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FRESH TRACKS EVALUATION REPORT

FRESH TRACKS

Fresh Tracks leadership program brings youth from urban and Indigenous communities together during a three day expedition, using the outdoors as a background for transformative leadership development. Forged by the dynamic partnership between the Center for Native American Youth at the Aspen Institute, the My Brother's Keeper Alliance at the Obama Foundation, and the Children & Nature Network's Natural Leaders Network, Fresh Tracks uses the power of the outdoors as a safe and supportive platform for leadership development through a cross-cultural learning strategy that strengthens cultural competence, inclusive excellence, civic engagement, and community cohesion.

In communities across the country, youth of color are often the most severely and disproportionately impacted by chronic inequities and marginalizing systems like foster care and the criminal justice system. They also face harmful disparities in school discipline, rates of violent victimization, poverty and other forms of trauma that hindering their opportunities, sense of self, and community cohesion. Fresh Tracks exists to empower a movement that is inclusive of all youth who grapple with such systems, recognizing that when we bring their diverse cultures, communities, and talents together—we disrupt and dismantle the systems that deny them opportunity—and can help them build power through their strengths, not their deficits.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Fresh Tracks program provided participants a distinctive cultural immersion and experiential experience centered on fostering leadership, civic engagement, environmental stewardship and justice, and cultural competency skills. This youth/young adult leadership development program included a diverse array of traditional and experiential activities which allowed the participants a first-hand understanding of their respective communities, tools to identify and confront marginalizing and deficit perceptions, and the knowledge of their collective power to bring about social change.

Fresh Tracks used an evidence-based leadership development model to achieve the following core outcomes:

Cultural Competence: To gain a conceptual and practical understanding of cultural and emotional intelligence and implicit bias to lead and thrive in an increasingly diverse, global world and to devise strategic plans to address the myriad of social issues impacting their respective communities. Development and enhancement of participant's cultural competency knowledge, skills, abilities and behavior, including: Respect and caring for oneself and others; Sense of responsibility to self and others; Awareness of and appreciation for cultural differences among others and communities
Awareness and understanding of role of implicit bias and how to undermine their use;
Inter-personal skills such as ability to build trust, handle conflict, value differences.

Leadership Development: To cultivate new leadership skills centered on the value of their personal narrative and cultural identity to achieve their desired personal and community goals. Through workshops focused on leadership IQ, effective communication, cultural competency, strategic thinking, and collaboration, participants gain practical experience leading others. Development and enhancement of strategic leadership knowledge, skills, abilities, and behavior including: The ability to motivate others; Ability to share power and distribute tasks; Ability to work with a team; Ability to resolve conflict; Ability to create and communicate a vision; Ability to manage change and value continuous growth and learning; Ability to both lead and follow; Enhanced communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills.

Civic Engagement: To become more civically knowledgeable and engaged to empower themselves and their respective communities. Creation of informed, knowledgeable, and motivated national youth leaders and advocates to strategically impact local communities, systems, and policies. Using participatory action research and building on their acquired knowledge and skills, to devise evidence-based and community informed action plans, which will include assessing key needs, devising a strategy, and leveraging resources. Participants will have the support of Fresh Tracks trainers who will provide critical guidance and mentorship during the process. Upon completion, participants will have the opportunity to apply for micro-grants to implement their plans and present their findings in a report and presentation.

Fresh Tracks Regional Model

Building on and modifying both the two-week long expedition and Train-the-Trainer Summit models, Fresh Tracks 2018 implemented a replicable regional model in Massachusetts, California, Illinois, and New Mexico. Each of the programs convened participants from the respective geographical regions to both leverage and recognize the distinctive aspects of each location, and to build local/regional cohorts and capacity. This regional model lifted up four diverse cohorts of emerging leaders, advocates, and educators who, collectively, will shape the future of our communities, country, and planet through collaborative, cross-cultural civic action.

Northeast Training at Essex Woods, Massachusetts

In early June, Fresh Tracks held its first regional three-day training and cross-cultural experience in the tranquil woods of coastal Massachusetts.

West Coast Training at Cal State University Long Beach, California

Over the weekend of July 13-15, Fresh Tracks moved to the West Coast, where the campus of California State University, Long Beach became the setting for three days of cultural sharing, leadership development, and outdoor exploration.

Midwest Training At Dunes Learning Center, Indiana

The Fresh Tracks journey continued over the weekend of August 10-12 at the Dunes Learning Center in the heart of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, where young adults gathered from states and tribal nations across the Midwest.

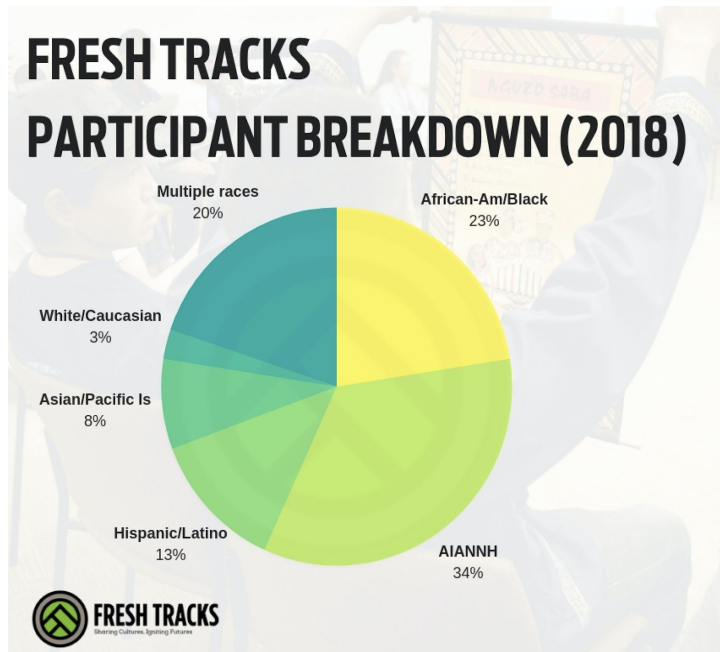
Southwest and Intermountain Training at Abiquiú, New Mexico

On Sunday September 16th, Fresh Tracks completed its fourth regional training of 2018 after three days in the sun-drenched sacred spaces of Ghost Ranch in Abiquiú.

CURRICULUM

The Fresh Tracks curriculum produced a leadership model that enabled participants to leverage their personal and community assets and resources into the collective power needed to initiate and make desired societal changes. The Fresh Tracks curriculum was built upon four foundational pillars: The power of personal narrative; leadership development; community organizing; and action planning.

PROGAM PARTICIPANTS



FRESH TRACKS TRAININGS (2018)	#	%
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African American/Black	25	28%
American Indian/Native Alaskan	38	31%
Asian/Pacific Islander	9	9%
Hispanic/Latino	14	13%
Multi-ethnic	22	15%
White	3	3%

EVALUATION

The evaluation foci, informed by a comprehensive logic model, included: Program strategy, design, implementation, and overall effectiveness. More specifically, the process and outcome evaluation aimed to address the following questions:

1. What is the Fresh Tracks program and how is it a distinctive youth/young adult leadership development program?
2. How was the Fresh Tracks program implemented?
3. How effective was Fresh Tracks in achieving its four stated objectives around: Cultural Competency, Civic Engagement, Hometown/Environmental Stewardship, and Leadership skills?
4. What participant knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavioral outcomes were achieved?
5. How, if at all, can this distinctive model be applied in other communities?

METHODOLOGY

Fresh Tracks evaluation included both a formative and summative component utilizing qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The primary quantitative measures included: A)

An evidence-based pre-post instrument designed using validated items from disparate leadership, interpersonal, civic engagement, cultural competency, and environmental stewardship studies (Furco, A., Muller, P., and Ammon, M. (1998). Competence for Civic Action (Tapping Adolescents' Civic Engagement); Bautista, Bertrand, Morrell, Scorza & Corey Matthews, 2013, Participatory Action Research and City Youth: Methodological Insights from the Council of Youth Research). B) Additional pre-post surveys were administered to assess self-esteem using both the Rosenberg (1965) and Heatherton and Polivy (1991) instruments. C) A post-program instrument was devised using key process and outcomes indicators to assess program design, implementation, fidelity, and overall effectiveness, as well as participant knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors around intended program objectives. To ensure the overall accuracy of responses and to avoid arbitrary repetition, the instrument Likert scales were reversed across questions, using a 1 to 5, Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree continuum that resulted in both the numbers 1.0 and 5.0 serving as the highest option depending on the question. Qualitative methods included participant focus groups, interviews, and evaluator observations.

KEY FINDINGS

The data collected at each regional site and in the aggregate demonstrated that overall participant knowledge and skills around key objectives, especially community engagement and empowerment, cultural competency and implicit bias, leadership and communication, and environmental stewardship and justice. Participants also showed growth in their value of their personal narrative and cultural identity, confidence in their abilities and strategies to create a community vision and action plan as community advocates and change agents, and

the cultivation of critical cultural competency, collaboration, and communication skills needed to achieve social justice and equity for themselves, and others.

Key findings were analyzed by individual sites and across all sites for comparative insights and to inform future program planning and implementation strategies. Key survey results (percentages) were tallied combining “Agree,” and “Strongly Agree” responses as shown in the following tables. The survey used for the Boston regional included various items that were replicated across all four programs, however, based on challenges with scheduling and implementation, the evaluation plan, pre-post surveys, and daily surveys were modified to increase participation rates and ensure assessment of key objectives. The final three regional programs, Los Angeles, Chicago, and New Mexico all used the final modified version, and key items were used across all programs for comparisons and aggregate analysis.

Table 1: Summary Results of Administered Surveys—Boston*

Outcome	Description	Day 1/ 2	Day 3
Cultural Competence/ Inclusive Excellence			
	The introduction activities taught me about different cultures.	1.60	
	I understand the concept of implicit or unconscious bias		1.09
	I understand how implicit bias effects my and others thoughts and behaviors.		1.27
	I have knowledge and strategies to actively be aware and counter my own bias.		1.18
	It is important to collaborate with persons from other cultures to achieve change.		1.09
Civic Engagement and Community Advocacy			
	I learned how to identify, contact, and communicate with policy makers.		1.45
	I learned how to organize communities for change		1.09
	I know how to use organizing strategies to develop an action plan.		1.64
	I learned specific strategies to achieve my community action plan		1.45
	I learned how to empower citizens and community members’ action.		1.18
	I feel prepared and organized to lead my community.		1.73
I know how to determine and evaluate if my community action plan will work.		1.36	

Leadership, Communication, and Teamwork			
	Learned how narratives can be used to drive social change.	1.20	
	Enhanced my understanding regarding the power of narratives.	1.20	
	My action team worked effectively together		1.09
	I grew as a leader		1.09

*As a result of scheduling and necessary modifications to enhance the overall implementation of the program, aspects of the evaluation plan were revised. While there was a comprehensive pre/post survey, participants did not complete the final quantitative post survey, however, both the mixed methodology Day 2 and Day 3 instruments, as well as the qualitative post instrument captured several key program objectives, including cultural value, motivation, self-esteem, cultural competency, and leadership, which were triangulated through focus groups and interviews, and qualitative responses to provide comprehensive insight regarding the program’s impact.

Boston Qualitative Questions and Responses

What did you learn most about yourself throughout the Fresh Tracks program?

“I learned that rather than being secluded and feeling like the only one to deal with the problems that i face... It is a much bigger, and global problem that we all face together.”

“I learned that I am a quieter leader and that I want to work on becoming more outgoing and talk more during discussions.”

“That I can be a very effective leader once I begin to talk and open up.”

“How to be a better leader and how to get more involved. I also have a stronger presence that I want to deliver moving forward.”

“I learned to put myself out there and to learn about other cultures.”

“Throughout this Fresh Tracks program I figured out that I have the ability to do anything and that I don’t have to please anyone.”

“I learned about culture sharing and how to connect in broader sector.”

“I learned that I wasn’t the only one who had some type of trauma or tragic experience. I learned about some new cultures and made new friends.”

List new leadership skills and tools you've gained, if any, as a result of participating in the Fresh Tracks program.

“I became a better critical thinker and I now have a better understanding of cultures involving city’s.”

“Understanding, determination, kindness.”

“Asking more questions, asking open ended questions, having a stronger presence, being an effective leader.”

“I learned the different styles of leadership which is important to know so you can assess your strengths and weaknesses.”

“Using personal narratives to move others into action.”

“Being able to acknowledge different types of leadership.”

“New leadership skills I have gained will I have to be being able to have feelings. Only because I’ve always looked at a leader as someone that hides their emotions.”

“STEP UP SPEAK OUT.”

As a result of participating in the Fresh Tracks program, will you become more civically engaged in your community? If so, how? When?

“Most definitely, I grew a stronger feel for wanting to know more about policies, community organizing, struggles of my community, representatives etc. I developed this mentality when we started discussing action plans and what we wanted to do moving forward.”

“I have assessed my passion, purpose, my community's issues and how I plan on improving. I will start with the small action of engaging in my community meetings.”

“Ways to engage and involve the community and to come together and involve the youth.”

“I plan to do research on my community and looking up events that are taking place to participate in.”

“Yes I will as soon as I get home I will tell everyone about my weekend.”

“I’ve realized I actually do care about my community. Before it was just so much going wrong and nothing being changed just made me feel like there will never be a change.”

“Yes and I will bring back all my knowledge and share it with the youth of my tribe as soon as I get back and able to share it.”

Will the knowledge, tools, and resources shared during the Fresh Tracks program help you to envision, design, and implement your community action plan? If so, how, and what specific knowledge, tools, and/or resources do you plan to use?

“Yes I became better at communicating what I want to get out and that will help me achieve my action plan.”

“Through Fresh Tracks I have become more aware of the resources that are out there for me to take advantage of.”

“Yes it will, I now have more connections and have learned about different leadership types. I plan on using my community leadership skills to help get people from my community to help me with making this project come through.”

The knowledge I have now will help me because I’m more aware of different things now. I also have a better understanding on how the world works.”

“Yeah I’m going to become more strategic and better at formulating action plans.”

“Yes, with Fresh Tracks providing resources like the various organizations invited.”

“Yes, the action plan required for me to actually write out my thoughts. Which compels me to actually follow through.”

After participating in the Fresh Tracks program, how would you describe your leadership style? Abilities? Strengths? Challenges?

“Abilities: Creative thinking, weighing different options before making decisions, active listening. Strengths: Cultural competency, versatility, I know when to step up and when to step us and when to step back. Challenges: Not always confident with my decisions so it takes me a while to decide, sometimes I’m not very assertive so I feel as I’m taking in other perspectives sometimes the main point can be steamrolled and lost.”

“I am special.”

“I am a great unique individual leader who is a servant to his community.”

Will your experience participating in the Fresh Tracks program help you to interact with others from different cultures? If so, how?

“I met a lot of people from very different cultures, this helped to expand my understanding of different people.”

“Yes, as a result of meeting many people from different backgrounds and hoping to connect with them further after the training.”

“Yes because practice makes perfect so exposure to other cultures got in that as well. The more exposure that we have of other cultures will be able to eliminate some of those racial bias thoughts or judgements that we place upon people unknowingly.”

“Yes because I didn’t know what to look for at first, but was willing to learn about what’s outside of just me and my family.”

What program activities did you like best? Least? Why? (Please be specific), so that we can effectively assess and improve the program?

“I really liked the action plan part. I think it was very important and useful for helping me bring together the plans I have for my project. It was very helpful for getting everything organized so when I continue to work on the project I can see what I need to do easier.”

Table 2: Summary Results of Administered Surveys—Los Angeles

Outcome	Description	Pre	Post	
Self-Esteem/Value of Cultural Identity	I have a strong sense of cultural identity.	1.88	1.69	
	I can confidently share my personal values with others.	1.92	1.54	.38
	I know the power of my personal story	1.88	1.38	.5
	I have high self-esteem.	1.96	1.69	
	My cultural beliefs make me a strong leader.	1.77	1.69	
	I have integrity.	4.27	4.38	
	Cultural Competence/Inclusive Excellence	I value “different ways of knowing” other than my own.	4.19	4.57
I appreciate and respect cultural difference among my peers and those within the larger community.		4.42	4.23	
I value cross-cultural interactions.		1.62	1.38	
I understand the impact of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and overall culture on civic and community participation.		1.42	1.46	
I am aware of my personal biases.		1.77	1.38	
Civic Engagement and Community Advocacy				

	I have high expectations for myself and my community.	4.38	4.38	
	I know how to create a community action plan.	3.5	4.0	.5
	I am a role model in my community	1.77	1.38	
	I can create and communicate a community vision.	1.96	1.77	
	I know the impact of my personal vote to achieve social change.	1.81	1.23	.58
	I know how to define a problem and work toward a solution.	4.15	4.15	
Leadership, Communication, and Teamwork				
	I am a role model for others.	4.0	4.38	
	I can organize people for a specific task.	1.77	1.23	.54
	I work well with a team.	1.50	1.38	
	I know the importance of effective listening.	1.50	1.23	
	I know different leadership styles.	1.69	1.31	
	I can communicate to get a point across.	1.72	1.46	
	I know my personal leadership style.	1.73	1.46	
Environmental Stewardship				
	I know what impact engaging in the outdoors has on my physical and mental health.	1.46	1.23	

Table 3: Summary Results of Administered Surveys--Chicago

Outcome	Description	Pre	Post
Self-Esteem/Value of Cultural Identity			
	I have a strong sense of cultural identity.		
	I can confidently share my personal values with others.		
	I know the power of my personal story		
	I have high self-esteem.		
	My cultural beliefs make me a strong leader.		
	I have integrity.		
	I have a strong sense of purpose.		
Cultural Competence/Inclusive Excellence			
	I value “different ways of knowing” other than my own.		
	I appreciate and respect cultural difference among my peers and those within the larger community.		
	I value cross-cultural interactions.		
	I understand the impact of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and overall culture on civic and community participation.		

	I am aware of my personal biases.		
Civic Engagement and Community Advocacy			
	I have high expectations for myself and my community.		
	I know how to create a community action plan.		
	I am a role model in my community		
	I can create and communicate a vision.		
	I know the impact of my personal vote to achieve social change.		
	I know how to define a problem and work toward a solution.		
Leadership, Communication, and Teamwork			
	I am a role model for others.		
	I can organize people for a specific task.		
	I work well with a team.		
	I know the importance of effective listening.		
	I know different leadership styles.		
	I can communicate to get a point across.		
	I know my personal leadership style.		
Environmental Stewardship			
	I know what impact engaging in the outdoors has on my physical and mental health.		

Table 4: Summary Results of Administered Surveys—New Mexico

Outcome	Description	Pre	Post
Self-Esteem/Value of Cultural Identity			
	I have a strong sense of cultural identity.		
	I can confidently share my personal values with others.		
	I know the power of my personal story		
	I have high self-esteem.		
	My cultural beliefs make me a strong leader.		
	I have integrity.		
	I have a strong sense of purpose.		
Cultural Competence/ Inclusive Excellence			
	I value “different ways of knowing” other than my own.		
	I appreciate and respect cultural difference among my peers and those within the larger community.		
	I value cross-cultural interactions.		

	I understand the impact of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and overall culture on civic and community participation.		
	I am aware of my personal biases.		
Civic Engagement and Community Advocacy			
	I have high expectations for myself and my community.		
	I know how to create a community action plan.		
	I am a role model in my community		
	I can create and communicate a vision.		
	I know the impact of my personal vote to achieve social change.		
	I know how to define a problem and work toward a solution.		
Leadership, Communication, and Teamwork			
	I am a role model for others.		
	I can organize people for a specific task.		
	I work well with a team.		
	I know the importance of effective listening.		
	I know different leadership styles.		
	I can communicate to get a point across.		
	I know my personal leadership style.		
Environmental Stewardship			
	I know what impact engaging in the outdoors has on my physical and mental health.		

Fresh Tracks Evaluation Response Rates by Site

Fresh Tracks Site	Pre-Survey Response Rate	Post Survey Response Rate
Boston	100%	52%*
Los Angeles	100%	50%
Chicago	100%	53%
New Mexico	100%	84%

*Aggregate of three day, daily evaluations prior to evaluation plan modification.

Additionally, significant outcome themes emerged from qualitative data gathered from participant surveys, interviews, and focus groups:

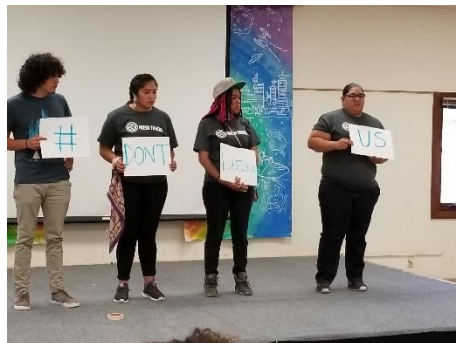
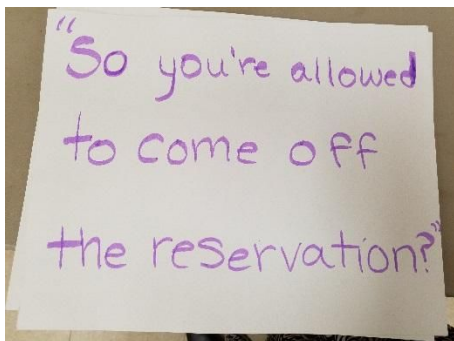
- Value of personal reflection and introspection
- Value of recognizing the impact of implicit bias and stereotyping
- Respect for the wisdom of elders/Intergenerational relationships

- Power of collective efforts to achieve systemic societal change
- Value of authentic opportunities to engage with and learn about people from different backgrounds and cultures.
- Understanding that leadership is relational which involves listening to and helping others
- Appreciation for new experiences and the ability to gain confidence
- Importance of networking and the value of meeting others

Additional Qualitative Findings and Community Action Plans

Throughout each regional program, several participants were interviewed, either individually or as a member of a focus group to gain deeper insight into their thoughts and experiences throughout the program. Additionally, all participants identified vital community action plans they wanted to develop and implement following the program. In addition to the formal curricular workshops on community asset-mapping, problem-solving, and devising a community action plan, participants presented their proposals to the entire group and a panel of professionals to both garner strategic feedback, but suggested resources to support their endeavors. These presentations incorporated core knowledge and tools gained during the program in a concrete deliverable with tangible goals, strategies, and desired outcomes.

Proposed community action plans ranged in scope and interest from local small business development, community clean-up, Cultural recognition at colleges and Universities, voter registration, and social media campaigns designed to confront historical stereotypes and the marginalization of communities of color. For example:



In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations. Iroquois Maxim (circa 1700-1800)

Post Regional Webinars and Community Action Plans: Several participants and Trainers have been actively engaged in strengthening and implementing their community action plans initiated during the Fresh Tracks regional programs. Programmatically, participants can apply for community action plan grants to support their efforts after a review and selection process. Additionally, participants and trainers have continued to cultivate and utilize key knowledge, skills, and tools gained during Fresh Tracks as demonstrated in facilitated webinars on various subjects, including community organizing and program evaluation.

In one of the webinars, Sonny co-facilitated an enlightening and engaging webinar discussing how he achieved the goal of having the Iroquois flag raised at his University to acknowledge the factual history of his heritage, and to build new community relationships across the campus and region. Using core skills he

gained during Fresh Tracks, he develop a strategic inclusive communication and persuasion plan to authentically listen to decision-makers and to invite them to acquire valuable knowledge while remedying past wrongs. Sonny's engagement strategy led to a successful outcome and has resulted in his strategy serving as a model for other youth and cultural groups to broaden the cultural mosaic and build community.

IMPLICATIONS

The Fresh Tracks distinctive leadership development program resulted in positive participant and program outcomes. As supported by key, triangulated evaluation findings, Fresh Tracks achieved its intended objectives, and laid the foundation for continued participant growth and development.

Overall, participants gained a comprehensive conceptual and practical understanding of core knowledge, skills, and tools to effectively engage in and lead a culturally diverse, global world and to identify strategic action plans to initiate and achieve societal change and justice, bolstered by a profound understanding of, and respect for the outdoors.

Each of the core program objectives were achieved with insight for enhancement and modifications around continued curricular development and implementation, increased evaluation response rates, continued post-regional program support and engagement, including webinars and leadership mentoring to support community action plans. While each of the respective regional programs were distinctive due to a myriad of factors, including participant composition, geographic location, size of group, and differences among the facilities, overall the Fresh Tracks program achieved site level and aggregate outcomes that support the logic model, stated objectives, and desired outcomes.