Reducing Recidivism Coalition

Purpose-based Planning Process
Fall, 2014

Planning Participants

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Process designed, facilitated, and report written by Kathleen Eisenmann, Associate Professor, UW-Extension, Jefferson County Office, November, 2014.
Introduction

The purpose-based planning process began with the Reducing Recidivism Coalition identifying a need to engage in some organizational development in order to determine a future purpose and vision for the coalition. Liz Hanson, a coalition member, contacted Kathleen Eisenmann, UW-Extension Jefferson County Family Living Agent, about designing a process to meet the coalition’s needs. Ms. Eisenmann agreed to meet with the coalition to dialogue about the group’s needs and desired results. The conversation resulted in a planning agreement to achieve the following results:

Provide the Coalition with an opportunity to engage in a purpose-based planning process in order to achieve a consensus among members on the coalition’s future purpose, a realistic vision, and an action plan with strategies to achieve that vision

A planning team of the entire coalition was established to engage in the process. The process took place over the course of four workshop sessions. Ms. Eisenmann designed and facilitated the process for the team using a research-based approach and authored the report.

This proceedings report was reviewed and approved by the coalition at its December 2014 meeting. The coalition members will implement the action plan to address the identified priorities and use it to further develop proposals and action steps as the preceding steps are achieved. The coalition has committed to implementation of the plan over the course of the next year and reviewing progress on a regular basis.
Creating Solutions to Address Complex Problems

Public, nonprofit, and community-based organizations are increasingly faced with tackling very complex issues which transcend their individual or organizational interests and capacities. Research on effective best practice organizational development shows holistic approaches to solving complex problems are more likely to be successful than reductionist approaches. Holistic approaches are more successful because they focus on three foundational principles:

**Uniqueness** - Every issue or problem manifests itself in unique ways in an environment. For example, recidivism may be a problem across Wisconsin and the U.S., but the problem is different in Dane County than Jefferson County for reasons unique to each environment. *Any viable solution must take into consideration these unique qualities or it won't work.*

**Purposeful Information** - Groups often rely on empirical evidence to solve complex problems. The groups engage in data gathering in an attempt to "know everything" about the problem. The underlying assumption is that once you know everything, the solution will be obvious. Most of the time this doesn't work with complex problems as data is always incomplete and time bound. *It is more effective to spend time gathering data that will help create the solutions, not analyze problems.* The goal is to search out purposeful information that contributes to the knowledge and understanding of the solutions; and

**Systems Approach** - Complex problems are more often successfully solved when the solutions involve each part of the systems involved. Recidivism isn't going to be reduced by the judicial system adopting more effective sentencing strategies without the human services sector implementing effective programs to address the underlying psychosocial causes of crime and law enforcement modifying its incarceration policies to create multiple pathways to successful re-entry into the community. *The problem is too complex and the interdependencies of the systems require multiple actors be involved from their sector to address it.*

By taking a broader and more holistic approach to solving the problem of recidivism, the number of possible solutions expands, the work is focused on gathering people and information necessary to create those solutions, and the eventual solution is based not on what was the past circumstance which caused the problem, but what does the future need to look like in order for the solution to be effective.
Creating a Purpose

A key part of developing solutions to complex problems is to clearly understand the purpose of the work to be done. This is a critical phase for creating workable solutions to complex problems because it is important the purpose is framed in broad enough context to allow the flexibility to expand the "creative space" for solutions to be developed. The initial problem is only the beginning of examination of the purpose because it's essential to expand the solution space in order to assure the real need is addressed. By expanding the solution space, groups often discover the need to adopt a higher level purpose than originally identified by the problem in order to truly solve it.

The coalition members re-examined and analyzed possible purposes for the group's work. The members worked both individually and in small groups to identify several candidate purposes using the following questions:

- What is unique about the recidivism problem in Jefferson County?
- What basic social needs and community interests do we want to address?
- What do we want to be able to do to develop a creative, workable, and integrated solution?
- What is my role or my organization's role in developing that solution? How is that different from other people/organizations? What do others think my role should be?
- What core values and beliefs should our solution have?
- What concepts reflect the expectations of the key people (incarcerated/formerly incarcerated individuals, public agencies, elected officials, community residents) we need for support?
- Are there solutions to our problem beyond those we assumed initially? If so, what?

The coalition members settled on the sketch of several integrated and related components to the overall purpose of developing a community-based approach to reducing recidivism in the county. That purpose sketch is noted with the following diagram.
Purpose Sketch

Develop a Community-based Approach to Reducing Recidivism in Jefferson County

Everyone is given an opportunity, treated with worth, and given a chance to succeed. Providing skills while still incarcerated – education, employment, positive coping. Increasing resources for the basic needs in community – housing, employment, transportation, food, access to health care. Trauma informed care

Prevention – keeping people out in the first place; parenting skills, safety nets/support, involving schools.

Create a program to change their behaviors, empower them to make the change, and maintain the support

Create Healthy Alternatives
Provide Resources & Tools
Facilitate Individual Positive Choices

*Provide programs in jail
*Notify schools
*Create a community network of individuals and agencies to provide a wide base of opportunities for ex-offenders
*Safer community
*Low cost
*Mentorship – volunteer opportunities (help provide)
*Present data – helps build

Identify strategies we could implement with current resources and local volunteers to reduce recidivism:

Addiction
Mental Health
Jobs
Housing
Transit
Education
Medical/Physical Health

By everyone being given an opportunity, treated with worth, and given a chance to succeed, everyone is provided skills while still incarcerated – education, employment, positive coping. Increasing resources for the basic needs in community – housing, employment, transportation, food, access to health care.

Trauma informed care

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Identifying Key People to Achieve the Purpose

Identifying key people who are essential to involve in order to achieve the group’s purpose was the next step for the coalition members. Key people can be defined as those who have the ability to effect or who are affected by the group’s purpose. It is important to consider the interests of those key people and how their interests are met by the purpose and the strategies used to achieve the purpose. Meeting those individual and organizational interests of the key people identified will be critical to engaging them and keeping them engaged in the coalition’s work.

The key people identified as critical to achieve the purpose are listed by organizational identity below. The key questions the planning group considered when identifying people key to achieving its purpose were:

- Who is involved or affected by the recidivism problem in Jefferson County?
- What is unique about the culture of people involved in reducing recidivism in Jefferson County?
- What types of people in related or outside systems ought to be included to help determine the recidivism solution we are creating?
- Who might have insights into pertinent types of data/information we may need to gather to determine our purpose and develop solution strategies?
- Who has the talents, resources, and authority needed to implement and maintain the solutions?
- What different roles do we need represented to make the whole effort effective?
- What people might provide perspectives about recidivism that we should consider beyond the information we have?

Key People to Involve

- Landlords/Property Managers
- Public Defender
- Community Corrections
  Probation & Parole
- District Attorney
- County Admin/Board
- Offenders - Current/Former
- Church: Faith Based Initiatives – Resource
- Human Resources Managers
- Schools
- Treatment Providers
  Mental Health
  Addiction
- Transportation Providers
- Best Practice Examples
- St. Vincent’s
- Jail Liaison/Program Coordinator
Vision Sketch

The next step in the planning process is to develop a description of what the ideal future for the coalition might look like if it achieved its purpose. This portion of the process gets the group to look further down the road to what the future solution might be to the problems posed by recidivism. This focus on an ideal solution is more effective and efficient because it describes what the long term solution will be rather than just focusing on the “quick fix”. That longer term focus allows for better solution creation because it focuses on ideas that need to considered in the longer term rather than just “fixing” the immediate problem.

Once the ideal solution is described, the group can work backward from that ideal to develop a more realistic, or living, solution. The living solution concept is premised on the fact there is no one perfect or permanent solution. The world is constantly changing as is the environment the Reducing Recidivism Coalition is working in. Any realistic solution needs to incorporate the realization it will need to be continually altered based on changing circumstances as the coalition moves towards its future. The challenge is to develop a realistic solution that remains consistent with the future solution even as time passes and the coalition’s environment changes. These principles of the holistic approach to solution creation will be re-emphasized in the strategy development phase of the planning process.

The coalition members considered the following prompts and questions when developing their description of an ideal and realistic vision of the group’s future:

Imagine you’re three years in the future and you’re giving an interview to a reporter from the Daily Jefferson County Union on the Coalition. What do you realistically see in the following areas?

Δ What people are involved?
Δ What services/work product have been produced?
Δ What does the structure look like? What processes are used?
Δ What resources does the Coalition have?
Δ What’s the Coalition’s culture?
Δ What external legitimacy & support does the coalition have?

The coalition’s consensus on the answers to these questions is incorporated in the vision sketch on the following page. The coalition members also reflected on that vision and identified some key gaps or concerns to address as they pursued their vision. Those are also included on the following page. Most importantly, the coalition members identified the need for continuous improvement by planning, implementing and evaluating strategies as they pursue their vision and work toward achieving their purpose.
Vision Sketch

People

Community People
Monitors & Mentors
Key People in each sector to turn offenders from incarcerated to successful.

Services/Work Product

Intervention – focused with primary prevention when appropriate.
Coordination/Network

Structure/Processes

Networked with community
Reduce redundancy
Role in monitoring best practice processes

Culture

Empowering
Externally/Community Focused
Action Oriented Focus
Values Based
Restorative Justice

External Support

Acceptance
Leaders in Subject Matter
Reciprocal
Respect
Authority
Foster Change
Dependent/Independent

Resources

ROI
Grants approach
Leveraging public dollars and private money
Network plus periphery
Coordinating Effect
Communication

Reflections on Vision

Are Key External People Involved?
Very Doable
Might be Limited by Resources
Self-Care & Realistic Vision are Important
Strategic Development & Formulation

The next step in the planning process is the identification of strategies to implement in order to achieve the coalition’s purpose and vision. The coalition identified the need to gather additional purposeful information regarding effective research-based best practice programs and approaches to reducing recidivism before proceeding with the strategy development phase of the planning process.

Additional Purposeful Information

The coalition members reviewed information compiled by members and by Ms. Eisenmann in two key areas: effective communication strategies and effective re-entry program development. Effective communication strategies are important because research shows there is a gap between how “experts” in the criminal justice system and the general public describe and understand the system. Developing communication strategies that effectively bridge the gap will be critical to advancing the coalition’s purpose and vision. Effective re-entry programs are based on several key principles of program development unique to those programs. Examining that research, and best practice programs developed based on that research, will be important to formulating effective strategies.

Strategy Development & Formulation

The coalition members were ready to develop strategies after reviewing the additional information. The group quickly settled on developing a research-based re-entry program based on existing best practice. Ms. Eisenmann facilitated a strategy development exercise to walk the group through the steps to developing strategies necessary to develop such a program. This strategy development exercise will equip coalition members with the key process skills to continually monitor, evaluate and modify their actions based on changing environmental considerations, which is a key component to a holistic problem-solving approach. Below is an outline of that strategy development:

**Strategy:** Develop a Research-based, Best Practice Re-entry Program Using a Collaborative, Community-based Approach

**Successful Outcomes:**

◊ Replicable Model That We Can Implement Here in Jefferson County
◊ Key People Engaged
◊ Core Program Needs (job skills, housing, transportation) Identified
◊ Program Participants Have a Support Network
**Strategy Development & Formulation**

**Barriers to Success:**

- Lack of housing & transportation
- Can we identify a best practice model that will fit our unique needs?
- Lack of engagement by key people
- Lack of a coordinated network
- Resource limitations
- Burn-out risk/Lack of follow-through

**Strategy Most Likely to Succeed:**

Get More Information on Successful Programs
- tools used (risk/needs assessment)
- programs
- community resources needed

**Actions to Take within One Year:**

1. Risk/Needs Assessment identified and trained in to implement consistently—the process of assessment
2. Make changes to existing programs based on assessment results
### Specific Actions to Take in Next Six Months:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identify model program &amp; do site visit for more information</td>
<td>1. Judge Wambach (will also contact Kathi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(could be tele/video conference).</td>
<td>Jeanette Petts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- LaCrosse program</td>
<td>Lynn Forseth</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Allegheny Co. PA</td>
<td>Tania Wenzel</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Involve Kathi Cauley</td>
<td>Capt. Wallace</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Engagement Meeting—Key people are presented with model and proposal</td>
<td>2. Lynn Forseth</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Liz Hanson</td>
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### Resources Needed:

- Contact Jail Administrators Association for feedback on programs
- Jail Health Program
- Involve Judge on Criminal Rotation
- Bridge for Offenders from Incarceration to Community

### Measures of Success:

- Actual identification of model program that fits our inmates in Jefferson County
- Key people engaged and committed
The coalition members identified the outcomes that would define success for them. This step is important because it assists the coalition in further defining what it needs to do in order to achieve those desired outcomes. Identifying potential barriers to success helps the coalition to raise potential challenges early in the process and develop strategies to overcome them. Selecting the strategy most likely to succeed builds on effective change process by capitalizing on early and easily achieved wins. Setting out short term action steps and noting the responsible individual or organization further defines who will do what when and who will be accountable to the coalition for progress towards its desired outcomes. Resources need to be identified in order to measure readiness for action. The coalition must be able to identify needed resources in order to marshal them for the effort or acquire them as part of an action step. Finally, identifying measures of success will assist the coalition in evaluating its progress toward desired outcomes and formulating new strategies to account for changes in the environment.

As a final step in the strategy development phase, the coalition members identified a conceptual framework for the purpose and vision—namely a community network. The coalition members recognized the theme of coordinated, community-based networks as a central framework which could be conceptualized through a network map. A potential configuration might look like the diagram below:

The core is represented by the Reducing Recidivism Coalition itself. Nodes are individuals or organizations networked to the coalition. Clusters are groups of nodes or hubs loosely tied to the Core. The periphery represents nodes that are not central to the coalition’s purpose and only tangentially related, however the periphery does play an important role in the network from time to time. This conceptual framework will be important to keep in mind in order to achieve both the coalition’s purpose and vision.
Plan Adoption & Next Steps

The coalition will be responsible for reviewing and adopting this plan and moving it forward. A three and six month review of the strategies in light of potential environmental changes is recommended. An entire review of the plan should be conducted within a year or two.

Adaptation of Research

The methods and processes used to develop this plan were based on the following research and evidence-based sources:


