

Developing Data Useful for Decision Making – Example 1

Team's Vision Example 1

Promoting collaborative relationships across agencies to benefit transition youth

Goal

Professionals across agencies will have the knowledge and tools to collaboratively plan with each other, individual youth and their families for the transition from school to adult life

Baseline Data for the Goal

Define the starting point for this goal

Baseline data from survey sent to SSAs, intervention specialists and OOD OTSP counselors:

- Level of knowledge of each agency's role in transition: overall, less than 45% of respondents felt they had adequate knowledge of another agency's role
- confidence in knowing how to plan collaboratively with other agencies: overall, less than 30% of respondents felt they could implement a process for collaborative planning
- Data will be further analyzed for other goals in the plan that target activity with specific agencies

Progress Benchmark

Define the progress, level of success or effectiveness expected after the goal is implemented

- 80% of respondents feel they have adequate knowledge of another agency's role (increase of 35% from the baseline of 45%)
- 60% of respondents are confident in implementing a collaborative planning process (increase of 30% from baseline of 30%)

Progress Monitoring Method

Describe how data will be gathered to monitor progress

- Pre-Survey to gather baseline – May 2019
- Post-Survey (same questions restated slightly) Oct 2019 (or after overview sessions take place)
- Training and technical assistance evaluations to track PD event effectiveness

Discussion

This example is not an 'exemplar'; it does illustrate a way to establish Baseline Data and a Progress Benchmark:

- Think logically about what data to use to define the Team's starting point in reference to the Goal
- Set a Progress Benchmark linked 'apples to apples' to the Baseline
- Determine a simple, straightforward way to monitor progress

This Team previously analyzed the problem, "Families begin transition planning too late" using the 5 Whys. The root cause they decided to tackle is that agencies have long worked as separate entities, creating confusion for families and others on the Team as to what each agency is (or is not) providing services for the youth's transition. They also reviewed SWOT information. Then they talked through an If...Then...Because discussion to affirm that the Goal they had in mind was aligned with their Vision. See the Vision-Goal discussion example.

The Team reviewed their Vision, to 'Promote collaborative relationships'. They determined that yes, providing professionals across agencies with the same information and tools for planning would definitely move forward the collaborative relationships they desire. For the goal they plan to enact (common knowledge and tools across agencies for collaborative planning), the Team discussed what 'conditions' would need to be in place to successfully implement the goal. While there

were many possibilities, they decided to focus on two aspects. That:

- professionals have an adequate knowledge of other agencies
- professionals have skills related to collaborative planning (how to use tools, who to include, strategies for active engagement of youth and families), that would equip them to be confident in collaboration.

To determine what data best defined their starting point (baseline) for this goal, they asked questions such as:

- Does data already exist that we could use to define our starting point for this goal?
- What data or information can we gather that will tell us the current level of knowledge and confidence that professionals feel they have regarding transition planning processes and tools?
- What data will be sensitive to measuring changes in the knowledge and confidence of professionals as we implement strategies

The Team decided that a survey of professionals in CBDD, education and OOD would give them baseline data they wanted. By asking respondents for their own assessment of their level of knowledge and confidence in a survey format, the Team will be able to transform the opinions of survey respondents into data. The Team will be able to compile the survey responses to ascertain, as a group, the level of knowledge and level of confidence of the respondents. The baseline data then provides the point of reference for setting a Progress Benchmark, or target for improvement that is ambitious yet realistic.

They developed survey questions that could be used across agencies, using 'agency neutral' language to elicit responses that could then be quantified for the three target audiences. They decided to use statements and a scale of 'no knowledge' to 'expert knowledge' to get consistent information. They decided the survey needed to be rather short, 10 questions or less, and to set a rather short timeline for responses to be returned. The Team included questions in the same survey that will inform other goals in the plan as well. The survey was entered into an online platform, such as Survey Monkey.

Each Core Team member gathered the email addresses to send the survey to for personnel in each of their respective agencies. They set a date for the Core Team meet to analyze the survey data, a week after the deadline for survey responses. Because they crafted the questions in a way that personnel in each agency could respond to the same set of questions, the data were easy to compile, analyze and quantify.

They were somewhat surprised that the majority of survey respondents did not feel they had either 'adequate knowledge' or 'confidence in collaboration.' The data helped to inform that planning for training and technical assistance should start with very basic information. Their SWOT information had also indicated that an internal weakness, across all systems, was a recent significant turnover in agency/school staff and leadership. It made sense to them that an influx of professionals new to working with transition youth would lack background information and skills.

Then they set targets for improvement - Progress Benchmarks. Based on the results of their survey, they decided to focus on two primary areas: 'adequate knowledge' and 'confidence in collaboration'. They considered the strategies they had in mind, and how much improvement they could reasonably expect within the timeline. Improvement at 100% is a long-term level to attain, but given the starting point, the Team set the Benchmark for Progress at levels they reasoned would be ambitious, yet realistic.

They thought logically about how many people the baseline percentages represented. There were 52 respondents to the survey. The baseline level for 'adequate knowledge' was determined by considering the number of responses in the '1' and '2' levels on the scale (no knowledge, and minimal knowledge). That represented about 23 people (there were a few who did not answer this question). The Team did some simple math to determine that they felt they could increase the knowledge of about 20 more people, and set a Progress Benchmark at 80%. They thought through the 'confidence in collaboration' factor in the same way. In the post survey, the Team will look for 80% of the responses to the knowledge question to be a '3' (basic knowledge) - '5' (expert knowledge).

For the Progress Monitoring Method, the Core Team will use a Post-Survey, using the same questions. The Post Survey will be given to those who participate in the activities associated with the Strategies in their plan. They also wanted another layer of data - evaluations from training and activities implemented as strategies for this goal. They wished to also gauge the effectiveness of the training sessions they were implementing. This would give them a barometer along the way for determining whether or not they are hitting the mark and making progress.

Strategies, including Responsibilities, and Timelines are yet to be determined. These additional plan elements will add accountability for ensuring the Core team is completing the work of implementing the Goal and Strategies within the established timeframe.