

ECHO Meeting Notes February 16, 2021

29 Participants

Jan Smith & Ariana Kramer

Jan Smith - Somos Executive Director

- Somos means “we are” in Spanish
- Somos is literary organization to foster literary arts, support readers, writers, and learners
- 10 core programs offered annually, some of which include:
 1. Writers show-case: nationally and internationally renowned poets are invited to conduct reading and workshop
 2. Poetry month: lineup of poets to do readings
 3. Taos Writers Conference: 85-95 participants, 3-day long conference with workshops, keynote speakers, and a panel
 4. Annual story-telling festival
 5. National Novel Writing Month in November – encourages authors to write a novel in one month within specified word count
 6. Young Writers Program: provides mentors to young writers
 7. Used Bookshop: thousands of donated gently used books sold. Local authors are highlighted
- Book sales have not reduced from the pandemic

Ariana Kramer

Somos Development Coordinator and Poetry Month Curator

- Shared Somos’ logic model
- Four goals, 3 of which are to provide education support and encouragement for writers of all skill levels, increase the diversity of voices whose stories are told and appreciated, offer opportunities for young people across Taos community
- Outputs include events, number of participants, books sold, books donated, number of partnering organizations, participant enthusiasm
- Short-term outcomes include increased awareness of variety of literary artists, increased appreciation of breadth and depth of literary arts, enhanced and improved skills in the craft of writing and storytelling, writers and storytellers develop camaraderie with other writers/storytellers, youth and adults feel supported in self-expression, access to affordable community space to use for literary and other events, access to low-cost and free books
- Somos staff members guest lecture at schools and provide mentors/opportunities to interested students

Didactic - Melissa Binder

MPP Program Director, UNM Evaluation Lab

- The Evidence Base presentation
- Evidence answers question of how program activities will lead to desired outcome

- Evidence-base is a continuum
- Randomized control trials (RCT) are most convincing research literature and are considered evidence-based
- Quasi-experimental studies and expert opinion are less convincing research literature than RCTs, considered evidence-informed
- Common sense or casual observation is not evidence-based or evidence-informed
- Casual observation can be wrong because people tend to remember what stands out, which can be the exception
- You need more than a success story to show that a program is achieving desired goal
- Academic research is evidence because it is peer-reviewed, systematic, and uses scientific method
- Best evidence comes from RCTs in which subjects are randomly assigned to participate in a program, then those subjects are compared to a control group who was not given the program. RCTs are what is meant by the phrase “evidence based”
- Not having random assignment is problematic because volunteers are likely to be atypical, leading to misleading results
- Evidence base allows you to have a realistic expectation of what program can or cannot achieve
- Washington Institute for Public Policy website > publications > filter by topic > choose “inventories” to see list of where programs are on evidence continuum
- RCTs do not promise external validity (exp. what works in New York might not work in New Mexico)
- Observational studies and expert opinion/state of the art (overview of current understanding of issue) are helpful evidence, just not “evidence-based”
- Think about what evidence supports your logic model to make strong case for program (are there any RCTs? Are there experts you rely on? Key studies people talk about? Is your evidence based on experience?)