

REINVESTING IN YOUTH

EVALUATION OF LESSONS LEARNED IN REINVESTING IN YOUTH INITIATIVE

Prepared for

*Reinvesting in Youth
City of Seattle Human Services Department*

May 2007

Prepared by

*Organizational Research Services
In conjunction with Geo Education & Research and Marc Bolan Consulting
Seattle, Washington*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Report

Executive Summary	1
I. Introduction	5
Evaluation Goals	5
The Research Team.....	5
Methodology	5
Organization of the Report.....	6
II. What is Reinvesting in Youth?.....	7
RIY Goals and Objectives	7
Key Components of the RIY Initiative	8
III. What are the “OVERARCHING LESSONS” Learned from the RIY Initiative?.....	11
IV. Detailed Findings and Lessons Learned.....	15
SECTION 1: Overall Leadership and Collaboration in the RIY Project.....	15
SECTION 2: Expansion and Evaluation of Evidence-based Practices	21
SECTION 3: Funding & Reinvestment	28
SECTION 4: Cultural Competency Assessment, Action Planning and Technical Assistance.....	31
SECTION 5: Capacity Building: Elements of Successful Program Guidebook Coaching and Technical Assistance.....	37
SECTION 6: Capacity Building: Promising Programs Evaluation	41
SECTION 7: System Change: Juvenile Justice and Other Youth Serving Systems.....	44

APPENDIX

APPENDIX: Elements of Successful Programs Case Study

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Reinvesting in Youth (RIY) is an ambitious and complex initiative to improve the juvenile justice system in King County and the State of Washington in fundamental ways. Reinvesting in Youth (RIY) is a partnership of the City of Seattle, King County and suburban cities with funding from local and national foundations. In its own words RIY is as follows:

Reinvesting in Youth seeks to demonstrate how it is possible to move from a juvenile justice system based on reaction and incarceration to a coordinated system of preventive youth services and juvenile justice that stops problems before they become severe.

The project further specifies objectives for the community at large as related to:

- Reducing crime and incarceration via the implementation of evidence based programs;
- Changing the paradigm of funding prevention and intervention efforts using savings resulting from reduced incarceration of youth;
- Building the capacity of local community-based agencies as to result in lower disproportional involvement of youth of color in the juvenile justice system; and
- Bridging the gaps between separate parts of what should be an integrated system to serve needs of youth and families in the community.

Over the past five years the RIY project has been actively involved in the following core component areas that are intended to support progress towards the accomplishment of project objectives:

- Building a regional partnership as the springboard for legislative change and coordinated regional decision-making around issues related to youth involved or at-risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system.
- Expanding intensive, cost effective, proven intervention services for youth and families already involved in the juvenile justice system.
- Creating sustainable funding for intervention services through state legislation that will reimburse local governments for the savings realized by the state as the result of local investments in cost effective programs.
- Strengthen the capacity of community-based agencies serving substantial or growing numbers of youth of color.
- Connecting juvenile justice, chemical dependency and mental health systems.
- Supporting rigorous evaluation of program intervention and treatment efforts.

Over the course of the last year Organizational Research Services (ORS) in conjunction with Geo Education & Research and Marc Bolan Consulting have carried out a comprehensive systems change evaluation of the RIY initiative (*the full Systems Change Evaluation report is available through the RIY staff*). The research team used a combination of qualitative data gathered from project staff and stakeholders, key project documentation on the RIY initiative and review of

evaluation and research reports on different facets of the initiative to provide insight with respect to the following goals:

- Assess what has changed and how RIY has contributed to that change; and
- Learn from what RIY has accomplished and from what it has been unable to accomplish and to identify lessons that can be useful to those who will continue or who might attempt to replicate RIY's efforts.

Using these data the research team has been able to identify some overarching lessons learned from the Reinvesting in Youth project. These lessons, in conjunction with more specific findings documented in the main report are intended to help RIY and interested parties better understand what seemed to work well and not as well over the course of the project, what factors have supported or hindered accomplishments and progress, what information is necessary to continue, support and sustain these efforts in the future, and how such a model is transferable or replicable to other substantive areas.

Public/Private Collaboration

- **Public/private collaborations can be successful in finding and implementing solutions to complex problems when true collaboration, trust and accountability are present.** The RIY model of using foundation investments as catalysts for change leading to greater public investment has been productive and in the interests of both types of funders.

Capacity Building

- **The provision of capacity building strategies through RIY for community organizations has been very successful.** RIY's provision of capacity building to agencies through technical assistance on evaluation, cultural competency, program implementation and mechanisms for continuous improvement have helped home-grown programs better serve youth and increase their ability to use research-based best practices in their work.
- **To insure effective programming, use a multi-faceted capacity building approach.** Technical Assistance will be most effective when it can be tailored to individual organizations' needs. In some instances single agency-focused technical assistance is needed, but there are also benefits from working with cohorts of organizations with similar needs and challenges in more of a "Lateral capacity building" approach.
- **The success of capacity building efforts is heavily dependent on the commitment and active participation of agency leadership.** While quality of leadership can not be guaranteed, capacity building funders should be intentional and clear about their expectations of agency leadership engagement.

Evidence based Interventions/Savings Reinvestment

- **RIY’s “savings reinvestment strategy” has been effective in building support for the expanded evidence based interventions being pursued; it has succeeded as a “sustainability” strategy that has more than fully replaced foundation dollars with public dollars.** In 2007 the state legislature added over \$5 million to the budget for evidenced based interventions for juvenile justice involved youth, almost double what Reinvesting in Youth asked for. The concepts of cost avoidance and cost effectiveness are firmly established in Washington State public policy.
- **The concept of “savings reinvestment” has been difficult to fully explain.** In reality, the strategy might be more accurately described as a “cost avoidance” strategy that has the potential to reduce deep end costs for state and local government budgets. The concept of “reinvestment” or cost avoidance needs to be communicated effectively to policy makers who must be convinced that these proven interventions work and that failure to invest in them will result in higher costs to taxpayers long-term.
- **Contrary to Reinvesting in Youth’s original assumptions, it is not politically realistic to expect that policy makers will necessarily capture a surplus of cost avoidance over program cost and invest that surplus in prevention.** How they choose to invest any such surplus will depend on their estimate of the cost effectiveness and importance of all the different policy options in front of them including more prevention.

Evaluation

- **The level of rigor and wide breadth of evaluation efforts in the RIY initiative has resulted in more informed decision making about programs and strategies.** RIY made conscious choice from the onset to apply systematic and rigorous evaluation to understanding different facets of the overall initiative. As such RIY and other stakeholders have more useful data to better understand the potential impacts of these programs, the strengths and challenges involved in carrying out these programs with diverse populations, and the potential short and long-term benefits of continuing to support programs for youth and families at-risk of involvement in the justice system.
- **Most community-based organizations need ongoing assistance in implementing program evaluation efforts.** Coaching in evaluation is the best way to deliver these services. Most agencies and particularly those with limited resources need assistance with the use of complex self-assessment tools and in the development of logic models and other tools to serve as the framework for both outcome and process evaluations. In the RIY project both the Promising Programs Evaluation and Elements of Successful Practices Guidebook coaching have shown the benefits of direct assistance on program evaluation efforts.

- **Evaluation of outcomes from interventions at all levels is essential.** Whatever theories or methods drive the reform processes used, it is important to have some ongoing evaluation of outcomes to see whether they are working and to learn how they can be improved, expanded, extended or replicated.

Conclusions

- **The work of RIY is not yet complete.** There is consensus that the work that RIY has undertaken in getting broad participation and in finding solutions to the problem of juvenile justice recidivism is far from complete. Participants and stakeholders see a need for RIY or a successor entity to continue to play a catalytic role that addresses the key elements that RIY has started or positively influenced.
- **RIY is a useful model for addressing other problems that are complex and involve many stakeholders.** The fact that RIY is moving on to address problems related to school dropouts with many of the same organizations shows that participants believe that the model can be effective in other realms. Its general approach (i.e., collaborate with all key stakeholders to define an important community problem and to fund solution paths; find tested, cost effective solutions; engage stakeholders in defining implementation strategies; support capacity building efforts as part of the investment) should be replicable in other contexts.

I. INTRODUCTION

Reinvesting in Youth (RIY) is an ambitious and complex initiative to improve the juvenile justice system in King County and the State of Washington in fundamental ways. Recognizing the need for an objective assessment of its efforts, RIY has funded this evaluation.

Evaluation Goals

This evaluation has two goals.

- The first is to assess what has changed and how RIY has contributed to that change.
- The second is to learn from what RIY has accomplished and from what it has been unable to accomplish, and to identify lessons that can be useful to those who will continue or who might attempt to replicate RIY's efforts.

The Research Team

Organizational Research Services (ORS), an independent research and evaluation firm based in Seattle, was contracted to carry out this evaluation. The research staff included Marc Bolan, Ph.D., Bill Leon, Ph.D. (Geo Education & Research) and Frances Contreras, Ph.D. Since this research team played a crucial role in the implementation of one of the capacity building components of the RIY initiative, the Elements of Successful programs assessments and technical assistance, Rene Doran of Doran Consulting was contracted to do an independent evaluation of that component of the initiative. Her findings are integrated into this report.

Methodology

The research staff gathered primarily qualitative data through interviews with RIY staff, Steering Committee members, foundation staff, King County and Juvenile Court staff, community-agency staff, elected officials, and consultants involved in different facets of the project. In total they completed over 35 interviews during the summer of 2006. In addition, they reviewed key RIY documentation including quarterly and year-end reports, internal and external communications, budgets and contracts, products of the capacity building efforts such as action plans or summary reports, and evaluation reports completed to date on the Expansion of Evidence-based Practices (*completed by the TriWest Group*) and Promising Programs Evaluation (*completed by Davis Ja and Associates*).

Evaluation staff designed a standard interview protocol with different sections emphasizing issues related to collaboration in the RIY project, capacity building, changes in the juvenile justice system and operations, expansion of the Evidence-based practices, and funding and reinvestment strategies. In addition, all interview subjects “described” RIY in their words and were asked to reflect on the perceptions about the four key objectives and the overall RIY mission.

Organization of the Report

The report is in two parts. The first discusses overall lessons learned from the RIY initiative as a whole; as the second describes specific lessons and findings pertinent to the different components of the initiative. The specific findings and lessons are organized in seven sections

- SECTION 1: Overall Leadership and Collaboration in the RIY Project
- SECTION 2: Expansion and Evaluation of Evidence-based Practices
- SECTION 3: Funding and Reinvestment Strategies
- SECTION 4: Capacity Building: Cultural Competency Assessment and Training
- SECTION 5: Capacity Building: Elements of Successful Program Assessments and Technical Assistance
- SECTION 6: Capacity Building: Promising Programs Evaluation
- SECTION 7: System Change: Juvenile Justice and Other Youth Serving Systems

Each of these sections point to some important findings and specific lessons learned with respect to those findings. The specific lessons are numbered, relative to the section heading, and may be referenced in other parts of the document. For example, the first lesson with regards to Section 1: Overall Leadership and Collaboration in the RIY Project is numbered **1.1**. In the discussion of key findings and lessons learned we have woven in quotes from many of those interviewed to illustrate common or significant perceptions.

II. What is Reinvesting in Youth?

We found that those interviewed appear to have consistent ideas about what RIY is, including its theory, its goals, and its methods. We also found that these views are consistent with stated purposes of RIY found in its publications and reports. This suggests that RIY has done an effective job in communicating a clear and coherent message about the initiative and its aims.

Reinvesting in Youth (RIY) is a partnership of the City of Seattle, King County and suburban cities with funding from local and national foundations. RIY is housed in the City of Seattle's Human Services Department, which is the project fiscal agent and responsible for grants management. Since its launch in June 2001 RIY has been staffed by two full-time staff.

The project has a Steering Committee comprised of 33 individuals representing state, county, city and non-governmental entities and organizations involved in the Juvenile Justice system or serving the needs of those involved in the system. The administrative funding and support for the inception and ongoing implementation of the initiative has come from local and regional governments (*which have contributed \$1,264,437 for administration (2001-06) plus \$1,661,567 for program implementation*) and from private foundations including the Gates, Allen, JEHT, Seattle, Laurel, Satterberg, Robert Wood Johnson and Annie E. Casey Foundations (*which have contributed \$2,575,000 for program development and implementation*).

RIY as an entity does not have the statutory authority to make the changes it envisages in the juvenile justice system and the provision of services to youth and families involved in the system. Rather RIY seeks to encourage reform through working with local governments, King County, the Juvenile Court and local providers and organizations on efforts to affect service delivery, capacity building, systems integration and allocation of resources. Over the past five years RIY has developed an agenda for itself and formed relationships with many public and nonprofit organizations that can fund and implement changes as well as advise, co-create strategies and advocate for the changes in policies, funding, performance assessment, and program improvements that make up this agenda.

RIY Goals and Objectives

In several documents, RIY describes itself in this way:

Reinvesting in Youth seeks to demonstrate how it is possible to move from a juvenile justice system based on reaction and incarceration to a coordinated system of preventive youth services and juvenile justice that stops problems before they become severe.

It further describes its objectives for the community at large as:

- We can reduce juvenile and adult crime, reduce reliance on incarceration and save public monies by implementing evidence-based programs at sufficient scale and with precise enough targeting to lower the number of kids locked up.
- We can change the paradigm by which we fund such programs through the recognition, capture, and reinvestment of the public dollar savings that result from closing down secure beds and avoiding the need for other "deep-end" expenditures. We can be budget neutral at a time of severe budget

constraints, and we can eliminate the need for foundation funding within four years.

- We can reduce the disproportional involvement of youth of color in our juvenile and adult justice systems by increasing the capacity of community-based agencies serving youth and families of color.
- We can bridge the gaps that now separate different parts of what should be an integrated system – with particular emphasis on mental health, drug and alcohol treatment, juvenile justice and youth and family services.

Key Components of the RIY Initiative

The RIY project has been actively involved in the following core component areas that are intended to support progress towards the accomplishment of project objectives.

- **Build a regional partnership as the springboard for legislative change and coordinated regional decision-making around issues related to youth involved or at-risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system.**

The RIY Steering Committee is chaired by King County Prosecutor Norm Maleng and consists of elected and administrative leaders from state and local government, judges, school leaders and leaders of community-based organizations and non-profit funders. This partnership can discuss and broker agreements on common local approaches to intervention, treatment, prevention efforts, data sharing, management expectations, funding and other areas where collective actions and commitments to common approaches will enhance consistency and coordination.

- **Expand intensive, cost effective, proven intervention services for youth and families already involved in the juvenile justice system.**

Capacity has been added to serve 330 additional youth and families per year with intensive family focused interventions – Functional Family Therapy, Multi-Systemic Therapy and Aggression Replacement Training. Team approaches that spread the services through many local agencies throughout the region have made these interventions more widely available. Integrating the use of these interventions into the thinking of key players in the juvenile justice system has been a consistent focus. RIY provided financial support and resources to the expansion of these efforts as directed through the King County Juvenile Court.

- **Create sustainable funding for intervention services through state legislation that will reimburse local governments for the savings realized by the state as the result of local investments in cost effective programs.**

A state-wide “Reinvesting in Youth” pilot program, based on the concept of savings reinvestment, was approved by the legislature in 2005. As a result foundation support for these intervention services in King County has been replaced by state dollars. In 2006 the legislature passed the “Reinvesting in Youth” bill that will extend the savings reinvestment opportunity to all counties in Washington that are able to contribute the local match, and full state wide funding is included in the State’s 2007-09 biennium budget.

- **Strengthen the capacity of community-based agencies serving substantial or growing numbers of youth of color**

Potential funders and in particular the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation were supportive of a RIY core strategy to expand evidence-based programs and to support funding reform through the savings reinvestment strategy, but they also indicated that, regardless of how those strategies might turn out, they wanted to make sure that community-based agencies emerged from the project with increased capacity to serve youth at risk from diverse communities..

RIY believes that building the capacity of community-based agencies to better serve the youth and families in their communities will in the long run prevent criminal activity, reduce youth recidivism and reduce the disproportional involvement of youth of color in the Juvenile Justice system. The capacity building strategy encompassed three project components: Cultural Competency Assessment and Technical Assistance, Elements of Successful Programs Assessment and Technical Assistance and Promising Programs Evaluation.

Specifically, RIY provided:

- \$178,000 for cultural competency assessment, action planning and training for 14 service provider agencies.
- \$222,000 for research-based best practices assessment, action planning and technical assistance for 15 agencies.
- \$483,000 for evaluation of 7 existing youth serving home grown or innovative programs with potential for demonstrating substantial, cost-effective results in reducing high-risk behaviors.

Twenty-one agencies throughout King County are involved in one or more of these capacity building programs.

- **Connect juvenile justice, chemical dependency and mental health systems.**

RIY funding permitted expansion of intensive Multi-Systemic Therapy for youth with combined juvenile justice / chemical dependency / mental health issues. The objective is to achieve greater integration among the related systems. RIY is funding technical assistance to improve information sharing between juvenile court and community-based service providers. The RIY staff has also been involved in the King County System Integration Initiative, an effort bringing together county and state officials and local agency and provider staff in an attempt to “reform the culture, policies, practices, programs and protocols that make up a fragmented method of service delivery.”

- **Carry out rigorous evaluation**

The RIY program includes the following evaluation design elements:

- **Proven programs** – The evaluation consulting firm, TriWest Group, is carrying out an evaluation of the recidivism outcomes of the three proven model programs that are at the center of RIY’s savings reinvestment strategy. The total budget for 2003-06 is \$230,000, of which \$186,000 is provided from RIY foundation sources. The first phase and RIY’s contribution to this evaluation was completed in 2006.
- **Unproven programs** – (See discussion under Capacity Building above.) This evaluation, which is being carried out by Davis Y. Ja & Associates, is focused on determining the extent to which recidivism is reduced in seven existing youth programs as well as providing continuing feedback to improve program implementation and agency operations. Total cost for 2003-06 is \$483,000. The evaluation is expected to be completed in August 2007.
- **Systems change /lessons learned** – Reinvesting in Youth has contracted with Organizational Research Services to carry out an evaluation to assess program and system improvements that have resulted from Reinvesting in Youth and related initiatives and to identify lessons learned that can be applied to continuing system reform in King County and elsewhere. This report provides preliminary findings and lessons, and the final report will be completed in the summer of 2007.

Funding

The RIY implementation budget for 2003-2006 is \$5.5 million of which \$2.4 million has been received from eight foundations. King County, the City of Seattle, 12 King County suburban cities and the Port of Seattle are contributing approximately \$240,000 per year for RIY administrative costs.

III. What are the “OVERARCHING LESSONS” Learned from the RIY Initiative?

This summary lists the overarching lessons learned from the Reinvesting in Youth project. Together with Part IV, “Detailed Findings and Lessons Learned”, it is intended to help RIY and interested parties better understand what seemed to work well and not as well over the course of the project, what factors have supported or hindered accomplishments and progress, what information is necessary to continue, support and sustain these efforts in the future, and how such a model is transferable or replicable to other areas, both geographic, e.g., other states, and substantive, e.g., dropout prevention (*which the Reinvesting in Youth Steering Committee has selected to be the primary focus of RIY Phase 2 beginning in 2007*).

PUBLIC/PRIVATE COLLABORATION

1. **Public/private collaborations can be successful in finding and implementing solutions to complex problems when true collaboration, trust and accountability are present.** The RIY model of using foundation investments as catalysts for change leading to greater public investment has been productive and in the interests of both types of funders.

CAPACITY BUILDING

2. **The provision of capacity building strategies through RIY for community organizations has been very successful.** RIY recognized that existing organizations and programs—most developed locally—will continue to receive funding from local governments and will probably continue to serve more individuals and communities, even if other, “research-based, proven” models are introduced. By meeting such home grown programs “where they are”, RIY has succeeded in introducing research based best practices on a broader scale and, in many cases, has established the basis for continuous improvement. Consultants developed a guidebook based on meta analyses of proven programs from across the U.S. and tools and methods for coaching local programs through a self-analysis process to identify and address deficiencies in order to help them identify and achieve outcomes that are likely to reduce juvenile justice involvement.
3. **To insure effective programming, use a multi-faceted capacity building approach.** Different organizations and programs need different types of assistance at different times. Assistance will be most effective when it can be tailored to individual organizations’ needs. Single agency-focused technical assistance is needed, but there are also benefits from working with cohorts of organizations with similar needs and challenges. “Lateral capacity building,” which involves the sharing of experiences with other organizations, can enhance learning. RIY tried this in different ways with its “fishbowl” meetings, support for workshops and trainings, and through group working sessions on theory of change and assessment tool development.

4. **The success of capacity building efforts is heavily dependent on the commitment and active participation of agency leadership.** This was found to be true in all the capacity building projects – cultural competency, elements of successful programs and promising programs evaluation. While quality of leadership can not be guaranteed, capacity building funders should be intentional and clear about their expectations of agency leadership engagement.

EVIDENCE BASED INTERVENTIONS / SAVINGS REINVESTMENT

5. **RIY’s “savings reinvestment strategy” has been effective in building support for the expanded evidence based interventions being pursued; it has succeeded as a “sustainability” strategy that has more than fully replaced foundation dollars with public dollars.** In 2007 the state legislature added over \$5 million to the budget for evidenced based interventions for juvenile justice involved youth, almost double what Reinvesting in Youth asked for. The driving force behind this was a study commissioned by the legislature to explore strategies to reduce the need to build new adult prisons. The concepts of cost avoidance and cost effectiveness are firmly established in Washington State public policy.
6. **The concept of “savings reinvestment” has been difficult to fully explain.** In reality, the strategy might be more accurately described as a “cost avoidance” strategy that has the potential to reduce deep end costs for state and local government budgets. Savings do not automatically appear in precisely calculatable amounts. In fact the avoided costs attributable to cost effective services will occur in the context of changes in many unrelated long and short-term factors that may result in overall expenditure reductions that are less than or more than the reductions attributable to the services alone. There may even be an increase in expenditures based on underlying factors that are independent of the investments in research-based interventions. This concept of “reinvestment” or cost avoidance needs to be communicated effectively to policy makers who must be convinced that these proven interventions work and that failure to invest in them will result in higher costs to taxpayers long-term.
7. **Contrary to Reinvesting in Youth’s original assumptions, it is not politically realistic to expect that policy makers will necessarily capture a *surplus* of cost avoidance over program cost and invest that surplus in prevention.** How they choose to invest any such surplus will depend on their estimate of the cost effectiveness and importance of all the different policy options in front of them including more prevention.

EVALUATION

8. **The level of rigor and wide breadth of evaluation efforts in the RIY initiative has resulted in more informed decision making about programs and strategies.** RIY made conscious choice from the onset to apply systematic and rigorous evaluation to understanding different facets of the overall initiative and their impacts on youth, families and the system as a whole. The efforts of the consultants working with local agencies and the Juvenile Court in evaluating the implementation of and efficacy of the promising programs and the evidence-based interventions (i.e., the 3T's) have helped RIY and other stakeholders better understand the potential impacts of these programs, the strengths and challenges involved in carrying out these programs with diverse populations, and the potential short and long-term benefits of continuing to support these types of programs for youth and families at-risk of involvement in the justice system. The rigorous evaluation methods and approaches provide RIY and agencies with data they can be confident using in making programmatic and funding decisions.
9. **Most community-based organizations need ongoing assistance in implementing program evaluation efforts.** Coaching in evaluation is the best way to deliver these services. Most agencies and particularly those with limited resources need assistance with the use of complex self-assessment tools and in the development of logic models and other tools to serve as the framework for both outcome and process evaluations. The Promising Programs evaluation experience has highlighted the importance of providing agencies and programs with the support and resources needed to carry out data collection, management and analysis. The Elements of Successful Programs process has further shown how building organizational understanding and use of evaluation tools and concepts can support ongoing program development and service delivery efforts. Even if “proven”, research based models are selected and implemented, some formal evaluation process is essential to determine whether fidelity to model is being achieved and how performance can be improved.
10. **Evaluation of outcomes from interventions at all levels is essential.** Whatever theories or methods drive the reform processes used, it is important to have some ongoing evaluation of outcomes to see whether they are working and to learn how they can be improved, expanded, extended or replicated. With respect to the evaluation of program impacts, it might support more insightful study if “best” and “promising” programs are provided with the opportunity to understand and refine their service strategies before starting to evaluate the long-term outcomes for youth and family participants.

CONCLUSIONS

11. **The work of RIY is not yet complete.** There is consensus that the work that RIY has undertaken in getting broad participation and in finding solutions to the problem of juvenile justice recidivism is far from complete. Many stakeholders continue to pose the question “What’s next?” Participants and stakeholders see a need for RIY or a successor entity to continue to play a catalytic role that addresses the key elements that RIY has started or positively influenced.
12. **RIY is a useful model for addressing other problems that are complex and involve many stakeholders.** The fact that RIY is moving on to address problems related to school dropouts with many of the same organizations shows that participants believe that the model can be effective in other realms. Its general approach (i.e., collaborate with all key stakeholders to define an important community problem and to fund solution paths; find tested, cost effective solutions; engage stakeholders in defining implementation strategies; support capacity building efforts as part of the investment) should be replicable in other contexts.

IV. DETAILED FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED

SECTION 1: Overall Leadership and Collaboration in the RIY Project

Key Finding: The RIY Steering Committee played several essential roles in its work. RIY was successful in building and maintaining collaboration within the committee and in using the committee to build collaboration in the community.

- ✓ The involvement of a broad cross-section of individuals and organizations to work with RIY in key partnership roles led to a broader agenda, better strategies, greater commitment, and more effective implementation. RIY was effective in doing this at the beginning of its work and has continued involving more participants over time.
- ✓ RIY, in particular, has been able to attract participants who not only represent key organizations but who are also personally engaged with and knowledgeable about juvenile justice issues and who have been able to work effectively in collaboration with others.
- ✓ The Steering Committee has diverse membership in many areas; council members and police chiefs from smaller local governments have been especially helpful in assuring broad funding support from local governments, which has been compelling to foundations as they considered RIY funding requests; the four state legislators on the Steering Committee representing both parties and both the House and Senate have played crucial roles as champions of RIY’s legislative strategy.
- ✓ “People with holistic thinking but different issues, backgrounds, and roles in communities have found synchronicity through RIY. The brought an attitude of ‘No kid is safe unless all kids in the region are safe,’ and this encouraged a regional approach.” ~ government staff person.
- ✓ As one elected official noted “Everyone is very out front. They say what they think. People are pro-active: they never say we can't do this. They find ways around roadblocks. They are all there to help. I would work with anyone in that room on anything.”

LESSONS LEARNED

1.1 Inform and seek buy-in from key decision-makers.

- Frame the issues to highlight key elements that will attract attention (e.g., cost savings from investments, improved safety, equity, capacity building, cultural competency, evaluation).
- Keep elected officials and their staff members informed about overall reform efforts and successes.
- Cement relationships between cities, counties and community providers over issues of common concern.
- Encourage collective, positive thinking and creative approaches to dealing with potential roadblocks or unforeseen consequences.

1.2 Recruit participants who not only represent key or example organizations but who are also personally engaged with and knowledgeable about juvenile justice issues and who have been able to work effectively in collaboration with others.

- Obtain early and consistent participation from large local governments and their units that deal with juvenile justice issues (e.g., King County Community Services Division; Juvenile Court).
- Involve smaller local governments to bring in additional energy, ideas, and support that can broaden implementation and help with lobbying at the state level and with foundations.
- Encourage all stakeholders to understand that a regional approach is needed and viable.

Key Finding: The qualities of leadership and the backgrounds and capabilities of the RIY leaders are mentioned frequently—almost always positively—as significant factors in RIY’s success.

- ✓ Norm Maleng, the head of the Steering Committee, (considered a trusted, well-respected, Republican County Prosecutor) is credited with bringing high-level attention to the problems, helping to engage different parts of the legal system and lobbying for legislative support.
- ✓ Jim Street, director of the RIY initiative has the background (economics education, juvenile court judge experience, and Seattle City Council experience), reputation as a trusted and thoughtful leader, and connections to leaders in many areas that make him effective. High level leaders lined up with RIY. People view him as passionate, committed, focused on details, and always moving the agenda forward. As one elected official noted “Jim Street has done a wonderful job. He is known in lots of circles where people trust him. He got buy-in from lots of people.”
- ✓ The RIY staff were accessible and very willing to come to meetings, discuss ideas, issues and approaches. While mission oriented, they were not dogmatic in an adherence to only one way of solving problems. They both provided oversight and management to keep projects on track and focused on agreed upon outcomes and provided resources as needed to help organizations and programs function effectively.
- ✓ The selection of Steering committee members for their personal interests, expertise, and collaborative working styles as well as for the constituents that they represent is often cited as contributing to broad, creative thinking about problems and solutions and to consensus building efforts among committee members.
- ✓ The involvement of executive directors of provider agencies in decision making and in capacity building efforts led to greater involvement among agencies in the selection of approaches and in their implementation.

LESSONS LEARNED

1.3 Key leadership qualities are needed in staff and leadership committees.

- Leaders must be able and willing to work with a wide variety of participants, be able to recruit diverse participants into the process, and be culturally competent.
- Leaders must be personally open to change and willing to listen and help participants reach consensus when possible.
- Excellent program management skills (including fund raising and grants administration) are essential.

Key Finding: RIY worked effectively to engage stakeholders from many parts of the community (*in and outside of government*) to work toward solutions to difficult problems at each phase of project implementation.

- ✓ Early on RIY sought to engage with groups that were collaborating such as the Juvenile Justice Operations Master Planning work group and Oversight Committee and the Juvenile Justice Evaluation Workgroup. RIY staff participated in these committees, recruited participants to serve on its steering committee, and broadened participation to include even more representatives from an even more diverse group of influential organizations.
- ✓ There was a conscious, consistent and concerted effort made to identify and recruit individuals from key organizations to participate in RIY in various capacities. Some were stakeholders who needed to be informed. Others were key participants in the system who needed to be more deeply involved.
- ✓ The involvement of a broad cross-section of individuals and organizations to work with RIY in key partnership roles led to a broader agenda, better strategies, greater commitment, and more effective implementation.
- ✓ There is an increasingly shared understanding that diverse participants in the complex juvenile justice system need to understand other parts of the system and need to collaborate to develop a more integrated system.
- ✓ RIY has strengthened ongoing partnerships between funders and system providers and juvenile justice court staff that started with the Juvenile Justice Operations Master Planning process (*a system reform effort initiated by King County a number of years back intended to address many of the same concerns and issues in the juvenile justice system as addressed by the RIY initiative*).
- ✓ “[RIY gave people a] voice to change the system of juvenile justice and treatment and have an impact on shared responsibilities [for changing youth]” ~ NGO staff person
- ✓ Some see the involvement of local community-based organizations as slow to come about, but they also agree that it has.
- ✓ “We have a history in our community to ask what the needs are and who should address them. RIY used science to divine problems and solutions. It did not engage communities. It took longer to bring communities into the efforts in a collaborative way.” ~ government staff person

LESSONS LEARNED

1.4 Recognize that experienced practitioners in the field of juvenile intervention and rehabilitation may have different approaches to finding and developing interventions and that dialogue about the science-based approach to identifying best practices may need to be discussed to develop consensus or buy-in

- The commitment to research based interventions was made by State and King County policy makers before the launch of RIY, but as RIY sought to expand those interventions, it encountered continued community based resistance. The resistance reflected skepticism about whether such interventions are sufficiently sensitive to specific community and ethnic needs and a concern that evidence based programs would displace home grown programs which were believed to be effective.
- RIY maintained its commitment to research based programs but responded to community concerns by developing strategies that included evaluation of home grown programs and technical assistance that was designed to meet such programs where they are. In the end RIY was committed to the idea that it is not “either or”.

1.5 Identify and work with existing groups already focused on the kinds of changes desired.

- Participate with pre-existing groups that are working to bring about system change and recruit members from them for the initiative so that there is overlapping membership among the key groups focused on system change.

1.6 Foster alignment of missions and strategies of groups involved

- Engage participants in discussions of their theories of practice, activities and shared outcomes.
- Seek but don’t demand consensus on how to change the system and build a sense of shared responsibility for making the changes that will affect the outcomes.

1.7 Insure that participants from all major types of organizations and cultural groups served are represented

- Work with existing networks.
- Find organizations that serve under-represented groups like recent immigrants.
- Encourage and as much as possible insure that people with different levels of authority (e.g., government funders and NGO grantees) feel equally valued and open to learning from each other.
- “Power differentials need to be noted and addressed.” ~ NGO staff person.

1.8 Consider using a community development approach in encouraging involvement and finding viable solutions to community-wide problems.

- The collaboration model used by RIY can be taken further by incorporating an approach to problem solving that involves a wide group of stakeholders (as RIY attempted to do).
- Involving a wide group of stakeholders means that more viewpoints and opinions need to be heard and accommodated, but this helps insure that approaches developed and implemented are collectively more comprehensive and suitable to more sectors of the community.

1.9 In selecting potential interventions, recognize that effective approaches to problem solving follow logically from how the problems are defined.

- If one defines problems as community problems and not just problems of criminal behavior by a number of individuals, potential interventions might be different. The latter view leads to solutions that emphasize treatment for individuals and families (*a major emphasis of RIY and one that community service providers also use*). The former view leads to other prevention approaches that look for root causes of criminal behavior that manifest at the community or neighborhood level and that can be dealt with at those levels as well.
- Both the individual-focused approach and the community-focused approach to problem identification and problem solving are viable and helpful and can be pursued simultaneously.

1.10 Develop activities and workgroups that foster inter-organizational learning and planning processes that encourage inter-agency collaboration on a variety of scales.

- Educate Steering Committee members in group learning activities to develop common understandings of issues and options.
- Encourage groups of providers to share ideas, tools and methods to encourage learning and experimentation.
- Adopt inter-agency agreements (e.g., to share information about juveniles; to define agencies' responsibilities to each other).

Key Finding: Since it was not a manager of programs or a long-term entity, RIY sought ways to institutionalize changes made and encourage other organizations to accept responsibility for ongoing management and support of initiatives it worked on.

LESSONS LEARNED

1.11 Integrate things that are working well into organizations that can sustain them

- Once shown to be effective, develop policies and funding to keep them going (e.g., using evidence-based assessments (the GAIN) and programs (Multi-Systemic Therapy)).
- Develop methods and incentives for organizations to continue self-assessments for ongoing program monitoring and improvement (e.g., Action Plans with re-assessment dates identified).

1.12 Use collaborating organizations to keep issues visible in their various venues and communities.

- Be or create an ongoing source of information about ideas, data, and tools that are relevant to participants or potential participants.
- Continue to educate leaders at all levels and recognize that turnover requires greater efforts to help new leaders understand why existing efforts are in place and how they are working.

SECTION 2: Expansion and Evaluation of Evidence-based Practices

RIY has provided financial resources to the King County Superior Court – Juvenile Court Services to expand the use of three research-based treatment interventions: Functional Family Therapy (FFT), Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) and Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART). Locally, these are often referred to as the “3T’s”. The use of these interventions is the centerpiece of the RIY “reinvestment” strategy in that the interventions have a proven track record in reducing recidivism and saving money relative to their costs.

These treatment modalities are referred to as research-based “proven programs” because they have been clinically tested with various (but not all) groups and used in a number of settings around the country. They have well-defined trainings for therapists who use them and protocols on how clients (and in some cases, parents) are supposed to be engaged and treated.

With this expansion effort, King County has contracted with a number of community-based agencies to formulate multi-agency teams involving one or more therapists per agency who administer these treatment interventions with youth at-risk of continued criminal involvement and with their families. The Tri-West Group was contracted to conduct an overall evaluation of the expansion effort with emphases on assessing the successes and challenges of the implementation and quality assurance processes and measuring the long-term impacts on recidivism and disproportionality.

With this expanded use of the 3T’s there was an interest for RIY and the King County Superior Court in evaluating these expanded services with respect to impacts on long-term recidivism outcomes. TriWest Group was chosen as the evaluation consultant and put together a research design in early 2004 outlining a process and outcome evaluation. The key outcome questions focused on comparing the outcomes of participants with non-participants and looking at patterns across different racial and ethnic populations. Key process questions focused on the fidelity of implementation of the services and the affects of process measures on longer term outcomes.

In September 2006 TriWest presented Process and Preliminary Outcome reports examining a reporting period of services between July 1, 2001 and December 31, 2004¹. The Process evaluation assessed the process of referral to and implementation of the different programs, and in general, has found evidence of:

- Increased referrals to the 3T programs, but also increased proportion of these referrals being withdrawn (*i.e., youth or family choosing not to participate prior to the start of the intervention*).
- Persistent racial differences in referrals to the MST and FFT programs; specifically a higher proportion of African American youth referred to the programs are withdrawn prior to participation.
- Some improvements in quality assurance in later years, building off earlier concerns for below standard program fidelity and quality assurance.
- Shortcomings related to staff turnover and coordination across agencies

¹ See reports “King County Superior Court – Juvenile Justice Intervention Services Evaluation: Part 1 – Process Evaluation and Part 2 – Recidivism Outcomes” prepared by the TriWest Group and available through the Reinvesting in Youth staff.

The Preliminary Outcome report focuses primarily on 12 month recidivism outcomes for youth participating in the earlier phase of implementation (up through 2004). To date, the evaluation has shown:

- Few significant differences in recidivism among program participants as compared with non-participants.
- Some differences in recidivism by race when looking at 12 month outcomes for MST. In particular the rates are lower for African American youth and other youth of color as compared with a matched set of youth non-participants.
- Fairly high completion rates for MST and FFT (over 80 percent), but lower completion rates for ART participants.

As part of this Systems Change Evaluation we spoke with the evaluation consultants, Juvenile Court staff, participating agencies and other stakeholders about the implementation and evaluation of these expanded services. Some key findings and important lessons are noted below:

Key Finding: RIY has played a significant role in promoting and funding the use of these three best-practices, and its efforts have led to significant expansions of the number of therapists offering one or more of the treatments and the numbers of youth receiving these treatments.

- ✓ King County was implementing these evidence-based treatments before RIY began with funding provided by the State, but supply was not sufficient to meet demand and State and County budgets were extremely tight. RIY brought dollars in to expand them, coupled with a strategy to provide sustainable funding over time.
- ✓ Without RIY's involvement, FFT, MST and ART would not have been expanded and King County and State funds would not have become available.
- ✓ While King County and RIY were committed to the expansion of these services, many non-profit providers were skeptical about their effectiveness in local communities and concerned that they would supplant existing home-grown programs. On the other hand, as policy makers at both the state and local levels demanded more emphasis on research based interventions, community-based providers did not want to be left out. Community-based agencies argued and continue to believe that distributing therapist positions to several agencies was not a problem because they had a history of working together.
- ✓ Partly to ease local provider concerns and partly in an attempt to increase the capacity of multiple community-based providers to employ evidence-based practices, King County adopted a multi-agency approach with each team of 4-6 therapists consisting of one therapist per agency.
- ✓ The national developers of MST, and FFT took different approaches to oversight of implementation. MST contracted with a local consultant who worked closely with the community MST team and therapist supervisors were also given MST training. The FFT consultant was based out of state and FFT did not provide for training of therapist supervisors in each agency. The FFT approach combined with the multi-agency approach resulted in some isolation of therapists in each agency and reduced the amount of team cohesion. This, along with low salaries (an endemic problem in non-profit based services) may have contributed to high turnover in the therapist positions.
- ✓ King County has decided to go to a single agency team approach for FFT in 2007 and is considering the same for MST. It is also considering reorganizing in the way that it provides ART.

- ✓ As a “change agent” working between the foundation funders and the government implementers, RIY faced some special challenges in its attempts to influence performance. RIY brought its concerns regarding the advisability of multi-agency teams and the effective implementation of quality assurance to the attention of King County on numerous occasions, but, with hindsight, RIY could have been more insistent in pursuing some of its concerns, particularly with respect to quality assurance.
- ✓ At the beginning of the program expansion in 2003, RIY budgeted substantial dollars to training of juvenile probation counselors and other juvenile court staff around the evidence-based programs. King County was slow to use these resources, and training originally programmed for 2003 and 2004 was not fully implemented until 2005 and 2006. The training dollars were well spent, but the delay may have affected the extent to which juvenile probation counselors were fully engaged and supportive and may have contributed to fairly low rates of engagement of youth and families.
- ✓ Probation counselors play a key role in facilitating the transition to family based therapy. In 2005 and 2006 Juvenile Court administration was aggressive in addressing these issues.

LESSONS LEARNED

2.1 Replication and expansion of “proven” evidence-based programs requires fundamental cultural changes in the way government thinks about administering human services.

- Prior research and evaluations show that without fidelity to model such programs are unlikely to meet expectations.
- Quality assurance management must require that funders put in place monitoring and accountability protocols that go well beyond business as usual. As much attention needs to be given to management oversight of best practices as is given to service delivery best practice. Up-front work includes: buy-in from key individuals and organizations that will be engaged; developing purposeful, detailed strategies, guidelines and procedures for implementation of the selected quality assurance protocols; training; and monitoring and assessment of implementation. Conducting formative evaluations will enhance the quality of interventions.

2.2 Gaining wide support on what types of evidence-based treatments are likely to be effective with local youth is helpful in expanding support to fund the interventions and expand their availability.

- Seek and listen to many viewpoints, especially those organizations currently serving local at risk youth.
- Expanding the range of treatment options does not need to decrease the availability of those currently in practice, but common agreement on what modes are most likely to be effective is helpful and should be sought.
- With the implementation of new treatments, there is still a need for community-based after care (case management, counseling, employment) to insure a reduction in recidivism.

- There is now more local interest in evidence-based programs among many stakeholders.

2.3 Implementation of a treatment modality in a management structure significantly different from that recommended by the agency that developed the treatment protocol should be considered an adjustment in protocol that might affect the overall success of the effort. There is a need to evaluate such an adjustment with the first priority on the impact on treatment success for the population being served.

- Work out management details with all significant stakeholders; have written management and reporting protocols; and monitor and evaluate the implementation.
- Train all key stakeholders (especially juvenile probation counselors) on the strategies and procedures; communicate with them frequently to reinforce the messages; and monitor implementation (at least monthly) to insure fidelity.
- Periodically bring agencies together to try and address challenges around turnover issues, isolation of therapists, supervisor buy-in, consistency of delivery of services, etc.

Key Finding: There persists the assumption that the use of the three treatments is effective but some important empirical questions remain to assess whether this is true

- ✓ Initial evaluation results show that the three therapies were not implemented with sufficient fidelity.
- ✓ Some treatment providing agencies see conflicts between strict adherence to the treatment protocols and making sure that the treatments will work as designed for all ethnic groups. One pointed out, “They say it can work with any population, but it has not been tested in all of them.” To change the treatments to make them more compatible with the cultures of newer immigrants with whom the treatments have not been tested contradicts some of the treatment protocols.

LESSONS LEARNED

2.4 Clarify and monitor treatment protocols to insure fidelity with their designs.

- Get commitments of support from management agencies (those providing training and support to local agencies).
- Develop written agreements about how treatment programs will be administered (at all levels) and delivered. In particular, insure that quality assurance protocols are in place *and* that they are being consistently followed.
- Clarify management and reporting responsibilities so that monitoring is more effective.

2.5 Consider whether modifying evidence-based treatments to better accommodate local ethnic communities will contradict treatment protocols or require changes in them and reach agreements between treatment designers and deliverers on how best to implement treatments with untested populations.

- Expanding the range of treatments offered and offering as many “best practice” alternatives as possible may provide the needed options.

2.6 Whether or not protocols are modified, evaluate the process and outcomes of the chosen and delivered treatments so that delivery and design can be improved.

- Keep a focus on implementing programs and treatments that work but *verify that they do, in fact, work* in the local settings and be open to modifications if they can be shown to be effective.
- Address concerns around possible negative results of evaluations that show less than expected outcomes. Use the evaluations for program improvement and not program punishment. Show commitment to the evaluation process by not linking near-term funding to short-term outcome results.

Key Finding: Strong collaboration between participating entities has resulted in stronger data collection, more information on process and outcomes, and stakeholder commitment.

- ✓ The providers and Juvenile Court Staff have communicated well and worked closely with the TriWest staff in trying to understand and use data.
- ✓ The National program developers from MST have been very supportive of efforts and responsive to needs. The staff with Assessments.com, the entity working with the Juvenile Court on the collection and management of data from the Juvenile Court Risk Assessment instrument, has provided guidance in accessing and using assessment data.
- ✓ Providers and Juvenile Court staff have been willing to “learn from evaluation failures.”
- ✓ Juvenile Court can now track who refers youth and why, and supervisors can monitor better.

LESSONS LEARNED

2.7 Present continued opportunities for collaboration and help these collaborators understand the benefits of working together on such a project.

- Make sure that collaborators are willing to learn from the process.
- Upfront, make clear the roles and responsibilities of the different collaborators in the process of gathering data on program implementation and impacts. Some of the concerns with fidelity and quality assurance issues emerged with uncertainty about data collection responsibilities (*i.e., who was responsible for getting what data from what sources*). Put in place explicit guidelines for implementation and tracking of the process.

Key Finding: Some of the weak findings with respect to recidivism outcomes are a direct result of challenges with program fidelity and implementation.

- ✓ The process data over the course of implementation has consistently shown lower than expected engagement rates, lower completion rates, and high staff turnover. The research on the 3T's suggests that full implementation and strong fidelity and necessary for achieving strong youth outcomes.
- ✓ Over time there have been improvements in the fidelity and quality assurance tracking process, but the results will not be visible for a year or so.
- ✓ Initially there has been a high rejection rate by families, and youth can't participate in programs if they are on the run or in detention.
- ✓ Juvenile Court can now track who refers youth and why and supervisors can monitor the referral process better. This will help the supervisors and overall staff better understand whether the youth are being properly evaluated for participation in different interventions and whether they are being referred to appropriate programs for their needs.

LESSONS LEARNED

2.8 Determine what data are and are not in place and accessible prior to implementation of the evaluation

- Develop a shared understanding among stakeholders on why these data are important, why they are essential to collect, and how they can be useful to individual programs.
- Like in the case of the Promising Programs Evaluation, consider phases of evaluation where in the first phase a formative evaluation is completed to assure that the program is being implemented effectively with fidelity and quality, and once that is in place, a second phase starts to track long-term youth outcomes.
- Changes in recidivism rates will need a 3-5 year time horizon to be truly visible. One may see that individuals are not re-offending in the short-term, but tracking them over a longer period of time is necessary to see if the changes are sustained (i.e., they do not re-offend over several years).

2.9 The ongoing challenges of the expansion of the evidence-based practices highlights the importance of consistent tracking of fidelity and quality assurance data as youth participate in different interventions.

- The more detail that is collected by the Court and through providers on the fidelity and quality of services, the more information will be available to assess true impacts of Court sponsored interventions with different youth.
- There needs to be a shared understanding of the tools in place to keep track of fidelity and quality assurance data and awareness of the roles Court staff, providers and national developers play in consistently tracking these data.
- The tracking system needs to report key indicators regularly to key stakeholders in formats that are meaningful and useful for program improvement management.

Key Finding: There has been an increasing shift in emphasis toward the importance of engagement and motivation in addressing the needs of youth and families involved in the juvenile justice system.

- ✓ Over time the Court has worked with Probation staff and others who work with youth and families in building strategies to better engage and connect with youth and families as part of more effective service provision.
- ✓ Through RIY and other reform efforts there has been a concerted effort to provide staff training on motivational interviewing and cultural competency strategies for engaging and connecting with families.
- ✓ The pro-active work on the part of the Court has changed perceptions of Court as a “keeper of bad kids” or “too detention focused” to one where the entity strives to meet youth and families where they are and find effective ways of helping them change negative behaviors.

LESSONS LEARNED

2.10 As part of increased focus on engagement and working with youth and families, Court staff and local providers should continue to use information on risk and protective factors to shape interventions and provide more direct services.

2.11 The ability to engage and connect with youth and families is seen as crucial for successfully carrying out alternative intervention strategies with youth.

- Court staff and community providers need consistent training and guidance on how to best engage with youth and families representing diverse communities.
- The Court, in particular, is changing the way it views the role and position of the probation staff, and is looking for a different set of qualifications and characteristics among people in these positions.

2.12 Service providers that work with different communities of color and families can provide the Court staff with additional insights on how to reach out and connect with youth and families of color in the implementation of best practices.

- Develop and implement plans to regularly engage in pro-active discussions with leaders and clients to seek ways to keep improving the system.

SECTION 3: Funding & Reinvestment

The crux of the RIY initiative with respect to ongoing funding and sustainability of evidence-based programs is to convince state and local policy makers that the investment of their funds in proven, research based programs such as Functional Family Therapy will result in greater savings or cost avoidance for state and local government budgets than it costs to fund the services.

At the direction of the legislature the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP, the research arm for the state legislature) had already surveyed the national literature to identify proven juvenile justice intervention programs and had carried out evaluations and economic analyses to establish the impacts on case loads of recidivism reduction and the resulting, potential cost reductions. Based on the WSIPP work, an RIY-funded consultant further refined the data to show more specifically the year to year growth of cost avoidance / savings and the allocation of the cost avoidance across different levels of government. It was determined that 69% of cost avoidance resulting from these programs accrued to the state government and 31% to local counties and cities.

In 2003 and 2004 RIY successfully lobbied the legislature to fund studies that provided further support for these conclusions. On April 24, 2005 the State Legislature approved a budget that included \$997,000 for the "Reinvesting in Youth" pilot program in five counties; \$600,000 of that amount went to King County in the current biennium, and, combined with local contributions from King County and the City of Seattle, was sufficient to eliminate the need for foundation funding of these programs in 2006. In 2006, the legislature passed the "Reinvesting in Youth" bill which established the legal basis for the long-term funding of a savings reinvestment strategy for all counties.

State support of \$2.8 million was included in the Governor's proposed 2007-09 biennium budget for full implementation of the state wide Reinvesting in Youth program. The State Legislature actually funded more than twice that amount. \$1,414,000 was targeted to continue RIY in the pilot counties. \$5,735,000 was allocated to fund additional increases in RIY supported evidenced-based programs (without a local match requirement) as part of a strategy to avoid the construction of new state prisons for adults. Of these amounts approximately \$1.2 million will go to King County to sustain the programs begun by RIY with foundation dollars. Thus, political and State budgetary support for innovative and likely cost-effective approaches to reducing juvenile recidivism has grown. Support for committing matching funds in many counties is still lacking.

During the period 2003-2006 RIY expended \$818,953 on the intervention services expansion including training and staffing and an additional \$205,000 on the evaluation of the services expansion and the strengthening of King County evaluation capacity.

One major premise of the RIY theory of change is that the investment in cost-effective, research based interventions will allow governments to avoid costs that would have been spent on incarceration and other deep end activities. These benefits will eventually equal or surpass the costs of treatment. This would produce a sustained source of funding and even produce a surplus of benefits over costs that would allow greater investment in up-stream prevention efforts.

RIY never expected savings would show up on a department's ledger as a specific lower expenditure. In fact, if there are savings from reduced incarceration of youth, the savings may not be recoverable in the sense of moving a budget line from one column to another. As stated previously in this report, this is because there are many factors and trends unrelated to the level of investment in cost effective interventions that effect case loads.

Key Finding: Although overall taxpayer funded costs would be reduced with the RIY approach, no budgetary accounting analysis is likely to observe it.

- ✓ While the Reinvesting in Youth funding strategy has been described as a “savings reinvestment“ strategy, it could be more accurately described as a “cost effective” strategy that reduces deep end costs for state and local government budgets by more than it costs to fund the programs that cause the cost avoidance. “Savings reinvestment” implies that reductions in budget expenditures will occur that can be directly observed, captured and reinvested.
- ✓ The avoided costs attributable to cost effective services will occur in the context of changes in many unrelated long- and short-term factors that may result in overall expenditure reductions that are less than or more than the reductions attributable to the services alone. There may even be an increase in expenditures based on underlying factors and juvenile justice case load trends that are independent of the investments in research based interventions.
- ✓ It is worth noting that over the last several years, including some very difficult budget years, King County has invested new dollars in proven evidenced programs in proportion to the local government share of cost avoidance which are attributable to those programs. And the State has committed to doing the same in the next biennium.
- ✓ “RIY articulated it in a way no one had, and fundamental policy changes were enacted. The budgets are mathematical statements of policy.” ~ funder

LESSONS LEARNED

3.1 Develop ways to succinctly, yet thoroughly explain the economic logic and benefit to the RIY approach.

- It is important to clarify this distinction between a “savings reinvestment” and “cost effective” strategy for stakeholders

3.2 In order to avoid increases in long-term costs, state and local governments at a minimum must invest in the cost effective programs amounts that are necessary to sustain them. They should recognize the potential for a surplus from those investments and attempt to invest at least part of that surplus farther up stream in prevention programs.

- “Focus upstream. Identify youth at an early age by risk behavior around potential to be school dropouts. Engage kids and families sooner with intervention (waiting until high school is too damn late). Get help to the homeless. Kids in detention have no place to be released to.” ~ government staff person.

Key Finding: While positive financial benefits can be realistically achieved with 3-5 years, making the big systemic shifts takes longer.

- ✓ “To see change in a big organization like this you need benchmarks and need to hold a steady course for 10 years with full commitments” ~ elected official.

LESSONS LEARNED

3.3 Encourage participants to make long-term commitments to any new processes and to try them at a scale where the benefits can eventually be seen.

Key Finding: Many small county governments are not set up to fund or manage social services, and many may not have the match to participate. This could be a detriment in the long run if they choose not to participate.

LESSONS LEARNED

- 3.4 Proposing and lobbying for the legislation and its use at local levels needs to be ongoing.**
- 3.5 While emphasizing the cost-effectiveness of these programs from the taxpayers perspective, advocates should also emphasize the benefits to society – including reducing the costs of crime to victims, families and communities and improving the lives of youth in need.**

SECTION 4: Cultural Competency Assessment, Action Planning and Technical Assistance

As RIY started to consider its overall capacity building strategy it formed a community-based advisory group to help identify core needs. The most powerful and not necessarily predictable recommendation to emerge from that group was that a cultural competency assessment process should be a central component of the capacity building strategy. The advisory group recognized that King County is experiencing shifts in its demographics that mean that no agency's staff can be completely reflective of the ethnic identities or cultural backgrounds of all of the clients that they serve. The changing demographics are also reflected in the higher proportions of youth of color (and of African American youth in particular) in the juvenile justice system. Their reasoning was that if agencies can improve their abilities to serve communities of color, they will be more effective, be more successful in keeping youth out of the juvenile justice system and thereby help reduce the disproportional involvement of youth of color in the system.

The Reinvesting in Youth Steering Committee approved a policy that provided that all agencies receiving any type of technical assistance from RIY would also be invited to participate in a cultural competency assessment process. The short-term goal of this process was to help agencies self-assess their competency and then use technical assistance to enhance it. This will, in turn, assist them in being more effective change agents in their communities with a wider set of clients and contribute to a decrease in the disproportionalities now evident in the juvenile justice system (while recognizing that other changes beyond the control of the agencies are also needed).

The first six agencies that were selected to participate in the Promising Program evaluations agreed to also participate in assessments. As other agencies learned about the value of the cultural competency work, they asked to be included. As a result the program was expanded to include eight additional agencies on a stand alone basis.

RIY contracted with consultants from the Minority Executive Directors Coalition (MEDC). MEDC outlined a social justice framework for their approach (influenced by practices developed and taught at Georgetown University's National Center for Cultural Competence). This framework recognizes that the most effective and long-lasting changes that can come out of interventions like this are ones that recognize the existence and influences of institutionalized racism on clients, service providers, the agencies they work for, and collaborating institutions in society. Some diversity training approaches address individual perceptions and interpersonal interactions by trying to increase participants' awareness of racial, ethnic and cultural differences and help people become more sensitive to how they interact with people that are different from themselves. This approach focused instead on the agencies' structures, processes, policies and procedures. It worked at an institutional level and helped staff see ways that their agencies might reduce expressions of institutionalized racism that they themselves were taught to recognize.

The approach was also educational and supportive of self-identified change and avoided being blaming, punitive, or prescriptive. It did not use a deficit model that told organizations where they were lacking but instead used an appreciative inquiry method that proposed a well-reasoned and supportive continuum of cultural competency. It helped organizations see where they were on this continuum, made note of the positive elements in their institutional structures, and allowed them to identify things and ways that they wanted to change.

The goals of the approach were to:

1. Develop each organization's capacity for self assessment;
2. Build awareness and skills in observation of and reflection on issues in cultural competency
3. See themselves on a continuum of cultural competence; and
4. Identify ways that they can enhance their cultural competency with and without outside technical assistance.

MEDC developed a self assessment tool to serve as the basis for the development of a cultural competency action plan and technical assistance plan for each agency. MEDC and subcontractors then provided the technical assistance. In 2004 and 2006, RIY and MEDC convened "fishbowl sessions" in which agencies shared their experiences and accomplishments with each other and with other entities who were interested including funders. The total budget for the cultural competence project is \$178,000 or approximately \$12,715 per agency.

The Cultural Competency assessment and technical assistance process is a key component of a comprehensive strategy to address one facet of the RIY mission; "Reduce racial disparities in the juvenile justice system by building capacity within communities of color to address needs of youth." Most considered the assessment and technical assistance processes to be beneficial for their organizations.

We identify some key findings based on conversations with the consultants, participating agencies and other stakeholders. The consultants, in particular, point out that "it is too soon to really tell the impact of the assessment and evaluation efforts on the organizations," and recommend revisiting these agencies in another three years, since it takes time for "institutional change to set in" and for "leadership to have enough ongoing discussion about cultural competency issues."

Key Finding: There is an ongoing need to enhance cultural competency in all organizations.

- ✓ The approaches that have been used and might continue to be used include: 1) ongoing self assessment to support the implementations of self-designed change efforts in their action plans; 2) the provision of generic training on how to think and behave in ways that honor all cultures and recognize the ways that institutionalized racism has affected all of us regardless of our racial or ethnic identities; 3) training, coaching and technical assistance focused on needs of a specific organization; and 4) education on how to work with specific ethnic groups (especially recent immigrants from cultures not long represented in King County).

LESSONS LEARNED

4.1 Provide training and support in self assessment so that this process can be ongoing.

4.2 Provide technical assistance to keep agencies "moving forward on their journey."

Key Finding: The assessment, action planning and technical assistance process helped support the growth and development of organizational policies and organization-wide learning and knowledge about cultural competency.

- ✓ A clear, tangible outcome of the process was increased organizational learning, particularly in agencies knowledge of how to promote and raise cultural awareness issues that affect both internal and external operations.

- ✓ Some agencies have addressed policies and procedures that impact cultural competence internally by changing mission statements, changing hiring practices, or creating standing committees that deal with institutional change around cultural competency.
- ✓ The work has also helped partner agencies (RIY and government agencies) see and address some of the same cultural competency issues in themselves (e.g., seeing the need to fund interpreters).

Key Finding: Uncertainty about expectations of this process raised some challenges for organizations in their ability to implement and integrate this process into their day-to-day work. Despite this, most made significant progress.

- ✓ A by-product of the assessment approach of “meeting agencies where they are” was that there were no prescribed expectations of specific outcomes from the onset, other than the willingness to be introspective about organizational practices, ethnic and racial makeup, linguistic diversity, and commitment to equitable practices in serving clients.
- ✓ All agencies are at different places when it comes to embracing and benefiting from cultural competency work. For example, one Executive Director noted, “We already had culturally competent practices, were representative of the cultures we serve and addressed linguistic issues, but did not have our work stated as an organizational policy.” As a result, this organization turned its cultural competency practices into official institutional policy through a Board statement on cultural competency and a functional group statement describing the core activities offered by the organization and how they are implemented in a culturally competent manner.
- ✓ Other agencies were quick to acknowledge that they began in a state of “cultural ignorance”, but were able to make great progress toward increased awareness and concrete action steps. Still other agencies were not ready to fully meet the challenges associated with significant breakthroughs.
- ✓ Still other agencies reported that while they were prepared to address cultural competency within their organizations, they were not ready to pursue anti-racist work in the community. As one Executive Director stated, “We were not prepared for the expectation to go and do this work in the community—cultural competency anti-racist work; we were not ready for this level of engagement and felt like we were pushed very far without the context for doing this work.” Many of the organizations were unclear about the expectations for this area, even though it was presented as a “potential” activity that could be (but need not be) part of what a highly culturally competent organization could do. In other words, such action could be self-selected but is probably more likely to be attempted by organizations that have become highly culturally competent themselves.
- ✓ Executive directors in different agencies defined their leadership roles differently. Some believed that they should not impose their own expectations in this area and should only take the agency as far as the staff was ready to go. Others believed that it was their job to establish clear expectations around cultural competence and anti-racism work and to push staff to meet those expectations.

LESSONS LEARNED

4.3 It is important to “challenge” organizations understanding and perspectives on issues of race, culture, power and empowerment.

- Agencies need to carefully consider their role in the external communities they serve.

- It seems that this “challenge” will help the organizations take a more critical and introspective look at their practices, policies, and programs from a perspective that will help them in better serving diverse clients and constituents.

4.4 The assessment and technical assistance must be presented in a manner that meets the agencies “where they are” in the process but with the clearly communicated intention of taking them as far as they are able to go.

- A standard presentation or curriculum about cultural competency is not going to help agencies feel committed to the process or have the ability to critically evaluate their policies and procedures.
- Individualizing the work and having organizational staff members own it is important.

4.4 RIY and the consultants need to work together to set clear expectations around both the cultural competency assessment and planning practices.

- To the extent that one of the expectations is to introduce agencies to the importance of doing anti-racism work, that intention needs to be clearly communicated. If it is an option (but not an expectation) for highly competent organizations, then that needs to be clearly communicated to the agencies.

4.5 From the onset delineate and describe the challenges faced by organizations in attempting to achieve internal and external impacts with respect to cultural competency issues, practices and policies.

- Providing examples of changes made by other organizations may be useful.

Key Finding: At the outset, there was a very limited understanding of the influences of institutionalized racism.

- ✓ This was evident in the rating process on statements and comments about agency policies.
- ✓ Many participants viewed the work as focused on diversity and need to focus on inclusion and celebrations of constituents’ ethnic identities.
- ✓ Most made the shift to understanding the need to address institutional racism directly within their organizations

LESSONS LEARNED

4.6 The motivation to participate will influence readiness and willingness to deeply engage in the process.

- Realize that many organizations and individuals do not have an understanding of the influence of institutional racism.
- Bring in consultants who can help them learn and use their insights to focus on their own needs for change in a supportive, collaborative atmosphere.
- Realize that each organization will start in a different place and end in a different place and that there is no one “right place” for all.

- Organizational readiness to learn is a key factor in its ability to address and sustain changes needed. Organizations need to see where they are and be open to doing the work and use the help that they need.
- One-on-one coaching of each executive director is necessary.

Key Finding: Technical assistance is a valuable tool for helping organizations change their cultural competency.

- ✓ In phase one of the process gaps identified were not necessarily addressed in the action plans developed.

LESSONS LEARNED

4.7 Insist that identified gaps be addressed in the action plans developed.

- Also identify what kind of technical assistance might help the organization change.
- Build in action steps, clear outcomes, and the budgets of time and funds needed.
- Some changes can be made without outside technical assistance.

4.8 The process of self identifying needs and committing to change in the form of a clear and achievable action plan can greatly stimulate and enhance the changes desired.

- Leadership and management are key assets to making the changes.
- Commitment is more important than precise planning but both are highly desired and useful.

Key Finding: The Eurocentric individualization of American culture discourages collaboration and emphasizes competition in ways that harm communities' abilities to address problems.

- ✓ Competition among agencies for limited dollars to assist their clients can decrease the abilities of a diverse community to develop multiple and diverse approaches that meet varied needs of all citizens.

LESSONS LEARNED

4.9 Emphasize the importance of collaboration and the building of relationships across organizations to reduce the work “in silos” that isolates organizations.

- Seek ways to increase changes in knowledge about why and how to encourage inter-agency collaboration.
- Seek ways to change attitudes in favor of collaboration.
- Seek ways to change collaboration behavior for the common good (e.g., encouraging larger organizations to assist or avoid competition with smaller, grass roots organizations that have a harder time competing for funding).

4.10 Funding via a request for proposals process should look for commitments to and capabilities in cultural competency.

Key Finding: Given this short process and the number of agencies that were able to affect institutional changes that will enhance service delivery, the investments in enhancing cultural competency are worthwhile, but the sustainability of these changes can only be seen over time.

- ✓ Some organizations changed in ways far beyond what outsiders might consider sufficient.

LESSONS LEARNED

4.11 Regardless of initial perceptions, believe that organizations can and will change if given the opportunity, encouragement and assistance that they need.

4.12 A re-assessment process is necessary to measure and encourage long-term change.

- The self-assessment process needs to be replicable by the agency to have ongoing life.
- Outside review after two years would be ideal for more thorough re-assessment and should be part of the budget (even if this means serving fewer agencies because average costs will be higher).
- This would help quantify the impacts of the approach for funders and provide tangible evidence of progress or additional needs to the organizations and their staff.
- This would show that this whole approach is a “process” and not a “product” or “act”.

4.13 Funders can encourage this kind of change in other ways as well.

- Model it.
- Identify cultural competency as important and necessary.
- Make it a criterion for funding.
- Make it an expectation.
- Fund its development in addition to the tasks that they are providing funding for.

SECTION 5: Capacity Building: Elements of Successful Program Guidebook Coaching and Technical Assistance

As part of the total capacity building package, RIY's community-based advisory committee recommended an array of technical assistance activities that might be useful to agencies. At about the same time King County launched the development of a "Guidebook to Elements of Successful Programs" that was intended to focus on programs that served youth involved in or on the threshold of the juvenile justice system. As the Guidebook was developed, it became evident that it was the logical framework around which to build RIY's technical assistance program. As a result RIY contributed to the completion of the Guidebook and developed a package to "take it to market" by providing funding for local community-based agencies to conduct assessments based on the "Elements", complete action plans, and receive technical assistance to better bring to bear on home grown programs the use of research-based practices.

In May 2005 King County completed the development of the Elements of Successful Programs Guidebook. In 2005 RIY invited community-based agencies to apply to participate in the "Elements" program, and 15 agencies were selected. RIY contracted with Organizational Research Services (ORS) to work with the participating agencies in assessing elements of their programs and formulating action plans for technical assistance needs. RIY contracted with the Nonprofit Assistance Center (NAC) work with agencies to the determine technical assistance priorities and to identify consultants who provided assistance on issues related to theory of change development, staff training, evaluation and assessment, curriculum development and communication. The total expenditures for the Elements of Successful project were \$208,485.

Rene Doran of Doran Consulting completed an external evaluation of this component of the RIY project in February 2007 and is primarily responsible for the findings and lessons contained in this section. Her final report is included as the APPENDIX.

Key Finding: In general there is consensus among all involved (stakeholders, agency participants, and consultants) that the ESP process has been successful in building agency capacity through self-examination and skill-building.

- ✓ The engagement in the process and enthusiasm towards the technical assistance has been strong among agencies, and the participants believe, and expect in the future, that the assessment process and products of the technical assistance will benefit their long-term programming efforts.
- ✓ The hope among many providers and at least some funders is that such a process will persist as a means of ongoing assessments of the quality of programs and could be used on a consistent basis by providers as a review of their program efforts. Funders and contract managers might, in the future, also use the elements in the Guidebook to help select and monitor programs.

Key Finding: Programs consistently prioritized similar elements for more attention in their action plans and technical assistance including: articulation of their theory of change and evaluation (Elements #3 and #19 of the ESP guidebook).

- ✓ In their action plans, 13 programs identified Element #3--Theory of Change and 13 identified Element #19--Evaluation and Continuous Program Improvement; all programs named one or the other, and 11 named both. All of the participants desiring technical assistance identified these as their first or second priority for consultant assistance.
- ✓ Participants reported knowledge gains most commonly in the area of evaluation. Several also noted greater understanding of the theoretical basis for their program.

LESSONS LEARNED

5.1 “Home grown” programs greatly desire and benefit from a process to review and enhance their program elements based on a comparison with research-based practice;

- ESP was a good response to concerns from community-based agencies that funders were ignoring the strengths of home grown programs.

5.2 Since all participants identified core program framework issues such as theory of change and logic model development in their action plans, it might make sense in the future to strengthen these core areas and then follow-up with more focus on the other program components

- In such an approach, programs would first work on building and clarifying logic and theory of change models as a means of helping them better understand their interventions
- This approach would mirror in many ways the development process used in the Promising Programs Evaluation (see more in Section 6).

Key Finding: The individualized coaching process was cited as high quality and effective, even though it was more costly and reduced cross-agency sharing. The process of doing the self-assessment with coaching assistance was itself a powerful form of TA and learning.

- ✓ Nearly all participants felt the coaching facilitated their ESP experience because it provided the opportunity to clarify understanding of the elements and made the research concepts in The Guidebook more accessible. It is likely, based on the comments, that few would have read The Guidebook thoroughly were it not for the coaching.
- ✓ Those in the first cohort of ESP implementation received much of their coaching initially in a large group, with that format changing to one-on-one coaching sessions after feedback and experiences confirmed the large group modality was not productive.

LESSONS LEARNED

5.3 To preserve the rigor and quality of the process and maximize learning by participants, ESP should maintain its approach of using a “one-agency-to-one coach” format in conducting the assessment and action plan phases.

5.4 To maintain “lateral capacity building”, participants could converse via an electronic listserv, and the project could provide regular updates to participants with details on program models, action plan elements, and TA requests and products. A website might be a useful tool to update the elements and to provide a place where agencies could share their challenges and successes.

Key Finding: Delays in the completion of the Guidebook and in the organization of the technical assistance compressed the time available for technical assistance particularly for the latter cohorts.

- ✓ Almost all providers waited too long between the completion of their action plans and the development of their technical assistance (TA) plans; once the TA plans were finalized it took more time to receive the TA. Since much of the TA was sequential, with later steps building upon earlier products, the delays resulted in some discontinuity of context for participants, rushed the learning process, and competed with programs' busiest time (beginning of the school year),

Key Finding: Going through the entire ESP process, from assessment to action planning to technical assistance, was intense and time consuming, particularly for agencies already busy with day-to-day activities².

- ✓ Just over half of the programs said that *agency resources were not a factor* limiting their experience; only one cited agency resources as an impediment to participation. Despite these costs, a few noted that it was worth the expense; others were waiting the benefits of the TA to decide.

LESSONS LEARNED

5.5 It is important to build in realistic, adequate, and appropriately sequenced timelines for each phase of the project.

- Building the TA plan should happen concurrently with or soon after developing the action plan. Ideally, a much longer time frame should be built in for TA. [RIY extended the planned time for completion of the TA by two months.]
- Phasing the ESP process by focusing on core elements first (e.g., theory development) might also alleviate some issues in delivering TA by spreading it out thematically.

5.6 Agency leadership influences staff learning and programs. As such it is crucial to encourage and support the involvement of the agency executive director with staff.

- The eventual impact of the organizational learning process—the quality of the action plan, the priority of the work, the expectations of participants, their willingness to learning and identify areas for improvement—rely on the internal functioning and leadership of the agency.

5.7 Future implementation of ESP should accurately gauge an agency's true capacity to assure participation from all key individuals.

- While it may be costly, involvement of key staff, from agency leadership to program staff, is essential to sustaining long-term program improvements.

² During the assessment and action plan phases, all programs together dedicated a total of more than 900 hours of staff time; however, individual programs ranged in the amount of staff hours contributed from 20 to 200 hours (with an average 60.7 and a median of 40 hours). Three indicated there probably was some loss in income due to redirecting staff away from income-generating activities; and no one presented this as a problem for participation. Two agencies indicated that quality assurance time was built into staffing schedules.

- Program staff can supply the implementation-specific information required by the process, and agency leadership supplies the resources and motivation needed to implement and sustain change.

Key Finding: Sustaining program improvements gained through the ESP process will be an enduring challenge.

- ✓ The RIY staff, coaches, and TA consultants kept the improvement process in front of the agencies. During the break from action planning to TA, few agencies progressed on action plans, even on steps not requiring outside resources or consultation.
- ✓ ESP took several approaches that may lead to longer-term improvements: some TA products were aimed at programs' technical impacts and institutionalizing improvements, such as updating procedure manuals, curriculum, and agency policies—changes with long life-spans.
- ✓ TA consultants said that the people involved in the process were changed—it is now part of a program manager's regular toolkit to use The Guidebook or think about impacts when designing new programs.
- ✓ While there is no guarantee for sustained funding for the ESP project, RIY staff anticipate that a priority of Phase 2 of RIY to begin in 2007 will be to sustain the capacity building elements of the project including ESP. King County has included dollars in its 2007 budget to support ongoing ESP related work.

LESSONS LEARNED

5.8 Most organizations can realistically expect to make two to three substantive changes in a year; most action plans identified many more. A Longer-term focus (assurance of funding for ESP) would increase the odds for sustaining change.

5.9 Funders could adopt the coach-guided self-assessment concept with the Elements as a set of standards for agencies to meet.

- (*The Guidebook designers are less confident of using the assessment in this manner, since it was intended as a self-reflection tool and requires an insider's perspective.*)

SECTION 6: Capacity Building: Promising Programs Evaluation

The introduction and expansion of “proven”, evidence-based intervention services in King County encountered resistance among community-based providers who believe that their existing home grown models are effective and potentially more responsive to the needs of the county’s ethnically diverse communities. While persisting in its support for proven models, RIY determined that promising home grown models deserved the opportunity to demonstrate their effectiveness. RIY also believed that the combined outcome and process evaluations would themselves be capacity building opportunities for programs that had not had the resources to apply rigorous techniques to the assessment of their activities.

RIY hired a consultant, Davis Ja and Associates, to develop the research design and work closely with the participating agencies in the implementation of the evaluation. In this work the consultant has provided agencies with guidance in the formulation of theory of change models, evaluation instruments and systems for implementing data collection and managing outcome data.

The original plan for the promising program evaluations was there would be six target programs and each program would have its own comparison group. After intensive effort this proved to be impractical because no groups of comparable youth could be identified with reasonable resources. As a result the research design focused on a multi-site evaluation with six participating agencies and three comparison program models and intended to assess program impacts on performance measures and outcomes related to domains such as self-esteem/confidence, family relations, communication, problem solving, and positive adult relations. The ultimate outcome focused on long-term criminal activity and recidivism rates.

Davis Ja and Associates staff worked closely with the individual programs to build their capacity to implement the evaluation. At the onset the agencies participated in a training workshop where they worked with the consultants on the development of program logic models intended to help them better understand their program theory. Additionally, Davis Ja collaborated with N-Power in the development of a common database for the management and tracking of process and outcome data on participants.

In general there is common sentiment among funders, staff, consultants and providers that this has been an informative process. There is an appreciation that RIY has been willing to make an investment in understanding the efficacy of these home-grown programs, and the providers have greatly appreciated the role that RIY and Davis Ja have played in helping guide them through the process.

There have been significant delays in the implementation of the project. Collecting the base line data for a sufficient number of youth and then collecting additional data on those same youth proved to be more time consuming and costly than originally expected. The original completion date for data collection was extended from June 2006 to March 2007. Agencies have expressed some frustrations with the delay in more ongoing feedback and reporting on the process and outcome data.

Since there has not been a summary to date of outcome results, there is still an uncertainty of whether the results will answer the question about whether these Promising Practices “work.” The findings below are preliminary and will be updated upon completion of the Promising Programs evaluation in September 2007.

Key Finding: The process of implementing evaluation has helped agencies build their capacity to understand programming, carry out evaluation of impacts, and address needs of the population they serve.

- ✓ Participating agencies have better awareness of and are more self-reflective about their programs, how they are working and how they might be implemented with greater fidelity.
- ✓ Participating agencies have stronger infrastructure in place for the collection, management and ongoing reporting of process and outcome data, and see how to start using outcome data for making decisions about program efforts.
- ✓ Programs have gained a “common language” around theory and evaluation to help think about the ways that their efforts can have impacts on the populations served.

LESSONS LEARNED

- 6.1 Upfront training and development of theoretical logic models is important for establishing common language and helping agencies better understand and articulate the underlying rationale behind the services they offer.**
- 6.2 Having the evaluation consultant as a “partner” as opposed to an entity that simply collects and analyzes data from an external perspective is important for building agency commitment to the process.**
- 6.3 With respect to the evaluation of program impacts, it might support more insightful study if “best” and “promising” programs are provided with the opportunity to understand and refine their service strategies before starting to evaluate the long-term outcomes for youth and family participants.**

Key Finding: Participating programs and consultants encountered significant challenges in implementing the data collection and day-to-day evaluation efforts.

- ✓ Many programs have had a difficult time with implementation of project components around follow-up data collection with youth, consistent data entry, and the use of multiple, long data collection instruments. The time and resources needed for timely completion of tasks has been burdensome for some agencies.
- ✓ Evaluation consultant has had to devote additional resources to work closely with agencies to keep up with data collection needs and demands.
- ✓ Concerns have emerged with respect to the fidelity and consistency of data collection and the ability to get accurate data on program participants.

LESSONS LEARNED

- 6.4 Most agencies will require resources and guidance in developing procedures to meet challenges of longitudinal data collection with youth participants.**
 - It is important to think about how these resources might be provided. Is it in the form of external staff assigned to data collection and evaluation or finding “more time” for program staff to carry out these functions.
- 6.5 It is important to assess the tradeoffs of the desire to get data on a large number of outcomes and performance measures for purposes of research vs. the local program’s ability to carry out such an endeavor.**

6.6 Make certain upfront that participating agencies understand the expectations and obligations involved in such an evaluation process and are committed throughout the agency to carry out the process.

- Some agencies, despite their best intentions, will not have the internal resources to carry out such rigorous evaluations.

Key Finding: Implementing the multi site comparisons design has been challenging.
(Lessons learned will be noted when the Promising Programs Evaluation is complete in 2007)

- ✓ One of the original six participant agencies dropped out of the evaluation.
- ✓ Over time it became clear that the data from one of the two comparison sites was not usable for the evaluation.
- ✓ An expected comparison to the implementation of the County funded FFT programming may not materialize given the challenges with the corresponding evaluation of the Expansion of Evidence-based Practices.

SECTION 7: System Change: Juvenile Justice and Other Youth Serving Systems

RIY was one of a set of ongoing initiatives with an emphasis on changing the ways that the Juvenile Justice System addresses the needs of youth and families involved in this system. RIY, along with efforts such as the Juvenile Justice Master Planning Process (JJOMP), Reclaiming Futures (supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and focused on better coordination between juvenile justice, substance abuse and mental health systems), and the King County Systems Integration Initiative (focused on integration of the juvenile justice and foster care systems), have used collaborations between providers, governmental officials and Juvenile Court to help push for reforms in the juvenile justice system. There is evidence to suggest that these reform efforts have affected the procedures and practices used in this system, the operations and functions present in the system, and the “culture” of service delivery and programming among those entities involved in the system. The core of this work has been to address issues around information sharing, integration of resources and relationships between entities involved in these youth serving systems.

RIY has played an important role in contributing to system changes. RIY provided funding for a Project Manager position at the Juvenile Court, overseeing the expansion of the Evidence-based Programs. This individual has been involved in providing training to court staff and working with local providers to focus on questions of program implementation, data collection, use of data, and staff engagement with clients and families. RIY has also provided funding for Multi-systemic Therapy services to support the implementation of the King County Reclaiming Futures initiative funded through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. This initiative has focused on working with youth in the juvenile justice system who present substance use problems and/or co-occurring disorders, and has involved putting in place a continuum of assessment, treatment and supports for these youth.

Additionally, the RIY staff has played a crucial “oversight” role, in part by being purposeful in attempts to understand and account for the challenges related to implementation of the Evidence-based Practices, and by remaining a clear voice and strong advocate for the concept of reinvesting savings and avoided costs. Likewise, RIY, through its “Elements of Successful Programs” capacity building project, has funded a collaboration between King County Juvenile Court and community-based providers to establish protocols for the sharing of information on youth in both systems.

Some of the key system changes as related to program implementation are discussed earlier in Section 2 where we outline specific lessons learned from the implementation of the Evidence-based Practices. In this section we focus more generally on other elements of change in system operations, procedures and functions that have resulted, in part, from a combination of the work sponsored by RIY and the other initiatives.

Key Finding: The system of tracking services provided to, and information about youth involved with the Court and maintaining data on these youth has improved dramatically.

- ✓ There is more information being collected from youth at various points of their involvement with the system. This involves gathering more information on individual characteristics, family characteristics, risk and protective factors, and ongoing services provided.
- ✓ The work with Assessments.com has increased access to more consistent information for Court staff and service providers working with youth and families.

- ✓ There has been more consistent and ongoing use of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy Risk Assessment Instrument at different points of a youth's experience in the system. *(Though there are still significant challenges associated with tracking and reassessing youth in the system.)*
- ✓ The Court has developed new case plan documentation intended to gather more information on who gets what types of services and the rationale for decisions about service provision.
- ✓ The court has moved from the JJWAN to JJWEB database systems for maintaining client data on background factors and criminal activities. This has improved access to client data among a wider range of court staff.

LESSONS LEARNED

7.1 The increased availability and access to data provides Court and community agency staff with increased information to use in making decisions about service provision.

- Probation staff and local provider staff can use information on risk and protective factors or ongoing interventions to assess how to best address the needs of individual youth and families.

Key Finding: The information collected by Court staff on youth through risk assessments or other tools can be very useful and informative to the local community providers who serve the youth and families with their programs and services.

- ✓ At this point many agencies know there are useful data available, but have not understood how to best access this information.

Key Finding: The study funded by RIY to develop protocols for information sharing between Juvenile Court and community providers identified key information resources and determined that there are few legal or policy impediments to sharing the information that providers find most useful.

- ✓ The challenge is to ensure that established protocols are consistently employed by juvenile probation counselors.

LESSONS LEARNED

7.2 The recommended procedures and policies for information sharing between court staff and community providers should be implemented, and regular check-backs between court staff and providers should be provided in order to assure consistent compliance.

Key Finding: With the increased involvement and support from Judges, there is evidence of changes in sentencing practices and the use of alternatives to detention.

- ✓ With changes in the Court Modification Reports, probation staff are providing Judges with more information about a youth's risk and protective factors and the interventions that they have tried with the youth or family. With this information, judges have a better perspective on the individual youth and his/her unique situation.

- ✓ The reform efforts have consistency and effectively conveyed the message to judges that there are evidence-based, proven alternatives to detention available at their disposal. This is giving judges the option of “letting kids out of jail” and funneling them into local alternatives believed to work. The emergence of programs such as drug court, therapeutic court and Reclaiming Futures and the state legislation authorizing sentencing alternatives have supported this.
- ✓ New filings against juveniles and the rates of bed use and use of JRA have declined in King County at rates significantly higher than observed in other counties across the State.

LESSONS LEARNED

7.3 The opportunity for Judges to consider evidence-based alternatives to detention is an important and crucial component of the reinvestment strategy.

- At the time of sentencing judges must consider all options for addressing the needs of the youth involved in the system.
- More complete information on the youth, his/her family, his/her unique situation and the availability of programs that might help this youth allows judges to look for viable options to incarceration, particularly for youth from communities of color.

Key Finding: High disproportionality in the involvement of youth of color in the juvenile justice system continues to exist.

- ✓ Youth of color still make up a disproportionate percentage of those in detention and these rates are not changing.
- ✓ There has been slight progress in access to alternatives to detention for some communities of color.
- ✓ There still remains a concern about the Court’s ability to engage with and connect with families and youth of color.
- ✓ To date, the evaluation of the Evidence-based practices has shown little evidence of improving outcomes for youth of color relative to Caucasian youth.
- ✓ It is still too soon to determine whether RIY’s cultural competency strategy will have an effect on disproportionality.

LESSONS LEARNED

7.4 It is essential that the training of staff and providers addresses the barriers to engagement among youth and families of color.

- Engagement of youth and families is often quite challenging and complex in some communities. There needs to be an emphasis on how providers can draw on strengths of the community as a means of building rapport and engagement.
- Language difficulties and communication are persistent challenges that need to be addressed.

APPENDIX

***ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS
CASE STUDY***

Reinvesting In Youth

*Elements of Successful Programs
Case Study*

*Final Report
February 28, 2007*

*contributing to the
Systems Change/Lessons Learned Evaluation*

Submitted to Reinvesting in Youth,
City of Seattle Human Services Department

by
Rene Toolson Doran
Doran Consulting

1. Introduction

The Lessons Learned Evaluation ESP Case Study

The **ESP Case Study**, conducted by Rene Doran of Doran Consulting, is a chapter in the overall Reinvesting in Youth Lessons Learned Evaluation. The case study explores the process and impacts of the Elements of Successful Programs through its implementation by RIY from September 2005 through February 2007. Information supporting the findings from this case study comes from:

- Review of all relevant ESP documents (participant’s ESP proposals, Action Plans, Technical Assistance Plans¹, Final Monitoring Reports², and the summary of NAC’s Agency Exit Survey.
- Interviews and guided conversations with ESP program participants after the completion of their action plans.³ (Follow-up phone conversations were also held with 8 of the participants in November 2006⁴ and with 12 in February 2007⁵.)
- Interviews and guided conversations with key stakeholders and consultants involved in the project conducted throughout 2006: Sadikifu Akina-James and Pat Lemus (King County Department of Community and Human Services), Jim Street and Darryl Cook (Reinvesting in Youth, Seattle Human Services Department), Mary Shaw (Seattle Human Services Department), and Nancy Ashley (Heliotrope).
- Interviews conducted with TA Consultants and Coaches in August 2006: Marc Bolan (Organizational Research Services), Bill Leon (ORS/Geo Education and Research); Davis Ja and staff (Davis Ja and Associates); and Jodi Nishioka and Judy DeBarros (Nonprofit Assistance Center); participation in the TA Consultant Debrief on January 29, 2007.
- Observations and participant comments during the ESP Fish Bowl on October 26, 2006.

¹ TA Plans were prepared by the Nonprofit Assistance Center and received from all agencies except Friends of Youth (FOY elected not to receive TA).

² Final Monitoring Reports were prepared by ORS ESP Consultants who met with individual ESP participants to follow-up on progress achieved on the action plans. Reports were received from 8 agencies, representing all cohorts: Auburn Youth and Family Services, Friends of Youth, Northshore Youth and Family Services, Powerful Voices, Ruth Dykeman Children’s Center, SafeFutures Youth Center, Valley Cities Counseling and Consultation, and YouthCare Orion Center.

³ In April 2006, interviews were conducted with participant agency directors/staff from cohorts 1 and 2: Jessie Forsyth and Randy Nelson (Youth Care); Jeri White (Southeast Youth and Family Services), Sorya Svy (SafeFutures Youth Center), Bruce Mulvey (Northshore Youth and Family Services), Beratta Gomillion (Center for Human Services), George Dignan (King County Work Training Program), Mike Heinsisch (Kent Youth and Family Services), and Jim Blanchard (Auburn Youth and Family Services, conducted in August). In August 2006, interviews were conducted with those from cohorts 3 and 4: Loren Inman (Valley Cities), Diane Boyd (Ruth Dykeman), Tanya Kim and Anne Muno (Powerful Voices), Paula Frederick (Friends of Youth), Deborah Stake (Central Youth and Family Services), Cheryl Chow (Girl Scouts), Steve Daschle and Nanette Westerman (Southwest Youth and Family Services).

⁴ In November 2006 follow phone conversations occurred with Bruce Mulvey (Northshore YFS), Sorya Svy (SafeFutures), Randy Nelson (YouthCare), Tanya Kim (Powerful Voices), Loren Inman (Valley Cities), Diane Boyd (Ruth Dykeman), and Steve Daschle (Southwest YFS), and Deborah Stake (Central YFS).

⁵ February 2007 follow phone conversations occurred with those programs who in October 2006 had not yet finished the process: Jim Blanchard (Auburn Youth and Family Services), Beratta Gomillion (Center for Human Services), Jeri White (Southeast Youth and Family Services), Bruce Mulvey (Northshore YFS), Sorya Svy (SafeFutures), Cyoon MacBride (Kent Youth and Family Services), George Dignan (King County Work Training Program), Ann Muno (Powerful Voices), Cheryl Chow (Girl Scouts), Steve Daschle (Southwest YFS), Diane Boyd (Ruth Dykeman), and Deborah Stake (Central YFS).

The Creation of the Elements of Successful Programs

Developed by the King County Department of Community and Human Services with funding and implementation support from Reinvesting in Youth, the Elements of Successful Programs project has two goals:

- Provide a means to demonstrate the use of best practice by community-based (or “home grown”) programs working with at-risk youth.
- Increase the level of quality of practice within those programs,

King County Department of Community and Human Services funded a meta-analysis of research of current research reviewing and summarizing more than 400 evaluations of juvenile justice programs, which identified a set of program characteristics consistently present among those programs demonstrating success in reducing recidivism among juvenile offenders—*the elements*. The County conducted community focus groups to begin informing local agencies and community members about these elements and gather input; input was incorporated into these elements when research supported it. Through the entire process, the multi-agency Evaluation Work Group monitored the growing body of findings and developing products.

Ultimately, this research and community process led to the writing of ***The Guidebook to Elements of Successful Programs to Reduce Juvenile Justice Recidivism, Delinquency and Violence*** (*The Guidebook*)— a compilation of those characteristics shared by programs demonstrating success. *The Guidebook* provides the research base for 24 elements and describes each in detail, providing indicators for programs to use to judge their alignment with each element. *The Guidebook* was reviewed and endorsed by King County’s Juvenile Justice Work Group and the County Council’s Law Justice and Human Services Committee.

Reinvesting in Youth became involved in ESP as they were exploring means to building capacity among programs serving youth at greatest risk of encountering or already involved in the juvenile justice system: *The Guidebook* and its assessment offered a clear way to provide technical assistance on best practice. While the County played the leadership role in development of *The Guidebook*, Reinvesting in Youth took on the lead in implementation, essentially “taking it to market”.

2. Who participated in ESP?

Agency Participants

Reinvesting in Youth issued an RFP (and encouragement) for agency participation, offering the coaching and technical assistance to successful applicants. In the end, 15 agencies were identified as appropriate for the process, and these were divided into 4 cohorts, loosely based on the type of services they provide. Cohort 1 began in September 2005, followed by Cohort 2 in November 2005 and Cohorts 3 and 4 in January 2006.

Reinvesting In Youth identified 15 agencies to participate in ESP:

Cohort 1

*Auburn Youth and Family Services
Center for Human Services
Northshore Youth and Family Services
Southeast Youth and Family Services*

Cohort 2

*Kent Youth and Family Services
King County Work Training Program/New Start
SafeFutures Youth Center
YouthCare/Orion Center*

Cohort 3

*Girl Scouts Totem Lake Council
Powerful Voices
Valley Cities Counseling and Consultation*

Cohort 4

*Central Youth and Family Services
Friends of Youth
Ruth Dykeman Children’s Center
Southwest Youth and Family Services*

There is great diversity in the size, reach, and capacity among the organizations selected for participation:

- Most of the agencies have existed for more than a decade; at least 6 are more than 30 years old.
- All but one agency are non-profits; King County Work Training Program/New Start is a program out of King County Department of Community and Human Services.
- There is a wide variation in the size of the agencies participating, with budgets from \$600,000 to well over \$4 million, and staff ranging from two to more than 100.
- They are located throughout King County, some having multiple locations, with 8 based in Seattle. Some serve very large geographic areas where the population is spread out, while others serve more concentrated areas or neighborhoods. A few provide services across county lines; Girl Scouts Totem Council reaches a ten-county area, and Ruth Dykeman Children’s Center serves children throughout the state of Washington.

While there is great diversity in the actual services provided by the participating agencies, all provide multiple services, with the generalized summary as follows:

Agency Services (<i>agencies all provide more than one of the following</i>)	#
Youth development services, such as teen centers, recreation and after-school programs	12
Mental health services and/or counseling	11
Chemical dependency counseling or treatment services	9
Family support services	6
Education and workforce development activities	5
Services for homeless youth	5
Juvenile justice intervention or gang intervention services	4

Programs

Only one organization selected to apply the ESP to their entire agency (SafeFutures Youth Center). The remaining selected a program within their agencies that most closely addressed youth involved or at high risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system. As a result, they chose a wide variety of programs to participate in ESP, with ranges in size and capacity:

- Approximate annual program budgets range from \$20,000 to \$1.2 million, with roughly one-third at or below \$100,000, another third under \$500,000 and the final third over \$500,000 (2 programs reported annual budgets more than \$1 million).
- Programs employ from 1 person to more than 20 people, with some programs indicating a lot of fluctuation in the number of staff over the course of a year.
- The number of youth served annually varies from 20 to more than 1000. Nearly half of the programs (7) serve fewer than 100 youth; another one-third serve between 120 and 350, and two programs serve more than 600 youth annually.

The 15 programs selected could be categorized into the following specific service areas:

Program Focus <i>(each program provides only one of the following)</i>	#
Girls—support and education groups for at risk girls, education groups for girls in detention, support and education for young girls with incarcerated mothers, and case management for homeless girls in or at risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system	4
Substance abuse treatment	4
Counseling	2
Education and/or GED for those at risk of not finishing high school (dropped out, expelled, truant, etc.)	2
Specific/multi-service interventions for youth involved or at of involvement in the juvenile justice system (one leaning more towards counseling, the other towards education, youth development and case management)	2
Youth development, education and support activities for at risk kids	1

Programs reported diversity in their funding base as well. Most programs (at least 9) were funded by King County, followed by sources including local cities (8), federal government (7) and state government (6), and private foundations (5). Some programs were able to bill insurance (4) and/or Medicaid (2). Most programs (11) cited at least 3 funding sources; some programs—those smaller in scope—had only one or two funders. Programs also reported collaborations with other programs to bring in services or staff to reach their clients (or joint programming to reach a community or neighborhood).

Why Programs Participated

When asked why they wanted to participate, most programs (12 of 15) reported a desire for some aspect of program improvement—to learn ways to improve or strengthen, become more effective, or to improve outcomes for the youth and communities they serve. A second highly common answer was to demonstrate their programs to be effective and gain acceptance or credibility (validation). Of the 15 programs, nearly half (7) noted that participation would enhance their ability to raise funds for the program by improving their competitiveness, increasing their attractiveness to funders, and/or completing a process anticipated to be required for future King County funding. A few (4 of the 15) participated in ESP to gain access to the promised technical assistance (3 specifically noted a desire to use this to address their evaluation processes).

3. How did the process go?

Program Implementation

RIY contracted with Organizational Research Services (ORS) to complete the “coaching” phase with participating agencies from September 2005 to March 2006. ORS coaches worked with agency staff and leaders to conduct an **internal self-review** of the program using *The Guidebook* and a companion assessment tool. Through the assessment process, they identified elements where the programs align with standards in *The Guidebook*, elements where alignment occurs but documentation may be lacking, and elements where indicators are not met.

Using the assessment, coaches and program teams developed **action plans**, which identified tangible steps to guide the programs on a path toward improvement. Action plans described the steps to achieve each standard, who would lead each step, the resources necessary, and a timeline.

RIY contracted with Nonprofit Assistance Center (NAC) to orchestrate the delivery of **technical assistance** to the participating agencies throughout 2006. All participants elected to receive technical assistance except Friends of Youth⁶. Based upon actions and resource needs identified in the action plans, NAC worked with programs to develop a TA plan to support them in progressing and, ultimately, completing their action plans. NAC, in turn, contracted with local consultants based upon their areas of expertise to work with programs to implement specific steps in their TA plans. Depending upon program needs and consultant skill sets, some programs worked with one consultant, and some programs worked with numerous consultants to address all the priority needs in their plans.

TA providers included:

⁶ Friends of Youth participated in the assessment, enjoyed the coaching process, and developed an action plans with a few very do-able goals, which were completed during the summer of 2006. They felt the process was highly informative and took it seriously, but they felt it was redundant with other audit and evaluation requirements of current funders. They did not feel they needed any TA because their action steps didn't require any, and they were the first to complete the process. Their project director was able to articulate a strong working knowledge and use of *The Guidebook* and maintains a documentation binder as a reference and communication tool.

Organizational Research Services Geo Education & Research Nonprofit Assistance
Center
Business Government & Community Davis Ja & Associates NPower

Overarching Comments

There is agreement among those involved (stakeholders, agencies, consultants) that ESP has been successful in building agency capacity through self-examination and skill building. The coaching/self-assessment process was itself a very powerful form of technical assistance. The process offered a unique approach to educating providers about current research—something they usually desire, but lack the time to effectively seek out or sift through; the assessment process resulted in many providers actually reading *The Guidebook* and exploring the research base for their own interventions. All involved felt it to be thorough and comprehensive. The experience benefits received through the process were related to the extent and quality of leadership provided by the agency executive director or in some cases by the program leadership, and their involvement.

Implementation Process by ESP Component

The Guidebook and Assessment

There was total consensus among program participants, consultants, and stakeholder touching the ESP project that *The Guidebook* is a comprehensive document detailing the state of research. All 15 programs reported *The Guidebook* and its assessment facilitated the process because of its thoroughness and relevance. *The Guidebook* is seen an excellent reference document, especially now that people have become familiar with it.

The assessment was cited as an effective structure to examine their programs, and as a result identify program strengths and areas for improvement. Many felt the assessment process gave them an opportunity to bring their program team together (whether that includes staff or partners) to reflect upon their program and to learn and converse strategically about the theory and research behind their program components.

There were very few negative comments on the usefulness or relevance of *The Guidebook*. While appreciating its thoroughness, the high level of detail made the workload for completion time consuming and sometimes a struggle (and some agencies would have liked some staff assistance to help with gathering and writing documents).

After some probing, a few wondered if some elements supported application to specific populations from a research-base—most notably girls, immigrant and refugee populations. At least 3 participants indicated that *The Guidebook's* focus on recidivism and the criminal justice system was sometimes a difficulty because the program was more preventive in focus and served youth for whom the risk factors did not yet apply. For at least two programs, *The Guidebook* seemed geared towards much larger programs, making applicability of some of the elements more distant. For another two programs, a few of the elements seemed irrelevant, or perhaps too rigid (e.g. clinical assessment, staff qualifications, sufficient intensity and duration) because of the more “youth development” nature of their programs. For example, one program used “the

ability of a staff person to connect with kids” as more important than other staff qualifications cited in *The Guidebook*.

Coaching and development of the action plans

Nearly all participants (13 of 15) felt the coaching facilitated their ESP experience because it provided the opportunity to clarify and explain the elements and the process. “The coaching and facilitating process was as useful as the elements themselves”. Participants reported they felt their coaching experience to be tailored and flexible, and consultants demonstrated an understanding or empathy for the issues of program implementation. Based on participant comments, it is unlikely that many would have read *The Guidebook* thoroughly were it not for the coaching.

All participants had positive comments on their ORS coaches, Bill Leon and Marc Bolan. The coaches made the research concepts in *The Guidebook* accessible through “translation”, examples, simpler language, patience and flexibility. Coaches are knowledgeable of the concepts, and participants noted they were deft at asking questions to stimulate deep thinking.

Development of the action plans

Eleven participants felt the development of the **action plans** facilitated their ESP experience in generating tangible action steps towards improvement. At the same time, the action plans’ utility is limited by the quality of the TA that follows. Two participants felt it is a useful tool to rate their progress towards improvement.

Programs consistently prioritized similar elements in their action plans for more attention and technical assistance. Thirteen programs identified *Element #3--Theory of Change* and 13 identified *Element #19--Evaluation and Continuous Program Improvement* (all programs named one element or the other, and 11 named both). All of the 14 participants desiring technical assistance identified these as their first or second priority for consultant assistance.

Elements Focused on in Action Plans

Element	# Action Plans	%
3. Program design based on theory and research	13	86.7%
19. Evaluation and continuous improvement	13	86.7%
2. Target changeable risk factors to reduce criminal activity	12	80.0%
1. Client assessment and selection	10	66.7%
5a. Cultural Competence	4	26.7%
6. Staff Practice, Qualifications, and Support	4	26.7%
7. Engagement, motivation and retention of participants	4	26.7%
9. Skill Building and Other Skill-Oriented Interventions	4	26.7%
17. Implementation of Practice as designed	4	26.7%
23. Community Support	4	26.7%
8. Behavioral and Cognitive-Behavior Interventions	3	20.0%
21. Agency leadership	3	20.0%
22. Agency Funding and Financial Management	3	20.0%
9b. Academic Skills and Training	2	13.3%

Element	# Action Plans	%
18. Intensity and duration	2	13.3%
4. Adaptation of Program Design	1	6.7%
5. Match services to characteristics of program participants	1	6.7%
5c. Serving youth with substance use problems or co-occurring mental disorders	1	6.7%
10. Individual therapy	1	6.7%
11. Family Therapy/Interventions	1	6.7%
20. Agency Mission	1	6.7%
<i>N</i> = 15		

Large group (cross-agency) experiences

Those in the first two cohorts received some of their coaching initially in a large group, with that format changing to one-on-one coaching sessions after feedback and experiences confirmed the large group modality was not productive. The format change was welcomed as many participants had felt the large groups to be a waste of time; for some, the changes resulted in minor confusion due to changes in forms (thereby causing some duplicating in work). For those in Cohorts 3 and 4, the large group experiences were limited to the Orientation at the beginning and the Fish Bowl Forum at the end.

Technical assistance

Technical assistance (TA) was delivered through consultants to participants in one-on-one and workshop formats. NAC matched consultants with agencies based on the expertise, culture and “personality”. There was a large range in the amount of individual TA allocated across the agencies, from \$3,400 to \$11,500 (with an average of \$7,846 and a median of \$7,500 across all receiving TA). Resources were also allocated towards “community TA” to be delivered in groups or workshops.

Participants have expressed appreciation for access to customized technical assistance to support improvement steps. NAC reported that all providers were enthusiastic about the TA resource they were to be given as identified in their TA plans. In November, among 8 participants with whom follow-up contact was made, they were all very satisfied with the consulting assistance and products they had received.

Elements focused on in TA plans

The bulk of the individualized TA was directed towards assisting agencies with the theoretical and research basis for their programs (Element #3) and evaluation and continuous program improvement (Element #19). TA consultants worked with all 14 providers to develop theory of change language and build a logic model, linking resources, activities, outputs, and goals; some also included developing an evaluation process to include data collection and developing or refining a tool relating to assessment and outcomes. From conversations with a majority of providers, this was the first focus of TA sessions, and much of the remaining TA built upon this foundation.

Based on the TA plans, the focus of TA was dispersed across the following topics:

TA Topic	# TA Plans
Individual/Consultant TA	
Logic model exercise and evaluation support (<i>Elements #3, 19</i>)	14
Assessment (<i>Elements #2, 3</i>)	7
Curriculum development/manual linking outcomes and activities (<i>Element #2, 3</i>)	5
Community support/public relations: materials to educate stakeholders/the public or improve referrals (<i>Element #23</i>)	3
Database technology to capture assessment and evaluation data (<i>Element #19</i>)	3
Training, best practices research on chemical dependency (<i>Elements #3, 7</i>)	3
Fund development plan (<i>Element #22</i>)	2
Cultural competence training (<i>Element #5a</i>)	2
Professional development Plan (<i>Element #6</i>)	2
Data analysis model and staff training (<i>Element #19</i>)	1
Skill building curriculum - finding and implementing (<i>Element #9</i>)	1
Outreach plan for hard-to-reach immigrant communities (<i>Element #5a</i>)	1
Policy and procedure manual update to reflect logic model (<i>Element #17</i>)	1
Management/Board training (<i>Element #21</i>)	1
Community/Group TA	
Assessment tool/best practices research (<i>Element #1</i>)	8
Ethnic specific training on culturally specific practice to specific cultural groups—those mentioned were Samoan, SE Asian, East African (3), Russian, Afghani, Palestinian, Iranian, Iraqi, Latino (2) (<i>Element #5a</i>)	6
Training on best practices on gender specific services (1), developmentally specific services (1), serving resistant youth (1), youth offenders (1) (<i>Element #6</i>)	4
Training on co-occurring disorders (<i>Element #5c</i>)	3
Training on chemical dependency (<i>Element #5c</i>)	2
Facilitator for juvenile justice agencies to collaborate (<i>Element #23</i>)	1

David Ja and Associates were contracted to do a national search for relevant assessment tools supporting the identification of risk factors and tracking program outcomes (supporting Elements #2 and 3) and to provide training on their findings. A number of consultants worked individually with providers to tailor those tools to their programs and their logic models.

The most commonly requested training topic (aside from Assessment) to be delivered via the “community TA” was ethnic specific training on culturally specific practice to specific cultural groups (groups mentioned were East African, Latino, Afghani, Iranian, Iraqi, Palestinian, Russian, Samoan, and Southeast Asian).

Consultants were also contracted to draft (or update) curriculum manuals to incorporate work to articulate their theoretical/research basis of the program, and logic models) for 5 individual programs.

Delay

The most outstanding issue for the TA process has been its delay. Almost all providers waited months between the completion of their action plans and the development of the TA plans. Once the TA plans were finalized, it took more time to begin receiving the TA. Delay was attributed to insufficient capacity in managing the TA process, not having a clear picture of what the total TA resources and needs were to keep the project within budget, bureaucratic processing snafus, and complications of coordinating/scheduling with programs. In addition, on the program side, staff turnover and lack of time/scheduling contributed to slowing down TA delivery. By February 2007, ten programs had completed their TA; 3 programs were nearly done with a few last things to tie up, and 2 programs were still in the midst of the process.

The delay initially resulted in some discontinuity of context for participants. For many, it also compressed the TA experience, rushed the learning process, and competed for attention during programs' busiest time (beginning of the school year). Since much of the TA is sequential, with later steps building upon earlier products, those in the latter cohorts have felt these impacts most acutely.

Networking and Information Sharing

With the exception of the Fish Bowl Forum in October 2006, lateral capacity building (information sharing and learning across agencies) happened rarely. At least 3 participants in later cohorts reported they would have benefited from the opportunity to network. Realistically, however, participants approached the process with different needs, resources, and at varying speeds. At the same time, because TA consultants were working with more than one agency, some cross-agency learning and materials sharing occurred via the consultants.

What Participants Brought to the Process

For the most part, participants demonstrated high engagement to the process and great enthusiasm for the TA. All consultants found most participants willing to work and open to learn.

Resources

While most agencies did not quantify (or cost out) the agency resources dedicated to participate in ESP, going through the entire ESP process, from assessment to action planning to technical assistance, was intense and time consuming, particularly for agencies already busy with day-to-day activities. Three participants indicated there probably was some loss in income due to redirecting staff away from income-generating activities, but no one presented this as a problem. Two agencies indicated that quality assurance time was already built into staffing schedules.

All programs together dedicated a total of more than 900 hours of staff time during the assessment and action plan phases; however, individual programs ranged in the amount of staff hours contributed from 20 to 200 hours (with an average 60.7 and a median of 40 hours). Nearly three-quarters of the participants (11 of the 15) reported spending 60 hours or less; while only 3 reported the process took more than 125 hours of staff time.

Only one participant cited agency resources as limiting their participation; whereas, slightly more than half of the programs (8 of 15) said that agency resources were not a limiting factor for participation. Five participants saw agency resources as *facilitating* their involvement, since the agency supported their participation. There were some delays caused by participants' limitations in availability to schedule coaching, planning and TA sessions. Most participants wished they could have dedicated more time to the process.

Several programs noted that because the process was so time intensive, it did take time away from service delivery or resulted in some staff working overtime. On the other hand, while it did take resources, at least 11 programs indicated the benefits received far outweighed the costs of participating in the process.

One complication for participation was the overlap of numerous Reinvesting in Youth initiatives happening concurrently. Several agencies participating in ESP were also part of the RIY Promising Practices Evaluation and/or the Cultural Competency Assessment and Training. While participation by agencies was in all cases voluntary, this turned out to be overwhelming for some and led to occasional confusion.

Teamwork and Commitment to Improvement

Many programs saw the assessment/action planning process as an *opportunity* to bring their program team together (whether that includes staff or partners) to learn together and from each other. Just over half of the programs (8 of 15) chose not to involve their Executive Directors; others elected to leave out line staff during this phase. All 15 programs involved their lead program managers (clinical directors, program directors) in the process; 8 programs involved the agency's Executive Directors in the assessment process. In more than half (9 of 15), direct program staff (case managers, counselors, therapists) were included in the assessment process; most programs involved program staff at the TA phase. Among 4 programs, additional administrative managers (such as development directors, and in 1 case a chief operating officer) were also included.

All participants found the teamwork and planning time together a positive and enjoyable aspect to the process through the coaching sessions and separate team meetings in between sessions. Participants reported benefits to hearing multiple viewpoints and stimulating each other to think through issues. Involving program staff and administrators improved accuracy of the assessment and brought people together with a common understanding. The coaching sessions, for some, turned into effective team building sessions.

Nearly all program participants cited their "buy-in" to the ESP process (12 of 15) and commitment to change when needed (13 of 15) as facilitating the process. At the same time, the action plans showed great variation in number of elements addressed and the depths to which programs critiqued themselves and identified action steps. In some cases, this was related to the perceived "fit" of *The Guidebook's* elements and the ability of participants to make change.

4. What impacts occurred for ESP participants?

What Participants Learned

When asked what they learned, all participants pointed to the elements in their action plans as areas where discussion, thinking, and learning took place. Participants reported knowledge gains most commonly in the area of evaluation. Several also noted greater understanding of the theoretical basis for their program. This is not surprising given that all programs named one or both of these items for priority attention in their action plans and TA plans. Focus on evaluation and theory of change could also be an outgrowth of many factors: agencies understanding of this as a priority of funders; the results-orientation goals of RIY, *The Guidebook's* emphasis on evaluation and theory of change in its first few elements; and that the coaches guiding the assessment process are, themselves, evaluators.

Participants reported knowledge gains in the following areas:

- ♦ Identifying areas for program improvements, design, and adaptation (7) (in addition, 2 noted the benefits of reflection—stepping back and looking at their entire program with staff or partners)
- ♦ Defining program strengths (6)
- ♦ Understanding evaluation (6) including improving the focus on outcomes, developing a systematic means to measuring outcomes, gaining a logic model
- ♦ Gaining a theoretical basis for their program (4)
- ♦ Improving documentation (3)
- ♦ Risk factors (3)
- ♦ Cultural competency (2)
- ♦ Better preparation for funding/applications (2) (e.g. gave programs tools and improved their understanding of what funders are looking for)
- ♦ Skill building, with focus on areas including interpersonal (2), behavior (1), cognitive (1), and education (1)
- ♦ Participant assessment (1)

Program Improvements/Results

Upon completion of the action plans, nearly all the programs *hoped* that through ESP they would gain the means to better understand and communicate their program impacts— through development of a logic model, strengthened assessment and tracking tools, and better articulation of their outcomes. They anticipated that this would also lead to strengthening their services and improved ability to attract funding.

Progress in Implementing the Action Plans

Progress in completing the action plans could serve as an indicator for program improvements, since completion would imply bringing program components in alignment with best practices standards.

Based on the monitoring reports and follow-up conversations with participants (in November 2006 and February 2007), 14 of 15 programs reported having made considerable progress on their action plans; 8 of these felt they were 75% or more completed. The one program not progressing on its action plan was still in initial phases of the TA in February, and it is not clear whether this program will ultimately complete the process or not. Staff turnover in at least a few agencies (Auburn Youth Resources, YouthCare, Girl Scouts, Ruth Dykeman Children's Center) alongside the delay in TA presented the greatest impediments to progress.

Given many of the action plan steps are ongoing and process-oriented, several programs indicated they would continue to do some work on their steps, as there is always room for improvement. This sentiment was confirmed by the TA consultants—who indicated that, for some agencies, it was “difficult to leave”; more in-depth work could have been done as well as more follow-up once implementation of changes was solidly under way.

Reports of Program Improvements

Based on follow-up conversations with participants and their reports at the October 2006 Fish Bowl Forum, programs can cite improvements in their program across administrative, planning, and service dimensions.

Most programs report:

- ♦ Better articulation of their program mission, service model and populations
- ♦ Newly formulated logic models
- ♦ Improved documentation—getting more program structure and information into written format, including clarifying the theoretical basis for program components
- ♦ Better communication among staff; more formal information sharing process, common vision and language

Some programs can report one or more of the following specific program improvements:

- ♦ Enhanced frameworks for and implementation of evaluation—several programs now have current logic models in place (almost all should have them by the end of the year); formalized structure for evaluation; new assessment tools in place to more clearly measure progress towards desired outcomes
- ♦ More thoughtful planning is occurring—more time is devoted to planning; evaluation used as a tool to inform planning; Elements used in designing or modifying program components
- ♦ Improved service model, based upon research and comparable to other national models; more structure to the program
- ♦ Growth in cultural competencies among program components and integrated into board strategic planning

- ♦ Development and use of improved survey and data management tools to track client progress and program impacts
- ♦ Use of *The Guidebook* language in describing programs and writing grant proposals
- ♦ Improved leadership development (among board members and staff)

5. Did ESP achieve any broad systems impacts?

Will participants use the ESP approach with other programs?

This question was asked repeatedly during the ESP implementation. Near completion of the project, thirteen program participants said they would use the ESP process (or aspects of it) in application/assessment to another program in their agency. Many liked the project in concept, but would need resource assistance to apply it again. A few were excited to apply it to other programs in their agencies. A few participants said they would probably apply some of the broader elements within their agencies. At least 2 programs indicated they would like to use the assessment process over time as a program status check.

In some cases, participants valued the process and what they learned from ESP, but they were uncertain of replicating the process with other programs because of the narrowness of *The Guidebook's* focus on reducing recidivism and youth criminal involvement; these participants felt application of the elements had been a “stretch” during this process, with the program they could most closely relate. Technical Assistance consultants concurred with these participant responses.

Programs sustaining lessons learned and program improvements

ESP took several approaches that may lead to longer-term improvements. Much of the TA assistance worked with administration and communication, resulting in some institutionalized changes and improved documentation—products with lasting impacts, such as updated agency policies, new curriculum and procedure manuals. In a few cases, ESP resulted in the introduction of a research-based curriculum as part of program implementation, another long-term change.

In addition, TA consultants said that the people involved in the process were changed; it is now more part of a program manager's regular toolkit to use *The Guidebook* or think about impacts when designing new programs. In fact, a number of participants reported that they had already used *The Guidebook* as a resource for writing grant applications and that they would use it in the design of new programs.

When asked how they would sustain what they had gained through ESP, most programs cited the improved documentation would be used in staff and/or board training to develop a common language and understanding of the program. They also felt that much of the TA focused on structural aspects of the program and inherently would be sustained. One program noted that if the changes truly resulted in improved fundraising capability then there would be incentive to maintain those improvements.

At the same time, several challenges exist to sustaining these improvements at an agency level:

- RIY provided coaches to facilitate and keep the spotlight on the process. When RIY staff and coaches go away, are there people within the agencies to sustain the focus and level of intensity? Every ESP consultant identified longer-term follow-up as an issue needed to sustain the changes that occurred (and for continuing program improvement).
- Most organizations can realistically expect to make two or three substantive changes in a year; most participants identified much more than that. This would argue for a longer time frame in which to assess, plan, make changes, and reassess.
- Ultimately, staff turnover could greatly impede continued future progress; this was evidenced during the time between the coaching and the delivery of TA, when at least 4 agencies lost key staff.

The Future of ESP?

Among stakeholders, many see value in the process for use by funders and agencies, and as stated before, all believe it to be a comprehensive and thorough process that builds capacity among participants; however, none could definitely say there is a sure future for ESP as a unique initiative. Certainly, if resources are available, there is support and justification to continue. If funding is not available to sustain the project, its general aims could still be achieved (albeit more vaguely) if:

- Agencies use it as an annual quality review exercise and means to identify areas of continued program improvements. (Those who have gone through the coaching process have the familiarity to continue the assessment and reflection, but will lack the objectivity and “push-back” brought by the coaching.)
- Funders adopt the self-assessment concept with *The Guidebook* as standards for agencies to meet to receive funding⁷.

6. Findings and Lessons Learned

1. *There is consensus among all involved (stakeholders, agency participants, and consultants) that ESP has been successful in building agency capacity through self-examination and skill building.*

- ♦ ESP can be a useful tool for ongoing program improvement/quality assessment.
- ♦ While it definitely builds agency capacity in the area of evaluation, ESP cannot replace the actual exercise of tracking outcomes as indicators of success.
- ♦ Agencies will use *The Guidebook* as a program development tool, and they could use the assessment as an annual quality review exercise and means to identify areas of continued program improvements.

⁷ Designers are less confident of using the assessment in this manner, since it was intended as a self-reflection tool and requires an insider's perspective.

2. *Programs consistently prioritized similar elements for more attention in their action plans and technical assistance: articulation of their theory of change and evaluation (Elements #3 and #19).*

- ♦ “Home grown” programs greatly desire and benefit from a process to review and enhance their program elements against research in order to better articulate the theory of change behind their interventions and developing an evaluation framework (logic model) and measurement tools.
- ♦ Particularly in the current outcomes-focused funding climate, there appears to be a strong need and desire for technical assistance in both defining interventions’ research-based theory of change and in developing tangible frameworks and tools to capture program impacts and results.
- ♦ Should some topics be addressed first by all participants or should ESP have several phases to deepen its impact? Since all participants identified core program framework issues in their action plans, they may have benefited more deeply from the assessment if they had *already* strengthened these core areas and gained a deeper understanding of their interventions. This could have been accomplished by phasing the assessment process to focus first on core program frameworks such as theoretical basis for the intervention and developing a logic model, and then focusing on program components. Some consultants suggested that all participants also would have benefited from a more thorough approach to cultural competency training prior to reviewing their program components (such as having all programs participate in the Cultural Competency Assessment and Training).

3. *The one-on-one coaching process was cited as high quality, effective and essential, even though it is a more costly approach that minimized cross-agency sharing.*

- ♦ To preserve the rigor and quality of the process and maximize learning by participants, ESP should maintain its approach of using a “one-agency-to-one coach” format in conducting the assessment and action plan phases, using coaches who are knowledgeable in *The Guidebook*, skilled in facilitation, and empathetic to program implementation issues, yet strong enough to remain objective.
- ♦ If lateral capacity building is a priority, in addition to the Fish Bowl Forum, the project could provide regular updates to participants with information on who is participating, their program models, the elements of focus in their action plans, and more detailed summaries of TA requests and products. In addition, participants could converse via an electronic listserv.

4. *Time delays were an impediment at several phases of the project.*

- ♦ It is important to build in realistic, adequate, and appropriately sequenced timelines for each phase of the project. In an ideal scenario, a much longer time frame should be allocated for TA; this would improve the process and may result in deeper change.
- ♦ Greater management capacity should be devoted to the TA process—creation of TA plans and bringing consultants to the participants. Participants were quite pleased with the TA received once solid connections were made with consultants.

- ♦ Exploration and identification of TA resources could have begun as action plan elements were being identified, or at least after Cohorts 1 and 2 were completed, with the goal of generating a menu of potential TA resources. Building of the TA plan could happen concurrently with or soon after developing the action plan. If programs were each given an equal allotment for TA (at least initially), part of their TA planning could have been to match their action plan priorities to this menu, which would enable quicker access to TA. Unspent or additional resources could be re-allocated and spent according to the program needs and priorities.
- ♦ Phasing the ESP process by focusing on core elements first (as noted under Key Finding #2) might also alleviate some issues in delivering TA by spreading it out thematically.

5. *Significant agency resources were utilized to participate in ESP, most notably the involvement of key staff and their motivation to participate.*

- ♦ Agency leadership provides a context for staff learning and program improvement. ESP exposed providers to a discipline and form of rigor and introspection that is not *typical* in community based organizations, mainly due to their lack of time and resources. The eventual impact of the process— the quality of the action plan, priority of the work, the expectations of participation, the willingness to learn and to identify areas of improvement depends on the internal functioning and leadership of the agency.
- ♦ Future implementation of ESP should accurately gauge an agency’s true capacity to assure participation from all key individuals. Involvement of key staff is essential to sustain long-term program improvements, from agency leadership to program staff. Some agencies chose not to involve their Executive Directors or high-level managers; others elected to leave out line staff. While it may be costly, involvement of key staff, from agency leadership to program staff, is essential to sustaining long-term program improvements. Program staff can supply the implementation-specific information required by the process, and agency leadership supplies the resources and motivation needed to implement and sustain change. In addition, involvement of line staff in evaluation planning and program design builds buy-in from the people who will be implementing it.

6. *Sustaining program improvements gained through ESP will be an enduring challenge.*

- ♦ A longer time frame in which to assess, make action plans, receive TA, make changes, and reassess, would potentially result in deeper, more sustained improvements.
- ♦ Resources to support the focus and follow-through (roles supplied by RIY staff and ESP coaches) would increase the odds for sustaining change.

7. *The Guidebook is an amazingly thorough resource, with a few limitations: the challenge of remaining up to date with current research; its narrow focus on reducing recidivism may limit its broad applicability; and it is confined by existing research on special populations.*

- ♦ To remain relevant, resources should be directed towards keeping *The Guidebook* up-to-date with current research and building upon the body of research-based knowledge for girls, all youth of color, and immigrant and refugee populations, as it becomes available.
- ♦ It is important not to “reach” to get programs to participate, but rather work with potential participants (before beginning the process) to make sure their program goals and characteristics align with those in *The Guidebook*—this serves to build “buy-in” among those who participate and eliminate any whose activities and service populations are more peripheral. Some of the process would have been benefited from more up front conversations to identify their relatedness to the project and the potential benefits for participation; in some cases, ESP would have been better suited for use with the entire agency, rather than one program within the agency.
- ♦ If possible, it would be beneficial to identify those elements within *The Guidebook* that have broader applicability and relate to success of all interventions.

7. Additional Comments

Several agencies noted their gratitude for being able to participate in ESP. One participant said, “RIY is leaving agencies with tools that can be used for a long time.” A few also appreciated the opportunity it gave to allow “home grown” prevention programs to demonstrate their impacts.

A few participants also wanted funders to be aware of the cost in agency time and resources to participate, indicative of the resources necessary to measure and document outcomes.

Kudos

Through ESP, Reinvesting in Youth helped local agencies that participated to identify strengths and key areas for program improvement, but they didn’t stop there. ESP provided resources and tools to address those areas and begin to make lasting change.

Throughout the process, RIY staff and ESP consultants listened to participants and partners and made small and large adjustments to their own program implementation to improve its delivery. This occurred overtly during the pilot phase when issues arose with the Assessment and during the first round of coaching when it became apparent that the large group approach wasn’t working.

Ultimately, Elements of Successful Programs appears to have both tangible and intangible benefits worthy of consideration for continued funding and ongoing implementation.