



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

Starter Kit

1j: Creating a Charter for Your Policy Team

Navigating the Roadmap

Activity 1: Build a genuine, collaborative policy team.

Introduction

Developing a written charter is a critical step towards achieving an effective team. It facilitates dialogue among team members about the ways that a group of individuals can and should operate, and it documents these agreements. Doing so ensures that these agreements are understood by all, facilitates the orientation of new team members, and supports the accountability of individual team members, as well as the team as a whole.

The policy team charter should define the purpose of the team, outline its vision and mission, and explain how it will work together. The charter is important as it

- defines common objectives and the shared intent of the team;
- keeps the team focused and helps the team determine when it goes off track (i.e., when activities go beyond the scope of the team);
- defines team boundaries and agreements; and
- helps team members determine when to raise an issue.¹

The charter serves as a roadmap for the team's work together and should be referred to when "times get tough." It should be developed jointly, in principle if not in practice, and be agreed upon by all team members. Signatures on the charter reflect members' commitment to adhere to the charter. Although a charter is similar to a memorandum of understanding (or to an agreement), its distinction is that it contains more detailed information than a MOU/A typically does.

While charters may differ from team to team, generally the following elements are included:

- the clear and elevating goal (vision) the team is striving to achieve;
- the specific mission of the team during the current phase of work;
- the goals and objectives the team has agreed to take on to achieve the mission;
- team membership and agreed-upon roles and responsibilities;
- the team's agreed-upon operating norms/ground rules;
- the team's agreements around making decisions; and
- the resources and support available to the team as it conducts its work.²

¹ DRM Associates, 2001.

Purpose

To create a charter that will map the course for the policy team

Participants

While all policy team members should ultimately agree to the content of the charter and indicate their agreement by signing the document, a few team members may draft the charter based on the work of the team (i.e., they may take team products such as the vision, mission, ground rules, and list of roles and responsibilities and combine them to form a formal charter).

As the team's work evolves, the charter should be updated. For instance, an initial charter is unlikely to contain a detailed work plan, team membership might change, or operating norms or team member roles might be expanded over time. In these cases, an amended charter would include an updated work plan, team membership list, set of operating norms, or clarification of roles.

Instructions

As your team determines what it wants to achieve and makes agreements about how it will work together, complete and/or update the appropriate sections in your team's charter.

Consider the example charter in this kit or review the template provided here:

<https://www.acquisition.gov/sevensteps/library/GenericTeamCharterTemplate.doc>.

1. In the section entitled "Team Membership," explain how team members were chosen and list all the members of your team. You may also wish to state your team's agreement on whether or not the membership may change over time, as well as the use (or not) of proxies or designees of team members. If you want to include a full list of contact information, this can be attached to the charter as a separate document.
2. Once team membership has been established, one of the first activities of the team should be to discuss the reason for its creation. The first section of a charter should include an introduction to your team. It should state the "context," that is, the problem that is being addressed and the results that you expect to achieve. Once your team has developed a shared vision for your work together, fill in your team's vision statement.³
3. Following a discussion with the team on its mission (i.e., the activities your team will engage in to meet its vision), include the mission statement in your team's charter.⁴
4. As your team begins to clarify how it will work together, include the following in the charter:
 - a. your team's agreement on how often and for how long the policy team will meet;

² Mind Tools, 2010.

³ See 1c: Creating a Vision for Your Policy Team.

⁴ See 1i: Developing a Mission for Your Policy Team.

- b. the ground rules and operating norms on which your team has agreed;⁵
 - c. under “Team Roles and Responsibilities,” any special roles of team members (e.g., chair, facilitator) and expectations for all team members (e.g., all team members will attend every meeting)⁶; and
 - d. under “Decision Making Guidelines,” agreements made by your team regarding your decision making process.⁷
5. In the section entitled “Policy Team Activities,” refer to your team’s work plan. When your team is satisfied with the objectives contained in the work plan, include it as an attachment to your charter.⁸ Update this attachment as your team revises its work plan.
6. Once the team has reviewed and approved its contents, be sure to have all team members sign the charter to indicate their agreement to adhere to it.

Example: Yamhill County, Oregon, EBDM Policy Team Charter

Policy Team Vision: We envision a safer Yamhill County community, where professionals work together utilizing data, research, and evidence-based practices in the criminal justice system. Yamhill County will experience enhanced public safety, a reduction in the number of victims, greater offender accountability, and a reduced threat of harm through appropriate application of proven practices at all phases of the criminal justice process.

Policy Team Mission: Our mission is to collaboratively develop, by July 1, 2011, a strategic plan to implement proven, cost-effective system improvements.

Policy Team Values:

- Safe and healthy communities
- Public safety
- Fairness
- Justice, due process, and rule of law
- Respect for the rights, needs, and concerns of people who are victims of crime
- Respect for the rights of people accused of crimes
- Enhanced collaboration
- Cost efficient and effective practices
- Competent and dedicated criminal justice professionals

Policy Team Activities: To ensure accomplishment of the policy team’s mission, an action plan has been developed, defining the objectives and action steps the policy team will undertake. The action plan will be reviewed at each policy team meeting to ensure that tasks are

⁵ For more information, see 1f: Setting Ground Rules.

⁶ For more information, see 1k: Establishing Clear Roles and Responsibilities.

⁷ See 1f: Setting Ground Rules.

⁸ See 1l: Developing an Action Plan for Your Policy Team’s Work.

completed as anticipated and updated as needed. The action plan is attached as Appendix 1.

Meeting Frequency and Duration: To accomplish its work, the policy team will meet on a regular schedule. The first meeting of the policy team will be 10/14/10. Policy team meetings will be held twice per month through June, 2011. If accomplishment of the action plan requires more or less time, the policy team will readjust this schedule as necessary.

Ground Rules and Operating Norms: The following ground rules and operating norms have been established, and team members have agreed to hold each other accountable for adherence to these rules and norms:

- Be courteous.
 - Don't interrupt.
 - Don't talk over each other.
 - Don't check emails during meetings.
 - Take important phone calls outside of meetings.
- Be candid, honest, and open.
- Strive to be goal-oriented.
- Bring your "best self" to meetings.
- Be on time, participate, complete assigned "homework," attend all meetings, and stay for the duration of all meetings.
- Start/end meetings on time.
- Agendas will be sent out in advance by email.
 - Each member may add items to the agenda.
- At the end of each meeting, members will review how the meeting went and how well its members adhered to the ground rules and operating rules.
- Judge Collins will facilitate all meetings.
- As the local coordinator, Director Ted Smietana will schedule meetings and handle all necessary logistics in between meetings.
- The policy team will agree to the type of information/messages that will be shared with the policy team member agencies to ensure consistency.
- Team members will be transparent with their agencies regarding the Initiative.

Decision Making Guidelines: The policy team has agreed on the following guidelines for decision making:

- All members have equal status for the purposes of input and decision making.
- No proxy voting will be permitted.
- Unanimity is preferred; otherwise, decisions will be reached by consensus whenever possible.
- When consensus cannot be achieved, we will respect divergent views, seek common ground, seek technical guidance, and continue to strive for consensus.
- Team members will remain cognizant of the impact of our decisions on individual agencies.
- Team members have independence to make decisions for their own agency, while still adhering to the collective interest of the policy team.

- Each meeting will be recorded and minutes will be shared with team members.

Team Membership: Team members have been selected based upon the desire to have all local and relevant criminal justice agencies involved and represented.

- At least one committee member represents each of the following disciplines/interest areas:
 - Law Enforcement—Sheriff Crabtree, McMinnville Chief Ron Noble, and Newberg Chief Brian Casey
 - Jail Administration—Sheriff Crabtree
 - Judiciary—Presiding Judge John L. Collins
 - County Administration—Commissioner Mary Stern
 - Correctional Treatment—HHS Director Silas Halloran-Steiner
 - Prosecution—District Attorney Brad Berry
 - Defense—Attorney Carol Fredrick
 - Victim Services—Debra Bridges
 - Community Corrections—Director Ted Smietana
- On an ongoing basis, the team will reconsider its composition and seek to add members to the team as additional expertise is required. Because the work of the team will be intensive and require the full engagement of all policy team members, proxies and designees will not be allowed.

Team Roles and Responsibilities: The following roles have been established to support the effective work of the policy team:

- Chair: The role of Chair will be filled by Judge Collins. The Chair’s role is to facilitate and oversee each policy team meeting and ensure that the team’s mission and purpose is being fulfilled.
- Coordinator: The role of Coordinator will be filled by Director Ted Smietana. The Coordinator’s role is to organize meetings and activities and to manage all logistics for the team.
- Recorder: Kathe Bonfield, of Community Corrections, will record each meeting and produce detailed meeting minutes for all team members.
- All team members have the following responsibilities:
 - Each team member will serve as a liaison to the constituency/agency/interest area they are representing, carrying key discussion points to these individuals and reporting feedback to the team.
 - Each team member will serve as a liaison to the community, communicating key decisions and operational changes, and reporting feedback to the team.
- In addition, the following unique responsibilities have been agreed upon:
 - Mimi Carter, Principal and EBDM Initiative Yamhill County Site Coordinator, Center for Effective Public Policy: Ms. Carter will act as a meeting co-facilitator, provide technical assistance, and coach the policy team through the Initiative process so that objectives will be reached. She will also broker any additional technical assistance resources as needed, advocate for the team, and critique the team to assist in the achievement of all goals.
 - Carl Gordon, Ph.D. Local Citizen and former Bureau of Prisons Chief Psychologist: Dr.

Gordon will provide additional local technical assistance and team support.

Attachments:

Appendix 1 – Policy Team Action Plan

Appendix 2 – EBDM Phase II Timeline

Appendix 3 – List of policy team members and contact information

Additional Resources/Readings

DRM Associates. (2001). Team charter. Retrieved from <http://www.npd-solutions.com/charter.html>

Mind Tools. (2010). Team charters: Getting your teams off to a great start. Retrieved from http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMM_95.htm