

A Dedication to Tom Joe

This series of Learning Guides is dedicated to Tom Joe, founder of the Center for the Study of Social Policy and its Director for 21 years. Tom believed that one of the Center's most important contributions was to build the capacity of local decisionmakers. By that, he meant giving ordinary people the information and tools they needed to improve conditions for children and families in their communities.

Tom first conceived of these Learning Guides in 1997 and was their original champion, but he died in 1999 before they were completed. Tom would be proud of the final products. They are based on a premise that he spent his life developing: that government, in tandem with citizens and community organizations, can and should do a much better job of helping disadvantaged people. Tom was a fierce critic of the way human services have evolved. He described the problem this way:

“A family should be able to get what it needs, based on its particular circumstances, not given some treatment or service because that’s the only thing the government will pay for. Our human services systems are still in the dark ages. Instead of looking at what the whole family needs and how the individual pieces can work together toward those goals, we’ve built up this crazy collection of categorical programs that have little or nothing to do with the family’s real needs.”

To him, our social service systems had grown fragmented, unresponsive, and even harmful to the people they were intended to serve.

Tom proposed various solutions that evolved over time. In the last 20 years, he argued passionately that the best way to break out of the current morass was to empower people at the local level. While simultaneously giving communities local authority, one could break down the current categorical systems and create new approaches to help families in need. Tom knew early on that the federal government could not do this alone, and he became an early advocate for the concept that no one sector of our society, alone, can achieve better outcomes for children and families. He hoped that local leaders and citizens could take up the challenge, generating their own ideas about what communities needed to help families prosper.

Federal and state governments' roles would then be to figure out how to align with communities, and avoid bureaucratic rules, to make it happen. As he put it:

“Since as far back as 1972, I tried to get services integrated for people. While others were trying to get the federal government to integrate services from the top down, I suggested a different angle. I said, ‘Let’s allow the community to propose what they want to do and then ask the federal government for waivers to integrate programs when the community runs into problems.’ Of course, communities would have to develop a proposal explaining the results they were trying to accomplish and why. I still think that’s the best strategy, but we have to prepare communities with the capacity, skills and staff to propose to the federal and state government what they want to do.”

Tom believed that this series, *Building Capacity for Local Decisionmaking*, was a valuable tool to equip communities to move in this direction. If average citizens—computer technicians, teachers, stay-at-home moms, and sales managers—could learn how the current systems work, with their flaws and opportunities, they would be able to figure out better ways to use existing resources to help struggling families. To do this, Tom knew that we first have to provide people with skills, knowledge, and tools as well as the confidence in their capacity to plot an effective agenda of their own.

All of Tom’s work and the Center’s has promoted the involvement and leadership of citizens in community-based problemsolving. In 1997, under Tom’s leadership, the Center embarked upon a four-year effort with its partners in Georgia, Missouri, and Vermont to develop this series of Learning Guides. With these, we hope that any group of citizens with the will to accept the challenge of improving results for children, families, and communities would have the critical understanding of social policy needed to succeed. That is Tom’s legacy and was his hope for the future.

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June 2001

Acknowledgment

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Building Capacity for Local Decisionmaking

This series of Learning Guides was developed by a consortium of partners convened by the Center for the Study of Social Policy, including Georgia's Family Connection, Missouri's Family Investment Trust, and Vermont's Agency for Human Services. The Annie E. Casey Foundation supported the Center's time and publication of these guides.

Center for the Study of Social Policy

The Center for the Study of Social Policy was established in 1979 with the goal of providing public policy analysis and technical assistance to states and localities, in a way that blended high academic standards with direct responsiveness to the needs of policymakers and practitioners.

The Center's work is concentrated in the areas of family and children's services, income supports, neighborhood-based services, education reform, family support, disability and health care policy, and long term care for the elderly. In all of its work, the Center emphasizes several common themes:

- ✍✍ An approach based on results accountability,
- ✍✍ Community service strategies that reach across categorical boundaries and are truly community owned,
- ✍✍ New forms of state/local governance,
- ✍✍ More flexible financing strategies linked to results, and
- ✍✍ New approaches to professional development and local capacity building.

Georgia’s Family Connection

Georgia’s Family Connection is a state-level, public-private entity created in statute to support the work of Georgia’s 155 partnerships. It is comprised of state agency directors, corporate, and civic leaders.

The work of the local partnerships is dedicated to positively affecting outcomes related to children’s health, safety, success in school, and self-sufficient families.

Missouri’s Family Investment Trust

Caring Communities Partnership (CCP) is Missouri’s system reform initiative to achieve its core results through partnerships between communities and state agencies. The Family Investment Trust (FIT) is Missouri’s state-level body, created in 1993 by Executive Order of the Governor, to assist communities and state agencies in achieving the core results. The FIT Board of Directors is a 17-member governing body comprised of the directors of eight state agency partners as well as business and civic leaders.

The CCPs are the local decisionmaking bodies, broadly representative of a county or multi-counties, which partner with the state agencies to plan, develop, finance, and monitor strategies to achieve the state’s core results. The Partnership, in turn, serves as the parent board to neighborhood or site councils, which also broadly represent decisionmaking entities at the neighborhood or site level. The neighborhood councils partner with their individual Community Partnership to plan, develop, finance, and monitor strategies to achieve the core results.

Vermont’s Agency for Human Services

Vermont’s Agency for Human Services and the Department of Education, together, have given broad discretion and support to twelve Regional Partnerships.

Vermont’s system of local governance is less formal than either Georgia’s or Missouri’s, in keeping with the small size of their communities and the more informal political culture of the state. The partnerships focus their work on achieving a core set of results agreed upon by the state.

Contributors

Phyllis Brunson, Senior Associate at the Center for the Study of Social Policy, was the primary author of this guide, with contributions from Frank Farrow and Cheryl Rogers, also at the Center. Barbara Pearson, Instructional Designer with Georgia Academy translated the material into the format of this guide.

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Preface

Georgia, Missouri, and Vermont have forged an alliance, supported by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), to help local decisionmakers acquire the skills needed to improve conditions for children and families in their communities.

In a number of states, including these three states, local businesses, civic leaders, and other citizens are working through Local Governance Partnerships (LGPs) to improve children's health, safety, success in school, and movement to a productive adulthood. These partnerships are being asked, usually by state or local government, to come up with new strategies for improving specific results and to monitor the community's progress over time.

Partnership members are assuming ever-greater responsibility for important decisions affecting public sector resources, staff, and service delivery. Yet, community members are rarely equipped to handle these tasks because they have not been given the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their new roles.

To help meet this demand, Georgia, Missouri, Vermont, and the Center for the Study of Social Policy have developed a set of curriculum materials for local governance members and staff. These materials represent our collective best effort to communicate what we think community members need to know in order to make local decisionmaking a successful venture. These guides are meant to help develop local members' capacities, skills, and knowledge, not to lead to a specific product or blueprint.

Local Governance Partnership S in Georgia, Missouri, and Vermont

Georgia, Missouri, and Vermont have created new decisionmaking structures at the local level through which communities are mobilizing resources to improve child, family, and community well being.

Georgia

Georgia has established 155 local partnerships dedicated to achieving statewide outcomes related to children’s health, safety, success in school, and self-sufficient, strong families. The partnerships are made up of public and private agencies, parent and neighborhood representatives, community organizations, faith community leaders, business people, and other community representatives. Their work has been supported at the state level by the Georgia Policy Council for Children and Families, a public-private body created in statute, comprised of agency heads, and corporate and civic leaders.

Missouri

Missouri currently provides funding to 21 Caring Communities Partnerships (CCPs) serving 24 counties. The CCP is Missouri’s systemic reform initiative to achieve their core results. The partnering state agencies have pooled approximately \$24 million for the Caring Communities initiative. The dollars are used to build local infrastructure, conduct assessments and evaluation, and enhance or expand existing strategies. The Family Investment Trust (FIT), Missouri’s state-level entity created by Executive Order of the Governor in 1993, assists communities and state agencies in this work. The FIT is a 17-member governing body comprised of the directors of eight state agencies as well as business and civic leaders. Through this systemic reform process, Missouri is using its community partnerships to help redesign core programs, such as welfare reform.

Introduction

Learning Guide 3 Setting a Community Agenda

Given that Local Governance Partnerships (LGPs) have broad-based membership, couldn't LGP members provide what information is needed on the most pressing issues affecting the well being of children and families in their communities? The answer is both "yes" and "no." LGP membership is a source, but just one source.

Finding out a community's priorities involves collecting information from a *variety* of sources: research studies; statistics from government, businesses, and nonprofit organizations; and especially opinions of individuals and families in the community. Collectively, these sources contribute what is needed to understand the root causes of problems for children and families as well as the community assets that can offset the problems or influence solutions. The quest for information and understanding also uncovers the issues of utmost importance to community members, which can translate the priorities of a community agenda into effective strategic action.

This Learning Guide describes a community agenda; how collecting information from a variety of sources and with a variety of methods develops the agenda; and how the information collected can create a vision of desired results and indicators of progress to establish community priorities.

The guide presents information and tools for an LGP to begin or enhance its efforts in setting a community agenda. It contains examples, profiles about other partnerships, activities, discussion worksheets, and resources to help build the capacity of LGP members and staff toward this end.

Using the Learning Guide

This Learning Guide is designed for reference and self-study by those interested in building or expanding their knowledge about a community agenda. The guide reflects the combined experience and best thinking of the partners involved with developing the Building Capacity for Decisionmaking series.

Because this Learning Guide is intended for a broad and diverse audience, its design purposely provides options for its use. For example:

- ☞☞* You may want to start at the beginning and study each chapter sequentially,
- ☞☞* You may want to refer to the table of contents and select the chapters that capture your interest,
- ☞☞* You may want to take the assessment in the last chapter, Moving Forward, to determine what aspects of developing a community agenda that need your attention,
- ☞☞* Your LGP may want to take the assessment in the last chapter, Moving Forward, to determine what aspects of developing a community agenda need its attention, or
- ☞☞* You may use the Appendices to access activities and worksheets, locate resources and tools, find contacts for more information, or review examples that may suit your needs.

Overview of Chapters and Appendices

When thinking about setting a community agenda, many questions should come to mind. You may ask yourself or others some of the following questions, which define the guide's chapters and appendices.

Review: A Local Governance Partnership

What is local governance? What is a Local Governance Partnership (LGP)? What are its functions and defining characteristics?

Chapter 1: Getting Started

What is a community agenda? How does an LGP determine its context for setting a community agenda? How does an LGP start the agenda-setting process? What planning decisions are needed?

Chapter 2: Identifying Current Conditions

Why is collecting information about community conditions important? What type of information does an LGP need? How does an LGP collect that information?

Chapter 3: Gathering Community Perspectives

Why is input from community members important? How does an LGP ensure a broad community perspective? How does an LGP gather information from community members?

Chapter 4: Identifying Community Assets

What are community assets? Why is identifying them important? What is asset mapping and how can it help a community? How does an LGP map community assets?

Chapter 5: Creating a Vision and Setting Priorities

How is a vision created from the information collected? What are results and indicators, and how do they relate to the shared vision? How does an LGP analyze the information collected to create a vision and set priorities?

Chapter 6: Building Consensus for a Community Agenda

Why is a wider circle of support for the community agenda important? What is critical mass and how does it relate to gaining support? What are some ways to communicate and build acceptance for the community agenda?

Chapter 7: Moving Forward

How can we use this Learning Guide to continue building our knowledge? What do we already know about setting a community agenda? On what topics do we need more information?

Appendix: Glossary

What is the meaning of terms used throughout this Learning Guide?

Appendix: Activities and Worksheets

What activities can help us better understand the concepts presented in this Guide? Are there worksheets that can help us in planning?

Appendix: Tools

What tools have other LGPs found helpful? Are there checklists that we can adapt and use for our work?

Appendix: Resources

What references were used to develop this Learning Guide? Which websites can we explore for more information?

Appendices: Contacts

Who can we contact for more information? What are the specialty areas of different organizations?

Learning more about local governance

The Learning Guides are intended for use as a series, although each guide is a valuable resource and learning tool by itself.

If you would like to build on knowledge gained from this guide, review the following topics. Use the list to refer to other Learning Guides in this series.

Refer to Learning Guide 1:
Theory and Purpose of
Local Decisionmaking

☞ The roles, success factors, defining principles, and functions of Local Governance Partnerships (LGPs).

☞ How LGPs relate to existing entities, such as state and local government.

☞ Ways to ensure community outreach and linkage to neighborhoods.

Refer to Learning Guide 2:
Forming and Sustaining a
Successful Partnership

☞ The roles and responsibilities of LGP members and staff.

☞ Critical factors for effective working relationships.

Refer to Learning Guide 4:
Strategies to Achieve
Results

☞ Systems thinking and its application to services and supports.

☞ How to develop a community strategy for improving results.

☞ What makes a community strategy effective.

Refer to Learning Guide 5:
Financing and Budgeting
Strategies

☞ What is meant by a collaborative view of financing.

☞ How to identify existing funding and resources.

☞ Ways to build a core funding base.

☞ Ways to round out the core funding base.

☞ How to develop a financial plan and a results-based budget.

Refer to Learning Guide 6:
Using Data to Ensure
Accountability

☞ The meaning of results-based accountability.

☞ How to set up a data-collection system for reporting, and using information related to results.

Vermont

Vermont has formed 12 Regional Partnerships in a system of local governance that is less formal than either Georgia's or Missouri's, in keeping with the small size of their communities and the more informal political culture of the state. Vermont's State Team for Children, Families and Individuals has given broad discretion to the Regional Partnerships to work on achieving a core set of results agreed upon statewide. Vermont's outcomes help to sharpen the focus and work of the Regional Partnerships. The outcomes begin with the goal of assuring that pregnant women and young children thrive and progress developmentally. The State is witnessing significant reductions in the rates of reported child abuse and neglect as well as improvements in other indicators in the jurisdictions in which the community partnerships have been developing preventive programs and family support.

Audience for the Learning Guides

The primary audience for this series of Learning Guides includes local governance board members, their community partners, and staff. This comprises a broad range of people, including local elected officials, business people, staff of local service organizations (both public and private), representatives of the faith community as well as consumer parents and other lay citizens involved with helping children and families.

An equally important audience for this series of Learning Guides is state officials who are supporting the Local Governance Partnerships. These officials are among the state executive and legislative branches; others include key staff from state agencies that work with children and families. Staff from the following state departments could also benefit from these Learning Guides:

Education

Economic Development

Mental Health

Corrections

Health

Employment

Social Services

Public Safety

Description of the Six Learning Guides

The six Learning Guides developed by this consortium include the following:

Learning Guide 1: Theory and Purpose of Local Decisionmaking

This guide sets forth the theory and purpose of local governance. It begins with issues and problems facing today’s children, families, and communities, and an analysis of the categorical human services system. It proposes an alternative—local governance and a Local Governance Partnership (LGP)—as a means of addressing these problems and improving results.

The basics about an LGP are presented: its role, defining characteristics, functions, how it relates to existing entities, decisions about structure and legal standing, relationships with state and local government, and relationships with neighborhoods.

Learning Guide 2: Forming and Sustaining a Successful Partnership

This guide focuses on the roles and responsibilities for board members of Local Governance Partnerships. It includes skills for building trusting relationships, negotiating with partners, effective decisionmaking, ensuring meaningful parent and community member involvement, and racial, ethnic, and gender diversity.

Learning Guide 3: Setting a Community Agenda

This guide presents the knowledge and supports the skill building needed for creating a community agenda. It includes identifying community conditions, gathering community perspectives, and mapping community assets. It shows how this information is used to create a vision—with results and indicators—and establish community priorities. Finally, it presents ideas and guidelines for building a wider circle of support and consensus for the agenda.

Learning Guide 4: Strategies to Achieve Results

This guide presents the requirements for developing effective strategies. It contains knowledge and skill building activities in systems thinking, researching promising practices, and synthesizing the information collected into a comprehensive community strategy and a plan for implementation.

Learning Guide 5: Financing and Budgeting Strategies

This guide presents the basics to financing a comprehensive mix of strategies. It includes a collaborative view of financing and ways to identify existing funding and resources, develop a core funding base, obtain discretionary and grant funds, restructure and repackage resources, obtain informal and in-kind resources, and develop a financial plan and a budget.

Learning Guide 6: Using Data to Ensure Accountability

This guide deals with accountability and the Local Governance Partnership. It presents a results framework and roles and responsibilities for shared accountability. Subsequent chapters present knowledge and skills for setting up a data collection system, including collecting, reporting, and using data to determine progress toward improving results.

Together, these six guides are intended to give local people—both professionals and non-professionals—the knowledge and skills needed to become active decisionmakers on behalf of children and families in their community.

The Development Process

✍✍ CSSP drafted an initial outline of topics to be included in each guide.

✍✍ Each of the three states formed a design team of state staff and community representatives to draft one guide. CSSP consultants helped each design team write the guide and gather resource materials. CSSP drafted three guides.

✍✍ CSSP and each state partner reviewed the work of each design team, providing written feedback. Each guide was revised based on this feedback.

✍✍ CSSP contracted with a curriculum design team of instructional designers and training experts to translate the content for each guide into a learning tool and a training program.

✍✍ The revised Learning Guides and accompanying training programs were pilot tested with Local Governance Partnership members in at least one of the three contributing states to make sure the information and activities were appropriate and relevant. The Learning Guides and training programs were then revised based on the pilot tests and community feedback.

What do you think?

The project partners are interested in your reaction to the Learning Guides.

✍✍ What is your reaction to the Learning Guides?

✍✍ How could they be more useful to you?

Please contact the Center for the Study of Social Policy at: <http://www.CSSP.org> and click on “Contact Us” at the bottom of the page.

Introduction

Learning Guide 4 Strategies to Achieve Results

Consider an automobile. It is made up of independent parts—an engine, spark plugs, wheels, etc. Each part may work well alone, but it is because of the *interaction* of all the parts that allows the automobile to move from one place to another.

Now, compare this to families and communities. A child or a family member may be viewed individually, but he or she exists in the context of a family; and that family exists in a neighborhood or in a larger community.

Achieving better conditions, and increased well being for our children, families, and communities means not only focusing on how well the “parts” work, but more importantly, how well they all work together. In the complex, interrelated world in which we live there is no one-step easy fix. Every action has an effect on another.

This thinking is fundamental to developing effective strategies and is the undergirding premise of this Learning Guide. A well-devised comprehensive community strategy, instead of random solutions, is more likely to achieve results.

This Learning Guide presents information and tools for the Local Governance Partnership to begin or enhance its efforts in crafting a comprehensive strategy. It contains examples, profiles about other partnerships, lessons learned, activities, resources, and tools to help build the capacity of LGP members and staff.

Using the Learning Guide

This Learning Guide is designed as a reference and self-study guide for those interested in expanding and building their knowledge about developing strategies to achieve results. The guide reflects the combined experience and best thinking of the partners involved with developing the Building Capacity for Decisionmaking series.

Because this Learning Guide is intended for a broad and diverse audience with a range of experience, it was purposely designed to provide options in the way that it is used.

- ☞☞* You may want to start at the beginning and study each chapter sequentially,
- ☞☞* You may want to refer to the table of contents and select the chapters that capture your interest,
- ☞☞* You may want to take the self-assessment in the last chapter, Moving Forward, to determine the aspects of strategy development that need your attention,
- ☞☞* Your LGP may want to take the assessment in the last chapter, Moving Forward, to determine aspects of planning for strategy development that needs attention, or
- ☞☞* You may want to use the Appendices to access activities and worksheets, to locate resources and tools, to find contacts for more information, or to review examples that may be adapted for your needs.

Overview of Chapters and Appendices

When thinking about developing a comprehensive community strategy, many questions may come to mind. You may find yourself or others interested in strategy development, asking some of the following questions. Information related to these questions may be found in the respective chapters and appendices.

Review: A Local Governance Partnership

What is local governance? What are the functions of a Local Governance Partnership (LGP)? What are the defining characteristics of an LGP?

Chapter 1: Systems Thinking

What is a system? What is systems thinking and how does it relate to services and supports? Why is systems thinking important to developing a comprehensive community strategy?

Chapter 2: Identifying Promising Practices

What are promising practices and why is it important to identify them? What are the steps to identifying promising practices? When identifying promising practices, is there a way to know that a program or practice is likely to be successful? Where can we find information about promising practices?

Chapter 3: Building a Comprehensive Community Strategy

What is a community strategy? What is an effective strategy? How is a comprehensive community strategy pieced together? What are the steps? How do we know that the strategy is feasible, that it will work?

Chapter 4: Involving Partners in Strategy Development

Who needs to be involved with developing strategies? When should they be involved? How should they be involved?

Chapter 5: Implementing Strategies

What is an implementation plan and what are its components? What are the steps to developing this plan? What is an interagency agreement? How does systems change and staffing affect implementing a comprehensive community strategy?

Chapter 6: Moving Forward

How can we use this Learning Guide to continue to build our knowledge? What do we already know about developing a comprehensive community strategy? What topics do we need to know more about?

Appendix: Glossary

What are the definitions of terms used throughout this Learning Guide?

Appendix: Activities and Worksheets

What are some activities that we can do to help us better understand the concepts presented in this guide? What are some ideas for discussing strategy development? Are there worksheets that we can use for our planning?

Appendix: Resources and Tools

What references were used in the development of this Learning Guide? What resources and tools are available? Are there websites we can explore for more information?

Appendix: Contacts

Who can we contact for more information? What are the specialty areas for different organizations?

Appendix: Examples

Do the contributing partners have examples they can share? Are there sample forms that we can adapt for our work?

Learning More About Local Governance

The Learning Guides are intended for use as a series, although each guide is a valuable resource and learning tool by itself.

If you would like to build on the knowledge you gain from this guide, review the following topics. Use the list to refer to other Learning Guides in this series.

- Refer to Learning Guide 1: Theory and Purpose of Local Decisionmaking
- ✂✂* The roles, success factors, defining principles, and functions of Local Governance Partnerships (LGPs).
 - ✂✂* How LGPs relate to existing entities such as state and local government.
 - ✂✂* Ways to ensure community outreach and linkage to neighborhoods.
- Refer to Learning Guide 2: Forming and Sustaining a Successful Partnership
- ✂✂* The roles and responsibilities of LGP members and staff.
 - ✂✂* Critical factors to effective working relationships.
- Refer to Learning Guide 3: Setting a Community Agenda
- ✂✂* How a community agenda is developed.
 - ✂✂* How to build consensus for the agenda in the broader community.
- Refer to Learning Guide 5: Financing and Budgeting Strategies
- ✂✂* What is meant by a collaborative view of financing.
 - ✂✂* How to identify existing funding and resources.
 - ✂✂* Ways to build a core funding base.
 - ✂✂* Ways to round out the core funding base.
 - ✂✂* How to develop a financial plan and a results-based budget.
- Refer to Learning Guide 6: Using Data to Ensure Accountability
- ✂✂* The meaning of results-based accountability.
 - ✂✂* How to set up a data collection system for collecting, reporting, and using data related to results.

Review

A Local Governance Partnership

Learning Goal

You will recall the functions and defining characteristics of a Local Governance Partnership.

A Community Approach

Glossary

Local governance —

A decisionmaking process whereby the community takes responsibility for making decisions about developing and implementing strategies to improve results for children, families, and communities.

Local Governance Partnership — A

decisionmaking partnership between the state, private sector, local government, community and neighborhood leaders, and residents to carry out the process of local governance.

Communities are beginning to look at the well being of their families and children. They are identifying conditions that must improve if all children, families, and communities are to prosper.

Research, innovative programs, and promising practices indicate that a community approach is a viable solution to the existing human services systems, which are both complex and categorical. A community approach can support families in a more holistic way. Building strong and healthy families and communities requires changes both within the current system and in how a community uses its resources.

How does this change come about? What is a process for eliciting decisions from a community, while still involving all those who are currently making decisions about services and financing?

A promising answer to these questions is local governance.

This chapter presents an overview of local governance and the functions and defining principles of a Local Governance Partnership (LGP). For some readers, this chapter will be a review; for others, this information will lay the groundwork for subsequent chapters about community strategies.

Local Governance

Glossary

Stakeholders — Those who have a vested interest or “stake” in improving results, which may include parents, neighborhood residents, local businesses, elected officials, local and state agencies, and private-sector organizations.

Local governance is a decisionmaking process that brings together state and local government, the private sector, elected officials, and community members.

It builds on community strengths and supports incremental and long-term change in categorical systems.

Local governance concerns the hopes of all families and community residents that their children will grow up healthy, safe, well educated, and prepared for a productive adulthood.

A Local Governance Partnership

An LGP is the entity that carries out the process of local governance.

An LGP provides a focal point for multiple partners working together to develop and implement community and neighborhood-based strategies targeted to improving results for children, families, and communities.

An LGP pulls together information across all agencies and sectors and builds a community profile of its strengths and needs.

An LGP provides a forum for all stakeholders to present their perspectives, offer their resources, ask for assistance, and negotiate a common plan of action.

An LGP serves as the mediator, convener, problemsolver, information sharer, catalyst, and mentor. An LGP has the potential of being a catalyst for reshaping the community service system.

Local Governance Partnership: Functions

The functions of LGPs, and their capacity to carry out these functions, vary; however, the following functions are essential to the work of any LGP:

Identify Community Strengths and Needs

Analyze community-wide and neighborhood or locale-specific problems and resources.

Set Results and Indicators

Establish results and indicators that stakeholders agree on wanting to achieve.

Use the results/indicators to guide actions.

Use the results/indicators as a foundation for accountability.

Develop Strategies

Understand:

Existing programs, activities, and resources,

Promising practices,

The structure and system of services at the state and local levels of government,

The parts of the system difficult for families to access;

What services could be more accessible to families of different cultures, and

What opportunities could bridge separate service systems and lessen the duplication of bureaucracy.

**Local
Governance
Partnership:
Functions
(Continued)**

Develop Strategies (Continued)

- ☞☞ Translate this understanding into strategies that can have a positive impact on priority areas and results agreed upon by the community.
- ☞☞ Develop strategies that encompass multiple services and systems involving formal and informal resources.
- ☞☞ Develop strategies that reach across an entire community: counties, cities, towns, and neighborhoods.
- ☞☞ View services as part of an overall strategy that includes programs, activities, and resources to address the combined social, health, and economic well being of families.

Design Financing Strategies

- ☞☞ Understand the full range of current resources and how they are used.
- ☞☞ Coordinate and combine public and private resources to implement the strategies.
- ☞☞ Realign current resource allocations (human, material, and financial) to implement the LGP's strategies.

Support New Ways of Working

- ☞☞ Training and professional development is needed to gain the skills for working with families in new ways.
- ☞☞ Ensure availability of the support and professional development needed by frontline workers.
- ☞☞ Facilitate rethinking of personnel policies, workload standards, and standards of effective practice.

**Local
Governance
Partnership:
Functions
(Continued)**

Support New Ways of Working (Continued)

Support training and professional development for staff working across systems, including a common perspective about helping families, knowledge of other system resources, and a core set of skills for use across systems.

Support training and capacity building for community members, including leadership skills, decisionmaking, group processes, and problemsolving.

Monitor and Evaluate Progress

Develop a data collection system.

Develop interim measures to continually assess progress toward specific results.

Maintain standards of accountability for all children and families as well as for systems to accomplish results.

Defining Characteristics

Focus on Results

Results are the organizing principle for an LGP. Its decisions and actions are based on desired results. In the long run its success is judged by results—i.e., whether conditions improve for children, families, and communities.

Inclusion, Diversity, and Outreach

The heart of an LGP is a more inclusive process for making decisions. As many individuals, organizations, and perspectives as possible contribute to the decisions made by the LGP about its work. Families and community residents are explicitly engaged as active and equal voices.

Manageability, Scale, and the Right Geographic Scope

The LGP's geographic scope should cover a large enough area to be recognized by community-wide institutions, yet manageable enough to be responsive to residents' needs.

Comprehensive Strategies Involving Informal Supports

The intent of an LGP is to develop and implement strategies that encompass multiple services and systems. A comprehensive strategy would involve informal supports, the natural helping system, and formal service providers.

Influence Over Resources

Influencing the allocation of resources across systems is necessary to improve results for children, families, and communities. An LGP has to influence how funding is spent and how staff members are deployed.

**Defining
Characteristics
(Continued)**

Legitimacy and Credibility

To adequately represent local residents and their communities, an LGP needs legitimacy and credibility. Legitimacy connotes formal recognition by key constituents; credibility addresses the less formal trust earned from the community.

High-Level Commitment

High-level commitment from state government is necessary to confront historical traditions, support new service delivery options, and transfer some decisionmaking authority to the local level.

Chapter 1

Systems Thinking

Learning Goal

You will understand “systems thinking” and its importance when developing strategies to improve results for children, families, and communities.

Only Part of the Picture—Categorical Thinking

Glossary

Results or outcomes — Conditions of well being for children, families, and communities to be achieved through services or strategies. Although these terms are interchangeable, these Learning Guides will use “results.”

Consider the parable about an elephant and twelve men who couldn’t see. The men were asked to describe the creature before them. The first man reached out, touched the elephant’s leg, and said, “The creature is strong and solid.” The next man reached out, touched the elephant’s ear, and said, “The creature is flexible and pliable.” The third man reached out, touched the elephant’s trunk, and said, “The creature is long and capable of a wide range of movement.” And so on.

Each man, because he could only touch a portion of the elephant, had only a partial impression of the whole.

Categorical thinking about services and supports for children, families, and communities is like this parable. Categorical thinkers see only one aspect of support rather than the whole picture of strategies targeted to improve results.

A categorical thinker might view services as “silos,” independent and discrete programs, such as child welfare, mental health, and education. Although this viewpoint worked in the past to address specific problems, categorical thinking is no longer effective for improving results today.

Refer to Learning Guide 1: Theory and Purpose of Local Decisionmaking.

Wouldn’t looking at the whole elephant, or the entire system of services and supports, make more sense? →

What is a System?

Glossary

Systems — A set of related services, programs, activities, and policies that work interdependently to address a common purpose.

You are more familiar with systems than you might think. Consider the following systems:

- The Solar System
- The Human Body
- An Automobile
- A Computer
- A Family

Can each part function alone?

Does output from one part provide input to another part? How?

Do changes in one part impact another part? How? For example, does each member of a family interact with the other members? Does this affect how the family as a whole functions? If the answers to these questions are yes, then the family operates as a system.

Understanding any type of system—whether the human body, the solar system, or a system of social services—requires the ability to picture the dynamic relationship among various elements of the system. Consider the simple example of eating a sandwich.

Eating a sandwich requires the cooperation of several parts of the human anatomy working together as a system. The tongue and teeth in your mouth are involved in reducing the sandwich to small bites, while your throat carries the food to your stomach. Then, the stomach breaks down the food into energy for your body and waste products for removal. You may even develop indigestion from the onions on the sandwich. But, on the whole, you feel “full” or satisfied after eating the sandwich because separate parts have worked together to produce a result.

This oversimplified example illustrates how elements of a system are related.

From this example, we can identify several common traits of a system. →

Common Traits of a System

- A system is made up of various elements that work together.
- Output from one element of a system provides input to another element (i.e., the throat carries food to the stomach).
- One element of the system is insufficient alone; all the elements are needed (i.e., the teeth and tongue are incapable of digesting food without the throat and stomach).
- Changes introduced into one part of a system are likely to impact all parts of the system.
- Systems naturally resist change.
- Once a change is introduced, systems tend to seek a new balance or equilibrium.

More Examples

- A community is a system made up of many parts or sub-systems.

For example: Several neighborhoods send their children to a regional high school. The neighborhoods are sub-systems of the larger school system.

- A change occurring in a sub-system affects the equilibrium of all neighboring sub-systems.

For example: A paper mill closes that employs most residents in one neighborhood. The change affects that neighborhood but also affects nearby neighborhoods. The neighborhoods that did *not* experience job layoffs may worry about the possibility of businesses closing in their neighborhood and/or more individuals competing in the job market.

Keep in Mind...

In an LGP, neighborhood leaders most likely will identify with other residents rather than with local government.

- The definition of a sub-system is unique to each situation.

For example: The regional high school decides to help families who lost income by setting up a food bank and a used-clothing drive. Yet, few families take advantage of this support. The families did not like going to the school setting to “receive charity” because it made their depressed circumstances too visible to their children and their children’s friends.

The stability and reference point for the neighborhood in need of support was not with the regional high school or even with other neighborhoods. The residents related to their own sub-system: those who had lost their jobs rather than with the larger system.

How does understanding a system translate into system thinking? →

What is systems thinking?

Glossary

Systems thinking — The ability to see relationships among elements of a system, such as services, programs, activities, and policies, and to anticipate their effects on children, families, and communities. Also, the practice of applying this understanding to organizations, systems, and individuals and possibly changing their behavior.

Systems thinking is the ability to see the relationships between system elements (individual services, programs, activities, organizations, and policies) and to anticipate how these elements affect each other. The practice of applying this understanding to organizations, systems, and individuals—and possibly changing their behavior—is also systems thinking.

Peter Senge and colleagues at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, at Innovation Associates, and elsewhere pioneered the concept of the learning organization and systems thinking during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Senge and his colleagues define systems thinking as:

“a way of thinking about, and a language for describing and understanding, the forces and interrelationships that shape the behavior of systems. This discipline (systems thinking) helps us to see how to change systems more effectively and to act more in tune with the larger process of the natural and economic world.”

Senge’s definition identifies three key components of systems thinking:

- 1) Systems thinking is a new way of thinking that requires a shift from linear thinking about the world and its events to circular thinking.
- 2) Systems thinking gives us a language for describing and interpreting the events we observe.
- 3) Systems thinking is not only about understanding the behavior we observe but also about finding ways to shape such behavior positively. At its essence, systems thinking is concerned with improving behavior.

A Comparison: Categorical Thinking and Systems Thinking

Categorical Thinking About Strategies	Systems Thinking About Strategies
Focus on services, programs, and activities to address a specific problem	Focus on improving results for children, families, and communities
Discrete programs	Comprehensive array of services and supports that are linked together
Programs not connected to a supportive structure	Coordinated arrangements for providing services and supports
Services and programs bound by rules	Services and supports that are flexibly administered and connected to other related services
Duplicative, conflicting, and/or overlapping service plans	Coordination and integration of social services, education, public and private health and mental health, economic development, housing, informal networks, faith community, businesses, and neighborhood leaders
Fragmented and categorical financing	Willingness and ability to identify, integrate, and jointly make decisions about financing
Static	Dynamic
Describes system relationships as linear and isolated	Describes system relationships as non-linear and complex

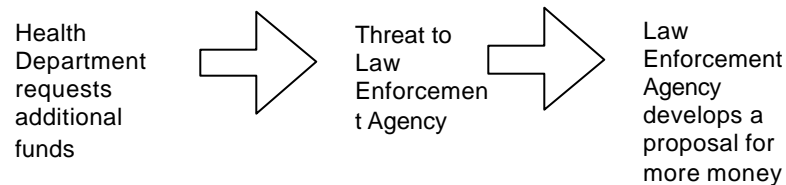
How does systems thinking relate to services and supports?

Shifting from Linear, Categorical Thinking to Systems Thinking

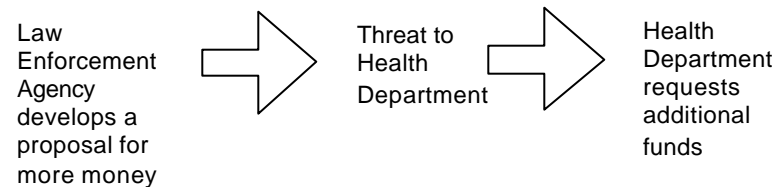
We often speak of “the human services system.” However, a more accurate view of all human services reveals that multiple systems are in place (e.g., education, housing, etc.). Each system is comprised of its own policy, program, and administrative elements.

Most thinking about human service systems is characterized by linear, categorical constraints. We are trained to think in terms of linear cause and effect.

For example, suppose Allen County is interested in investing some county revenue into human services. Consider the competition for funding that might erupt between a county law enforcement agency and a county health department. From the linear point of view of the law enforcement agency, the events might look something like this:



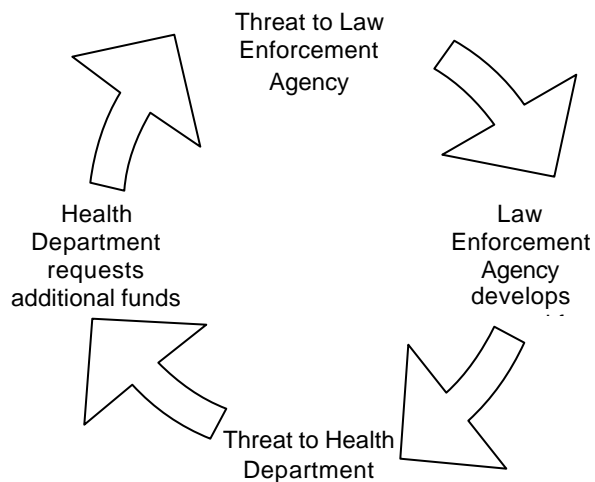
At the same time, the health department’s linear view of events might look like this:



From the health department's point of view, the law enforcement agency represents a threat to its request for funding. Consequently, the health department "pads" its budget in anticipation of competition and possible cuts. The law enforcement agency sees the health department as the aggressor. So, the law enforcement agency increases its budget and efforts to acquire more funding.

From their individual perspectives, both agencies see a linear cause-and-effect relationship beginning with the other agency's request.

In reality, however, the two views are linked in a circle.



Keep in Mind...

One of the key principles in systems thinking is to shift from a linear view of the world to an interrelated, circular view. An interrelated, circular view provides the basis for understanding system behavior.

Both agencies are successful in the short term; they each respond to what is interpreted as immediate threats from the other agency. However, when their actions are viewed as part of a whole system (i.e., the whole county budget) the short-term goal of responding to the perceived threat is seen as caught in a cycle of growing competition and distrust.

The long-term result of failing to understand the cyclical nature of this interaction is increased fragmentation and decreased cooperation.

PROFILE

Using Systems Thinking in Georgia

Early childhood advocates, parents, and educators in Savannah, Georgia grew concerned about the school readiness of children entering the public school system. After months of community focus groups and best practices research, the Youth Futures Authority (the Local Governance Partnership) decided to improve the quality of early childhood programs by paying enhanced subsidies to child-care centers that offered higher quality care. Initially, these investments paid off as child-care quality increased in the county and children entered school better prepared for success. Public awareness and demand for quality childcare increased as well, which stimulated even more investments in subsidies for higher quality childcare.

Success with the new enhanced subsidies continued for a couple years. Then, parents, advocates, and educators noticed that gains in readiness scores had leveled off and were beginning to turn downward again, despite the fact that demand for quality care was higher than ever. After investigating the decline in school readiness scores, school administrators learned that Savannah and Chatham County had filled all available quality child-care openings. They decided that the tapering scores were due, in part, to the lack of available quality childcare in the county.

In sum, improvements in school-readiness scores increased as more children participated in quality child-care centers that received enhanced subsidies. The improvement in scores continued until the limiting force of child-care availability took hold. Once Chatham County exceeded its supply of quality childcare, scores in school readiness eventually began to decline. This example shows the importance of looking at whole systems—in this case, Savannah's YFA leaders examined their whole child-care system to explain why school-readiness scores were no longer improving. They could then target specific strategies to the problem identified: an inadequate number of quality child-care slots countywide.

Why is systems thinking important for developing strategies?

Glossary

Reconfigured services
— Rearranging the parts or elements of existing services.

Systems thinking is important in presenting us with at least two levels of analysis.

- First, we can assess individual systems (e.g., housing) for their effectiveness.
- Second, and perhaps more important, we can assess the interaction among systems. This second level of analysis develops broader and potentially more effective strategies.

Looking at the whole picture and understanding all its parts will provide more comprehensive information for making decisions. Such a view will keep LGPs focused on improving whole systems that serve families instead of only on isolated programs. The more comprehensive the information, the better the strategy selection is. The better the strategy selection is, the better chance for positive results.

When developing strategies, system thinkers may analyze individual services and supports, but they will then piece them together to create a comprehensive and integrated whole system.

Systems thinking is similar to creating a patchwork quilt. Just as each square of material is examined for its potential worth to the finished quilt, each program and activity is examined for its potential contribution to improving results. Just as the pieces of cloth are assembled to create a unified whole, the comprehensive mix of strategies combines high-quality existing services with new or newly reconfigured services.

Over time, some strategies may not work as well as others and, like a quilt that becomes worn in places, strategies may need to be adjusted and/or their parts replaced.

Chapter 2

Identifying Promising Practices

Learning Goal

You will incorporate systems thinking when developing a comprehensive community strategy by identifying promising practices.

More Informed Decisions

Already in Place

- Agreed upon results
- Community assessment
- Community priorities
- Information about root causes

Glossary

Promising practices — Programs and activities that have demonstrated effectiveness in producing results.

Too often, when presented with a problematic situation, the tendency is to recycle old solutions. “Thinking outside the box” is not an easy task.

What if everyone stayed neutral and open to possibilities instead of jumping to solutions right away? What if another layer of information were added to everyone’s knowledge, opinions, and perceptions about a given problem? What if the knowledge base were expanded to include what others already found successful and effective?

This chapter presents the importance of taking the time for that “extra layer” of information by researching promising practices that have worked in other communities. Information about promising practices provides evidence for the Local Governance Partnership (LGP) to make more informed decisions rather than to respond with initial solutions.

Promising practices increase the likelihood that the comprehensive mix of strategies chosen by an LGP will be successful.

PROFILE

Floyd County Commission on Children and Youth

In 1997, the Floyd County (Georgia) Commission on Children and Youth (an LGP) submitted its Strategic Plan to Family Connection and to the Georgia Policy Council on Children and Families. Although the LGP has been active since the 1980s, this year was the first time that they developed a formal plan.

According to the Commission’s former Executive Director, the need for a five-year plan prompted the LGP to conduct more formal research and focus on outcomes. They knew they needed to do homework and they knew they needed to assess whether they were making a difference. The LGP decided to focus on teen pregnancy prevention.

Twelve active members of the LGP, representing such health and human services as the local hospital, public health department, and juvenile court, assumed responsibility for the research. They began by gathering and analyzing data.

Health and human service professionals on the working team shared information on promising practices, which they had collected from local and national sources. They mapped incidences of teen pregnancy reported in their community.

PROFILE (Continued)

The LGP's Executive Director searched the Internet for relevant evidence-based research to help the LGP develop an effective strategy for reducing teen pregnancy in Floyd County. Using evidence-based information helped the LGP develop a strategic plan "*in a thoughtful way,*" according to the former Executive Director. "*It made us more deliberate and directive, more focused on outcomes, and moved us away from a crisis orientation.*"

The working team shared their research findings with all the partners in an effort to address the issue of teen pregnancy as a team rather than assign partners to review separate service systems.

The LGP and its partners focused on prevention instead of crisis response. This approach, in turn, led to a new way of doing business in Floyd County.

The successful efforts in one neighborhood are being replicated in another part of the county. Other partners, like the Boys and Girls Club and the churches, are lending their resources for the county's effort. Statistical research revealed that a significant number of pregnant teens were victims of child abuse. As a result, multidisciplinary teams are now being trained to address teen pregnancy and victims of child abuse jointly.

While the LGP's research and planning efforts on reducing teen pregnancy in the county are too early to assess, the collaborative work has certainly made an impact on the health and human service delivery system of Floyd County.

Why identify promising practices?

Accountability is shifting toward results rather than outputs.

Both government and private funders are increasingly concerned about measurable results for their investments in programs and activities. In the past, funding for new programs and activities was often based on effective advocacy or recommendations from existing providers. Accountability was based on the output—the number of service hours provided—rather than on the impact of services on recipients.

Now, with more information about the effectiveness of various approaches, the mandate that scarce funds should be spent wisely has greater urgency. Programs and activities that reliably produce improved results are the ones financed.

For example, welfare reform legislation shifted the goal for case workers from determining eligibility and providing services to finding jobs for their clients. This result was specific to the client, not a measure of the case worker's effort.

Funding goes to programs and activities that show evidence of making a difference.

Less effective programs may be redesigned or deleted. More effective programs may be expanded.

Mindful attention to funding effective programs could potentially free up funding and other resources, which would continue the process of determining what works. Financing community or neighborhood-based evaluations could, in turn, shed more light on what works best in local settings. The research of promising practices continues!

How do you research promising practices?

Example

Results: Children Succeed in School

Priority Area: High School Dropouts

Issue: An increasing number of students, male and female, are dropping out of school.

Goal: All students will complete high school on time.

Sources for information about promising practices:

- U.S. Department of Education for statistics.
- An ERIC search for documents and journal articles on education, research, and practice.
- National Dropout Prevention Center in Newark, New Jersey, for effective strategies.

1. Select a priority area. Be clear about the issues and problems to address and the specific results to achieve. Be clear about the target population.
2. Develop a set of research questions to guide the search.
 - What are the key sources of information?
 - What are the most promising approaches or promising practices for achieving desired results?
 - What evidence exists that a particular approach or promising practice is effective?
3. Review high-quality research and evaluation reports as recommended by local experts.
 - Seek information about consumer outcomes, not just program outcomes. Contact state agencies and ask for evaluations about programs and initiatives related to the priority area.
 - Sources for research on promising practices include the Internet, libraries, published literature, county-to-county information, the United Way, foundations, nationally known experts and organizations related to the priority area, and local programs that have conducted evaluations.

Refer to the Appendix, Resources and Tools, for a starting list of promising practices resources.
4. Narrow the search.
 - The more specific the issue or problem and the desired result, the more effective the research in finding promising practices that are known to work.

For example, a general search for programs to enhance student success in school will yield an enormous number of programs, activities, opinions, and speculations. Narrowing the desired result to preventing school dropouts will help you focus your efforts and succeed in the search.

Steps for Researching Promising Practices (Continued)

5. Summarize the findings. You may want to use the Promising Practices Inventory, Parts 1 and 2, to organize the research findings.

Refer to pages 33-34 for an example of a completed Promising Practices Inventory.

TIPS

Take advantage of information that has already been collected and analyzed by another organization or by another LGP.

Be sure to ask local “experts” in the particular field of interest what they think are key sources of research information. Research does not need to be exhaustive but should include some reputable sources.

Be sure to include information from program consumers. They know best what they need and want.

- For Part 1, the result, goal, and issue/problem are written across the top of the inventory. The “What Works” column is used to list promising practices. Note that there are sections for programs and for activities.

Later, information about existing programs, activities, and resources can be added to the “What We Have” column. This will help with an analysis of “What Is Missing.”

Refer to Chapter 3, Building a Comprehensive Community Strategy, and the related activities in the Appendices for more information about using this tool to help piece together information to create a community strategy.

Refer to Learning Guide 3: Setting a Community Agenda for information about inventorying existing resources.

- For each program and activity, complete a promising practice description using Part 2 of the inventory.

Refer to the Appendix, Activities and Worksheets, for a blank inventory for duplicating.

Glossary

Program — A set of services, such as parenting education, job training, mental health counseling, or family preservation services, provided by a public or private organization or a distinct and formally structured component of an organization, operated and administered with a formal budget.

Activities — Efforts, such as day care, after-school activities, etc., that occur in a community to promote positive results or prevent

Keep in Mind...

Research can always turn up unanticipated benefits. For example, the research may bring about more cohesiveness among LGP members and staff or a better understanding of each other’s background and work style.

Research in one priority area may inadvertently uncover information for another related area. For example, one of the main reasons students drop out of school is because of teenage pregnancy.

or mitigate risk factors for
children and families.
Activities may
be either informal or formal.

Promising Practices Inventory, Part 1

<p>Result Children Succeeding in School Goal Students will complete high school on time. Issue/Problem An increasing number of students, male and female, are dropping out of school.</p>		
What Works	What We Have	What Is Missing
Promising Practices	Existing <u>Formal</u> Programs and Resources	
<p>Mentoring – Big Brothers/Big Sisters</p> <p>Youth Development – Teen Outreach Program</p> <p>Career Education/Workforce readiness</p>		
	Existing <u>Informal</u> Resources and Activities	
<p>A community service project for teens—planting trees in roadside parks</p>		

Promising Practices Inventory, Part 2

Promising Practice or Approach	
Mentoring	
Description	
Mentoring is one-to-one caring, supportive relationships based on trust between a mentor and a "mentee." Big Brothers/Big Sisters is a program that matches unrelated adult mentors with children in order to promote positive development and social responsibility.	
Critical components	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Statement of program purpose and goals 2) Recruitment and selection plan for mentors 3) Support and training program for mentors 4) Monitoring and evaluation process for the program 	
Evidence of effectiveness	
Evidence from comprehensive national research is available from a thorough review of Big Brothers/Big Sisters programs (Tierney and Grossman), showing the following results: 37% decrease in skipped classes, 46% decrease in drug use	
Implementing organization	Location
Probable implementers – new community group or existing family service agency or youth development program	Over 500 agencies across the U.S.
Population served	Capacity to serve
Children and youth, ages 6-18	National average for making and supporting a match is about \$1000 a year

Months/days/hours of operation 3-5 hours per week for at least one year	Staff Volunteers involved volunteer adult mentors, director, case manager, and administrative assistant
Necessary conditions	Program contact Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (215) 567-7000
Source of information National Dropout Prevention Center, Newark, New Jersey http://www.promisingpractices.net	Other notes See United Way of America Mentor training curriculum

ALERT!

Little evidence is available about effective coordinated strategies.

Information about specific model programs or single-issue approaches is more plentiful than information about comprehensive approaches. Available information often focuses on specific programs in specific communities, not about general types of programs or combinations of activities that are effective as part of an overall local strategy.

Pull together as much relevant information as possible, looking at the various approaches and types of programs. Analyze them in relation to local community characteristics and needs. Make assumptions and educated predictions about how combinations of programs would work.

ALERT!

Beware of the following potential pitfalls.

- Thinking a promising practice is good just because it has been evaluated.
- Thinking a promising practice is *not* good just because it hasn't been evaluated.
- Selecting a promising practice with no community interest or energy behind it.

When researching promising practices, how will you know the likelihood that a program will be successful? Are there attributes that ensure a greater probability of success? →

What do successful programs look like?

Lee Schorr explored promising programs for children and families in her book *Common Purpose*. Her theory was that there are programs that improve the odds of favorable results for children, families, and communities, and we can identify the characteristics that make some programs successful. She lists seven attributes for highly effective programs:

Successful programs:

- 1) Are comprehensive, flexible, responsive, and persevering.
- 2) See children in the context of their families.
- 3) Deal with families as parts of neighborhoods and communities.
- 4) Have a long-term, preventive orientation, a clear mission, and continue to evolve over time.
- 5) Are well managed by competent and committed individuals with clearly identifiable skills.
- 6) Have staffs that are trained and supportive to provide high-quality, responsive services.
- 7) Operate in settings that encourage practitioners to build strong relationships based on mutual trust and respect.

The following is from *Common Purpose* by Lisbeth B. Schorr. Refer to the Appendix, Resources and Tools, for a complete citation.

1) Successful programs are comprehensive, flexible, responsive, and persevering.

In contrast to bureaucratic programs where staff sometimes say, “*This may be what you need, but it’s not part of my job to help you get it,*” successful programs are staffed by people who have enough discretion so they can help people get whatever they need when they need it. They use a variety of services and supports including natural helping networks, often have access to a pool of flexible funds, and they “hang in there” even when progress seems inordinately slow.

2) Successful programs see children in the context of their families.

They know that strong families are the key to healthy children, so they work with all family members in the household, not just one child. The well being of the parents and siblings is also of concern to the staff.

3) Successful programs deal with families as parts of neighborhoods and communities.

They recognize that interventions cannot be imposed from without. Rather, sound programs are shaped to respond to the particular needs of neighborhood residents.

4) Successful programs have a long-term, preventive orientation, a clear mission, and continue to evolve over time.

Many programs succeed when they address risk factors early on, before they lead to full-blown crises in families’ lives. These programs combine a flexible mode of operation with a clear sense of mission that is articulated in simple terms. And the programs evolve in response to the changing needs of families and to feedback from staff, constantly seeking new and better ways to achieve their goals.

Attributes of Successful Programs (Continued)

5) Successful programs are well managed by competent and committed individuals with clearly identifiable skills.

Lee Schorr maintains that leadership skills are learned, and that we do not have to throw up our hands for want of a miracle worker. These skills include the willingness to experiment and take risks; to tolerate ambiguity; to win the trust of line workers, politicians, and the public; to respond to demands for prompt, tangible evidence of results; and to work collaboratively with staff.

6) Staffs of successful programs are trained and supported to provide high-quality, responsive services.

Successful programs recognize that the competence and quality among staff are at the heart of their effectiveness. With high quality training, monitoring, and supervision, frontline staff can effectively use their discretion to build exemplary programs.

7) Successful programs operate in settings that encourage practitioners to build strong relationships based on mutual trust and respect.

The quality of these relationships is key. When clients know that staff and natural helpers care about them, enormous progress can be made. This means that institutions must support and nurture these life-transforming relationships.

Researching promising practices and successful programs is a building process. Each resource tends to lead to additional resources. Following are some ideas for starting points. →

Are there resources that describe promising programs and practices?

A number of good resources exist to identify promising practices, including the following:

The Promising Practices Website

The Promising Practices website, <http://www.promisingpractices.net> was developed by Georgia Academy, California Foundation Consortium, the Colorado Foundation, and Missouri's Family Investment Trust. The site describes research-based programs that have improved results for children, families, and communities. The site also has a bulletin board for individuals to post programs and activities that they believe are working in their communities.

Information on this site is organized under nine outcomes:

- Healthy Children
- Children Ready for School
- Children Succeeding in School
- Children Safe at Home
- Strong Families
- Self-Sufficient Families
- Strong Communities and Neighborhoods
- New Forms of Governance
- Results-Based Accountability

Under each outcome area, the site lists and describes a number of promising programs and practices. Some are listed as “proven programs,” meaning that credible research or evidence indicates the program is effective in at least some circumstances. Others are listed as “promising programs,” meaning that while there is not yet research evidence to show results, experts believe the approach is promising because of the potential it demonstrates.

The Promising Practices Website (Continued)

For example, under the outcome “Children Ready for School,” one will find:

- Two “proven programs,” the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program in Washington State and the Ypsilanti High/Scope Perry Preschool Project, with a 3-4 page description of each and contact information.
- Seven “promising programs,” including California’s Healthy Start Initiative, Georgia’s prekindergarten program, Parents as Teachers, North Carolina’s Smart Start, United Way’s Success by Six (including Vermont’s Success by Six initiative), and the Newborn Individualized Developmental Care and Assessment Program, with a 3-4 page description of each and contact information.

What Works Reports from Vermont

Vermont developed reports to describe effective approaches used by their communities. The Planning Division of the Vermont Agency of Human Services has produced a series of “What Works” reports which offers brief overviews of strategies and programs that research has shown to be effective in achieving any of Vermont’s critical outcomes:

- Families, Youth, And Individuals Are Engaged In And Contribute To Their Community’s Decisions And Activities
- Pregnant Women And Young Children Thrive
- Children Are Ready For School
- Children Succeed In School
- Children Live In Stable, Supported Families
- Youth Choose Healthy Behaviors
- Youth Successfully Transition To Adulthood
- Elders And People With Disabilities Live With Dignity And Independence In Settings They Prefer
- Families And Individuals Live In Safe And Supportive Communities

What Works Reports from Vermont (Continued)

The reports identify “effective programs” defined as those for which research demonstrating success in changing the targeted behaviors has been published in peer-reviewed journals or evaluated with a control group and follow-up assessment of results. They also identify “promising programs” as those that appear to be successful in changing the targeted behaviors but which do not meet the criteria of “proven programs.” Finally, the series identifies “noteworthy programs,” which are prevention efforts that have demonstrated success in changing relevant attitudes and knowledge, but not the targeted behaviors themselves.

The series contains the following reports, also available on the web at: <http://www.ahs.state.vt.us>.

- *Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect in Your Community* March 2000
- *Promoting Positive Youth Development in Your Community* February 2000
- *Preventing Teen Pregnancy in Your Community* December 1999
- *Keeping Youth in School in Your Community* May 1999
- *Preventing Youth Disruptive or Violent Behavior in Your Community* January 1999
- *Preventing Youth Substance Abuse in Your Community* November 1998

The Community Tool Box Website

The Community Tool Box website, <http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/> was developed by the University of Kansas Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development in Lawrence, Kansas, and AHEC/Community Partners in Amherst, Massachusetts. The site has been on line since 1995, and contains “how-to tools” which use simple language to explain how to work on community health and development.

For instance, there are sections on:

- Leadership
- Strategic planning
- Community assessment
- Selecting strategies
- Advocacy
- Grant writing
- Evaluation

Each section includes a description of the task, advantages of doing it, step-by-step guidelines, examples, checklists, and training materials. Additionally, there are links to hundreds of other helpful web pages and listservs in areas such as funding, health, education, and community issues.

Refer to the Appendix, Resources and Tools, for more information and a list of 25 websites that contain information on promising practices .

Chapter 3

Building a Comprehensive Community Strategy

Learning Goal

You will incorporate systems thinking into the development of a comprehensive community strategy.

No Magic Pill

Already in Place

- Agreed upon results
- Community assessment
- Community priorities
- Information on root causes
- Research on promising practices

In seeking to construct the best approach to an issue or problem, communities often wish for a magic pill. They want a single program guaranteed to work at a low cost without too much disruption of the status quo. Soon, however, communities realize that a single program is unlikely to solve the problem or have the desired impact.

This chapter is the antithesis to such oversimplified solutions. It addresses, instead, an integrated mix of multiple strategies. A Local Governance Partnership (LGP) has many options. For example, it may want to reconfigure existing programs and resources to make them available at the neighborhood level. It may want to establish a whole new system of services and supports. Or, it may want to combine existing programs and resources with new ones.

Glossary

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At this point of the strategy development process, an LGP needs to try out different ways of thinking about how a system of services and supports could and should work. This chapter provides information to assist with this thinking: criteria and considerations for effective strategies, steps for planning a community strategy, and ways to determine if the selected community strategy is feasible.

First, what makes a community strategy have the potential for improving results effectively? The following pages list criteria and considerations for effective strategies. →

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Criteria for Effective Strategies

Glossary

Natural helping system

—
An informal network of extended family, friends, neighbors, and community leaders who provide support to families.

Does the comprehensive community strategy...

- Include formal and informal programs, activities, and resources?
- Include integrated rather than discrete programs and activities?
- Engage individuals outside the formal human service profession, such as the natural helping system?
- Include a continuum of services and supports, such as prevention, early intervention, and remediation?
- Include services and supports for a range of age groups and life stages?
- Consider the interdependency of individual, family, and community systems?
- Strengthen and involve the community?
- Build on strengths of the current system?
- Mitigate weaknesses of the current system?
- Link to other systems, when feasible?

Criteria for Effective Strategies (Continued)

Risk factors —
Conditions in the lives of children and families that put them at risk of having healthy and productive lives.

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Does each part of the comprehensive community strategy...

- Relate to desired results?
- Contribute toward reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors?
- Reflect family-centered practice?
- Respond to the culture of the community and/or neighborhood?
- Support and empower families?
- Show evidence of making a difference?

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Considerations for Effective Strategies

This information is taken from the Community Toolbox website:
<http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/>

In developing strategies to pursue in the community, an LGP needs to pay close attention to what has worked in other communities, especially communities similar to its own. It also needs to come up with original ideas and approaches. Typically, some combination of original ideas and ones adapted from other sources works best.

An LGP should think broadly about strategies—beyond the usual after-school activities and home visiting programs. This may be a start but it is far from comprehensive enough to affect broadly defined results.

The Community Toolbox has identified a number of other kinds of strategies that are effective in promoting healthy outcomes for communities. It divides the examples into two types: those meant to change individual behavior and those related to organizational and community development.

Strategies Related to Changing Individual Behavior

Incentives or disincentives: Strategies that involve incentives or disincentives find ways to penalize or discourage risky behavior and reward or encourage protective behavior (e.g., high taxes on cigarettes as a disincentive to smoking; lower insurance rates for non-smokers as an incentive).

Peer education: In peer education, individuals who are themselves members of the target population go into the community to act as positive role models for behavior and distribute information. Peer education can be very effective, because the target population gets to see people like themselves who not only come to them to talk about less risky behavior, but also model that behavior in their own lives. Peers can do one-on-one counseling, speaker's bureaus, or other activities.

Enhancing resources: Enhancing resources involves working to raise more money, improve materials, connect better with other programs and services, or increase public awareness of available resources.

It can also involve changing programs to remove barriers or make them more accessible to the people using them (e.g., expanding eligibility for school breakfast programs, making more WIC distribution centers, parent nutrition education at school pick-up-time, etc. to work against child hunger).

Strategies Related To Organizational And Community Development

Information campaigns: This is probably the most commonly used tactic in risk reduction. Educating the public about how to cut down on their risks for certain health problems is a common and widespread practice. Some of the methods to get out information might include advertisements, posters, brochures, public service announcements on radio or television, speakers, and informational hotlines.

Street outreach: This involves sending outreach specialists into a given area to make face-to-face contact with the target population. Some street outreach activities include canvassing, setting up information tables, or distributing information or supplies. The regular contact that street outreach provides between the LGP and the target population tends to have a strong impact on risky behavior.

Community outreach: This differs from street outreach because it is more often done in a group setting—workshops, presentations, lectures, and so on. The impact on behavior is usually limited because they're single-encounter experiences, but they are still good ways to get information out. Community outreach should probably be backed up with other tactics as well.

Considerations for Effective Strategies (Continued)

Direct action: Direct action is a term used to describe a range of political actions or "media stunts" taken to directly confront or highlight the issue or authority you're trying to address. If you want to make a big statement publicly, direct action might be a tactic to consider. Some examples of direct action are demonstrations, symbolic actions, street theatre, trespass actions, occupations and sit-ins, and blockades.

Clearly, direct actions are often disruptive and more confrontational than other methods and, depending on what you do, people involved may end up being arrested. Look into other ways of campaigning for change before using direct action, because direct action's confrontational nature can alienate and polarize the public, especially if other ways of getting your message out have not been used.

If using direct action tactics, make sure they are painstakingly planned out and try to anticipate how to counter any negative public reaction to the actions.

ALERT!

Do not ignore the media.

Involve representatives from the media at the beginning of the strategy development work. Their early involvement will help ensure their full participation throughout the process. They may also provide guidance about the best ways to disseminate information.

PROFILE

Success in Taylor County

When the Family Connection process was initiated in Taylor County, Georgia, an all-day meeting was held in the school to discuss, list, and rank problems in the community. According to the coordinator, approximately 25 people came, primarily agency heads and family representatives. The three top-ranking issues were school dropouts, teenage pregnancy, and child abuse and neglect. Community discussions and surveys verified those issues as the most important to tackle.

Continued

PROFILE (Continued)

Since Taylor County is not a very large or affluent community, the county collaborative was advised to use any additional funds to strengthen the existing system. That made sense to the LGP.

“We didn’t want to start a lot of things we couldn’t sustain,” the coordinator said. *“We brought everyone back to the table to see what the community really had, and then we made lists of all the things that were needed.”* The school system posted their needs; the Parks and Recreation Department posted theirs. Then, the LGP was asked to look at the lists and determine how they could help each other.

New linkages began to form. For example, despite the school superintendent’s open door policy, some parents said they didn’t feel comfortable in the school system. The only time they came to the school was when their child was in trouble. From that discussion, a “parent panel” was developed with the principals of the schools appointing one parent for each grade. In addition to the panel’s well-attended “family event” each month, parents are now much more involved in the school system, helping wherever they can, bringing refreshments at testing time, and acting as hall monitors. The panel also serves as an advisory body to the school board.

Other responses to the county’s needs began to surface. High school students began peer mentoring with younger children. Retired teachers began reading to the youngest children. County commissioners gave the collaborative a building. The school system provided space for a three-day after-school program and paid the insurance for the bus. The County Extension Service began offering a job-shadowing program. The sponsoring agencies and organizations picked up the costs of the new programs.

As *“we proved what we were doing was working,”* additional resources became available for the county to strengthen its existing system.

Today, through newspaper articles, the Health Fair, and discussions at the Board of Education and County Commission meetings, the partnership informs the county about the strategic plan and its activities. Copies of the plan are distributed. *“And to think, five years ago we had nothing,”* the coordinator said.

ALERT!

Remember to carefully think through the potential effectiveness of strategies. Keep in mind what to avoid.

“Many interventions have turned out to be ineffective not because seriously disadvantaged families are beyond help, but because we have tried to attack complex, deeply rooted tangles of troubles with isolated fragments of help, with help rendered grudgingly in one-shot forays, with help designed less to meet the needs of beneficiaries than to conform to professional or bureaucratic convenience, with help that may be useful to middle-class families but is often irrelevant to families struggling to survive.”

From: Schorr, Lisbeth B. with Daniel Schorr, *Within Our Reach, Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage*, Anchor Press/Doubleday, New York, 1989.

One approach: Analyzing and Synthesizing Information

How do you piece together a comprehensive community strategy?

Glossary

Informal supports — Nontraditional resources and supports, such as businesses, the faith community, civic organizations, citizen groups, and the natural helping system. These supports are not usually provided by government agencies and are not a part of any formal service system.

There are a number of approaches or steps to creating a comprehensive community strategy. This guide presents two. An LGP can use, combine, or adapt the approach(es) that best meets its needs.

Systems thinkers analyze individual services and supports, then they piece them together to create a comprehensive, integrated whole.

The following steps describe the tasks involved with planning a comprehensive community strategy. Start with a priority area and a specific issue or problem.

Step One

Start with the goal or the desired results you want to achieve. What if the issue or problem no longer existed? What if the goal were achieved? What would this look like? Describe the target population, and the community or neighborhood. Remember to include community assets and values in the description.

Refer to Learning Guide 3: Setting a Community Agenda for more information about results, community perspectives, and assets.

Rationale: Working “backwards” from the desired result enables an LGP to review all the steps required to meet that goal. A variety of disciplines use this approach to determine what is required for a finished product.

Step Two

Pull together information about existing programs, activities, resources, and informal supports. Determine if they have the potential for successfully improving results. Are they effective as they currently exist? Could they be modified or reconfigured to be more effective?

Refer to Chapter 2, Identifying Promising Practices, pages 36-38, for information about the attributes of successful programs.

Refer to criteria and considerations for effective strategies in this chapter.

Analyzing and Synthesizing Information (Continued)

Rationale: Effective programs already exist. They are important building blocks for other strategies. They may be effective in how they are presently configured or they may need to be reconfigured or financed differently in order to realize their full potential.

Step Three

Compare information about existing program, activities, resources and informal supports with research on promising practices. Relate all this information to the desired conditions (Step One). What is missing? What would it take to get from the current situation to the desired one?

Refer to a blank Promising Practices Inventory, Part 1 in the Appendix, Activities and Worksheets, page 103, if you would like a chart for listing “What We Have” and “What is Missing.”

Rationale: This is sometimes called a “gap analysis” as the gap between what exists and what is desired is analyzed. It is discovering what is missing and the steps required to get from point A (current conditions) to point B (desired conditions).

Step Four

Synthesize all the information. Consider the existing resources and the needed resources. Consider programs and/or activities that could be reconfigured. Consider new programs and activities. Consider ways that all the resources could fit together to create a community strategy for the desired result.

Consider areas with few or no programs and activities, and how to fill this void.

Test each piece of the strategy. Make sure it contributes to the described results; is consistent with the needs of the target population, and; reflects community attitudes and values. Make sure the strategy has the potential of affecting long term results. If it does not, consider the changes needed to make it more effective.

Refer to Criteria for Effective Strategies on pages 45-46 of this chapter, and the South River County example on the next page of this chapter.

Rationale: An analytical process becomes even more valuable when carried out as a creative, problemsolving process. At this point, the LGP has the opportunity to use information from the analysis to create a community strategy. To do this, the LGP must look at the big picture and approach the information in a fresh and open-ended way.

A test: Is the comprehensive community strategy a short-term or a long-term solution?

The following example takes a fictitious county and situation to illustrate an unsuccessful quick fix or “band-aid” solution. An LGP needs to always ask the key question: “Does our strategy for addressing a core problem solve the problem fundamentally or only provide temporary relief?”

Example: South River County

Consider a county that tries a short-term fix, which fails to affect the longer-term problem. This example involves the workload stress confronting workers from Child Protective Services (CPS) in South River County. Here, each CPS worker provides support to caseloads of 32-45 families, far above the mandated maximum of 20 families per worker. Slow hiring practices in county government and a lack of qualified social workers often hinder managers who wish to address the caseload problem. Consequently, the fundamental solution of hiring staff with a range of qualifications and experiences is delayed.

Needing to address the almost epidemic problem, South River’s CPS managers rely on other temporary strategies to manage growing caseloads. Some managers find creative ways to shift caseloads among social workers. Others ask employees to work more hours, extend the time for closing cases, or offer incentives to workers who close cases quicker. These temporary solutions produce immediately noticeable results as stress levels from the workload get better. Increasingly, managers and staff rely on these short-term “fixes,” which seemingly enable them to continue serving families. However, still unaddressed is the problem of too many cases per worker. When the temporary effects of short-term fixes wear off, side effects like declining morale and lower productivity appear and the underlying problem continues to worsen.

This example shows that LGPs need to avoid relying on short-term “band aid” solutions, which only address the problem’s symptoms. The longer managers apply a symptomatic solution, the more difficult applying a fundamental or long-term solution becomes. If short term-solutions must be used, use them in a way that positions the LGP to apply a fundamental solution as quickly as possible.

Another approach to creating a comprehensive community strategy is

crafting a “theory of change.” →

Another Approach: A Theory of Change

Glossary

Theory — Systematically organized knowledge applicable to a wide variety of circumstances, especially a system of assumptions, principles, or rules of a procedure.

Social capital — The value derived from the willingness of citizens to join organizations, to vote, to attend meetings, to spend quality time with others, to trust fellow citizens.

Many communities are trying to craft a “theory of change” to help test whether the strategies they choose to put in place are likely to lead to their intended results. Put simply, a theory of change defines how and why a particular strategy or intervention is likely to work or not. It is a set of assumptions or propositions that explain why an action plan is likely to lead to a specific result. Getting LGP members to think hard about and articulate why their plan of action will achieve their aim is a critical part of building a comprehensive strategy. This means the LGP needs to describe its theory in fine detail, identifying the assumptions about why particular interventions are likely to lead to certain results.

In simple terms, articulating a community’s theory of change means completing a number of “If....then...” statements. For example: one community might speculate:

- *If* we increase the social capital of neighborhood residents,
- *Then* there will be lowered unemployment rates and greater savings among residents.

This is the bare outline of a theory of change that could be made much more specific. Once defined, the theory allows the strategy to be tested: Is there a causal link between specific interventions and their intended results?

Some LGPs have found that when members try to articulate the “If...then...” statements of a theory of change, different theories surface in the discussion. Some members may believe one set of assumptions, while others believe a different set. The process of articulating a theory of change forces LGP members to analyze their assumptions and reconcile differences. Now everyone can start from the same page. The discussion is also valuable, in that it may bring out which theories hold, where theories are supported by evidence, and where theories may break down.

Continued

Steps

Example: “If...then...” Statements

Select a priority area, issue/problem.

To build a comprehensive community strategy to reduce child abuse and neglect, an LGP identified several assumptions:

Describe the goal/results.

Assumption 1

Develop a set of “If... then...” statements. Discuss and test the assumptions.

If reached before abuse/neglect occurs,

Then parents who may be likely to abuse/neglect their children can gain the skills necessary to avoid it.

Agree on a set of assumptions.

- Communities can identify families likely to abuse before they do, based on profiles of known risk factors and prior experience. (e.g., young, isolated families with several children under age 6, mildly retarded parents, and those who show signs of mental illness may be at risk.)

Analyze assumptions for required programs, activities, resources to carry them out.

Identify promising practices and existing programs, activities, and resources with the potential of meeting the need.

- Key community institutions can identify potential abusers.

Assumption 2

If there is an overall public awareness of the problems of child abuse/neglect,

Then this will increase the likelihood that risk factors are identified early on, thereby reducing the incidence of abuse/neglect.

Discuss what is missing. Discuss reconfiguring programs; redirecting financing.

Assumption 3

If there is a family-friendly source of help in the neighborhood,

Then people will be more likely to identify at-risk families, and supports can then be made available to help prevent abuse/neglect.

Based on the discussion around these assumptions, an LGP can craft a comprehensive strategy for reducing child maltreatment.

ALERT!

A successful program in one community may not be successful in another community.

The conditions and circumstances that contribute to the success of a program vary from community to community. Each community has a unique set of conditions, target groups, resources, and values.

When looking at other communities' promising practices, carefully determine whether the same conditions for implementation exist and whether to expect the same results in your targeted community.

ALERT!

Don't overlook informal resources and supports.

Remember that the most important resources available to families may be those provided by co-workers, extended family, neighbors, and friends. These mutual support networks exist in every community and consistently provide the first source of support when a family experiences difficulties.

These resources are often untapped by well-intentioned planners. Not being part of any formal system, such as government financing or private donations, these resources go undetected.

Informal resources should be considered, used, and strengthened as part of any comprehensive service strategy.

Once a comprehensive community strategy is crafted, an LGP determines whether all aspects of the plan are feasible. It tries to predict any foreseeable crises or barriers to implementation. If necessary, the plan is refined or adjusted so that the strategies can be implemented more effectively. →

What factors and tasks help to determine the feasibility of a comprehensive community strategy?

Is the comprehensive community strategy ready for implementation? Once developed, the comprehensive community strategy needs to be tested.

- What factors might influence implementation?
- Is implementation feasible?

Answers to these questions may mean further revisions or refinement to the strategy. The goal of this analysis is to ensure smooth and effective implementation.

Ideas for Testing Feasibility

- Gather information from multiple sources, such as frontline workers, mid-managers, and families. Use focus groups, interviews, and surveys.
- Interview experienced service providers. Inform them about the comprehensive plan. Ask their opinions. Ask them to predict potential problems with implementation.
- Discuss the plan with representatives of the natural helping system and with neighborhood leaders and other potential informal contributors. Assess their ability to lend talent, tools, and other resources.
- Discuss the plan with representatives from each resource area identified for a recommended change. Ask them about opportunities and barriers to implementation. Assess potential stumbling blocks.

Factors Affecting Feasibility (Continued)

The following factors could have an impact on implementation. They may set up barriers that would affect implementing strategies within a reasonable timeframe. LGPs may want to develop action plans to address any of the following potential stumbling blocks:

- Capacities of local providers
- Political influences at local and state levels
- Economic influences
- Social influences
- Personnel policies
- Confidentiality laws
- Holiday schedules
- Personality differences among key stakeholders
- Rules and regulations from state and federal government
- Funding requirements
- Evaluation and reporting requirements
- Agency turf issues
- Administrative/management capability for coordination

PROFILE

An Example: Factors Influencing Strategies

In one community, the programs and activities of a family resource center were selected within a strategy to mitigate risk factors of teenage pregnancy and increase protective factors.

Prior to full implementation, the LGP learned that some community partners felt that placing a nurse at the center threatened public support. Some heard from a small but vocal group that the nurse would be distributing condoms and advocating abortions. Despite these misperceptions, the LGP had to take them into account.

Thinking that the outraged group was not open to facts, the LGP held a public forum of neighborhood leaders, volunteers, advocacy groups, and elected officials. A decision was made to omit the nurse for the first year. The group also agreed to several community discussions in the next year to further explore issues and discuss research findings about “what works” to decrease teenage pregnancy.

The LGP adjusted its original plan, hoping to build public support over the next year, thereby offsetting some misinformed opinions in the community.

ALERT!

Avoid the following potential pitfalls:

- Neglecting to involve families, the natural helping network, and residents in selecting and prioritizing programs and activities.
- Neglecting to review what is already working in the community.
- Assuming that an effective promising practice will continue to be effective when combined with other programs and activities.
- Failing to consider all aspects of local culture and politics and the context of service delivery.
- Allowing service providers to take over, excluding business, government, and community partners.
- Neglecting to consider the self-interest of each partner and allowing old turf battles to emerge.

Chapter 4

Involving Partners in Strategy Development

Learning Goal

You will know how to involve partners in the development of a comprehensive community strategy.

Endorsement, Buy-In, and Involvement

Glossary

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The Local Governance Partnership (LGP) cannot institute a comprehensive plan of strategies by itself. A broad community strategy will need everyone's support to succeed. Full endorsement, buy-in, and involvement by all partners at all levels are important, including both the formal and informal service systems.

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The LGP should bring together all those who have a stake in the new delivery system. Take deliberate steps to engage stakeholders early and often in the development and implementation process.

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Remember that partners have roles and responsibilities throughout the strategy development process. Some partners may participate more fully at some points than at others. Some may “disappear” during the concept phase, then return when planning becomes more concrete. LGP members and staff need to be aware of the natural tendency of partners to change their levels of involvement over time, yet, at the same time, they need to engage and sustain the involvement of partners at critical points throughout the strategy development process.

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This chapter identifies the partners who are involved with local governance and addresses when and how they should be involved during the strategy development phase.

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Who are partners in local governance?

- State government agencies, board members, local directors, program officials
- State-level elected officials
- Local-level elected officials
- Local government department and program officials
- Public, non-profit service providers
- Private service providers
- Local business leaders
- Teachers, principals, school administrators, school board members
- Faith community leaders
- Representatives from the media
- Parents and family representatives
- Neighborhood residents, representatives of neighborhood organizations
- Natural helping system
- Youth
- Recipients and consumers of services

When is it important to involve partners? →

When is involving partners important?

In the initial stages of the partnership, LGP members and staff generally operate informally. Typically, they involve traditional family and child-service agency department heads and program managers. Yet, the overall quality of planning, decisions, and strategies is enhanced with the inclusion of diverse and varied viewpoints. Therefore, the LGP needs to ensure and sustain diverse involvement by deliberately bringing in representatives of the natural helping network, service providers, and knowledgeable professionals. This combined expertise is critical for effectively shaping strategies.

People are interested in different ways of being involved. Some may want to be part of ongoing planning activities, while others may prefer to be part of occasional focus groups. Finding out how people want to be involved is important for using them effectively.

Refer to the chart, Involving Partners in Strategy Development, pages 67-68, of this chapter.

PROFILE

From Dawson County, Georgia

“Our collaborative is much broader today, because so many people were involved in the planning process. They are really building the strategies that will improve results.

We have changed our thinking. Originally, the board, with its direct service providers, called itself the collaborative. Our thinking now is that the board members are partners and the collaborative is really the whole community.

It’s really relationships and the experiences of being involved in a committee or project that bring people together—that make our work real.”

When To Involve Partners (Continued)

Opportunities and roles for partners exist in each part of the strategy development process, such as:

Planning a Systems Approach

- Helping to understand the big picture by contributing individual or agency viewpoints.
- Understanding the characteristics of systems.

Researching Promising Practices

- Providing information about programs and activities that work or show promise.

Assessing Existing Programs, Activities, and Resources

- Helping to identify and evaluate existing services.
- Providing information about accessibility, usability, culture and values, relevancy, what works, and what does not.

Developing a Comprehensive Community Strategy

- Helping to synthesize the research so it can be used and applied.
- Helping to select strategies that are tailored to local conditions and culture.

Developing a Plan to Implement the Strategy

- Helping to support the implementation strategies, such as financing and staffing as well as informal and in-kind resources.
- Providing knowledge to the community about what is feasible and acceptable.
- Helping to educate constituencies and build public support.

Keep in Mind...

The Importance of Buy-In

Do you remember a time when you were asked to implement a program or stage an event after all decisions had been made? You may have found this frustrating and even demeaning. It may have seemed like your input was not valued; you were simply the person to carry out the plans.

This situation exists at almost any level. Yet experience has proven that, when those affected by decisions are involved early on, support for the decisions is increased. Users of new training programs or computer systems are more likely to use the programs and systems if they were involved in designing, testing, and trying out the programs. This premise holds true for strategy development. Get lots of people involved at the early stages of thinking about recommended strategies, so they will want to help implement the strategies later on.

ALERT!

Beware of the following potential pitfalls:

- Involving partners too late in the process.
- Overlooking political alliances and misalignments.

How can partners become involved? →

Involving Partners in Strategy Development

Possible Missing Partners	Ideas for Engaging Partners	Ideas for Sustaining Involvement
Planning a Systems Approach		
<p>Those who think these discussions are secondary to their “real job”</p> <p>Those with conflicting priorities between work with their organization and work with the LGP</p> <p>Frontline service providers running the “shop” while CEOs are attending meetings</p> <p>Local organizations and businesses, faith community representatives</p> <p>Representatives from the business community</p> <p>State agency regional managers</p>	<p>Help them see how their agency or organization goals fit with the big picture. Give concrete examples and case studies that show day-to-day situations.</p> <p>Try to combine concrete task work with conceptual discussion and learning.</p> <p>Encourage CEOs to pull in relevant program managers and frontline staff as well as stay involved themselves.</p> <p>Use one-on-one relationships among LGP board members and staff to bring others on board.</p>	<p>Help them to foresee their roles in shaping strategies.</p> <p>Provide ongoing “nurturing and feeding.”</p> <p>Use things like family suppers, study circles, and living room chat sessions to keep family members involved.</p>
Researching Promising Practices		
<p>Invaluable: Key partners with knowledge of resources for promising practices includes educational staff from technical schools and community or regional colleges.</p> <p>Individuals with knowledge of small, “invisible” neighborhood-based activities</p> <p>Individuals with knowledge of many programs and activities within the faith community</p>	<p>Build relationships with CEOs from the start. Ask them to identify individuals with the best content knowledge in subject areas targeted for research.</p> <p>Keep in mind that program staff need the support of their immediate supervisor for this “outside work.”</p>	<p>Plan tasks carefully to keep the time spent with this group focused and productive.</p>

Continued

Involving Partners in Strategy Development (Continued)

Possible Missing Partners	Ideas for Engaging Partners	Ideas for Sustaining Involvement
Developing Comprehensive Strategies		
<p>Those who have remained uninvolved since the community assessment process may include county and/or city commissioners and elected officials</p>	<p>Build relationships. Link a member of the partnership who has a neutral reputation with the elected official. This “ambassador” is someone who has nothing to gain personally by the work and no axes to grind, someone who speaks solely in the best interest of the community.</p> <p>Seek ways to become a part of each other’s meetings. One LGP asked to unveil the first part of the plan at a County Commissioners meeting followed by questionnaires for more input.</p>	<p>Make sure everyone receives updated information as additions and changes are made.</p>
Developing an Implementation Plan		
<p>Any stakeholder acting as gatekeeper with the power to “let you in or keep you out.” This person may be an executive secretary, who has access to management, or a gatekeeper, who has keys to the proposed building for the new program.</p>	<p>Connect with individuals who have good working relationships with the gatekeeper. Ask for help in meeting with this person. Ensure a strong connection with the organization’s CEO and ask for guidance on how best to ensure long-term cooperation.</p> <p>Approach all levels of staff by acknowledging their contributions to the program’s success.</p>	<p>Invite auxiliary program helpers on a regular basis to collaborative “lunch and learn” sessions for discussing progress, barriers to success, etc. Recognize their contributions to the implementation. Hold the luncheon meetings at pleasant “get away” places.</p>

Chapter 5

Implementing Strategies

Learning Goal

You will incorporate systems thinking when developing an implementation plan for a comprehensive community strategy.

Chapter 6

Moving Forward

Learning Goal

You will have access to tools that can help you assess learning and planning for continued development.

Keep in Mind...

You can always return to portions of this guide and revisit topics to expand your expertise.

Next Steps

This Learning Guide is meant to be a continual learning tool as well as reference, while you increase your knowledge and skills with developing a comprehensive community strategy.

The next steps are up to you. At this point, you may:

- Assess your individual knowledge and skills.
Go to the Self-Assessment in this chapter.
- Assess the knowledge and skills of your LGP.
Go to the LGP Assessment in this chapter.

Resources and Tools, Contacts, and Examples are located in the Appendices.

Georgia's Family Connection team provided the examples. They may be photocopied and/or adapted for the particular needs of your LGP.

Self-Assessment

Assess your knowledge and skills. Respond to each question with “Yes,” “Somewhat,” or “No.” For questions marked “Somewhat” or “No,” plan for improvement. You may want to refer back to pertinent chapters, seek additional information from the Resources and Tools list, and/or work through activities you might have skipped.

Are you able to...	Y	SW	N	Page References	Ideas for Next Steps
Chapter 1: Systems Thinking					
Describe categorical thinking and systems thinking?				Pages 16-21	
Recognize the fundamental application of systems thinking to developing strategies?				Pages 22-25	
Chapter 2: Identifying Promising Practices					
Recognize the importance of identifying promising practices?				Pages 28-30	
Identify steps for effective research?				Pages 31-35	
Identify attributes of successful programs?				Pages 36-38	
Identify resources that describe promising practices?				Pages 39-42	

KEY: Y = Yes, SW = Somewhat, N = No

Self-Assessment (Continued)

Are you able to...	Y	SW	N	Page Reference s	Ideas for Next Steps
Chapter 3: Building a Comprehensive Community Strategy					
Identify criteria and considerations for effective strategies?				Pages 44-51	
Identify steps for planning a comprehensive community strategy?				Pages 52-57	
Identify factors and tasks for determining the feasibility of a comprehensive community strategy?				Pages 58-60	
Chapter 4: Involving Partners in Strategy Development					
Identify partners who need to be involved in developing strategies?				Pages 62-63	
Identify when and how to involve these partners in developing strategies?				Pages 64-68	

KEY: Y = Yes, SW = Somewhat, N = No

Self-Assessment (Continued)

Are you able to...	Y	SW	N	Page Reference s	Ideas for Next Steps
Chapter 5: Implementing Strategies					
Identify components of an implementation plan?				Pages 70-74	
Identify tasks for developing an implementation plan?				Pages 75	
Identify components of an interagency agreement?				Pages 76-77	
Identify considerations for systems change and staffing?				Pages 78-81	

KEY: Y = Yes, SW = Somewhat, N = No

Local Governance Partnership Assessment

Assess the knowledge and skills of your LGP. Discuss each question and respond in the “Yes,” “Somewhat,” or “No” column as it applies to your LGP as a whole.

Are you able to...	Y	SW	N	Page References
Apply systems thinking in the development of a comprehensive community strategy?				Chapter 1 Pages 16-25
Research promising practices?				Chapter 2 Pages 28-42
Develop a comprehensive plan of strategies?				Chapter 3 Pages 44-57
Assess whether the comprehensive plan is feasible and ready for implementation?				Chapter 3 Pages 58-60
Identify partners, assess their involvement, and generate ideas for improvement?				Chapter 4 Pages 62-68
Develop an implementation plan?				Chapter 5 Pages 70-75, 78-81
Develop interagency agreements?				Chapter 5 Pages 76-77

KEY: Y = Yes, SW = Somewhat, N = No

The Action Plan

Partners' Roles

- Help support implementation strategies
- Assume new roles and responsibilities
- Provide community and political support

At this stage, a comprehensive community strategy is put into action. Careful planning takes the strategy from the “drawing board” into operation in the community. Guiding this planning stage is the implementation plan, a dynamic and fluid document that helps identify and manage programmatic and administrative procedures, costs and funding sources, timetables, tasks, and responsibilities.

Partners will have key roles. So, these roles must be clearly stated early in the process and a clear communication structure put in place. Effective implementation of a redesigned delivery system depends on a commitment to monitoring, getting feedback, reporting, and making refinements.

This chapter describes the implementation plan: its components, its development, the interagency agreements needed, and considerations for systems change.

What is an implementation plan?

Glossary

Implementation Plan — An outline of specific roles, responsibilities, and operational details for achieving the vision and goals of a strategic plan.

Strategic Plan — The vision and focus of an organization, which delineates in written form the common base for a course of action.

An implementation plan is a design for the action needed to put the comprehensive community strategy into place. Most LGPs have a strategic plan that sets forth the vision, overall goals, and broad-based strategies to achieve them.

The implementation plan provides specifications to make this overall picture become a reality. It offers a basis for making operational, day-to-day decisions about building a system of services and supports. It takes the strategic planning process to the organizational and individual level i.e., assigning roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

The implementation plan addresses:

- What programs and activities to implement.
- Who is responsible for what aspects of implementation.
- When programs and activities are implemented.
- Funding strategies for implementing the programs or activities.
- Evaluation measures to determine the effectiveness of implementation and of the program and activities.
- Administrative tasks involved with putting the programs and activities in place.

Examples

If strategies call for staffing an existing resource center in a neighborhood with different organizations, the implementation plan defines what programs or activities will be offered by which organization.

For example, if an after-school program needs \$50,000 to serve 125 children and is short of operating funds, the implementation plan shows the “unfunded” portion that needs to be addressed.

An Implementation Plan (Continued)

Typically, a strategic plan covers a time period of several years, while an implementation plan is an annual plan. Year-to-year, the implementation plan is reviewed and adjusted based on information from evaluations, changes that might occur in resources, and evidence-based research about promising practices.

For example, evaluation findings show that participants for an after-school program, which was targeted for elementary school students, included many children from Latino families. Since the majority of the staff and volunteers cannot speak Spanish, offering Spanish would be an important part of next year's implementation plan.

ALERT!

Remember the option of mid-course corrections.

LGPs should be encouraged to make mid-course corrections once a mix of strategies has been implemented. Once you embark on a particular course, you may find out it isn't working as you had hoped. Don't be shy about changing the activity or how it is implemented. Plenty of worthy programs went through a bumpy beginning and changed several times before they became successful.

PROFILE

Family Connection's Planning Process

The following excerpt is from Family Connection, *Guidelines for Five-Year Strategic Plan*, FY 2002.

Strategic planning is not an event that comes to an end when the plan is completed; it's an ongoing process. The guiding members of a Family Connection collaborative envisioned its future and developed the operations and procedures necessary to achieve that future. Its planning process provided an opportunity for citizens, agencies, and community organizations to come together, establish a shared vision for children and families, then chart a course to get there.

Family Connection communities are asked to develop a Strategic Plan, spanning a period of five years. This Plan describes the shared vision for children and families established by the community collaborative and the goals and objectives to reach the vision. This Strategic Plan can provide a clear sense of direction for the collaborative.

In order to implement the Strategic plan, year by year, the LGP develops an Annual Operating Plan (AOP). This one-year AOP specifies what portion of the Strategic Plan that the LGP will implement during the coming year and what actions will achieve the desired results and benchmark objectives. In some cases, the AOP reports on early successes or continuing struggles and adjusts the forecast for the future.

What are the components of an implementation plan?

Glossary

Target group — A specific group of individuals, such as children, youth, parents, families, or individuals within a particular geographic area, as the focus of an LGP's strategy to achieve a goal.

Evaluation measures — Criteria for assessing progress by means or ends: "Process" measures can tell us how many children attended a program; "Outcome" measures tell us if the program made a difference, e.g., did participants improve their skills.

The formality of the implementation plan and the number of components may vary from LGP to LGP. However, basic components make the implementation plan an effective planning and decisionmaking tool. They include programmatic and administrative components.

Programmatic Components

Programmatic components describe programs and activities, including:

- Type of program and/or activity
- Target Group(s)
- Location
- Timeframe, (e.g., hours of operation, length)
- Capacity to serve
- Staff, volunteers involved
- Provider and neighborhood staff qualifications
- Ratio of participants to staff
- Benchmarks and performance measures

Refer to Chapter 2, Identifying Promising Practices for the Promising Practices Inventory, Part 2 to review the components of a program description.

Refer to the Appendix, Examples, for Georgia's Strategy Implementation Form. One form is used for each strategy.

Components of an Implementation Plan (Continued)

Administrative Components

Administrative components describe what it will take to manage and support the programs or activities, including:

- Partners' roles and responsibilities
- Management oversight of administrative components
- Costs, financing arrangements
- Resources, including space, staff, materials, in-kind resources
- Staff requirements, (e.g., paid or volunteer)
- Coordinating specifications
- Benchmarks and performance measures

Keep in Mind...

The implementation plan is for a “package” of mutually supportive formal and informal programs and activities. Therefore, implementation must be planned for each program or activity and also for integrating the programs and activities as a whole.

Refer to Learning Guide 6: Using Data to Ensure Accountability, for more information about collecting, analyzing, reporting, and using evaluation data.

How do you develop an implementation plan?

Typically, the tasks involved in developing an implementation plan are assigned to subcommittees, depending on the scope and complexity of the plan. Subcommittee members work with partner agencies, which have agreed to implement one or more programs or activities. Together, they work out the operational details for implementing various components of the community strategy. They may seek input from ad-hoc groups, which have expertise in certain aspects of the strategy's implementation, such as those with knowledge about particular target groups or neighborhood residents familiar with the location for a particular program.

Some LGPs organize their implementation teams around priority areas, such as youth development or substance abuse issues. In other LGPs, one planning team might work on the implementation plan for a combination of goals and priority areas.

Often, an LGP member chairs a subcommittee and then is responsible for bringing the committee's implementation plan back to the LGP for discussion and approval.

For each goal and the mix of strategies selected to achieve that goal, the subcommittee:

- Develops interagency agreements
- Develops implementation timetables
- Calculates the cost of implementation
- Identifies existing resources—formal, informal, and in-kind as well as additional funding and resources needed
- Establishes performance measures for each program or activity
- Establishes a way to collect implementation and evaluation data
- Agrees on methods and procedures for sharing information, including evaluation data across agencies and organizations and with the LGP
- Develops an ongoing internal and external communications system
- Stipulates the frequency with which strategies are reviewed and course corrections made

A key component of an implementation plan is the memorandum of agreement between agencies and organizations and the LGP. →

An Interagency Agreement

Glossary

Interagency agreement —
Consensus among agencies

and LGP partners to accept responsibility for specific programs, activities, resources, and/or functions as part of the implementation of strategies toward specific results.

Interagency agreements or memoranda of agreement (MOA) between agencies and an LGP lay out the specific responsibilities and commitments for implementing the agencies' and organizations' programs and activities. Agreements can be made for direct responsibilities in program delivery and/or for in-kind support, such as supervision of staff, office space, use of computers, evaluation tasks, and agreement to participate in LGP meetings.

Interagency agreements or MOA specify:

- Who will do what
- For whom
- Over what time period
- At what cost, if any
- To what standard of performance

MOAs acknowledge the acceptance of responsibility by an agency or organization for implementation of strategies and their related components.

Refer to the Appendices, Examples, for a sample MOA.

Components of an Interagency Agreement

Some interagency agreements may be more elaborate than others; some may have to conform to agency requirements. Some basic components for consideration are:

- Legal name of entities entering into the agreement
- Beginning and ending dates of the agreement
- Deliverables for programs, activities, or supports
- Responsibilities of each entity
- Performance expectations
- Cost of sharing responsibilities
- Reporting timeframes, both programmatic and financial
- Schedule for re-negotiations or modifications of terms
- Procedure for terminating the agreement
- Signatures and title of authorized partners

Other components may be added depending on the strategy and nature of the agreement. They may include but are not limited to:

- Groups to participate in the strategy
- Location of strategy component
- Description of processes and procedures
- Description of staffing
- Funding level and/or method of payment
- Supervision and evaluation of the day-to-day operations
- Plans for interagency and in-service training
- Provisions for individuals with disabilities or English as a second language
- Responsibilities for evaluation activities
- Procedures for release of information and confidentiality policy
- Provisions for sharing information
- Responsibilities for participating in LGP meetings or activities
- Identification of agency liaisons
- Publicity agreement

Remember that systems thinking plays a part in strategy development and in implementing the strategies. →

What are systems change considerations?

Plans for implementing a community strategy involve more than programs and activities. To effectively incorporate systems thinking into strategy development, changes are also called for in “the way we do business.”

The LGP needs to consider the following changes and work toward making them a part of its operational structure and service delivery:

Changes in the Way Decisions are Made

- Taking decisions to the community level, including family members who receive services.
- Involving a broad range of partners, including businesses and community organizations.
- Conducting a comprehensive community assessment.
- Basing decisions on evaluation data.

Changes in the Strategy Mix and How Services are Delivered

- Integrated staff, co-location of staff, and staff redeployment.
- Coordinated, seamless systems of services.
- Volunteer development, including recruiting and training.
- Improving accessibility and availability of services.
- Preventive, family-centered, and family-friendly approaches.
- Culturally competent and responsive practices.
- Identifying policy barriers to effective service delivery.

**Systems Change
Considerations
(Continued)**

Changes in Financing and Budgeting

- Blending funding
- Redirection of existing funds
- Completion of fiscal inventories
- Resource development, including joint grant writing
- Local investment in an LGP's strategic plan

Refer to Learning Guide 5: Financing and Budgeting Strategies for more information.

Since we are changing the way we do business, there are also considerations for how staff are involved with the comprehensive community strategy. →

What are considerations for staff?

Implementation plans need to include what staff are involved in the community strategy. Systems thinking and a community-based approach changes the way staff are selected and thus have implications for staff development.

Staff Selection

- Identify qualifications for staff, including both paid and volunteer, within the new or reconfigured delivery system.
- Involve neighborhood residents in developing these qualifications and in interviewing and selecting staff who will work with them.
- Hire staff from the community.

Staff Development Needs

Consider the following orientation and training needs:

- Orientation to systems thinking and a new integrated way of delivering a comprehensive array of services.
- Orientation to the policies, procedures, and cultures of participating agencies and ways to work together.
- Orientation and/or training in the philosophy and practices of family-centered, neighborhood-based services.
- Skill building, or enhancing existing skills, on the theory of local governance, group processes, working with families and community members, problemsolving techniques, and consensus decisionmaking.
- Plan for orientation and training by considering costs, time, target group, and providers. Incorporate this information into the implementation plan.

ALERT!

Beware of the following potential pitfalls.

- Viewing the implementation plan as an end, rather than as a dynamic, flexible guide.
- Neglecting the contributions of less formal institutions to the overall plan.
- Overlooking input from frontline staff, family, and youth.
- Not addressing information and confidentiality issues during the early stages of plan development.
- Neglecting to consider technology needs.
- Overlooking the importance of managing administrative tasks.
- Not informing the community at large about the plan, its status, and its achievements.

Appendices

Glossary

Activities and Worksheets

Resources and Tools

Contacts

Examples

Local Governance Terms

Glossary

Local governance—A decisionmaking process whereby the community takes responsibility for developing and implementing strategies to improve results for children, families, and communities.

Local Governance Partnership (LGP)—A decisionmaking partnership between the state, private sector, local government, community and neighborhood leaders, and residents to carry out the process of local governance.

Results or outcomes—Conditions of well being for children, families, and communities to be achieved through services or strategies. Although these terms are interchangeable, these Learning Guides will use “results.”

Indicators or benchmarks—Measures for which data are available to help quantify progress toward achieving a result.

Formal resources—Services and supports that traditionally serve children, families, and communities, such as public agencies.

Informal supports—Nontraditional resources and supports, such as businesses, the faith community, civic organizations, citizen groups, and the natural helping system. These supports are not usually provided by government agencies and are not part of any formal service system.

In-kind resources—Donated goods, services, or space that support services and activities, but not in cash, typically include space for meetings, use of office equipment, lending of staff, or employees volunteering during work hours. Sometimes called informal resources.

Natural helping system—An informal network of extended family, friends, neighbors, and community leaders.

Resources—Funding, staff, leadership, information, physical space, and equipment that can be used to support the work of an LGP.

Stakeholders—Those who have a vested interest or “stake” in improving results, which may include parents, neighborhood residents, local businesses, elected officials, local and state agencies, and private-sector organizations.

Terms presented in Learning Guide 4

Activities—Efforts, such as day care, after-school activities, etc., that occur in a community to promote positive results or prevent or mitigate risk factors for children and families. Activities may be either informal or formal.

Community strategy—An array of mutually supported and integrated programs or activities, both formal and informal, tailored to meet the needs of the target population and coordinated among organizations and community networks for positive results.

Evaluation measures—Criteria for assessing progress by means or ends: “Process” measures can tell us how many children attended a program; “Outcome” measures tell us if the program made a difference, e.g., did participants improve their skills.

Implementation Plan—An outline of specific roles, responsibilities, and operational details for achieving the vision and goals of a strategic plan.

Interagency agreement—Consensus among agencies and LGP partners to accept responsibility for specific programs, activities, resources, and/or functions as part of the implementation of strategies toward specific results.

Promising practices—Programs and activities that have demonstrated effectiveness in producing results.

Protective factors—The qualities in children and families, who though exposed to significant stress and adversity in their lives, succeed in avoiding high-risk behaviors.

Program—A set of services, such as parenting education, job training, mental health counseling, or family preservation services, provided by a public or private organization or a distinct and formally structured component of an organization, operated and administered with a formal budget.

Reconfigured services—Rearranging the parts or elements of existing services.

Risk factors—Conditions in the lives of children and families that put them at risk of having healthy and productive lives.

Strategic Plan—The vision and focus of an organization, which delineates in written form the common base for a course of action.

Social capital—The value derived from the willingness of citizens to join organizations, to vote, to attend meetings, to spend quality time with others, to trust fellow citizens.

Systems—A set of related services, programs, activities, and policies that work interdependently to address a common purpose.

Systems thinking—The ability to see relationships among elements of a system, such as services, programs, activities, and policies, and to anticipate their effects on children, families, and communities. Also, the practice of applying this understanding to organizations, systems, and individuals and possibly changing their behavior.

Target group —A specific group of individuals, such as children, youth, parents, families, or individuals within a particular geographic area, as the focus of an LGP’s strategy to achieve a goal.

Theory—Systematically organized knowledge applicable to a wide variety of circumstances, especially a system of assumptions, principles, or rules of a procedure.

Activities and Worksheets

Chapter 1 Systems Thinking

Learn by Discussing

Impact of Systems

Describe how systems thinking affects services and supports.

How does systems thinking relate to services and support? This activity will highlight the interdependency of each partner in a system and the consequences of one action on the system as a whole.

Materials

Several pieces of easel pad paper, markers, and tape.

Option

Draw a map of the community, outlining the service area for each community partner. Overlapping services should be evident.

1. Select an area of interest, such as youth development.
2. Identify and list key community partners whose missions involve that area of interest.
 - ✍✍ Try to include at least one public, one private, one private non-profit, and one informal partner. (Examples: public partner, Department of Children's Services; private partner, a local retail store; private non-profit partner, The United Way; informal partner, a local sorority.)
 - ✍✍ Briefly describe the services that each community partner provides to ensure that everyone is familiar with the partners.
3. Discuss: What would the impact be...
 - ✍✍ If one partner decided to terminate services and supports?
 - ✍✍ If one partner decided to expand services and supports?
 - ✍✍ If a new partner with the same mission decided to offer services and supports?

Are the services and supports duplicative?

Do the services and supports range from preventive to remedial?

Are any services or supports missing?

**Chapter 1
Systems
Thinking**

Learn by Discussing

Applying Systems Thinking

Use systems thinking to develop recommendations for the focus of an LGP's work.

Can you get away from thinking in a linear cause-effect manner? Can you think of a situation in terms of interacting systems? This activity uses the profile from the chapter to generate discussion about next steps for the work of Savannah's LGP.

Materials

Easel pad chart and markers for discussion purposes

1. Read the profile about the use of systems thinking in Georgia on the next page. (This is the same profile found in Chapter 1, Systems Thinking.)

2. Discuss the following:

✍✍ Where should Savannah's LGP focus its efforts for improving school-readiness scores?

✍✍ Given this system behavior, what strategies might produce the best results?

PROFILE

Using Systems Thinking in Georgia

Early childhood advocates, parents, and educators in Savannah, Georgia grew concerned about the school readiness of children entering the public school system. After months of community focus groups and best practices research, the Youth Futures Authority (the Local Governance Partnership) decided to improve the quality of early childhood programs by paying enhanced subsidies to child-care centers that offered higher quality care. Initially, these investments paid off as child-care quality increased in the county and children entered school better prepared for success. Public awareness and demand for quality childcare increased as well, which stimulated even more investments in subsidies for higher quality childcare.

Success with the new enhanced subsidies continued for a couple years. Then, parents, advocates, and educators noticed that gains in readiness scores had leveled off and were beginning to turn downward again, despite the fact that demand for quality care was higher than ever. After investigating the decline in school readiness scores, school administrators learned that Savannah and Chatham County had filled all available quality child-care openings. They decided that the tapering scores were due, in part, to the lack of available quality childcare in the county.

In sum, improvements in school-readiness scores increased as more children participated in quality child-care centers that received enhanced subsidies. The improvement in scores continued until the limiting force of child-care availability took hold. Once Chatham County exceeded its supply of quality childcare, scores in school readiness eventually began to decline. This example shows the importance of looking at whole systems—in this case, Savannah's YFA leaders examined their whole child-care system to explain why school-readiness scores were no longer improving. They could then target specific strategies to the problem identified: an inadequate number of quality child-care slots countywide.

**Chapter 2
Identifying
Promising
Practices**

Learn by Discussing

Importance of Research

Recognize the importance of finding evidence on promising practices and identify the steps for effective research.

What happens when LGPs fail to ask the target population what they think about a proposed strategy? What lessons can be learned from the experiences of others? This activity uses the experience of one LGP to initiate discussion.

Materials

Easel pad chart and markers for discussion purposes

Option

If the group is large, discuss the responses to questions in small groups.

1. Read the scenario following these instructions.
2. Answer the following questions:
 - ✍✍ What steps were missing in selecting and implementing the doll program?
 - ✍✍ What was the evidence of the program's effectiveness? What did the research say?
 - ✍✍ How did the LGP know that the doll program would work with its target population? What would they need to do before answering that question?
 - ✍✍ What did the LGP know about the target population?
3. Write two or three additional questions that this example brings to mind.

Discussion

Submit one of your questions to the group for discussion and rotate doing so until all questions are submitted. (Select a facilitator to record each question on an easel pad chart.)

Notice the number of questions and the number of duplicate questions. A lot of questions may show the importance of thoroughly researching a potential strategy. Duplicate questions may suggest a set of questions that LGP members and staff should raise about strategies.

After discussion, refer to possible responses following the scenario.

SCENARIO

This is a fictitious community, but based on a real situation.

The River Birch Partnership

The River Birch Partnership learned through experience the critical importance of thoroughly researching a program before implementing it.

According to the coordinator, the LGP made a decision to use “Baby Think It Over” dolls to help prevent teenage pregnancy in the county. One agency had already invested in two dolls, even though no evidence-based research was available on results of using the dolls.

Approximately \$2000 was spent to buy additional dolls at \$250 each. Letters were sent from the Health Teacher to parents asking their permission to assign a doll to their teenager, indicating that parents would be responsible for the costs if the dolls were lost or damaged. The results were not good. Parents were apprehensive about the replacement cost of the dolls mentioned in the letter, and 95% of the letters were returned denying permission to participate.

Parents of teenagers that used the dolls were annoyed by the doll’s constant crying, even though the crying was meant as a lesson for the teen. Complaints kept coming in.

“The use of the dolls is temporarily on hold,” *says the coordinator*. “We must now rethink our course of action to decide when and if the dolls will be used in the future.”

POSSIBLE RESPONSE S

Importance of Research

Some discussion activities included a reference to possible responses. Following are responses that need to be considered.

What steps were missing in selecting and implementing the doll program? Key information is missing.

What was the desired result and the issue or problem of concern? No evidence exists that the LGP tried to understand the underlying or root causes of teen pregnancy. It did not compile information about family attitudes and did not get opinions and information from teens.

What was the evidence of the program's effectiveness? What did the research say? The LGP didn't look for evidence-based research. Instead, it relied on the advice of an agency spokesperson. With better understanding of the causes—risk and protective factors, attitudes, and values—the dolls may have worked, if handled differently or combined with other programs and activities. In fact, other communities have found the doll program very successful and highly regarded by teenagers and their parents.

How did the LGP know that the doll program would work with their target population? What would they need to do before answering that question? The LGP did not know. It would need to include members of the target population in decisions about the program. It would need to find evidence of this program working in other counties or states. The LGP would then need to examine the target population and the conditions for implementing the program to determine whether it would fit in its county.

What did the LGP know about the target population? The LGP only knew that middle school girls were to be the target group. (It consciously or unconsciously ignored males as a target group.) By looking at the demographics in the county for the past three or more years, the LGP could identify which age group was at the highest risk and which racial or ethnic group was most prominent in this age group. Research could tell the LGP which practices appear to work best with a particular age and racial or ethnic group.

**Chapter 2
Identifying
Promising
Practices**

Learn by Doing

Researching Promising Practices

Apply the steps for researching promising practices to the work of the Local Governance Partnership.

Is your LGP involved in researching promising practices? Are there areas that you would like to explore further, or steps that the LGP needs to take to more effectively identify promising practices? This activity uses worksheets to guide the LGP discussion and planning.

Materials

Copies of the worksheet and Promising Practices Inventory on the following pages

1. Select a priority area. Be clear about the issues or problems and the goals. Be clear about the target population.
2. Plan the research on promising practices for this priority area. Use the worksheet on the next page to guide the planning.
3. Develop subcommittees or staff assignments for each step.
4. Continue planning with other priority areas.
5. Develop a timeline to plot the tasks for the overall research. Include times to report progress of subcommittees and/or staff work.

Researching Promising Practices

Result Goal Issues/Problems			
Step	How to do this	Who is responsible	Timeframe
Develop a set of research questions.			
Access high-quality research and evaluation reports.			
Narrow the search.			
Summarize the findings. Use the Promising Practices Inventory, Parts 1 and 2.			

Promising Practices Inventory, Part 1

Result Goal Issues/Problems		
What Works	What We Have	What Is Missing
Promising Practices	Existing <u>Formal</u> Programs and Resources	
	Existing <u>Informal</u> Resources and Activities	

Promising Practices Inventory, Part 2

Promising Practice Program or Approach	
Description	
Critical components	
Evidence of effectiveness	
Implementing organization	Location
Population served	Capacity to serve
Months/days/hours of operation	Staff/volunteers involved
Necessary conditions	Program contact
Source of information	Other notes

**Chapter 3
Building a
Comprehensive
Community
Strategy**

Learn by Discussing

Putting It All Together

Apply the steps to developing a comprehensive community strategy.

Example

Results: Children
Succeed
in School

How can information be pieced together to create a comprehensive mix of strategies? In this activity, you will practice applying the steps using the high school dropout example found in Chapter 2, page 31 of this guide.

Priority Area: High School Dropouts

Issue: An increasing number of students, male and female, are dropping out of school.

Goal: All students will complete high school on time.

1. Write the goal and/or the desired results for the priority area on a piece of paper of one color.

2. Analyze information.

✍✍ Discuss the effective existing programs, activities, and resources that could potentially contribute to achieving the desired results. Write each existing program, activity, or resource on a separate piece of paper of another color or on a blank puzzle piece found at some hobby shops.

✍✍ Discuss promising practices (Chapter 2) and considerations for effective strategies (Chapter 3). Write potentially effective promising practices on a separate piece of paper of another color or on a blank puzzle piece found at some hobby shops.

Materials

Paper of three different colors, pens or markers

Blank puzzle pieces from a hobby store (optional)

Copies of the Criteria for Effective Strategies, Chapter 3, pages 45-46

Option

Use a result and priority area of current interest to your LGP.

Organize into small groups if your group is large.

Keep in Mind...

The purpose of this exercise is to manipulate the programs, activities, and resources in order to create an effective mix. Each part should support the others and help achieve the desired results.

3. Synthesize the information to come up with a comprehensive mix of strategies.

✍✍ Place the desired result in the center. Move the other pieces of paper around (programs, activities, and resources). Match and group those that support each other.

✍✍ Note what may be missing. Discuss if existing programs, activities, and resources could be reconfigured or redesigned to support promising practices. Discuss if new programs, activities, or resources are needed.

✍✍ Check all the pieces of paper and the patterns that are formed against the desired result. Ask: does this configuration of strategies have the potential to improve results?

✍✍ Decide on a comprehensive mix of strategies. Check this against the “Criteria for Effective Strategies.” Add new arrangements and reconfigure the mix, if needed.

Variation 1

Use the quilt analogy from Chapter 1, Systems Thinking page 25. Cut the pieces of paper into triangles and piece together a “quilt” of strategies.

Variation 2

Incorporate a theory of change by developing a set of “If...then...” statements at the beginning of this activity.

**Chapter 3
Building a
Comprehensive
Community
Strategy**

Learn by Doing

A Comprehensive Community Strategy

Identify criteria, considerations, and steps for developing a comprehensive community strategy and apply them to the work of the Local Governance Partnership (LGP).

This activity helps the LGP in planning. The worksheets are based on the information in this Learning Guide and will need to be adapted to the unique configurations of each LGP. Keep in mind the activity is intended for overall planning, so additional detailed work plans may be needed.

Materials

Copies of the worksheet

For the following planning activities, use the worksheet on pages 109-110 of this section of the Appendices to guide the planning and discussion.

1. Plan to conduct a gap analysis. Discuss the tasks involved, how to accomplish them, and who will take responsibility. Develop a timeframe.
2. Discuss and plan ways to communicate findings from the gap analysis. Decide:
 - ☞☞ Who needs the information
 - ☞☞ How to disseminate the information
 - ☞☞ Who takes responsible to ensure that it happens
 - ☞☞ Are additional resources needed
 - ☞☞ Timeframes

Continued

3. Plan to synthesize the information or piece together a comprehensive community strategy. Discuss:

- ✍✍ What is involved with the process, including places to meet, individuals to attend, and resources to obtain

- ✍✍ Who oversees that tasks are completed

- ✍✍ Timeframes

4. Plan to study the feasibility of the plan. Discuss potential influencing factors. Make plans to tackle specific factors that influence strategy implementation.

A Comprehensive Plan of Strategies

Task	What is Involved	Who is responsible	Timeframe
<p>Conduct a gap analysis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>☞</i> Review the information on the Promising Practices inventory. <i>☞</i> Complete the “What We Have” by listing existing programs, activities, and resources. <i>☞</i> Analyze the gaps. Complete “What Is Missing.” 			
<p>Communicate findings and decisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>☞</i> Who needs to know <i>☞</i> How to disseminate information <i>☞</i> When is the information disseminated <i>☞</i> Resources needed 			

Continued

A Comprehensive Plan of Strategies (Continued)

Task	What is Involved	Who is responsible	Timeframe
Piece together, or synthesize, all the information to decide on a comprehensive community strategy.			
Discuss and decide about the feasibility of implementing the comprehensive plan of strategies.			

**Chapter 3
Building a
Comprehensive
Community
Strategy**

Learn by Doing

Testing Feasibility

Assess the feasibility of a comprehensive community strategy.

Is the comprehensive mix of strategies feasible? What are the factors that influence implementation? This role play or simulation activity helps the LGP realize the implications and consequences of its plan.

Materials

A comprehensive plan of strategies

Option

Use a facilitator or consultant to assist the group in coming to conclusions.

1. Role play or simulate the implementation of a given set of strategies. Assume the part of each partner involved and follow the logical path of the planned changes. Make sure you consider all stakeholders. Discover and discuss:

✍✍ The barriers to address

✍✍ The self interest of each partner in making the requested changes

✍✍ Which aspects require additional time and effort to implement

✍✍ The estimated additional time

✍✍ The effects and changes to the rest of the plan

2. Discuss alternatives.

How would using a different but equally effective approach change the rest of the plan?

**Chapter 4
Involving
Partners in
Strategy
Development**

Learn by Discussing

Involving Partners

Identify partners and when and how to involve them in developing a comprehensive community strategy.

Why is it important to involve partners? Who should be involved?
When and how should they be involved?

1. Read the scenario on the next page.
2. Discuss:
 - ☞☞ How was systems thinking used, or not used, in this scenario?
 - ☞☞ What partners were involved? What partners were missing?
 - ☞☞ At what point of the strategy development process should partners be involved? Should different partners be involved at different times?
 - ☞☞ What are some ways to involve partners?

After discussing, refer to possible responses.

SCENARIO **Magnolia County Collaborative**

Magnolia County Collaborative in Georgia started eight years ago with a “core” of five individuals who had been working together through The Children and Youth Commission established by the Governor. The group represented children and family services, mental health, public health, a local child advocacy organization, and education. Even at the early stages of forming an LGP, they recognized that they needed to expand partner involvement. The chair remarked, *“We wanted to pull in people at the local level with authority to make decisions, but we weren’t sure who.”*

As it turned out, the development of the strategic plan ended up expanding the number of partners involved. The LGP’s number one priority was school dropouts; teen pregnancy and children ready for school was its secondary area of concern. The LGP discussed who should be involved in the planning process, placing emphasis on who was not previously involved and also organizations that helped identify the issues.

The LGP reached out to people who had not been involved but were likely to be interested. The response was extraordinary. Many new individuals and organizations, like the Parks and Recreation Department and the PTA, became involved in the work of the committees.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

Involving Partners

How was systems thinking used, or not used, in this scenario? The LGP knew that it needed to expand and broaden its partnership. It realized that looking at the whole picture and including all stakeholders would have an impact on results. However, many stakeholders have yet to be included.

What partners were involved? What partners were missing? The partners who were involved included service providers, the Parks and Recreation Department, and the PTA (the first community group involved). The partners who were missing included families, youth, representatives from the natural helping system, elected officials (such as county commissioners), and representatives from business and the faith community. The local school board and principals would be critical partners, particularly with the priority areas chosen.

At what point of the strategy development process should partners be involved? Should different partners be involved at different times? Involvement by some representatives of all key stakeholders helps in initial planning. From the beginning, being broad based and inclusive is important. The strategic planning process provides the opportunity to establish a shared vision for children, families, and the community. Those who are actively engaged in the planning process will serve as valuable resources when implementing the plan.

What are some ways to involve partners? Project and committee work brings people together and gives them specific tasks. To build commitment, establish key roles for county and community leaders. By building the support of those with a powerful voice in the community, you can gain valuable leverage for commitment and resources. Consider times and locations that are accessible to young people, parents, and families. Consider issues that may keep people away, such as childcare and transportation. Consider work week schedules of business and service providers.

Chapter 5 Implementing Strategies

Learn by Discussing

Elements of an Implementation Plan

Identify the components of an effective implementation plan.

Many considerations and options exist to implement strategies. You can learn from each other's past experiences with planning and build on each other's ideas. This activity is a cooperative exchange of information.

Materials

Paper, pens, or easel pads and markers.

Option

If the group is large, organize into four groups.

1. Organize into at least two groups. Assign times for each part of this activity and do as much as possible within each timeframe.
2. Each group:
 - ☞ Selects someone to take notes.
 - ☞ Develops a set of strategies for a priority area of its choosing or uses the community strategy developed in the previous chapter.
 - ☞ Determines what needs to be included in an implementation plan for these strategies.
3. Group one and group two exchange strategies and implementation plans. The groups review each other's work for aspects of the implementation that may be unclear or missing in their own work. Groups note the questions they have and the parts of the plan that they think may be most effective.
4. Discuss plans. Build on each other's ideas. Make sure all critical components for implementing a set of strategies are included.

Chapter 5 Implementing Strategies

Learn from Others

Others' Experience with Implementation Planning

Identify effective components of implementation plans and interagency agreements.

What have other LGPs learned about implementing strategies? What are their lessons learned, and what are their success stories? The following is a list of ideas for gathering information about effective ways to implement a comprehensive community strategy.

Contact other LGPs.

Exchange information about implementing strategies.

Ask for examples of plans and interagency agreements.

Ask about challenges and successes, what worked, what didn't work, and what is absolutely necessary.

Review interagency agreements initiated by a variety of different agencies. Notice what is important to each of these agencies.

Talk to the legal staff of various agencies and organizations to learn about legal requirements or constraints in developing interagency agreements.

Have a management information systems (MIS) person explain the advantages of an automated system for collecting evaluation data and the steps necessary to put one in place.

Observe staff in an effectively managed family resource center. Talk with staff and participants.

Refer to the Appendices, Resources and Tools, and Contacts, for more information.

Chapter 5 Implementing Strategies

Learn by Doing

Sorting Tasks

Differentiate between programmatic and administrative tasks, and identify appropriate partners for carrying out the tasks.

What tasks are involved with an implementation plan? Who is the best partner to carry out each task?

Materials

A mix of two or three strategies from a comprehensive plan, large post-it notes, two easel pad charts—one labeled, “Programmatic Tasks”, the other labeled “Administrative Tasks.”

Option

Use a facilitator familiar with the Technology of Participation (ToP) method to facilitate this activity.

Part One

1. Select a comprehensive strategy on which to focus for this exercise.
2. In pairs, think through all the tasks involved in implementing this mix of strategies. Write each task on a large post-it note, one task per note.
3. Attach the post-it notes with tasks to the appropriate easel pad chart, separating the administrative and programmatic tasks.
4. As a large group, discuss the organization of tasks. Rearrange if necessary. Add missing tasks. Eliminate duplicate tasks.

Part Two

1. Group the administrative and programmatic tasks into logical clusters of responsibility.
2. Discuss the most likely individual partner for each of the clusters.

Resources and Tools

Chapter 1: Systems Thinking

Senge, Peter, et al., *The Dance of Change: The Challenges of Sustaining Momentum in Learning Organizations* (New York NY: Doubleday/Currency, 1999).

Chapter 2: Identifying Promising Practices

Schorr, Lisbeth B., *Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods to Rebuild America* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1997).

Whittaker, James, Garbarino, James, *Social Supports Networks: Informal Helping in the Human Services* (Hawthorne, NY: Aldine Publishing Co., 1983).

Chapter 3: Building a Comprehensive Community Agenda

Alliance for Youth, *Five Fundamental Resources for Children and Youth: America's Promise* (Minneapolis, MN). 700 South 3rd St., Ste. 210, Minneapolis, MN 55415, 800-888-7828.

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, *Prevention Primer: An Encyclopedia of Alcohol, Tobacco and other Prevention Terms* (Rockville MD: National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, 1994).

Chen, Huey-tyh, Rossi, Peter H., eds., *Using Theory to Improve Program and Policy Evaluations* (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1992).

Connell, James P., Kubisch, Anne C., Schorr, Lisbeth B., Weiss, Carol H., eds., *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives: Concepts, Methods and Contexts* (Washington DC: The Aspen Institute, 1995).

Connell, James P., Kubisch, Anne C., *Applying a Theories of Change Approach to the Evaluation of Comprehensive Community Initiatives: Progress, Prospects and Problems* (Washington DC: The Aspen Institute, 1996).

Chapter 3: Building a Comprehensive Community Agenda (Continued)

Lofquist, William A., *The Technology of Development: A Framework for Transforming Community Cultures* (Tucson, AZ: Development Publications, 1996). To order call: (520) 575-7047, 800-711-3988.

Lofquist, William A., *The Technology of Development: A Leadership Development Program* (Tucson, AZ: Development Publications, 1996). To order call: (520) 575-7047, 800-711-3988.

Melaville, Atelia, Blank, Martin J., *Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, April, 1993).

Mendonsa, Arthur A., *Helping Children Become Successful Adults: A Planning Manual for Communities* (Athens, GA: Carl Vinson Institute of Government, 1998). 47 Trinity Ave, Ste. 212H, Atlanta, GA 30334 (404) 463-6800.

Samuels, Bryon, Nilofer, Ashan, Garcia, Jill, *Know Your Community: A Step-by Step Guide to Community Needs and Resource Assessment* (Chicago, IL: The Family Resource Coalition, 1995). 33 West Jackson Blvd., Ste. 200, Chicago, IL 60604 (312) 341-0900.

Schorr, Lisbeth B. with Daniel Schorr, *Within Our Reach, Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage* (New York, NY: Anchor Press, Doubleday, 1989).

Thiagaran, S., *Matrix Games* (Amherst, MA: HRD Press, 1995). To order call: 800-822-2801.

VanGundy, A. B. Jr., *Techniques of Structured Problem Solving* (New York, NY: Van Nostrand Search Institute, April 1997).

Chapter 4: Involving Partners in Strategy Development

Family Connection, *Defining Local Governance and Collaborative Governance Structures* (Atlanta, GA: 1998). 100 Peachtree St. Ste. 500, Atlanta, GA 30303 (404) 527-7394.

Fisher, R., *Getting To Yes* (New York, NY: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1992).

Chapter 4: Involving Partners in Strategy Development (Continued)

Herrman, P., *Conflict Resolution Skills Training* (Athens, GA: Carl Vinson Institute of Government). 47 Trinity Ave, Ste. 212H, Atlanta, GA 30334 (404) 463-6800.

Senge, Peter, *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization* (New York, NY: Doubleday/Currency, 1994).

Spencer, Laura J., *Winning Through Participation: Meeting the Challenge of Corporate Change with the Technology of Participation* (Athens, GA: Carl Vinson Institute of Government). 47 Trinity Ave, Ste. 212H, Atlanta, GA 30334 (404) 463-6800.

Williams, R. Bruce, *More Than 50 Ways to Build Team Consensus* (Palatine, IL: Skylight Publishing, Inc.). To order call: 800-348-4474.

Chapter 5: Implementing Strategies

Institute of Cultural Affairs, *Technology of Participation: Group Facilitation Methods* (Phoenix, AZ: 1996). 4220 North 25th St., Phoenix, AZ 85016 (602) 955-4811.

Melaville, Atelia, et al., *Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, April 1993). Appendix A. To order call: (202) 512-1800.

Family Connection, *Annual Operating Plan Guidelines, FY 2002* (Atlanta, GA: 2001). 100 Peachtree St. Ste., 500, Atlanta, GA 30303 (404) 527-7394.

Family Connection, *Guidelines for Five-Year Strategic Plan, FY 2002* (Atlanta, GA: 2001). 100 Peachtree St. Ste., 500, Atlanta, GA 30303 (404) 527-7394.

Family Connection, Georgia Policy Council for Children and Families, and Georgia Academy, *Planning for Change Workbook* (Atlanta, GA: 1998). 100 Peachtree St. Ste., 500, Atlanta, GA 30303 (404) 527-7394.

Websites Related to Promising Practices

The following list of websites related to promising practices is an excerpt from a longer list of websites developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Best Practices Database

This searchable database demonstrates “the practical ways in which communities, governments and the private sector are working together to eradicate poverty, provide shelter, protect the environment, and support economic development.” The database contains over 650 “proven solutions” to common problems and also includes policy tools and guides. <http://www.bestpractices.org>

The Asset-Based Community Development Institute

Established in 1995 by Northwestern’s Institute for Policy Research, the ABCD Institute has been primarily involved in “the production of resources and tools for community builders involved in the process of capacity-based initiatives,” while also helping to “identify, nurture, and mobilize neighborhood assets.” Online publications are provided. <http://www.nwu.edu/IPR/abcd.html>

Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation

MDRC is a nonprofit, nonpartisan social policy research organization “committed to learning what works to improve the well-being of low-income people.” This site, provides access to an extensive collection of online publications and other Internet resources that highlight their welfare reform efforts. http://www.mdrc.org/welfare_reform.htm

Annenberg Institute for School Reform

The mission of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform is “to develop, share, and act on knowledge that improves the conditions and outcomes of schooling in America, especially in urban communities and in schools serving undeserved children.” This site offers online publications as well as information about the Institute’s initiatives. <http://www.annenberginstitute.org>

Coalition for Healthier Cities and Communities

The Coalition is a network of hundreds of community partnerships working “to improve the health and quality of life of the country's communities.” This site offers a “community library” that includes a searchable database of health initiatives, resources, and organizations nationwide, plus links to Healthy Community initiatives.

<http://www.healthycommunities.org>

Community Connections

Community Connections is the information center of HUD’s Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD). This website provides users with “program regulations, descriptions of model programs, case studies of affordable housing initiatives, publications on expanding affordable housing opportunities, funding information, and referrals to technical assistance providers.” <http://www.comcon.org>

The Consortium for Housing and Asset Management

A collaboration of the Enterprise Foundation, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, and the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, C.H.A.M. coordinates the development and delivery of timely information on property and asset management and training for managers working in the affordable and nonprofit housing industry. This site provides access to a clearinghouse of information pertaining to best practices, commonly-used forms, training, recommended resources, and web links. <http://www.cham.org>

The Enterprise Resource Database

Formerly Enterprise Foundation’s Best Practices Database, this resource, “a comprehensive online collection of tools and resources that help community development practitioners in a wide range of efforts,” provides step-by-step “how-to” information and techniques. <http://www.enterprisefoundation.org/products>

HUD's Best Practices Data Base

“Through the John J. Gunther Blue Ribbon Practices in Community Development awards, HUD recognizes the most notable and innovative practices in community development.”

<http://www.hud.gov/ptw/menu.html>

National Association of Community Health Centers

NACHC provides technical assistance and other services to community health centers “in support of their mission to provide health care services to the poor and medically underserved.” This site offers access to their Internet Grassroots Action Center, which includes guides and media alerts as well as state-by-state data, model legislation, and information on programs and initiatives.

<http://www.nachc.com>

National Crime Prevention Council

The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is “to prevent crime and build safer, more caring communities.” This site offers a wealth of materials including program ideas, online publications, guides, newsletters, local initiatives, FAQ's, and other information on children and teens.

<http://ncpc.org>

National Dropout Prevention Network

This site aims to provide the “most comprehensive and up-to-date information about the critical issue of K-12 youth in at-risk situations” as well as strategies and solutions to help keep youth in school.

Available on this site are online publications and guides, model programs, effective strategies, statistics and data, a resource materials library, plus selected Internet links. <http://www.dropoutprevention.org>

Partnership Against Violence Network

PAVNET Online is a “virtual library” of information about violence and at risk youth that represents data from seven federal agencies. This library is organized into four main sections—funding, programs, curriculum, and technical assistance—and also includes extensive links to promising anti-violence efforts nationwide. <http://www.pavnet.org>

**Websites Related
to Promising
Practices
(Continued)**

Street Law

Street Law seeks to “provide practical, participatory education about law, democracy, and human rights” and also “empower people to transform democratic ideas into citizen action.” This website includes information about national and international programs on juvenile justice, community policy, conflict resolution, crime prevention, and youth leadership as well as ordering information about Street Laws curricula, courses, and manuals. <http://www.streetlaw.org>

**Zero To Three: National Center for Infants, Toddlers,
and Families**

Zero To Three, “the nation’s leading resource on the first three years of life,” is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to “strengthen and support families, practitioners, and communities to promote healthy development of babies and toddlers.” This site offers discussion forums, online publications, news briefs, an Internet resource list, plus a searchable index for its bimonthly journal. <http://www.zerotothree.org>

Change Communications

This site is a compilation of hundreds of links to sites dealing with issues critical to community development. These links are organized into categories such as economic development, housing and homelessness, sustainable development, organizing, case studies and best practices, policy and research, jobs, and online data. This page features listings of small local initiatives' web sites as well as links to the pages of large national organizations. <http://www.change.org/links.htm>

Civic Practices Network

CPN is a “collaborative and nonpartisan project dedicated to bringing practical tools for public problem solving into community and institutional settings across America.” This site includes case studies, essays, and theories on civic innovation and engagement, plus manuals and best practice guides on civic work, course syllabi on democratic theory and practice, a “civic dictionary,” and a 50-state searchable “civic map.” <http://www.cpn.org>

Community Development Online

This extensive database—located in the “resources” section of the Neighbor Works Network website—contains detailed case studies, funder and technical assistance profiles, abstracts of practical guides and written resources, and timely news about affordable housing, and economic and community development. <http://www.nw.org>

Community Tool Box

Here you will find practical guidance and problem solving tips on various aspects of community health and health and development. There are over 3,000 downloadable pages of specific, skill-building information on over 150 community topics as well as forums, chat rooms, newsgroups, grant writing guides, and related web resources. <http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu>

Do Something

Do Something is a national nonprofit organization that trains, funds, and mobilizes youth to “be leaders who measurably strengthen their communities.” This website offers strategies and “action steps” on civic engagement, political participation, and community “spirit,” as well as a “Community Connections” curriculum, training program and media campaign—with case studies and research findings—plus related Internet resources and access to the online journal *Do Zine*. <http://www.dosomething.org>

Grass Roots

Grass Roots “tells the stories of the most innovative grassroots programs in the United States and the local heroes who've found effective ways to build their communities, fix what's broken and make them better.” Online publications and selected Internet resources are available, plus a clickable 50-state map with links to “groups that change communities.” <http://www.grass-roots.org>

**Websites Related
to Promising
Practices
(Continued)**

Idea Central

Idea Central, the “virtual” magazine of the Electronic Policy Network, provides in-depth coverage—including full-text reports and journal articles—about the initiatives and work of its member organizations. This site provides a wealth of information on economic policy, welfare and politics, education, health policy, politics and civil life, and more. <http://epn.org/ideacentral/>

National Service Learning Clearinghouse

The Learn & Serve America’s National Service-Learning Clearinghouse is “a comprehensive information system that focuses on all dimensions of service-learning, covering kindergarten through higher education school-based as well as community-based initiatives.” This site offers both online and print publications, searchable databases, bibliographies, and more. <http://www.nicsl.coled.umn.edu>

Public/Private Ventures

Public/Private Ventures is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is “to improve the effectiveness of social policies, programs, and community initiatives, especially as they affect youth and young adults.” This site provides online publications regarding youth development, mentoring, faith-based initiatives, violence prevention, workforce development, and more. <http://www.ppv.org>

Youth Service America

YSA “envisions a powerful network of organizations committed to making service the common experience and expectation of all young Americans.” This site offers access to funding information, research and surveys, best practices from organizations across the country, and listservs as well as a “Volunteer Now” database. <http://www.ysa.org>

Contacts

The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) is a private, nonprofit research, policy analysis, and technical assistance organization. CSSP focuses on human services reform, particularly the establishment of neighborhood-based governance and service delivery systems that are developed through partnerships between the public and private sectors and community residents.

Center for the Study of Social Policy
1575 Eye Street NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20006
Tel: (202) 371-1565, Fax: (202) 371-1472
<http://www.cssp.org>

The Child and Family Policy Center was established in 1989 by former Iowa legislator Charles Bruner to better link research and policy with issues that are vital to children and families, and to advocate for results-based policies to improve child well being. The Center provides technical assistance to many Iowa communities to develop effective services and supports for children and families. On a national level, the Center operates the publication clearinghouse and technical assistance resource network of the National Center for Service Integration (NCSI). The Center also provides technical assistance and support to construct comprehensive, community, and results-based systems of support for families and children.

Child and Family Policy Center
218 Sixth Avenue, Suite 1021, Des Moines, IA 50309-4006
Tel: (515) 280-9027, Fax: (515) 243-5941
<http://www.cfpciowa.org>

The Fiscal Policy Studies Institute (FPSI) was established in 1996 to provide assistance to states, counties, cities, and communities working to improve the well being of children, families, and communities, using a results-based accountability and budgeting approach. Since 1996, the FPSI has worked with state and local, public and private-sector partners from over 30 states, 12 countries, and the United Nations.

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Midwest Community Leadership Resource Center is a collaboration of Communities in Schools, the Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership at the University of Missouri—Kansas City, the Family Investment Trust, and the Local Investment Commission in Kansas City.

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Promising Practices Network is sponsored by the Foundation Consortium, the Colorado Foundation for Families and Children, the Missouri Family Investment Trust, and Georgia Academy. This website highlights information on programs and practices that are effective in helping children, families, and communities. The information included is organized around seven results areas associated with the well being of children and families and two new ways of doing business: healthy children, children ready for school, children succeeding in school, children safe at home, strong families, self-sufficient families, strong communities and neighborhoods, new forms of governance, and results-based accountability.
<http://www.promisingpractices.net>

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Examples

Sample forms

☞☞ Strategy Implementation worksheet from Georgia's Annual Operating Plan FY2001

☞☞ Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

☞☞ Collaborative Benchmarks of Systems Change from Georgia's Annual Operating Plan FY2001

Section II: Results For Children and Families

A. Strategy Implementation

Goal: _____

5-Year Benchmark Objective: _____

Code

Strategy (brief description): _____

Family Involvement: _____

Target Group(s)	Code	Program or Activity (1 per line)	Code	Responsible Organization	Code	MOA	Evaluation Measures
		1.				<input type="checkbox"/>	
		2.					
		3.					
		4.					
		5.					

Program Cost by Revenue Source(s)

(1) Program or Activity*	(2) Total Program Cost**	Revenue Sources											
		(3) FC State Grant	(4) FC TCM	(5) FC/DFCS Cash- Match	(6) State	(7) Federal	(8) GCTF Grant	(9) GCCC Grant	(10) Indigent Care Trust Fund	(11) CYCC Grant	(12) Local Gov't	(13) Other ***	(14) Unfunded
1.													
2.													
3.													
4.													
5.													

* Each program or activity listed in the first section above, must be listed, in the same numerical order, in the "Program Cost by Revenue Sources" Table
 ** Columns (3) through (14) **MUST** total the column (2) Total Program Cost.
 *** Enter total "other" here.

Sample MOA:

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

Between
(Name of Family Connection body)
and
(name of partner)

The (name of Family Connection body) and (name of partner) enter into an agreement for the provision of (service, program, activity or support) as specified in the annual operating plan to achieve the county's goal(s). Either party to this agreement may terminate this agreement by giving the other party (number) days in advance notice in writing.

The period of this agreement is (month, date for the fiscal year from July 1, _____ through June 30, _____)

Responsibilities of the Partner

(Name of partner) agrees to provide (service, program, activity, or support) to (name of group(s) as specified below).

Reporting Services to Be Provided

The (name of the partner) agrees to provide the above components of service and to report (frequency of reporting) to the (name of the county collaborative) the numbers of persons served by each of the components of service.

Approved By:

(Name of county collaborative)

(Name of partner)

(Signature)_____

(Signature)_____

(Name of collaborative chair)
(Print name under signature)

(Name and title of person signing)

(Date)

MOA authorized by

(Name of board)

(Date)

Section I: Systems Change

C. Collaborative Benchmarks of Systems Change

Code	Collaborative Benchmarks of Systems Change	Yes
Changes in the Way Decisions Are Made		
D1	Development of collaborative governance structure: development of committees, by-laws, operating procedures, etc.	
D2	Consolidation/linkage with other collaboratives	
D3	Including families who receive(d) services on collaborative board	
D4	Including youth on collaborative board	
D5	Including business representatives on collaborative board	
D6	Including local government representatives on collaborative	
D7	Shared collaborative support: partner agency supervision of collaborative staff, partner agency sponsorship of collaborative evaluation, etc.	
D8	Community involvement: forums, town meetings, focus groups, task forces, councils, etc.	
D9	Computer/information network linking two or more organizations (for example, for tracking consumer children and families)	
D10	Comprehensive community assessment	
D11	Responsibility for allocation of government funds and/or local resources	
D12	Decision making based on evaluation findings	
D13	Broadening collaborative to reflect all segments of the community	
D14	Other (please specify)	
Changes in the Strategy Mix and How Services Are Delivered		
S1	Coordinated interagency case management	
S2	Integrated training of staff involving two or more organizations	
S3	Staff redeployment	
S4	Co-location of staff and/or services	
S5	Coordinated, integrated seamless systems of services (programs and activities involving two or more organizations: “wrap around” service delivery, eliminating redundancy in intake and eligibility	

Collaborative Benchmarks of Systems Change

Code	Changes in the Strategy Mix and How Services are Delivered, continued	Yes
S6	Volunteer development: recruitment, training, placement, support, etc.	
S7	Transportation development: coordinated van use/routing, etc.	
S8	Housing development: renovations, low-income housing services, etc.	
S9	Improving accessibility and availability of services (for example, flexible service hours)	
S10	Taking promising practices to scale	
S11	Preventive approaches (e.g. home visitation, early learning, youth development)	
S12	Neighborhood based, family-friendly approaches (e.g. family resources centers, neighborhood-based networks of family support)	
S13	Culturally competent and responsive practices	
S14	Identifying policy barriers to effective service delivery	
S15	Other (please specify)	
Changes in Financing and Budgeting		
F1	Blended funding	
F2	Redirection of existing funds	
F3	Completion of fiscal inventory to determine the level of resources applied to results for families and children	
F4	Resource development: joint grant writing, joint fund raising, etc.	
F5	Development of long term financing strategies.	
F6	Conducting cost analysis of prevention strategies	
F7	Local investment in the strategic plan (local agency support: public and non-profit, private business contributions, etc.)	
F8	Implementation of at-risk Targeted Case Management	
F9	Implementation of DFCS/Family Connection USDA Nutrition Education Cash Match	
F10	Other (please specify)	