

Results Based Accountability™

– Population Accountability

What is population accountability?

Population accountability is about the condition of well-being for children, families and communities as a whole. It enables communities to articulate the aspirational outcomes they would like for their community and those that live within that community. It is about the whole community within a particular area. For example:

- All people in NSW or All children between the ages of 0 – 5yrs; or
- All people within the Sydney CBD.

Some examples of population outcomes include:

- All children are ready for school
- All families feel connected and supported by their community
- Young people have the opportunity to participate in education, training or employment

Why is population accountability important for organisations and communities?

It is becoming increasingly important for organisations to be able to identify the population outcomes that their organisation contributes to within the communities in which they work. The work that your organisation does in collaboration with others who are working with the same target groups in the community contributes to the well-being of that community. The more an organisation is able to demonstrate what they contribute to at the population level, the greater the opportunity of identifying key partners and stakeholders who also have a role to play towards the population outcomes to which they contribute. Working collaboratively with our partners on a clear population outcome enables a collective approach to social change within the communities. For more information on Collective Impact see Fact Sheet 4.

How do we determine the population result/outcome that we want to achieve?

As population outcomes are aspirational we start with the first question in the Population Accountability seven questions. This question is: ***What is the condition of well-being that we want for our children, families and the community as a whole?*** To determine this with your partners you start the process through brainstorming with some starter sentences such as:

- We want children who are.....
- We want families that are.....
- We want a community that is.....

When you have an aspirational list of what the group wants to achieve, it is then refined to a statement or a few outcome statements that clearly articulate the population outcomes that the group will be working towards.

Once we have these we then ask the second question: ***What would these conditions look like if we could see them or experience them?*** We ask this question so we can consider what the

community would look like if we have achieved the outcome. This brainstorming activity enables the group to experience the outcome but also provides pointers as to what indicators we might be able to use that will tell us what is happening in our community in relation to the outcome.

This leads us to question 3, which is about the data: ***How can we measure these conditions? (indicators)*** This is a really important question as we need to ensure that the indicators (data) we select tell us something of significance about how the community is going towards achieving the result/outcome. Selecting the right data takes time but it is time well spent. To begin with you may need to start with anecdotal data (data gathered from experience within the group) until you are able to develop or gather the data required. Data helps you to determine where the community is at the moment, historically what the data looked like and where you are headed if you don't do anything about it. This enables you to answer the next question in greater detail enhancing the process.

Once we have determined the indicator/s (data) that we are going to be using we then need to answer the question 4: ***How are we doing on the most important of these measures (indicators)?*** This is where we gain context around what the forces at work are that contribute to the indicator – ***'what is the story behind the baseline?'*** This is an important process and the more partners that you have represented the deeper the story you will receive. With every contribution it is important that you dig deeper than the surface story so ask 'WHY' three times to get the depth of what is happening within the community. The deeper the story the greater opportunity to link the story to what can be done to change the situation. The 'story' links to question 6.

In looking at the story the group determine who the partners are that are not currently engaged in the process and identify these. This is question 5: ***Who are the partners that have a role to play in doing better?*** It is important that we try to get the partners who are currently not engaged and have a role to play involved in the process.

Question 6 asks us: ***What works to do better, including no-cost and low-cost ideas?*** This is where we begin to brainstorm initially what do we know works to do better, what does evidence based research and practice tell us, what do we know has worked in other countries, communities etc that we could learn from or adapt to our community? We ask that you have low cost and no-cost ideas as resources are limited and it is important to look at sustainability. Remember that the story (question 4) provides pointers to what you can do about it.

Finally question 7: ***What do we propose to do?*** Once we have brainstormed ideas and done the research we then select what strategies we are going to implement – remembering that it is not one approach that makes a difference but many reinforcing activities. Once the strategies are determined, responsibilities for the strategy are then assigned the partners involved.

What happens now?

Now that we have the agreed strategies, the programs/activities have performance measures assigned to determine what each program/activity is responsible for and the contribution that they are making to the population outcome and indicators selected. This is performance accountability and discussed in Fact Sheet 7. The group will work together over time, population change takes time, it is vitally important work and more than collaboration is required to achieve the outcome. Tracking the data regularly, reviewing the strategies and approaches is critically important; this is an iterative process so it does not only happen once and must be a regular practice.

How can we find out more about how to do this work?

If you would like to find out more about how to do this work, our team at RLG Australia would be very happy to discuss this with you and assist you in this work, please contact us at info@resultsleadership.org.au