

Action Plan Template

Evidence2Success

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION



PHASE 4

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Drafting Your Community's Action Plan

This document provides a template to help you organize and draft your community's Evidence2Success action plan on behalf of your community board. It is to be used by the committee tasked with drafting the action plan. The drafting of the plan begins in Phase 4, after the Community Action Planning Workshop. The plan states the aspirational goals the community board has set for improvement in the priority outcomes, risk and protective factors identified in Youth Experience Survey data and the community's administrative data. It spotlights the tested, effective programs chosen by the community board to respond to the priorities. It also states the program-level and participant-level goals the board has set for the each program. The action plan explains the rationale for choosing each of the programs and the high-level implementation planning underway for each program. It also communicates the strategic financing plan to fund the programs and supportive infrastructure for Evidence2Success. The action plan can also be used to explain the rationale behind any policy changes recommended by the board as part of the Evidence2Success effort.

The action plan is a valuable tool for communicating about Evidence2Success since it provides a tangible picture to the community at large. The plan may, for example, be used to convince other agencies of the value of participation. It may be shared with the state legislature to show how partners are investing more wisely or to garner interest in scaling or expanding the effort. It also may be used to support grant applications for program funding and related work. For effective dissemination, we recommend posting the finished action plan online and emailing stakeholders with a link to the document. It may be useful to include internal links within the document to help readers navigate more easily.

This template is based on the Providence 2015-2018 action plan and various Communities That Care action plans. Providence's action plan can be found at <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/PCYC-Evidence2SuccessActionPlan-2015.pdf>. The Providence action plan contains some sections that may not be relevant to your community. If so, those sections can be omitted. Your action plan should display the appropriate visual identity for Evidence2Success in your community (e.g., fonts and colors), usually that of the lead agency of your community board.

Action plans are often considered to be living documents. That is, they incorporate sections of other documents and are updated when changes are made to their component documents. At minimum, the action plan should be revised after the survey is readministered and the new data analyzed. Ideally this happens every two years so that the new edition will reflect the most recent survey data. This is a check on the course the community has taken. The data should demonstrate the progress being made. The community board will compare it to the degree of change envisioned at the Community Planning Workshop and can make course corrections, if appropriate.

USING THIS TEMPLATE

Typical major sections of an action plan are listed below, with typical subsections and suggestions for information to include in each section. Refer to the Providence action plan as an example. As you draft the report, keep the tone crisp and businesslike but not too formal. Avoid jargon as the plan will be used by a variety of readers.

Your action plan will need to be reviewed by the **Evidence2Success Community Review Committee** before it can be considered final. Check with your coach about the proper procedure for securing a review.

Executive Summary (See pages 1–2 of the sample action plan)

The executive summary is the most important section of your action plan, because it is the section most likely to be read in its entirety. For this reason, be sure your executive summary makes the crucial points in the document. The executive summary is usually written last, after the rest of the plan has been composed.

Traditionally, an executive summary is one page in length (one side of one page). In recent years executive summaries have expanded significantly. Please resist the temptation to include nuance or detail. Like the authors of the Providence example, please limit your executive summary to one succinct page, front and back.

If Evidence2Success is new to your community, you'll want to explain the overarching goals of the initiative and why your community has chosen to participate. Also explain the role of data, the need for prevention and early intervention and the importance of community and neighborhood involvement. List the major agency partners.

Next, give the priorities being addressed by the plan and why they were chosen: outcomes, risk factors and protective factors as well as geographic areas or populations of focus. Then describe the portfolio of programs (and policies) chosen to address the priorities, noting the range of ages and types of prevention being used.

Discuss funding. If the information is available when you are drafting the action plan, include both funding that has been secured and funding that is still needed. Refer to the Strategic Financing Plan for this information.

Close by reminding readers how Evidence2Success will help improve outcomes for the community's youth.

Introduction (See pages 3–8 of the sample action plan)

The introduction is a call to action on behalf of local children. For many readers, it is also an introduction to Evidence2Success. This section has three parts:

- A narrative about how your community's children are doing (leaving the data for a subsequent section), how the participating public systems are working to meet local needs and the challenges these systems face.
- A brief overview of the Evidence2Success framework using the following language:

Evidence2Success promotes healthy child development by helping communities and public systems work together to use data to understand how children are doing; select proven programs to enhance strengths and address needs; and develop financing and action plans to support the ongoing use of those proven programs. The framework was developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a private charitable organization dedicated to building a brighter future for children and families, and several partner organizations.

- A discussion about the local partnerships and partners. This should include an explanation of the key leaders, community board and workgroups. If your local effort focuses on particular partner neighborhoods, they should be described here also.

The Introduction in the sample Providence report discusses the impetus for adopting Evidence2Success. One particular issue of special concern in Providence was the cost of congregate care. If a certain issue figured heavily in your community's decision to adopt Evidence2Success, you should discuss it in this section.

If you are following the example from Providence, you have probably noticed some unfamiliar terms. Providence's community board was known as the Evidence2Success Workgroup, part of the Providence Children and Youth Cabinet. (Its committees are the equivalent of your community board's workgroups.) In Providence, the Evidence2Success implementation placed a large emphasis on partner neighborhoods. Representatives from these communities participate through community tables. Terminology differences such as this can occur when Evidence2Success is taken up by an existing initiative in the community. Feel free to use whatever terminology your community has adopted. After all, this plan is intended for your community's use.

Interim Results (See page 9 of the sample action plan)

As you know, the Evidence2Success framework provides a method for selecting programs based on data and then implementing those programs. The programs should produce improvements in the priority outcomes, risk factors and protective factors when implemented at appropriate saturation levels with fidelity to their specifications. Those improvements are the results everyone is waiting for, as they show real improvements in youth development. But those results are still in the future; they take a year or more to appear after program implementation begins (depending on the survey schedule). After all, this document is a plan for implementing the programs.

But most communities will be eager for information indicating progress. Use this space to explain the work the community board has done thus far. Describe the changes in system behavior that have taken place as a result. These probably include building infrastructure, improved cooperation with one another and willingness to work together and to work with the community. All of this is progress. The Evidence2Success framework classifies system outputs as short-term (appearing in one to two years) and intermediate-term (appearing in the second year and beyond). These are listed in the table below. You should discuss those that have become evident.

System Outputs Indicating Culture Change Possibly Arising from Evidence2Success
<p>In the short term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased capacities in key areas• Changes in policy and practice• Joint decision making• Increased support for prevention and tested, effective programs• Designated funding for tested, effective programs
<p>In the intermediate term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shared accountability• Increased investment in tested, effective programs• Greater availability of tested, effective programs in Evidence2Success

The example plan from Providence also discusses related work that the participating public agencies have undertaken in support of the same goals as Evidence2Success. If you are using this document to build a case for funding from your state legislature, this sort of information can buttress your case.

Data Portrait (See pages 10–16 of the sample action plan)

The next section is devoted to showing how the community board arrived at its priorities. Charts from the YES data report provide a visual explanation. But the choice of priorities is not simply about elevated or depressed indicators in the charts. It also requires an interpretation of the data through the lens of the community. This section is a good place for noting how economic, educational and health disparities affect youth and explaining how Evidence2Success is intended to address those disparities. At the time the Providence report was written, widespread discussions were taking place about disparities in that city..

If your YES data reveal striking differences from the rest of the community's youth — say, by grade, race, ethnicity or gender — that have prompted particular programming choices, you will want to explain this in your action plan, including the relevant data. Take care to avoid stigmatizing anyone. Be sure to share the draft with a large, diverse group of reviewers before it is final.

Some Evidence2Success communities administer a second survey, the Childhood Experience Survey (ChES). If your community has ChES data, you should include it here if it was part of the priority-setting process or if it supports the YES data.

Include a link or reference to the YES data report for the community.

About the Programs Selected for Implementation (See pages 16–20 of the sample action plan)

This section is for explaining the choice of programs to address the priorities and to describe the programs. We recommend doing this in table form, with columns for:

- the name of the program;
- a description of the program;
- the risk factors it addresses; and
- the risk or protective factors it addresses

This is the approach used in the sample report from Providence. Most of the information is from the Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development database (blueprintsprograms.com) and can probably be taken directly from the program information posters that were created for the Community Planning Training in Phase 4.

The Blueprints database continues to expand. Programs are being added to address risk or protective factors that may not have previously been addressed by programs with the desired level of proof behind them. Occasionally, however, a community might identify a priority that is not addressed by a program in Blueprints or other databases of evidence-based programs. If this is

the case with one of your community's priorities, you will want to describe the priority in this section and explain how the community board intends to proceed. You will find an example in the sample plan from Providence in the subsection "A Note on Community Disorganization."

In addition to the priority outcomes, risk factors and protective factors, the portfolio of programs selected may be intended to address other priorities as well. These might be geographic areas or populations of focus, such as African-American or Spanish-speaking families. Programs are also chosen to cover a range of prevention: universal, selected or indicated. We recommend including this information in this section. The sample plan includes a breakdown showing how the types of prevention in the portfolio are distributed across the age ranges.

The Strategic Financing Plan (See pages 20–24 of the sample action plan)

This section covers financing plans for the selected programs. The information here comes from the community's strategic financing plan. You should describe the process of strategic financing, beginning with fund mapping and including the financing strategies that have been considered and adopted thus far. You should separate short-term financing arrangements for programming to be implemented within the next year from longer-term plans. As mentioned earlier, if the information is available while you are drafting your action plan, include funding that is still needed, along with current plans and possible strategies to address gaps in funding.

Scale targets should also be indicated. The plans should be ambitious in order to inspire greater investment in the community's children.

Include a link or reference to the full strategic financing plan for readers who want concrete information or greater detail. It may be useful to state that the entire report is "incorporated by reference," since the financing plan and the action plan are intended to work in tandem to guide program implementation. The program implementation plan to be drafted in Phase 5 is another action planning document. It can be incorporated, in whole or part, in the same way.

Conclusion (See page 24 of the sample action plan)

Your conclusion should be brief and inspiring. Strive to demonstrate a concrete link between the Evidence2Success framework and the vision of healthy development for all your community's children.

Pull Quotes

Quotes from participants in the process — especially neighborhood representatives — can be very persuasive. Choose them judiciously, however. If too many are included, they can become distracting.

Appendix

In your appendix, include other information your readers might want, such as data tables from the YES report. You can include greater detail here than you did in the body of the plan. This might consist of data from the partner neighborhoods.