

Kids – ‘Go for your life’

Increasing local capacity for obesity prevention

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Introduction

The Kids – ‘Go for your life’ Program uses a multi-sectoral approach to obesity prevention, and includes a Healthy Communities component that aims to increase the capacity of Victorian local government areas to improve healthy eating and physical activity for children.

A key strategy of this component included funding ten local governments to:

- develop and maintain local partnerships;
- increase uptake of the Kids – ‘Go for your life’ Award Program for local early childhood services and primary schools; and
- develop and implement local government healthy eating and physical activity policies.

Kids – ‘Go for your life’ project officers were employed in all ten funded local governments and were required to work towards targets for Award Program uptake and deliverables relating to community engagement and policy development.

It is identified however that in terms of partnership development and Award Program uptake, many unfunded local governments have also had success.

Background

Methods of quantitative evaluation identified that funded local governments had greater success in increasing local Award Program reach in comparison to unfunded matched local governments; 72% vs. 42% of early childhood services and primary schools are Members of the Award Program (funded vs. unfunded local government areas respectively) (Table 1) and 24% vs. 3% of these Members were Awarded (funded vs. unfunded local government areas respectively) (Table 2).

While these data clearly show the achievements of funded local government areas, it also demonstrates the success of many unfunded local governments at engaging schools and services in the Award Program as Members. Capacity to achieve this utilised existing local funding available to community health agencies and Primary Care Partnerships to address children’s healthy eating and physical activity. Specifically, capacity has been increased in unfunded local government areas where healthy eating and physical activity has been identified as a priority in health promotion plans, and where new and existing roles have been orientated to achieving outcomes of community engagement and Kids – ‘Go for your life’ Award Program uptake.

Additional capacity is needed in unfunded local governments to assist early childhood services and primary schools complete the Award Program criteria and move from Membership to Award. Learnings from both funded and unfunded local governments are being documented to identify what have been effective strategies to build local capacity and sustainability and to show how to successfully and efficiently assist Members to complete the Award criteria.

Conclusions

While providing local governments with funding for a project officer has been effective at increasing community engagement and uptake of the Kids – ‘Go for your life’ Award Program, unfunded local governments have also demonstrated increased Award Program membership and engagement when community health agencies and Primary Care Partnerships have utilised their existing funds. Therefore, to achieve these outcomes across Victoria in a sustainable and cost-effective manner it is proposed that the Healthy Communities component of the Kids – ‘Go for your life’ Program will continue to work with agencies funded through existing sources to encourage take-up of the Program. Further, learnings need to be taken from Kids – ‘Go for your life’ funded local governments on how to build capacity and effect policy change at the local level and how to assist Member schools and services become Awarded.

Table 1: Matched Local Government Areas – Members

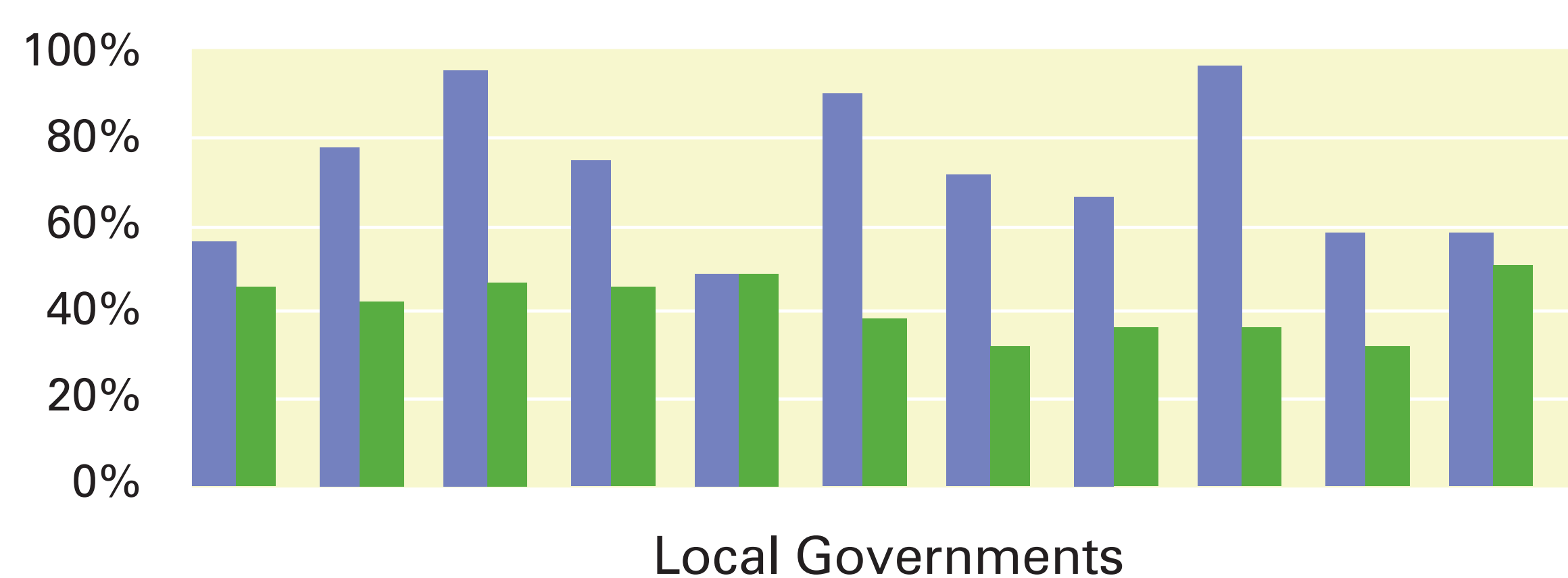


Table 2: Matched Local Government Areas – Awarded

