TOOL | Getting to Impact: Outcomes Diary

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 Outcomes Diary enabled the HRPR staff and community leaders to effectively monitor and learn from the constant stream of changes that were occurring.

Key Elements in the 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 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/ImagineActBelieve.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_VC_Evaluation.html

LESSONS LEARNED
- Consistency is vital.
- Be as specific as you can be about the change
- Track contribution by all partners
- Use the results
- Watch for patterns in the changes
- Adjust your data collection and reporting as needed
- Look for opportunities for sense making

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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