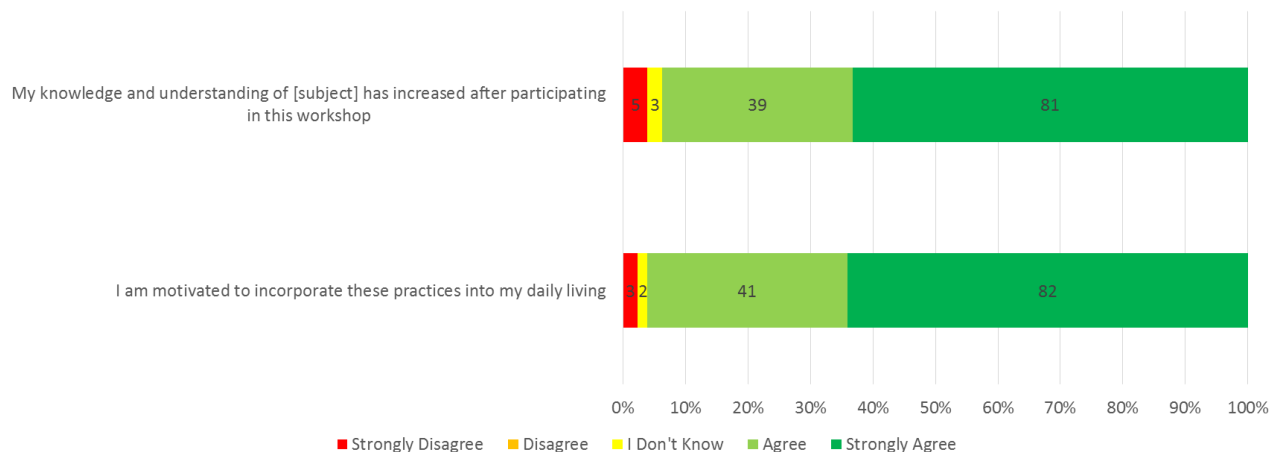
The FFL project team works collaboratively with team members from different disciplines such as physiotherapist, chiropodists, FHC diabetes prevention team and community health workers, delivering healthy living workshops and trainings to many groups and organizations. The workshops and trainings aim to increase awareness about the importance of physical activity in older adults and the management of various chronic conditions. As noted above, the healthy living workshops reached 2,168 people.

Topics included:

- Small exercise ball (November 2016)
- Diabetes prevention (February 2017)
- Heart health (February 2017)
- Exercise bands (February 2017)
- Small exercise ball (June 2017)
- Healthy eating and cardio health (June 2017)
- Stress management (August 2017)
- Foot care (October 2017)
- Cancer screening (October 2017)

Feedback from 128 participants of healthy living workshops on various topics were aggregated. One workshop that covered two topics assessed each separately, and the participants from that workshop (n=19) were double-counted. Ninety-four percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their knowledge and understand of the workshop subject increased after participating in the workshop, and 96% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were motivated to incorporate the workshop practices into their daily living.

Figure 1: Healthy Living Workshop Participant Feedback



RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS FOR EVALUATION

At mid-point, FFL project components are being implemented as planned, the target population of older adults ages 55 years and older is being reached, and participants in the low-impact fitness classes are demonstrating improvement in all but one area of functional fitness.

The following recommendations have emerged from the process and results of the mid-point evaluation. Most of the evaluation questions (see Appendix), will be addressed in the final evaluation, so the scope of the recommendations presented here may not cover all aspects of the Fit for Life project.

- Standardize participant feedback forms across the different groups and classes, so that results can be aggregated and used for evaluation.
- Provide additional training in the administration of functional fitness tests to remove the uncertainty of some results (e.g., the uncertainty of whether +/- signs were documented correctly for the back scratch test).
- Begin planning for sustainability early, so a plan will be in place by the end of the funding period (March 2019).

The next step for the evaluation of the Fit For Life project is to collect information during the final project year to assess the evaluation questions, which can be found in the appendix.

APPENDIX: FFL PROJECT EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Evaluation Question	Method	Indicators	Data Source(s)
1. Were the project components implemented as planned?	Review progress reports and project Gantt chart	% of key activities on target	- Progress reports to funder - Project Gantt chart
2. Did we reach the target population?	Review registration for key project activities	% of participants who are 55+ and from target neighbourhoods	- Functional fitness assessment database
3. Did the partnerships work effectively? Why and why not? How do partners view their role in the project?	Electronic survey with project partners	N/A	- Project partners: FHC, SRCHC, PCHC, AJHS, Victoria Park Hub, AWO, BLCH
4. What worked well and why?	- Electronic survey with project partners - Focus group with peers - 1 focus group with participants of selected sites (with help of interpreted where needed and feasible)	N/A	- Project partners - Project peer leaders - Project participants
5. Did participants increase their knowledge and understanding of the importance of adopting an active lifestyle?	Retroactively through participant focus groups	N/A	- Project participants
6. Did participants increase confidence to engage in safe and age appropriate physical activity programs?	Retroactively through participant focus groups Document review of existing participant surveys	N/A	- Project participants
7. Did participants perceive sense of improved mobility and increased endurance, muscular strength, flexibility and dynamic balance? Did they perceive a sense of improved management of chronic condition, -This is not currently captured in framework. It can be included in participant focus groups if deemed	Retroactively through participant focus groups Document review of existing participant surveys	N/A	- Project participants

Evaluation Question	Method	Indicators	Data Source(s)
important by FFL project team			
8. Did participants improve their functional fitness?	Review and analyze functional fitness assessment results for each participant	% of participants who improved on each metric, stratified by site	- Functional fitness assessment database
9. Did participants increase their physical activity?	Collect pre and post information during participant focus groups	N/A	- Project participants
10. What can we learn from the participants who dropped out of the program?	By proxy through focus groups with peer leaders	N/A	- Peer leaders
<i>The questions above are the ones identified in the OTF grant application. The questions below are additional questions that I've added to reach the purpose and objectives of the evaluation and other identified needs.</i>			
11. Do project participants continue to engage in age-appropriate physical activity beyond their participation in classes or HSEP? ** After project and evaluation are completed (i.e., outside the scope of this framework)	N/A	% of home-bound participants who are physically active at 3 months and 1 year after completing the Home Support Exercise Program % of non-home-bound participants doing physical activity (3x per week) at home or enrolled in community exercise classes at 6 and 12 months after participation	- Project participants
12. Does using the peer model increase program accessibility and support skill training and development? Does it impact quality of fitness instruction for participants? How do peers view their role? How do participants view peers? Have peers been successful at gaining employment in a field that relates to their physical activity-related training?	- Focus groups with project participants - Focus group with peers - Electronic survey with partners	N/A	- Project participants - Project peers - Project partners

Evaluation Question	Method	Indicators	Data Source(s)
What do partners perceive as factors that should be considered in the selection and recruitment of peer leaders?			
<i>The question below is outside of the scope of this evaluation and is being prepared to share with project partners.</i>			
13. Summarize the feedback collected in surveys from training, workshops, classes, etc. (to share with partner agencies)	Review and analyze completed surveys	N/A	Existing surveys