March 7, 2022

government practices that promote Self-healing communities

(An Informal Discussion)

**Self-healing Communities is a process model based on the science of complex adaptive systems.** The Self-Healing Communities model builds general community capacity – the capacity to solve complex problems.



Community health is a dynamic condition – constantly adapting to changing circumstance. The ACE Interface model for community capacity building helps us to understand the dynamics of healthy communities and can help us to identify where a community may be stuck – so we can effectively interact with people to get the ball rolling again.

1. **Support a Four-Phase Process to Generate Change and Transformation**

As more people become engaged with others in their community, the health of the community begins to improve. Funding supports facilitators, who invite people to **focus** on root causes together in ways that feel safe and build ongoing relationships and invite conversation about issues that really matter to the people who live there. Discussion is often grounded in core values and represents the hopes and aspirations of the community. Conversation leads to actions generating **learning and opportunity** to realize the community vision for better lives.

Some groups may get stuck talking about surface issues – issues that are not very important to anyone but do take time to consider. When this happens it is important that someone who is trusted call the question: What are we avoiding by talking about these issues that aren’t most important to us? That person can be a local facilitator, yet it may be necessary for the facilitator to call a partner from another community or from the government to ask this question.

As people work together, they naturally form structures and processes to get things done; form follows function. People begin to organize themselves in new and improved ways focused on **results and shared identity**. They develop ways of getting work done that are innovative, attract unusual resources like in-kind donations of labor, space, materials and expertise, and honor the unique contributions that people have to offer. Essentially, they form structures that support **shared leadership and attract new leaders** who want to contribute because they feel a sense of shared identity and belonging with others.

Community capacity is inherently sustainable. That’s because each phase in the development of capacity naturally invites the next phase into being. All the phases work together as a dynamic and living system.

*The Self-Healing Community Model: Strong Correlation with Positive Results at the Population Level*

This model describes the iterative four-phase process that Washington State’s Community Public Health and Safety Networks (Network) and their partners used to achieve reductions in the rates of major social problems between 1997 and 2012. Use of this model is correlated with reduction in the rate of one or more of the following: child abuse and neglect, family violence, youth violent crime, youth substance abuse, teen pregnancy, teen suicide and dropping out of school. Findings in Longhi, 2008[[1]](#endnote-1):

1. Counties with a state-funded Network using the model were more likely to reduce these rates than counties without a Network using the model.
2. Among counties with state-funded Networks, overall severity of problems (the pile-up of many problems occurring at high rates) decreased or remained stable while they worsened for those counties without state-funded Networks.
3. The community capacity built by Networks with their partners was important in driving rates down: A higher average community capacity score using an index developed for the purpose of measuring capacity over time was strongly correlated with a higher number of better-than-state trends in the rate(s) of child and family problems.

Low average High average

1. There may be a tipping point at a certain level of community capacity where health problems improve rapidly, according to the research literature on processes of change. The data supported these expectations. There were small increases in the number of better-than-state trends at lower levels of community capacity –at the first through third quartiles, and then a much higher increase –to 5.14 at the fourth quartile. See graph.

In 2012, a second study was conducted. Findings from that study include:

1. Counties with a state-funded Network using the model were more likely to improve, among adults ages 18 to 34, resilience scores[[2]](#endnote-2), ACE scores, level of education, employment, and days of disability-related functioning problems than counties without a Network using the model.
2. The community capacity built by Networks with their partners was important in driving rates down: A higher average level of community capacity was strongly correlated with improvements in all factors in (5) above.
3. **Put Structures In Place to Help the Community to Realize Change**
4. Contract and reporting features
5. Education framework
6. Technical Assistance
7. Practice-Based Evidence Dissemination
8. **Legal, Contract and Reporting Features**

The legal mandate for the Washington Family-Community-State partnership called for five state agencies to partner with community residents and community-based professionals (Networks) to reduce the rates of seven interrelated social problems. That mandate required people to think differently – to set aside single-issue focus and to engage in dialogue with people with different priorities and concerns in favor of co-creating dynamic conditions that would give rise to transformational improvements in child, family and community life.

Washington State used a results-focused contract for services that was designed to make population-level improvements to multiple social problems concurrently. The contract helped to focus community leaders on the long-term aspirations of the community, while requiring local leaders to articulate the logical connections between their near-term actions and their long-term goals. Leaders measure both the short term results they seek and monitor the rates of seven major social problems and related antecedents to those problems, as well as the accumulation of Adverse Childhood Experience from birth to adulthood.

Service was defined in the contract as any action that is intended to produce a community result or a population-level child or family result in the next two to ten years. A community result was defined as a change in the skills, practice, awareness, and/or response to human needs. A child or family result was defined as a change in knowledge, skills, attitude, behavior or status of a child, parent or family. Networks purchases, supported, and promoted improved services. These definitions helped to ensure that Networks were designing services based on the needs and potential of real people, not just around theoretical ideas about how a service system should work. “Services” included professional training, neighborhood organizing, and other general capacity building strategies, as well as direct help for children and families.

During the early years of the partnership, most Networks worked to produce child and family results. Over time, leaders recognized that small budgets cannot deliver enough direct services to children and families to move the needle on the rates of social problems. Nearly all Networks shifted their work to deliver community outcomes. By doing so, they helped the community orient dialogue and strategic planning and decision making around human needs. The contract required that if the Network was not achieving desired results with services approved in contractual Statements of Work; the Network was required to make changes to their service strategy.

*Rolling Time Frame for Contractual Statement of Work Approval*

Community leaders don’t limit their enthusiasm for improving children’s lives to the external timelines of funders. They form new initiatives when energy and resources for those initiatives are hot, when the fiscal year of a key local partner begins, or when local people come to agreement about what they believe will be most effective. Most funders require a complete plan prior to issuing a grant. (The Director of this work thought of this as a hunting model – we make a plan, then launch the hunt. Whereas this funder used a gathering model; the state issued a grant of funds and allowed the community to gather partners and resources throughout the grant period to determine how that grant should be invested.) The funder provided each Network with an approved budget for a two-year time period with opportunity to submit new Statements of Work or proposals for new types of services at any time within that period. Once both the funder and the local Network approved a proposal, dollars were obligated from the local budget. The rolling timeframe for contractual agreements was more effective locally, and also required fewer administrative resources for the funder since review and approval of proposals was distributed throughout the year.

The Statement of Work approval process was used as a tool for inviting more clarity of thinking, articulation, and strategic design of services to improve the likelihood that those services would produce population-level results.

Contract terms and conditions left education and training voluntary but required measurement of results and summative reporting on how the community’s work was or was not affecting positive change. Reporting was an important tool for helping communities to become adaptive. An adaptive community is one that generates new knowledge from experience and then integrates that knowledge in such a way that the community and its human organizations alter or change. Reporting also invited community leaders to manage knowledge within their community.

**“Knowledge Management**: the explicit and systematic management of vital knowledge - and its associated processes of creation, organization, diffusion, use and exploitation - in pursuit of business objectives.

1. Explicit - Surfacing assumptions; codifying that which is known
2. Systematic - Leaving things to serendipity will not achieve the benefits
3. Vital Knowledge - You need to focus; you don't have unlimited resources
4. Processes - Knowledge management is a set of activities with its own tools and techniques”

**(**David Skyrme, 1999)

Education events dovetailed with reporting requirements so that Networks would have a model for engaging with the process of knowledge management. Reporting questions were tough – a Network could not complete a report without surfacing assumptions and thinking about whether their work has been systematic and focused.

Reporting was required once every two years, and not more often than that. Biennial reporting allowed for significant amounts of work to be conducted, followed by deep reflection on how and whether that work produced intended results. The funder required three reports, sequenced over a four month period, in which time the Network was required to host public dialogue about each topic, gathering opinion and facts to inform the report content. Reports were structured for the community to engage in important reflective work, but also provided necessary accountability for use of public funds. Three types of reports sequenced over four months were required:

1. An environmental scan of the community context for present and future work based on data, local social, political, economic conditions, and the state of the neighborhood and service provider infrastructure for working to reduce social problems;
2. A report on past work, with focus on what was done and what was learned in the last two years by the community. A part of this report was about the Networks’ direct investments of time, money and expertise (Network actions and services) but the report also included how these investments dovetailed with the larger body of work in the community; and
3. A report on how the community and the Network would apply what they learned from past work in their future work.

*The Community Context Report was used to:*

* Learn about the changing strengths and challenges that impact success in your community;
* Recognize, honor and tap into the specialized expertise Networks develop, given community variation in the severity of problems, and other factors that impact community work;
* Create a public record that can be used locally, and also can be used by state agencies and philanthropic organizations to improve the relevance of investments in your community;
* Provide a structure for documenting information needed for compliance with our contract and judging for the Exceptional Results Awards.

*Summative Reports*

At the end of each biennium, Networks work with community partners to develop summative reports about their work and associated results over the past two years. Those reports are made in the context of the broader community efforts, and include information about how the Network investments contributed to, or detracted from, widely held community goals. Our reporting questions have changed over the years as we learned which questions invoke the kind of reflective thinking necessary to prompt continuous learning and improvement. In 2001 we asked very few questions. We found that our lack of specificity about the thinking and dialogue we were inviting into the community leaders’ circle was a problem. Network leaders wanted and needed a guide to community dialogue, which we integrated into our reporting requirements. Attached are two sets of questions used in reporting, one from 2001, and the second from 2011.

Structuring the Partnership for Results

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| --- | --- |
| Traditional Performance-Based | Self-Healing Communities |
| Controls for whether deliverable gets done/delivered | Controls for learning and ability to apply learning from the deliverable being completed  |
| Has punitive measures for not performing what was promised in the contract | Requires that the Network change what they are doing from what was promised, if what was promised isn’t working |
| Requires that the contractor know in advance all things needed to agree upon a statement of work for a period of time (often a year) – (what will be done, how/with whom, on what timeline, at what cost per unit of time or deliverable, how it will be evaluated, details about the content, etc. of deliverable/results.) | Has rolling time frame for SOW/proposals to allow time for partnership development around a central purpose, shared vision and collaborative development of collective impact agenda, decisions about the Network role in that agenda, proposal for Network expenditure of funds – can come in at any time of the biennium that is appropriate, once background thinking is complete. |
| Delivers funds on a competitive basis to the best, according to criteria established by funder. | Delivers funds on a formula basis to all communities with a partnership agreement with the funder in order for communities to take a next step into the state of being their best |
| Conducts request for proposals or the equivalent with detail about what the funder wants in the short term (duration of the contract) … thus eliminating the give and take of the funder and contractor sharing their thinking and perspective about how, when, with whom, etc. to arrive at a particular set of results in the long term, and what strategic steps we might take now to propel the work toward that aspiration. | Negotiates Statements of Work and Service Proposals: the thinking behind the proposals is generated by the community in the context of their ongoing relationship with the funder, our ongoing learning together, and within a broad framework of interrelated aspirations that both community and state hold in common |
| When one contractor fails we pull the funds from the community or purpose | When a Network board/staff combination fails we seek another entity that can serve as the network or provide supports to expand the leadership of the Network so that performance can happen. The community can still work toward the purpose |
| Assumes that the community and state are entirely separate - the state delivers money so that the community will act or change. | Assumes that the government-community are part of a complex adaptive system which consists of a large number of mutually interacting and interwoven parts and agents. The system continually makes itself. It is produced by its components and in turn produces those components. This means that the pattern of a local community failing to perform on its contracts with the government is the responsibility of the government just as much as it is the responsibility of the community – the government needs to be a different kind of partner in that place. How the government needs to partner well in a community with a history of losing grants and continual or escalating human suffering is, in and of itself, a process of learning and transformation in relationship with local people. The government must be in that process, not stand at the sidelines. |
| Pay for a specified product or a pre-determined service for a specified number of customers | Participate in a process that brings forth services and products that lead to transformative changes in population-level outcomes |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Uniform reporting requirements for all contractors based on funders preference.  | Cultural tailoring and coordination accommodations. Invites diverse forms/styles of documentation and reporting to support authentic presentation and/or cross-sector alignment. |
| Short term or re-applications for competitive grant TA or funds. Grants are issued, revoked, etc based on a yes or no test to near term objectives, and do not contain long term commitments to the process of building capacity. | Legal authority –there is agreement about the role and responsibility of each partner in building community capacity. This agreement is in perpetuity until or unless the Legislature changes law – a process that includes open public debate and policy setting. The partners have commitment to working the process together. |

1. **Build an Education Framework to Support Continuous Learning**

*Purposes*

For helping local coalitions building general community capacity that reduces the rates of major social problems, educational processes and content need to be designed for multiple purposes:

1. To attract a broad range of partners including volunteers,
2. To reach to learners at their own place of development,
3. To deliver content in a wide range of topics – from operations and effective practice to basic science,
4. To support learning at the community level.

*Calendar and Content*The calendar of four events each year both reflects and leverages the business calendar of the Governmental entity system. For example, Summer Conference focuses on emerging issues at the time when: 1) Networks are required by the Governmental entity to be reporting on the previous biennium and planning their next round of investments; 2) legislators are identifying and gathering information for the next legislative session; and 3) local governments and member agencies are preparing their budgets.

Taken together, the annual events serve five systems functions in addition to achieving specified learning goals and objectives:

1. Strengthen the culture of the Governmental entity family-community-state partnership, including its values, business practices, and priorities.
2. Make relevant aspects of the culture explicit so that all partners are able to participate meaningfully in the system.
3. Perform rituals, such as gathering, that celebrate the system and its accomplishments, strengthen the culture, welcome new participants, and cultivate common identity.
4. Add new information, tools, and skills to the knowledge ecology.
5. Create the conditions for innovation, which includes opportunities to network, reflect, and share information in formal and informal ways.

Major content themes of educational events are ordered and predictable so that local leaders know which community partners to invite to each event. For example, our annual Network Partners’ Summit presents leading edge research related to the problem behaviors, their antecedents, risk and protective factors, and promising interventions. Networks typically bring teams of community leaders (not necessarily Network members) as a way to develop common language for discussing emerging research findings and exploring opportunities to apply those findings in daily life and program offerings. Other events focus on civic engagement, the day-to-day responsibilities and operations of the Community Network, and the skills and emerging issues that move Networks and their collaborative efforts forward.

*Governmental entity Education Taxonomy*

Upon analyzing the demands on Networks, it became clear that the requisite knowledge and skills are interrelated, requiring higher orders of thinking as the community moves towards mastery and effectiveness. Therefore the Governmental entity hypothesized that key knowledge and skills in Community Network Education ought to be viewed taxonomically.

**COMMUNITY LEARNING TAXONOMY**



Taken together, the knowledge and skills represented in the Governmental entity Community Learning Taxonomy ensure the ability of Community Networks to: 1) assess needs and barriers; 2) engage community; and 3) take actions that result in reduction of the rates of complex social problems.

*Mining the stream of questions, complaints, evaluative comments for patterns*

We continuously track the feedback that comes to our staff. We are looking for patterns that give us important clues about what we need to focus our efforts on in order to improve capacity and results. This is a way of working that is essential for knowing what to do, for whom, when, in order to effect greater general capacity at the community level. Here is an example of how it works. Between 1997 and 2000, we heard a clear theme in the complaints, suggestions, etc: information. We heard “you are sending us too much”, “we can’t do this hard job because you haven’t given us the information we need”, “the articles and guidance you are sending is too hard to understand”, “why do we have to held accountable to collect data about results?”, “if you would just listen to what community leaders are saying and sending to the state”, etc. Our staff sifted through the contacts looking for themes, and for underlying assumptions and beliefs that might be driving those themes. We were disciplined about testing logic; e.g. do people believe that someone knows how to reduce the rates of seven major social problems, and that someone is withholding that information from communities? Do people believe that more information would make it easy to reduce the rates of seven major social problems, and if so, what information do they believe would work? Do people believe that we have high rates of major social problems because community messages get stuck between community and state leaders – if the messages would just flow, we would reduce the rates?

After understanding the assumptions and beliefs that were driving the comments toward our staff, we developed a question for our office to pursue:

What information, if it were flowing through the system of people and organizations that care about social problems, would have the potential for dramatically reducing the rates of those problems?

After generating that question, we developed some metrics – some indicators – that we could use to test our theories about the answer to that question. We intentionally created themes for information flow, and noticed how each one affected the quality and quantity of local dialogue, strategic action, and evaluation. As a part of this process, we tested a meta-frame for educational content (below), and found that it affected critical aspects of community capacity development: coming together and learning (the new science attracted people into community conversations and prompted local education events), leadership expansion (people who had not been central to our work stepped up to become trained trainers, thereby providing a new leadership core for the effort).

*Meta-Frame for Educational Content Delivery*

Our goal is to develop the general capacity of communities to solve complex and interrelated problems. Education in service to that goal has required us to observe the effects of our educational content in terms of the quality of community-level dialogues, action, and results. When we delivered information about each of the seven social problems as separate topics we found that community leaders went back to their local conversations and continued to debate which issue was more important than another, which fields evaluation standards were better, whether everyone in the community should orient their work around a single outcome, like school completion or poverty relief, because that one thing was “at the root of all the other problems”.

In order to invite discussion about the cumulative and intergenerational nature of the social problems, and the community context that generates the patterns of behavior reflected in the current rates of the problems, we developed a meta-frame for our education about improving the social sphere of community and family life. That meta-frame was a combination of developmental neuroscience, the Adverse Childhood Experience Study, resilience research and the science of living systems. With these four pillars to our educational frame, we saw the local debates all but stop in favor of cohesive and thoughtful partnerships that aligned resources, but did not insist on combining them. People could see their contributions in the flow of life and community experience. They talked and formulated strategic action agendas based on each contribution to the whole community agenda: healthy development, reduced prevalence of toxic stress in childhood and greater accommodations so that more people experience recovery and resilience. They began to track the rates of strengths as well as challenges, and understand that everyone in the community is a co-creator of these strengths and challenges. A different kind of shared accountability emerged, and was fueled by more education, local trained trainers giving presentations using this meta-frame for education. We didn’t abandon all the other topics in our taxonomy; we simply added this scaffolding that allowed all the other topics to have a home in local discussions.

*Education Principles*

Our education is guided by four principles:

1. *Inclusiveness – professionals and volunteers must experience inclusion, welcoming, and affordability of educational opportunity*
2. *Community Engagement – we hold events throughout the state, so that many communities benefit both from having education accessible, but also from the financial benefits that communities derive from payments for hotel, meeting space, etc.*
3. *Quality and Rigor – assured* in order to ensure the greatest possible return on investment.
4. *Outcome-focus – education is managed to produce specific learning objectives; evaluation of education is used prospectively to improve the performance of the system as a whole.*

*Learners*

In order to dramatically improve general community capacity, we must engage an ever-widening circle of people who want to help. **With support and challenge, youth, elders, extremely poor, and many other individuals who might otherwise be marginalized in public dialogue and policy making, make significant contributions to the system over time, prompting innovation and transformation by sharing wisdom and insight unavailable to those with different vantage points.** Fundamental respect for the wisdom of each person is a core value and operating principle of the partnership. This fundamental respect is also called for in Washington law:

 “It is not the intent of the legislature that health, social services or education professionals dominate community public health and safety networks, but rather that these professionals use their skills to lend support to parents and other citizens in expressing their values as parents and other citizens identify community needs and establish community priorities. To this end, the legislature intends full participation of parents and other citizens in community public health and safety networks.”

Challenge plays a critical role in both adult learning and motivation. Therefore, Family Policy Council education draws heavily from Csikszentmihaly (1990), who argues for a **balance between challenge and support in order to maximize participation, motivation and learning**. When challenge and support are well balanced, learners experience “flow,” a state of motivation often characterized by perseverance, enthusiasm and loss of self-consciousness.

The Family Policy Council’s continuous balancing of challenge and support results in a highly experiential learning system. **On-going reflection on the needs of various partners results in a dynamic relationship between the education program and the business practice of the organization.** For example, biennial reports filed by Networks in 1999 revealed substantial need for education programs focused on *Operations, Legal Obligations & Public Accountability*. The Family Policy Council focused education investment in this domain throughout 2000 and 2001. One module, on government procurement, was developed in partnership with the Employment Security Department, a member agency. That module emphasized procurement methods that would build partnership between residents and professionals, such as *Request for Ideas* and *Request for Qualifications*.

This training introduced business practice that is consistent with the mission and core principles of our work with communities, and offered discrete knowledge and skill building helpful to our local Network leaders. A focus on discrete knowledge and skills is typically delivered through behaviorist, mastery-based training, in which the educator breaks the information down into sequenced parts and “delivers” them in a useful order, continuing such training until mastery is achieved.

Use of a behavioral approach is nearly impossible for much of the Family Policy Council context, as:

1. The field has not sufficiently developed authoritative information on the problem behaviors and their solutions;
2. Each of the problem behaviors exists in its own field or domain and appropriate sequencing across fields is unknown;
3. It is the responsibility of all professionals in the Family Policy Council system, including the educators, to “lend support to parents and other residents in expressing their values,” and experience has shown that there are limits to authoritative delivery of information in this context;
4. Participation in Family Policy Council education is voluntary, just as participation in Network Boards is voluntary. It is virtually impossible to sequence and deliver to a level of mastery under such circumstances; and
5. The cost of a behaviorist approach—in terms of curriculum development, program planning, and participation by community members—is prohibitive.

Given organization-directed education, the alternative to a behaviorist approach is a constructivist approach. With a constructivist approach, it is the job of the educator to facilitate the sharing of critical information and to create conditions through which learners can co-create meaning.

This approach has striking similarity to a public health approach, which is central to the Family Policy Council mandate. In addition to being sensitive to the statutory requirements of the work, the advantages of the constructivist approach include:

1. All participants have the opportunity to contribute expertise of value to others;
2. Problems encountered in “the real world” can be used as teaching and learning tools for all;
3. Working together to co-create meaning helps to strengthen and professionalize a field (Brown and Duguid, 2000b);
4. **Form a Long-Term Partnership with Community Leaders**

Create a structure that can be used as a central point of contact that can "represent the local community", as opposed to only representing a local organization within the community - and fund idea generating and reflection processes that engage community residents in the processes of generating improvements in BIG goals that are relevant to the community.  Create a structure at the government that local people can send observations, ideas, reports to - and reach multiple disciplines within the government.  That way, there is a structure for community-government partnership

*Technical Assistance/Helping from a Birds’ Eye View*

The task of the technical assistance provider is to deliver the right help at the right time, given the unique conditions and journey of each community. While tremendous expertise exists in every community, local people sometimes need partners who have a birds-eye view of many variables that affect success. A central office, or intermediary organization, provides this vantage point, and therefore can provide valuable assistance. Technical assistance includes:

1. Brokering connections to subject matter or process experts to provide just-in-time help
	* Bringing a leading expert into the state or the community to teach and consult
	* Generating peer-to-peer helping arrangements among Network coordinators and board leaders
	* Recruiting state agency representatives to work in partnership with a Network to solve a particular problem
2. Illuminating what the community needs to be noticing
* Awards for exceptional results
* Positive gossip
* Mural or writing projects that make public an important theme or accomplishment
* Publishing their work in their own words <http://www.fpc.wa.gov/publications/Who%20We%20Are_Okanogan%20show.pdf>
1. On-site assistance such as:
* Co-lead processes of capacity building; e.g. interviewing, mediation, meeting design and facilitation, coaching, generating promotional or invitation materials, etc.
* Be a thought partner; e.g. help to reframe issues to engage a wider circle of participation.
* Provide tools to help people re-frame or understand at a new level; e.g. system alignment maps <http://www.fpc.wa.gov/publications/Alignment_Print%2011x17.pdf>
* Provide skill building workshops and activities; e.g. teach how to gather and use outcome data that is useful for improving practice.
* Provide appreciative feedback, e.g. generating a PowerPoint presentation of highlights of local work that they can use to recruit more participation, garner support for next steps
1. Offering new data, research findings, tools, processes or incentives that can help the community understand issues in a new way, such as understanding intergenerational transmission of trauma, or help the community take a next step:
* Gathering, analyzing and disseminating data to help community leaders understand complex issues, including cost savings from their work <http://www.fpc.wa.gov/publications/technicalnotes_costsavings_final.pdf>
* Incentive grants for innovation or replication of effective work
* Providing educational materials with instructions about how to use these in the community; e.g. what is a public health approach, or what is the citizen role in policy development (civic engagement). <http://www.fpc.wa.gov/publications/Budget%20Fairy%20Tale%20v%208%205x11.pdf>
1. Providing how-to Guidance (especially in response to their statements of need)
	* Operational audits with clear guidance for process improvement
	* Start-up frameworks for allowable expenditures, when partnerships are new and vulnerable
	* Guidance on key processes such as Review of Community Efforts <http://www.fpc.wa.gov/publications/reviewexecutivesummary.pdf>

Or Community Capacity Development <http://www.fpc.wa.gov/publications/How-To.Community.Capacity.2011.pdf>

* + Frameworks for action, developed in response to their requests for state systems to change <http://www.fpc.wa.gov/publications/thriving_families.pdf>

*Practice-Based Evidence Dissemination Across Communities, Community to Funders*

Examples of what we do to provide for communities to learn from one another include:

* Host cross-system dialogue at events
* Organize panel presentations from leaders in several Networks and make these available at regional, state and national conferences
* Share reports from Networks on the web, and through interactive exercises at education events
* Engage Networks in building reports to the Legislature, articles for publication, and reports to private funders, so that Network leaders understand and can articulate the work and accomplishments of other Networks.

Examples of what we do to provide for the state to learn from communities include:

* Broker agreements for pilot initiatives in partnership with Networks; e.g. current partnership with the Vocational Rehabilitation system to help youth with disabilities to transition from high school to job readiness, to employment.
* Provide briefings for new elected or appointed officials to bring them rapidly up to speed with Networks as valuable partners to their work – provide the service of matching officials’ pilot initiative ideas with “ready” communities to assure success.
* Write formal reports about successful community-based work, organized for policy makers as the primary audience (a translation exercise)
* Invite state officials and managers to deliver awards for exceptional results to winning Networks, so that officials will meet local leaders and speak to what is exceptional about their work.
* Publish analysis of cost savings attributable to community network work; deliver to the executives of agencies that benefit from caseload reductions.
* Model the state role as a learning role – more about how we do this below:

State Role as Learning Role

The legal mandate for our work calls for five state agencies to partner with community residents and community-based professionals to reduce the rates of seven interrelated social problems. That mandate requires people think differently – to set aside single-issue focus and to enter into dialogue with people with different priorities and concerns in favor of co-creating dynamic conditions that would give rise to transformational improvements in child, family and community life.

Common themes in early communication from community leaders to state staff were: *this is too hard, you haven’t given us enough information, you haven’t given us enough money, how do you expect us to improve so many issues when every other state program only has to improve one issue, and how can we build a bridge between citizens and professionals when the professionals are arguing about which specialty is more important, proven, or relevant?*  As the technical assistance staff to the initiative, we developed a disciplined approach to challenging our own thinking, and the prevailing thinking in the fields we draw from.

1. We tested our own beliefs and beliefs embedded in the communication we received using reverse logic – e.g.: could it be true that reducing the rates of seven social problems is easy, and we are the ones making the task difficult? Could it be true that if communities just had enough information, the rates of seven interrelated and intergenerational social problems would go down? Do we believe that, if communities just had enough money dumped on them all at once, the problems would be gone?
2. We responded by changing our own way of working:
3. We openly corrected our way of working when criticisms were constructive and had plausible logic behind them.
4. We considered: what way of thinking or history of state-local interaction might be embedded in the patterns of questions we received?

Our own interactions with community residents are a part of a large and complex set of human interactions that, taken together, are producing status quo problem rates. We took the position that we have to change the way we interact with communities if we expect to interrupt the patterns that deliver to our children high rates of abuse, neglect, violence and other problems.

1. We began to test our own ways of interacting with community leaders to learn what helped or hindered the quality of dialogue among community residents and professionals. We did this with an eye toward co-creating constructive conversation, transformational action, and promotion of local self-organizing for continuous improvement of people’s lives.
2. We did more of the things that worked, and less of the things that didn’t seem to make a difference with quality of engagement, dialogue and response-ability. We developed distinct but interrelated modes of working with communities: cultivating far-from-equilibrium community dynamics, and creating attractors that keep people in the change process.
3. We worked on our own learning, dedicating resource not only to learning about the problem behaviors, but to skills, ideas and theories that could help us do the work as a whole, e.g. systems thinking.
4. **Discussion of the Structure of Staff Roles**

Networks had many needs in the early years – interpretation of law, instructions, orientation about how to be a network, payment of bills, education about important operational issues like how to avoid conflict of interest, how to issue an RFP, how to develop and monitor a performance based contract. All of these were felt needs – Network leaders knew they needed this information and asked for it.

Our colleagues running other state programs set up their education and assistance entirely focused on felt need. They typically had committees of community representatives who designed education, selected speakers, decided on price, location, etc… of education events and opportunities. We structured our work differently. We intentionally split the staff positions into two types:

1. People attending to the felt needs – issues that had immediate relevance and were responsive to what we saw and heard from Networks that they wanted and needed.
2. People who attended to the long term future of the enterprise, its aspirations, intention, and core purpose – to reduce the rates of seven major social problems. We knew we could not reduce those rates using the same thinking and educational processes that were the norm for state funding entities – because if that was going to work it already would have worked. Our colleagues are really good at what they do; we knew that the quality of their work was not the barrier to success – there must be a different way of inviting change to occur.

Our staff was small – ranging from a high of 10 and a low of 5. The majority of the staff positions are designed to attend to felt need. Accountability, fiscal responsiveness, technical assistance, and making sure that policy proposals from communities are appropriately conveyed to state agencies, tracking the stories of local people being awesome, learning the human stories that underlie perceived snafus - - these are in the purview of these staff positions. These are real-time roles necessary for the operation of the enterprise. They also work with each community to cultivate far-from-equilibrium conditions, generate attractors for change, and put into place positive reinforcing processes for integrating wisdom with knowledge, action with reflection. Working with each community on next-step action is necessary, but not sufficient for transformative change.

20% of the staff (1 or 2 full time equivalent positions, depending on budget) is assigned to attend to the long-term trajectory of the enterprise as a whole. Executive Director, Education Director, Senior Researcher, and Liaison to Thought Partners are roles with long-term orientation. People in these positions have the discipline to keep a long term focus, helping the organization manage large volumes of requests by addressing patterns and root causes of the demands coming into the office. They are also responsible to build a strong partnership with local leaders based on shared risk, responsibility, mutual respect and learning. These positions are oriented to the system as a whole to cultivate far-from-equilibrium conditions, generate attractors for change, and put into place positive reinforcing processes for integrating wisdom with knowledge, action with reflection.

People with short term and long term responsibilities work together, sharing observations, helping one another, co-generating the organization strategic and work plans, etc. Their roles are complementary and interdependent. One orientation is not more important than the other. (Although there is a lot of emotion around this issue, and from time to time the Director has to remind folks of why the staff positions are structured in this way.)

***Keys to Success:***

* Take a learning systems approach
* Form long-term partnership commitment with community leaders
* Structure staff for both short and long term needs (see attachment: How we structured staff)
* Develop an education framework that unites people across professional disciplines, class lines, sectors, etc.
* Hold a fundamental respect for the wisdom of every person – their culture, experience, capabilities, and aspirations

Attachment:

Excerpts from FPC Contract with Networks

Selected definitions:

## “Community Result (Outcome)” means a change in the skills, practice, awareness, and/or response to human needs on the part of service providers, policy and other decision makers, systems, organizations, and communities, that can be expected to occur within one (1) to two (2) years, and with sufficient scale and duration, is expected to lead to long-term results in the lives of children and families.

## “Comprehensive Plan” means a two-year plan that examines available resources and unmet needs for a Network’s geographic area, barriers that limit the effective use of resources, and a plan to address these issues that is broadly supported by local residents.

## “Long-term Child and Family Result (Outcome)” means a measurable change in the knowledge, skills, attitude, behavior or status of a child or family that can be expected to occur within two (2) to ten (10) years, and is logically related to reduction in one or more at-risk behaviors.

##  “Result (Outcome) Indicator” means observable data expressed as a precise statement of a result (outcome). Examples: the number or percentage of parents who use appropriate disciplinary techniques; and the number or percentage of families who have at least one person to assist in respite care for a child.

## “Review of Community Efforts” (Program Review) is a state-authorized evaluative process that uses parent and citizen perspective, professional expertise, and data to assess effectiveness of and potential improvements to efforts affecting individuals, families, or communities.  The process demonstrates consideration of: local values and strengths; Key Questions derived from statute and published in FPC Guidance; at least one state or federally funded program; and, (governmental entity) guidance (Field Guide for the Review of Community Efforts or successor document).

## “Short-term Child and Family Result (Outcome)” means a measurable change in the knowledge, skills, attitude, behavior or status of a child or family that can be expected to occur within one (1) to two (2) years, and with sufficient scale and duration, may be logically related to a long-term result.

## “Risk, Protective, Resiliency, Asset Factors” means the conditions known to be antecedent to or empirically associated with one or more at-risk behaviors. These factors are typically used in three ways:

### As short term results e.g. reduce risk and improve protective, resiliency or asset factors;

### As a way to prioritize a population for service; or

### To understand interrelationships among at-risk behaviors and thereby design strategic action with limited resources.

## “Service” means any investment, program, or action that is logically related to a result (outcome).

# (The purpose and duties of the Networks section of the contract is below. Language in bold is relevant to fostering a learning system and orienting Networks to population-level improvements, while articulating near term results that will logically lead to those improvements.)

# “PURPOSE

The purpose of this Agreement is to provide both funding and authority from the Council to the Network to invest in service projects and to conduct review of community efforts in order (1) **to modify public policy and programs to empower communities to support and respond to the needs of individual families and children and (2) to improve the responsiveness of services for children and families at risk by facilitating greater coordination and flexibility in the use of funds by state and local service agencies.** To achieve this purpose the Network shall work to:

## **Improve the status of at-risk behaviors** specified in the Network’s SOWs measured by Results (Outcomes) at the expiration of this Agreement;

## **Provide quantitative and qualitative analyses of community conditions status of Results (Outcomes) specified in the Network’s SOW with emphasis on learning and application to future work;** and

## **Support the continuing improvement of services for children and families,** in accordance with the Network’s approved Comprehensive Plan for implementation of its goals.

# DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE NETWORK

## Network Organization and Operations

### The Network agrees to maintain a Community Public Health and Safety Network that meets the requirements set forth in Chapter 70.190 RCW.

### The Network agrees to effectively implement its most recent Comprehensive Plan, which has had comprehensive public review, in accordance with the duties and obligations of the Network set forth in this Agreement. **The Network shall implement effective approaches to the duties and obligations specified.** These approaches shall also address At Risk Behavior Antecedents and Risk, Protective, Asset, Resiliency, or other Factors and shall effectively implement the selected strategies described.

### **The Network agrees to apply findings from relevant past work as a means for improving performance and results.**

### The Network agrees to implement effective approaches to Review of Community Efforts (RCW70.190.110 Program Review) consistent with the guidance provided in the FPC document “Field Guide: Reviewing Community Efforts” (Guide) or successor document and other information provided by the FPC.

### **Before obligating funds, the Network agrees to obtain approval from the Council by submitting complete information in writing in the Statement of Work, associated Service Proposals, Review Proposals, or successor documents describing each related activity or service, describing how selected Network expenditures and strategies are logically linked to intended Results (Outcomes).**

### The Network SOW, approved in 2007-2009 biennium shall be extended and become the approved SOW in effect July 1, 2009 through September 30, 2009, with the exception of Networks submitting, in writing, a request for a new SOW that is approved by the FPC.

### The Network will submit all requests for funding approval prior to April 1, 2011. All requests must reflect Network board discussion and agreement to obligate funds. For obligation of funds decided by a Network board after April 1, 2011, approval will be case by case, based on the strength of the explanation of how Results (Outcomes) will be achieved in the short period of time prior to the end of the biennium.

### The Network agrees to contract with a public entity as a lead fiscal agent to perform fiscal, accounting, contract administration, legal and other duties per RCW 70.190.075.

### The Network agrees to maintain a comprehensive record-keeping system and an adequate audit trail to provide accountability of its revenues, expenditures/expenses, receipts, disbursements, resources, and obligations (liabilities). The Network must assure sufficient documentation is maintained by its fiscal agent and by the Network to link expenditures and activities to Network subcontracts, and to demonstrate compliance with allowable cost standards specified in this Agreement. (Guidance may be found in Chapters 20, 80 and 85 of the State Administrative and Accounting Manual (http://www.ofm.wa.gov/policy/saamintro.htm).) The Network agrees to use systems compatible with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and Generally Accepted Auditing Standards (GAGAS). The Network is urged to consult with its fiscal agent to ensure the totality of accounting requirements is met.

### The Network agrees to submit to the Council monthly reimbursement requests supporting the SOWs, or at a frequency as mutually agreed by both parties, and yearly matching funds (cash and in-kind) reports. The Network also agrees to submit to the Council timely, accurate, and completed reports and forms in the format required by the Council.

### In the event the Network’s recommendation is sought from any entity or person proposing a blended funding project, the Network agrees to submit to the Council its recommendations on the proposed projects pursuant to RCW 74.14A.060. The Network shall review the proposed blended funding project pursuant to its authority to examine the de-categorization of program funds under RCW 70.190.110.

## **Implementation of Network Comprehensive Plan**

### Implementation of the Network’s Comprehensive Plan shall be guided by the Family Policy Principles as described in RCW 74.14A.025 and RCW 74.14a.020.

### **The Network is required to implement its strategies, as shown in its SOWs, in order to achieve either Short- or Long-term Child and Family Results, or Community Results, as defined in this Agreement. The implementation of Network strategies shall be accomplished through use of results-based employment agreements or subcontracts to achieve designated, intended Results. The Network shall ensure its contractors report measurable data to the Network regarding the effect of the services they provided on the Results achieved. The Network shall also ensure that its contractors report findings; what was learned from the work performed and the outcomes achieved?**

### The Network agrees to compile and report to the Council quantitative and qualitative analyses of Results specified in the Network’s SOWs by the dates and on the forms provided by the Council at either the conclusion of projects or by the dates/events specified. A summative report of Results, compiled from the totality of the Network’s projects, shall be reported***,*** conforming to instructions provided by the Council. The Network may analyze reported data itself or may contract externally for its analyses. The reports shall describe:

#### **The implementation of and learning from the Network's specific targeted strategies,** as described in its SOWs and/or service proposals;

#### The status of the process measures specified in SOWs and/or Service Proposals;;

#### The status of the Short-term Results, and other required reporting elements as issued by the Council;

#### **Findings from analysis of implementation efforts and results including but not limited to how findings will be used to improve future work; and**

#### Other information as required by the Council.

### **Subject to review and approval by the Council, the Network shall have the flexibility and responsibility to redirect its resources and strategies if one or more of the following conditions should occur:**

#### **Failure to achieve the change in measurable Short-term Results as contractually agreed with a subcontractor;**

#### **Failure to achieve Results as indicated by measures as contractually agreed with a subcontractor;**

#### **Inability of a contractually specified strategy to reach the Targeted Population fairly;**

#### Failure of the subcontractor to apply specified strategies and methods as contractually agreed with a subcontractor; and,

#### **Significant demographic shifts or significant clarification or discovery of data that alters the logic of pursuing a specified strategy.**

### The Network agrees to make changes to its Council-approved SOW only by negotiation and agreement with the Council that results in a formal, written amendment to the Agreement between the Network and the Council.

### The Network agrees to involve and/or consult with neighboring Tribal Networks and Tribal governments within the Network boundary, if applicable, concerning Network Comprehensive Plan amendments and community decisions about actions to implement the Network’s Comprehensive Plan.

### The Network agrees to provide a copy of the Network’s fiscal agent agreement to the Council prior to its execution, if a new fiscal agent agreement, and within 10 days of renewing or signing a new agreement. The Network agrees to maintain an agreement that specifically covers the period of time of this Interlocal Agreement.

1. Community Networks: Building Community Capacity, Reducing Rates of Child and Family Problems, Longhi, 2008 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Resilience scores were calculated using an index of three questions from the WA State, U.S.A. adult health surveillance survey – the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)