Tracking Change through an Outcomes Diary

Resource at a Glance

Tracking Results in Community Change Efforts

Collaborative community change efforts are distinct because they involve many partners engaged at different levels working toward a shared outcome such as moving the needle on complex issues like poverty, homelessness, newcomer integration or environmental change. There is often a convening collaborative body or backbone organization with multiple responsibilities including the engagement of partners, developing and monitoring a change plan, and reporting results.

To effectively monitor changes as they are occurring, a simple tool has been developed called an Outcomes Diary. The diary, developed and used by the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction (HRPR), a cross-sector community collaborative planning table, was used to document progress across three domains: changes impacting individuals and families; changes in community capacity and changes in policy and systems.

At regular intervals, HRPR staff would capture shifts occurring in the community from a wide variety of sources. They would document these changes and then develop results reports which were shared with key community partners and other stakeholders. The results of the Outcomes Diary approach to community change enabled the HRPR staff and community leaders to effectively monitor and learn from the constant stream of changes that were occurring.

> Claus Otto Scharmer (2002) writes that to every farmer, a field is a living system with two aspects: the visible, which we see above the surface; and the invisible, which we find below the surface. No matter what actions the farmer takes, the quality of the harvest depends on aspects of the field that are invisible to the eye, such as the richness of the soil. Scharmer says we haven't learned how to see below the surface, to decipher the subtle structures and principles that shape our outcomes, and to be as deliberate about enhancing the quality of the field as we are about producing results.
>
> **Imagine Act Believe**
> **Annie E Casey Foundation**

Sample Template: Documentation of Weekly Results
Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction

Outcomes: The benefits or changes for individuals (or populations) after participating in the program's or organization's activities (examples: new knowledge, increased skills, changed attitudes, improved job status/income. Be as specific as possible noting dates, numbers and results.

Impact on Individuals and Households

Name of Community Partner	Activity	Outcome	HRPR Involvement

How We Work/How We Work Differently (Community Capacity)

Name of Community Partner	Activity	Outcome	HRPR Involvement

Policy and Systems Change

Name of Community Partner	Activity	Outcome	HRPR Involvement

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Key Design Elements for an Outcomes Diary

Framework for Change – The collaborative entity should have a framework for change describing the key design features of the collaborative.

Benchmarks and Targets – The collaborative should have established benchmarks and targets. These benchmarks will provide a framework for reporting outcomes.

Sources of Information – Sources of information can be diverse and include partner reports, emails, media reports, and data collective from community sources. In recording data in the outcome diary, remember to be as specific as possible including numbers of participants, funding received and dates.

Regular Record Keeping – Establishing a regular reporting cycle ensures that information and results reflect on-going shifts and changes in the community context. A regular reporting cycle also ensures that accurate records are kept throughout the course of the initiative.

Role of Collaborative Organization – The staff of the collaborative or backbone organization takes the lead in collecting and disseminating results.

Partner Engagement – Partner engagement can occur throughout the process through contribution of information, analysis and assisting with the dissemination of results reports.

Patterns and Themes – Regularly reviewing the results will uncover emerging patterns and themes enabling the collaborative table to identify whether it is on course and determine both intended and unintended results.

Reporting – The outcomes diary is an opportunity for the ongoing collection and dissemination of results. Collecting and sharing results with key community stakeholders and partners enables assessing progress and learning from the changes that are occurring in the community.

Resources

Imagine, Act, Believe. A Framework for Learning and Results in Community Change Initiatives. The Annie E Casey Foundation. http://ccitoolsforfeds.org/doc/Imagine ActBelieve.pdf

Collective Impact and Shared Measurement. Mark Cabaj. http://vibrantcanada.ca/resource-library/comprehensive-community-change/collective-impact-shared-measurement

Comprehensive Community Change Resources. Vibrant Communities Canada. http://vibrantcanada.ca/resource-library/comprehensive-community-change

Evaluating Vibrant Communities 2002-2010. Vibrant Communities Canada. http://tamarackcommunity.ca/g2_V C_Evaluation.html

Lessons Learned

Consistency is vital. Capturing changes on a regular basis ensures that results are current and information is not missed.

Be as specific about the change as possible. Specific details about the numbers of people, the amount of funding and the policy change is very helpful when summarizing results for reporting purposes.

Track the collaboratives contribution. Tracking and reporting on the collaboratives contribution to community change is vital to build capacity and recognition of the role of the collaborative planning table to change efforts.

Use the results. Look for opportunities to communicate the community changes as frequently and in many different ways. This tool will help the collaborative planning table to share results with their partners, funders and community on a regular and timely basis – proving that there are significant changes happening.

Watch for patterns and changes. By consistently capturing community changes, the collaborative can watch for patterns or shifts and adapt their work to the changing community context. This will help the collaborative identify opportunities or address gaps.

Adjust as necessary. There is no right way or wrong way to use this tool. It can be adjusted to support the work of different collaborative planning tables. The tool will assist in uncovering the changes, shifts and impacts of community change efforts that are continuously occurring and provide a frame for tracking and analysis to occur,

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