A Practical Guide to Documenting Influence and Leverage In *Making Connections* Communities

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

TABLE OF TOOLS

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE: WHAT DOES THIS GUIDE OFFER?

This guide offers practical guidance to capturing and documenting influence and leverage in your *Making Connections* community. It provides clarification, concrete examples and suggested approaches for documentation of these often elusive concepts. Specifically, you will learn the following:

1. Clear definitions of the terms *influence* and *leverage* within the *Making Connections* context.

2. How influence and leverage relate to core capacities.

3. How influence and leverage are integrated with impact and results in the overall *Making Connections* strategy.

4. The range and types of changes that characterize influence and leverage in community change initiatives.

5. Practical methods for documenting influence and leverage with actual examples.

6. Potential ways to apply the documentation of influence and leverage to guide and carry out your action agenda.

This guide is intended to be versatile to meet a wide variety of specific audiences and needs. Importantly, each community will decide for itself what matters most on its path to powerful and sustainable changes. This needs to be done in a transparent, intentional, realistic and focused manner. The conceptual and practical tools in this guide will help make this work manageable. In turn, *Making Connections* communities will be able to tell their complete story, assess whether the levers of change of influence and leverage are moving in the right directions, and hold their partners and themselves accountable to the processes that are aligned to making powerful differences that last.

WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM THIS GUIDE?

First and foremost, **communities** can benefit from this guide. *Making Connections* is built upon a belief system that sustained community transformation results from the powerful combination of impact, influence and leverage strategies. This belief system maintains that communities will achieve sizable and lasting well being for children and families only if progress occurs on all three of these fronts.

Impact is readily recognizable because it is evident in direct changes in the lives of individuals, families and communities. Influence and leverage, in contrast, tend to be more abstract and less observable elements that are embedded in groups, organizations, institutions and systems. Nonetheless, they directly affect neighborhoods and represent powerful levers of change. This guide will help pave the way to making influence and leverage tangible, concrete and accessible to documentation. In this way, communities can keep on eye on the progress concerning how well the groups, organizations, institutions and systems that serve communities and shape community life support the well being of children and their families. This is a critical part of the complete picture of learning, action and accountability for communities.

***Making Connections* teams and their partners** can benefit, too. *Making Connections* teams juggle many balls in the air at once in supporting their communities' agendas. This guide will assist site teams and their partners in working with communities to identify and make palpable key components of influence and leverage and develop manageable ways to track progress in these areas. This information should be real-time, or near real-time, to function as a management tool that can be used to adjust strategies, develop new strategies and communicate successes.

Furthermore, *Making Connections* teams and communities will have a shared understanding of the terms *influence* and *leverage*. This common understanding will improve communication and information sharing within and across teams. It will also improve report documentation, community learning and reporting among *Making Connections* communities. This shared understanding is a critical part of the complete picture of learning, action and accountability for site teams and their partners.

The philanthropic community–particularly those foundations that are involved or are considering involvement with place-based strategies–has the potential to benefit from this work as well. Documentation of influence and leverage in *Making Connections* communities will offer a window into the *Making Connections* story and how it facilitates transforming neighborhoods to improve the lives of vulnerable children.

As a result of *Making Connections* teams and communities putting this guide to work, other foundations will be able to consider how the concrete examples of the role of influence and leverage in community change efforts relates to their own approach to community change. This heightened awareness is a critical part of the complete picture of learning, action and accountability for the philanthropic community.

This guide is directed specifically to a *Making Connections* audience; however, the content is relevant to a wide range of partners involved in community and systems change work. The word *you* is used frequently throughout the guide in a broad and inclusive sense. If you are engaged in working toward improving the lives of children, families and communities with an intentional focus on understanding, reforming or strengthening the structures and systems that support their well being, then you can benefit from this guide. If this work is being done in a *Making Connections* model, the language, framework and illustrations will be most directly familiar and relevant to your work.

HOW CAN YOU PUT THIS GUIDE TO USE?

This guide covers four main topics:

- **Topic 1:** Definitions and clarification of the terms influence and leverage.

  Location and Contents: Section II – This section offers specific definitions of terms and distinguishes them from other terms commonly used as part of comprehensive change efforts.

- **Topic 2:** Guidance in selecting and developing specificity around key influence and leverage outcomes for your community.

  Location and Contents: Section III – This section identifies steps you can take to focus and prioritize your documentation of influence and leverage. It further identifies specific language for naming different types of influence and leverage outcomes.

- **Topic 3:** Techniques and tools for documenting influence and leverage outcomes.

  Location and Contents: Section IV – This section provides concrete approaches to documenting influence and leverage outcomes. A variety of options are presented for a representative sample of influence and leverage outcomes.

- **Topic 4:** Suggested approaches to connecting the documentation of influence and leverage to an action agenda.

  Location and Contents: Section V – This final section makes a case to connect learnings about documentation and leverage with your community's action and accountability agenda. It addresses different roles of specific groups in the *Making Connections* arena: community members, site team leaders and coordinators, and agency and institution partners.

There are two main ways to use this guide: **Standalone Usage** and **Team Process**.

Standalone Usage: You can turn to any or all of the topics that are immediately relevant to a specific question you have about documenting influence and leverage. Each topic stands on its own and is informative about the content area. Readers will gain insight and knowledge about how to define, select and document influence and leverage and to further apply these learnings in an action context.

Team Process: *Making Connections* teams can work through this guide as part of your work in planning, implementing and learning about powerful strategies to achieve results.

STEPS TO TEAM PROCESS

If you choose to work through this guide as part of a team process, here is a recommended approach that can be modified to fit your particular situation.

1. *Identify a work team that is broad-based.* Participants could include site team leader, site team coordinator, representative systems partners, representative community members, local learning partner coordinator, diarist, and process documenter. Ten to 15 people would be a strategically-sized group for including broad perspectives and to charge yourselves with work tasks.

2. *Review Section II*. Discuss how influence and leverage strategies are relevant to your *Making Connections* agenda. Consider how these relate to your core capacities.

3. *Review Section III*. Use your theory of change (if you have one) or other materials to identify your intended influence and leverage outcomes. Use the broad categories provided to help you think about how to write the outcome statements. Develop a consensus about what is most strategic, relevant and meaningful to capture systematically for documentation and measurement purposes.

4. *Review Section IV*. Use the influence and leverage outcomes you have selected for your site as the basis for developing a documentation plan. Begin by identifying three influence and leverage outcomes to document. Consider data collection strategies provided, and select a method that will work in your situation. Be sure to consider all of your resources, including your LLP, diarist, and process documenter as you choose your documentation approach.

5. *Review Section V*. Plan to use the information that you will learn about influence and leverage in the everyday action on the ground. Consider your intended audiences and what they need to know about your change efforts. Discuss how you will be able to use the information strategically to further your learning, action and accountability.

This team process will serve your needs at a local level. It will also be useful in reporting periodically to the Foundation about your progress and results toward achieving neighborhood transformation.

SECTION II

UNDERSTANDING INFLUENCE AND LEVERAGE AS OUTCOMES

Purpose of Section: This section defines and clarifies the influence and leverage outcomes that are essential to achieving sustained, comprehensive change for individuals and families.

What You Will Learn:

- Definitions of terms: *impacts, outcomes, influence outcomes* and *leverage outcomes*.
- How to relate impact, influence and leverage outcomes to core capacities.

DEFINING: WHAT ARE IMPACT, INFLUENCE AND LEVERAGE OUTCOMES?

Outcome statements are change statements. An outcome statement answers the question: *What has changed for individuals, families, institutions, organizations, systems or the community?* Changes for individuals and families—such as improved health for children or increased family income—are the most easily understood and usually reflect the ultimate goal for making changes in institutions, organizations, systems or the community. Changes for individuals and families are impact outcomes.

Definition of Impact Outcomes: Changes in a condition of well being for the children, adults or families directly served by programs, agencies, planned strategies or services systems.

To document change in an impact outcome you would look at individuals and families to see what has changed for them. Examples of impact outcomes, which will likely sound familiar to *Making Connections* site teams, include the following:

- ▶ A greater percentage of parents and young adults are employed.
- ▶ A greater percentage of parents are employed in jobs that provide a family-supporting wage.
- ▶ A greater percentage of families own their own homes.
- ▶ Families access more services and supports.
- ▶ Families access better quality services and supports.

- A greater percentage of children are prepared to succeed in school.
- A greater percentage of families and youth participate in civic activities.

In order to get to that change—in order to create the substantial, sustainable changes for families described by the examples of impact outcomes above—changes in entities other than individuals and families are often necessary. Nonprofit and government service providers may need to change how they do things. For example, they may need more funding, different processes, additional competencies or new partners. They may need more flexible eligibility requirements, different personnel, changed hours or new methods.

Similarly, change may need to occur at the community level, such as a shift in public opinion. The community's tolerance for certain behaviors may need to decrease. Community beliefs may need to moderate. Common practices may need to evolve. Perhaps, in some cases, the attitude or focus of political decision makers may need to be altered. State or local governments may need to shift their funding priorities, create new regulations or modify existing codes. These changes that occur in systems, organizations, institutions or environments that affect individuals and families are influence and leverage outcomes.

Definition of Influence Outcomes: Changes in community environments, relationships, institutions, organizations or service systems that impact individuals and families, including changes in issue visibility, community norms, partnerships, public will, political will, policies, regulations, service practices or business practices. The following are examples of influence outcomes:

- Health care providers offer more culturally and linguistically appropriate services.
- The sense of "neighborhood identity" increases within the community.
- City government creates a new policy to provide amnesty to individuals whose driver's licenses have been suspended.
- Local government extends hours and increases administrative staff to implement Driver's License Amnesty.
- Religious organizations expand the concept of their ministries to participate in a free tax preparation campaign coalition.
- Unlikely allies, such as grant makers, banks, community activists, the IRS and social service providers, increase their level of collaboration.
- The school environment is more comfortable for parents.

Definition of Leverage Outcomes: Changes in investments (monetary or in kind contributions) by other public or private funders, institutions or organizations that help to create and support impact or influence changes related to your powerful strategies. The following are examples of leverage outcomes:

- The United Way dedicates resources (funds and staff) to EITC application and free income tax assistance effort (a new area of investment for them).
- Commercial redevelopment attracts private investments of nine million dollars.
- A private foundation provides $1.5 million to fund an early childhood education pilot project in the community.
- The county council approves additional funds for public transportation that serves the community.
- The state government increases spending on subsidized child care slots.

The table below provides some additional examples of influence and leverage outcomes related to the impact outcome of increasing family assets.

Outcome Examples: Family Assets

Impact	Influence	Leverage
Families have increased assets.	*Outcome/Results Examples:* Media attention to costs associated with being poor (such as predatory lending or higher car insurance rates) increases. Accessibility of job training services (e.g., location, hours of service, reduced language barriers) increases. Business practices (such as location of bank branches or predatory lending) improve to support increases that affect family assets.	*Outcome/Results Examples:* Public funding dollar amount for affordable housing increases. Foundation funding for Individual Development Savings Accounts (IDAs) for *Making Connections* neighborhood residents increases. In kind contributions (such as computer equipment or volunteer hours for free tax preparation) increase. The dollar amount of health insurance coverage offered by employers increases.

As you think about some of the varied outcomes occurring as a result of different strategies in your community, you have likely realized that *Making Connections* can take complete credit for few, if any, community-level changes. While you can rarely **attribute** community-change outcomes solely to *Making Connections*, you know that *Making Connections* has **contributed** to many changes. As you are defining, identifying and selecting the key influence and leverage outcomes in your community, think about which outcomes are most central to the *Making Connections* theory of change in your community. Focus on the outcomes you set out to achieve and the outcomes that are logically connected to the overall community change you envision. Be sure to reflect your awareness of the many collaborators as you document changes in impact, influence and leverage and communicate your findings to others.

To accomplish this kind of sustainable, scalable change, *Making Connections* teams will require powerful capabilities – their core capacities.

CLARIFYING: HOW DO IMPACT, INFLUENCE AND LEVERAGE OUTCOMES RELATE TO CORE CAPACITIES?

Core capacities are the building blocks that enable powerful strategies to become actualized. They stand for people, processes, supports, models, techniques, structures, plans, frameworks, and so on. They are the inputs needed to enact, bring to scale and sustain powerful changes. Some examples of core capacities include the following:

- collective vision and results framework
- governance structure
- group processes such as governance; decision making; problem solving; conflict resolution; addressing power differentials; and dealing with issues of race, class and culture
- resident leadership and authentic civic demand
- strategic use of data
- effective partnerships among residents, institutions and others
- supports for collaborative learning and accountability to results
- communication plan and structure.

Impact, influence and leverage are the outcomes achieved when core capacities are developed and performing well. For example, consider the influence outcome of changing community norms about tolerating crime in the neighborhood. Certain core capacities are vital to this norm change, such as engaged resident leadership; collective vision for results; effective partnerships among residents, institutions and others; and capacity to communicate core messages, ideas and beliefs. As these building blocks of change are brought into play, neighbors may change their viewpoint about accepting the level of crime and may decide to, in turn, mobilize for action. For instance, flyers for block watch (based on a communication strategy) may be distributed in schools, stores, faith organizations and neighborhoods (effective partnerships among residents, institutions and others) due to the action plan of an engaged neighborhood group (resident leadership). The block watch activity may further mobilize residents to request that law enforcement agencies partner with them in new ways. These changes in behavior, partnerships and law enforcement strategies illustrate influence. They happen because of the strong building blocks represented by the core capacities.

If the changes in the neighborhood organizing and law enforcement strategies lead to a decline in crime in the neighborhood, these core capacities have achieved an impact outcome. If these new strategies are replicated in other neighborhoods throughout the city, these strategies will be brought to scale. The engaged residents remain in place to address other neighborhood issues as well.

In this sense, capacities are part of the continuum for comprehensive community change. They are elements that enable influence, leverage and impact to happen. The line between capacities and influence, leverage and impact can sometimes be blurry. This is particularly true with respect to resident engagement and partnerships. The formation of a resident group is the beginning of capacity. The group's work in developing a collective vision, creating group processes, learning new strategies, and so on represents a change in community behavior which may be seen as influence. The same can be said for partnerships. The work of bringing diverse people and groups to a collective vision of accountability represents a significant change in community norms – an important part of the influence continuum. The process begins with capacity but immediately reflects influence by the very acts of planning, acting, learning and achieving results through the work of the partnership.

The documentation of capacity is inseparable from documenting influence, leverage and impact because they are all part of a continuum. Capacity may best be viewed as the inputs or ingredients that are used in carrying out influence, leverage and impact strategies.

In the following illustration, a Kids Count program employs its capacity to use data strategically to pursue a strategy to influence legislators' support for key issues relating to children's well being. The following section offers guidance on how to choose and name influence and leverage outcomes resulting from the work in your community.

Influence and Leverage Outcomes In Context:

Connecticut Kids in the District

Sample Outcome Statement:
Political leaders increase support for policies that address key issues relating to children's well being.

Connecticut is one of the first states for which the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Population Reference Bureau developed Census data at the legislative district level. These data are being used to produce a series of three fact sheets entitled Kids in the District*, which will inform each state representative and senator of his or her district's demographics, focusing on facts related to: (1) children in poverty, (2) employment and housing, and (3) education.*[1]

The Connecticut Association for Human Services is producing and distributing these fact sheets. While its longer-term goals are to advocate for the passage of specific legislation and create policies that will positively impact individual children and families, the Association has aimed the fact sheets more immediately at creating changes in the awareness and priorities of state legislators. To provide interim information about effectiveness as well as produce useful information to modify the strategy if necessary, the Association could create a documentation system to track changes in legislators' support for policies to address the issues covered in the fact sheets.

[1] Source: Jude Carroll, Director, KIDS COUNT Project, Connecticut Association for Human Services.

SECTION III

IDENTIFYING INFLUENCE AND LEVERAGE OUTCOMES

Purpose of Section: The purpose of this section is to provide guidance that will help you think about all of the different influence and leverage outcomes resulting from the work in your community. Focusing on the outcomes most integral to your strategies or theory of change can help you select which outcomes to study more closely to document the change that occurs.

What You Will Learn:

- How to select influence and leverage outcomes to document based on your community's strategic plan and action agenda (e.g., theory of change, powerful strategies, *"so that"* chains).
- How to name and communicate your influence and leverage outcomes.

SELECTING: HOW TO IDENTIFY KEY INFLUENCE AND LEVERAGE OUTCOMES FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

As you have already realized, *Making Connections* strategies in your community are creating change in many different kinds of influence and leverage outcomes. There may be so many different types of influence and leverage outcomes occurring as a result of the efforts of *Making Connections* partners that you could never imagine documenting change in all of them. However, choosing to document some areas of influence and leverage that are particularly relevant to the work in your community can be a very useful practice.

Be selective, focused and strategic. Consider what influence and leverage outcomes are most critical to the transformation efforts in your community, and choose your priorities for documentation. If your community has developed a theory of change, it can be a useful starting point for selecting influence and leverage outcomes to track more closely. Your list of strategies can also point you toward influence and leverage outcomes particularly important in your community. Making a *"so that"* chain that more explicitly links your strategies with their eventual impact on individuals and families can also be a useful exercise. Again, Local Learning Partners and other evaluators have skills to assist you in selecting outcomes that will be meaningful to the work in your community.

LOOK AT YOUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Your theory of change can help you prioritize which influence and leverage changes you want to document more carefully. A theory of change will often explicitly identify influence or leverage outcomes as interim outcomes–changes that must occur *on the* way to achieving lasting change for individuals and families. For example, when stakeholders in the *Making Connections* effort in Oakland articulated their theory of change, they identified several "levers of change." *Making Connections* Oakland's theory of change describes how broad, lasting change for individuals and families results from strategies that "push" these levers of change. Any strategy intended to push Oakland's "levers of change" will produce changes in influence and leverage outcomes (such as policy change or improved service practice) on the way to producing broad, sustainable positive **impacts** for individuals and families. Measuring some of the influence and leverage changes that are central to *Making Connections* Oakland's theory of change could help that community monitor its progress as it works toward transforming the community. Some key examples of the "levers of change"[2] identified in Oakland's theory of change include:

- Policy Change:
  - Create new policies
  - Change interpretation of policies
- Quality Services:
  - Offer new services
  - Strengthen existing services
  - Better coordinate services
- Partnerships:
  - Establish funding partnerships
  - Establish public-private partnerships
  - Establish partnerships among community-based organizations
- Resources:
  - Increase human resources
  - Increase financial resources
  - Increase program resources
  - Increase information resources

[2] Adapted from "Lower San Antonio Collaborative Planning Committee Retreat, May 7, 2003" notes from a *Making Connections* stakeholder meeting.

Influence and Leverage Outcomes In Context:

Making Connections Denver

Sample Outcome Statement:
Community increases mobilization around key issues

To understand anything else about Making Connections *Denver (MCD), it is important to understand just how serious it is about ensuring that all change efforts be rooted in the community. MCD identifies creating an environment in which communities can "develop their own power" as one of its key roles. "Resident mobilization" is a central driver in MCD's theory of change. A critical mass of empowered community residents, motivated to work together on specific issues, will engage with systems and institutions and create lasting change for individuals and families. MCD is currently engaged in three different data collection efforts that help it gauge the level of community mobilization: 1) an automated diary that tracks community member involvement, 2) a tool to document changes in leadership skills of community members, and 3) a qualitative evaluation of four specific projects that helps capture the emerging definitions of community mobilization and the relationship of community mobilization to other aspects of these projects.*

MCD is also committed to incorporating continual learning into its efforts. As the group assesses the level of community mobilization, it uses the information it collects to examine and refine its definitions of community and community mobilization and to adjust its research, roles and strategies as needed. Assessing the level of community mobilization helps MCD decision-makers create a "window into its theory of change" and better understand how change is occurring in the community. Measuring and examining that outcome also creates a near real-time feedback loop that informs MCD team members how and when they should adjust their role. As community members mobilize and gain power, they engage as the driving partners in a change process involving government and other institutions.

LOOK AT YOUR LIST OF STRATEGIES

As you review your list of *Making Connections*-related strategies, you will realize that many strategies are specifically intended to achieve influence and leverage changes. For example, *Making Connections* Hartford is pursuing several strategies that focus on achieving influence or leverage outcomes. Hartford's influence- and leverage-focused strategies include the following:

- **Influence policy** by working with School Readiness Council to develop a theoretical framework to guide policy development to improve children's health and school readiness.
- **Improve practice** by implementing a prototype for connecting families with children to comprehensive neighborhood-based health and human services to improve children's health and school readiness.
- **Increase local investments** and commitments to improve the employability of youth and young adults so that more adults in *Making Connections* neighborhoods will be employed.

- Develop media advocacy skills to help residents **influence and shape local media messages** so that the city of Hartford is portrayed in a more positive light.[3]

Measuring change in the influence and leverage outcomes that these strategies produce could help the Hartford *Making Connections* community know more about what it is achieving in the short-term as it works toward sustained community change.

Influence and Leverage Outcomes In Context:

The Hartford Community Partnership and the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF)

Sample Outcome Statement:
The Department of Children and Families changes practices to reduce out-of-home placements of at-risk children

In Hartford, Connecticut early Making Connections *work focused on providing technical assistance to help "beef up…organize, link up and motivate" existing change efforts.*[4] *A collection of organizations and individuals now known as the Hartford Community Partnership (HCP) was one of the first groups that worked with* Making Connections. *Noticing that a high concentration of DCF cases occurred in the seven targeted* Making Connections *neighborhoods, the HCP studied the issue and concluded that the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) was separating too many children from their families. Partnership members believed that the DCF was missing opportunities to preserve and strengthen families. The HCP established new collaborations, pushed for regulatory change, created avenues for public feedback regarding child welfare services and provided information systems development to the DCF to help safely reduce out-of-home placement decisions.*

The main focus of the HCP strategy was to reduce the number of out-of-home placements. Tracking that number could be one indicator of change in DCF practices. To gather even more information about how their efforts created change, HCP members could collect data on some of the other aspects of DCF practices targeted by their strategies. In its efforts to decrease out-of-home placements, the Partnership pursued the following changes in DCF practices:

- *Child welfare workers conduct more of their work in the neighborhoods, at the local level.*
- *DCF increases the use of data in decision-making.*
- *Child welfare workers have more discretion to differentiate their responses to serious and minor threats or abuse.*

MAKE A "SO THAT" CHAIN

A theory of change explains how your strategies link to community transformation. A *"so that"* chain (example on page 16) can be a useful exercise to more explicitly show the short-term, intermediate-term and long-term changes that will lead to long-term positive impacts for individuals and families.

[3] From "Hartford *Making Connections* First Quarter Report," March 31, 2004.
[4] "*Making Connections* Connects: Hartford *Making Connections* Initiative Technical Assistance Efforts," Hartford *Making Connections* Local Learning Partnership.

Strategies that achieve influence and leverage outcomes are generally based on the theory that creating change in systems, institutions or environments will achieve sustainable positive impacts for large numbers of individuals and families. Whether the connection is obvious or requires a little more explanation, it is always important to be aware of how your influence and leverage strategies logically lead to the changes you hope to achieve for individuals and families. The example below describes a KIDS COUNT information and media strategy. While there are many strategies that contribute to the long-term change of increased assets, the *"so that"* chain following the example shows how this particular strategy contributes to that change.

Influence and Leverage Outcomes In Context:

Minnesota and Anti-Predatory Lending Legislation

Sample Outcome Statement:
Media coverage of how public funds are being misused in the tax industry increases

Using data from the IRS, the Minnesota KIDS COUNT report, "Keeping What They've Earned: Working Minnesotans and Tax Credits," details how the use of tax preparation services and refund anticipation loans (RALs) is concentrated among low-income families and communities in Minnesota. Maps in the report provide a compelling visual representation of the relationship between where low-income families live and where the tax preparation offices choose to locate. It is estimated that $7.3 million in public funds statewide were diverted in 2001 to major tax franchises and their out-of-state banking partners to pay for these services.
The report was released on January 9, 2003, to coincide with the beginning of tax season and the beginning of the state legislative session. The media strategy was successful in that the press found this story about how public funds were being misused in the tax industry to be very timely. At least five statewide or local newspapers, 66 radio stations, and one television station picked up the story.[5]

Children's Defense Fund Minnesota and its partners then worked to draft and advocate for the passage of legislation requiring all commercial tax preparers that provide RALs to provide a variety of disclosures to individuals seeking a RAL. The wording and font size of the disclosures is mandated by the legislation, which also provides individual taxpayers the ability to hold the tax preparers liable for errors and other misconduct.

One method to clarify the connection between **influence and leverage outcomes** and **impact outcomes** is to use a *"so that"* chain. This *"so that"* chain uses information from the Minnesota KIDS COUNT example above.

[5] Source: Diane Benjamin, KIDS COUNT Director, Children's Defense Fund, Minnesota.

STRATEGY:

Increase media coverage about amount of money low-income families and individuals pay to the tax industry for tax preparation and RALs and how this reduces the net benefit they receive from EITC and other tax credits. *(strategy based on core capacity of strategic use of data and communication plan)*

So That

Public awareness of this issue increases.
[Influence Outcome]

So That

Policy-makers increase their knowledge of and interest in this issue.
[Influence Outcome]

So That

Policies change to require the tax industry to provide specific disclosures to individuals seeking an RAL.
[Influence Outcome]

So That

Tax preparation businesses change their business practices to abide by the new policies.
[Influence Outcome]

So That

Individuals and families have increased ability to make choices to avoid paying interest and fees to the tax industry for services they may not need.
[Impact Outcome]

So That

Low-income individuals and families receive more cash for their EITC and other tax credits or refunds and can use these funds to meet their basic needs, pay off debts or save for the future.
[Impact Outcome]

So That

Families have increased levels of assets.
[Impact Outcome]

You may notice that the first four outcomes in the “so that” chain are influence outcomes statements. The last three outcomes in the chain describe changes for individuals and families. Clearly, CDF Minnesota would not necessarily want to collect data to document change in every one of the influence outcomes in the chain. This is especially true when you consider the press campaign and legislative strategies focused on RALs and tax preparation fees are just two of the many strategies the organization is pursuing. However, if media campaigns are a type of strategy that CDF Minnesota often uses, it may indeed be useful to document how its press strategies impact media coverage. Alternatively, if raising the awareness of legislators about some specific issues relating to low-income families and children is a primary focus of CDF Minnesota, perhaps they would choose to engage in some documentation of change in that influence outcome.

NAMING: BROAD OUTCOME AREAS AND SAMPLE OUTCOME STATEMENTS

To help you think about and give names to influence and leverage outcomes for your community, the table on the following pages contains several broad outcome areas with sample outcome statements.

Influence and Leverage: Outcome Areas and Sample Outcome Statements

Broad Outcome Areas	Sample Outcome Statements
INFLUENCE OUTCOMES	
Changes in visibility of issue	Local media accurately cover the message(s) of the media campaign. Media increase accuracy and completeness in coverage of issue. Public or community raises issue to a higher priority.
Changes in community norms	Community decreases tolerance for certain behaviors or attitudes. Community increases belief in its own power to create change. Community increases acceptance of culturally diverse community members.

Broad Outcome Areas	Sample Outcome Statements
INFLUENCE OUTCOMES	
Changes in partnerships	Partnerships become more strategic. Strategic partners deepen their collaborative relationships. Strategic partners jointly implement actions toward agreed-upon goals. Partners improve group functioning Partnership increases ability to articulate a shared purpose. Partnership shares a plan of action. Partnership improves articulation of roles and responsibilities within the group. Partners increase formal interagency agreements and/or other collaborative protocols. Partners increase referrals to one another. Partners increase sharing of resources. Partners increase seamless presentation to consumers. Partners increase sharing of data.
Change in public will	Community is motivated to take action on an issue. Community (e.g., neighborhood, city) has decreased tolerance for a specific problem or condition. Community increases shared definition of specific problem or condition. People increase their willingness to demonstrate around an issue. Community members place a higher priority on a specific issue. Consumers of public services increase demand for improved services. Community members change attitudes and/or beliefs toward an issue. Community members increase their sense of community. Community members increase their awareness of an issue in the community.

Broad Outcome Areas	Sample Outcome Statements
INFLUENCE OUTCOMES	
Change in political will	Political leaders and/or public administrators increase awareness of issue. Political leaders and/or public administrators increase willingness to take action on issues. Legislators co-sponsor bills that support community priorities
Change in policies	Specific policy changes. Increase in policy statements that support community goal. Policymakers adopt common language in policies and regulations. Policymakers write legislation that reflects community priorities. Policymakers adopt new legislation that reflects community priorities. Policymakers maintain legislation that supports community priorities. Policymakers implement legislation that reflects community priorities. Policymakers fund legislation that reflects community priorities.
Change in regulations	Specific regulations change. Increase in regulations that support a specific community goal.
Changes in service practice(s)	Service providers increase cultural competence. All staff that directly interacts with service consumers increases their knowledge of the cultural background and experiences of their consumer populations. Service providers increase their linguistic competence. Service providers change the hours of service delivery to better match the availability of consumers. Service providers change the locations of service delivery to better match the locations of consumers.

Broad Outcome Areas	Sample Outcome Statements
INFLUENCE OUTCOMES	
Change in business practice(s)	Key services (e.g., grocery store, drug store, bank) are newly available in community. Businesses/service employees in community improve day to day interactions with diverse clientele. Businesses change practices (e.g., hours, advertising, product selection) to meet community desires. Businesses change their recruiting practices to create a more diverse pool of qualified applicants.
LEVERAGE OUTCOMES	
Changes in public funds	New money targeted toward program priorities. More money allocated/re-distributed toward program priorities New arrangements (e.g., pooled, matched, blended) in funding increase availability of funding for community priorities. Public funding practices (e.g., RFP process, reporting) change to increase availability of funds for community priorities. Public agencies provide detailed or loaned staff for work on a particular program or strategy.
Changes in philanthropy	Increased funding available for community priorities. New arrangements (e.g., pooled, matched, blended) in funding increase availability of funding for community priorities. Foundation funding practices (e.g., RFP process, reporting) change to increase availability of funds for community priorities. Foundations make new types of funding available (e.g., PRI) Foundations previously uninvolved in community begin to provide funding in community. Funders pool resources dedicated to a priority area.
Changes in resources available to the community	New physical resources (e.g., computer rooms, meeting rooms) are available to the community. New transportation resources (e.g., buses, taxis) are available to the community. New service resources (e.g., copying, printing, delivery) are available to the community.
Changes in private investment	Investments in commercial development increase. Private investments in housing development increase.

Most likely you have already begun to identify influence and leverage outcomes that are part of the current work in your community. This framework may provide you with new or additional ways to strategize and purposefully achieve these types of outcomes to support lasting community change. The following section will help you as you think about the many different documentation approaches available for tracking changes in some of the influence and leverage outcomes that are particularly relevant to the work in your community.

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SECTION IV

DOCUMENTING INFLUENCE AND LEVERAGE IN YOUR COMMUNITY — METHODS AND TOOLS

Purpose of Section: This section identifies and provides specific examples of data collection options for a number of influence and leverage outcomes.

What You Will Learn:

- Factors to consider when planning data collection.
- How to coordinate data collection with existing efforts.
- How to apply various data collection techniques to relevant influence and leverage outcomes.
- Specific data collection tools that can be modified and updated to document your community changes.

Data collection is always a balancing act between collecting data that are comprehensive enough to serve your needs and finding processes and scopes that are reasonable to implement. This section provides specific ideas about data collection methods and tools for some influence and leverage outcomes that *Making Connections* communities will likely find relevant:

❶ Changes in Public Will

❷ Changes in Visibility

❸ Changes in Partnerships

❹ Changes in Funding and Resources

❺ Changes in Policy and Regulation

❻ Changes in Service Practice

Each outcome area will have a menu of possible data collection options. Icons in the left margin of this section will assist in identifying these options. Data collection tools will include the following:

 **Surveys**

 **Logs**

 **Observations**

 **Content Analysis**

 **Interviews**

 **Document Reviews**

 **Focus Groups**

CLARIFYING: CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PLANNING DATA COLLECTION

As you determine the tools and data collection methods for your influence and leverage outcomes, keep a few things in mind:

- Which outcomes are most important to capture information on for purposes of making decisions, refining strategies or communicating results?
- What data are already being collected that could provide insight into these outcomes (e.g., LLPs' or diarists' work, process documentation plan, cross-site survey, etc.)?
- What is the timeframe for capturing this information? Does it need to be real time or near-real time? Is an annual survey or check-in appropriate?
- Who is the audience? The intended audience can help you determine the most appropriate method.
- Which questions, methods and outcome indicators are most culturally appropriate? Think about translation of materials, the importance of establishing trust and whether methods are culturally sensitive.
- Who is in the best position to collect the data?

Remember—you cannot and do not want to measure everything. Be strategic and focused.

<u>EXPLORING</u>: COORDINATING DATA COLLECTION WITH OTHER EVALUATION AND REPORTING PROCESSES

Before developing any kind of data collection plan, you should consider what data are already collected and available. Your Local Learning Partners should be among the first people you contact as you identify which currently available data shed light on the influence and leverage outcomes you have chosen to measure.

Depending on the role and development of process documentation in your *Making Connections* effort, data collected as part of process documentation can be an incredibly rich source of information on changes in influence and leverage.

Re-examine the data you collect for your results reporting—perhaps some of the data are relevant to your influence and leverage outcomes. Your Communications team members are probably already collecting newspaper clippings and related stories. The Cross-Site Survey, diarists, process evaluators and feasibility studies are all potential sources of data related to the influence and leverage outcomes that are important in your site.

Finally, your governmental and nonprofit partners may collect data that are helpful—ask them about the data collection they do for their funders, annual reports, annual children's or human services budgets, or communication efforts.

As you explore all the existing data collection efforts, you may get lucky and find data source(s) that exactly meets your needs. More likely, you will learn more about the outcomes you have chosen and identify existing data collection efforts that could be modified to produce data on your influence and leverage outcomes. Again, your LLP can be a useful resource for finding, examining and modifying existing data collection methods to meet the needs of measuring changes in influence and leverage. Many of the data collection method examples on the following pages could be modified to be incorporated into existing data collection processes. Examples of existing processes that could be modified include the following:

- If you are already keeping track of meeting minutes, tweak the outline for collecting that information to capture information that is pertinent to measuring your influence outcome.
- If you already use a standard feedback form at community events, add some questions that will help you gauge progress on your identified influence outcomes.
- Ask a staff person or stakeholder who is present at an activity to formally observe it. Provide them with a form and/or questions specifically related to your influence or leverage outcomes.

For some outcomes you will find that you need to create new data collection processes to get the information you need to monitor change. Once again, Local Learning Partners often have extensive experience developing and executing data collection plans. Use them and the following examples as resources to develop data collection processes that fit your outcomes, timeframe, audience and community.

CHANGES IN PUBLIC WILL

Changes in public will include many types of changes within the community. Examples of these public will outcomes could include the following:

- Community members have ***decreased tolerance*** for [issue] (e.g., racist comments, neighborhood crime, sales of pornography in the community)
- Community members ***change attitudes and beliefs*** toward [issue] (e.g., savings, spending, becoming involved in children's school)
- Community members have an ***increased sense of community*** (e.g., sense of responsibility for improving the neighborhood, willingness to get involved)
- Community members have an ***increased belief in the importance*** of [issue] (e.g., addressing violence, voting, socializing with neighbors)
- Community members have ***increased awareness*** of [issue] within the community (e.g., predatory lending practices, importance of early learning).

Public will is the kind of outcome that often requires determining how people feel and think about particular issues at an individual level, so data collection methods typically include surveys, focus groups or interview questions.

OUTCOME: **COMMUNITY MEMBERS *DECREASE TOLERANCE* FOR PORNOGRAPHY OUTLETS IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD**

For two consecutive years, youth researchers in White Center/Seattle identified the existence of pornography stores in the downtown corridor of White Center as a problem. If the youth researchers or other residents were to choose to take action to reduce the number of pornography outlets in their neighborhood, they may start their community change process by working to change people's attitudes or beliefs about these businesses. Decreasing tolerance for an existing condition, such as a prevalence of pornography stores, could be measured in several ways.

METHOD OPTION #1: SURVEYS

One way to measure tolerance is to gauge peoples' attitudes and beliefs toward an issue. Here are some sample survey questions:

Tolerance Scale

It is important for us to learn about the individual viewpoints and perspectives toward the sale of pornography in our community. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements by selecting *strongly disagree, disagree*, *neutral, agree* or *strongly agree*.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼
1. Stores selling pornography are a serious problem in the community	1	2	3	4	5
2. It is never OK to sell pornography in this neighborhood.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Selling pornography is OK as long as it does not occur before 7 p.m.	1	2	3	4	5
4. It is OK to sell pornography as long as the merchants don't allow minors to enter the premises or purchase materials.	1	2	3	4	5
5. It is always OK to sell pornography because it brings money into the neighborhood.	1	2	3	4	5

Source: Adapted from Partnership Development Survey, Reisman, J. & Mockler, R., "A Field Guide to Outcome-Based Program Evaluation," Version 3.0, The Evaluation Forum, Seattle, WA, November 1994.

Making Connections Des Moines' LLP had student interviewers roving at a community picnic with "quick surveys." These surveys allowed the community to get some quick, real-time feedback on specific issues.

METHOD OPTION #2: LOGS

Another method for determining *decreased tolerance* for a situation or issue is to document the number of people who become engaged in opposing an issue, whether they attend meetings, participate in demonstrations or write letters to the editor. Here are a few examples:

- Counts of participants to see if more people are willing to spend their time or energy around a specific issue over time.
- Number of signatures gathered on a petition.
- Number of letters to the editor around a specific targeted issue.

Making Connections Denver (MCD) has an "automated diary" on-line into which community organizers enter information on all meetings with five or more people in attendance. The system captures who was there, what the meeting was about, and the date. With this database, MCD can see how long individuals have been involved, the number of meetings they attend per year and if they continue involvement over time. MCD has determined that individuals are "involved" if they attend at least four meetings per year. The MCD diary system has the ability to generate mailing labels as well as useful reports to promote and reward use of the system.

METHOD OPTION #3: OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

If *decreasing tolerance* is an important area for you to look at, you should create periodic opportunities for interviewing people and/or observing their interactions in a more open-ended way. These qualitative methods can help shed light on emerging patterns or trends, which can help you create new outcomes or indicators, re-define or clarify existing outcomes, and fine-tune questions and tools.

Someone (e.g., a *Making Connections* site team member, the site's diarist or process documenter, or the LLP) could interview community members or key informants on this issue. Sample questions could include the following:

- ? *How do you feel about [issue] (e.g., the pornography stores on Main Street)?*
- ? *What impact do you feel these pornography stores have on the community?*
- ? *Have you always felt this way? What changed or could change your opinion?*
- ? *Should the community address this issue?*
- ? *Why or why not?*

OUTCOME: **COMMUNITY MEMBERS <u>CHANGE BELIEFS</u> ABOUT PERSONAL SAVINGS**

One outcome used by most sites that do EITC campaigns is to increase families' financial assets through personal savings. For that outcome to occur, people may need to change their beliefs about savings and savings institutions. Questions that could be used to determine beliefs in these areas follow.

METHOD OPTION #1: FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups are facilitated discussions with a small group that allow you to see an issue from community members' perspectives. Focus groups can help explain how people regard an experience, idea or event. Since focus groups stress commonality over diversity, it is best to compose a focus group (or multiple groups) of people who are similar.

Beliefs about Savings Focus Group Guide

Welcome. My name is ________________. Assisting me will be ____________________.

Our discussion will help us understand what you believe about banks and how you feel about personal savings.

There are no wrong answers—only different points-of-view. Feel free to say what you think, even if it differs from what was already said. We are here to listen and learn from you.

We will be recording our discussions to be sure we do not miss any comments. No names will be attached to any reports. We will be on a first name basis and will start by going around the table to get to know each other (in some cases, know each other better).

First, we'll talk a bit about banks:

1. Are there banks in your community? PROBE: What do you like about these banks? What don't you like about these banks?
2. Where do you currently do your banking (e.g., check-cashing, loans, savings)?
3. Why do you choose to do your banking there? PROBE: What do you like about it the most? What do you like about it the least?

Now we'll talk a bit about personal savings:

4. What does "saving money" mean to you?
5. What do you do with the money you save?
6. Do you currently save money every month?
7. If you saved money, what would you save for?
8. Have you tried to save money before?
9. How important do you think it is to save money?
10. How easy do you feel it is for you to save money?
11. What would have to happen for you to be able to save money?

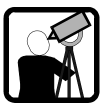
METHOD OPTION #2: INTERVIEWS

Someone (e.g., a *Making Connections* site team member, the site's diarist or process documenter, or the LLP) could interview community members on a one-on-one basis. Sample questions could be similar to those shown above which explore an individual's banking and savings habits. Because this is a highly sensitive and personal topic, an individualized method may work well for this issue.

OUTCOME: **COMMUNITY MEMBERS HAVE AN INCREASED SENSE OF COMMUNITY**

Developing social networks is an important component of *Making Connections*. Changing public can depend on community members having a sense of community.

The cross-site survey collects information on social networks in the "Neighborhood Connections" section. However, these data are not collected annually. Interim information on community members' sense of community may be valuable to *Making Connections* communities. Or, if a *Making Connections* community is implementing a specific strategy addressing sense of community for one segment of the community (e.g., in a public housing unit), it may be valuable to collect this information more regularly.



METHOD OPTION #1: OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

If increasing a sense of community is an important area for you to look at, you should create periodic opportunities for interviewing people and/or observing their interactions in a more open-ended way.

- ? *What do you consider your "community"?*
- ? *How do you feel about living in your community?*
- ? *How do you feel about other people in your community?*
- ? *Do you feel like you are a part of your community? Why or why not?*

You could also track increases in sense of community through the following methods:

- ▶ Count the number of community events, such as parades, festivals and community meetings.
- ▶ Count how many people participate in these events.

METHOD OPTION #2: SURVEYS

The sample survey below uses questions from the *Making Connections* Cross-Site Questionnaire, which asks questions to determine individuals' feelings about "community." While this is done periodically, you could use these questions on a more regular basis to determine change.

Many of the questions will be about your neighborhood. By neighborhood, I mean the area around where you live and around your house. It may include places where you shop, religious or public institutions, or a local business district. It is the general area around your house where you might perform routine tasks, such as shopping, going to the park, or visiting with neighbors. Please take a look at this map of the area. Study it for a moment and use this pencil to draw the boundaries of what you consider to be your neighborhood.

SHOW RESPONDENT MAP. ASK RESPONDENT TO DRAW THE BOUNDARIES OF THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD

1.0 What is the name of your neighborhood?

NEIGHBORHOOD DOES NOT HAVE A NAME 1
DON'T KNOW...DK
REFUSED..REF

1.2 How long have you lived in this neighborhood? _____ YEARS _____ MONTHS

DON'T KNOW...DK
REFUSED..REF

1.3 Do you think this neighborhood is a good place to raise children?

Yes 1
No...2
DON'T KNOW...DK
REFUSED..REF

1.4 What's the best thing about this neighborhood as a place to live?

____

____

DON'T KNOW...DK
REFUSED..REF

1.5 What's the worst thing about this neighborhood as a place to live?

____

____

DON'T KNOW...DK
REFUSED..REF

For each statement, tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree.

1.6a I live in a close-knit neighborhood.

1.6b People in my neighborhood are willing to help their neighbors.

1.6c People in my neighborhood generally don't get along with each other.

1.6d People in my neighborhood do not share the same values.

1.6e People in my neighborhood can be trusted.

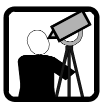
1.7 How does the future look for this neighborhood? Is this neighborhood likely to:

Get better 3
Stay the same...2
Get worse 1
DON'T KNOW...DK
REFUSED..REF

Source: (Cross-Site Survey)

OUTCOME: COMMUNITY MEMBERS INCREASE BELIEF ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF ADDRESSING GUNS, STREET VIOLENCE AND GANGS

To change public will, *Making Connections* communities may have to prioritize specific issues. It can be useful prior to and during the process to learn how community members prioritize specific issues and how they believe other key stakeholders prioritize or address issues.



METHOD OPTION #1: OBSERVATIONS

When an issue is a higher priority to community members, you can expect to see more activity in that area. For example, a simple observation checklist can help you capture how often an issue is on a meeting agenda, whether it was discussed, what the main content was, the length, and the perception of "seriousness."

Observation Checklist
For Meetings (Community, City Council, etc.)

Date: ____________________________ Length of meeting: __________________________

Setting: ___________________________ Attendees: __________________________________

What were the main issues discussed during this meeting (e.g., academic achievement, drug/alcohol issues, sexual harassment, etc.)?

____

2. Were guns, street violence and/or gangs on the agenda? ❑ YES ❑ NO
3. Were guns, street violence and/or gangs discussed? ❑ YES ❑ NO

*(If answered "**yes**" for question 3, please continue; if answered "**no**" for question 3, please skip to question 8.)*

4. What was the main content of the guns, street violence and/or gangs discussion?

____

5. Was agreement reached in this discussion? ❑ YES ❑ NO
   What was the length of the discussion? _____________________
6. Would you say that the problem(s) of guns, street violence and/or gangs were taken seriously by the attendees? ❑ YES ❑ NO
   Please explain: ____
7. Was there any action planned related to guns, street violence and/or gangs? ❑ YES ❑ NO
   Please explain: ____

Additional notes or comments:

____

____

____

METHOD OPTION #2: SURVEYS

These survey questions determine community members' beliefs about how community groups prioritize an issue and where they believe responsibility lies for addressing an issue.

How much do you think each of these groups of people is ACTIVELY working to address guns, street violence and gangs in your school and/or community?

⇒ School staff (teachers, counselors, principals, other school staff)

	❑ Not at all	❑ A little	❑ A lot

⇒ Police/Sheriff departments

	❑ Not at all	❑ A little	❑ A lot

⇒ Family member(s)

	❑ Not at all	❑ A little	❑ A lot

⇒ Neighbors/Other families you know

	❑ Not at all	❑ A little	❑ A lot

⇒ Teenagers

	❑ Not at all	❑ A little	❑ A lot

⇒ Social service/community agencies (e.g., YWCA, community centers, etc.)

	❑ Not at all	❑ A little	❑ A lot

⇒ Youth organizations/groups

	❑ Not at all	❑ A little	❑ A lot

⇒ Religious organizations

	❑ Not at all	❑ A little	❑ A lot

⇒ Community leaders/politicians

	❑ Not at all	❑ A little	❑ A lot

⇒ Other (please specify)__________________________

	❑ Not at all	❑ A little	❑ A lot

Whose responsibility do you think it is to address guns, street violence and gangs in your school and/or community?

____

____

____

METHOD OPTION #3: SURVEYS

These survey questions elicit data on how community members perceive how others in the community prioritize issues in comparison to how they personally prioritize issues.

How seriously do you think your COMMUNITY treats each of the following problems?

1	2	3	4	5
Not Very Seriously				**Very Seriously**

CHOOSE A NUMBER FROM THE SCALE ABOVE THAT SHOWS HOW SERIOUSLY YOU THINK YOUR COMMUNITY TREATS EACH PROBLEM, AND WRITE THE NUMBER (1-5) IN THE SPACE BESIDE EACH PROBLEM.

___Drug and alcohol abuse
___Guns, street violence and gangs
___Domestic violence
___Child abuse
___Teen pregnancy
___Teen smoking
___Sexual assault
___Sexual harassment

How seriously do YOU treat each of the following problems?

1	2	3	4	5
Not Very Seriously				**Very Seriously**

CHOOSE A NUMBER FROM THE SCALE ABOVE THAT SHOWS HOW SERIOUSLY YOU TREAT EACH PROBLEM, AND WRITE THE NUMBER (1-5) IN THE SPACE BESIDE EACH PROBLEM.

___Drug and alcohol abuse
___Guns, street violence and gangs
___Domestic violence
___Child abuse
___Teen pregnancy
___Teen smoking
___Sexual assault
___Sexual harassment

OUTCOME: **COMMUNITY MEMBERS HAVE INCREASED AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY LEARNING**

Making Connections Indianapolis is working with the Mayor's Office, United Way, and neighborhood and industry leaders to develop and implement an early childhood education initiative, one of the Mayor's priorities for his second term. The aim is to ensure that all children enter school ready to learn. The citywide effort will expand early care and education opportunities and improve health care for young children to increase children's chance of school success. MC Indianapolis will also focus on building the capacity of parents and other family members to be their child's "first teacher." A key component for both of these strategies to work is to educate the broader community on the importance of early learning so community members will value and take advantage of these new opportunities.

METHOD OPTION #1: FOCUS GROUPS

Here is a sample focus group protocol related to child care.

Parent Focus Group Guide

Welcome. My name is ___________________. Assisting me will be ___________________.

Our discussion will help us understand what is important to you and your families in a child care program as well as ways to be supportive of the parents and families involved in our child care program.

There are no wrong answers—only different points-of-view. Feel free to say what you think, even if it differs from what was already said. We are here to listen and learn from you. After conducting several different focus group discussions with parents, staff and other stakeholders (as well as a survey), we will review what we learned and begin to problem-solve and develop action plans based on what we learn. Parents, staff and other stakeholders will be involved in every step along the way.

We will be recording our discussions to be sure that we do not miss any comments. No names will be attached to any reports. We will be on a first name basis and will start by going around the table to get to know each other (in some cases, know each other better). Tell us your name and the names and ages of your children in a child care program.

1. How does your child (children) feel about the child care program? ***PROBES***: What does he/she (they) like the most? What does he/she (they) like the least?
2. What do you want most from a child care program?
   a. On a paper in front of you, write down the three most important things you want out of a child care program. [***Pause for a minute while they write. When finished, then say]*** Let's go around the table and share what you've written down. [***Moderator writes responses on the flip chart. Put tick marks next to items mentioned more than once. When list is finished, then ask***]
   b. Is there anything missing from this list that you want to add?
3. Now, if you were to pick one of these as the most important, which one would it be? Let's go around the table. [***Place a check mark on the flip chart next to those factors mentioned***]
4. Let's talk about the top three items on this list. [***Moderator circles the three items which receive the highest number of checks. For each item, ask***]
   c. What do you mean by ?

We've been talking a lot about the factors that are very important to parents in a child care program. Now we want to learn more about family involvement in the child care programs and how the child care programs can be most supportive to you and your family.

5. First, let's discuss early learning in the child care programs.
   a. To what extent do you think learning should be involved in child care programs?
   b. In what ways can providers support early learning in the child care program?
   c. What gets in the way of early learning in the child care program?
6. Now let's turn to how the program can best be supportive of early learning.
   a. What kinds of things are most important for preparing children for school?
   b. How does your family achieve that?
   c. Are there any ways the child care program can add to that?
   d. For those of you whose child care program is situated in a school, how do you see the partnership between your school and child care program working?
   e. Do you see any ways the child care program could help you and your family better connect with other programs?
   f. How about ways in which the child care program could help you and your family better connect with community services that relate to early learning?
7. Our discussion today will help us understand what is important to you and your families in a child care program as well as ways to support parents and families involved in our child care program. Have we missed anything?


METHOD OPTION #2: OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

If increasing awareness is an important area for you to look at, you should create periodic opportunities for interviewing people and/or observing their interactions in a more open-ended way.

Sample questions could include the following:

- ? *What can parents do to help their children get ready for school?*
- ? *What can schools do to become ready for children?*

CHANGES IN VISIBILITY

Another influence outcome could be increased visibility of an issue which can be an important stepping stone to achieving other outcomes such as changing public will, changing policies, or even changing funding.

Examples of visibility outcomes could include the following:

- ▶ Local media increase attention given to an issue (e.g., predatory lending practices, importance of early childhood education).
- ▶ Local media accurately cover the message(s) of a media campaign.

OUTCOME: **LOCAL MEDIA INCREASES ATTENTION GIVEN TO AN ISSUE**

METHOD OPTION #1: CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis is the systematic approach to analyzing themes in audio, visual or print communication. Selected material is reviewed and assessed along the lines of predetermined criteria, such as number of references, reflection of key messages, accuracy and perspective. Here are some guidelines for how content can be performed for this outcome:

1. Identify the main messages of the campaign:

   a. Money is being diverted from the pockets of low-income families and communities as they pay fees for simple tax preparation and high interest rates for RALs.

   b. $7.3 million in public funds were diverted from the pockets of families and individuals to major tax franchises and their out-of-state banking partners to pay for these services.

2. Time Period: focus on articles related to the topic leading up to and during tax season, such as the period from January 1st to April 15th.

3. Selected Material: all articles in the local newspaper that address tax return preparation and/or the tax industry.

4. Tracking: track type, date, location of reference (i.e., name of newspaper, radio station), reach of reference (e.g., number of subscribers, targeted audience), prominence (e.g., size of coverage, placement of coverage), perspective (pro/con/neutral), reference to *Making Connections* work, and factuality of information.

5. Analysis: how many articles mention tax preparation and/or EITC? How many articles mention the main messages of the campaign? Is the information about EITC, RALs, tax preparation fees and the tax industry factually correct?

CHANGES IN PARTNERSHIPS

Making Connections is about organizations and institutions working together as partners to transform neighborhoods. The relationships between and among partners as well as the characteristics, functioning and levels of collaboration demonstrated by partners can impact how community transformation happens and whether or not it is sustained. By observing the characteristics, functioning and quality of partnerships, communities can document how partnerships "grease the wheels" of and champion the *Making Connections* action agenda and therefore play a major role in achieving *Making Connections* results.

Some examples of partnership outcomes could include:

1. Partnerships ***become more strategic****.*
2. Strategic partners ***deepen their collaborative relationships***.

OUTCOME: **PARTNERSHIPS <u>BECOME MORE STRATEGIC</u>**

Partnerships can be monitored over time to see which organizations are "at the table" and how these partners interact strategically to move the *Making Connections* agenda forward. The following questions help assess the strategic quality of partnerships:

Is there involvement from key groups, organizations or institutions that can bring resources, expertise, visibility, credibility or other support to the *Making Connections* work? For example, certain nonprofits might bring expertise regarding serving particular populations of children and their families, a school partner might bring resources and access to families and children, and certain business partners might bring visibility.

- Have new kinds of partners been added to existing collaborations or have unexpected alliances developed among organizations in support of the *Making Connections* agenda? For example, the Des Moines Chamber of Commerce has adopted *Making Connections*' strategic vision and will engage as a partner offering resources, visibility and extended credibility for achieving results.
- Is there a sufficient diversity of voices in the partnership? For example, the Seattle King County *Making Connections* group works in a community where many immigrants and refugees reside. To be viewed as credible and representative of the community's perspective, community partnerships must include representation from groups and organizations that reflect the array of cultural and linguistic backgrounds of people living in the community.
- Is the partnership accomplishing more together than could be accomplished if the partnership did not exist?

METHOD OPTION #1: LOGS

The White Center Community School Coalition wanted to offer family support services on-site in their new school facility. They made a list of all the possible strategic partners who might bring resources, expertise, visibility, credibility or other support to that effort. The list included WIC and TANF agencies, housing organizations, ESL providers, organizations that offered support services to refugees and immigrants, and organizations that could provide translation services. The Coalition noted how each partner could be connected to the effort and how they were connected (e.g., attend Coalition meetings, accept referrals of school families, be on call to provide services) and detailed what types of working agreements were in place with each partner (e.g., referral system agreements, use of building space to deliver services, use of a common intake form, etc.).

To collect similar information, the following log could be used:

Partner name	____________________________________
Date joined partnership	____________________________________
Strategic area(s) partner can bring to partnership *(Check all that apply)*	❑ Resources ❑ Expertise ❑ Ideas ❑ Visibility ❑ Credibility ❑ Support ❑ Other: ________________________
Current connection to partnership	❑ Attends meetings ❑ Accepts referrals ❑ Provides direct services ❑ Provides resources ❑ Provides consultation ❑ Other: ________________________
Possible/ideal connection to partnership	Describe:
Existing working agreements	Describe:
Notes	

METHOD OPTION #2: INTERVIEWS

Someone (e.g., a *Making Connections* site team member, the site's diarist or process documenter, or the LLP) could conduct key informant interviews at different times to observe changes. Questions may include the following:

- ? *How does the partnership resemble or differ from other kinds of collaborative efforts in the community? How does it differ from past collaborative efforts in the community?*
- ? *Does the partnership reflect the make-up of the community?*
- ? *Are there any groups you feel should be included in the partnership who are not currently involved?*
- ? *Which representatives from government, business, nonprofit and grant making sectors are present?*
- ? *What do partners contribute in terms of resources, expertise, visibility, credibility or other support?*

- ? *What has the partnership accomplished?*
- ? *Could these accomplishments have been achieved if the partnership did not exist?*

OUTCOME: **STRATEGIC PARTNERS DEEPEN THEIR COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS**

Partnerships can be observed and monitored over time to determine the ways in which collaboration among partners is deepening. Much of the research on collaboration bases assessment of the degree of collaboration on elements such as vision and relationships; structure, responsibilities and communication; authority and accountability; and resources. However, since partnerships operate on different levels—depending on the purpose, goals and degree of integration—evidence of collaboration can be viewed through different lenses. The following are examples of ways to view changes in the nature and depth of collaboration:

- **Aspects of group functioning** (e.g., good participation at meetings, shared power among group members, clear and respectful communication among partners, ability to make decisions well, ability to resolve conflicts openly)
- **Articulation of a shared vision, values and purpose** (e.g., group has identified common values and strategic goals, group has an agreed-upon theory of change)
- **Existence of a shared plan of action** (e.g., group has an agreed-upon timetable, process, budget and revenue-generating strategy for carrying out its work)
- **Articulation of agreed-upon roles and responsibilities** by which partners carry out the shared plan of action
- **Implementation of action toward agreed-upon goals** (e.g., group making progress toward agreed-upon goals, creating relevant products)
- **Level of collaboration** (e.g., partners are sharing information, coordinating services or integrating systems).

Deepening collaborative relationships can mean many different things, depending on the group. This section provides a number of tools that can help measure different aspects or dimensions of this outcome.

METHOD OPTION #1: SURVEYS

This collaboration survey asks a variety of questions to canvass members of a collaboration about group functioning, roles and responsibilities.

Sample Collaboration Scales

Now we would like to know more about the ways in which *Making Connections* works together on matters of common interest. Please tell me the extent to which you agree with the following statements by indicating that you strongly disagree, disagree, are neutral, agree or strongly agree.

	Strongly Disagree ▼	Disagree ▼	Neutral ▼	Agree ▼	Strongly Agree ▼
1. We work on tasks together.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
2. The community is included in the work we do with *Making Connections*.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
3. My organization supports *Making Connections*' efforts.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
4. We work together toward realistic goals.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
5. We respect each other's differences.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
6. I feel satisfied with the norms and dynamics of the group.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
7. Everyone is involved in discussions, not just a few.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
8. My organization has a clear understanding of our roles and responsibilities in our work with *Making Connections*.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
9. Power is shared equally among members.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
10. All races and ethnicities are made to feel welcome in the work we do together.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
11. *Making Connections* supports my organization's efforts.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
12. My organization can count on *Making Connections* to do what it says it will do.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
13. *Making Connections* appreciates my organization's agenda.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
14. My organization is committed to working with *Making Connections* to improve the community.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
15. My organization is committed to working with *Making Connections* to improve the lives of children and families.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
16. Members of the group demonstrate willingness to commit time.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
17. Members of the group demonstrate willingness to commit resources.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Source: Adapted from Partnership Development Survey, Reisman, J. & Mockler, R., "A Field Guide to Outcome-Based Program Evaluation," Version 3.0, The Evaluation Forum, Seattle, WA, November 1994.

METHOD OPTION #2: INTERVIEWS OR FOCUS GROUPS

Through a qualitative data collection process, members of a partnership could be interviewed to assess changes in group functioning. Questions might cover partnership members' views on the following:

- Give an example of when the group functioned at its best.
- What are the key components that made this a good example of the group working together?
- How can these key components be enhanced?
- What are the strengths of the group?
- How can the group build on and enhance these strengths?

METHOD OPTION #3: CONTENT ANALYSIS

Someone (a site team member, process documenter or someone from the LLP) can analyze meeting minutes over time. Was consensus reached more often? Did most partners contribute equally? Was conversation respectful? How were conflicts resolved? Is there evidence of a shared purpose and shared goals? Is there evidence of a clear plan of action (e.g., timetable, processes, budget)? Is there tracking of progress toward achieving agreed-upon goals? Is there evidence that partners are carrying out their responsibilities?

METHOD OPTION #4: LOGS

Quarterly updates from partners can help regularly capture information about how relationships between partners change over time, with whom they collaborate, and at what levels they are collaborating.

Levels of partnerships can be defined as "cooperation," "coordination," and "collaboration." Based on a synthesis of research on what makes collaboration work, these terms are defined as follows:

- **Cooperation:** informal relationships. These often involve information sharing and networking but not formalized agreements. For example, relevant stakeholder groups receive quarterly newsletters updating them on what is happening within the local *Making Connections* community.
- **Coordination:** formal relationships. This is often characterized as interaction related to one specific project or task and established communication and coordination, but not shared authority. For example, organizations serve on a Task Force related to a specific local issue, contribute their individual resources toward a common goal and support each others' efforts.

- **Collaboration:** separate organizations are brought together under a new structure. The highest level involves the "creation of new methods, the shaping of new conditions, and cooperative efforts to bring about desirable change. Generally, new missions and goals are created, leadership is dispersed, accountability shared, and resources may be pooled or jointly secured…." For example, groups with similar goals and/or missions pool resources to fund early education initiatives.[6]

Collaborative System Development Tracking Log

Quarter:

Your Name & Organization:

List each system development collaboration (e.g., meeting, activity or event, forum, work session or community event) involving system partners that occurred during this quarter). Please indicate the intended results, level of collaboration, and any significant facilitators for or barriers to achieving the intended results of this collaboration. Please provide relevant documents (e.g., meeting agendas, minutes, presentations or products).

Name or Type of Collaboration, Activity or Event and Date	Describe or List Organizations, Groups or Individuals Represented	Level of Collaboration* 1 = Share information or network 2 = Coordinate or extend existing activities 3 = Create or conduct new activities	Intended or Achieved Results of Collaboration (e.g., anticipated outputs or outcomes). Label each as "I" (Intended) or "A" (Achieved)	Barriers or Facilitators: Describe any significant factors that act as barriers (B) or facilitators (F) to this collaboration

* All levels are important. List the level that best characterizes the purpose of this event.

[6] Adapted from the works of Martin Blank, Sharon Kagan, Atelia Melaville, and Karen Ray, from Mattessich, Paul W., Murray-Close, Marta, Monsey, Barbara R., "Collaboration: What Makes it Work," 2nd Edition, Wilder Research Center, St. Paul, MN, 2001; Lofquist, William, "The Technology of Development," Development Publications, Tucson, AZ, 1996.

METHOD OPTION #5: DOCUMENT REVIEWS

Partnerships can be monitored over time to asses the degree to which there has been action directed toward agreed-upon goals. It is not enough for partnerships to exist; progress should be made toward achieving the articulated goals.

The White Center Community School is charged with achieving long-term outcomes for the school and students, including academic improvement of students, increased parent involvement in their children's education and systematic improvement of the school environment. Early on, the Community School's Advisory Council (made up of many diverse community partners) decided to develop a theory of change for the Community School, linking programs and activities to short-term outcomes that would ultimately contribute to the longer-term outcomes defined above. This theory of change yielded a detailed work plan for the current school year.

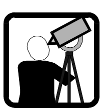
For the Advisory Council, the work plan product would be an example of making progress toward agreed-upon goals. The work plan gives the Community School a process to confirm whether actions are happening that move the Community School toward its goals. As the school develops future work plans in line with its theory of change, new products will continue to be created.

To review products from a partnership, you must know the following:

- What are the agreed-upon goals?
- What products can be expected from goals or work plans that have been created?
- What is the expected timeline for various products?

Once this information is determined, you can review products in light of these factors:

- Is the work of the partnership being done?
- Is the work being done according to the timeline?
- In what way does the product advance the agreed-upon goals?



METHOD OPTION #6: OBSERVATIONS

One component of the *Making Connections* process documentation includes an "Anatomy of a Systematic Observation Guide" *(see Appendix)* and an "Observation Checklist" *(see Appendix)* that includes areas for observation for shared vision, resident and family engagement and organizational competencies. In each area, statements are listed that describe observable group behavior. For each behavior, the observer is asked to provide a summary rating on a five-point scale, ranging from "1" (strongly agree that this behavior is present) to "4" (strongly disagree that this behavior is present) and "0" (unobserved). The summary ratings are not intended to be computed into a score; rather, their purpose is to get observers to think about what they witnessed and make explicit their judgments of behaviors. Because this tool captures information on a variety of influence outcomes, you could choose to strategically track a few items that provide information on the influence outcomes you have chosen as being key components of your community's strategies.

	Observation	Summary Rating*	Substantiating Evidence to Support Summary Rating
Shared Vision	Participants have a shared understanding of the results they are working toward.		
	Participants consider how decisions, strategies, and activities relate to core results.		
	Multiple partners, including residents, have broad knowledge and ownership of proposed strategies to achieve results.		
	Data are used to understand problems and develop strategies to achieve specific results.		
	Some stakeholders or stakeholder groups have more say than others.		
	Differences of opinion are expressed.		
	Conflict is addressed constructively.		
	Major decisions are made by consensus.		
	The *MC* vision, strategies and results are generated, owned and controlled locally.		

Summary Rating Scale: 0 = Not applicable or not observed - 1 = Strongly agree with this statement - 2 = Agree with this statement - 3 = Disagree with this statement - 4 = Strongly disagree with this statement
Source: Achatz, Mary, Westat, 2002.

The full document, developed by Process Documentation Lead Mary Achatz, Ph.D., Westat, is available in the Appendix at the end of this guide.

CHANGES IN FUNDS AND RESOURCES

Unlike the concept of influence outcomes, most groups are familiar and comfortable with the concept of leverage outcomes. Anyone involved in grant-funded work is accustomed to tracking money to show matching funds from other entities, increased levels of funding or aligned funds for grant-writing or reporting.

Examples of leverage outcomes could include the following:

- Commercial developers ***increase investments*** in the community (e.g., developing new commercial or residential buildings, opening new chain stores).
- Funding partners ***increase their aligned grant making*** to support priority area goals and strategies.
- The legislature ***increases funding*** for priority area goals and strategies (e.g., fund new early childhood services).

- The legislature ***maintains current funding levels*** for priority areas (e.g., preserve health insurance programs for low-income children).
- Partners ***increase in-kind donations*** that support priority goals and strategies.

OUTCOME: COMMERCIAL DEVELOPERS INCREASE PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT IN TARGET NEIGHBORHOODS

METHOD OPTION #1: LOGS

Making Connections Milwaukee has developed a database to track all the investments occurring in the Washington Park area. This inventory consists of all the known current development projects in the *Making Connections* Milwaukee area, from project ideas to finished developments. Projects are organized by those with a known address and those without. In this way, the group can track leverage outcomes associated with the neighborhood and determine the role of *Making Connections* Milwaukee in these projects.

Similar tracking could easily be done using some of the following fields:

Name of project/development: ______________________________

Description: ______________________________

____

____

Contact: ______________________________

Address: ______________________________

Project stage (e.g., Concept, In progress, Completed, etc.): ______________

Start date: ______________________________

Completion date: ______________________________

Funding source(s): ______________________________

Estimated development cost/value of property: ______________________

Relationship to/role of MC: ______________________________

OUTCOME: FUNDING PARTNERS INCREASE ALIGNED GRANT MAKING IN PRIORITY AREAS

Aligned grant making occurs when a group of funding partners commit to funding priorities that meet specific, agreed-upon goals.

The Opportunity Fund is a partnership among the City of Seattle, King County and private grant makers who work together to focus on filling system resource gaps so that all children and youth—regardless of ethnic or cultural backgrounds, economic status or where they live—have equal opportunities to succeed in school and as adults.[7] The Opportunity Fund includes four avenues for increased collaboration among public and private funders and community organizations, one of which is aligned grantmaking. Through the Aligned Grants program, private partners create a shared portfolio of effective individual grants that advance Opportunity Fund goals.

The Opportunity Fund's work on tracking aligned grant funding by partners may prove useful to *Making Connections* communities. Here are some guidelines for how aligned grants are determined:

Guidance for Determining "Aligned Grants"
(adapted from the OPPORTUNITY FUND INVESTMENT ANALYSIS WORKSHEET, WORKING MODEL: August 29, 2002)

Purpose of Aligned Grants: For private and public funders to create a shared portfolio of effective grants that advance Opportunity Fund goals.

Priority Outcomes Affected: (1) Early learning opportunities, including pre-school and child care; (2) after-school learning activities and care; and (3) youth development, recreation and leadership opportunities.

Aligned grants may include (these guidelines are suggestions only, not rigid rules; funders should make their own assessments of fit):

- Program and project grants
- General support, fundraising, and technical assistance grants to organizations focused primarily (more than 50%) on achieving outcomes in the shared issue areas
- Capital grants for buildings or goods that are primarily used to achieve outcomes in the shared issue areas
- Grants to support research in areas related to outcomes in the shared issue areas

Aligned grants do not include:

- General support, fundraising, and technical assistance grants to organizations focused primarily in other issue areas (i.e., less than 50% of their work is directed toward shared issue areas)
- Capital grants for buildings or goods that are primarily used for purposes unrelated to Opportunity Fund issue areas
- Grants for parenting education in general
- Grants for educational improvements in schools

[7] To learn more about the Opportunity Fund, visit www.philanthropynw.org/opportunityfund.

METHOD OPTION #1: LOGS

Aligned grants can be tracked by having committed partners complete a form on a regular basis. Here is a sample form adapted from the Opportunity Fund that can help you collect this information.

Aligned Grant Report

Your Foundation/
Organization Name: ______________________ Date: ________

Are you a:
Public Foundation: ❒
Private Foundation: ❒
Corporate Giving Program: ❒
Other: (please specify): ____________________________________

Date of Grant	Grantee Organization	Project Description	Grant Amount	Goal Area(s) Served		
				(area)	(area)	(area)
		TOTAL	**$0**			

OUTCOME: THE LEGISLATURE INCREASES OR MAINTAINS FUNDING FOR PROGRAMS THAT HELP CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

In Arizona, KIDS COUNT data helped prevent a wide variety of proposed state budget cuts that would have hurt outcomes for children and families.[8] Despite initial proposals from legislative leadership to completely eliminate funding for many critical services for children and families, the adopted state budget for fiscal year 2004 maintained appropriations for KidsCare Health insurance, the Healthy Families child abuse prevention program, the Family Literacy program, the Early Childhood Block Grant, health coverage for youth leaving foster care, a high-risk prenatal program and inflation adjusted funding for K-12 education. In a number of cases, lawmakers specifically cited KIDS COUNT indicators as the reason for maintaining investment in early childhood and prevention programs.[9]

[8] For guidance on IRS rules governing how nonprofits can engage in education and advocacy see IRS Publication 1828; IRS Publication 557; and IRS discussion “Political and Lobbying Activities” available at http://www.irs.gov.
[9] Source: Dana Naimark, Deputy Director, Children’s Action Alliance, Arizona.

METHOD OPTION #1: CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis of state budgets over time could cull evidence of leveraged funds for KIDS COUNT priority areas. As noted earlier, content analysis is the systematic approach to analyzing themes in audio, visual or print communication. Selected material is reviewed and assessed along the lines of predetermined criteria, such as reflection of key messages, accuracy and prominence of messages, and reference to sponsoring organizations. Guidance for this process could include the following:

- **Time Period:** State biennial budgets for the past three budget periods (six years)
- **Selected Material:** State budgets and legislative records
- **Analysis:** Compare the budget allocations for key programs addressing program priorities (e.g., KidsCare Health insurance, the Healthy Families child abuse prevention program) and determine funding level changes over time, accounting for increases to adjust for inflation.

METHOD OPTION #2: LOGS

If you choose to track advocacy efforts, such as calls, letters, visits or informational mailings to legislators, you can track how these efforts correspond to how legislators vote on specific issues. While you cannot claim full credit that your advocacy efforts created changes in how legislators voted, you can see how your efforts around priority areas contribute to favorable funding decisions. This could include collecting information relating the types of outreach efforts for specific priority areas directed toward individual legislators and the voting record of these legislators concerning these priority areas.

OUTCOME: **PARTNERS INCREASE IN-KIND DONATIONS THAT SUPPORT PRIORITY AREA GOALS AND STRATEGIES**

Leverage outcomes can include resources or other types of non-cash in-kind donations as well as dollars budgeted, aligned or appropriated. For example, a company could donate computers for a center that is training community members for higher-paying jobs.

Making Connections Louisville's Asset Building Coalition (LABC) works with a number of partners to build family assets through VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) sites. One of these partners, the Transit Authority of River City (TARC), donated a bus to LABC. The LABC Core Planning Team decided to use this bus to provide access to community members from a *Making Connections* neighborhood without a VITA site. The bus transported residents between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. on five Saturdays during January and February from the local Community Center to an Urban League for tax preparation.

While the impact the shuttle bus had on the number of returns filed or amount of federal refunds claimed has not been determined, the in-kind donation supported the broader goal of increasing assets for families by increasing the number of community members with access to free tax preparation.

METHOD OPTION #1: LOGS

Here is a simple log which you can use to track leverage dollars and in-kind donations.

Name of Funding Source	Source Type	Description (optional)	Leveraged Value ($)	In-Kind donation? ONLY if in-kind	In-Kind Description ONLY if in-kind
Enter the name(s) of the organization that provided funding.	Select from Foundation, Public, Corporate, Private, United Way, etc.	If needed, describe the funding source in more detail	Cash value of leveraged funds received or the estimated value for in-kind gifts	Indicate if this gift was an in-kind donation (non-cash).	Briefly describe the in-kind donation (e.g., books, office space, etc.)
			Use whole numbers only – no text	Examples of in-kind donations include books, office space, etc.	

Adapted from Year End Reporting Requirements for United Way Success by 6®, United Way of America, Fairfax, VA.

CHANGES IN POLICY AND REGULATION

Like leverage outcomes, policy and regulation changes are among the more easily defined types of influence outcomes. When policies change, there is a record of past and present policies that support *Making Connections* goals.

Examples of policy outcomes could include the following:

- Policymakers ***adopt new regulations*** that reflect community priorities.
- Policymakers ***write legislation*** that reflects community priorities.
- Policymakers ***maintain legislation*** that supports community priorities.
- Policymakers ***implement legislation*** that reflects community priorities.
- Policymakers ***fund legislation*** that reflects community priorities.

OUTCOME: COMMERCIAL TAX PREPARERS DISCLOSE INFORMATION ON REFUND ANTICIPATION LOANS (RALS) TO CONSUMERS

As discussed earlier, Minnesota KIDS COUNT (Children's Defense Fund Minnesota) partnered with Mid-Minnesota Legal Assistance to pass legislation requiring all commercial tax preparers that provide Refund Anticipation Loans (RALs) to provide a variety of disclosures to individuals seeking a RAL, including (1) an explanation that a RAL is a loan, (2) the interest rate of the RAL, and (3) a notice that clients could file electronically with the IRS and receive their refund within two to three weeks. The wording and font size of the disclosure is mandated by the legislation to ensure proper compliance and consistency of the notices.

METHOD OPTION #1: LOGS

A simple log to track all related legislative work and changes could be used.

Date	
Priority area	
Law/legislation	
Summary	
Key partners	
Legislative sponsors	
Votes for	
Votes against	
Funded?	
Comments	
Next steps	

METHOD OPTION #2: OBSERVATIONS

Another assessment method could be to create a less formal log of legislative-related notes that is updated by a designated partner on a regular basis (e.g., weekly, bi-monthly, monthly). Such entries could include information on efforts to advocate for legislation, contacts with legislators, status of policy efforts, partnerships and next steps.

One thing to consider when collecting or reporting policy change outcomes is the intermediate stages that led to a policy change or creation of a new policy. Other influence outcomes were likely achieved along the way to effect this type of change. Were there changes in the visibility of the issue, public will or decreased tolerance for an issue or situation? Reflecting on these interim influence outcomes may help you learn what strategies or processes were most and least effective along the way, information that can help you be more purposeful in achieving other influence outcomes in the future.

CHANGES IN SERVICE PRACTICE

A variety of outcomes fall under the larger umbrella of the “Changes in Practice” influence outcome category. Examples of changes in practice outcomes could include the following:

- Local service providers provide culturally responsive services.
- Local providers increase access to services.
- Local service providers increase their linguistic competence.
- Local organizations implement hiring and recruitment strategies that reflect the community.

OUTCOME: **CITY GOVERNMENT ADOPTS NEW SERVICE MODEL TO SUPPORT MUNICIPAL POLICY CHANGE**

Making Connections Milwaukee experienced its first policy victory with the City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee Municipal Court to implement a one-time partial amnesty to individuals whose driver’s licenses had been suspended due to nonpayment of municipal fines. The amnesty represents an experimental short-term change by the city to see whether such a program—and the policies that were required to implement it—can reverse the dual problems of suspended drivers and uncollected municipal revenue. Not only did the city endorse the measure, with the mayor and city council approving a resolution encouraging the Municipal Court to embark on the program, they also allocated $50,000 from the city budget to help the Municipal Court offer extended evening hours for license seekers to enroll in the program. In addition, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) stepped forward to endorse and support the program and also provided staff to offer advice to license seekers. The Court and the DOT provided extensive support (e.g., training, free access to driving record abstracts) to community organizations that assisted clients and other residents with the process.

In this example, the intended influence outcomes were a short-term policy change and an allocation of public resources to support the change. An unanticipated outcome was a new and growing collaboration among the court, the DOT and community organizations and new service models, such as extending court hours and providing support to community organizations, to help people get their licenses back. Unintentional outcomes like these can often be captured through regular updates from key partners or stakeholders. One example of a quarterly update form follows.

METHOD OPTION #1: LOGS

PROCESS QUESTIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS

Time period covered: ________________ *Initiative/Project:* _________________

Person(s) completing this form: ____________________

1. List the initiative’s greatest successes or achievements during this period. What worked particularly well? What facilitated these successes?	
Success:	*What facilitated it?*
Success:	*What facilitated it?*
Success:	*What facilitated it?*
2. List the initiative’s greatest challenges, barriers, frustrations, disappointments. What did not work so well? What caused each challenge?	
Challenge:	*What caused it?*
Challenge:	*What caused it?*
Challenge:	*What caused it?*
3. What else, if anything, happened as a result of this achievement—expected or emerging?	
4. What insights have you gained about the initiative’s development? What have you learned?	
5. What adjustments, if any, are planned for the initiative based on what you have learned?	

OUTCOME: MEDICAL SERVICE PROVIDERS INCREASE THEIR CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Many *Making Connections* communities have an intentional focus on improving cultural competence of local providers. Cultural competence has a variety of critical domains which can be culled from the literature in this area. According to a report by the US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, literature reviews suggest that for cultural competence to exist, professionals must: value diversity, understand their cultural biases, be conscious of the dynamics that occur when cultures interact, internalize cultural knowledge and develop adaptations to diversity. Each of these conditions set by Cross, et al. must function at every level of the system in order for that system to provide culturally competent care. While most of the research findings referenced here relate to health care services, they are broad enough to be used for a variety of organizations. (www.hrsa.gov/OMH/cultural/sectionii.htm)

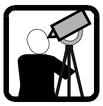
Critical domains for measuring cultural competence include the following:

1. Values and attitudes: acknowledges and respects diversity, mission, vision
2. Cultural sensitivity: nonverbal communication, visual representation, culturally sensitive encounters
3. Communication: interpreter, translated materials, communication styles, cultural brokering
4. Policies and procedures: grievance and conflict resolution, adequate financing, staff hiring and recruitment
5. Training and staff development: new staff orientations; training and professional development topics; bilingual training; assessment of the knowledge, skills and attitudes of providers
6. Facility characteristics, capacity, and infrastructure: available and accessible services, physical environment, materials and resources
7. Intervention and treatment model features: best practices, use of traditional practices
8. Family and community participation: coalition building, community outreach, community and consumer participation
9. Monitoring, evaluation and research: consumer or community member satisfaction and feedback, community needs assessment, evaluation of services, evaluation of providers.

Efforts to evaluate changes in cultural competence can incorporate these aspects.

METHOD OPTION #1: LOGS

- Keep a log of changes, such as translated materials, changes in mission or vision, or changes to the physical environment.
- Track recruitment and hiring practices: Are employers advertising positions in media that reaches a diverse audience? Are employers recruiting in new or different ways to attract a more diverse pool of applicants?



METHOD OPTION #2: OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

Increasing cultural competence in a system is a complex and unpredictable process, requiring change to occur in various ways and at various levels. Because of the nature of this change, it may be valuable to periodically check in with people who represent different parts of that system: administrators, staff people, professional providers and community members who access these services. Possible questions could include the following:

- What does “cultural competence” mean to you?
- Do you see changes in the cultural competence of this organization?
- What are the challenges of creating cultural competence in this system?
- What strategies have been successes so far?

DOCUMENTING INFLUENCE AND LEVERAGE: IN PERSPECTIVE

Since data collection is a balancing act, you will need to find the right balance between collecting data that is robust enough to tell the *Making Connections* story and selecting data collection processes and scopes that are reasonable to implement. Hopefully, the examples of outcomes and tools provided in this guide make it clear that documenting influence and leverage outcomes is quite possible and can be relatively simple once you know what you are looking for.

While many *Making Connections* efforts are intended to produce at least some of the influence and leverage outcome examples provided in this guide, it is worthwhile to point out that sometimes influence and leverage happen in unforeseen ways and have unanticipated characteristics. Influence and leverage describe the ways in which community systems change to support children and families. And, because community systems are complex and dynamic, it is not always possible to determine all courses of action or predict how systems will respond. For example, a catalytic event—such as September 11—might occur which suddenly changes the ways in which community members relate to one another, the degree to which community members are willing to commit to a cause or the degree to which community members are willing to offer resources to a cause.

In the *Making Connections* Milwaukee example previously described, the community had decided a key factor in improving employment rates was addressing the problem of revoked driver's licenses due to non-payment of fines. While the group had been moving forward by developing appropriate partnerships, increasing visibility of the issue, and beginning to address how to change appropriate policies, a surprise leap in progress occurred when a mayoral candidate in a hot and closely watched political race chose to latch onto the issue and move the policy forward more quickly than anticipated. While it is unlikely that such a change would have happened without the efforts of the Neighborhood Workforce Group, it could not have anticipated or planned for the pace of this policy change.

Therefore, in addition to being purposeful and intentional about defining, selecting and measuring influence and leverage outcomes, it is also extremely valuable to undertake rich qualitative inquiry to explore and document the systems involved in *Making Connections*, the course of events, and the things that happen along the way. Once again LLPs, diarists, process documenters, university, government and/or nonprofit partners might be able to offer resources regarding qualitative inquiry. We recommend considering this kind of less structured inquiry as part of your documentation process to help sites gain information and insights that richly describe the dynamic system elements that synergistically pave the way for positive results for children and families.

SECTION V

CONNECTING LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY WITH ACTION

Purpose of Section: This section identifies specific actions that connect to documenting influence and leverage outcomes.

What You Will Learn:

- Action steps for community members.
- Action steps for site team leaders or coordinators.
- Action steps for agency and institution partners.

The concluding section of this guide shows the relevance of documenting influence and leverage to the everyday life on the ground in *Making Connections* communities. It is incumbent on communities to take the next steps, to reflect on learnings about influence and leverage, and to translate these learnings into action. This is a critical part of the complete picture of learning, action and accountability to communities.

Some specific actions include the following:

- Use common language to describe change strategies.
- Step up the intensity of an effort.
- Celebrate and publicize a successful result.
- Recruit new partners who have the potential to contribute to a powerful strategy.
- Keep the heat on partners to act differently or change their practices.
- Make decisions to change directions.
- Make decisions to expand partnerships.
- Call the question about a neighborhood group that has "stalled out."
- Support efforts of community groups to gain effective problem solving and conflict resolution strategies.
- Recognize public officials that take stands or actions that support the community.

- Practice accountability to the people and systems that have invested themselves, their time, their money and their hopes.

Here are some suggestions on how to translate learnings about influence and leverage into action:

If you are a community member, here is a menu of potential learnings and related actions.

- A tool or report card gauging progress on systems change that can be used to hold systems accountable.

  For example, a tool or report card can document the responsiveness of school programs and structures to the needs of multicultural students. This can be used to communicate with school officials about the linkage between trusted and effective services and children's school success.

- A picture of success that can be communicated to mobilize further support and reinforce that the efforts of mobilized community members are paying off for the community.

  For example, this picture could showcase the unity of community members in using data, a consistent message, and organizing residents to put pressure on local elected officials to reverse a decision to close a park in a neighborhood. Communicating this success can energize and inspire a community to continue moving forward together and attract additional people to the effort.

- A picture of those group norms or system practices that maintain the status quo that can be used to name and more fully describe the problem to enable a clearer identification of solutions.

  For example, this picture can describe the level of investment in family support resources that are available to a community and how conveniently these resources can be accessed. A well developed picture can be used to put heat on systems to change their practices and help create the desired picture of how to best meet family's needs in a community.

- An inventory of the political support for an issue that can be used for targeting communication, education, mobilization and advocacy efforts.

  For example, this inventory can describe the perspectives and votes by local or state officials about child care subsidies. This can be used to launch an educational campaign targeted at both the public and policy makers about the relevance of early care and learning to future success and parents' ability to maintain stable employment.

If you are a site team lead or coordinator, here are some potential learnings and related actions:

- A progress checklist of the effectiveness of a partnership in accomplishing goals together.

  For example, this checklist can be reviewed periodically during convenings of partners to assess how well partners are able to move beyond individual interests to effectively collaborate in new and different ways. This could be instrumental in engaging partners in buying into the relevance of influence and leverage for achieving sizable and lasting changes.

- A progress assessment of the how powerful influence and leverage strategies in your theory of change are moving toward desired impacts.

  For example, site team partners can regularly reflect on the coherence, power and alignment of the role of influence, leverage and impact in their theory of change as community conditions change over time. They can use this reflection to make mid-course adjustments in strategy or investment or the identification and recruitment of new partners. They can also use this assessment to attract attention to influence and leverage strategies and insure they remain a salient part of the change process. Further, this assessment can be used to communicate successes and help identify the roles of partners in contributing to these successes.

- A report card about the strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of influence and leverage strategies.

  For example, this report card can be used by a site team to hold itself accountable to the effectiveness of using a "best practice" communication plan, data warehouse or other influence strategies promoted by the Foundation and to strengthen the implementation as needed. The report card is a tool for the site team to hold the "big picture" in front of them and be sure that everyone is on the same page or sees themselves within that picture.

Agency and institution partners can also make the documentation of influence and leverage actionable.

- Agency and institution partners can use progress assessments about influence and leverage strategies to share with their stakeholders to make a case that will continue or build additional support for partnering for change.
- Agency and institution partners can use report cards about influence and leverage strategies to examine their own role in maintaining the status quo and help create a positive picture for desired changes through changes in practices and policies of allocation of resources.

In sum, systematic information about meaningful influence and leverage outcomes can be used in many powerful ways. This vital information is part of the story of change, and many actors can play important roles to insure that influence and leverage strategies are carried out to support lasting positive changes in the lives of children, families and community. This manual has attempted to unpack some of the rich content of influence and leverage so they can be more easily and strategically identified, documented and viewed in real time and with real intentionality.

APPENDIX

SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATION OF KEY MEETINGS

Systematic Observation of Key Meetings[1]

Systematic and purposive observations of key meetings and other activities will yield important information and insights about the processes and work of *Making Connections* that cannot be collected in other ways. Important uses of observation data include:

- Complementing data collected from other sources (triangulation);
- Generating questions that can be followed up in subsequent interviews;
- Corroborating what people say they do or say is going on; and
- Systematically assessing group dynamics and the relationship of these and decisions taken to achievement of sustainable change in the well-being of significant numbers of families and children in the core result areas.

Attached are drafts of two tools for conducting observations of key meetings: 1) Anatomy of a Systematic Observation Guide, and 2) Observation Checklist. Taken together they can provide the sort of information that will be useful to your local self-evaluation and the Foundation's need to understand the diverse ways that sites organize themselves to do the work and achieve results in the core areas. Following feedback from you, it can be quickly turned into a user-friendly tool that you can expand to include items of local interest. It will be reviewed and revised periodically to grow with the work and address emerging questions.

Anatomy of a Systematic Observation Guide

The "Anatomy of a Systematic Observation Guide" is organized around 5 key elements of any meeting: 1) identifying information and purpose of the meeting; 2) description of the setting and participants; 3) group dynamics and competencies; 4) outcomes (decisions taken and actions assigned); and 5) wrap-up—i.e., a place for notes for future data collection. For each element, the table includes sample process documentation questions and observational items that will help you answer them. This format is intended to stimulate discussion of the items and how they can be used to improve local efforts to build consensus and do the work necessary to achieve sustainable outcomes for large numbers of families and children.

Observation Checklist

Group dynamics are inherently complex and, absent a focus, can be labor intensive and difficult to document and apply to the work. The goal of the observation checklist is to provide the structure and focus that will make observations useful and contribute to local and cross-site learning.

The proposed checklist is organized around three areas for observation that are relevant at this stage of the initiative: 1) shared vision, 2) resident and family engagement, and 3) organizational competencies. In each area, statements describing observable group behavior are listed. The list can be expanded locally to include other valued behaviors. For each behavior, the observer is asked to provide a summary rating. A five-point scale, ranging from "1" (strongly agree that this behavior is present) to "4" (strongly disagree that this behavior is present) is suggested. A "0" is also an option for those behaviors that were not observed in a particular meeting. Summary ratings for many of the behaviors are expected to fall in the 3-4 range, initially. With experience

[1] *Source: Achatz, Mary. Westat, 2002.*

and learning, it's reasonable to expect movement up the scale. Each site should begin wherever they're at.

The summary ratings should not be computed into a score and will not be used to quantify organizational maturity or any other concept across sites. Rather, they are intended to get observers to think about what they witnessed and make explicit their summary judgments of behaviors that should be reinforced and behaviors where improvement or consistency may be needed. Whether you have multiple observers, or the data are shared with participants, it will provide opportunities to discuss different perspectives and move the group to improvement and celebration.

Finally, for each behavior observers provide specific examples to substantiate or explain their summary judgments. Over time, these will provide "stories" about your growth—for example, productive changes in relationships that cross social boundaries, how resident participation increased once transportation or language barriers were addressed, or how different approaches to conflict affect productivity. They also will provide information about what it takes to achieve results.

Things to Think About & Discuss

- At this stage in the initiative and your development, is this a doable starting point for documenting key meetings?
- Does the proposed tool address the right questions and behaviors? Are there additional questions, items, or behaviors that you'd like to see included?
- Thinking about your site, what key meetings should be observed? Site team meetings? Result area workgroups? Resident groups? Other forums where decisions are made or policy set?
- How might you be able to use observational data for self-evaluation? For reinforcing desired behaviors?
- Who will conduct the observations? What should their role in, or relationship to, the observed group be? When describing behavior, is it better for recorders to refer to roles or generic affiliations (e.g., agency head, community- or faith-based organization representative, neighborhood resident, or Casey team member) rather than name specific individuals?
- Who will supervise the work of observers? Assess the quality and meaning of their work?
- Where will the data be archived? Who will have access to it?
- What can the Foundation do to help you develop your process documentation capacity? Your capacity to use the data for purposes of self-evaluation and improvement?
- Is this general format for co-designing cross-site and local tools helpful—i.e., you are presented with drafts of tools for the cross-site piece for input and local adaptation? Between meetings, how can we continue the co-design process in this and other areas of process documentation?

DRAFT: ANATOMY OF A SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATION GUIDE

	Process Questions	Item
Identifying Information	Administrative data	Date of observation Start time End time Written agenda? (attach) Other documents? (attach) Observer's name or initials Date, time & location of next gathering
	How is the site organized to share information, develop or adopt strategies, make decisions and achieve core results? What is the nature of this group? E.g., is this an ad hoc group that meets infrequently, a standing committee that meets regularly, or what?	Type of meeting observed Date, time & location of next meeting
Description of Setting/Participants	Are meetings held in the Making Connections neighborhoods? In single- and multiple- neighborhood sites how does location of meetings, activities or events impact development of core capacities and achievement of results? Are the facilities, furniture, layout, equipment and other characteristics of the setting conducive to productive work? Who are the participants? What demographic, linguistic, cultural groups are not represented? What relevant agencies or organizations are not represented? How does composition of the group change over time? What forum and roles are more or less effective in attracting and sustaining resident engagement in the work of sustainable change to achieve core results?	Location of meeting Assessment of facilities, furniture, layout, equipment Number of agencies/organizations present Number of residents present Characteristics of participants (affiliation: external agency or organization, neighborhood-based agency or organization, neighborhood resident) Salient observable characteristics of residents present: (e.g., culture/language group; gender; age group: teen, young adult, adult, senior) Names of participants, if interested in stability of membership (attach sign in sheet)
Outcomes of Meeting	How does the observed meeting contribute to decisions and strategies to move the work forward to achieve specific results? Building core capacity to achieve results?	Topics discussed; relationship to *MC* result areas, theory of change, core capacities, strategies or activities; decisions taken & next steps Description of support/concerns raised; tone
Organizational Characteristics & Competencies	How is the work organized to build core capacities and local ownership, and to achieve core results?	See Observation Checklist.
Wrap-up	What other methods or sources will shed light on how aspects of the observed event are expected to lead to specific core results?	Follow up interviews, document review, additional observations

DRAFT: ANATOMY OF A SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATION GUIDE

	Observation	Summary Rating*	Substantiating Evidence to Support Summary Rating
Shared Vision	Participants have a shared understanding of the purpose of the meeting.		
	Participants have a shared understanding of the results they are working toward.		
	Participants consider how decisions, strategies, and activities relate to core results.		
	Multiple partners, including residents, have broad knowledge and ownership of proposed strategies to achieve results.		
	Data are used to understand problems and develop strategies to achieve specific results.		
	Some stakeholders or stakeholder groups have more say than others.		
	Differences of opinion are expressed.		
	Conflict is addressed constructively.		
	Major decisions are made by consensus.		
	The *MC* vision, strategies and results are generated, owned and controlled locally.		
Resident & Family Engagement	Participants are treated with respect by those who control resources.		
	Leadership fosters respect, trust, inclusiveness and openness.		
	The views and priorities of neighborhood residents and families are considered.		
	Resident contributions and achievements are recognized.		
	Barriers to participation are minimized (e.g., by holding them at times and places that are convenient for residents; and providing child care, transportation and translation services, when necessary).		
Group Dynamics & Competencies	At all levels, systems, organizations and individuals respond to family concerns and ideas.		
	The group has sufficient skills and expertise to do the work (e.g., leadership, cultural competency, partner engagement).		
	The group has sufficient data and information (e.g., statistical data, information about community perceptions, values, resources & politics).		
	The group has sufficient resources to conduct the meeting (e.g., comfortable space, furniture, A-V equipment).		
	The group continually evaluates its progress toward achieving specific milestones and core results.		
	Participants arrive for the meeting on time and prepared.		
	The group uses its time effectively.		

Summary Rating Scale: 0 = Not applicable or not observed 1 = Strongly agree with this statement 2 = Agree with this statement 3 = Disagree with this statement 4 = Strongly disagree with this statement