



## Results & Performance Accountability

The Results and Performance Accountability Framework is a results based approach to planning. It is based on the social policy work of Mark Friedman in the U.S. It has been adopted by some New South Wales government departments in planning, delivering and funding human services.

The NSW State Budget for the period 2005 - 2006 and subsequent years will use the Results Planning Framework. The government departments responsible for human services will need to submit their budget bids against the core results identified through the planning framework. This will influence funding decisions including those impacting on community organizations.

To document accountability we need to distinguish results and performance measures.

Results and indicators are about the well-being of whole populations.

Performance measures are about the well-being of client populations.

### Results

Results are conditions of well-being for communities, families, children, youth etc. They are broad statements like: "healthy children", "safe communities". They apply to populations or sub-groups of populations.

Accountability for these results cannot be assigned to any one individual, organisation or level of government. All the players: non-government, government, private sector etc must share the responsibility for the results.

### Performance

Performance accountability is about the effectiveness of programs, agencies or service systems.

Responsibility for this accountability can be assigned to the managers who run the various programs, agencies or service systems.

Performance is about the means (service system delivery) as one component of reaching the ends (results for populations)

# Results planning and accountability

This process involves nine steps.

## **1 Define the population**

The population might include all children living in a region or state, or all people with a disability, or all young people aged 12 to 19 years. (like target group models) Or it might include all residents of an area (like place management models).

## **2 Be specific about the results desired**

Results are the conditions of well-being we would like to say exist for this population, such as statements like: “all children are ready for school”, “a community with affordable housing for everyone”, “a prosperous economy”. The results have to be in plain English, without jargon, so that we can understand and relate to them.

## **3 Identify indicators or benchmarks**

Indicators are the measures of how we recognise these results. They are expressed in terms of both *experience* and *data*.

Experience provides indicators that describe how these results may be seen or felt in the population group, e.g. what would look or feel different if there was “affordable housing for everyone”?

Data indicators are how we can recognise these results in measurable terms, e.g. if the result is to be “healthy children”, then data on the rate of low birth-weight babies, or the rate of accident and emergency admissions may be relevant.

## **4 Develop baselines**

For each indicator we need a picture of where we’ve been and where we’re headed if we stay on our current course. We can use baselines to show improvement, achievement or progress. We need to consider the likely scenarios for change.

## **5 Create a story behind the baselines**

This is sharing knowledge from participants about why the baseline pictures look the way they do. This

process involves the perspectives of different participants to create a rich picture of what is happening in the community.

## **6 Involve others**

At this stage it is important to review who else needs to be involved to truly address issues or causes and the stories behind the baselines.

## **7 Find out what works**

What would it take to do better than the baselines? What has worked here and elsewhere? What does research and importantly, our experience, tell us about what would work here? Research is important, but so are ideas and creative problem solving. Using these criteria.

*Specificity: Is the proposal specific about what will be done? Can it be implemented in an action plan?*

*Leverage: How great an impact would this proposal or action have on the conditions we are trying to change?*

*Values: Is the proposal consistent with community values, with equity and fairness, does it take into account cultural differences?*

*Reach: Is it feasible and affordable?*

## **8 Create an action plan or strategy**

What are we actually going to do? This should take the form of a multi-year strategy and action plan laying out what is to be accomplished by when, then assign responsibilities and get started. Revise the plan looking at:

*New data*

*New stories behind the curve*

*New participants*

*New information on what works*

*New financing*

*Changes in the action plan or budget.*

## **9 Develop the budget**

Make sure the action agenda drives financing and not the other way around. No or low cost strategies are part of the framework as well as funded projects.

## Performance Accountability

Performance measures are measures of how well programs and agencies are working. The most important performance measures tell us whether the clients of the service are better off.

There are four evaluative questions or performance measures:

1. What did we do? What services did we provide?
2. How well did we do it?
3. Is anyone better off? How much change for the better did we produce?
4. Is anyone better off? What quality of change did we produce?

The last measure is the most important. The first two are about the *quantity* of service, whilst the last two are about the *quality*.

Remember that tools like collaboration; coordination; service integration; service reform; etc are means to improving results not ends in themselves.

## How the Results Accountability and Performance Framework affects community organizations

The non-government community service sector is experienced in participatory processes and in working with communities and people at the ground level (with an ability to use meaningful language). The Results Accountability framework is a systematic bringing together of participatory planning and action processes. Individually these are not new processes. Some of the real value in the framework is the demonstration of how participation is necessary at each stage of the planning processes. It has the ability to 'manage knowledge' in that if implemented rigorously, it benefits from the experience, stories, knowledge and skills of all participants in the human services field. The handbooks/ guidelines on the framework make it explicit that the results achieved are collective results, not the 'property' of a single department, agency or player.

To achieve joint ownership of the results, the process relies on participation at the different levels of planning, analysis and action formulation. The community services sector has a key role to play. It is a sector grounded close to some of the hardest to reach members of the community. The knowledge and experience of the sector in analysing the issues for communities and target groups is essential in creating the stories behind the baselines, identifying what works and developing action strategies.

**This material has mostly been taken from Mark Friedman's Results Accountability Implementation Guide. For more information see [www.raguide.org](http://www.raguide.org) This website has information in English and Spanish.**