Using Data To Ensure Accountability

Building Capacity for Local Decisionmaking

Number 6 in a Series of Learning Guides

6

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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Acknowledgments

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

A Vermont team is responsible for the first draft of this Learning Guide. The team members' commitment, time, expertise, and willingness to share their experiences in local governance were invaluable to the process of developing this guide. The Vermont team included:

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Contents

Appendices

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 Partnerships in Georgia, Missouri, and Vermont

Georgia, Missouri, and Vermont have created new decision making 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.

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 governments, 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 6
Using Data to Ensure Accountability

Think about the many decisions you make, from decisions with seemingly less consequences like where you will buy your groceries or the route you will travel to work, to decisions with more of an impact, such as buying a car or applying for a job. What do these decisions have in common?

One reply to this question is that information is used to make the best decision, and as the consequences of the decision become more important, the amount and/or quality of information becomes more critical. You may buy your groceries based on what you and your family like, but if you are buying a car you will probably want to know more about your purchase.

Following this line of reasoning, what about decisions that affect the well being of children, families, and individuals that live in your community? These decisions are complex and the consequences of these decisions have far-reaching effects.

This Learning Guide presents information, or data, as essential to the work of Local Governance Partnerships (LGPs), including developing, implementing, and refining strategies that have an impact on desired results for children, families, and communities.

The guide frames the discussion about collecting, reporting, and using data with a detailed description of results-based accountability and ways that partners and stakeholders share accountability for improving conditions. The Learning Guide shows self-evaluation as unique and effective for LGPs, and outlines steps for setting up a data system for this evaluation.

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 local governance and results-based accountability. 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 designed purposely 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 results-based accountability that need your attention, or

- You may want to use the Appendices to access activities, worksheets and tools, to locate resources, or to find contacts for more information.

Overview of Chapters and Appendices

Results-based accountability and using data to ensure accountability may bring many questions to mind. You may find yourself, or others interested in being accountable for results, 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? What characteristics define an LGP?

Chapter 1: Results-Based Accountability

What is results-based accountability? What does it have to do with improving results for children, families, and communities? What makes results-accountability unique? What are its defining characteristics? How is results-based accountability part of the functions and activities of LGPs? What changes must occur to implement results-based accountability?

Chapter 2: Sharing Accountability

Who shares accountability and what are the roles and responsibilities? What are partnership agreements? How do they help with defining roles and responsibilities? What are the components of a partnership agreement?

Chapter 3: Measuring Progress Through Self-Evaluation

Why is measuring progress critical? What approach works well for LGPs? What are the characteristics of a self-evaluation approach? What are the benefits?

Chapter 4: Building a Data System

What is a data system? Why have one? What makes a data system effective? How is a data system set up?

Chapter 5: Collecting Data

What are key elements in a plan to collect data? What are the steps to developing and implementing this plan?

Chapter 6: Reporting Information

What makes reporting effective? What are the different ways to report information? What are the steps to developing a plan for reporting information?

Chapter 7: Using Evaluation Data

What are the many ways to use evaluation data?

Chapter 8: Moving Forward

How can we use this Learning Guide to continue to build our knowledge? What do we already know about results-based accountability, self-evaluation, and a data system? 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 results-based accountability, self-evaluation, and a data system?

Appendix: Tools

Are there steps, exercises, or worksheets that others have found to be effective? Are there samples that could be adapted to our needs?

Appendix: Resources

What references were used in the development of this Learning Guide?

Appendix: Contacts

Who can we contact for more information? What are the specialty areas for 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 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 4: Strategies to Achieve Results

✍✍ Systems thinking and how it applies to services and supports.

✍✍ How to develop a community strategy to improve 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.

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 financing and budgeting.

Local Government

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

Results-Based Accountability

Learning Goal

You will understand the underlying concepts of results-based accountability and will know how to apply them to the work of the Local Governance Partnership.

Being Accountable

Glossary

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

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."

Being accountable to families, communities, and governmental bodies is one of the most important reasons for the existence of Local Governance Partnerships (LGPs).

During the last decade, national indicators of well being for children, families, and communities have taken a turn for the worse, especially in some of the most disadvantaged neighborhoods and communities. Poverty rates, infant mortality rates, and school success rates, among other indicators, are now points of political pressure as the public clamors for better results from tax dollars.

Many residents are tired of rhetoric. State and local political jurisdictions are turning to LGPs to help find a way to make a difference and improve results for children and families.

This chapter looks at what being accountable means and what results-based accountability is, its importance, its characteristics, its components, and changes needed to enable implementation.

PROFILE

In the Best Interests of All

"Accountability is not an excuse in fixing blame, but in building support. In the broader world of outcomes thinking, accountability is not focused on a particular organization or structure, or any given person or people within that structure. It is focused on the best interests of all the people within a community."

Con Hogan, former Secretary of the Vermont Agency of Human Services

What is results-based accountability?

Glossary

Results-based accountability — The steps and processes for making decisions using results to measure accountability.

Stakeholders — Those who have a vested interest or "stake" in improving results, such as parents, neighborhood residents, local businesses, elected officials, local and state agencies, private sector organizations.

Results-based accountability is an approach that LGPs use to accept responsibility for the impact of their work on mutually agreed upon results for children, families, and communities. Results-based accountability includes:

- Setting clear results and indicators,
- Using data to help understand past and current trends,
- Determining the effects of communitywide strategies to improve the lives of children and families as well as conditions in communities, and
- Using data and evaluation for an ongoing feedback loop to know whether strategies are working.

Results-based accountability requires a shift in perception about who is accountable. Everyone has a stake in making lives better for children and families—the LGP, providers, non-profit and for-profit organizations, the neighborhood, families, youth, faith communities, local businesses, and other concerned citizens.

The responsibility that LGPs take on is to ensure accountability for improving the well being of children, families, and communities. This accountability means two or more partners agree to be responsible for ensuring progress, moving from talk to action, and achieving better results.

Being accountable for something also means being accountable to someone. LGPs are accountable to state agencies and multiple community stakeholders, including residents, specific neighborhoods, school districts, local governments, non-profit agencies, businesses, and community collaboratives.

Why is results-based accountability important? ➔

Why is results-based accountability important?

It fulfills mandates from authorizing entities.

Most LGPs have been formally recognized and authorized by state and, sometimes, local government to perform certain tasks and functions. LGPs usually perform these roles at the request of, and in partnership with, government or other funders. In this partnership, government promises to confront traditional processes and financing to pave the way for these new structures. In turn, LGPs must produce expected results, or at least progress toward results, to fulfill government's expectations.

It earns the LGP credibility in the community.

When LGPs demonstrate being accountable to the community and neighborhoods by improving family well being, their ability to do more work better becomes stronger. With increased credibility comes the ability to mobilize residents and influence policymakers.

It acts as a catalyst for uniting diverse stakeholders in a common purpose.

Results-based accountability can unite diverse stakeholders in a common purpose. When stakeholders agree on a common purpose—the results they want to achieve, or a common "road"—they find solidarity in their passion to achieve it.

Common purposes are rarely about programs or agencies. Instead, they are about healthy children, or children ready for school, or living in safe communities and neighborhoods. These results can mobilize a broad and diverse group of stakeholders.

It can demonstrate progress.

LGPs across the country are showing results. They are improving conditions that affect children and families. They can demonstrate progress through measurable indicators.

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 part of any formal service system.

It cuts across traditional systems of services and supports.

Results-based accountability cuts across traditional systems of support services and resources. It is flexible and holistic rather than categorical. Results-based accountability embraces strategies that rely not only on a wide range of formal services but also on informal supports and opportunities in communities and neighborhoods.

It demonstrates commitment to accountability for effective use of funding and resources.

LGPs have the ability to influence how resources are used to support a community's agenda and desired results. Some LGPs have direct control over funds and resources, while others only use their influence. In either case, LGPs are held accountable for producing evidence that the resources are used to impact directly on improving the lives of residents.

It ensures decisions are supported by data.

Results-based accountability requires that decisions be based on solid, understandable data. Our gut instinct about whether something works is no longer enough proof. Community residents, legislators, policymakers, funders, and the media have learned to insist on solid evidence that funding, policies, and activities are accomplishing their intended purpose. This approach to accountability banks on reliable, available, timely, and understandable data to make decisions about strategies and activities to document progress, and to provide useful information that can alter the course when progress isn't apparent.

What characteristics describe results-based accountability?

- Shared accountability and responsibility by all stakeholders
- Shift to a holistic view
- Forms of accountability
- Programs and activities designed to accomplish desired results
- A common language

Shared Accountability and Responsibility By All Stakeholders

Results-based accountability is a process that includes the entire community. Although the LGP is usually an ideal "voice" of the community, everyone has a stake, not just professionals and service providers. The proverb "it takes a whole village to raise a child" makes a lot of sense in light of shared accountability.

In the broadest sense, increasing accountability increases the responsibility of all community stakeholders toward achieving better results for children and families.

Shift to a Holistic View

The process of results-based accountability shifts us from a very linear way of looking at categorical systems and solutions to a much more holistic view. The focus of the LGP's work is on the whole family—its economic self sufficiency, housing, health status, education, etc.

Forms of Accountability

Results-based accountability can take many different forms. Usually, a contract, grant, partnership agreement, or memorandum of understanding is drawn up between an LGP and its partners. LGPs, especially mature ones, take on the role of catalyst to engage stakeholders in assuming this greater responsibility.

Programs and Activities Designed to Accomplish Desired Results

The use of new, promising programs and activities to improve results is one of the key characteristics of results-based accountability. Results-based accountability implies a cohesive, comprehensive plan with strategies, financing, budgeting, and self-evaluation procedures all designed to improve the well being of children and families.

A Common Language

Results-based accountability requires people to communicate with each other about important issues in a common language. Early in the process, participants should agree upon the meaning of terms so that everyone is using the same words for the same ideas.

Without the discipline of a common language, semantics can cause discord. A tangle of words that sound alike but mean different things to different people is a sure way to block progress. For example: results, outcomes, goals, benchmarks, objectives, strategies, measures, indicators, milestones, hallmarks, etc., are all terms related to results-based accountability and the work of local governance. These terms need definition and shared understanding.

Vocabulary Test

(All answers are correct.)

A statement about a condition of well being for children, youth, families, or neighborhoods.

- ❑ Result
- ❑ Outcome
- ❑ Goal
- ❑ Other

A measure that helps quantify the achievement of a result, outcome, or goal.

- ❑ Indicator
- ❑ Benchmark
- ❑ Other

A measure of the effectiveness of agency or program service delivery.

- ❑ Performance measure
- ❑ Program measure
- ❑ Other

What are the components of results-based accountability?

Results-based accountability is made up of the following five components:

- Results and Indicators
- Data to Create a Baseline
- Strategies to Improve Results
- Budgets and Expenditures Linked to Results
- Data and Evaluation to Measure Progress for Decisionmakers

Results-based accountability is not a single, discrete activity conducted once. Rather, it involves many of the LGPs' core functions and permeates all of their activities. To be fully invested in results-based accountability, LGPs typically develop each of these five components which are described in turn on the following pages.

Refer to the Appendix, Tools, page 137, for a list of steps for maintaining results-based accountability offered by Mark Friedman, a consultant who has done pioneering work in results-based accountability.

Results and Indicators

LGPs share a common mission to improve results for children, families, and communities. Results-based accountability helps make that happen. It establishes the context and parameters for making decisions. Results become the point of reference for:

- What is to be achieved,
- How it will be achieved,
- How it will be measured,
- What funds are budgeted and expended,
- What financing strategies will support it, and
- How data systems are designed.

Results (and specific indicators) are selected to define the changes sought for children, families, and communities. All activities are driven by the results to achieve: community plans and partnership agreements; measuring progress; organizational activities (strategic plans, staff evaluations, and capacity building activities); forming collaborations; budgeting; and performance agreements with providers.

Refer to other Learning Guides in this series for more information about results and indicators. All guides include information about results especially Learning Guide 1: Theory and Purpose of Local Decisionmaking and Learning Guide 3: Setting a Community Agenda.

Georgia, Missouri, and Vermont use a core set of results across communities and state agencies.

Georgia's Five Result Areas

- Healthy Children
- Children Succeeding in School
- Self-Sufficient Families
- Children Ready for School
- Strong Families

Missouri's Core Results

- Parents Working
- Children Safe in their Families and Families Safe in their Communities
- Young Children Ready to Enter School
- Children and Families Who are Healthy
- Youth Ready to Enter the Workforce and Become Productive Citizens
- Children and Youth Succeeding in School

Vermont's Outcomes

- Families, Youth, and Individuals are Engaged In and Contribute to Their Community's Decisions and Activities
- Pregnant Women and Newborns Thrive
- Infants and Children Thrive
- Children are Ready for School
- Children Succeed in School
- Children Live in Stable, Supported Families
- Youth Choose Healthy Behaviors
- Youth Make a Successful 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

Criteria for Results

The results and indicators selected by hundreds of communities and states throughout the country share an uncanny resemblance.

Meaningful to a Broad Group

Results are considered important and meaningful to a wide range of policy makers, funders, and neighborhood residents. They are persuasive to the entire neighborhood, community, or state.

Commonly Understood

Results are commonly understood. If ten people in the community were asked to explain what is meant by a particular result, they would all roughly have the same understanding (although not the same agreement).

Cross-Cutting

Results are cross-cutting. No sole agency, system, organization, or individual can achieve the results. These results require a comprehensive effort across domains.

Important to the Community

Results are important enough that, in order to impact results, the community needs to coalesce and mobilize around the work required.

Measurable

Results can be measured by data that are relatively easy to obtain, whether from new or existing sources.

Criteria for Indicators

EXAMPLE

Result

Children Ready to Enter School

Indicators

What % age of children are enrolled in preschool programs?

What % age of young children are up to date with their immunizations?

What % age of children are passing the kindergarten readiness test?

Specific indicators are selected to measure the effectiveness of strategies targeted to improve results. Often LGPs will also develop some community-specific indicators, which are important for their community but may not be in other communities around the state.

Selecting indicators to measure results is not an easy process. For any given result, dozens of possible ways exist to measure progress. As a guideline, select indicators that are timely, available, locally relevant, and communicate to the general public what you want them to know.

Communication Power

Does the indicator communicate to a broad range of audiences? Can it communicate to the public and other stakeholders about "how we are doing" on child, family, and community well being?

Proxy Power

Does a clear relationship exist between the indicator and the result it represents? Does the indicator bring along the rest of the data? You don't need 20 indicators telling you the same thing. Select the indicators most likely to match the direction of other indicators.

Data Power

Is data available on a frequent basis, preferably monthly or quarterly? Be sure data are available for indicators. In Kansas City, the Local Investment Commission found that they initially chose an indicator for which the data did not exist to measure. In other words, the indicator did not have "data power."

From: Friedman, Mark, *A Strategy Map for Results-Based Budgeting*: *Moving From Theory to Practice* Fiscal Policy Studies Institute, September, 1996.

Refer to the Appendix, Tools, for worksheets for indicators.

PROFILE

Vermont's Outcomes and Indicators

The following list shows some of the outcomes Vermont is focusing on, and several indicators under each with which to measure progress:

Outcome: Pregnant Women and Newborns Thrive
Indicators:
- Percent early prenatal care
- Percent low birthweight

Outcome: Infants and Children Thrive
Indicators:
- Infant mortality rate
- Rate of injuries (ages 0-9) resulting in hospitalization
- Child mortality rate

Outcome: Children are Ready for School
Indicators:
- Percent of kindergartners fully immunized
- Percent of children ready for kindergarten

Outcome: Children Succeed in School
Indicators:
- School attendance rate
- New Standards English/Language Arts assessment scores
- Arts assessment scores
- New Standards Math assessment scores
- Percent of students with special education IEPs
- Scholastic Assessment Test scores
- Percent high school dropouts

Outcome: Children Live in Stable, Supported Families
Indicators:
- Percent children in poverty
- Percent children in families receiving Food Stamps
- Percent child support paid
- Rate of child abuse and neglect
- Rate of out-of-home placements (ages <18 years)
- Average number of moves within the substitute care system

PROFILE (Continued)

Outcome: Youth Choose Healthy Behaviors
Indicators:

- Percent of students smoking cigarettes within the last 30 days
- Percent of students using alcohol within the last 30 days
- Percent of students using marijuana within the last 30 days
- Rate of teen sexually transmitted diseases
- Rate of young teen pregnancy (ages 15-17)
- Rate of injuries (ages 10-17) resulting in hospitalization
- Rate of custody for children deemed "unmanageable"
- Rate of court dispositions for delinquency
- Rate of delinquents in custody
- Rate of teen violent deaths

Outcome: Youth Make a Successful Transition to Adulthood
Indicators:

- Percent of high school seniors with plans for education, vocational training, or employment
- Rate of new families at risk
- Rate of out-of-home placements (ages 18-24)
- Rate of injuries (ages 18-24) resulting in hospitalization
- Rate of teen nonviolent deaths

Outcome: Families and Individuals Live in Safe and Supportive Communities
Indicators:

- Rate of injuries (ages 25-64) resulting in hospitalization
- Rate of injuries (ages 65+) resulting in hospitalization
- Rate of out-of-home placements (ages 25+)
- Percent of adults who smoke
- Percent of adults who are "binge drinkers"
- Rate of petitions filed for relief from domestic abuse
- Rate of adult abuse and neglect reports
- Rate of suicide (ages 18+)
- Rate of violent crime
- Percent of people above poverty level
- Average median household income
- Average annual wage
- Rate of job creation
- Percent living in affordable housing
- Percent of affordable housing
- Percent met need for child care

PROFILE

Indicators

The following is from a statement by Con Hogan, *Vermont Communities Count.*

- Indicators tell you where you've been, where you are, and can guide you to where you want to go.
- Indicators can help us understand how we are doing compared with others.
- Indicators can present great motivation for community self-improvement.
- Over time, well-constructed indicators build budgetary and political control.
- Indicators move prevention and investment forward in early intervention.
- Indicators connect us more closely to the business community.

PROFILE

Missourians Identify Priorities

The Family Investment Trust (FIT) is the state-level entity created in 1993 to assist communities and state agencies to achieve core results in Missouri. FIT used several approaches to gather information about what Missourians wanted for children and families and what they thought could be done to improve the delivery of services in their communities. First, FIT conducted interviews with neighborhood residents and others. Second, focus groups were conducted in several communities with parents and service providers. Third, community-wide meetings were held regionally across the state.

More than 900 Missourians participated in these activities. They identified what they wanted better for their children and families, what types of changes they wanted in their communities, and how they wanted state agencies to function. They clearly stated that they wanted better opportunities to support themselves through living wages, to enable their children to live in safer, healthier communities, and to provide children with the support needed to become more successful in school.

From: *Missourians Working Together: A Progress Report*, 1997.

PROFILE

Strengthening Results-Based Accountability in Vermont

The Rutland Regional Board for Family Services, a Community Partnership in Vermont, sent a survey to 40 key organizations in their region, asking how each organization's mission related to a set of statewide results. The information gathered from these organizations enabled the LGP to target its results to the needs of its constituencies as well as to increase support for its work.

Let's look at other components of results-based accountability. ➔

Data to Create a Baseline

Glossary

Data — Information, especially that organized for analysis or used as a basis for a decision.

Data most often refer to numbers, percentages, and rates but can also include views, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs collected in various ways.

Baseline — A picture of where we've been and where we're headed if we stay on our current course.

A baseline describes conditions by using numbers, rates, and/or percentages during a specific time period. Often, baselines present a picture of data using such variables as race/ethnicity, gender, age, and geographic area. Most baselines are illustrated in graphs.

This component is sometimes referred to as "developing the story behind the baselines." To truly understand the current conditions in communities, we need to understand what happened in the past and what is happening now. Why are children not fully immunized? Why are more students dropping out of school? The LGP needs to understand why the baselines look the way they do.

Baseline data:

- Describe current conditions of children, families, and communities.
- Provide a means to think about conditions historically in multi-year terms not just one year or point-to-point comparisons.
- Forecast trends, such as a best-case scenario, a steady-course scenario, and a worse-case scenario.
- Communicate an expectation about what will happen in the future.

Refer to Learning Guide 3: Setting a Community Agenda for more information.

Components of Results-Based Accountability (Continued)

Strategies to Improve Results

Strategies are developed to improve results based on data, research, promising practice, and experience. This component refers to the process of designing strategies that communities selected to address the specific indicators and results and their most prevalent problems.

Refer to Learning Guide 4: Strategies to Achieve Results for an in-depth look at developing strategies.

Budgets Linked to Results

Budgets are linked to targeted results and the strategies that can achieve the results. In order to implement their strategies, LGPs need to create a financial plan with a budget attached. The financial plan is one of the key places where funds and other resources tie directly to results.

Refer to Learning Guide 5: Financing and Budgeting Strategies for a thorough review of this component.

Data and Evaluation to Measure Progress for Decisionmakers

Progress is measured and communicated by collecting data, evaluating progress on indicators and results, and sharing information with all stakeholders.

The work of an LGP doesn’t end with selecting results and indicators nor with implementing strategies to affect results. The ongoing work of an LGP is accountability to a multitude of stakeholders. This accountability requires an ongoing effort to collect and review data and a plan to communicate news about progress (or lack of progress) to a wide variety of audiences.

Refer to Chapters 3-7 for more information about collecting, reporting, and using data.

Refer to the Appendix, Tools, for information about performance measures and measuring change.

PROFILE

The Case of the Missing Paper Towels

In Missouri, LGPs are required to submit multi-year plans that reflect activities and strategies intended to impact one or more of the state's six core results. LGPs are also required to submit annual updates. These plans and updates are used as roadmaps. The LGPs also use indicator data to improve the well being of families and children.

Marion County has chosen to work on several of the state's results, including "Children and Families Healthy" and "Children Succeeding in School." The LGP partners with neighborhoods based around school sites. One of their school sites is the Eugene Field Elementary School, which had experienced problems with poor hygiene habits. The absentee rate was high due to students sent home from school for hygiene-related issues, so school attendance and success suffered as a result.

The school realized that, if the high rate of absences continued to occur, students would *not* be succeeding at school and they would compromise their health. So the school's planning was designed to impact both of these results. Strategizing about "what works?" to improve this problem prompted administrators to decide that every student would receive a hygiene kit (containing six items) and regular interaction with a Health Educator to help with hygiene practices.

How would success be measured? Shortly after the strategy was implemented, one of the school janitors commented on the fact that bathroom paper towels and soap seemed to be disappearing at faster than ordinary rates. He noticed that his task of filling soap and towel dispensers was taking more and more time! The planners realized that this was an important way of measuring their efforts to reduce hygiene problems in the school. Although this data were not ordinarily reported, the data were directly correlated with achieving one of their strategies. (Communities sometimes find that data are not available to meet specific needs, especially related to geographic locations.) The school used other measures, too, such as the number of referrals to the school nurse, health educator, or coach for hygiene-related issues and the number of days absent due to hygiene-related problems.

What changes must occur to implement results-based accountability?

Results-based accountability doesn't just happen. This framework challenges partners to adopt new ideas, policies, strategies, and funding approaches, while requiring training, technical assistance, and clear and open communication.

Refer to Learning Guide 1: Theory and Purpose of Local Decisionmaking, Chapter 5, Relationships with State and Local Government, for more information about a new way of doing business.

A New Way of Doing Business

- Adopt core results and indicators chosen with input from a broad array of stakeholders.
- Collect data to understand the baseline on each indicator.
- Tie funding and resource decisions directly to their impact on results and indicators.
- Provide training and technical assistance, as needed and requested, to stakeholders who are learning to be accountable for results.
- Give up control. State governments give up some control by sanctioning LGPs. At the same time, LGPs share control with neighborhood partners.

From: *Aiming for Accountability: Lessons Learned from Eight States*, the Harvard Family Research Project, Cambridge, MA, 1998.

Characteristics of Promising Efforts Toward Results-Based Accountability

Dr. Heather Weiss at the Harvard Family Research Project has studied eight states engaged in results accountability. She has extracted eleven characteristics of promising efforts in results-based accountability:

- Begin with strategic planning used on an ongoing or periodical basis.
- Learn from past reform efforts, building on previous successes and modifying previous approaches that failed.
- Consider appropriate mechanisms to institutionalize results accountability work, including legislation, executive order, or informal agreements.
- Clearly identify roles and responsibilities of those involved in the design and implementation of the results accountability effort.
- Take into account the social and political context of the state as well as the balance of power between the executive and legislative branches.
- Make time to develop and implement results-based accountability systems.
- Engage champions, as they are critical in ensuring that results-based accountability is successfully designed and implemented.
- Incorporate training and technical assistance in identifying and overcoming challenges in the design and implementation of results-based accountability systems.
- Designate funds, staff, and computer support in the design and implementation of results-based accountability.
- Report to key stakeholders using a variety of formats and media tailored to different audiences.
- Build relationships among key leaders, service providers, and those affected by results-based accountability.

The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide

Mark Friedman has written an implementation guide for communities entitled *The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide*. The guide offers practical advice on how to implement results or performance accountability. A number of tools, techniques, and forms are offered for those interested in the "how-to's" of results-based accountability. It is available on the web at http://www.raguide.org. Some of the questions addressed include:

- How do we get people to understand the difference between indicators and performance measures?
- How do we select results for a given population?
- How do we identify results in terms of everyday experience?
- How do we select indicators for a result?
- Where do we get the data for indicators? How do we get better data?
- How do we create a baseline (trend line) for an indicator?
- How do we create a report card and what do we do with it?
- How do we create an action plan and a results-based budget?
- How do we present a results-based plan to the public and to political leadership?
- How do we oversee the implementation of a results-based plan?
- How do we report on progress?

PROFILE

The Plan to Achieve Core Results: Changes in Missouri

Missouri required three fundamental changes for its human services system to be accountable for results. The state's expectations are described in Missouri's guiding document, which Caring Communities Partnerships used to develop and implement their results-based plans. The required changes are:

- Change the way services are delivered by integrating and locating them in neighborhoods where children go to school and their families live.
- Change the way services are financed by pooling funds more flexibly across state agencies and communities and by tying program funding to the results they produce.
- Change the way decisions are made by involving neighborhood residents and community stakeholders in decisions that affect their well being.

From: *Plan Guidance for Caring Communities*, Family Investment Trust, Missouri, May, 1999.

PROFILE

Georgia's Key Elements for Results-Based Accountability

Georgia's Family Connection has developed a results-based system for decisionmaking to achieve accountability. LGPs are encouraged to follow these steps:

- Seek results that reflect the status desired for children and families.
- Choose a way to measure results that reflects the effectiveness of strategies.
- Accumulate knowledge about what strategies work in order to expand successful programs and improve or drop others.
- Understand service systems and community factors that affect achievement of results.
- Analyze gaps between existing and desired strategies, service systems, and community resources.
- Inventory current local, state, and federal revenues and expenditures related to the results.
- Link financing strategies to results through "gap" analyses.
- Build an information/data collection system that supports practice, management, and policy decisionmaking.

From: Georgia's *Planning for Change Workbook*, Family Connection, Georgia Policy Council for Children and Families, and Georgia Academy, 1998.

Chapter 2

Sharing Accountability

Learning Goal

You will understand shared accountability and options for partnership agreements and will know how to apply this understanding to the work of the Local Governance Partnership.

Who is sharing accountability?

- The Local Governance Partnership (LGP)
- State agencies
- Service providers
- Elected officials
- Businesses
- Families
- Citizens and neighborhood residents
- Others

No single person, organization, agency, or system holds the responsibility for achieving broad-based results. Everyone has a stake; therefore, everyone has some responsibility to improve the quality of life and well being for children, families, and communities.

This chapter looks at the roles and responsibilities of partners and presents different types of partnership agreements used by LGPs.

What are partners' roles and responsibilities in sharing accountability?

Glossary

Performance measures – Data elements that tell whether a particular program, service, or activity is achieving its intended results.

The Local Governance Partnership

First and foremost, the LGP holds itself up to the community as responsible for the well being of children and families. It is a collective responsibility by the entire LGP, not just its individual members.

Funders and policymakers give the LGP legitimacy by formally sanctioning its existence, its roles in decisionmaking, its financing, and even sometimes its membership.

Community residents give the LGP credibility by accepting it as the "voice of the community." The LGP is usually a party to a partnership agreement or a memorandum of understanding.

Refer to Partnership Agreements on pages 45-51 of this chapter.

State Agencies

The state is also accountable for better results. It answers to the Governor, to political entities (like state legislatures and Congress), to the media, to taxpayers, and to voters.

State agencies may initially drive results-based accountability by adopting a core set of results, loosening the strings on funding, and sharing their control and decisionmaking.

Service Providers

Service providers, along with informal supports and the natural helping system, will often be accountable for implementing the mix of service strategies. This accountability can be judged through performance measures, such as how well public and private programs and agencies are working.

Elected Officials

Elected officials must campaign for votes every few years. This necessity offers a strong incentive and an opportunity to show that better results are being achieved and that tax dollars are being used wisely. Elected officials are also residents, neighbors, and parents, but they are held accountable to the public as no other partners are.

Businesses

Businesses have traditionally shied away from the work of human service systems. In recent years, partnerships between businesses and LGPs have grown. LGPs have won credibility by showing real and sustained progress in improving the well being of families and neighborhoods, which attracted attention from the private sector. Businesses understand the need for economically viable families, well-trained and healthy employees, and an educated workforce—both now and in the future.

Families

Families bear responsibility and accountability for their own members as well as for the neighborhoods and communities in which they live. Many families know, firsthand, how the current service systems operate and have ideas about how to improve them. Families must have a voice. Often, as members of an LGP, families can tell their stories and help fashion strategies to improve results. Families connect to the neighborhoods and communities where they live. They function in liaison between those who are part of the informal network of the change process and the officials who are sanctioned to improve results.

Citizens, Neighborhood Residents

Making progress toward improvement in the selected results and indicators will require the effort and commitment of everyone living and working in the community. Clergy and congregations need to get involved; neighbors need to help neighbors; local organizations and services clubs need to take a stake in this effort. In other words, everyone who lives in the community is responsible for helping to achieve better results and improved well being for the entire community.

State Agencies Have a Role

State agencies play pivotal roles with communities in sharing accountability. The new roles required of a result-based framework call for agencies to change their relationships with communities and also to change their operations. State agencies demonstrate the shift to a results-based accountability by:

- Adopting a core set of results across agencies (with input from communities).
- Negotiating flexible, results-based financing agreements with communities.
- Providing baseline information about the conditions to be improved.
- Training staff and stakeholders (on the state and community level) in the application of a results-based framework.
- Measuring their progress in supporting communities to develop comprehensive strategies for improving results.
- Giving up "being in control" by offering the community assistance, not telling the community what they must do to achieve results.
- Providing a single point of access for communities to collaborate with multiple agencies.
- Serving as a resource to help communities access information, skills, and technical assistance to help them successfully address issues related to children and families.

PROFILE

Changing the Lines of Accountability: Putting Families in the Driver's Seat

Who determines who provides what services to a family?

Most often workers make the decision about a family's service provider. The service provider is usually accountable to the funder or service system, not the family. However, through the Self-determination Project in Vermont, families with disabilities are changing the lines of accountability.

The project is funded by a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant, allowing families to select their own case manager and determine how "their" funds will be expended to meet their needs. For one family this meant the difference for Angela, their adult daughter with disabilities, to make the transition to independent living.

The family decided that they were not making progress on this goal. After they selected a new case manager, the new worker acted quickly on the daughter's application for Section 8 Housing. In searching for daily assistance, a neighbor in the apartment building volunteered to check-in with Angela every day to make sure that all was well.

Through this Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant, the state agency offers nearly 300 families this approach to self-managing their funds.

An effective way to ensure clear communication about roles and responsibilities is to have written partnership agreements among the partners involved. ➔

Partnership Agreements

Partnership Agreements are one of the tools that LGPs use to formalize the commitments of various organizations and service providers.

Form of Agreement	Description	Example
Contracts	Typically, contracts are between the LGP and service providers for specific programs and/or services.	The LGP provides a certain amount of funds to the YMCA to provide after-school activities for children ages five through nine.
Letters of Agreement	Letters of Agreement are less formal documents between the LGP and its members about who will provide what types of in-kind resources.	The school principal agrees to host the LGP meetings in her conference room and provide refreshments, while the local transit authority agrees to provide bus tokens so that family members can participate.
Partnership Agreements	Partnership Agreements, also referred to as an interagency agreement or a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), are typically signed by state agency directors and the LGP chairperson. Partnership Agreements list the results and indicators on which the LGP will focus as well as the set of activities, funding, and communication that both parties agree to implement. Sometimes, a “master” agreement is created for all LGPs in the state with local variances noted separately.	The LGP and directors of various state agencies sign a memorandum of agreement that the LGP will focus on one or more indicators of results that impact families in their community, and the state agencies will provide certain resources to support their work.

Refer to Learning Guide 4: Strategies to Achieve Results, for more information about partnership agreements.

What is critical for successful partnership agreements?

- The parties share accountability.
- Everyone involved feels ownership for achieving results, although individual commitments may differ.
- The agreement focuses on results and indicators.
- Every agreement, regardless of whom is party to the agreement, includes a section describing the results and indicators that the agreement intends to impact. (Often, statewide results and indicators are included in the agreements as well as locally driven results and indicators.)
- The agreement includes information and data that are collected and shared so that each partner understands the whole picture.
- Parties negotiate agreements as equal partners with mutual respect.
- Decisions are consensual so that all partners feel that they have an opportunity to shape and influence the final agreement.
- The negotiation uses an interest-based approach. Instead of starting from a “must have” position, parties agree to describe what their interests are and find the common ground between them.

Refer to the Appendix, Tools, pages 144-145, for a worksheet to guide a discussion about developing a partnership agreement.

What are the components of a partnership agreement?

- Results to be achieved: Each partnership agreement will clearly target specific results, whether statewide results or community-driven ones based on community residents' needs and experiences.

- The mutual interests of each partner: Interests are the things we need, care about, believe in, or think important to us. Each partner will probably have multiple interests.

- The responsibilities of each partner: The responsibilities are agreed upon in advance and put in the agreement, so that no misunderstandings can develop about whom agreed to do what.

- Designation of which partner will do what: This component includes the roles, tasks, and responsibilities to which each partner agrees. It can also include details about when the tasks or activities will be done and how they will be funded.

- A plan for measuring the progress: Since each of these agreements is driven by results, a section is essential that specifies what information will be collected, what are the source(s) of the data, and how often the progress will be measured and reported.

- Communication methods: How will the partners communicate about important issues, such as implementing strategies, monitoring progress, and documenting decisions and how they are shared? Who is responsible for communications? Agreements usually describe how communication will take place (monthly meetings, quarterly reports, and so on).

- Provisions for renegotiations and problem resolutions: Most agreements will specify a timeline for renegotiation (annually, every two years, etc.) as well as how to resolve or renegotiate an agreed-upon process for issues and problems.

Refer to the Appendix, Tools, page 146, for a sample memorandum of agreement.

PROFILE

Trading Fund Flexibility for Increased Accountability: Interest–Based Negotiation between an LGP and Multiple State Agencies

In Montgomery County, Maryland, county stakeholders and state agencies discovered that a new, interest-based approach to partnership was successful. This approach identified their interests (common and different), and pursued a solution without being stalled by any stakeholders maintaining an intractable position. The result was a win-win situation for the state and the county. Both were able to negotiate an agreement based on common interests: That is, better results for children and families.

Negotiating Parties:

- LGP: Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families (the Council); and

- Multiple State Agencies: the Office of Children, Youth, and Families; Education; Mental Health; Human Services; and Youth Services.

Through this partnership agreement, the Council can target the $11.5 million in state funds allocated to the county and still achieve a mutually agreed upon set of performance measures relating to out-of-home placements, child and family services, and out-of-state placements.

This agreement promises to improve results for children and families through prevention and early intervention with more family-friendly, community-based access to services. In effect, hundreds of families will have customized services that will strengthen their capacity to support their children within the home environment.

During the planning process, the state and local partners:

- Used baseline trends and projections to identify some performance measures that more fully reflect child well being,

- Made an “upfront investment” and retained savings for multiple years, and

- Integrated program design and resource allocation.

PROFILE (Continued)

The Council worked with representatives from the county council, county executive, school board, school system, human services, health and juvenile justice agencies, private citizens, and providers to:

- Compile data,
- Develop proposals for innovative solutions, and
- Develop strategies to integrate services across public and private providers.

Representatives from the state agencies worked to:

- Team across agency lines, and
- Advocate flexibility to support community-proposed solutions; flexibility in state funds, including child welfare funding streams; and requests for federal waivers in the Medicaid program.

PROFILE

Vermont's Regional Partnership Agreement: Negotiable Incentive Agreements

"In addition to the partnership agreements for building basic capacity for improved outcomes, specific departments or coalitions of departments may from time to time focus attention on 'bending the curve' agreements in specific problem areas. One strategy may be to enter into interest-based negotiations for incentive agreements with regional partnerships. These negotiated agreements will reflect an expectation of continued improvement of specific outcomes, a reinvestment of savings in preventive strategies, and an agreement about the proportion of savings to be used by the regional partnership and state agency(ies). These agreements will address the issue of shared risk and accountability."

From the Vermont State and Regional Partnership Agreement, 1999-2000.

PROFILE

Community Partners Negotiate for Children's Upstream Services

A community grant for mental health services spurred a partnership agreement among stakeholders who would help children be ready to enter school. In Rutland, Vermont, the Regional Board for Family Services in collaboration with the Mental Health Center, the Department of Health, the Parent Child Center, Vermont Achievement Center, Essential Early Education, and others initiated a year-long planning process. That process resulted in a negotiated agreement to pool staff across agencies and form a consultative team that could support and refer families with children who needed various services.

The Regional Board, Rutland's LGP, served as the facilitator and engaged early childhood, health, and mental health stakeholders as well as family members in negotiating specific components such as referrals, staffing, management, housing for staff, and financing.

The consultative team assesses the services that children and their families may need, including environmental, medical, developmental, and mental health concerns. The team then links the families with the services that best meet their needs.

PROFILE

People in Partnership – Morrisville, Vermont: Negotiating Fund Flexibility in Exchange for Increased Accountability

In 1996, training opportunities in interest-based negotiation and results-based accountability opened the doorway for People in Partnership—an LGP in Morrisville, Vermont—and the Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services (DSRS) of the Vermont Agency of Human Services (AHS) to negotiate a new partnership. During mock negotiation training, the participants decided that they wanted actual negotiations.

People in Partnership organized a community team, which included local staff from the state agency. This team targeted three indicators: (1) reducing the number of children in custody; (2) reducing the number of out-of-home placements; and (3) reducing the total cost of children in custody.

PROFILE (Continued)

After a series of meetings between the People in Partnership and AHS's DSRS, a framework for the agreement emerged. The financing formula called for half of the savings achieved from decreasing the cost of placement to be used for prevention and early intervention services. The cap was set at $10,000 for the community's flexible fund. Using a series of memos and meetings with the DSRS Commissioner, a consensus was reached.

Dramatic results are being achieved through this negotiated agreement. The Substitute Care expenses from FY97 to FY98 decreased from $841,340 to $620,441 or 26%. The number of children in out-of-district placements decreased from 25 on 1/1/97 to 12 on 1/1/98.

People in Partnership and the DSRS view their negotiated agreement as a continuous improvement process. In 2000, they increased their shared accountability by adding twice yearly meetings to assess the placement and fiscal data jointly.

Chapter 3

Measuring Progress Through Self-Evaluation

Learning Goal

You will understand the importance of measuring progress and will know how to apply a self-evaluation approach to the work of the Local Governance Partnership.

Measuring Progress

The standard for demonstrating effectiveness of services and supports has changed. No longer is it enough to report the number of programs offered or the number of families served. Effectiveness translates to progress toward desired results. Therefore, reliable and accurate data on performance measures, indicators, and results are integral to results-based accountability.

Measuring progress answers at least two primary questions:

- Have results improved?
- What changes have been made in the way services are delivered, financed, and governed?

This chapter explains the importance of measuring progress and describes an evaluation approach, self-evaluation, which is consistent with the principles and characteristics of Local Governance Partnerships (LGPs).

Measuring progress is critical to the work of an LGP, and a self-evaluation approach is often appropriate and useful. ➔

A Self-Evaluation Approach

Glossary

Self-evaluation — An evaluation performed by the one being evaluated–in this case, the LGP— to assess the degree to which it is achieving its goals and realizing its desired results. An LGP uses this information for measuring progress and making decisions.

Self-evaluation relies on the skills and effort of the LGP and other stakeholders to collect and use information in a continuous learning process.

We often associate evaluation with research experts who describe fairly complicated, long-range evaluation designs in the jargon of their specialty. LGPs in Georgia, Missouri, and Vermont as well as community initiatives in other states are beginning to use a different type of evaluation approach. Self-evaluation is proving to be more appropriate and useful.

Self-evaluation is consistent with LGP principles of inclusive involvement and data-driven decisionmaking. Although self-evaluation is primarily "hands-on" work by an LGP, some LGPs contract with consultants or evaluation staff to help design and implement the evaluation tools. Most importantly, self-evaluation allows communities to answer the questions, "Are we doing what we said we would do, with whom we said we would do it, and with what results?"

A self-evaluation approach is well suited to LGPs because it:

- Integrates evaluation with the ongoing strategic planning process,
- Helps LGPs to understand how things work, what is changing, and what could be done next, and
- Is used to inform rather than judge, to improve rather than prove.

PROFILE

Continuous Evaluation in Vermont

The Vermont Agency of Human Services and the state Department of Education (DOE) agreed to sign a partnership agreement to promote the work of Regional Partnerships. The following is excerpted from the March, 1999 agreement: Engage Community/Regional Partnerships in a Continuous Learning and Improvement (Evaluation) Process:

"Continuous feedback is critical to any team (group, organization, partnership) that wants to make a difference for children, youth, and families in the community. Teams must be alert to their impact on outcomes. The AHS/DOE Partnership is encouraging community/regional teams to use self-evaluation techniques to assess how well they are achieving good results."

What are the characteristics of a self-evaluation approach?

Glossary

Qualitative — Evaluation methods that use observations, interviews, focus groups, surveys, etc., to assess change.

Quantitative — Evaluation methods rely on numerative data and its analysis to determine what results were achieved.

In some ways, self-evaluation is similar to other types of evaluation. Self-evaluation uses qualitative and quantitative methods to determine change, as do other types of evaluation. The primary difference rests in the use of more practical and participatory ways in which the evaluation is conducted.

Characteristics of Self-Evaluation:

Involves Stakeholders

Self-evaluation involves many people in the process, including members of the LGP, consumers, staff, partners, and other community groups. In traditional evaluation, the individuals responsible usually work at arms length. In self-evaluation, everyone has a stake and, therefore, everyone gets involved in the process.

Provides Regular and Frequent Information

In order for an LGP to track progress, it needs a regular process by which the board and staff receive and analyze information. Current and frequent information about whether its activities are having an impact on desired results and indicators is invaluable. LGPs need useful information on a timely basis for decisionmaking.

To achieve this, the LGP uses self-evaluation to conduct ongoing and continual review of its strategies. Usually monthly reports are used by staff and committees, while quarterly reports work well for the full LGP. (LGPs sometimes combine self-evaluation approaches with traditional evaluation to provide ongoing feedback as well as a professional evaluation conducted by impartial outsiders.)

Ensures Input from Continuous Evaluation

Self-evaluation is not limited by time; it is ongoing. The evaluation doesn't stop after a year or two. It becomes an integral arm of the LGP's efforts. By providing a fairly continuous flow of helpful information in the form of data and reports, the LGP can use the evaluation thoughtfully to judge, without blame, "how we're doing."

What are the benefits of self-evaluation?

Shared Learning

Self-evaluation is a way of sharing with the community-at-large the information that can tell them what's going on and what's working.

Stakeholder Ownership

When involving many stakeholders in design and implementation of the evaluation, everyone can take responsibility and ownership for the work and results of the LGP. The hands-on approach of self-evaluation serves as a persuasive way to engage more people in more of the work.

Capacity Building

For those involved in the evaluation, many opportunities exist to increase knowledge and enhance skills just by participating in the process. Building knowledge and skills in data collection and in applying database knowledge to develop effective strategies is inherent in self-evaluation.

Community Customizing

Each LGP customizes the design of the self-evaluation based on its priorities, requirements, capacity, interests, and available resources. This custom design ensures that each LGP has an approach that will evaluate the programs and activities of greatest interest.

Accessible Data

One of the most frequently cited benefits of self-evaluation is the opportunity for LGP members, staff, and other stakeholders to access data. In addition to regular, standard reports, LGPs can develop data or special reports about a specific group of children or a specific neighborhood.

Continued

Benefits (Continued)

Timely Information

LGPs need timely information for decisionmaking, planning, and budgeting. The more timely the information is, the more practical it is for regular use and the more credible an LGP is with its partners and stakeholders. Regular and frequent information helps LGPs identify ways to continuously improve their strategies and activities for more effective impact.

Self-Evaluation Tips from LGPs

- Prepare stakeholders and partners to the reality that numbers will not change overnight.
- Be willing to take incremental steps in building data collection systems.
- Understand that the self-evaluation process is time consuming and requires resources.
- Keep people informed about what steps are being taken.
- Use findings to discover what is and isn't working, why, and how to refine the strategies for improved results.
- Watch out for a common data trap: *We can't start until we have a way to collect all of the data.* Start with the data that you have and work from there.
- Make sure that LGP members understand the difference between accountability for performance (the means) and accountability for results (the ends).
- Be careful about having too many measures.

Chapter 4

Building a Data System

Learning Goal

You will understand what a data system is, how to set one up, and how to apply this understanding to the work of the Local Governance Partnership.

What do we mean by a data system?

The term "data system" used in this guide refers to a collection of individual record data that comes from multiple agencies, organizations, and sources. It might contain, for example, information on family income, housing arrangement, employment status, and what services a family receives from formal and informal networks. This information can then be used by the Local Governance Partnership (LGP) to target its strategies so it achieves its desired results.

Why is a data system Important?

A data system is the cornerstone to measuring progress. It supports the implementation of results-based accountability by providing information as the basis for thoughtful and deliberate action.

- Snapshots of the community's strengths and needs are based on fact.
- Results, indicators, services, and financing strategies are based on fact.
- Monitoring progress and mid-course adjustments are based on fact.

With credible data, the work of an LGP moves beyond perceptions and ideas to decisions based on facts.

The data system serves as a catalyst to engage citizens and stakeholders alike. Once they realize the usefulness of data, citizens and stakeholders can find out what they need to know about their community or neighborhood.

Even with enthusiasm for a data system, the task of setting up the system is a complicated, confusing, and intimidating one. However, the task is less formidable by taking one step at a time and keeping the benefits in sight.

This chapter presents the rationale for developing an effective data system, its purpose, criteria, and the steps for setting one up.

What about the data systems that already exist? Should the LGP set up a new system? ➔

Why would an LGP set up a new data system?

Traditional Data Systems

Traditional data systems have the following characteristics:

Data for only one categorical program

Many different systems, not linked to each other

No picture of the whole family or total array of services

Not neighborhood-specific

Designed to count units of service delivered

No data on results

Traditional data systems cannot provide an LGP with the broad-based data needed to measure progress toward desired cross-cutting results.

Most management information systems provide data for only one categorical program or, at best, a cluster of related programs. Comprehensive databases on children's well being are rare. Most public agencies collect data based on their needs or the requirements of legislative bodies, which don't necessarily reflect what community members think is important. (LGPs may use some of this data but will likely need to collect additional data based on what is most relevant to them.)

Data systems exist for income support programs, child welfare systems, mental health services, public health, and schools. Rarely are these data systems linked together in order to capture the full array of services that a family receives. A picture of all types of services administered to one household is rarely available.

Another reason why the "family service picture" is not readily available is because most data systems are not neighborhood specific. Thus, the information that LGPs and neighborhood entities need to establish baselines and measure progress is available only on a limited basis.

An additional challenge is that traditional data systems are usually designed to count the number of participants, the inputs, or the units of services delivered. Data are usually not collected on the results of the services delivered or on the outputs.

What is different about the data system that an LGP sets up? How will this system be used? ➔

What are the purposes for an LGP's data system?

Purpose	Explanation
Identify Needs	Identify existing, emerging, or unmet needs in neighborhoods and across the community. ■ Collect data close to home for its geographical sensitivity. ■ Validate the concerns and perceptions of community residents. ■ Bring the issues of community residents to the forefront.
Plan Strategies	Make planning decisions about the type, scope, and delivery of service strategies to improve a specific indicator. ■ Understand the "story behind the baseline" or why specific needs or issues exist. ■ Develop a theory of change about how or why an initiative or strategy would work to improve the indicators. ■ Determine what is needed to improve the indicators and develop an action plan.
Assess Strategies	Describe the extent to which strategies are working. ■ Communicate facts, not simply anecdotal information to communities, government, and funders. ■ Support the underlying premise of reform initiatives.
Support Decisions	Use the data to make informed decisions. ■ Provide information about whether practices, budgets, and policies are achieving their intended effects. ■ Provide data for LGP members or governing bodies, such as school boards, city councils, and/or legislatures, to make decisions. Funding and resource support is more likely when based on data of a workable strategy.
Encourage Dialogue	Bring stakeholders together to explore their common interests. A variety of stakeholders, such as law enforcement, business owners, school administrators, parents, and providers, can come together to look at data about the neighborhood in which they work and live. ■ Validate what parents and residents see in their neighborhoods daily. ■ Help to develop strategies jointly in order to make a difference.

	■ Figure out how to make changes happen through combined human and financial resources.

What criteria make a data system effective?

An effective data system is:

- Credible
- A Fair Gauge of Performance
- Clear and Easy to Understand
- Practical to Administer
- Adaptable to Changes
- Integrated and Connected to Other Data Systems
- Available for Immediate Needs
- A Foundation for Future Data

Credible

Do policymakers and citizens have confidence that the information is accurate and relevant?

Are internal controls or checks in place to ensure that the information is accurate and complete?

A controversy about whether the data are accurate will create a real obstacle to planning and measuring the effectiveness of service strategies. Therefore, care must be taken during the development of the data system to ensure that the methods used to collect and input the data are accurate.

A Fair Gauge of Performance

Are performance measures a fair gauge of program or agency performance?

Identifying the best measures to use is important. If a performance measure is impossible to achieve, then it's not a true indicator of performance. Such a measure has little value for making decisions or assessing effectiveness.

Clear and Easy to Understand

Can citizens and policymakers easily use the data to make decisions?

If users do not understand the data or the reports that are developed from the data, then the data are of little value to the work of an LGP.

Install a checkpoint that tests whether the data collected are understood by a sample group of stakeholders. This feedback will help improve the system, if needed. Users should have a clear picture of what the data mean and how to use the data in thoughtful ways.

Practical to Administer

Is the data system practical to administer and implement?

A data system has little value if so complex that even a “technology wiz” can not operate it effectively or if its cost is greater than the data’s worth.

LGPs should gear the data system to their own needs, including their level of expertise in collecting, analyzing, and using the data.

Adaptable to Changes

Is the data system adaptable to shifts in policy and program goals, which may follow new or emerging needs or changes in priorities?

Data systems need to be flexible and adaptable. When designing or reconfiguring a data system, LGPs should consider the potential for:

- New technology applications,
- Needing different data as information needs change, and
- Stakeholder input to define what the current and changing information needs require.

Criteria for an Effective Data System (Continued)

Integrated and Connected to Other Data Systems

Is the data system integrated with planning, budgeting, and management systems?

This question is not one with which many less-experienced LGPs will struggle. However, for LGPs that are developing sophisticated data systems, data integration could become an important issue. Government agencies have found that using separate systems to produce data for specific functions sets the stage for counting the same information in different ways.

Available for Immediate Needs, Foundation for Future Data

Does the data system meet immediate needs while providing a foundation for the long term?

Developing an effective data system is complex. Often, LGPs and their stakeholders address immediate data needs, recognizing that they have to work within present human and financial resources. Thus, building a data system incrementally, starting with the most immediate needs, is the preferred, practical option. To the extent that LGPs can anticipate their future needs for collecting, analyzing, and using data, planners can design data systems to expand and change as future capacity and needs dictate.

What are the steps for setting up a data system?

Getting Started

Collecting data to track results and indicators is an important task for any LGP. The scope of the data system may vary from one community to the next; however, for all LGPs, an effective data system develops incrementally. Data collection depends on such factors as:

- Available technology and knowledgeable staff
- Access to public and private information bases
- Available resources
- The developmental stage of the LGP

The starting point for an LGP, especially emerging ones, is to build on data already available or easily collected. In all likelihood, some data will not be available. The lack of it does not mean that an LGP should wait until more data are available before designing the plan for a data system.

Start with the data that can be accessed and document the additional data or information still needed. In this way, stakeholders are engaged in an effort to build the capacity of a data system. This need for additional data is often the driving force for improvements in the amount and type of data collected and available.

In Missouri, for example, the impetus for creating a data warehouse between state government and communities resulted from a notable absence of community-based data.

HOW-TO

For emerging LGPs:

Start with available data.

Gather data that are easily collectable.

Document data that are still needed.

Engage stakeholders in building the data system.

Glossary

Data warehouse — An increasingly popular strategy for improving data/information systems because it increases the amount of data available and improves the access to data for community organizations. Data are downloaded from multiple public and private databases, organizing information in order to project trends, identify performance gaps, and increase accountability. Multiple users can access data through computer links.

Plan for a Data System

At first glance, taking stock of the data to collect can seem like a complicated and confusing task. Building a plan for data can break these tasks into three parts.

Source
Strategic plans

Step 1: Identify Needs

Through the strategic planning process, LGPs will have identified their desired results and indicators for improving the lives and well being of children, families, and communities.

Questions to Answer for Step 1

- What data are needed to document progress on results and indicators?

- What demographic data are relevant to results and indicators?

  Certain demographic information may be helpful in relation to targeted results and indicators. For example, where pockets of poverty, elderly residents, or licensed childcare homes are located may be important to know.

- What data are needed about the concerns of residents related to results, indicators, and community priorities?

  For example, an LGP might learn through focus groups that parents are concerned about the safety of their children playing near condemned houses in a particular neighborhood. The LGP might decide to collect information on the number and location of condemned houses in the neighborhood to document, for the local government agencies, the need to raze such buildings.

Sources
Partnership agreements
Grants
Contracts

Step 2: Identify Requirements

Requirements for the data to be collected relate to the accountability and obligations that an LGP has through law, contracts, or partnership agreements.

Questions to Answer for Step 2

- What data are needed to meet reporting requirements for community and state-level letters of agreement?

  An essential component of partnership agreements is a section determining what data are to be collected and who is responsible for collecting, analyzing, and reporting that data.

  These agreements may be with a variety of community stakeholders, such as school districts, workforce development commissions, or state-level agencies. A state-level agreement will provide clarity about the data for which an LGP is accountable to collect and report as well as the data for which the state agency will collect and report.

- What data are needed to meet reporting requirements for funding sources?

  Many LGPs have grants or contracts with private funders, such as foundations, corporate givers, and United Way organizations. Each of these grants or contracts will have different provisions for collecting data and reporting on progress.

Sources

Possible other databases:
Government agencies
School districts
Kids Count
Advocacy groups
United Way
Research centers and universities
Courts
Libraries
Chambers of Commerce
Planning agencies
Foundations

Step 3: Identify Opportunities

Opportunities can present themselves in various forms. Whether in the form of dollars, person power, hardware and software, capacity building, or skill training, new resources will provide opportunities for the development of stronger, more sophisticated data systems.

Questions to Answer for Step 3

- Can we take advantage of new software applications?

- Can we take advantage of changes in hardware costs?

  Technology is changing daily. New software applications and reduced hardware costs create enormous opportunities to make data more accessible and easier to collect. The new technology presents an opportunity to collect more data, faster, more accurately, more specifically, and at less cost.

- Can we link with the data systems of other LGPs and/or partners?

  LGPs often find areas of common interest with other community partners. The connections can spur joint ventures for data collection and use.

PROFILE

Resources for Collecting Data

In Missouri, the state agencies provided the neighborhood Caring Communities (LGP) sites with a personal computer, Internet hook-up, and training in order to enter data for the evaluation.

In some communities, the LGP established a LAN (Local Area Network) so that neighborhood sites and the LGP could connect with one another.

ALERT!

Look out for indicator definitions.

In Maryland, Community Partnership members found that the definition of high school dropouts underrepresented the actual number. The definition included only youth who actually notified the school that they were dropping out. In reality, most youth don't report it; they just do it. Thus, the rate undercounted the real number of students dropping out of high school.

ALERT!

Look out for multiple client identifiers.

In order to apply for a federal waiver, the governor of a Midwestern state asked a top administrator for the number of persons receiving services from a particular human service agency.

According to the data system, the agency served more people than actually lived in the state. The error occurred because the reporting system relied on duplicate databases, with each database using a different method to identify the same individual.

Chapter 5

Collecting Data

Learning Goal

You will understand how to collect data and how to apply this understanding to the work of the Local Governance Partnership.

Continuous Work, Continuous Collection of Data

Collecting data is useful as a Local Governance Partnership (LGP) designs its strategies and then ensures that the strategies are working as intended.

The initial stages of an LGP's work concentrates on collecting data to create a community agenda. These data are critical to selecting targeted results and indicators and ensuring that the decisions on a comprehensive plan of strategies are based on evidence of what works and what the community needs.

Once strategies are implemented, the LGP uses self-evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the programs, activities, and services implemented to improve results. The data collected answer critical questions: Is progress being made? And, if not, what changes can improve the strategy's effectiveness? Are strategies being implemented as they were planned?

An LGP's data collection supports continuous improvement of its work in the community. Through evaluation data, an LGP can take stock of its efforts, such as its capacity for collecting data, strengthening partnerships, applying lessons learned, and staffing needs as self-evaluation efforts expand.

Refer to Chapter 3, Measuring Progress Through Self-Evaluation, for more information
about self-evaluation.

What are the key elements in a plan for collecting data?

An Evaluation Committee

Typically, an evaluation or data collection committee:

- Designs a plan for collecting information,
- Provides oversight for its implementation, and
- Ensures that reports are completed on a timely basis.

The LGP is responsible for:

- Ensuring that staff, technical expertise, and technology support are in place, and
- Hiring a consultant or establishing a staff position to manage the data collection.

The Purpose and Scope

The purpose and scope of the data collection is framed by the questions that the LGP wants to answer. LGPs will want to know about:

- Changes in the well being of children, youth, and families,
- Changes in how services are delivered, financed, and governed, and
- Changes in the community.

Key Elements in a Plan for Collecting Data (Continued)

The Partners Involved

Many different partners may be involved with gathering data:

- State agencies, school districts, local government, universities, and United Way organizations can help gather data.
- Many LGP members, due to their roles within their own agencies or organizations, will be able to gather data.

The Resources Available

An LGP needs to know the variety of resources available, such as funding, redeployed staff, and computer hardware and software.

PROFILE

The Accountability Committee

In Maryland, the Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth, and Families established an Accountability Committee with the following responsibilities:

- Measure effectiveness of system strategies.
- Collect data to measure outcomes.
- Identify gaps in data.
- Develop strategies to improve the data system.
- Develop accountability mechanisms to ensure effective data strategies.
- Publish an annual report on the Children's Agenda outcomes.
- Inform Collaboration Council of progress and barriers.

PROFILE

Instructions to Caring Communities Partnerships from Missouri's Family Investment Trust

In your evaluation plan, please describe:

- The type of planning process used.
- How to know whether the strategy components are working or not.
- What performance measures to use for each strategy component.
- How to know if the process is working and the partnership is effective in the community.
- What is the reporting plan? When will the report(s) be sent out? Who will the reports be sent to? For example, will they be sent to legislators, your Chamber of Commerce, school board, neighborhood site councils, state partners, stakeholders, businesses, etc.?

Internally, your Partnership will be determining:

- What will you evaluate?
- Who will do the evaluation?
- When will they evaluate?
- What timelines were established to reflect annual and multi-year processes?

Decisions About Data Collection

Glossary

Asset mapping — A method that involves multiple stakeholders in making a commitment to discover the community's capacities and assets instead of focusing solely on needs, deficiencies, and problems.

GIS (Geographic Information System) — A computerized method to gather, integrate, and illustrate data by individual residences, blocks, census tracts, and other geographic units.

Surveys — A method for gathering both qualitative and quantitative data regarding needs, assessments of service delivery, attitudes, or other information.

LGPs will need to make a number of decisions about their data collection.

Decisions About Data

What is to be measured?

In most instances, LGPs have more questions than they have available data. The lack of data should not deter an LGP from beginning its data collection efforts. Start with what's available. The following questions can help frame the type of data to be collected.

- What data will be necessary to track the community-based results and indicators? At what level will the data be necessary (e.g., county, city, neighborhood, etc.)?
- What changes are occurring in the way systems do business?
- What data will be necessary to tract the effectiveness of agencies and/or programs?

Decisions About Methods

What methods will be used to collect data?

LGPs have many methods to collect data. The challenge is to match the method of collection to the information to be measured by discussing responses to the following questions:

- What is the purpose for collecting the data?
- Why are the data needed?
- What type of data are needed?

Refer to Learning Guide 3: Setting a Community Agenda, for more information about data collection methods.

Refer to the Appendix, Resources, for information about surveys widely used

to gather information about the status of youth.

Some Methods for Collecting Data

Method	Type of data	Why data are needed	Collection tips
Client Record Reviews	Individual child, parent, and family records	■ Tracking impact of strategy on client well being ■ Identifying client needs ■ Informing frontline workers ■ Assessing progress toward indicators	■ Consider custom-designed or prepackaged data forms ■ Consider manual or automated retrieval ■ May need staff for data entry, retrieval, and analysis
Community Asset Mapping	Information about strengths, resources, and needs of a particular geographic area	■ Identifying baseline conditions ■ Engaging residents ■ Identifying resources for services and informal supports	■ Organize a group to canvas a neighborhood ■ Develop a survey form ■ Communicate findings
Community Walk-Throughs (may be part of Asset Mapping)	Information about the neighborhoods physical well being	■ Systemic portrait of community ■ Establishing the geographic area that constitutes a community	■ Identify the number and quality of parks, playgrounds, and the conditions of sidewalks, streets, buildings, businesses, etc.
Focus Groups	Perceptions and views of stakeholders	■ Assessing how services are being provided ■ Capturing the experiences of consumers	■ Use trained facilitator to guide the process and ensure equal "airtime" for all ■ Compile specific list of questions
GIS Mapping	Maps to illustrate the location of children and families by demographics, risk factors, services, and other descriptors demonstrating specific relationships or concentrations	■ Analyzing neighborhoods ■ Preparing spot maps to show where children live ■ Planning for service ■ Establishing baseline conditions ■ Plotting services by households	■ Gather data by household ■ Use appropriate software ■ Have skills to enter data and produce maps
Individual Interviews and Group Surveys	In-depth responses from stakeholders	■ Gathering specific views from individuals about services	■ Use skilled and objective interviewer or survey developer ■ Use predetermined set of questions

Decisions About Sources

- What are the potential sources of data in our community?
- What data sources do we want to access in order to provide the information needed for the self-evaluation?

Decisions About Reporting

Who needs to know what information? Different stakeholders need different information. Figure out the information that each of the following need:

- LGP members
- Community partners
- Legislative and other governing bodies (e.g., school boards)
- Community residents
- Providers and frontline staff
- Funders

Decisions About Timing

When are data needed and how often do we need to collect data?

Deciding when data are needed is driven by various schedules:

- The planning or budget cycle
- LGP meeting schedules
- Local and state government legislative schedules
- Reporting requirements through contracts, grants, and partnership agreements

Decisions About Data Collection (Continued)

Decisions About Timing (Continued)

Understanding when the data are needed also answers the question about the frequency to collect data.

- When is the annual update to the strategic plan due?
- When are reports to be made to the entire LGP?
- When are reports due to respective legislative bodies?
- When are we reporting information to the community at large?
- When are the reports due under contracts, grants, and partnership agreements?

Decisions About Resources

What resources are available? LGPs look internally and externally to identify resources that can support the evaluation.

- What financial resources do we have?
- What hardware and software resources do we have?
- What person power (technical expertise, data entry, etc.) do we have?
- What person power could we access through our partners or other stakeholders?
- What are our partners willing to contribute?
- What new resources will we need?

PROFILE

Data Warehouse, Local INvestment Commission (LINC)

Kansas City, Missouri

LINC is making progress to increase the availability and accessibility of information through a Data Warehouse. Using this approach, data are downloaded from 125 public and private databases. The data, organized for easy access and use, allow LINC and its community partners to:

- Forecast trends,
- Identify performance gaps, and
- Develop service strategies.

Eventually the data warehouse will include data from seven state agencies, and frontline workers will be able to track all the services that a family is receiving.

PROFILE

Celebrating Success and Polling Priorities: Rutland Regional Board for Family Services

Upon completion of its first five-year plan, the Rutland Regional Board for Family Services Partnership in Vermont decided to celebrate. Using mailing lists and announcements in the local newspaper, the Partnership invited residents to attend a Community Celebration.

Surrounded by food, fountains, flowers, and music, more than 80 people participated in fun and work. This event provided the opportunity to acknowledge the achievements made in their first five-year plan.

Recognizing that this celebration was also a wonderful opportunity to hear from residents about the *next* five-year plan, the partnership used table tents as a venue for people to answer two questions.

- What are the needs to be addressed in our community?
- What results should be addressed in the next five years?

The partnership collected the response cards for use by the planning committee to incorporate into their draft plan, which is then circulated throughout the community to invite more input from residents.

Chapter 6

Reporting Information

Learning Goal

You will understand how to report information and how to apply this understanding to the work of the Local Governance Partnership.

Informing Decisionmakers

Local Governance Partnerships (LGPs) use a wide array of approaches to "get the word out," both formally and informally, to small and large audiences. Many approaches are simple to manage and they fit within small budgets. As LGPs mature and budgets grow, they can add more ways to report findings and customize reports for different audiences.

Increasingly, technology is enabling easy access and low-cost reporting to a wide array of stakeholders. For example, many LGPs use websites to disseminate information, access reports, and provide data on children and families. LINC (Local INvestment Commission), the LGP in Kansas City, Missouri, is a good example of how a website can make information more accessible. Its website receives 275 "hits" daily.

In order to bring about community-wide change on the scale envisioned by most LGPs, the entire community should be informed and involved. The desired results for children and families should be communicated to a much broader audience than the usual human services and education stakeholders. The boundaries for a "new" audience are much wider, encouraging a community to rethink how its assets and resources support children and families.

Developing this broader constituency will demand some new communication skills and ideas not previously considered. LGPs will need to find ways for engaging the interest of many people, organizations, agencies, clubs, businesses, etc. The corporate and political worlds are already familiar with the needs and skills required to "market" messages to diverse and scattered populations. To impact the well being of children and families, an LGP will need to present information and ideas so that the community hears the message and understands its value.

This chapter addresses a variety of approaches for reporting progress, including factors for effective reporting, guidelines, community examples, and steps for developing a reporting plan.

What are key factors for effective reporting?

Multiple Reporting Approaches

The adage "one size fits all" does not apply to reporting information. Our hi-tech, fast-paced, information-overload society suggests that LGPs have to use multiple approaches to reach a diverse audience.

Websites are terrific for individuals with access to the Internet and the time to peruse it. Posters placed in doctors' offices or laundromats may reach other audiences better.

Multiple approaches are the only way to ensure that the diverse array of community residents will have access to the information and progress that the LGP wants to convey.

Match between Audience and Information

Knowing audience preferences is key to responding to their needs, since different audiences are interested in different information. Being able to target the right information for the right audience can ensure that information is used and doesn't "sit on the shelf."

Business partners want to know the "bottomline," whereas state agency partners are interested in specific details about how the service strategies work. Families want to know, in plain language, how this information will make a difference to their children. Teachers may want to know how to connect families to relevant information.

Regular and Frequent Reporting

Providing information regularly conveys dependability and consistency. Partners and stakeholders come to expect information about the progress being made, or not, toward desired results.

Often, LGPs report information regularly but not frequently. Many LGPs publish an annual report or issue an annual report card, which meets the definition of regular. For the community at large, in fact, this schedule might meet the test for regular and frequent.

However, LGP members and their partners may need reports more frequently, monthly or quarterly, to track progress in implementing specific strategies and reporting on results.

Accuracy and Reliability

Every LGP, emerging or mature, must ensure that the information reported is accurate and reliable. Credibility with partners and other stakeholders rests on being able to trust the information reported.

Check the information frequently during the collection and report preparation to make sure that the data are accurate and reliable.

Openness about What Is Working and What Is Not Working

Describing "what is not working" is as important as describing "what is working." Although stakeholders want to know that progress is being made, they also want to understand the reasons why change may not be occurring.

Partners need to understand that not every strategy will be effective. A good reporting system can flag the strategies that don't work as anticipated. This function is a critical, although delicate, part of an accountability system. Take care to describe what is not working in non-judgmental language.

The "what is *not* working" information is important for planning the next steps or course corrections. Honesty about the shortcomings or disappointments of a specific strategy serves to strengthen the LPG's credibility, whereas withholding information will diminish its credibility.

PROFILE

External Communication to the Community

Georgia's Family Connection has developed a series of assessment tools to help LGPs determine their own developmental stage. The following tool (adapted here somewhat) addresses communication skills and outreach.

Beginning Stage: Collaborative group produces and distributes a variety of print materials for the community.

Low Intermediate Stage: Collaborative group has a systematic communications plan, including routine media coverage and staff to implement it.

High Intermediate Stage: Collaborative group hosts events (seminars, town hall meetings, focus groups, etc.) to inform the public and elicit perspectives from the community at large.

Proficient Stage: Communication is highly interactive between the collaborative and the community, and includes solicited and unsolicited information.

What are some approaches for reporting findings?

Means	Audiences	When to Use	Benefits
Reports	Multiple and targeted	Minimum annually; periodic on specific results and/or issues	Presents more in-depth information
Newsletters	Multiple	Regularly and frequently; enough to be recognized	Develops a “following”; keeps people current with developments
Report Cards	Multiple	Annually	Makes indicators visible; promotes shared responsibility; calls for action
Conferences	Targeted	Ongoing capacity building for new initiatives	Promotes agenda; builds relationships; showcases practices
Websites	Multiple	Continuously	Makes data, reports, etc., accessible
Community Fairs	Residents	Getting the word out: ■ Personal contacts ■ Handouts, posters	Builds relationships; puts a face with information; reaches a wide audience
News Conferences	Multiple policymakers and citizens	Selective to announce: ■ Achievement ■ Identify issue or new initiative	Puts agenda in the public eye
Community Meetings	Residents	To engage in dialogue: ■ Progress ■ Challenges ■ Next steps	Sustains resident involvement; engages new residents
Posters	Residents, providers	Raise awareness: ■ Indicators ■ Key facts	Increases visibility in community and agency settings
Briefing Sheets	Targeted policymakers, funders, and LGP board	Focus on: ■ Specific result area ■ Strategies ■ Topic	Gets stakeholders up to speed and on the same page
Slide Shows	Multiple	Speaker’s bureaus Meetings Presentations	Presents consistent information by users

PROFILE

Vermont Reports Progress in Several Ways

The following is an excerpt from *Vermont Communities Count: Using Results to Strengthen Services for Families and Children,* by Cornelius D. Hogan, Secretary, Vermont Agency of Human Services, September, 1999.

If the state and communities are to take seriously the challenge of improving the well-being of children and families, there must be an accounting of that well-being. One of our rules of the road as we developed our outcomes was that they had to be measurable by a series of indicators. Although not all our outcomes are completely described and measured by their related indicators, there are enough of them to give at least a sense of the status of the described outcome.

Methods of reporting the outcomes and the indicators, both at the statewide and the local level, are myriad and limited only by creativity and imagination. In Vermont, they include the following:

Well Being Report

Vermont's first effort in this regard was the publishing of our first "well being report," *The Social Well Being of Vermonters*, in 1993. The report was a compilation of 51 indicators, distributed among the outcomes, that graphically portrayed progress (or lack of progress) over time, and in most cases compared Vermont to the nation. Each of these half-page graphs was accompanied by another half page of discussion and analysis that outlined technical considerations, along with information regarding the potential connection of the indicator to other indicators.

Community Profiles

In 1995, the Agency for Human Services (AHS) published a localized version of the well-being report, *Community Profiles*. This report had a format similar to the statewide report, but took well-being comparisons to the level of 60 school districts, comparing school district data to county and statewide indicators. For each indicator, we present data for the community over time as well as for the state as a whole to provide additional context for comparisons. For some indicators, we also identify the statewide goals set out in *Healthy Vermonters 2000*, our public health compendium.

Continued

Proactive Distribution

We distribute hard copies of both the *Community Profiles* and the statewide well-being report to Vermont's media, editorial boards, community partnerships and other opinion-makers in specific Vermont communities. In addition, every legislator who is on one of the standing or special committees that interact with either AHS or the Department of Education receives both the well-being report and the *Community Profile* that reflects his or her individual county.

Internet

Since 1997, all of these data have been available on the web at http://www.dsw.state.vt.us/ahs in downloadable form.

Wall Charts

One of the most effective ways we have found to share the outcomes is a set of large wall charts that show fundamental trends. We post these charts in places where people come together for training and meetings.

Top 10

We generate a special "top 10" list of communities or areas that have shown the most progress on the most indicators. This management report is the basis for customized analysis letters to each of those communities or partnerships.

Television

Once a year, AHS hosts an interactive television program to present the reports. The target audience is government's middle management and representatives from the substantial nonprofit community.

PROFILE (Continued)

Prevention Conference

Each year, the reports are summarized at the annual Governor's Prevention Conference, an assembly of several hundred people from across Vermont who are interested and involved in the broad prevention goal.

Staff Evaluations

Starting in 1998, Vermont added a question to the annual personnel and contract evaluation forms for state government employees and contractors: *"What did you or your organization do this past year to help improve the well-being of Vermonters, as measured by Vermont's outcomes and indicators?"*

Word of Mouth

Personal communication between families and local providers—for example, conversations that occur during early baby visits, which now reach 70 percent of all newborns in Vermont, rich or poor—promote higher expectations about the future well-being of children.

In these ways, information about outcomes and indicators reaches our citizens, from those at the highest levels of state government to the average person on the street. The result is a broader understanding of and enthusiasm for focusing on outcomes and indicators. It also gives rise to healthy and friendly competition among communities."

Copies of this report are available from The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 701 St. Paul Street, Baltimore, MD 21202. Phone (410) 547-6600 Fax (410) 547-6624 http://www.aecf.org

Guidelines for Reporting

- Use easily understood and jargon-free language. This guideline is important to all audiences, regardless of the methods used to report findings.

- Package information in an attractive format. This guideline can make the difference between engaging readers or turning them away.

- Engage the audience in simple and understandable ways. Extensive, formal, and expensive reports may not be necessary or desirable. Crisper, clearer language helps.

PROFILE

Getting the Word Out: How State Agencies Can Help

In Vermont, the Planning Division for the Agency of Human Services produces a series of reports called *What Works*. These reports include such topics as "Preventing Youth Disruptive or Violent Behavior in Your Community" or "Preventing Youth Substance Abuse in Your Community." The reports include a context for the topic, components of a community effort, and descriptions of effective programs.

PROFILE

Re-packaging Data into Community Profiles, Digests, and Posters

People in Partnership (a regional Community Partnership in Vermont) converted data on specific topics into one-page profiles called "The State of Youth in Lamoille Valley."

Each month, a new profile was created on such topics as alcohol use, tobacco use, disruptive behavior, domestic violence, mental health, etc. Each sheet contained four streamlined sections:

- What we know
- What helps
- Where to look for support
- Three things you can do

In addition, the Community Partnership developed a poster to illustrate the key facts.

Refer to the Appendix, Tools, for sample community profiles from Vermont.

PROFILE

Putting Reports and Data on Websites

Vermont, Georgia, and the Local INvestment Commission (LINC) in Kansas City, Missouri, provide access to data that communities can use to establish baselines or track progress in specific areas.

For example, on Georgia's website, individuals can conduct a data search in the "Chart our Progress" field on specific indicators as well as in specific geographic areas.

On Missouri's Department of Health website, individuals can develop county-specific and zip code-specific Community Data Profiles.

For more information, refer to:

http://www.georgiafamilyconnection.org

http://www.linc@kclinc.org

http://www.ahs.state.vt.us

http://www.health.state.mo.us

PROFILE

Adapted from a case study by
Lynn de Lapp in Mark Friedman's *Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide* found on the web at http://www.raguide.org. Used
with permission.

Santa Cruz County, California

An LGP made up of 33 members representing the county, city, United Way, major employers, private agencies, parents, and local activists operates the Community Assessment Project which "provides a comprehensive view of the quality of life" in Santa Cruz county by tracking over 100 indicators, related to seventeen community goals in six areas—the economy, education, health, public safety, natural environment, and social environment. The purpose of the data book is to raise public awareness of needs, trends, emerging issues, and community problems; provide ongoing data for human services, program planners, and funders; establish community goals with measurable indicators; and support collaborative action to achieve the goals.

The group established the indicators it wanted to track with the help of technical assistance advisory committees, involving 650 county residents. In each area, a few "key indicators" were designated to represent the best overall "snapshot" of the changing conditions in that particular subject area. Each indicator includes a "plain English" definition, data shown over time, and the data source.

Primary and secondary data are gathered annually. Each March, project researchers conduct 30-minute telephone surveys of over 500 county residents in both English and Spanish, representing the overall demographics of the county as well as special population groups. Secondary data is collected from government agencies, academic institutions, economic development groups, libraries, schools, health care organizations, law enforcement, fire departments, internet databases, etc.

Release of the report, published in three formats, has become an annual event covered widely by the local press. A 16-page full-color Summary Report is distributed to every household in Santa Cruz County. Also available are a 350-page comprehensive report including all indicators, community goals, survey data, and GIS systems and an 8-page Community Report Card showing approximately 50 trends on high-visibility indicators. In addition, customized reports tailored to geographic and demographic specifications are available upon request.

For a look at Santa Cruz's report, see http://www.appliedsurveyresearch.org.

PROFILE

Contra Costa County, California

In 1997, the Contra Costa County Children and Families Policy Forum, a county-wide group representing residents, county agencies, and others published their first Children's Report Card. The Report Card describes countywide progress on 23 indicators linked to five outcomes adopted by the County Board of Supervisors:

- Children ready for and succeeding in school.
- Children and youth healthy and preparing for productive adulthood.
- Families that are economically self-sufficient.
- Families that are safe, stable, and nurturing.
- Communities that are safe and provide a high quality of life for children and families.

The report card includes a description of each indicator, the data source, trendline information showing how the indicator has changed over time as well as comparisons to state-level data. The second edition published in 1998 and updated in 2000 added sub-county and other disaggregated data. Over 9200 copies of the report card have been distributed. To see the report card, go to http://www.cccoe.k12.ca.us and click on "Contra Costa County Children's Report Card" under "News and Announcements."

Adapted from a case study by Lynn de Lapp in Mark Friedman's *Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide found* on the web at http://www.raguide.org.
Used with permission.

What are the steps to developing a plan for reporting information?

By having a plan to report progress and findings, an LGP is able to know exactly what information to report, to whom, on what timetable, with what resources, and who is responsible.

Step One: Organize the reporting.

Gather needs and requirements for reporting.

- Which LGP committee is responsible for developing and monitoring this reporting plan?
- What are the committee's responsibilities?
- What staff is responsible for working with the committee and coordinating the reporting activities?
- What are the specific responsibilities and expectations of staff?
- What are the reporting requirements of our partnership agreements, contracts, and/or grants?
- What are the sources of information to develop these reports?

Step Two: Clarify the objectives.

Determine what needs to be reported and why.

- What are the objectives for our reporting plan and why?
- What are out priorities?

Steps for Developing a Reporting Plan (Continued)

Step Three: Determine approaches and resources.

Determine the approaches and resources available and those that are needed.

- How will we distribute information and findings to our various audiences?
- What resources will accomplish this task?
- What resources are available?
- Are they sufficient to the task? If not, what else do we need and where do we get it?

Step Four: Develop a work plan.

Develop a work plan for implementing the reporting. This reporting plan will describe the Who, What, When, Where, and How of reporting information.

- Who is the audience for the information?
- What reporting approaches will we use?
- How much will it cost?
- How long will it take to develop a report?
- Who is responsible for obtaining the data?
- Who is responsible for preparing the report?
- Who is responsible for proofing the report?
- What are the distribution steps and time to accomplish them?
- Who is responsible for the final sign-off?

Step Five: Plan to assess effectiveness.

Plan to assess the effectiveness of reporting.

- Did we reach our targeted audiences?
- Did they understand our message?
- How can we improve?

Chapter 7

Using Evaluation Data

Learning Goal

You will understand how to use evaluation data and how to apply this to the work of the Local Governance Partnership.

The Power of Information

The power of information is in its use. That is, putting the information to work. Local Governance Partnerships (LGPs) use information in a variety of ways, both externally to inform others and internally to define the work of the LGP.

In their day-to-day work, LGPs use data for decisionmaking. Information related to targeted results and indicators tells LGPs and service providers what they need to know about the effectiveness of particular strategies. If strategies are not yielding the progress desired, then adjustments can be made.

Keep in Mind…

Collecting, analyzing, reporting, and using data is an ongoing process that is part of an LGP's data system. With this process in place, thoughtful and deliberate decisions can be made to improve results for children, families, and communities.

This chapter presents multiple ways in which LGPs can use information for their ongoing work.

How can information be used?

To Increase Understanding About Conditions

The continuous flow of information to LGP members, partners, and stakeholders is an incremental support system for decisions about particular strategies.

As one LGP member noted, *"People act on what they know about, and **don't** act on what they don't understand."*

To Broaden the Community Agenda

Data can provide the impetus to take action in broadening a community agenda. If data show unmet community needs, then services can be enhanced and/or expanded to meet those needs.

To Change the Way Services are Delivered, Financed, and Governed

The information serves as a "feedback loop" for public agencies, providers, legislators, community leaders, residents, and the LGP itself.

Through systematic collection and presentation of information, stakeholders can learn a lot about "what is working" and "what is not." When credible information is available and distributed in a timely way, decisionmakers, advocates, and other stakeholders can think through policies, financing, and program strategies to improve services for families and children as a result.

As a Call for Action

Information can serve as an effective "wake-up call" for the community-at-large and for key stakeholders. The findings can be a startling reminder that work still needs to be done to improve the well being of children, families, and communities.

To Build Political Momentum

Long-standing LGPs have learned that reliable information can be effectively leveraged with policymakers, the media, and the community in order to heighten awareness and to increase the political stakes of *not* making improvements in the community.

Information can cause leaders to announce new initiatives or campaigns, set targets, go on the record calling for changes, or collaborate with other key stakeholders.

To Develop and Enhance Partnerships

With data in hand, LGPs are able to seek new partners and build new collaborations, such as with businesses that agree to sponsor mentoring programs or job shadowing for youth.

Information can also strengthen the commitment between partners when they see that their efforts are having an impact on improving the lives of children, families, and communities. Data can also further the resolve of partners to seek improved ways of making changes by shedding light on “what’s *not* working.”

To Obtain New Resources

LGPs frequently make the case for new resources (whether they are actually new sources or redeployed resources). When information clearly “tells a story,” LGPs can leverage resources in order to improve services or expand effective services to larger geographic areas and/or different populations.

To Attract New Leaders and Members

LGPs discovered that information is sometimes useful to attract new members and community leaders. Emerging LGPs find this especially true while trying to establish their credibility as community change agents.

Rigorous attention to data and broad dissemination attracts attention of community members and demonstrates the caliber and commitment of the LGP.

Data as Feedback

"It is crucial to the success of a collaborative's efforts to constantly monitor progress and the results or products for children and families."

The following is from: *Planning for Change Workbook,* The Family Connection, Georgia Policy Council for Children and Families, and Georgia Academy, 1998.

Once a community agenda has been set—that is, results and indicators are agreed upon—the community begins working toward its desired results. The LGP must then establish a system to monitor progress, assess community feedback, and observe changing conditions, opportunities, and trends that affect their work.

Accountability through a continuous feedback loop and appropriate adjustments are a critical part of the work of LGPs. Although most LGPs won't even know about all of the activities, services, and opportunities that ultimately affect results, a substantial amount of interaction will enable them to influence the desired results for children and families.

Plan ahead. The feedback loop and subsequent actions are part of the planning process. Designing and creating a community agenda through community input, data collection, and thoughtful strategies is not enough. The last step of the process entails some difficult and uncomfortable discussions, such as: what happens if the data and evaluation indicate that strategies are not having the desired effect? This question is not intended to assign blame but to find useful processes that regularly collect and review information in order to refine or change strategies for more effectiveness. When these discussions affect jobs, reputations, and relationships, they must be thought about upfront and procedures put in place. Such discussions about unmet expectations will be easier if LGP members trust and respect each other.

Decide on a process and timeline for the feedback loop. (How often will evaluation reports be reviewed? How long should positive changes take for particular results?)

Continued

Data as Feedback (Continued)

Here are a few questions that LGPs could use to frame their feedback loop:

- Are the indicators moving in the direction intended?

  If not, why are the strategies not working? Are these the right ones? Are they reaching enough people? What is the community wisdom about why the strategies are not working? What changes should be made? These questions may require more input than available around the LGP table. Be careful to take time with these questions, talking to families, frontline staff, counselors, and clergy, or whomever else might have an idea about what works and why.

- Is the strategy being implemented in the way intended?
- Are the strategies serving or impacting the persons intended?
- With the intention of improving our strategies, what changes should be made in operating agreements, contracts, practices, or policies to refine indicators and results?
- What is our timeline for making changes?

PROFILE

Developmental Stages of LGPs' Evaluation Processes

Georgia's Family Connection has developed a series of assessment tools to help LGPs determine their own developmental stage for their evaluation process. Evaluation consists mostly of completing quarterly self-assessment reports or having individual or small group conduct it. Evaluation is organized and conducted independent of other collaborative functions.

Beginning Stage: Evaluation is planned and administered by an evaluation team that meets regularly. A qualified "internal" or "external" evaluator guides development of the evaluation and its follow through.

Low Intermediate Stage: Evaluation is planned and administered as part of the strategic planning process. The planning and evaluation team/committee meets regularly. Adequate time, personnel, and other resources are allocated to the evaluation.

High Intermediate Stage: Planning and evaluation are linked tightly. Key stakeholders have input into both planning and interpretation of collected data. Decisionmaking continuously uses findings from the ongoing process and the interim results. Both strategic and operational plans are based on summative evaluation findings.

Chapter 8

Moving Forward

Learning Goal

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

Next Steps

Keep in Mind…

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

This Learning Guide is meant to be a continual learning tool as well as a reference, while you increase your knowledge and skills related to local governance and Local Governance Partnerships (LGPs).

The next steps are up to you. At this point, you may want to assess your individual knowledge and skills, or you may want to obtain more information by locating sources listed in the Resource and Contact sections of the Appendices.

Resources and Contacts

These lists were compiled from the most relevant, useful, and current sources at the time of publication. Please feel free to contact the Center for the Study of Social Policy for additional information.

Use the assessment on the following pages to assess your learning. ➔

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 list of resources, and/or work through activities you might have skipped.

Are you able to…	Y	SW	N	Page References	Ideas for Next Steps
Chapter 1: Results-Based Accountability					
Define results-based accountability?				Pages 16-17	
Discuss the importance of results-based accountability?				Pages 18-19	
Identify the characteristics of results-based accountability?				Pages 20-21	
Identify the components of results-based accountability?				Pages 22-33	
Identify the changes that must take place to implement results-based accountability?				Pages 34-38	
Chapter 2: Sharing Accountability					
Identify roles and responsibilities for sharing accountability?				Pages 40-44	
Identify different types of partnership agreements?				Page 45	

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

Self-Assessment (Continued)

Are you able to…	Y	SW	N	Page References	Ideas for Next Steps
Chapter 2: Sharing Accountability (Continued)					
Identify critical factors for successful partnership agreements?				Page 46	
Identify the components of a partnership agreement?				Pages 47-51	
Chapter 3: Measuring Progress Through Self-Evaluation					
Define a self-evaluation approach to measuring progress?				Pages 54-55	
Identify characteristics of a self-evaluation approach?				Page 56	
Identify benefits of a self-evaluation approach?				Pages 57-58	
Chapter 4: Building a Data System					
Recognize the rationale for setting up a data system?				Pages 60-61	
Identify the purposes of a data system?				Page 62	
Identify the criteria for an effective data system?				Pages 63-65	

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

Self-Assessment (Continued)

Are you able to…	Y	SW	N	Page References	Ideas for Next Steps
Chapter 4: Building a Data System (Continued)					
Identify steps for setting up a data system?				Pages 66-70	
Chapter 5: Collecting Data					
Identify key elements in a plan to collect data?				Pages 72-75	
Identify decisions for setting up a data collection system?				Pages 76-80	
Chapter 6: Reporting Information					
Recognize key factors for effective reporting?				Pages 82-85	
Identify approaches and guidelines for reporting?				Pages 86-93	
Identify steps to developing a plan for reporting information?				Pages 94-96	
Chapter 7: Using Evaluation Data					
Identify the multiple ways for using data collected?				Pages 98-103	

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

Appendices

Glossary

Activities and Worksheets

Tools

Resources

Contacts

Glossary

Local Governance Terms

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.

Results-based accountability—The steps and processes for making decisions using results to measure accountability.

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.

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.

Data System Terms

Baseline—A picture of where we've been and where we're headed if we stay on our current course.

Data—Information, especially that organized for analysis or used as a basis for a decision.

Performance measures—Data elements that tell whether a particular program, service, or activity is achieving its intended results.

Qualitative—Evaluation methods that use observations, interviews, focus groups, surveys, etc., to assess change.

Quantitative—Evaluation methods that rely on analysis of data to determine the results achieved.

Self-evaluation—An evaluation performed by the one being evaluated–in this case, the LGP—to assess the degree to which it is achieving its goals and realizing its desired results. An LGP uses this information for measuring progress and making decisions.

Methods for Collecting Data

Asset mapping—A method that involves multiple stakeholders in making a commitment to discover the community's capacities and assets instead of focusing solely on needs, deficiencies, and problems.

Data warehouse—An increasingly popular strategy for improving data/information systems, because it increases the amount of data available and improves the access to data for community organizations. Data are downloaded from multiple public and private databases, organizing information in order to project trends, identify performance gaps, and increase accountability. Multiple users can access data through computer links.

Focus groups—A means to gather qualitative information from a group of individuals who respond to a set of targeted questions. A facilitator usually guides these discussions.

GIS (Geographic Information System)—A computerized method to gather, integrate, and illustrate data by individual residences, blocks, census tracts, and other geographic units.

Surveys—A method for gathering both qualitative and quantitative data regarding needs, assessments of service delivery, attitudes, or other information.

Activities and Worksheets

Learn by Discussing

Components, Benefits, and Changes

Describe the components and benefits of results-based accountability and the changes needed to implement it.

Refer to Chapter 1, Results-Based Accountability.

How would you describe the components of results-based accountability? Could you convince someone of its benefits? What needs to happen for results-based accountability to be implemented?

This role play activity gives you the opportunity to discuss these aspects of results-based accountability.

Part One

Create a panel of citizens who are getting involved with local governance. Have volunteers assume the roles of a state agency manager, a service provider, a community member, and an elected school board member. (Adjust the panel members to suit your locale and/or situation.)

The remaining participants have the task of informing the panel about how results-based accountability can guide the work of the LGP. They need to describe its components and convince the panel of its benefits.

Panel members may ask questions and give their opinions about what they hear.

Part Two

Panel members agree to the effectiveness and feasibility of results-based accountability. Now they need to come up with changes in the way they do business in order to implement it. Each panel member presents changes from his or her perspective. They may ask participants for their help and viewpoints.

Participants ask questions of the panel members and give their opinions.

Learn by Discussing

Benefits

Identify the benefits of a self-evaluation approach.

Refer to Chapter 3, Measuring Progress Through Self-Evaluation.

Why use a self-evaluation approach? This activity offers fictitious situations for small group discussion.

Materials

Easel pad paper, markers

Option

Develop a press release about a self-evaluation. State succinctly what is involved and why it is beneficial.

Organize into small groups. Select a recorder to list key points from your discussions.

Part One

Discuss how you would approach the following situation: Your LGP is preparing to use a self-evaluation approach. What do you need to consider? What would you do first? Second?

Part Two

A foundation is considering whether to provide funding and staff to help with a self-evaluation. Develop a written or oral executive summary that highlights the benefits to convince the foundation into becoming a partner.

Learn by Discussing

Criteria for Effectiveness

Identify criteria for a data system.

Refer to Chapter 4: Building a Data System.

How do you know if a data system is effective? Would you recognize the criteria?

Option

Organize into small groups with each group discussing one of the scenarios.

1. Read the scenarios on the next page that describe data systems. Some scenarios describe emerging LGPs; some describe mature LGPs.

2. Evaluate each of the systems.

   ✍✍Do they meet the criteria for an effective system?

   ✍✍If not, what would you suggest for improving them?

SCENARIO 1

The Mercer County LGP was formed just one year ago. It has been holding focus groups and town hall meetings throughout the community to ask residents how they feel about the community and in what improvements they are interested for their children and families. Now that the LGP has lots of feedback from every corner of the county, they are ready to agree on results and indicators. Or are they?

What additional types of data do they still need?

During the community discussions, the LGP heard a lot of concerns about teen pregnancy, fears about violence and crime, and dissatisfaction with the local public schools. What data would be readily available to determine if these issues are grounded in facts and if some issues are more pressing in some neighborhoods than others? How will the LGP know if resources and assets could be applied to achieve better results in some of these areas?

Is the LGP making progress in setting up a data system and does the system meet the criteria for an effective system?

After discussing, refer to possible responses following the scenarios.

Glossary

Focus group — A means to gather qualitative information from a group of individuals who respond to a set of targeted questions. A facilitator usually guides the discussion.

SCENARIO 2

The Anthony County LGP was an early leader in local governance and has been operating for the past seven years. Throughout these years, the LGP has developed a strong reputation for working with state and local governments and has partnership agreements with several governmental agencies.

The LGP has been collecting data for five years, although much of the data are not broken down by neighborhood or village. Unfortunately, the LGP has not been able to work with each source of data to agree upon definitions for some key elements, such as youth, seniors, and poverty. Therefore, different sources compile and report data using different age ranges for youth and for seniors, and various programs define the poverty level differently. This lack of uniformity ends up with the LGP relying on guesswork and approximation to make the data consistent and usable.

Due to financial constraints, the LGP has old computer equipment and software and, therefore, finds compiling reports by hand easier than trying to use old technology for developing these reports.

On the plus side, the LGP has found ways to publicize their progress through these reports, turning them into posters and annual newsletters. The community is pleased with the results and understands now what the LGP is trying to achieve with the help of the entire community. As LGP members plan for their annual retreat, they listed their data system as a major agenda item for discussion.

Does their system meet the requirements of an effective system? Do they need to make improvements? If so, in what parts of their system and why? How can they begin to make these improvements? What works well and why?

After discussing, refer to possible responses following this scenario.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

Scenario 1

This LGP is just getting started in setting up a data collection system. It is making progress in gathering qualitative data (see Chapter 4) about existing, emerging, or unmet needs in the community.

Now, the LGP needs some quantitative data to validate these concerns and pinpoint the areas where problems are most prevalent, what factors put certain groups at risk, and what resources can help mitigate the problems.

The LGP could seek existing reports and statistical data from state and county public agencies. For example, the public health department should have data about teen pregnancy rates, and the local police or sheriff's department would have statistics on crime and violence.

The LGP needs to make the data collection system practical and something they can handle, with limited experience and resources. They may want their membership to expand the data they initially collect. Some partners may have direct access to data and some may have relationships with others who have access.

The LGP may want to obtain resources so they can hire an expert in evaluation who could craft the system and determine the next steps.

This cross-checking of community opinions would add to the credibility of the data collection system.

Scenario 2

The fact that the community is viewing the data as credible speaks to the effectiveness of the LGP's communication system. The credibility of the data collection system, however, would benefit from some internal checks and balances to ensure that the information is accurate and complete. The partners who are collecting the data need consensus on definitions of various key elements so that the data and demographic information collected will be consistent.

Technology needs attention. Critical factors to a useful data collection system are a broad-based collaboration and suitable technology for the collection, compilation, and reporting functions. The LGP could look to its membership for resources. Typically, a member(s) would have either technology expertise or staff with expertise. A technology ad hoc committee could be formed to study the situation and come up with recommendations for the LGP. The committee would consider criteria for an effective system, both short term and long term.

Resources for technology may also come from the LGP membership, perhaps from this same technology committee. Those involved with technology usually have access to good deals on software and hardware or connections for donations or at-cost systems.

Learn by Discussing

Putting It All Together

Identify the components and steps involved in building a data system, including collecting the data, reporting the information, and using the findings.

Refer to Chapter 7, Using Evaluation Data.

How do all the pieces of a data system fit together? How does the continuous cycle of collecting, analyzing, reporting, and using data apply to the work of an LGP?

Option

Play out your role with participants assuming their roles of different members in an emerging LGP and in a mature LGP.

This activity uses a role play with a fictitious LGP in order to give you the opportunity for putting together the information about ensuring accountability.

1. Read the scenario on the next page.

2. Assume you are a member from a mature LGP in another part of the state. You are visiting with the partnership described in the scenario to help them move forward in setting up their data collection system. What recommendations would you make?

3. For each part of the scenario, answer the questions. Offer advice, steps, and "lessons learned." Show the emerging LGP ways to plan for the system.

ROLE PLAY

Community Partners of Rax County (CPRC) is an emerging LGP connected to a statewide effort to improve results for children, families, and communities. The state has adopted a core set of results and sanctioned a state-supported entity to serve as a consulting and coordinating body for the community partnerships.

CPRC includes neighborhood representatives, family members, some clergy, representatives from local service clubs, department heads from state agencies, and staff on loan from local agencies, such as family and children's services, community health, education, and employment and training. CPRC is housed in a Community Resource Center, which was once a recreation center.

CPRC is in the process of conducting a series of focus groups and door-to-door canvassing to discover neighborhood issues/problems related to the results areas. The next phase of this process is to present the findings at a series of town meetings in order to reach consensus on community priority areas. A critical aspect of CPRC's work is to set up a data system.

What would you recommend that the partnership do at this point?

- What criteria must they consider to make a data collection system effective?
- What steps should they take?
- How should they develop a plan for collecting data and for self-evaluation?
- What method(s) should they use to collect data?
- What should they do with the data collected?
- What kind of reports do they need?
- What should the reports look like and how should they be written?
- How should they plan to use the data collected?

Learn by Discussing

Using Data to Ensure Accountability

Determine the extent that results-based accountability, self-evaluation, and a data collection system is integrated into the work of your LGP.

Refer to Chapters 1 through 7.

Use the discussion worksheets on the following pages to discuss and determine the extent that:

- Results-based accountability is integrated into your LGP’s work.
- Your LGP understands shared accountability and uses partnership agreements.
- Your LGP understands and uses a self-evaluation approach.
- A data collection system is in place and is effective.
- Your LGP has a plan for collecting data.
- Your LGP uses different approaches to collect data and has a plan for reporting information.

Using Data to Ensure Accountability (Continued)

You may first want to individually check your responses to the discussion questions. Then, use these responses to determine areas of consensus and areas of disagreement. Structure the large group discussion accordingly.

Plan the next steps for areas that need attention. Consider:

- How to obtain additional information for questions marked DK (Don't Know).
- Contacting other LGPs to discuss their lessons learned and their successes.

  Refer to the Appendix, Contacts.

- Locating and using other resources.

  Refer to the Appendix, Resources.

- Using other Learning Guides in this series, Building Capacity for Local Decisionmaking.

Results-Based Accountability Discussion Worksheet

Discussion Question	Y	N	DK	What More Could We Do?
Do we understand results-based accountability?				
Do we have shared accountability with a wide range of partners and stakeholders?				
Do we have buy-in and support at the state, local, and neighborhood level?				
Are we acting as a catalyst to encourage stakeholders to assume responsibility? What is the status of our agreements, such as, contracts and memorandums, with partners?				
Does our community agenda, strategic plan, or financing strategies link to desired results?				

Do we have a common language among all partners and stakeholders?				

KEY: Y = Yes, N = No, DK = Don't Know

Shared Accountability Discussion Worksheet

Discussion Question	Y	N	DK	What More Could We Do?
Do we know what being a partner means?				
Do we know who can and who should be our state-level and community-level partners?				
Do we have contracts, letters of agreement, and/or partnership agreements with our partners?				
Do we understand what makes a partnership agreement successful?				
Do we know the components of a partnership agreement?				

Do our current partnership agreements contain these components?				

KEY: Y = Yes, N = No, DK = Don't Know

Measuring Results Discussion Worksheet

Discussion Question	Y	N	DK	What More Could We Do?
Do we understand the characteristics of a self-evaluation approach?				
Do we understand the benefits of a self-evaluation approach?				
Do we know how to conduct a self-evaluation?				
Do we have experience with a self-evaluation approach?				
✍✍ If yes, do we need to expand and/or enhance our approach?				
✍✍ If no, do we need additional knowledge and skills?				

✍✍ If no, do we need additional resources?				
✍✍ If no, do we need planning sessions?				

KEY: Y = Yes, N = No, DK = Don't Know

A Data System Discussion Worksheet

Discussion Question	Y	N	DK	What More Could We Do?
Do we understand the purposes of a data system?				
Do we have a data system?				
If yes, does it meet the criteria for an effective system? (Refer back to Chapter 4 to review criteria for an effective data system.)				
If yes, have we addressed all our needs, requirements, and opportunities?				
If no, do we have a plan for setting up a system?				
✍ Have we identified our data needs?				
✍ Have we identified our data requirements?				

✍✍ Have we identified our data opportunities?				

KEY: Y = Yes, N = No, DK = Don't Know

Data Collection Discussion Worksheet

Discussion Question	Y	N	DK	What More Could We Do?
Do we have a plan to collect data?				
✍✍ If not, do we know what we need to do to develop a plan?				
Do we understand all that needs to be in place to collect data?				
Have we reached agreement with our partners about the purpose and scope of the evaluation?				
Have we addressed the decisions that need to be made in order to collect data?				

Do we know the sources that exist in our community, including data warehouses and integrated systems, to gather better data?				

KEY: Y = Yes, N = No, DK = Don't Know

Data Collection Discussion Worksheet (Continued)

Discussion Question	Y	N	DK	What More Could We Do?
Do we have sufficient information about cost factors associated with collecting better data?				
Do we understand the specific logistical and technical issues to be addressed and by whom?				
Do we have a resource person available with knowledge about collecting data?				
Do we have a resource person to analyze, interpret, and report the data?				
Do we have a clear understanding of how to track implementation of the evaluation plan?				

KEY: Y = Yes, N = No, DK = Don't Know

Reporting Information Discussion Worksheet

Discussion Question	Y	N	DK	What More Could We Do?
Do we understand key factors to effective reporting?				
Do we know what our various stakeholder groups want to know?				
Do we know the type of report(s) most useful to our stakeholders?				
Do we know the approaches most effective with our different constituents?				
Do we know if we can produce the data on a timely schedule to generate reports?				
Do we have the human and financial resources to produce the reports?				
Do we understand the steps in developing a plan for reporting information?				

Do we have a reporting plan that describes what reports to make, who will do the work, and when?				

KEY: Y = Yes, N = No, DK = Don't Know

A Reporting Plan: Worksheet

Step 1: Organize the reporting.	
Key Questions	**Responses to Questions**
Which LGP committee is responsible for developing and monitoring this reporting plan?	
What are the committee's responsibilities?	
What staff is responsible for working with the committee and coordinating the reporting activities?	
What are the specific responsibilities and expectations of staff?	
What are the reporting requirements for our partnership agreements, contracts, and/or grants?	
What are our sources of information to develop these reports?	

A Reporting Plan Worksheet (Continued)

Step 2: Clarify objectives.	
Key Questions	**Responses to Questions**
What are the objectives for our reporting plan and why?	
What are our priorities?	

Step 3: Determine approaches and resources.	
Key Questions	**Responses to Questions**
What approaches will we use for which audience?	
What resources will accomplish this task?	
What resources are available?	
What additional resources do we need?	

A Reporting Plan Worksheet (Continued)

Step 4: Develop a work plan.

Key Questions	Responses to Questions
What else do we need to develop a work plan for implementation? Did we consider: ✍✍ Audience ✍✍ Approach ✍✍ Cost ✍✍ Development Timeframe ✍✍ Responsibility for Obtaining Data ✍✍ Responsibility for Preparing Report ✍✍ Responsibility for Accuracy Check ✍✍ Distribution Steps and Timeline ✍✍ Responsibility for Final Sign-off	

Step 5: Plan to assess effectiveness.

Key Questions	Responses to Questions
How will we determine if the report is useful?	
How can we improve our reporting process?	

Using Evaluation and Data Discussion Worksheet

Discussion Question	Y	N	DK	What More Could We Do?
To what degree do we use information to inform stakeholders?				
Do we use information to sustain stakeholders' commitment?				
Do we use data for making course corrections in the strategies to improve results?				
Do we have data available regularly for LGP members to make decisions about plans and budgets?				
Do we use the data to negotiate partnership agreements?				
Do we use the data to enter into contracts and grants with funding sources?				

Do we use the data to make a case for changing policies and practices?				

KEY: Y = Yes, N = No, DK = Don’t Know

Tools

Steps for Results-Based Accountability

Adapted from: Friedman, M., *Results Accountability for Proposition 10 Commissions: A Planning Guide for Improving the Well Being of Young Children and Their Families*, UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities, March, 2000

Mark Friedman, who has done pioneering work in results-based accountability, offers the following steps:

1. Decide on a set of desired results and indicators to measure progress. The results chosen answer the question "What do we want for our families and children?" The indicators chosen answer the question "How would we recognize these results in our day-to-day lives?" Extensive input and ideas should come from a wide range of individuals and organizations.

2. Create a baseline for each indicator. A baseline is a picture of where we've been and where we're headed if we stay on our current course.

3. Figure out the story behind the baselines. Why do these pictures look the way they do? What are the causes and forces at work? These questions require some research and information.

4. Gather the partners. Determine the potential partners (families, youth, businesses, public and private agencies, faith communities, educational institutions) who have a role to play in achieving better results.

5. Make some decisions about what might work. Determine how to do better than the baselines in this neighborhood. What has worked in other places? What does the research tell us and, just as importantly, what does our own experience tell us about what would work in this neighborhood?

6. Develop a simple action plan and budget. What do we propose to do? A multi-year plan would lay out tasks, timeframes, and responsibilities.

7. Track and report regularly on the indicators chosen to track progress. Don't expect miracles. Progress takes time. If regular measurements don't indicate the work is beginning to "turn the curve," a reassessment is due.

Criteria for Choosing An Indicator

Communication power

- Does the indicator communicate to a broad range of audiences?
- Can the indicator communicate to the public and other stakeholders about "how we're doing" on child, family, and community well being?

Proxy power

- Is relationship clear between the indicator and the result represented?
- Does the indicator bring along the rest of the data? You don't need 20 indicators telling you the same thing. Pick the indicators that are most likely to match the direction of the other indicators.

Data power

- Is information available on a frequent basis, preferably monthly or quarterly?

Excerpted from Friedman, Mark, *A Strategy Map for Results-Based Budgeting*, The Finance Project, September, 1996.

Check it out before you proceed!

- ✍✍Does the benchmark directly relate to the core result?
- ✍✍Does the benchmark quantify the achievement of your core results (can this benchmark be measured)?
- ✍✍Does the benchmark have high communication power (a wide range of people will understand it)?
- ✍✍Does it have proxy power (supported by research and central to the result)?
- ✍✍Does it have data power (quality information is available or can be developed)? Is the information you have easily and frequently available?
- ✍✍Do we need to collect information in a different way or do we need to collect additional information?
  - ✍✍ Do we have partners (local, regional, or state) who might help us answer this? If yes, who?
  - ✍✍ Do we have basic assumptions about data? (What factors may affect the accuracy of data?)
  - ✍✍ Are we satisfied that community planning members and board members buy into and understand this benchmark?

From *Plan Guidance for Caring Communities*, Missouri, May, 1999.

Selecting Indicators Worksheet

Instructions: Write the result you seek in the space provided. Then, list potential indicators for that result. Rank each indicator (H) High, (M) Medium, or (L) Low, in terms of Communication Power, Proxy Power, and Data Power.

Refer to Chapter 1, Results-Based Accountability, for more detailed information about results and indicators.

Result			
Indicator	Communication Power	Proxy Power	Data Power

Key Questions

- ✍✍Does the indicator directly relate to the result?
- ✍✍Does the indicator quantify achievement of the result (can it be measured)?
- ✍✍Does the indicator have:
  - Communication power (a wide range of people will understand it)?
  - Proxy power (supported by research and central to the result)?
  - Data power (quality data are available or can be developed)?

Sample Indicators

Some Ways We Experience Children Healthy and Ready for School

If the result to be achieved is ensuring that all children are healthy and ready for school, we might use some or all of the following indicators to tell us how well we are doing. For example, we might look at the number and percent of children entering kindergarten who are:

- Enthusiastic about going to school
- Dressed appropriately for the season
- Familiar with letters and numbers
- Not experiencing violence
- Interacting appropriately with peers
- Showing social interaction skills on the playground
- Hygienic in bedroom and bathroom at home
- Well nourished
- Showing coordination of fine and gross motor skills
- Supported by parental enthusiasm
- Demonstrating a positive self image
- Able to communicate

Source: Mark Friedman, *Results Accountability for Proposition 10 Commissions: A Planning Guide for Improving the Well Being of Young Children and their Families,* University of California at Los Angeles, March, 2000.

Performance Measures

Performance measures track how well public and private agencies and programs are working. Typical performance measures address timeliness, cost-effectiveness, and compliance with standards.

Example The percentage of child abuse investigations initiated within 24 hours of a report is a typical performance measure for reducing child abuse and neglect.

The following chart shows four types of measurements.

Measuring Change

Quantity	Quality
Input How much service was delivered? Measures # of clients # of activities	Input How well were services delivered? Measures % of satisfied clients % of activities performed well
Output How much change resulted? Measures Numbers Conditions Skills Behaviors Circumstances	Output What quality of change was produced? Measures % who achieved change

Example

Results	Children Ready to Enter School
Indicators	✍✍What percentage of children is enrolled in pre-school programs? ✍✍What percentage of young children has been immunized on time? ✍✍What percentage of children is passing the kindergarten readiness test?
Performance Measures	✍✍How many children participated in mentoring programs that provided tutoring services? ✍✍How many hours of mentoring per student were provided? ✍✍How many students improved their test scores after mentoring? ✍✍What percentage of children improved their reading level after the mentoring program?
System Change Indicators	What changes are occurring in the way systems do business? ✍✍Has a shift to neighborhood service delivery increased availability of services? ✍✍Do agencies make decisions together in a collaborative way? ✍✍Is there a uniform intake form across agencies? ✍✍What percentage of LGP members are parents and residents? ✍✍How many community meetings were held to gather input from residents on priorities for service delivery or budgets of public agencies? ✍✍Have public agencies developed a cross-agency approach to make decisions on financing strategies for community initiatives?

Developing a Partnership Agreement
Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

A Partnership Agreement works for each partner to:

- Set forth the mutual goals or results expected for the partners.
- Accept responsibility to pursue specific activities and meet obligations to the other partner(s).
- Specify which partner will do what, when, for what cost (if any), and at what standard of performance.

Key Questions to Answer	Response
Who are the partners entering into the agreement?	
What are the goals and expectations of this agreement?	
What are the beginning and ending dates of this agreement?	
What are the shared responsibilities of all partners?	
What are the responsibilities of each partner?	
✍Partner	
✍Partner	

Developing a Partnership Agreement (Continued)

Key Questions to Answer	Response
What are the financing provisions?	
What is the method to assess progress toward goals?	
How frequently will partners meet to review progress?	
What are the steps to amend or cancel this agreement?	
Who is authorized to sign this agreement?	

Sample Memorandum of Agreement

(Name of Local Governance Partnership)
and
(Name of Partner)

The (name of Local Governance Partnership) 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 community'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 _______)

Responsibilities of the Partner

(Name of partner) agrees to provide (service, program, activity, or support) to (name of group(s) as specified below). Table A relates to the provision of services; Table B relates to other forms of support (such as utilities, use of space, etc.).

Reporting Services to Be Provided

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

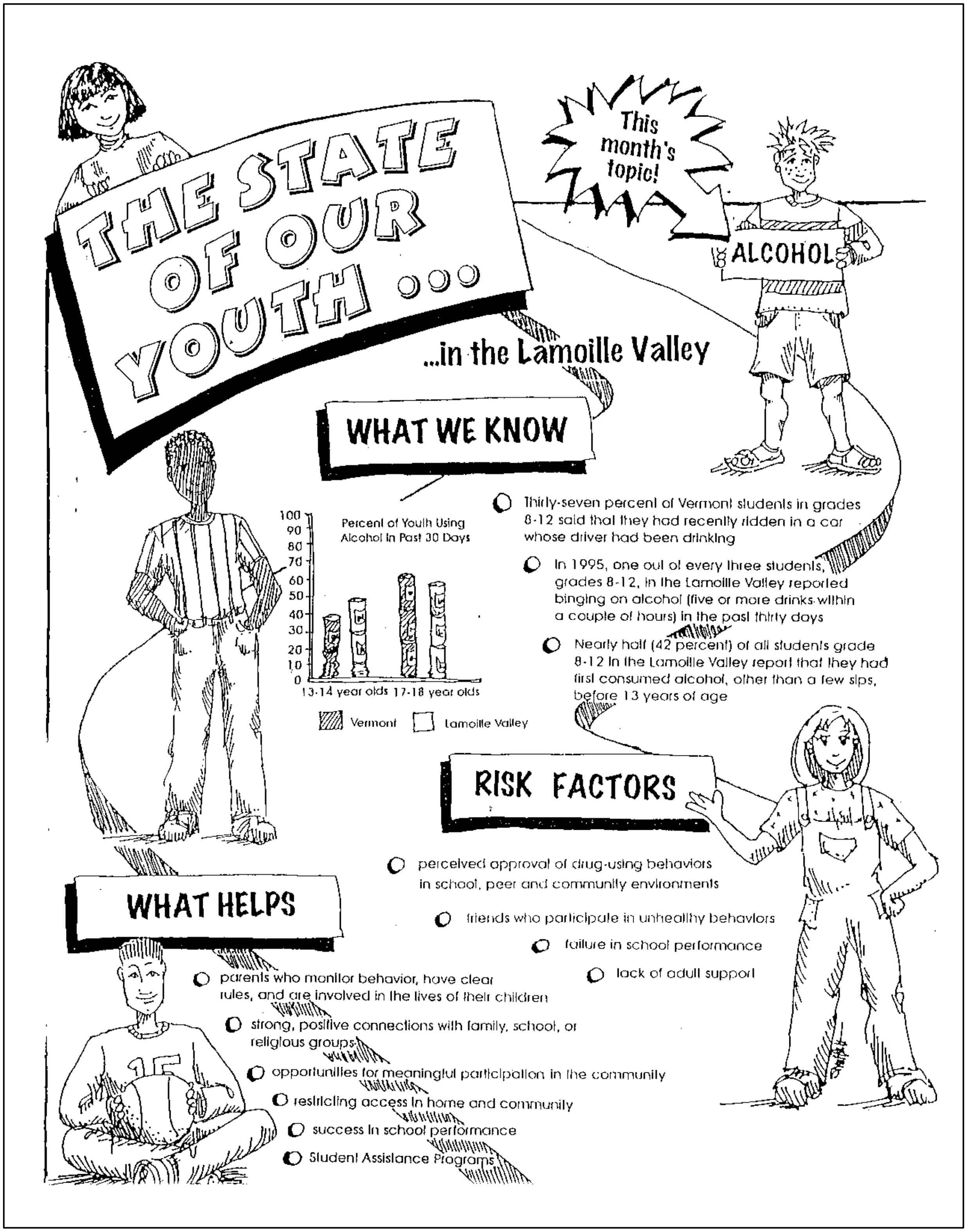
Approved By:

______________________	______________________
Name of LGP	Name of partner
______________________	______________________
Signature	Signature
______________________	______________________
Name of LGP chair	Name and title
______________________	
Print name under signature	
______________________	______________________
MOA authorized by	Date

Children and Families Indicator Baseline Worksheet

Result # 1: Children are born healthy and grow up healthy.

Indicator	Baseline Data	Source of Data	Trend Better/Worse	What Data are Needed?	Potential Source	Notes
Low birth weight	13.5% Year: 1997 13.6% Year: 1996	Kids Count	Better but irregular- 1987 = 13.6% 1992 = 14.2%	By neighbor-hood By race	Kids Count	
Infant mortality per 1,000	13.1% Year: 1997 13.2% Year: 1996	Kids Count	Better 1994 = 18.2%			



THE STATE OF OUR YOUTH ...

...in the Lamoille Valley

This month's topic!

ALCOHOL

WHAT WE KNOW

- Thirty-seven percent of Vermont students in grades 8-12 said that they had recently ridden in a car whose driver had been drinking
- In 1995, one out of every three students, grades 8-12, in the Lamoille Valley reported binging on alcohol (five or more drinks within a couple of hours) in the past thirty days
- Nearly half (42 percent) of all students grade 8-12 in the Lamoille Valley report that they had first consumed alcohol, other than a few sips, before 13 years of age

RISK FACTORS

- perceived approval of drug-using behaviors in school, peer and community environments
- friends who participate in unhealthy behaviors
- failure in school performance
- lack of adult support

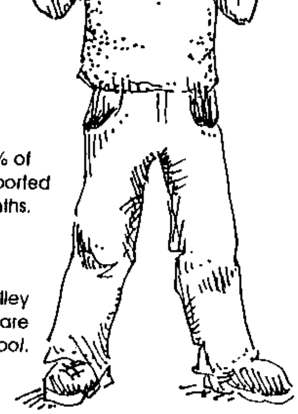
WHAT HELPS

- parents who monitor behavior, have clear rules, and are involved in the lives of their children
- strong, positive connections with family, school, or religious groups
- opportunities for meaningful participation in the community
- restricting access in home and community
- success in school performance
- Student Assistance Programs

THE STATE OF OUR YOUTH...

...in the Lamoille Valley

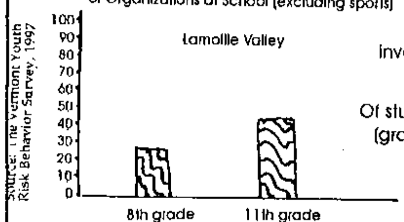
DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR



WHAT WE KNOW

The answer to last month's quiz is....in 1995, 50% of eighth grade students in the Lamoille Valley reported being in a physical fight in the past twelve months. In 1997, however, 42% of eighth graders said they had been in a physical fight.

Percent of Students Involved in Clubs or Organizations at School (excluding sports)

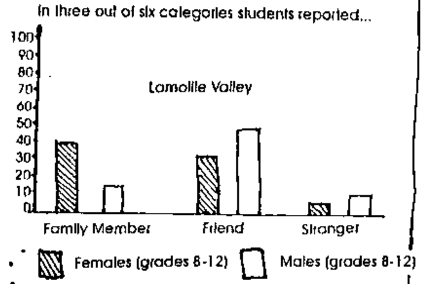


Of students surveyed in the the Lamoille Valley (grades 6-12), thirty-four percent said they are involved in clubs or organizations *outside of school.*

Of students surveyed in the Lamoille Valley (grades 6-12), fifty-four percent said they are involved in team sports.

The last time you were in a physical fight, with whom did you fight?

In three out of six categories students reported...



Source: The Search Institute, 1996

Thirty-three percent of all students in the Lamoille Valley reported having been in a physical fight in the past twelve months.

Thirty-three percent of Lamoille Valley students (grade 8-12) said that someone had stolen or deliberately damaged their property *on school property* in the past 12 months.

WHAT HELPS

Spending three or more hours a week in extracurricular activities such as music, sports, clubs or church events.

Parents and schools with consistent rules and expectations.

Adults who model responsible behavior.

A safe environment at home, in school, and in the community.

ADULTS... THREE THINGS YOU CAN DO

Volunteer your time as a youth activity leader or assistant.

Praise more....criticize less.

Find a common interest with a young person and do it.

WHERE TO LOOK FOR SUPPORT

Family Support Services:

Hardwick Area Patch Office 472-3127
LINK at the Lamoille Family Center 888-5229
Lamoille County Mental Health 888-4914

Seek support from an adult or person you trust such as a teacher, family member, or school mental health professional.

Resources

General References

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The Power to Connect People Community, 2000 HUD Community Planning Software, available for $249 from HUD c/o Caliper Corp. Community 2020 Sales, 1172 Beacon St., Newton, MA 02461 800-998-9999. http://www.hud.gov

Chapter 2: Sharing Accountability

Fisher, Roger, Ury, William, *Getting Ready to Negotiate: The Getting to Yes Workbook* (New York, NY: The Penguin Group, 1992).

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Websites

Aspen Institute: http://www.aspeninstitute.org/

Center for the Study of Social Policy: http://www.cssp.org

Community Tool Box: http:/ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/

Family Investment Trust: http://www.mofit.org

Georgia Academy: http://www.ga-academy.org

Promising Practices Network: http://www.promisingpractices.net

Search Institute: http://www.Search-Institute.org

Sherbrooke Consulting for tools:
http://www.sherbrookeconsulting.com

Strengthening America's Families
http://www.strengtheningfamilies.org

Fiscal Policy Studies Institute: http://www.raguide.org

Sample Surveys

A number of surveys are widely used to gather information about the status of youth. If your community is working to address the problems of risky behaviors among teenagers, you may want to consider exploring one or more of the following three surveys:

Survey 1

The "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System" (YRBSS) was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to provide information on risk behaviors among teenagers as well as some protective factors that help prevent problems. Thousands of communities use the YRBSS to monitor the behavior of youth. The YRBSS is best known for being one of the most in-depth examinations of a wide variety of youth risk behaviors, including substance abuse, depression/suicide, sexual activity, birth control, nutrition, and AIDS awareness.

For more information, contact Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1600 Clifton Rd., Atlanta, GA 30333. (404) 639-3311. Or visit their website at: http://www.cdc.gov.

Survey 2

"Communities That Care" (CTC) is an initiative used in 500 communities around the country to promote positive youth development. A CTC survey was created by Developmental Research and Programs (DRP) in Seattle in 1990. It is based on the premise that healthy development of young people is promoted by building strong bonds between youth and positive adults. The survey measures a number of risk factors that predict substance abuse, delinquency, violence, and early pregnancy as well as protective factors that promote positive youth development.

For more information, contact Developmental Research and Programs, Inc., 130 Nickerson St., Ste. 107, Seattle, WA 98109. 800-736-2630. Fax (206) 286-1462. Or visit their website at: http://www.drp.org.

Sample Surveys (Continued)

The Search Institute in Minneapolis developed the "Healthy Communities—Healthy Youth" initiative now used in over 540 communities. It includes a survey called "Profiles of Student Life" and is based on a list of 40 developmental assets that contribute to positive child and adolescent development. Examples of these assets are when a young person:

- Communicates with his parent(s) and is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s).
- Receives support from three or more non-parent adults.
- Serves in the community one hour or more per week.
- Spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school or in the community.
- Is out with friends with nothing special to do two or fewer nights per week.

The survey measures the degree to which young people possess these 40 developmental assets, and the degree to which they engage in risky behaviors such as substance abuse, sexual activity, violence, delinquency, and truancy. Their research has found that youth with the most assets are least likely to engage in problem alcohol use, illicit drug use, sexual activity, and violence, for example.

For more information about this initiative and survey, contact the Search Institute at 700 South Third St., Ste. 210, Minneapolis, MN 55415-1138. (612) 376-8955. Fax: (612) 376-8956. Or visit their website: http://www.search-institute.org.

Sites with Exemplary Reporting on Results and Indicators

This list of web sites is taken from Mark Friedman's *Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide*, available on the web at http://www.raguide.org

INTERNATIONAL

Norway: http://www.ssb.no/english/monthly_bulletin/

UNITED STATES

Kids Count: http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/index.htm

Redefining Progress: http://www.rprogress.org

CALIFORNIA

Healthy California Progress Report Initiative: http://www.ncccsf.org

Children Now: California Report Card:
http://www.childrennow.org/publications.html
Contra Costa County: http://www.ccoe.k12.ca.us

Sacramento Region Quality of Life Index:
http://www.valleyvision.org/aboutus/thinking.html

San Mateo County Children's Report Card:
http://www.pls.lib.ca.us/healthysmc/33/children.pdf

Santa Cruz County: Investing in Children and Families:
http://www.whatworks-scruz.org and
http://www.appliedsurveyresearch.org/cap_report.html
[For other results accountability work of Applied Survey Research (ASR): http://www.appliedsurveyresearch.org/assessments.htm]

Silicon Valley Joint Venture: http://www.jointventure.org

GEORGIA

Georgia Policy Council for Children and Families and Family Connection: http://www.georgiafamilyconnection.org

MARYLAND

Maryland Office of Children, Youth, and Families:
http://www.ocyf.state.md.us

Montgomery County Collaboration Council:
http://www.collaborationcouncil.org

MISSOURI	Missouri Family Investment Trust: http://www.mofit.org
OHIO	Montgomery County Family and Children First Council: http://www.fcfc.montco.org
OREGON	Oregon Progress Board: http://www.econ.state.or.us/opb
	Oregon Commission on Children and Families: http://www.ccf.state.or.us
VERMONT	Agency for Human Services: Community Profiles: http://www.ahs.state.vt.us
WEST VIRGINIA	Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families: http://www.prevnet.org/outcomes

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 link research and policy better 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.

Mark Friedman
The Fiscal Policy Studies Institute
8 Charles Plaza, Suite 1407, Baltimore, MD 21201
Tel: (410) 659-9745, Fax: (410) 659-9753
http://www.resultsaccountability.com

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 Web site 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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