

## Fact Sheet 7

# Results Based Accountability™ – Performance Accountability

### What is performance accountability?

Performance accountability is about the performance of your organisation, programs or services that you are responsible for and whether or not they are achieving the outcomes they are supposed to be achieving. When we are discussing outcomes at this level we are asking the important question of 'Is Anyone Better Off?' as a result of the work that we are doing? This is a crucial question and one that we don't always ask.

Performance accountability like population accountability has seven questions but the first three are different. We will be discussing the process of performance accountability, starting with how to set performance measures and then the very important practice of analysing your performance through the use of the last four questions.

### How do you set performance measures?

The first question in the Performance Accountability 7 Questions is: **Who are our customers?** It is really important that you identify who the customers are that you are responsible for – these are the people who come to your service, or that you provide a service to. They might be internal customers in your organisation if you are a manager your customer might be the staff that you manage. They might be external customers such as the children and families that you work with. Notice that these are the people who actually engage with your service not all people in the community.

Once we have determined our customers we then ask question 2: **How can we measure if our customers are better off?** This is what might tell us that they are better off for being part of the service or program that you deliver? An important thing to remember when determining this is what is the purpose/objective of the program/s that you run? As your 'better off' or outcome measures need to be related to the objective of the program or service. For example if you run a positive parenting program and the purpose is to increase the skills of parents in positive parenting then a better off measure might be: % of parents who state they have increased skills in positive parenting as a result of participation in the program.

The third question we ask is: **How can we measure if we are delivering services well?** This question is asking us about quality in the services we are delivering. Like the 'better off' question it is important we relate this to the purpose of the program/service we are delivering. These measures might include: timeliness of activities; attendance levels eg. % of participants who completed the program; customer satisfaction; unit cost etc.

Once we have developed some 'better off' measures and some 'how well' measures we then refine what we have come up with ensuring that the measures we are suggesting are things that we are responsible for, are related to the purpose or objective of the program and say something of importance about the work that you do. It is not about collecting hundreds of measures but about collecting the most important measures that demonstrate the work you do. You should try to have 3-5 'better off' or 'how well' measures per program/service. Make it achievable and ensure they are

ones that tell you something of significance about the work that you do. You will notice we have not asked a question around 'how much', we still collect this data but it is not the most important data and therefore is not emphasized as part of the process.

## **We have determined our performance measures and we have been collecting our data, now what?**

Collecting data is only one part of the process, what do we do with this data after collecting it! Data needs to be useful and it is really important that we collect data not for the sake of collecting data but so it can tell us something important about the work that we are doing. This is where the last 4 questions come into place....

This is a process that can be undertaken in your staff/team meetings and shifts the focus from being busy to client outcomes and can change the culture of organisations. It is a quality improvement process that is iterative. We start this process by asking question 4: ***How are we doing on the most important of these measures (better off or how well measures)?*** This is where we gain context around why the measures look the way they are. If we look at the example of % of parents who state that they have increased skills in positive parenting as a result of the program, and this measure is reporting only 30% of participants state their skills have increased, then you as a team would discuss the 'story behind this measure' as to why this is the case. Some of the things that might be discussed could be the content or activities or it might even be the participant's attitude towards the program etc. It is important that you ask 'Why' three times to get deeper into the story. The 'story' provides links to question 6.

In looking at the story the team determine who the partners are that have a role to play in the organisation/program doing better. This is question 5: ***Who are the partners that have a role to play in doing better?*** Even though this is within an organisation we all need to work in partnership to do better. In the example given this might be the parents who have participated previously, as they might provide information as to how this could be improved. It might be internal partners.

We then ask Question 6: ***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 programs/services? 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 actions we are going to implement and set timeframes to achieve these. You would then continue to collect the data and review the approach taken in a few months to determine any change that might need to be made.

## **What happens now?**

This is a continuous process; it is a quality improvement process that assists organisations to focus on their customer outcomes. The performance measure process is the first thing that organisations should do before the commencement of any program or service. As once you determine the outcomes that the program is to achieve for your customer you can then determine how the program will achieve these outcomes.

## **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](mailto:info@resultsleadership.org.au)