



A Framework for Evidence-Based Decision Making in Local Criminal Justice Systems

Starter Kit

1a: Conducting an EBDM Readiness Checklist

Navigating the Roadmap

Activity 1: Build a genuine, collaborative policy team.

Introduction

Jurisdictions interested in working towards building an EBDM justice system may want to begin by assessing their readiness for undertaking such work. The EBDM Readiness Checklist is designed to establish your “baseline” for working together and to help you explore a range of team-, policy-, and practice-related elements in your system. The results of the checklist will provide an assessment of your jurisdiction’s readiness to build capacity for implementing the EBDM Framework and can be used as a foundation for moving forward with the EBDM planning process.

Purpose

To measure and facilitate a dialogue among team members on the team’s readiness to begin working on building an EBDM justice system

Participants

All policy team members should be involved in completing and debriefing the results of the Readiness Checklist.

Instructions

The checklist is designed to serve as a catalyst for discussion on the team’s capacity and willingness to adopt the EBDM Framework. While the checklist may be administered in a variety of ways, it is critical that the results are discussed and processed by the full policy team.

Administering the Checklist

Below are several approaches a jurisdiction might take to administer the checklist. In all cases, there are two important considerations:

- Members should be encouraged to be as honest as possible. Candor will lead to the most accurate—and therefore helpful—results.
- Teams might consider using the services of a neutral facilitator¹ to debrief the results and implications of the checklist responses. Often, a neutral facilitator can help a group

¹ Jurisdictions might explore whether technical assistance is available for this purpose.

objectively engage in constructive dialogue and action planning, particularly around sensitive issues.

Methods of Administration

Some of the ways that jurisdictions may consider conducting the checklist include the following:

- Administer the checklist during a meeting of the full team, using transponders to collect real-time, anonymous answers from individual team members. This approach will likely result in candid feedback due to the anonymity; will provide members with the opportunity to immediately see—through the visual results the transponder system offers—areas of agreement and diversity of view; and will create a forum for dialogue about a variety of team-, policy-, and practice-related issues.
- The checklist may be distributed on paper for team members to complete individually either before or during a meeting, and responses can either be aggregated and reviewed or discussed in an open forum.
- The survey may also be conducted online in advance of a policy team meeting using an online survey service (e.g., Survey Monkey). The results should then be tallied and discussed during the team meeting.

Discussing Responses

Team members should discuss together the results of the checklist; it will likely to surface important areas of work for the team to undertake. These areas of work can be addressed through the various documents provided in this EBDM Starter Kit. For instance, the team should discuss

- the level of policy-level collaboration in the jurisdiction and key stakeholders' level of commitment to future collaboration;
- the extent to which the team has effectively engaged justice system agency staff—and community members—in discussions regarding a vision for an EBDM justice system;
- the extent to which policymakers and agency staff have the knowledge and skills necessary to implement evidence-based decisions;
- the breadth and depth of evidence-based practices currently in place in the jurisdiction (e.g., use of assessment tools, targeting services to criminogenic needs); and
- policymakers' willingness to agree upon systemwide outcomes, and the jurisdiction's ability to collect and analyze data to measure these goals.

The checklist is not intended to provide a list of items that **must** be addressed prior to a team starting the EBDM process. However, the checklist does include the core activities that a team will need to engage in for the successful implementation of the EBDM Framework. Therefore, if team members express serious concerns about certain items (particularly in terms of their commitment to working together), this may indicate that the time is not right to undertake this work and/or that further foundation-building is necessary before a jurisdiction is positioned to fully adopt the Framework.

Appendix 1: EBDM Readiness Checklist

Conducting a constructive self-assessment of your work as a local criminal justice policy team is important for creating a change-promoting climate and/or determining how best to advance policy and practice. The items on this checklist are designed to assist you with exploring a range of team-, policy-, and practice-related elements in your system. It can be valuable for providing a preliminary assessment of your jurisdiction's readiness to build capacity for implementing the EBDM Framework and can be used as a foundation for the planning process. Please complete this checklist as a group.

POLICY LEVEL COLLABORATION

- The individual stakeholders listed below are *philosophically* committed to using empirical research to guide decision making *in their respective roles/areas of practice* in the local criminal justice system.

Law enforcement	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Pretrial services	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Victim advocates	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Prosecution	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Defense	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Jails	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Court administrators	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Judges	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Community corrections/probation	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
City/county executives/administrators	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Legislators	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Community representatives/public	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

- The individual stakeholders listed below are *philosophically* committed to collaborating to ensure that empirical research guides decision making *across all areas* of the local criminal justice system.

Law enforcement	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Pretrial services	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Victim advocates	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Prosecution	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Defense	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Jails	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Court administrators	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Judges	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Community corrections/probation	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
City/county executives/administrators	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

Legislators	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Community representatives/public	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

3. The individual stakeholders listed below are represented (as measured by formal inclusion and routine participation) on an existing or planned/proposed local criminal justice policy team.

Law enforcement	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Pretrial services	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Victim advocates	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Prosecution	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Defense	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Jails	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Court administrators	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Judges	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Community corrections/probation	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
City/county executives/administrators	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Legislators	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Community representatives/public	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

4. For Question 3, indicate whether the team is Existing *or* Planned/proposed.

5. How confident are you that your jurisdiction will be successful in engaging all key stakeholder agencies (see list of stakeholders in Question 3) in your jurisdiction in this Framework initiative and sustaining their involvement over the long-term?

VERY SOMEWHAT NOT AT ALL

6. A forum for collaborative work has been formally established to take on this evidence-based decision making initiative (e.g., there is a mechanism for meeting on a regular basis, work to be accomplished has been defined, operating norms/ground rules have been established).

YES
 NOT YET, BUT STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN
 STEPS HAVE NOT YET BEEN TAKEN

7. The stakeholders have developed a systemwide vision and an agreement on a common set of goals.

YES NO

8. If you answered no to Question 7, are stakeholders committed to discussing and reaching agreement on a systemwide vision and common goals?

YES NO N/A

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

9. The stakeholders have developed a deliberate strategy to educate the local community (e.g., representatives of various interest groups as well as citizens at large) about relevant crime and risk reduction research and efforts underway to apply these findings locally.

YES NO

10. The stakeholders have begun to implement this community education strategy.

YES NO

11. The stakeholders have identified methods to actively engage community representatives in their strategic planning efforts.

YES NO

EVIDENCE-BASED KNOWLEDGE

12. Stakeholder agencies have equipped their individual agency leadership and staff with EBP knowledge/skills by conducting training and skill building events on practices that are evidence-based (e.g., how to conduct a validated risk/needs assessment and use the information in decision making; motivational interviewing skills; how to teach concrete problem solving skills):

Law enforcement	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Pretrial services	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Victim advocates	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Prosecution	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Defense	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Jails	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Court administrators	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Judges	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Community corrections/probation	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
City/county executives/administrators	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Legislators	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Community representatives/public	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> UNCLEAR	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

IMPLEMENTATION OF EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

13. Validated assessment instruments (e.g., LSI-R, COMPAS) are used to inform decisions for (select only one):

- All/most types of cases
- Only certain types of cases (e.g., drug-related, sex offenses, other violent crimes)
- N/A—none used

14. Stakeholders (e.g., judges, prosecutors, defenders) have adopted mechanisms to acquire and use consistent assessment information (e.g., offender risk/needs information, knowledge regarding evidence-based programming) to inform individual case dispositions in the following ways:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Arrest decision | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| Cite vs. detain decision | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| Pretrial release decision | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| Diversion decision | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| Plea negotiation decision | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| Sentencing decision | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| Jail programming decision | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| Community supervision-level decision | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| Community programming decision | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| Violation decision | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| Early termination decision | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |

15. Stakeholder agencies agree that more intensive interventions are best reserved for higher risk offenders.

- All agree
- Most agree
- Few agree
- None agree

16. Stakeholder agencies deliver services and interventions to offenders based on assessed criminogenic needs.

- All deliver
- Most deliver
- Few deliver
- None deliver

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

17. The stakeholders have agreed on a “scorecard” to measure systemwide performance.

- YES
- NO

18. If you answered no to Question 17, are stakeholders committed to discussing and reaching agreement on a “scorecard” to measure systemwide performance?

YES NO N/A

19. The following are in place to ensure evidence-based practices are incorporated into decision making at the system level:

System-level logic model	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Quality assurance mechanisms that assess fidelity of implementation	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Key benchmarks, performance measures	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Strategies to collaboratively assess benchmarks and performance measures and address identified performance issues	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

20. If you answered no to Question 19, are stakeholders committed to developing and instituting these mechanisms and indicators?

YES NO N/A

EXTERNAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS

Indicate the amount/level of assistance that your team needs in the following areas (i.e., high need for assistance, moderate need, etc.):

- | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 21. Initially identifying/engaging the full range of necessary stakeholders | <input type="checkbox"/> HIGH | <input type="checkbox"/> MODERATE | <input type="checkbox"/> LOW | <input type="checkbox"/> NO NEED |
| 22. Establishing a shared vision for the team | <input type="checkbox"/> HIGH | <input type="checkbox"/> MODERATE | <input type="checkbox"/> LOW | <input type="checkbox"/> NO NEED |
| 23. Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of team members | <input type="checkbox"/> HIGH | <input type="checkbox"/> MODERATE | <input type="checkbox"/> LOW | <input type="checkbox"/> NO NEED |
| 24. Establishing a results-driven structure for the team’s operation | <input type="checkbox"/> HIGH | <input type="checkbox"/> MODERATE | <input type="checkbox"/> LOW | <input type="checkbox"/> NO NEED |
| 25. Developing mechanisms to promote long-term engagement of team members | <input type="checkbox"/> HIGH | <input type="checkbox"/> MODERATE | <input type="checkbox"/> LOW | <input type="checkbox"/> NO NEED |
| 26. Establishing benchmarks, performance indicators, and | <input type="checkbox"/> HIGH | <input type="checkbox"/> MODERATE | <input type="checkbox"/> LOW | <input type="checkbox"/> NO NEED |

outcome measures

- | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 27. Equipping leadership across the system with knowledge about evidence-based principles/practices | <input type="checkbox"/> HIGH | <input type="checkbox"/> MODERATE | <input type="checkbox"/> LOW | <input type="checkbox"/> NO NEED |
| 28. Equipping practitioners across the system with knowledge about evidence-based principles/practices | <input type="checkbox"/> HIGH | <input type="checkbox"/> MODERATE | <input type="checkbox"/> LOW | <input type="checkbox"/> NO NEED |
| 29. Equipping practitioners across the system with evidence-based skills/competencies | <input type="checkbox"/> HIGH | <input type="checkbox"/> MODERATE | <input type="checkbox"/> LOW | <input type="checkbox"/> NO NEED |
| 30. Raising awareness and engaging the public in the initiative | <input type="checkbox"/> HIGH | <input type="checkbox"/> MODERATE | <input type="checkbox"/> LOW | <input type="checkbox"/> NO NEED |

Appendix 2: Template for Summarizing Checklist Results

**SHORT-TERM TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO JURISDICTIONS INTERESTED IN ADVANCING
EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING IN THEIR LOCAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

Readiness Checklist Results Summary

N = __

POLICY-LEVEL COLLABORATION

1. The individual stakeholders listed below are committed philosophically to using empirical research to guide decision making in their respective roles/areas of practice in the local criminal justice system.

	YES	UNCLEAR	NO	Count
Law enforcement				
Pretrial services				
Victim advocates				
Prosecution				
Defense				
Jails				
Court administrators				
Judges				
Community corrections/probation				
City/county executives/administrators				
Legislators				
Community representatives/public				
Other (<i>list here</i>)				

2. The individual stakeholders listed below are philosophically committed to collaborating to ensure that empirical research guides decision making across all areas of the local criminal justice system.

	YES	UNCLEAR	NO	Count
Law enforcement				
Pretrial services				
Victim advocates				
Prosecution				
Defense				
Jails				
Court administrators				
Judges				
Community corrections/probation				
City/county executives/administrators				
Legislators				
Community representatives/public				
Other (<i>list here</i>)				

3. The individual stakeholders listed below are represented (as measured by formal inclusion and routine participation) on an existing or planned/proposed local criminal justice policy team.

	YES	UNCLEAR	NO	Count
Law enforcement				
Pretrial services				
Victim advocates				
Prosecution				
Defense				
Jails				
Court administrators				
Judges				
Community corrections/probation				
City/county executives/administrators				
Legislators				
Community representatives/public				
Other (<i>list here</i>)				

4. For Question 3, indicate whether the team is:

	Count
Existing	
Planned/proposed	

5. How confident are you that your jurisdiction will be successful in engaging all key stakeholder agencies (see list of stakeholders in Question 3) in your jurisdiction in this Framework initiative and sustaining their involvement over the long term?

	Percent	Count
Very		
Somewhat		
Not at all		

6. A forum for collaborative work has been formally established to take on this evidence-based decision making initiative (e.g., there is a mechanism for meeting on a regular basis, work to be accomplished has been defined, operating norms/ground rules have been established).

	Percent	Count
Yes		
Not yet, but steps have been taken		
Steps have not yet been taken		

7. The stakeholders have developed a systemwide vision and agreement on a common set of goals.

	Percent	Count
Yes		
No		

8. If you answered no to Question 7, are stakeholders committed to discussing and reaching agreement on a systemwide vision and common goals?

	Percent	Count
Yes		
No		
Don't know		
N/A (Question 7 marked "yes")		

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

9. The stakeholders have developed a deliberate strategy to educate the local community (e.g., representatives of various interest groups as well as citizens at large) about relevant crime and risk reduction research and efforts underway to apply these findings locally.

	Percent	Count
Yes		
No		

10. The stakeholders have begun to implement this community education strategy.

	Percent	Count
Yes		
No		

11. The stakeholders have identified methods to actively engage community representatives in their strategic planning efforts.

	Percent	Count
Yes		
No		

EVIDENCE-BASED KNOWLEDGE

12. Stakeholder agencies have equipped their individual agency leadership and staff with EBP knowledge/skills by conducting both training and skill building events on practices that are evidence-based.

	YES	UNCLEAR	NO	Count
Law enforcement				
Pretrial services				
Victim advocates				
Prosecution				
Defense				
Jails				
Court administrators				
Judges				
Community corrections/probation				
City/county executives/administrators				
Legislators				
Community representatives/public				
Other				

IMPLEMENTATION OF EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

13. Validated assessment instruments are used to inform decisions for (select only one):

	Percent	Count
All/most types of cases		
Only certain types of cases (e.g., drug-related, sex offenses, other violent crimes)		
N/A—none used		

14. Stakeholders (e.g., judges, prosecutors, defenders) have adopted mechanisms to acquire and use consistent assessment information (e.g., offender risk/needs information, knowledge regarding evidence-based programming) to inform individual case dispositions in the following ways:

	Yes	No	Count
Arrest decision			
Cite vs. detain decision			
Pretrial release decision			
Diversion decision			
Plea negotiation decision			
Sentencing decision			
Jail programming decision			
Community supervision-level decision			
Community programming decision			
Violation decision			
Early termination decision			

15. Stakeholder agencies agree that more intensive interventions are best reserved for higher risk offenders.

	Percent	Count
All agree		
Most agree		
Few agree		
None agree		

16. Stakeholder agencies deliver services and interventions to offenders based on assessed criminogenic needs.

	Percent	Count
All deliver		
Most deliver		
Few deliver		
None deliver		

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

17. The stakeholders have agreed on a “scorecard” to measure systemwide performance.

	Percent	Count
Yes		
No		

18. If you answered no to Question 17, are stakeholders committed to discussing and reaching agreement on a “scorecard” to measure systemwide performance?

	Percent	Count
Yes		
No		
Don't know		

19. The following are in place to ensure evidence-based practices are incorporated into decision making at the system level:

	Yes	No	Count
System-level logic model			
Quality assurance mechanisms that assess fidelity of implementation			
Key benchmarks, performance measures			
Strategies to collaboratively assess benchmarks and performance measures and address identified performance issues			

20. If you answered no to Question 19, are stakeholders committed to developing and instituting these mechanisms and indicators?

	Percent	Count
Yes		
No		
Don't know		

EXTERNAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS

Indicate the amount/level of assistance that your team needs in the following areas (high need for assistance, moderate need, etc.):

	HIGH	MODERATE	LOW	NO NEED	Count
21. Initially identifying/engaging the full range of necessary stakeholders					
22. Establishing a shared vision for the team					
23. Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of team members					
24. Establishing a results-driven structure for the team's operation					
25. Developing mechanisms to promote long-term engagement of team members					

26. Establishing benchmarks, performance indicators, and outcome measures					
27. Equipping leadership across the system with knowledge about evidence-based principles/practices					
28. Equipping practitioners across the system with knowledge about evidence-based principles/practices					
29. Equipping practitioners across the system with evidence-based skills/competencies					
30. Raising awareness and engaging the public in the initiative					