



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

Starter Kit

3e: Prioritizing Your Team’s Targets for Change

Navigating the Roadmap

Activity 3: Understand current practice within each agency/across the system.

Introduction

Considering the information collected through various policy and practice analyses is no easy feat. It is more than likely that your analyses will surface a variety of possible areas of improvement. This may present the team with some tough choices regarding its highest priorities for action. This document outlines a process your team might use for culling through the information collected through your policy and practice analyses and selecting your priority change targets.

Purpose

To agree, as a team, on the most significant opportunities to advance policy and practice to achieve the jurisdiction’s harm and risk reduction goals

Participants

All policy team members should be present and actively involved in considering work groups’/outside experts’ findings from the policy and practice assessments.

Instructions

1. Plan a day-long strategic planning session (or a series of meetings) to conduct this work.¹
2. In advance of the meeting, ask policy team members to review the findings from work groups/outside experts regarding the extent to which policies, practices, and key decisions are supported/informed by research.
3. At the beginning of the meeting, take a moment to agree as a team how decisions will be made for selecting the change strategies on which the team will move forward.
 - a. Decide on the extent of agreement needed to make a decision. Will decisions be made by majority vote or through consensus? What does consensus mean? It may be unrealistic to assume that every team member will completely agree on the top change targets to pursue. One strategy for making decisions is for team members to

Reporting to the Policy Team: Work Group Findings

During their strategic action planning session during, Grant County, Indiana’s work groups were asked to report out on

- their top 3–5 action items/change strategies for improving risk reduction outcomes;
- the evidence-based research that supports the action/change and other supporting reasons for the proposal;
- a brief analysis of the pros and cons of each action item;
- action items/change strategies that were considered and then “taken off the table,” and why.

¹ Consider the use of an outside facilitator to ensure that the meeting is as productive as possible.

agree to make an honest effort to understand what is being proposed and to determine whether each member “can live with it and support it.”

- b. Set criteria to determine which change targets will be prioritized. Some factors to consider may include: What is the potential impact of this change on risk and harm reduction? Do we agree the research support is strong enough to consider this change? Do we think this strategy is realistic, given what we know about our current system’s challenges?
4. Once the team is clear on the way it will make decisions, work groups should report on their recommendations, on the level of research behind each recommendation, and on how the recommendations came about.
5. For each work group recommendation or change strategy, consider it against the selection criteria and discuss whether team members agree that the change strategy is a priority. This may be accomplished through group discussion and/or ranking, scoring, or voting methods.
6. If the team has already discussed its harm reduction goals, it will be necessary to consider these goals as part of the decision-making process for selecting change targets. (If the team has not yet determined its final harm reduction goals, it should do so as part of its efforts to establish performance measures and outcomes, and to develop a systemwide scorecard.²)
7. Once a set of change targets is formed, revisit them as a package and determine if anything is missing or if strategies need to be further developed. The team may decide that it wants the work groups that developed the recommendations to create more detailed descriptions of the scope of work and action steps to implement the proposed changes.³

² See 6a: Measuring Your Performance and 6b: Developing a Systemwide Scorecard.

³ This activity may naturally lead to work on system- and/or case-level logic models. See 5a: Building Logic Models.

Example: Grant County, Indiana, Strategic Planning Session Goals and Agenda

Goals

- The first goal is to *propose, describe, and weigh* the pros and cons of the top change strategies recommended by the various work groups.
- The second goal is to *prioritize* the change strategies according to those that will produce the greatest impact and, as a second consideration, those most feasible to pursue in the next 18–24 months. Other change targets may be critical to long-term improvement in outcomes but will fall into a second phase of implementation.

Agenda

8:00 a.m. Welcome; agenda review

8:15 a.m. Review and discuss ground rules regarding how the EBDM policy team will make decisions about change targets

8:30 a.m. Grant County EBDM Vision Statement: The Critical Context for Choosing Change Targets

9:00 a.m. Pretrial Work Group: Proposals for Top Change Targets

This will be the first of a series of reports from the work groups regarding proposed change targets and goals. Each work group will

- describe each proposal, including the work group’s analysis of the pros and cons of the proposal
- identify, with the participation of the full EBDM team, on flip chart paper
 - the agencies involved;
 - each proposal’s likely and logical contribution to harm reduction;
 - the estimated time required for implementation;
 - the supporting research, where possible; and
 - proposals that were considered and set aside, and the rationale for these decisions.

The full team is encouraged to ask clarifying questions, contribute to the discussion of pros and cons, and offer other strategies they would like to see considered at each decision point.

10:00 a.m. Break

10:15 a.m. Pretrial Work Group (continued)

11:00 a.m. Community Interventions Work Group: Proposals for Top Change Targets

12:00 p.m. Lunch

- 12:45 p.m. Violations Work Group: Proposals for Top Change Targets
- 1:45 p.m. Change Targets on Other Decision Points
- All team members will have the opportunity to nominate change targets that fall outside the purview of the three work groups.
- 2:15 p.m. Review of the “Big Picture” of Change Targets and Setting Priorities
- Prioritizing the change targets that will have the greatest impact on harm and risk reduction in Grant County
 - Understanding the change targets that are both foundational steps and feasible for implementation in the next 18–24 months
- If consensus does not emerge from the day’s discussion, or possibly to support that consensus, members will use colored dots beside each change strategy listed on the flip chart paper:*
- *red to indicate the most impactful change strategies; and*
 - *blue for those change strategies that would be most feasible within current resources.*
- 3:00 pm Action Planning for Next Steps
- The session will close with a clear list of priorities for the next two months’ work (i.e., development of action plan, scorecard, logic model, communications strategy).
- 3:30 pm Adjourn

Example: Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, EBDM Proposal Scoring Tool

Criteria	Scale	Weight of Overall Score
<p>Integrity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How closely does this proposal tie into the vision statement (stewardship/reducing recidivism/collaboration/harm reduction, etc.)? 	<p>1 = whether it's a good idea or not, it's just not a strong example of EBDM principles at work</p> <p>10 = epitome of EBDM principles at work, and especially useful in addressing the issues the criminal justice system in Milwaukee County needs to tackle</p>	14.285%
<p>Predictability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent does existing research suggest the proposal will be successful? 	<p>1 = in essence, the proposal is a hypothesis that hasn't been tested anywhere else we know of</p> <p>10 = solid research shows this has been a winner in similar circumstances in other jurisdictions</p>	14.285%
<p>Novelty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How innovative is the proposal? 	<p>1 = it may be somewhat embarrassing to have to explain why we aren't doing this already</p> <p>10 = someday someone will call this "the Milwaukee _____"</p>	14.285%
<p>Supportability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent do we have baseline data about the issue the proposal addresses, and to what extent do we have data collection systems in place that will help us track progress and success (or lack of it)? 	<p>1 = considerable effort will be needed to collect data about existing practices and the results of the project as we implement it</p> <p>10 = current, easily accessible data about our practices already exists and data collection systems are already in place that we can use to track progress</p>	14.285%
<p>Impressiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How big a hit will this be if it's successful? 	<p>1 = barely worth the effort</p> <p>10 = candidates for public office will jockey to take credit for this idea</p>	14.285%
<p>Scorability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How measurable are the projected results? Can the results be evaluated in terms of our overall scorecard? 	<p>1 = the aspirations of the proposal are not quantified and the proposal makes no suggestion of how they might be</p> <p>10 = the proposal contains a specific, quantified estimate of costs savings, reduction in recidivism, harm reduction, etc., and a firm methodology for conducting future measurements of actual performance against the estimate</p>	14.285%
<p>Feasibility</p>	<p>1 = it is unlikely that necessary budgetary resources can be obtained, or necessary</p>	14.285%

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do we have the financial and infrastructure capacity to implement the proposal immediately or must additional resources be sought?	infrastructure developed, or both 10 = no additional budgetary resources or infrastructure are needed to implement the proposal	
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