

WORKING WITH COMMUNITY NON-PROFITS TO ESTABLISH CULTURAL COMPETENCE STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES: IMPLICATIONS FOR SANTA CLARA COUNTY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Santa Cruz County's Human Services Agency was directed by its Board of Supervisors to work with community advisory groups and commissions to establish cultural competence and performance outcomes standards. As part of the Bay Area Social Services Consortium (BASSC) internship program, I explored and examined all aspects of these initiatives, including the planning process, the establishment of common definitions, agreements on outcomes, cultural competence models and the implementation of contractual requirements. The goal of this case study is to analyze the project and lessons learned and determine implications for Santa Clara County. The following is a summary of the process, successes and difficulties experienced by the participants, and recommendations and action steps for Santa Clara County.

BACKGROUND

Currently, Santa Cruz County has completed the cultural competence process and is working on performance standards. The course of action for both is similar. Both involved advisory committees which included HRA staff and community groups. Each assessed community programs capacities and garnered community input using a variety of methodologies. Once this was accomplished the advisory committees developed guidelines. Based on these agreements, each agency developed a cultural com-

petency plan and performance outcomes. The only difference between the two processes is that the cultural competency group hired a neutral facilitator to drive the process.

As the driving agency, HRA staff compiled lessons learned which include the following: 1) ensure top down support-as Executive Management/BOS support is critical to this process; 2) acquire the services of an independent facilitator; 3) engage stakeholders-make sure the right people are at the table who are committed to the process; 4) agree on common language and outcomes while looking realistically at current capacity and data collection abilities; 5) establish consequences for noncompliance if CBO's fail to meet the objectives they set in the cultural competence plan.

IMPLICATIONS

In order to fully assess the implications for Santa Clara County, one must explore the fundamental differences and similarities between Santa Cruz County and Santa Clara County. The differences include the fact that the sheer size disparity is the primary difference between Santa Cruz and Santa Clara. It will be much more of a logistics problem to form committees, gain consensus, assess data capacity, train staff and work collaboratively. There are also fundamental differences in the way Santa Clara and Santa Cruz fund their community based agencies. Funding is controlled by the Board of

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Supervisors in Santa Cruz County and by the Department in Santa Clara County. Santa Clara County would have an advantage in a similar project because there is an RFP process and the option of contractually imposing consequences for non-compliance. If Santa Clara County chose to undertake a similar project, it would have a significant advantage due to the expertise shared with us from Santa Cruz County. Due to differences in history and politics, Santa Clara County could feasibly attempt this project without a consultant given the current economic outlook. However, I think this piece is critical to the success of the project and cost containment can be addressed by compromise. Designated SSA staff members (one from each department DAAS, DFCS, AO, DEBS) may be assigned to conduct most of the labor intensive compilation of data and report writing. A neutral

facilitator is the key to CBO acceptance and trust. The process will be viewed as fair and equitable, and the presence of a neutral party will mitigate any resentment or resistance on the part of the CBO's. This aspect of the project must be decided after careful consideration of our unique relationship with our community partners.

A work plan and timeline are attached in the appendices of this document. The formation of effective advisory committees is the key to an inclusive process and each committee needs a specific purpose statement. The purpose of the committees should include the development of guidelines, review of existing models, review of CBO current capacity, and the establishment of common agreements and definitions.

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INTRODUCTION

The Human Services Agency of Santa Cruz County was directed by the Board of Supervisors to work with community advisory groups and commissions to establish agreements and measurement models for cultural competence and performance outcomes. As the senior analyst responsible for Performance-Based Budgeting (PBB) and research and decision support for the Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS), this subject matter was of interest to me on several levels. Having a strong background in contract monitoring I felt the agency had a strong and comprehensive contracting process in place. However, there appeared to be no CBO linkages to our cultural competence, performance outcome or PBB plans. In addition, our internal PBB outcomes were based predominantly on outputs rather than outcomes. Given this scenario, I thought it would be of benefit to the Agency to look at ways in which we could improve in this area. This case study will explore and examine all aspects of these initiatives including the planning process, the establishment of common definitions, agreements on outcomes and cultural competence models and the implementation of contractual requirements. Once these aspects have been researched, the goal of this paper is to analyze the project and lessons learned and determine implications for Santa Clara County.

OVERVIEW OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY EFFORTS

The Santa Clara County Social Services Agency (SSA) is one of the largest public agencies in county government, representing 17.5 % of the county budget or \$490 million of a \$2.8 billion dollar budget (FY 2001/2002). The mission of the Social Services Agency is to provide life protecting, life sustaining, life enhancing, and culturally competent services to adults, children, families, elders, and economically dependent individuals. The County of Santa Clara has a diverse ethnic population of 1.8 million residents. SSA supplements funding to 87 Community Based Organizations (CBO) by 4 + million dollars. These community agencies provide the community with essential services ranging from child welfare to senior services.

At the direction of the Board of Supervisors, the County of Santa Clara began work to develop and implement Performance-Based Budgeting (PBB). Each PBB goal focuses on enhanced services to clients and has been incorporated into county business practices. The County Executives Office of Budget Analysis (OBA) engaged the services of PKV Management Consulting Inc. (PKV) to assist in the development and implementation. The final program logic model applies outcome-based measurements at strategic, program, and operational levels. The budget document format contains Public Purpose (mission), Desired Results (defined by program logic model), Performance Indicators (data on desired results), Description of Services (narrative of services), Recommendations (narrative summary

of recommendations). This format is linked to the Board of Supervisors' budget priorities developed in January of each year and are based on the mission statement of the Agency.

All SSA contracts over \$100,000 must go through a competitive process. CBO cultural competence is part of the criteria during the selection process but is not necessarily incorporated into the final contract. As part of the scope of service, each contractor must provide a project description, identify target population, provide a budget and quarterly goals, including units of service and how they will be measured, as well as client outcomes. However, performance outcomes are fragmented and not necessarily tied to the agency's vision or PBB goals. In addition, SSA has engaged in cultural competency training most recently through a series of trainings on emerging service needs in an effort to increase understanding of various cultural groups. Although CBO's may be eligible to participate in cultural competence training, there is no agency-wide requirement nor is it incorporated into their contracts.

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY: PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY STANDARDS

Santa Cruz County has 254, 538 residents and is situated at the northern tip of Monterey Bay. There are four incorporated cities within Santa Cruz County. The largest is the City of Santa Cruz, with a population of 54,593. Watsonville has a population of 44,265; Scotts Valley has 11,385 and Capitola has 10,033. Santa Cruz County has a diverse population both ethnically and economically. The Human Resources Agency (HRA) is tasked with providing social services to this County. The agency's mission is to strive to strengthen families

by assuring safety, promoting self-sufficiency, eliminating poverty, and improving the quality of life within the community. The overall HRA budget supplements the income of 58 community-based organizations.

In order to better understand how Santa Cruz County arrived at this juncture in terms of both cultural competence and performance outcomes, it is helpful to review the history upon which cultural competence and performance outcomes were predicated. In 1972 Federal Revenue Sharing was implemented providing approximately \$2.3 million. While other counties used the money to upgrade infrastructure, Santa Cruz County used the money to support community-based agencies. After a couple of years, this resulted in an implicit assumption of "sustainable support." In 1986 the post-revenue sharing era began and federal revenue sharing came to an abrupt halt. In order to continue the support previously given to CBO's, the County Board of Supervisors agreed to offset the lost dollars and maintain the status quo in terms of CBO funding. By 1990, the diversity of the County had changed radically, and the 1990 census had a profound influence on funding decisions. In order to accommodate these changes, the Board adopted the standards of accessibility to ensure Latino access. However, due to budget constraints in 2001, Latino Equity was rescinded. With the end of Latino equity, the Latino Executive Directors, a group composed of the directors of CBO's targeting services to the Latino Community advocated for cultural competency standards to be incorporated into all CBO contracts to replace the Standards of Accessibility. This was the driving political force which would ensure accessibility to services for all cultural groups in the County.

At the same time that the Board of Supervisors was initiating a process to establish cultural competency standards, it also questioned how CBO's demonstrate accountability for the significant county investment (more than \$4 million) and the impact the funding had on improving the lives of the county's poorest families and individuals. HRA initiated a process to establish cultural competence standards in early 2002, followed by establishing performance outcome reporting which began in fall 2003.

The cultural competence piece of this project ultimately took two years to complete and began with the development of a work plan which was guided by the Community Programs Cultural Competency Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee). The Advisory Committee was comprised of the chairs or designees of nine Commissions or community groups as well as representatives of the county Personnel Department. HRA enlisted the expertise of JTR and Associates, a nationally recognized expert in developing culturally competent services to help create a work plan, facilitate the process of developing standards, and provide guidance to the group with regard to implementation. JTR and Associates assessed community providers' capacities to provide culturally competent services via an assessment tool which gave the Advisory Committee information on their cultural proficiency. JTR also garnered community input via focus groups from various target populations (Latinos, seniors, persons with disabilities, low income residents and GLBT). Once the assessments were complete, the Advisory Committee charged a subcommittee with conducting an extensive review of local, state and national literature providing models for developing cultural competency standards and preparing draft standards.

To provide clear direction to agencies, the Advisory Committee developed specific guidelines for each of the five competency domains. The competency domains were established as follows: 1) Cultural Competency Planning—the organization should have a plan including all domains 2) Organizational Management and Staffing—the organization should be reflective of community demographics and staff should be knowledgeable re: cultural issues 3) Evaluation—the organization shall evaluate and track progress on implementation 4) Data and Information Systems—the organization shall collect and analyze data in order to make informed decisions and move towards successful implementation 5) Service Delivery—it should be accessible, appropriate and representative. Each agency was responsible for a cultural competency plan outlining implementation and performance measures. They were also tasked with identifying ways they would increase their cultural competence with clear action steps and benchmarks.

While cultural competency got its start in early 2001, Performance Outcome Reporting did not get underway until October 2003. The driving entity for this endeavor is the Community Programs Outcomes Reporting Committee which consists of executive directors from various community agencies. Their role is similar to that of the Advisory Committee for cultural competence. Like Cultural Competence standards, a common definition and standardization process for client outcomes needed to have the involvement of those impacted by these mandates. The development of performance outcomes is still in its infancy with only several steps in the work plan completed. This endeavor should be completed by FY2005/2006. To date the committee has identified and convened stakeholders, established agreements, sought Board approval and is currently discussing common definitions. They

still need to analyze current reporting requirements, assess community program capacity, review other models, operationalize the reporting model and implement the plan.

SUCCESSSES AND DIFFICULTIES

In reviewing successes and difficulties in the development of both cultural competence and performance outcomes, I met with county and CBO staff to obtain feedback on what went well and what did not. Feedback regarding cultural competence was prolific as this project was well underway. However, feedback regarding the performance outcomes project was less abundant because the project is just getting started.

During this process, I met with a number of county staff whose duties ranged from facilitating the advisory committee meetings to monitoring the actual contracts. Overall, staff felt that they had gathered the right people, looked at current capacity and were realistic about strengths and weaknesses as well as obtained information from a variety of groups using several methodologies. Some of the difficulties were that the cultural competency undertaking took much more time than anticipated and was extremely labor-intensive.

The CBO perspective was provided through a meeting with three members of the Cultural Competence Committee and another meeting with three members of the Performance Outcomes Committee who provided what they could about their process thus far. Feedback from the CBO's included the general consensus that some agencies had opened up to the realization of the need for cultural competency within the community. While some CBO's felt this process produced a truly collaborative and trusting relationship between the county and CBO's, others

felt it was not as inclusive as it could have been. There was some frustration expressed that the process was perhaps unnecessarily lengthy.

In terms of feedback about the process, a complaint expressed by some was the frustration over accountability issues. It was felt that there were minimal standards, no real corrective action plan and no consequences associated with noncompliance. HRA staff agrees that accountability for addressing Cultural Competency standards may be an issue that needs to be addressed after the CBO's have fully implemented their Cultural Competency plans and HRA reviews the success or failure of meeting the objectives under the plan. Until then it is difficult to project what type of accountability measures might be called for. Surprisingly, some CBO staff were in favor of putting language in the contract to address the consequences of failing to implement a cultural competence plan.

LESSONS LEARNED

As the driving agency, HRA staff listed the primary lessons learned. They are as follows: 1) ensure top down support—Executive Management/BOS support is critical to this process; 2) acquire the services of an independent facilitator; 3) engage stakeholders—make sure the right people are at the table who are committed to the process; 4) agree on common language and outcomes while looking realistically at current capacity and data collection abilities; and 5) examine the necessity of establish consequences for noncompliance if CBO's fail to meet the objectives they set in the Cultural Competence plan.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SANTA CLARA COUNTY

In order to fully assess the implications for Santa Clara County, one must explore the fundamental differences and similarities between Santa Cruz County and Santa Clara County. They include: 1) In terms of implementing a project of this magnitude, the sheer size disparity is the primary difference between Santa Cruz and Santa Clara. It would be much more of a logistics problem to form committees, gain consensus, assess data capacity, train staff and work collaboratively. 2) There are also fundamental differences in the way Santa Clara and Santa Cruz fund their community-based agencies. Funding is controlled by the Board in Santa Cruz County and by the Department in Santa Clara County. Santa Clara County would have an advantage in a similar project because there is an RFP process and the option of contractually imposing consequences for noncompliance. 3) If Santa Clara County chose to undertake a similar project, it would have a significant advantage due to the expertise shared with us from Santa Cruz County. 4) Due to differences in history and politics, Santa Clara County could feasibly attempt this project without a consultant given the current economic outlook. However, I think this piece is critical to the success of the project and cost-containment can be addressed by compromise. A designated SSA staff member may be assigned to conduct most of the labor-intensive compilation of data and report writing. The department can reduce costs by appointing one senior staff member from each department (DAAS, DFCS, AO, & DEBS) to support the project and the consultant. There are a number of items which can be done by staff including document development, organization of focus groups, mailings, coordination, training and technical assistance. The neutral facilitator is the key to

CBO acceptance and trust. The process will be viewed as fair and equitable and the presence of a neutral party will mitigate any resentment or resistance on the part of the CBO's. This aspect of the project must be decided by careful consideration of our unique relationship with our community partners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are my primary recommendations for this project: 1) Ensure top down support by gaining buy-in from Executive Management Team 2) Use Santa Cruz County's work plan and timeline for both cultural competency and performance outcomes and apply to our organization. 3) Hire an outside facilitator or consultant who is neutral-yet based on limited resources have internal staff support the process. 4) Involve staff and community. Ensure that the right people are at the table. 4) Relate outcomes/indicators to vision and goals (PBB goals for each department).

Top down support is critical for any project. If this is not present, it would not be advisable to undertake this challenge. Although Santa Cruz County's politics and size are vastly different from those of Santa Clara County, its timeline and work plan provide a valid template with which to begin this undertaking. The hiring of an outside neutral consultant again adds credibility to the project and will engender trust. Finally, relating CBO outcomes to agency goals aligns us with community partners and provides joint vision.

In addition, to the recommendations above, there are also several other items to take into consideration. It is recommended that the agency ensure that the right people are at the table. It is important to involve staff and the community in process (both

technical and program). It is also advisable to agree on common language (in our case we need to supply viable options to NOT develop measurements from scratch since logistics are too difficult in a county this size. A realistic assessment of both agency and CBO data collection mechanisms is also in order. We need to identify what we can and cannot collect given current data collection mechanisms and tie outcomes to what you have or what is in development. It is also advised that we devote technical IT staff to data warehousing. There need not be a strain of existing staff—we must be practical as well as realistic. Finally, the agency should provide training and technical assistance to the CBO's and periodically reassess cultural competence as demographics change and then set appropriate goals for the future.

ACTION STEPS

A recommended timeline and action steps are attached in the appendices of this document for both performance outcomes and cultural competency. This work plan divides the project into yearly increments, and, based on the Santa Cruz County experience, it is anticipated that it will take at least two years to complete both projects. The formation

of effective advisory committees is the key to an inclusive process and each committee needs a specific purpose statement. The purpose of the committees should include the development of guidelines, review of existing models, review of CBO current capacity and the establishment of common agreements and definitions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Celia Espinola and the entire executive team, who welcomed us with open arms that cold and rainy February day that marked the beginning of our BASSC internship. I would like to thank Ellen Timberlake, Deputy Director, who took time away from her busy day and pressing budget issues to spend with BASSC interns. She provided me with well-organized information on both performance outcomes and cultural competency that proved to be invaluable in the development of this document. The staff from the CBO's and the county offered invaluable insights into the process and shared their perspectives with honesty and integrity. I would also like to thank Gary McNeil for his patience and insight into the process and coordination of our itinerary.

APPENDIX A

Step in Process:	Why Do It?	Product or Decision	Responsible Party	When
Identify and Convene Stakeholders for Cultural Competence Advisory Committee and Performance Outcome Advisory Committee	Define respective purpose/charge of each committee. Ensure maximum engagement, involvement and participation at all stages in the process.	Establish Advisory Committees for both cultural competence and performance outcomes	SSA Staff & Advisory Committees	1/05
Establish Common Definitions & Agreements in both Cultural Competence and Performance Outcome Committee	State what we're doing and why. Refine individual work plans. Ensure maximum involvement and support for operationalizing cultural competence and performance outcomes in the County.	Common definitions for terms used in our community re: Cult. Comp. & standard concepts regarding performance outcomes	Advisory Committees & SSA staff	4/05
Seek Executive Team Approval for Planning Process for both Cultural Competence and Performance Outcomes & consultant to drive process	Inform the Executive Team regarding approval process and proposed work plan.	ET adopted plan.	SSA Staff	5/05
Conduct Assessment Community Data Cultural Competence Only	Increase understanding of the current population of Santa Clara County. Increase understanding of who is being served by Community Programs.	Data Summarized & Power Point presentation	SSA Staff and CC Advisory Committee, Consultant	5/05-12/05
Consumer Input Cultural Competence Only	Increase knowledge of diverse groups in Santa Clara County, and determine which cultural groups are not receiving equitable access to services based on: 1) eligibility as defined by Federal/State and County statutes and 2) Consumer defined need.	Written summary of consumer input	SSA Staff, Consultant and CC Advisory Committee	5/05-12/05
All Community Programs – Cultural Competence Only	Get a "snap shot" of agencies' current level of cultural competence and concerns relating to the issue.	Baseline data on CBO's level of Cult. Comp and related concerns	SSA Staff & Consultant	1/06-3/06
Summarize Assessment Information – Cultural Competence only	Identify needs and gaps in access to services.	Initial Report	SSA Staff & Consultant	3/06-6/06
Analyze current reporting requirements – Performance Outcomes only	Establish shared understanding of CBO reporting requirements (i.e. outputs vs. outcomes) and in relation to agency vision and goals.	Inventory of current requirements & agreement on strengths and areas of development	SSA Staff and PO Advisory Committee	5/05-12/05
Assess Community Program's capacity – Performance Outcomes only	Understand agencies current outcome reporting requirements. Assess agencies level of familiarity with and capacity to identify and measure outcomes	Analysis of outcome capacity	SSA Staff and PO Advisory Committee	5/05-12/05
Review other reporting models- Performance Outcomes only	Establish shared understanding of current models		SSA Staff and PO Advisory Committee	1/06
Establish Standard concepts for outcome reporting – Performance Outcomes only	Ensure modifications of reporting process to reflect values and needs outlined in previous steps.	Agreement on approach	SSA Staff and PO Advisory Committee	2/06
Identify consideration to operationalize new outcome reporting - Performance Outcomes only	Ensure that the reporting model has flexibility to accommodate individual agency variables.	Agreement on standardization	SSA Staff and PO Advisory Committee	3/06
Develop process and tools to use for outcomes reporting – Performance Outcomes only	Ensure ease of implementation and consistency of reporting across programs	Reporting tools and T/A plan	SSA Staff and PO Advisory Committee	3/06-6/06
Develop an Implementation Plan & Determine Standards – Cultural Competence and Performance Outcomes	Ensure all CBO's understand expectations relating to performance outcomes and increasing cultural competence within their agencies.	Recommended Cultural Competency & Performance Outcomes Standards	SSA Staff, Consl. Advisory Committees	7/06-9/06
Accountability	Understand issues regarding program accountability for Cultural Competence and Performance Standards	List of policy considerations to be presented for ET approval	Advisory Committees SSA Staff	10/06
Review & Summarize Standards and Implementation Issues	Clearly specific recommendations to be made to Executive Team	Written Summary	SSA Staff	11/06-12/06
Next Steps	Enable all agencies to increase their capacity to provide culturally competent services and ensure effective performance outcomes and accountability.	Recommended plan, tools protocols	Advisory Committees Consultant, SSAS Staff	Ongoing

