

LOCAL

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LCSA
Local Community Services Association

Inside

Neighbourhood Centres and Results Accountability
- A Conversation with Mark Friedman

LOCAL

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WHO WE ARE

Local Community Services Association (LCSA) is the
peak body for 300 NSW neighbourhood and community
centres. We provide information, resources and
support on community development and community
management and represent members' views to policy
and decision makers. LCSA is run by a committee
comprised of neighbourhood and community centre
representatives.

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SUPPORT

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Community Education.

From the President



It just seems to keep coming! The Good Practice Guidelines, the Performance Monitoring System, the Community Services Grants Program Review, the information from the alignment exercise of that review – and that's just from one government department!

Those of us who are concentrating on running our centres and services can be forgiven for wondering if our time is going to be spent reporting to our funding bodies rather than providing

vital services for clients who really need them!

What do we make of all this and, more importantly, where do we begin? What should we be focusing on? Is there anything we should be worrying about?

LCSA believes this is the time to let members of the state government know how vital it is to get new funding into our sector. A budget submission has been made to Treasury by the Department of Community Services. The initial funding provision of that submission would bring an immediate injection of \$15m into the CSGP program and we are arguing it is vital that this is not delayed.

We believe that CSGP funded services will be reporting on their contribution to the headline result "Disadvantaged, children, young people and families and disadvantaged communities are safe and resilient" from the Service Specifications for 2009/10 and beyond.

We know from the experience of the results accountability pilot project that this will not be as easy or straightforward for neighbourhood centres as it will for some other services.

We believe all LCSA members should start engaging with results accountability. The "cut down" processes Mark Friedman outlines in this interview are a good place to start.

This will achieve two things. First you will start to become familiar with a process which will be important for reporting on achievements. Second and more important, you have an opportunity in the next twelve months to use this process to contribute to discussion on what measures should be used for CSGP funded services.

But you don't have to do it alone. Indeed, our experience from the pilot is no one should do this alone. LCSA staff are available to help you and I advise you to consult them as you get underway and there will soon be more information on our website.

Brooke Whitaker
President LCSA

Neighbourhood Centres and Results Accountability

A Conversation with Mark Friedman

Background

After 18 months of considerable effort, the 13 centres involved in LCSA's Results Based Accountability Pilot project were frustrated and concerned that the core business of neighbourhood centres might be too broad and complicated for Results Accountability. On top of that, from the perspective of Community Services Grants Program (CSGP) funding there is the struggle to fit the whole thing into the Department of Community Services' (DoCS) results logic framework.

This was the background to a meeting between Brian Smith and Sandra Handley from LCSA and Mark Friedman, the creator of Results Accountability, last December. Our discussion ranged beyond the difficulties we were experiencing with the LCSA Neighbourhood and Community Centre framework to include successes and challenges that have arisen when implementing Results Accountability in NSW and as far away as England.

Throughout the conversation Mark refers several times to the difference between population and performance accountability – and talks about above and below the line – or up top / down below. He is referring to the concepts outlined in the following diagram:

The concept is that single organisations can only be responsible for changing their clients results (performance accountability – below the line) – not for changing the results of the whole population (population accountability – above the line). For example, a neighbourhood centre can potentially be responsible for improving the connection with their community for the isolated clients that they actually serve. The Centre cannot be held responsible for changing this connection for all isolated people in their geographic area. They may contribute to it but it takes a wide range of partners to change population results. In the final analysis population results are the desired end everybody wants and is working to achieve. And performance or customer results are what Centre programs can deliver.

"Single organisations can only be responsible for changing their clients results not for changing the results of the whole population"



DIAGRAM 1

**Population Accountability /
Performance Accountability**

Diagram from <http://www.raguide.org/>

Neighbourhood Centres and Results Accountability

A Conversation with Mark Friedman

The claim that Results Accountability is a simple process

LCSA You have said that this process is simple and it is low paper. One of the questions that comes out for us is "In relation to what is it simple and low paper?" For some of our smaller services it will not be simple initially and even the amount of paper could be quite large if it is done properly. Possibly we got a glimpse of what you were getting at when you compared this with traditional government processes and planning.

Mark Friedman At its most basic level Results Accountability is about answering two sets of seven questions on a regular basis, one for population and one for performance. It is possible to make it a lot more complicated than that, but that's what I mean when I say it's "simple." In practice what this means is that it is simple compared with the other ways of doing this work. The work of providing services to people is inherently complicated, and your services are more complicated than most. With Results Accountability it is possible to put the whole picture on one page, both population and performance – I don't think there is any other framework which enables you to do that.

LCSA Basically then it is relatively simple.

Mark Friedman Right.

LCSA And we think that our members can accept that whereas if we say "it is simple" they'll say from their experience "no it's not."

Mark Friedman It is possible that people have made this more complicated than necessary. And you have to understand there is also a marketplace effect here. You wouldn't have a detergent that came out and said we make your clothes relatively whiter.

LCSA And the claim for simplicity is a true one given what the alternatives are. The challenge is going to be of course that as soon as it's picked up by governments it will stop being relatively simple.

Mark Friedman When that happens, they're not doing it right. There is a long history of government agencies making this work more complicated than necessary.



Results Accountability and Government Processes

LCSA We see Results Accountability as potentially very powerful at the local community level, doing it properly with the local community - looking at the whole community population, looking at what results they want for these people and looking at the indicators that are relevant for them.

We have a very constructive relationship with the Department of Community Services (DoCS), our major funding body, and we are aware of the constraints government departments face in arguing their case to Treasury. We live in the tension between their requirements and the way they, in our view, distort Results Accountability. We find people within the department will own that they have distorted it but they do not own the impact of that distortion on our capacity to use Results Accountability properly. So we find ourselves stuck between the impact of the distortion and our need, in the end, for neighbourhood centres to be able to report within the service system.

Mark Friedman I've had the same problem in other places. It is a kind of generic problem. In another country (that I won't name) there are some people in middle and upper management who don't fully understand Results Accountability. They keep missing important concepts and making it too complicated. But I am also working directly with local governments and nonprofits who are doing it right. So there's this conflict between what the national people are saying is their version of Results Accountability and how it is actually done well at the local level. It is similar to the problem that you are experiencing here.

One of my hopes in training people in the community is that they will understand what Results Accountability really is, and can be their own judge of whether what they're being told is correct. It's important for neighbourhood centres to focus on making this (or any other framework) work first and foremost as a useful tool for them, make it useful within their organisations. If you can get this to be a useful way to monitor and improve your own performance, then reporting to funding bodies should become a by-product of that work and not its principle purpose.

"It's important for neighbourhood centres to focus on making this (or any other framework) work first and foremost as a useful tool for them."



Neighbourhood Centres and Results Accountability

A Conversation with Mark Friedman

Population vs Performance

Mark pointed out that the Framework LCSA had presented in the "Is anyone better off?" edition of LOCAL had made the mistake of combining population and performance accountability measures and that was the first thing we needed to fix.

Mark Friedman The most important concept in Results Accountability is the separation between population and performance accountability. Some people think I'm just being a stickler about some obscure point, but it's actually hugely important. If you don't get population and performance accountability separated, you end up confusing what you are responsible for with what the community as a whole is responsible for. When that happens, agencies get held unfairly responsible for things they can't possibly deliver. The resulting confusion makes the work difficult, confusing and mostly unusable.

There's also the discipline about how you frame "ends" verses "means." Population quality of life results (like children being healthy and living in stable families) are the ends we all seek. Service delivery, no matter how important the service, is always a means toward those ends. Within services, there's another ends/means distinction that's also important. Here, customer results (like keeping an individual family together) becomes the end and the service methods become the means. So when I see in the State

Plan, for example, "delivering better services" presented as a "result," an end in itself, that's a sign that something's wrong, because better service is always a means to better community quality of life, never an end in itself.

Consider for a minute this two part structure - population and performance accountability. At the population level people in the community can talk about "what we want" for our children, families and communities (e.g. connected families, safe neighbourhoods). Where we have data we can measure whether we're getting this or not (e.g. the rate of family breakdown, entry of children into protective care, crime rates). Then we can consider the causes behind this, the partners who can help, and take action together as a community to make things better. Within this work, the neighbourhood centre is one of many partners.

The neighbourhood centre can then use performance accountability to track and measure whether the families it serves are staying together and keeping their children safe. We call these kind of measures "Is anyone better off" measures (referring to "Is anyone better off" edition of LOCAL). Centres can use a thinking process, similar to the population process, to consider how your clients are doing and how you can improve services. This two part structure keeps a proper relationship between community responsibility and centre responsibility.

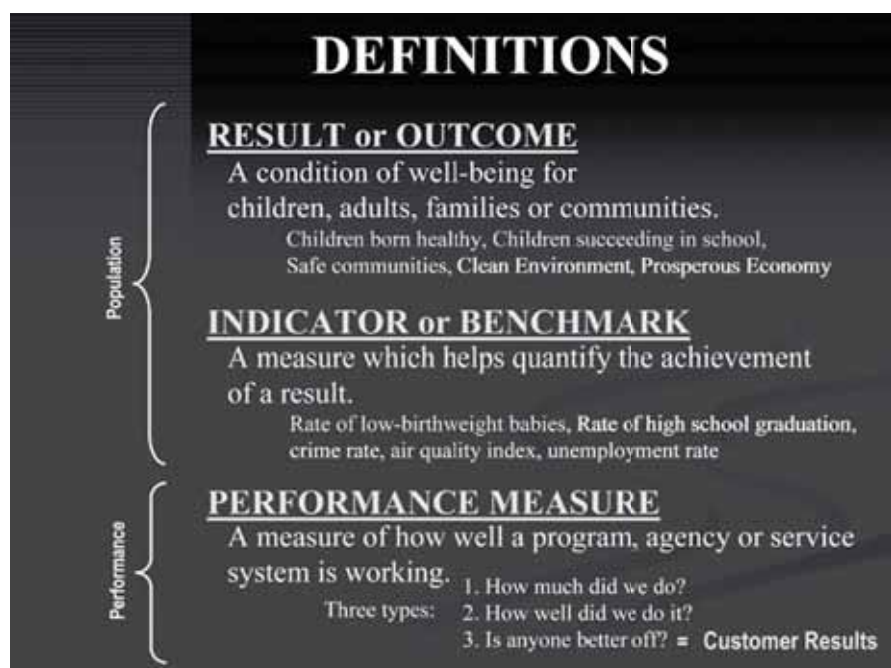


DIAGRAM 2

Results Accountability Definitions

Diagram from <http://www.raguide.org/>

Neighbourhood Centres and Results Accountability

A Conversation with Mark Friedman

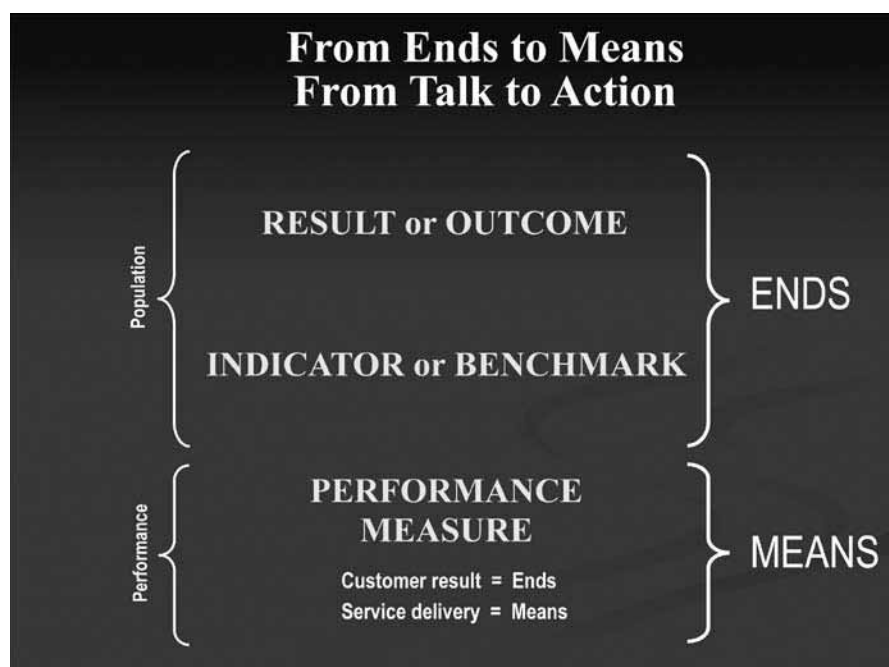


DIAGRAM 3

Ends to Means

Diagram from <http://www.raguide.org/>

Performance Accountability

LCSA There's over 300 neighbourhood centres across New South Wales, and they range from having half a worker up to twenty workers and from providing just basic information and referral up to a wide range of services. When we were contracted to do this pilot we were contracted to create a framework for neighbourhood centres on Results Accountability that everyone could tap in to.

Mark Friedman Okay.

LCSA To put this in context we started our process in conjunction with our funding body who ran a workshop with us which started at the client base, saying 'Who are your clients and what are the results you want for them?'

In that workshop we identified 47 client groups which we combined into seven main groups and identified their results. So we have, for example, a client group of isolated people and another client group of socio-economically disadvantaged. That's how they took us down into this Results Accountability process and as a result we've come up with performance measures for the client groups rather than for the services.

Mark Friedman Results Accountability doesn't work that way, and it's not the model I'm trying to teach people. The performance accountability discussion is always about services first. The discussion of clients is inside the discussion about a service.

LCSA This is really important for us, because, we are used to having a client focus so the most natural thing for us to do was "focus on the client groups".

Mark Friedman In performance accountability, you don't start with the community population, or target population or even a client population, you start with the service that you are talking about. Once you have identified the particular service then you can identify your customers, the people you actually serve, and you can identify measures of how the service is working for them, and use those measures to track and improve performance.

LCSA We've been trying to measure the direct contribution of our services to the community as a whole.

Mark Friedman Performance measurement is always about a particular service. What you do for you customers is your contribution to the community. Period.

Neighbourhood Centres and Results Accountability

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Performance Measures

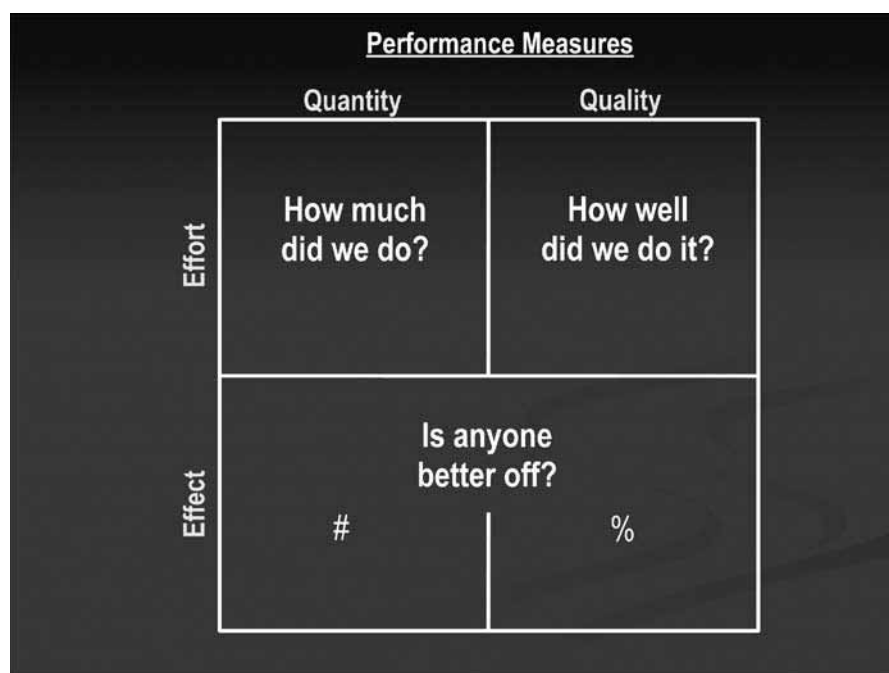


DIAGRAM 4

Performance Measure Quadrant

Diagram from <http://www.raguide.org/>

Mark Friedman Neighbourhood centres tend to be very flat organisations, right? How many services would they typically have?

LCSA Some of them would have 3 or 4 - the largest ones up to 20.

Mark Friedman Okay, so you could identify performance measures separately for each one of these (services) using the four quadrant process. You take each service one by one and ask "Who are the customers of this particular service?" Then in the top left How much quadrant, you write down # of elders served. You can break this number up into subgroups by characteristic, for example # of elderly people who are isolated, or # with a disability.

Next, in the top left quadrant **How much** quadrant you list the major activities of that service and show the measures that go with each activity, for example, # of group activities, # of counselling sessions.

In the **How well** quadrant you consider which of the common measures, like unit cost or staff turnover rate apply to your service.

And you show activity specific measures that tell how well each particular activity was performed. So if the activity is # of group sessions, the activity specific measure could be average attendance rate at these sessions.

Finally in the **Is anyone better off?** quadrants we get to the most important stuff. If the service works really well, how are your clients lives different or better? How could we see that? And how could we measure it? So, for example, what percentage of clients feel a close connection to their community? Or what percentage feel more connected since they started receiving service at the Centre?

When you think about service measures this way, you can come up with a fairly long list in each quadrant. The next step is to consider which of these measures you actually have good data for, and winnow the list down to the 3 to 5 most important (or headline) measures for each service. These should be taken from the **How well** and **Is anyone better off?** quadrants.

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If you do this for each of the 3 to 20 services in a Centre, you will have measures you can use for each service. And you can then pick from these measures, the most important measures for the Centre as a whole.

LCSA You don't actually start by picking performance measures for the neighbourhood centre as a single entity?

Mark Friedman When you have an agency as complicated as a neighbourhood centre, you are much better off doing it first for each of the component pieces and then putting those pieces together at the higher level.

Neighbourhood and Community Centre Populations

Mark Friedman It is still important to consider the total population.

LCSA For each program?

Mark Friedman No, now we're talking about a total population in the community. This population could be all people who live in the community or any defined subpopulation, such as all children or all people with disabilities. Here the neighbourhood centres have a role to play, possibly an important role, but they are just one of many partners. You could start by saying:

"Here are the populations we are concerned about (e.g All families);"

"Here are the results we want for that population (e.g Families are connected to their community, not isolated);"

"Here's how we're doing on connected families (using measures where they are available)."

"Here's what we think it will take for families to be connected, for children to be safe etc." and finally

"Here's the role of neighbourhood centres."

LCSA Okay – we have done that but we have confusion between the total population and client population - are isolated people a population?

Mark Friedman Not all isolated people in the community are clients of the neighbourhood centre. You're not serving every isolated person in the neighbourhood are you?



There is the overall population of ALL isolated people, and there are those isolated people whom you actually serve in the neighbourhood centres. Do you see the difference? The first is bigger than the second. This is the difference between population and performance accountability. The neighbourhood centres can not be responsible for all isolated people. Making progress for the whole population will take a much larger group of community partners. The neighbourhood centre might play a leadership or convening role. But the neighbourhood centre can only be responsible for what happens to the isolated people it serves.

LCSA This feeds into a conversation we are having with DoCS, because the headline vision for CSGP is "Disadvantaged children, young people and families and disadvantaged communities are safe and resilient"

Mark Friedman Okay - that is a legitimate way to state a population result.

LCSA One of the things that's helpful for us in your approach is helping our members realise that they don't have responsibility for the total community, because we have a mythology that everybody in the community is a client of the neighbourhood centre.

We have identified whole populations. For example, when we are talking about isolated people, that is the disadvantaged community of isolated people - so isolated people in NSW is the community that all neighbourhood centres are contributing to changing an indicator for.

Mark Friedman Precisely.

LCSA This creates a potential challenge and problem because we have 47 different populations that we have identified, do we do 47 different population indicators?

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Mark Friedman You could but you don't have to. Some measures will be more important than others. Remember, there are three parts to your list of population indicators and three parts to your list of performance measures.

First are the headline measures, the three to five that are most powerful and most important. Then come the secondary measures, all the other measures for which you have good data. And finally there is the Data Development Agenda, a list of where you need new or better data. Within this structure, it may turn out that you would want to have measures for each of those 47 groups – or not. You have to decide how complicated you want to make this.

LCSA What about the seven aggregated client groupings? Are they valid populations or should we be looking at it another way?

Essentially the seven groupings are: the local community, isolated people, people who are socio-economically disadvantaged, people in crisis, people who need services without stigma and people who need skills or employment. They are the aggregate of those 47 different client groups.

Mark Friedman Yes, I did see them - There's still another way to do this, that is actually simpler.

Rather than have 7 or 47 different populations, consider that you have just one population, all people in NSW or all people in the neighbourhood. End of discussion about population. Next we take each condition that we are concerned about (isolation, socio-economic disadvantage etc.) and we turn these into positive statements (not negative or problem statements) for that population. Consider, this way of stating results: "People are connected to their community," "Families are socially and economically healthy," "People have the skills they need for full employment." See how these are positive, not negative statements?

"...neighbourhood centres can not be responsible for all isolated people. Making progress for the whole population will take a much larger group of community partners..."

Then you can go on to find ways to judge (using data, like the poverty rate, the unemployment rate, the rate of suicide etc.) the extent to which these positive conditions are in fact being achieved.

LCSA Isolated people are connected?

Mark Friedman No, PEOPLE are connected. This is what we want for all people. Then we look at the extent of isolation, the percentage of people who are isolated, and we try to figure out what needs to be done to have fewer isolated people.

LCSA Perhaps the percentage of people who have not had any connection with friends or family for 3 months?

Mark Friedman Yes, that's a good measure. If you have the percentage rate of people who have not had any connection with friends or family for 3 months, you can set in motion a process to make this better. You first figure out the story behind this. Who are these people are and why are they isolated? This eventually should lead you to an action plan that gets you fewer isolated people. It would be an action plan in which the neighbourhood centre would be one of many partners.

LCSA Because of the distinction of children, young people and families and the way DoCS defines a family, we can actually restore isolated people to families.

Mark Friedman Sure.

Because of the nature of your service, you're unique in a lot of ways, which is why you're having so much trouble with this. You are a general service. You've got a huge charge - you know - to kind of heal the world.

LCSA And sometimes generalist can degenerate into doing nothing specific.

Mark Friedman Well certainly, you can become paralysed by the magnitude of what you are being asked to do. If you take this in two parts, it becomes much easier to understand and much more possible to make a difference. (1) Population accountability means we want all people in our neighbourhood to be connected (result). And we will work with other partners to achieve this. And (2) Performance accountability: For those isolated people we actually directly serve we will work to deliver the best possible service to help these people.

It's much easier to address the sub populations you have identified using indicators that measure the well-being of each subpopulation.

Neighbourhood Centres and Results Accountability

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LCSA That makes sense. The local community would end up with the result - “All people are safe”

Mark Friedman Yes, that’s right. Those are the results you want for everybody. The indicators show how you’re doing. Everyone will have a contribution to make in understanding the story behind the indicators, the reasons why people are not safe or are not connected. The story (or causes) helps you figure out what’s driving lack of safety or lack of connectedness and then what actions to take. This then enables you to articulate a role for the neighbourhood centre. All the work connects up to these very high level purposes that everybody can say, oh yes that’s pretty important.

LCSA Okay, that’s what we tried to do in the beginning where we actually combined all the clients and then we came up with experiences, but our funding body needs the impact on specific client groups to be able to present a strong case for neighbourhood centres to Treasury. So this is where the tension between what we are doing and the funding requirements becomes apparent, because they need the client groups in the picture.

Mark Friedman The client groups figure in your articulation of your role and the role of each individual service. In describing your services, it is perfectly appropriate to articulate who your clients are. In describing your role you would say - we target the following people in the community in order to fulfil the role of reducing isolation – and, here are the services that we provide to those people in order to do that. When you get down to the performance of a particular service you can start to talk about exactly how these people better off and how we can measure it using performance measures.

LCSA You’re saying you get a more concrete grasp by doing these individual services?

Mark Friedman That’s right, grounding it in what do these services actually do. Are their clients better off? Then when it comes to producing the overall centre level view you have a shopping list of measures for the 3 to 20 services. Things that are very real to choose from.

You may also find patterns in these measures. Let’s say 5 of the services look at the percentage of people who get a job. Then you can create what are called composite measures. You can create an overall (or composite) percentage of the people in the 5 services who get jobs. This composite measure could be used for the centre as a whole.



Neighbourhood Centres and Results Accountability

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Contribution of Performance to Population

LCSA One of the things that creates a tension for us is that perhaps the most difficult part of Results Accountability, and you acknowledge it in your book, is this link between performance accountability and population accountability. Why we say that this is difficult is that you yourself say that this is not a linear relationship, at times it's a complex relationship. You've even used the fractal picture and of course in a fractal you make a small change somewhere and the whole picture can change substantially - the butterfly effect. So one of the problems is that you never quite know what the effect might be. In particular, it's very difficult for funders to see that relationship.

Mark Friedman I believe that we're actually describing a truth about this relationship that's not been articulated before, or at least not well articulated.

LCSA We agree with that but ...

Mark Friedman Asking the question: do we need neighbourhood centres in order to have people safe, connected and self sufficient, etc., demands that you be able to articulate a role for the centre. If you can't articulate a meaningful role for a service, then you shouldn't have that service. But having a role to play is different than being solely responsible.

The relationship between performance and population is simply this: What you do for your customers is your contribution to the community. We got 20 people jobs and that's our contribution to reducing the unemployment rate. We connected 20 people to their families and communities and that is our contribution to reducing the rate at which people are isolated.

The difficulty comes when you look at the overall unemployment or isolation rate and it gets worse, even while you were helping people get jobs or get connected. The overall unemployment rate is affected by many factors far beyond the control of the



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neighbourhood centre (the world economy, the weather, etc.). You could be doing a great job and the overall indicator still gets worse. Neighbourhood centres need to be judged on what they do for their customers, not the overall change in the community.

LCSA On a slightly different note, one of the things that's starting to happen is that there is an idea that whatever's in that bottom right hand corner (Is anyone better off?) has to fit what's in the population indicators. It's almost like if you can get good measures here, you are proving that what you do works to achieve a contribution to the population indicators. For example, there is no evidence that proves that groups work to make people safe or that when a neighbourhood centre provides information and referral people get jobs. We think it works and we talk to people who have stories about it but no research has actually been done. So funders could use this to try and prove that what we do here contributes.

Mark Friedman Remember, there are two purposes for performance measures. The first purpose is to know how we are doing so we can do better. Improving the performance of the service is the first and most important purpose. The second purpose is to show that you're making a difference. Sometimes you can do this with performance measures. Some performance measures directly measure the difference. Let's say we assess the extent to which our clients are connected to family and community when they first enter our service. Then we do that same assessment 6 months later. The percentage of people who show improvement in "connectedness" is a pretty good measure of the effect of the service on improving connectedness. Understand that some of these people would have gotten connected without the service. So you must be careful not to credit the service for every new connection. But some measures can give you a pretty direct reading.

Another way to measure this is to ask people. "Did this service help you get a job?" "Did this service help you feel more connected to the community?" This is softer information, but can still be useful.

In information and referral you could have both kinds of measures. What percentage of the people went to the places we referred them and got the services they needed. You could find this out by following up on every 10th person you refer, either directly with the agency you referred to or by a follow-up survey of people 2 weeks after the referral. But this is more complicated. The only completely solid way to know cause and effect relationships with any degree of confidence is to do research, and that's usually prohibitively expensive.

LCSA You still need the research.

Mark Friedman 100 people walk through the door and 50% of them get jobs. Would those 50 people have gotten jobs without the neighbourhood centre?

LCSA Some of them...



Mark Friedman A portion of them certainly would have. So what's the margin of people who got jobs who would not have gotten jobs without the neighbourhood centre? That's a research question. There are ways that you can attempt to answer that question with performance data. For example, you could ask people "Would you have gotten this job without our help?" – the percentage of people who say no gives you a view of the causal connection between your service and their quality of life condition. You are directly measuring the effect on that client or group of clients, as perceived by the clients themselves. Client reported effect is not the same as control group research, but it may be the closest you can come with the resources you have. The problem occurs when you try to respond to funders who say "Prove to me that you have impacted the community."

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LCSA I think that's a danger that we face.

Mark Friedman The intellectually honest thing to do is show how you've impacted your clients, and label that as your contribution to the community. If you can show this, and the overall community numbers are still not getting better, then you have to ask why this is happening and what more must we, as a community, do to make the community numbers better? You can't treat this solely as a matter of the centre's performance.

LCSA So this is where your two customer satisfaction questions "Did we treat you well?", "Did we help you with your problems?" actually become very relevant at this point.

Mark Friedman They do.

LCSA Because "Did we help you with your problems?" actually answers the question of whether the client would have got the job without the neighbourhood centre's help or not.

Mark Friedman Precisely

LCSA But what we are hearing from funding bodies is that, for example, this measurement – "did we help you with your problems?" is too soft. They want to know that the problem was solved, was stopped, for example, children being abused. Often with neighbourhood centres, the link between clients coming to see us and them actually going out and making a difference, that is, getting a job, or stop abusing their children, may take a number of years. We're often the first step on that track and so we haven't been able to find out whether we helped people with their issues.

Mark Friedman So what can you know that's not soft? If your role is to connect people to the resources they need as a first step in getting a job, then you measure your success in connecting people to those resources. If you can show that you're successful in connecting people, then you have fulfilled your role in getting them a job.

LCSA Then all that you need to do is some sort of research agenda that actually proves that connecting people results in them getting a job.

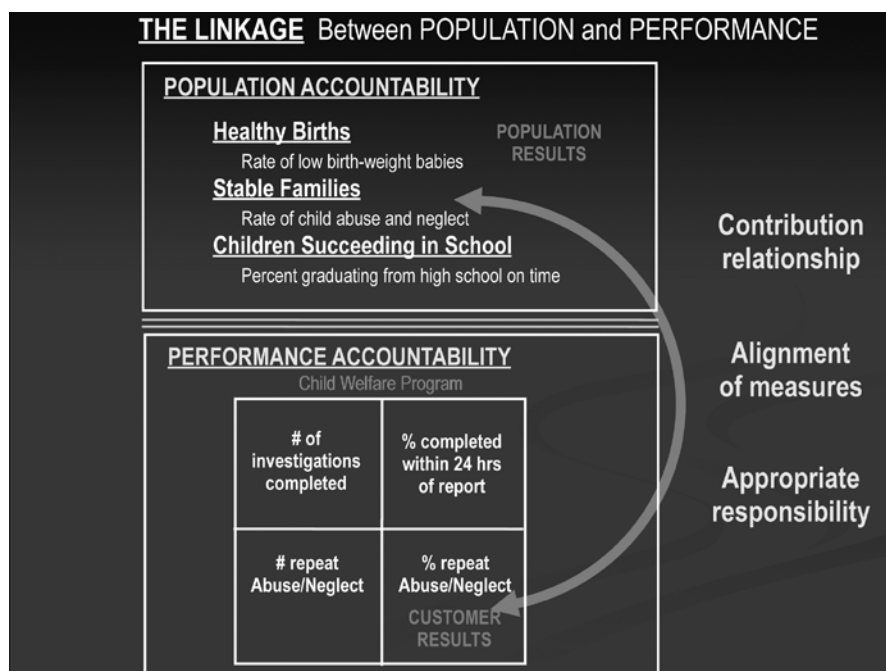


DIAGRAM 5

Contribution of Performance to Population

Diagram from <http://www.raguide.org/>

"So this is where your two research questions "Did we treat you well?", "Did we help you with your problems? actually become very relevant."

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Mark Friedman That would be a nice piece of research to have, but it may not be possible to get it. What do you do then?

These are the pages that you have to look at here in the book (“Trying Hard is Not Good Enough”), p 90 and 91 where I try to take on this business of “Is my program actually making a difference?” You can use these techniques in here – it’s not an exhaustive list, but it’s a pretty good list to chase down here that what you did makes a difference to your clients.

Ultimately if your funder is still not satisfied, then you have to put the burden back on them. Ask them, “What kind of evidence of customer change would be sufficient to demonstrate change to your satisfaction?” If you can get them to answer this question you might be able to reach agreement on a way to provide some of that evidence.

LCSA We’ve just surveyed every client over a week in the centres in the pilot program and we asked them questions about “did you solve a problem?” and “did you make a positive change in your life?” so we’re starting to actually get some data around it.

Mark Friedman Think about the budget logic of this, the purchaser’s logic, the DoCS logic. They want to produce these results, okay? They accept the argument that neighbourhood centres have a legitimate role to play, you’ve been able to articulate the importance of centres in doing that. So now your challenge is to show that you are fulfilling that role well. They’ve bought your service because they believe that role is important and you

can show that you’re fulfilling that role. By simple deduction, you are contributing to the population results they want. Now, it will turn out that sometimes the performance measures will align very closely with the population indicators. But that won’t always be the case.

LCSA We won’t necessarily be able to do that though as most of our centres won’t have that direct connection.

Mark Friedman So take the approach “Are we doing a good job fulfilling this role?” If DoCS wants all people in these communities to have jobs and be connected, then government (and other partners) will have to do a lot more than fund a few neighbourhood centres.

LCSA We can show we are fulfilling our role, that’s exactly what we can do. And I think that part of our difficulty all along is that we couldn’t show the direct link between performance measures and population indicators, but we can show a link between the performance measures and our role in achieving the population results. That’s very helpful.

"So now your challenge is to show that you are fulfilling that role well"



Neighbourhood Centres and Results Accountability

A Conversation with Mark Friedman

Service/Program Contributions to Population Indicators

LCSA When it comes to Community Services Grant program (CSGP) funded services, under the State Plan, DoCS is the lead agency for two key priorities – one's about the rate of child abuse and neglect and the other is increased proportion of children with skills for life and learning at school entry.

We are trying to create something that is showing the contribution of neighbourhood centres across the state. While one neighbourhood centre might be contributing directly to changing the rate of child abuse, twenty nine won't be. They will have an underlying contribution because they may be dealing with, for example, relationship breakdown. They might get one client that comes in with relationship breakdown but another service might be dealing with this specifically, and runs a whole counselling program about relationship breakdown.

Mark Friedman The two DoCS priorities become the first part of your plan at the population level: "Children are safe" is a result and the child abuse rate is an indicator. "Children have the skills they need for life and learning at school entry" is a result and the success rate in the early years of school is an indicator.

From this starting point, what is the story behind these indicators and what's your role in making them better?

LCSA So some neighbourhood centres may run parenting programs, some will have child care and others won't have anything to do directly but they might deal with homelessness which might effectively make safer communities which means children are safer anyway.

Mark Friedman Right. Neighbourhood centres contribute to reducing the child abuse rate by connecting families, and by connecting them to the services they need. You have two roles there that all your neighbourhood centres do to one degree or another.

LCSA Particularly the information and referral role.

Mark Friedman Exactly, it's hard to imagine a neighbourhood centre that doesn't contribute in some way to safe children.

There's another interesting technique you can use. I have mixed feelings about recommending this, but I'll show you anyway.

"We are trying to create something that is showing the contribution of neighbourhood centres across the state."

Neighbourhood Centres and Results Accountability

A Conversation with Mark Friedman

Services	Results		
	Children ready for school	Safe children	Connected people
Kids breakfast club			
Information and referral			

Mark Friedman Let's just say we have results across the top: Children are ready for school. Children are safe. Parents are employed and able to support their families. People are connected to their families and communities. etc. On the left hand column we list the services that you provide. So we show here the Kids Breakfast Club, the information and referral service, whatever services you actually provide.

You go across each row and place an X in the box where service contributes to the result at the top. In this chart for Kids breakfast club, you could put X's in one, two or all three columns. The first time people did this kind of chart it quickly became a game of how many Xs you could show for each service. The more X's you could put down the more important your service was. Even so, a version of that could help show what you mean by your "role." This could be a way of relating a complex set of services to a simple set of results.

There is a more interesting way of doing this than just entering an X. In consumer report magazines they have a scale of a filled in circle, a half filled in circle a full empty circle and nothing at all? In our chart this could mean:

- Direct contribution short term
- ◐ Direct contribution long term
- Indirect contribution
- No contribution

Instead of putting an X in the box, you enter one of these symbols. Then you can look down or across the rows at the density of ink and see the extent of contribution.

Still a third way to do this was recently used by a group of neighbourhoods in North Lincolnshire, England, where the entry in each box was a short description of the contribution itself.



LCSA This is something that every neighbourhood centre could do since because of their different programs they are going to have indirect contributions in one area and direct contributions in another.

Mark Friedman Exactly.

Neighbourhood Centres and Results Accountability

A Conversation with Mark Friedman

Results Accountability for Small Organisations

LCSA One of the things we have run into is that when you're dealing with relatively small but amazingly diverse services for their size this work can become complex.

So one of the dangers of neighbourhood centres using Results Accountability is that we might import something that while simple in concept, actually on the ground in a small service, may be quite complex to enact, take quite a lot of time and detract from the service.

Mark Friedman That's a legitimate worry. If the work required to implement the framework is out of proportion to the service, then you shouldn't do it. It is important not to let reporting and accountability methods interfere with the service. You don't need a complicated reporting and accountability system for a food pantry.

LCSA Yes, and that is one of the reasons why we are trying to do it as a peak body.

Mark Friedman You can do a more skeletal version of this for the very small organisations. On one page, show the following:

Mark Friedman In other words, you could create a simplified version of Results Accountability where a small service could answer these few basic questions about what they do on one page and not spend a lot of time doing it.

LCSA That's what we've been intuitively doing with some of our strategic planning. We've brought elements in that introduce people into it without engaging the full complexity, and then you say we are not going to get the data anyway at the neighbourhood level.

Mark Friedman As you get to smaller and smaller geographic areas, data on quality of life becomes harder and harder to get. Eventually you would like to have the data at the neighbourhood level – usually done through community surveys - there are some neighbourhoods that are showing how to gather this kind of data. But in the meantime you can use the version of this form we've been discussing, allow people to show each step of the thinking process without getting hung up about not having the data.

LCSA We shouldn't get seduced by the one page though - it is probably a series of one pages that is needed to create a picture isn't it?

Mark Friedman Well it's a fractal, a drill down - you have an overall big picture and then successively smaller pictures of each centre and each component service of the centre.

SECTION I: POPULATION ACCOUNTABILITY:

- A. The name of your community
- B. The quality of life results that the service contributes to
- Skip indicators and go directly to:
- C. Your service's role or contribution.

SECTION II: PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY

- A. The name of your service
- B. Purpose of service
- C. How much did we do? Number of people served – by type, by clients
- D. How well did we do it? Give measures where possible, and narrative (stories) where you don't have measures.
- E. Is anyone better off? How are clients better off as a consequence of your service? Give measures where possible, and narrative (stories) where you don't have measures.

Simplified Results Accountability Format Schematic

Conversation 1 – Population Results

Population		All people in the neighbourhood
Results		Quality of life conditions desired for population (People are safe, Families are strong, etc)
Indicator	skip →	Data Development Agenda
Partners		Who are the partners in doing better to meet these results
What would it take		Strategies, actions to meet these results
<u>Role of Neighbourhood Centres</u>		in these strategies

_____ } Services provided by
Neighbourhood Centre

Conversation 2 – Program Performance

Service # 1		Name of Service
<u>Purpose of Service</u>		How is this service intended to <u>contribute</u> to quality of life results
How much did we do?		# served
How well did we do it?		Did we treat you well?
Is anyone better off?		Did we help with your problems?
Data	skip →	Data Development Agenda
How are you doing on the better off measures?		
Partners		Who are the partners in delivering a better service?
Plan to get better		Action plan to deliver a better service

Neighbourhood Centres and Results Accountability

A Conversation with Mark Friedman

Simple Results Implementation

LCSA Another challenge we have is putting this into neighbourhood centres without using additional resources because there aren't any. We've noticed from the Results Accountability 101 training that most people are not able to take 101 and start applying it. So we need to give them something and that's what the idea of developing the framework was – it was to give them something like a generic process which says “this is what it is and this is what you do.”

Mark Friedman One way for people to take 101 and apply it is something I mentioned before: Start by asking and answering the seven (performance) questions about what you do. After a couple of iterations of asking and answering these questions there will emerge a way of writing something about performance that is actually useful. I don't expect people to come out of 101 and write a 50 page strategic plan. You can't do that. You shouldn't want to do that. Start by asking and answering the questions as best you can and get better over time.

7 POPULATION ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

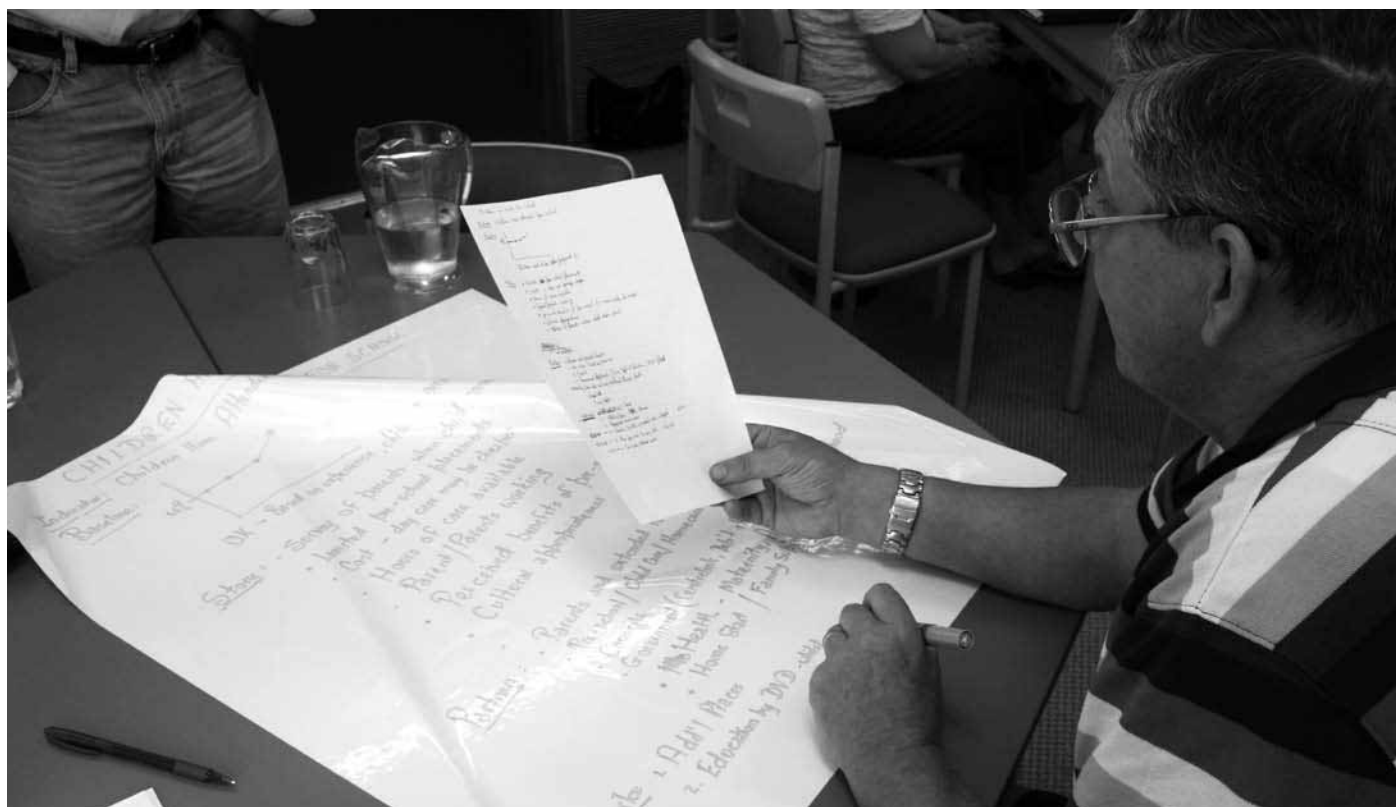
1. What are the quality of life conditions we want for the children, adults and families who live in our community?
2. What would these conditions look like if we could see them?
3. How can we measure these conditions?
4. How are we doing on the most important of these measures?
5. Who are the partners that have a role to play in doing better?
6. What works to do better, including no-cost and low-cost ideas?
7. What do we propose to do?

7 PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

1. Who are our customers?
2. How can we measure if our customers are better off?
3. How can we measure if we are delivering services well?
4. How are we doing on the most important of these measures?
5. Who are the partners that have a role to play in doing better?
6. What works to do better, including no-cost and low-cost ideas?
7. What do we propose to do?

Neighbourhood Centres and Results Accountability

A Conversation with Mark Friedman



LCSA What you are saying is the 80/20 rule - put in 20% of the effort, produce 80% and keep doing it rather than put in 100% of the effort and try to get it 100% right because you are not going to get 100% right anyway.

Mark Friedman Exactly right. We have been talking about organisations for whom even the simplest version of this is a challenge.

LCSA Yes.

Mark Friedman So use a pared down version that has just the essential elements of the thinking process.

LCSA Do we have to pare it down that much? Won't using the seven questions do that?

Mark Friedman Yes, but you still have the problem of lack of data. The seven questions are very much focussed on using data, especially how do you know it's working or not. The seven questions are designed in part to bring people face to face with their data. You want people eventually to be hungry for data. But if the only way to answer these questions is with data and they don't have any data, then you've given them something they can't do.

LCSA Which is exactly what we want to avoid.

Mark Friedman Right, so give them a version of the seven performance questions not dependent on data

1. Who are our customers?
2. How can we measure if our customers are better off?
3. How can we measure if we are delivering services well?
4. How are we doing on the most important of these measures?
5. Who are the partners that have a role to play in doing better?
6. What works to do better, including no-cost and low-cost ideas?
7. What do we propose to do?

Later, you can use data as you get it to answer questions 2, 3 and 4.

Neighbourhood Centres and Results Accountability

A Conversation with Mark Friedman

The Role and Use of Performance Measurement Data

LCSA That then leads to another conversation that will be worth recording. Traditionally our sector has not been strong on data. You have articulated very good reasons why data is essential and we would like to record that.

Mark Friedman Ultimately you have to be able to tell your story if you want to be successful with funders. There are three ways to think about and report on progress: (1) stories about individuals whose lives are better; (2) accomplishments or actions we've taken, what we've done and (3) data which quantifies how much we have done, how well we've done it, and the differences we have made.

We've been very good at the first two ways of talking about progress - we can tell stories about individual clients, and we can tell lots of stories about the things we have done. "We had a fair and we hired a new co-ordinator and put up banners in schools." "Here's a case where an isolated person got connected to their community." We can say all the things we did, and tell stories about individual cases, but when you go to the people who control the money, and I used to be one of those people, they're pretty unimpressed with that stuff.

As much as we might think those are wonderful stories and very compelling, when it gets to the point where people make decisions about money, we need to be able to tell our story, with all three pieces, stories, accomplishments and data.

And not just any data, but data from the lower right Is anyone better off? category. If you can tell your story with lower right quadrant numbers and illustrate those numbers with stories about individuals whose lives have changed you will have a compelling case to be made in any forum. If you can't do that, you are going to have a much harder time with people in control of the money. It's really that simple.

LCSA So that then leads to our next question because although you have been very strong on data for those reasons, you have also opened the way for people who don't have it to begin, as it were, in a different way. So if we've got a service that traditionally hasn't collected data (on whether anyone is better off), really doesn't know how to go about it and wants to start. How do we start with what we have? What can be seen as legitimate data and how do they transition from that point into having the really hard data that they ultimately need?

Mark Friedman Well, Appendix G of my book gives one set of methods to do this.

Appendix G is a 5 step method for identifying performance measures for any program in 45 minutes. It leads the reader through the 4 performance quadrants using a series of questions including "who are the customers, what activities are performed, how well are activities performed, in what ways are clients lives better, how can this be observed and then measured, what data is available and what needs to be developed.."

"... when it gets to the point where people make decisions about money, we need to be able to tell our story, with all three pieces, stories, accomplishments and data."

Neighbourhood Centres and Results Accountability

A Conversation with Mark Friedman

Mark Friedman The first order of business is to simplify the discussion of data into some common sense terms. If you look at other frameworks you will usually have pages of jargon that nobody really understands.

The three performance measurement categories: How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off? is a common sense, and yet still complete categorisation of performance measures that everybody, throughout the system from top to bottom, can understand. That can be a bridge into a way of doing this work that makes sense for everybody. Appendix G gives you a straightforward systematic way of working through what those questions mean for my service.

You will get answers to those questions for which you have data and answers to those questions for which you don't have data. You start with the data you have and fill in the missing pieces to the extent that you can afford to. That's the bridge.

LCSA And when it comes to gathering data, you could start with the customer satisfaction questions: "Did we treat you well?" "Did we help you with your problems?"

Mark Friedman Yes, that's right. Everybody can do a customer satisfaction survey with those two questions on it. And that gets you one upper right measure and one lower right measure.

LCSA And if you've got nothing else and that's all we start with – we can do that.

One of the roles LCSA works at is creating the space between our members and our funding body for the members to do this. It's about getting the right measures and turning the curve on those measures. It's about saying to our funding body "We are here on data and we want to go there but we are not going to go there overnight."

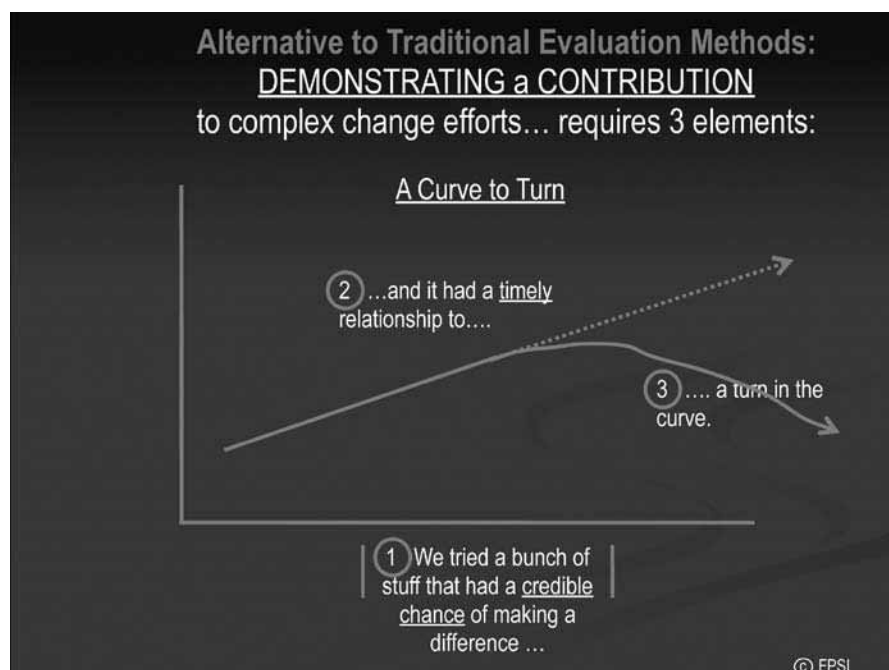


DIAGRAM 6

Turn the curve

Diagram from <http://www.raguide.org/>

Neighbourhood Centres and Results Accountability

A Conversation with Mark Friedman

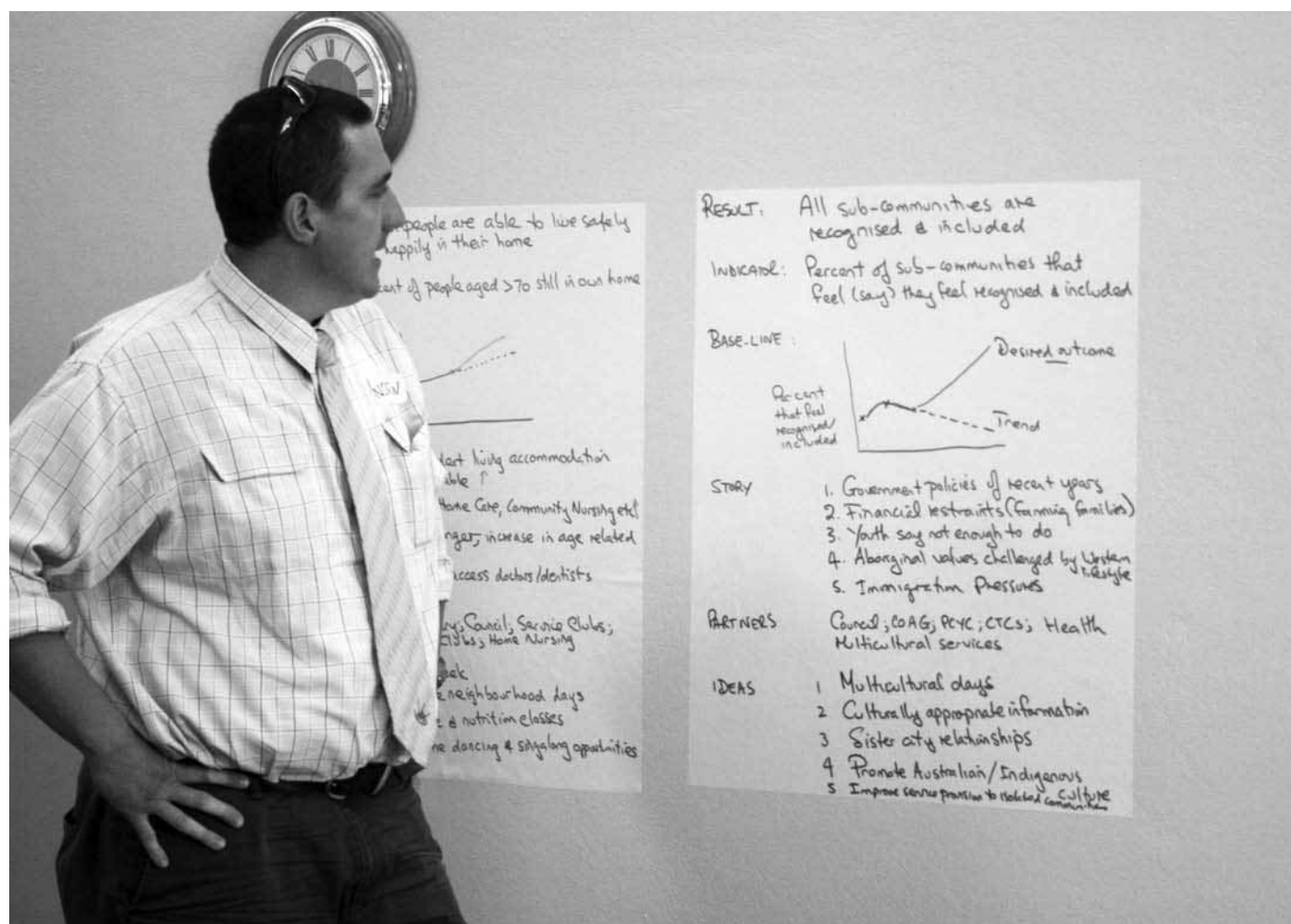
Results Logic Models

LCSA We owe our engagement with Results Accountability to DoCS, who were keen that we use it, but it seems to us that government bodies try to hybridise Results Accountability with results logic diagrams and it seems that it is the logic diagrams that distort the Results Accountability process.

Mark Friedman That could be. Logic model (or theory of change) thinking can actually be useful inside Results Accountability. They can show the logic we were talking about before..... what is the sequence of things that gets a client from information and referral to getting a job. So logic models show the theory of how a particular service is supposed to work.

There are two problems with this however. The first is the matter of causality. Logic models reduce the process to a series of causes and effects. But in reality it's much more complicated than that. Services, like life itself, don't operate in neat causal sequences. Logic models pretend that they can reduce complex services and social interactions to logical sequences and it can't be done. It's a misrepresentation of reality.

So if you want to use a logic diagram, you keep it as simple as possible (one page) to get your main ideas across and don't try to show every nuance of the change process or every possible pathway a customer might take through the services. Logic models can be useful, but only if you understand they will always be incomplete and useful only if they are kept simple.



“Services, like life itself, don’t operate in neat causal sequences.”



The other problem we frequently find is that logic models don't work well as the overarching framework for people to use. The main reason for this is that logic models start in the wrong place. They start with services and they work towards quality of life results. Results Accountability works in the other direction and says “What are the results we want?” Now let's work backwards to the strategy that will get us there. Part of that strategy will be services, but there will be a much richer array of things that are necessary, including no-cost / low-cost actions, and the contribution of many other partners.



Neighbourhood Centres and Results Accountability

A Conversation with Mark Friedman

"And that's where the richness of real world solutions comes from. It's the richness of seeing how many partners can contribute together to changing people's lives."

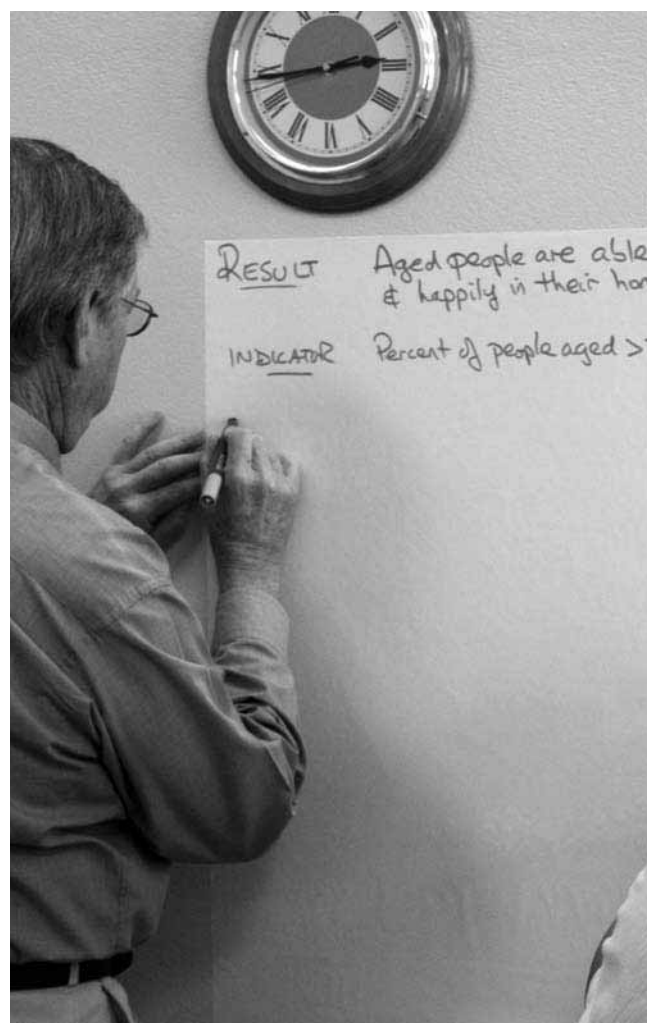
A Better Mental Model

Mark Freidman When a Results Accountability approach is used you end up with a lot more ideas than the row of services shown in at the bottom of a results logic diagram. And that's where the richness of real world solutions comes from. It's the richness of seeing how many partners can contribute together to changing people's lives. Logic models take all the life out of the work of partnerships by limiting the discussion to 15 boxes of services. It focuses you just on the services themselves and not the story behind the data, the partners and consideration of all the things (including no-cost and low-cost) that could work.

Problems occur when governments and government departments take some of the ideas of Results Accountability but not all of the ideas, mix them with other models and create hybrids. Often these hybrids are worse than either parent model. If you mix up population and performance accountability and then mix that up with a logic model process, you get a mess.

LCSA Is this government succumbing to a control paradigm, wanting to say "You can only do this?"

Mark Friedman No, it is more to do with mental models. Somebody once said that we operate on a set of mental models. We don't directly see the universe. We have a set of models about how the universe works and we use those models to filter what we see and direct our behaviour. A logic model process is a kind of mental model, but it's an incomplete and ultimately flawed model



Neighbourhood Centres and Results Accountability

A Conversation with Mark Friedman



Results Accountability is also a mental model about how the universe works. Once people understand this way of thinking they can more clearly see a useful way to organise their work.

I had a funny experience the other day - a woman attended an RBA 101 session conducted by one of my colleagues. Then she went back to her workplace and went to a meeting where they introduced the Balanced Scorecard model. She called up my colleague later and said "You've completely spoiled me, I can't sit through these meetings any more because I know it doesn't make any sense and yet I have to pretend that it does."

So that's what I am trying to do, I'm trying to give people an experience of something that actually makes sense so that when they're sitting in a meeting with somebody who is presenting a bunch of gibberish they have confidence in understanding that it's gibberish. If you don't have an alternative mental model you tend to think, well this guy's an expert and we've paid him a lot of money so he must know what he's talking about. What you're really thinking is that this is complex, full of jargon and not very useful. I was in government 20 years and this is what we did. I wasted many hours with all kinds of useless processes.

You have to take out the flawed mental model chip and insert a new chip which is a much richer model of how the world works and then you'll be more successful in solving the problems. So that's my job, to help remove the old chip and insert a new one.

LCSA Good luck.

Mark Friedman Well if you had told me we would be here today ten years ago I never would have believed you. So we've made a lot of progress, but there's a long way still to go.

"Well if you had told me we would be here today ten years ago I never would have believed you. So we've made a lot of progress, but there's a long way still to go."



Further information on Mark Friedman and Results Accountability is available on:

www.resultsaccountability.com

www.raguide.org

Mark's book, *Trying Hard Is Not Good Enough* and the RBA 101 workshop DVD are available from the University of Newcastle Family Action Centre (www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/fac/trainingconsultancies/resultsaccountability) and also from: www.trafford.com and www.amazon.com and www.resultsleadership.org.



Photos in this issue.

Sandra Handley and Mark Friedman discuss results accountability.

Planning using results accountability at Parkes Information and Neighbourhood Centre.