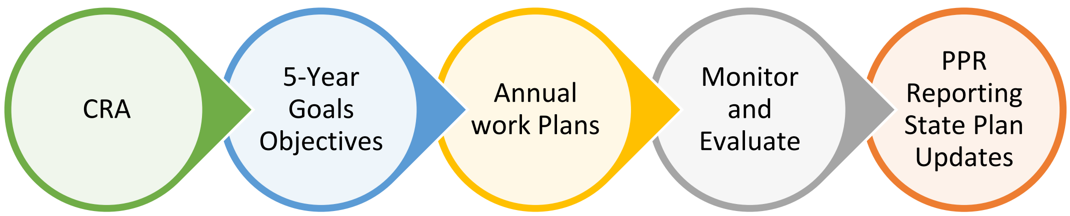
Planning and Timing – Connecting the Dots

The planning and reporting items Councils are required to use align with common steps in a strategic planning process.



The first step in a strategic planning process is to conduct an environmental scan. The Comprehensive Review and Analysis section of the State plan is designed to provide a Council with the environmental scan.

The second step is to develop long-term goals. Councils create 5-year goals with an expected goal outcome statement and objectives to meet the 5-year goal.

The third step is to identify strategies and key activities for objectives that will advance your goals. The Annual Work Plans are part of the State plan and ask Councils to identify strategies, collaborators, key activities, intended outputs and outcomes, data measurement and performance measure targets.

The fourth step is to monitor and evaluate activities and measure progress towards goals and objectives. Councils accomplish this through data collection and analysis activities of state plan projects and activities.

The final step of strategic planning is to review results and use the information to strengthen the plan. The Program Performance Report is the required federal report that reflects evaluation methods, results. The State Plan Update (or amendment) would reflect changes to the plan that are needed based on the results.

Strategic planning is built into the processes of planning and reporting throughout a five-year plan cycle, but they must be used on a regular basis.

Information and Technical Assistance Center for Councils, T/TA services funded by ACL Contract #75P00121C00067

Use the Annual Work Plan

Where do you want to go?

Goals
Objectives

How do you plan to get there?

Activities
Expected Outputs
Expected Outcomes
Performance Measure Targets

The annual work plan can serve as the foundation for developing an internal operational plan for Council staff.

Benefits: An annual operational plan can serve as a roadmap outlining activities, tasks, responsibilities, and timelines for each Council staff member and can reflect timelines for Council decisions needed to move the work forward. It can serve as a guiding document to help staff prioritize their work, manage their time more efficiently, and stay focused on achieving objectives. An operational plan can also help identify areas where capacity may be lacking in the way of staff, knowledge, and resources to carry out the activity).

TA Tip: Use the annual work plan as your guide. Add information to inform the work that is planned for the fiscal year (i.e., fiscal review and status, person responsible, due dates or timeframe, Council decisions needed (proposal reviews, obligating money)).

Take into account the amount of time it takes to complete a competitive bid process (developing and releasing a proposal request, Council decision time, and contract processing). Factoring relevant information into the timeline can help the Council launch projects and activities more timely.

Federal Funding

We recommend Councils use the current funding amount for planning purposes.

In the case of funding increases or decreases, Councils should have plans in place to address.

In the case of a reduction in the federal grant award, some Councils will apply an equal reduction to each line item in the budget because the reduced amount affects the entire budget (administrative and state plan work).

In the case of an increase to a Council's federal grant award, some Councils review their current work and consider projects they want to expand or replicate into other areas of their State/Territory, or they make the decision to take up new work with a funding increase. Of course, taking up new work would need to align with the approved State plan and the Council should be involved in funding decisions.

Both budget scenarios would require Council approval and documented in meeting minutes. (ITACC Notable FAQs, March 2024).

TA Tip: Consider including language in competitive bid applications and contracts stating “project funding is based on the availability of federal funds”. Check in with your Designated State Agency, Contracting Office, or State or Territory procurement for approved practices.

Outcome Focused Funding

Concepts

Outcome funding concepts may be beneficial when developing competitive bid announcements. As the name suggests, the focus ties back to the outcomes one is trying to achieve. Infusing outcome funding concepts into your process may help applicants stay focused on what they are trying to achieve through their proposed project or activity.

The information below reflects common areas of a competitive bid. Outcome funding elements are provided that may be added or exchanged for items in your competitive bid development.

Need

Projects and activities are dependent on participants for their success and participants are dependent on the project or activity for help.

While a typical needs statement may show the applicant understands the issue to be addressed, shift the focus to the people who have the need (who the project or activity will serve).

Consider asking the applicant to profile the people who will participate in the project. Have them describe a typical participant and why they would engage in the project or activity.

If the project you want to fund needs other groups or organizations to be involved so they can reach potential participants, require them to provide agreements with the groups as a condition for funding consideration. An example: If someone is proposing to offer training to teachers, school systems, or districts will need to be involved so teachers can be reached. A letter of agreement would be included to show the agreements are in place and work will not be delayed until agreements are reached).

Performance targets

Performance targets speak to what will occur for people who participated in the project, if the project or activity is successful. They are about change and focus on people (participants) who use the program or focus on applicable components of systems change.

Defining performance targets has two steps:

1) Specifying the target area.
2) Defining a level of performance within each area.

Often, applicants describe their inputs (number of workshops, number of training curricula) and avoid describing the results they want to achieve.

Performance targets should be stated in observable terms. For example, "increased self-determination" is not a target until we know what "increased self-determination" means. Applicants should describe what will be different in a person with increased self-determination (i.e., ability to say what they want and need, ability to control their resources and/or services).

Councils can determine what performance target will best achieve an outcome and ask the applicant to define the result. Councils can also state the area(s) of performance targets as "a given" and let the applicant indicate what portion of the target they can assume. Often, clear boundaries and "givens" enhance creativity. If a Council does not know what performance targets will best achieve an outcome, the Council can ask the applicant to define the result. Ultimately, the Council and the applicant will agree to the performance targets in advance of the funding decision.

Project Description

Applicants should clearly describe what goods and services they will offer to participants and describe the advantages their product has over other products to achieve similar performance targets and outcomes.

Have applicants include a focus on the actions they will take to ensure a participant can benefit from the project.

Milestones as part of a work plan and deliverables schedule.

Milestones are the critical interim points that offer assurance the program will achieve its performance target(s).

Milestones should be designed to get a positive response to three questions:

1) Will anybody want to use our product?
2) Can we produce the product within the budget and quality guidelines?
3) Are there enough people out there who want our product?

Traditionally, accountability focuses on the workplan and what the grantee is to do. This can lead to a disconnect because activities focus on what a grantee does and performance targets hinge on what a participant does.

Milestones suggest starting with the essential steps that define a participant's interaction with the program to achieve a successful result.

Key Individuals

Ask applicants to provide profile(s) of the key people who will have the most responsibility in shaping the project (product), connecting the product to people, and achieving performance targets.

Typically, applicants describe the credentials of people who will work on the project. Consider a focus on the capacities of the people who will deliver the program. Have them describe the skills and knowledge of the people they propose to work on the project with a focus on how their skills and knowledge are related to the project requirements.

An applicant should have key people identified to work on the project. Have them describe how the project staff were selected. We know from experience that many projects experience one or more transitions of key people. Ask applicants if they have a commitment from the key people who will implement the project.

If the project has a team approach, have the applicant describe how the strengths of individuals are complementary and not duplicative.

History of the group proposing the project

Rather than asking an applicant for the history of their organization, shift the focus to the following:

- Ask applicants to describe past performance for similar work and the people who did the work – are they with the organization or have they departed.

- List the specific resources they will contribute to the project, and which are critical to the success of the project. This goes beyond match or cost sharing, the question is "if a project is not achieving its targets, what organizational resources will be used to change that?"
- If an applicant has other projects and programs, ask the applicant about how they view the priority for this Council project.

Verifications and evaluation activities

Verification focuses on the people who used or participated in the program or project.

Councils want to know if the grantee reached their target(s).

Grantees have a responsibility to offer evidence on the extent to which they achieved their performance target(s).

Verification methods vary. A common approach is to ask participants about changes that did or did not happen for them. This places the person who participated as the expert on what happened (because it happened to them!).

Budget

Consider a correlation between milestones and project costs. This will help program staff see if money is being spent at a rate to complete the project.

Consider using a cost-accounting approach to determine the unit service and unit result costs. For example, if 25 people are served by a project costing $50,000, the <u>unit service cost</u> is $2,000 per person. If 20 of these people achieve the desired result, the <u>unit result</u> cost is $2,500.

Plan for Self-Reliance (often called Sustainability)

Ask applicants to tell you how the program (or parts of the program) will continue after Council funding ends.

This item encourages programs to develop ongoing viability. Encourage grantees to think about other sources of funding, but also cost reduction, so the program can continue at a lower per-participant cost.

If grantees cannot think of ways to sustain or keep the program or parts of the program viable at the application stage, the probability is not great that they will do so later.

Participant Evidence

Encourage participants to provide names of people who have expressed a strong interest in being a participant in the program. This will demonstrate the applicant has included people with ID/DD, their families, and others concerned with services and supports for people with ID/DD in hearing about the project and they show support for the project.

A list of five potential participants is more powerful than ten letters of support on prestigious letterhead.

Reference: Williams, H. S., Webb, A. Y., & Phillips, W. J. (1996). Outcome funding: A New Approach to Targeted Grantmaking. Rensselaerville Inst.

Common Competitive Bid Scoring Methods

Point System

- The most straightforward scoring system.
- Proposals are evaluated based on a set of criteria with each being assigned a specific number of points.
- The scores for each criterion are combined to give an overall score for the proposal.

Rubric with scoring

- A more detailed version of the point system.
- Includes several levels of achievement for each criterion.
- Each level is assigned a specific number of points.
- All points are combined to give an overall score for the proposal.

Weighted Criteria System

- Each criterion is assigned a specific weight or value.
- The scores for each criterion are multiplied by the weight and then combined to give an overall score for the proposal.
- This system allows grant makers to place more emphasis on certain criteria that are considered more important.

- More complex and typically combines elements of the point system, rubric, and weighted criteria system.
- Criteria is evaluated based on a set of sub-criteria, sub-criteria scores are combined to give an overall score for the criterion, then the scores for each criterion are combined to give an overall score for the proposal.

A few drawbacks to consider when using scoring systems.

- The system may encourage grant seekers to focus on the criteria being scored rather than the overall impact of the work they are proposing.
- May be inflexible and difficult to consider unique or innovative proposals that do not fit neatly into scoring criteria.

Reference: (https://grantwritingacad.org/understanding-common-grant-proposal-scoring-systems/)

TA Tips: No matter what type of proposal review process your Council uses, consider the following:

- **Develop clear, easy to understand instructions for reviewers.**
- **Ensure equity through anonymous review.** This means taking out identifying information related to the applicant to help reduce the risk of bias.
- **Avoid peer influence.** This means the reviewer's comments should be their own, free from the influence of how other people reviewed and scored applications.
- **Consider using minimum and maximum scores.**

Communication

Communication is an essential tool in the field of project management.

The success of a project largely depends on the effectiveness of communication between grantees, contractors, Council staff implementing state plan projects and the Council staff managing and overseeing state plan implementation and progress.

Communication starts from day one and continues for the entire life span of the project. It provides regular updates to notify the status of the project as well as its performance capacity. But surprisingly, it has been found that most projects experience a breakdown in communications (Rajkumar, 2010).

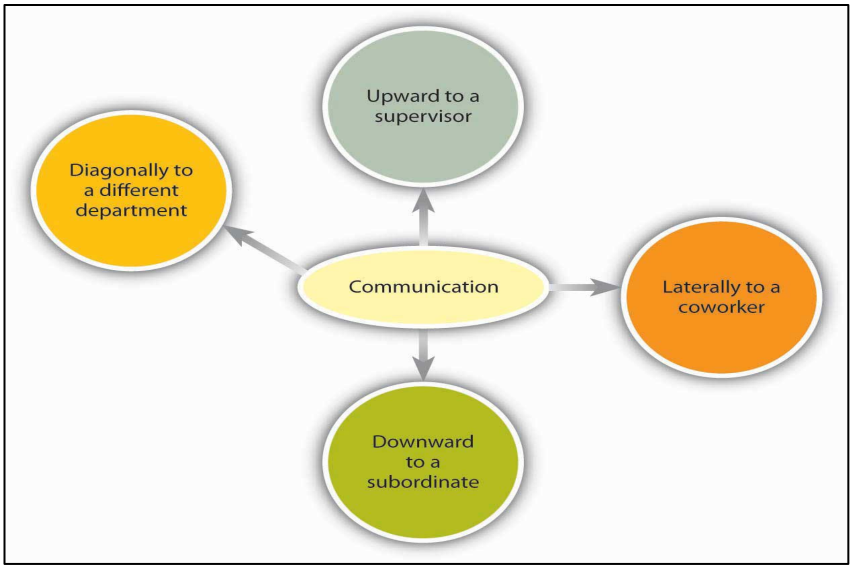
The Council and Council staff need program information to determine whether programs are working effectively and are achieving their goals and objectives.

Program information is needed for both external and internal uses to make decisions, monitor performance, and allocate resources.

Information must be relevant, valid, reliable, and timely and clear.

A precondition for reliable and relevant information is the prompt review of projects, activities, and events. Relevant information should be captured and communicated in a form and timeframe that allows staff and the Council to carry out their tasks and responsibilities.

The graphic below shows how information should be communicated to personnel at all levels within the Council. It should flow down, across and up, throughout all components of the Council structure, and out to external organizations as well.



Additional Resources

A quick internet search using the words “communication style free quiz” can help you find free communication style quizzes - here's a couple to get you started:

www.idealist.org/en/careers/workplace-communication-style

ogefacultymentoring.web.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/11490/2016/09/Communication-styles-assessment-ESAI.pdf

Identifying Risk

Assessing, identifying, and managing risk are important actions for DD Councils because risk can lead to a potential outcome that can result in a Council not meeting their goals.

45 CFR §75.352 provides information about "Requirements for Pass-through Entities".

Items (b-h) call for the pass-through entity to evaluate each subrecipient's risk of noncompliance with Federal statutes, regulations, and the terms and conditions of the subaward. Examples of risk assessment items include prior experience with similar subawards (federally funded), audit results, new personnel or new or substantially changed systems. Additional factors can be considered.

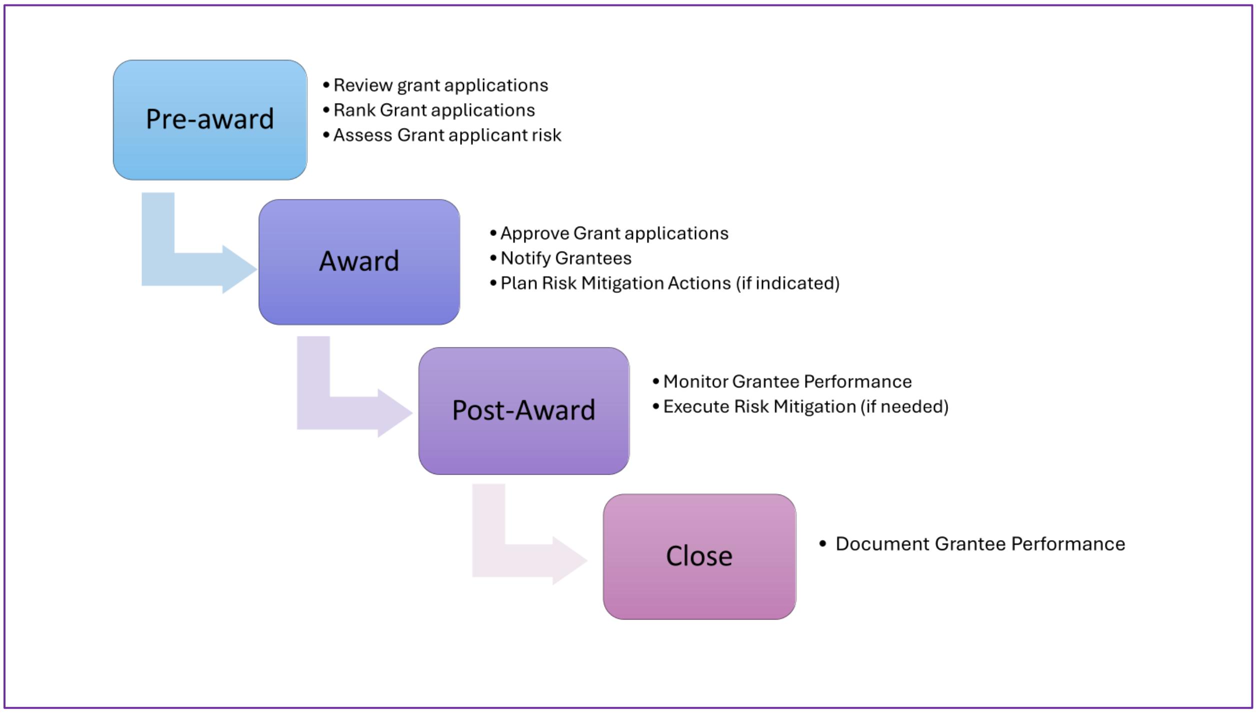
The purpose of assessing risk is to determine the appropriate amount of sub-recipient monitoring. Broadly stated, monitoring includes making sure the subaward is used for authorized purposes aligned with law, policy, and regulation and that the performance goals of the subaward are achieved.

Risk management as an integrated part of project management.

Risk management should be part of your project management functions. Align risk assessment and management activities with project objectives, scope, deliverables, milestones, and funding.

This means risk assessment activities should be part of pre-award, award, post-award, and closure aspects of the grant life cycle.

The figure below shows risk management practices across a grant life cycle.



Special note: Pre-award risk assessment results do not mean an applicant with higher risk than others cannot be funded. The higher-risk grantee will need more attention and staff time so care must be taken to ensure staff has the capacity to tend to higher risk grantees during the life of the project.

General categories of risk

Risk comes in all forms, but there are some general categories of risk associated with awarding funds to subrecipients.

Programmatic risks include the failure to:

- Achieve the intended project goals.
- Follow laws or regulations or organizational policies and procedures.
- Adequately monitor the project, gather data, and report.
- Provide reliable information for decision making.
- Prevent the mishandling of sensitive information.

Personnel risks include the failure to:

- Fill staff positions with employees with the appropriate experience.
- Effectively recruit employees.
- Meet the training demands required.

Financial risks include the failure to:

- Avoid improper payments, such as unallowable purchases, overpayment, duplicate payments, payments for services not received.
- Prevent or minimize waste.
- Provide the required match/cost sharing amount(s).
- Follow the project budget.
- Use effective project and resource management methods.
- Prevent fraud, bribes, and other forms of corruption, such as kickbacks from consultants, contractors, and employees.

Address Risk through Control Activities

Control Activities are the actions Council staff take to minimize risk.

Control activities are policies, procedures, techniques, and mechanisms that help ensure a Council's response to reduce risks identified during the risk assessment process. In other words, control activities are **actions taken** to minimize risk.

The need for a control activity is established in the risk assessment process. When the assessment identifies a significant risk to the achievement of a Council's objective, a corresponding control activity or activities is determined and implemented.

Control activities can be preventive or detective.

Preventive	Designed to deter the occurrence of an undesirable event; Designed to predict potential problems before they occur; Implement procedures to avoid them
Detective	Designed to identify undesirable events that occur and alert management about what happened Designed so management can take corrective action immediately

Both types of control activities can be helpful to a Council. Internal control activities can be incorporated into:

- Policies
- Procedures

- Sequences or combinations of procedures.
- Assignments of duties, responsibilities, and authorities.
- Physical arrangements or processes.
- Combinations of the above.

Commonly used control activities include:

- Education and training
- Performance planning and evaluation
- Reconciliation
- Authorization
- Review and approval
- Verification

Some Councils have formal risk management processes and others use control activities regularly, but do not have policies, procedures, or other written documentation that describe the control activities, under what conditions the control activity will be used, what staff people will be involved, and potential consequences if the control activity does not lead to grantee improvement(s). Consider developing internal control activity policies and/or procedures. This will enable staff and grantees to have the information they need to be effective.

Data Collection and Predicting Performance Measures

Collecting data is a requirement. How do we know? It is referenced in the DD Act, 45 CFR 75, and the Notice of Award, Terms and Conditions.

Think critically about the data that is needed. Consider the following questions:

1. **What info do you need?**
    a. Identifiers (source and context of a survey response (person with ID/DD, family member, others, SOGI, geographic, race/ethnicity)).
    b. Performance measures (required Federal Performance Measures, other measures set by the Council).
2. **How much data do you need to collect?**
    a. The number of respondents you need for a survey depends on how confident you want to be in your results.
    b. Calculate your sample size using an online calculator (for example, Survey Monkey Sample Size Calculator)
3. **What info is available?**
    a. Do you have access to the data?
    b. Is the data sensitive (is there personally identifiable information in the data?)
4. **What info will be useful?**
    a. Data quality
    b. How will you USE the information
5. **Cost of data?**
    a. Processing power (people and tools)
    b. Processing time
    c. Respondent fatigue
    d. Money

Demographic data

Councils need to provide data that shows the federal funds they are provided are reaching people in the state or territory with developmental disabilities and their families. This includes collecting data about the race/ethnicity, geographic location, sexual orientation and gender identity, and where people live (urban or rural) of people who participate in Council funded projects and activities.

This is important because Councils are called to serve unserved and underserved communities in their State or Territory. If Councils cannot reflect a robust collection of demographic data, the ACL cannot determine if they are serving unserved and underserved populations.

> Special note: If a subrecipient is unable or unwilling to collect data as part of their subaward from the Council, Council staff should employ risk management control activities to improve this area of grantee performance. Ultimately, the DD Council is responsible for the collection and reporting of data.

Prediction Activities

A prediction is a forecast about a future event. Sometimes predictions are called projections.

Annually, Council staff are asked to predict federal performance measure numbers as part of the annual work planning process.

Council staff can consider these steps when identifying activities likely to produce data to inform the Individual and Advocacy (IFA) and Systems Change (SC) Federal Performance Measures.

Step 1: Identify activities.

Consider three primary activity areas to inform your Federal Performance Measure(s) predictions.

1) Activities with contracts or grants in place.
2) Activities that Council staff are implementing.
3) Activities that are pending and will start during the year.

For **existing contracts**, you will most likely have an idea of what the contractor/grantee has planned. Gather information from them about the number of people they expect to participate in the activity, the types of people, and the outcomes they expect to achieve.

For **activities that Councill staff implement**. Gather the same information from them as existing contracts.

For **activities that will start during the year**. You will need to predict participants, types of people, and expected outputs and outcomes.

List the activities the Council is implementing that are designed to **increase knowledge of how to take part in decisions** that:

1) Affect their lives.
2) Affect the lives of others.
3) Affect systems (these are your systems change efforts, remember you will report participation of people with ID/DD and family members in the IFA performance measures section).

Step 2: Participation predictions (projections)

For each activity listed, predict how many people with DD and how many family members are likely to participate in each activity. Add the numbers together so you have a total number for all activities.

IFA 1.2 – number of people with developmental disabilities.

IFA 1.2 – number of family members of people with developmental disabilities.

Step 3: Outcome predictions

Of the participation numbers for the activities identified in Step 2, predict how many people will **increase their advocacy** because of their participation.

IFA 2.1 – percent of people with developmental disabilities.
IFA 2.2 - percent of family members of people with developmental disabilities.

Sub-outcome projections

IFA 2.3

Of the participation numbers for the activities identified in Step 1, project how many people are:

1) Better able to say what they want
2) Better able to say what services and supports they want

3) Better able to say what is important to them

IFA 2.3 – number of people with developmental disabilities.
IFA 2.3 – number of family members of people with developmental disabilities.

IFA 2.4.

Of the participation numbers for activities in Step 1, project how many people are participating in advocacy activities.

IFA 2.4 – number of people with developmental disabilities.
IFA 2.4 – number of family members of people with developmental disabilities.

IFA 2.5

Of the participation numbers for activities in Step 1, project how many people are serving on boards, coalitions, advisory committees, or other leadership positions.

IFA 2.5 – number of people with developmental disabilities.
IFA 2.5 – number of family members of people with developmental disabilities.

IFA 3

The percent of people satisfied with a project or activity

IFA 3.1 – percent of people with developmental disabilities.
IFA 3.2 - percent of family members of people with developmental disabilities.

Predicting federal performance measures for systems change efforts.

For each effort, predict numbers for each systems change sub-output and sub-outcome measure.

SC 1.1 The number of policy and/or procedures created or changed. Your number should reflect the item (rather than the number of times an item was adopted).

For example: If the Council expects to change a childcare procedure and as a result expects 35 agencies/organizations to adopt the procedure, you will predict 1 procedure change, not 35. You can highlight the number of times a procedure was adopted and how many children and families were positively affected in your report narrative.

SC 1.2 The number of statute or regulations created or changed.

SC 1.3 the number of promising and/or best practices created and/or supported

For each sub-outcome, predict the number of practices that were used in your systems change effort(s). Do not predict how many times a practice was used.

For example: A Council is using the best-practice of person-centered approach in their systems change effort. They have planned 25 activities that will use the best practice. The Council should predict 1 best practice supported, not 25. Again, you can highlight the number of times a best practice was repeated/used and how people with ID/DD were positively impacted as a result in your report narrative.

Sub-outcome measures

SC 1.3.1 Number of promising practices created.

SC 1.3.2 Number of promising practices supported.

SC 1.3.3 Number of best practices created.

SC 1.3.4. Number of best practices supported through Council activities.

SC 1.4 Number of people/trained or educated (as part of your systems change effort)

Predict the number of people you expect to train or educate as part of your systems change effort. Remember! People with ID/DD and families will be reflected in IFA Measures 1.1 and 1.2 and any relevant sub-outcome measures. All other people will be reflected here.

Do not predict newspaper or magazine articles (digital or print), television spots, Facebook posts, X posts, website visits, and similar social media outlets. The predicted numbers for this item must meet the criteria for training or education.

SC 1.5 Number of Council supported systems change activities with organizations actively involved.

Predict the number of organizations who are actively involved in the Council's systems change effort. Active involvement suggests the organization has responsibilities in the systems change effort rather than passive involvement such as providing a support letter or signing on to a position statement.

Often, Councils work with coalitions that are made up of many members. When predicting numbers for a coalition, the number is ONE, rather than the number of members that are part of the coalition.

Tips for predicting performance targets

Tip 1: Use past performance data to inform future predictions.

For example, a Council reviewed their last 2 PPR's and noted that about 70% of people with ID/DD increased their advocacy, and about 20% of people with ID/DD served in leadership positions. Based on this data, the Council felt confident they could use similar percentages to predict future Federal Performance Measure targets.

Tip 2: Ask your partners (grantees, contractors and others) who have critical insight into what is possible to achieve.

For example: The Council staff in partnership with the subrecipient (grantee, Council staff member, contractor, or others) determine what the intended outcomes will be for a project period.

Tip 3: A spreadsheet format can be helpful when predicting Federal Performance Measure targets.

Tip 4: Consider other measures that are important to your work.

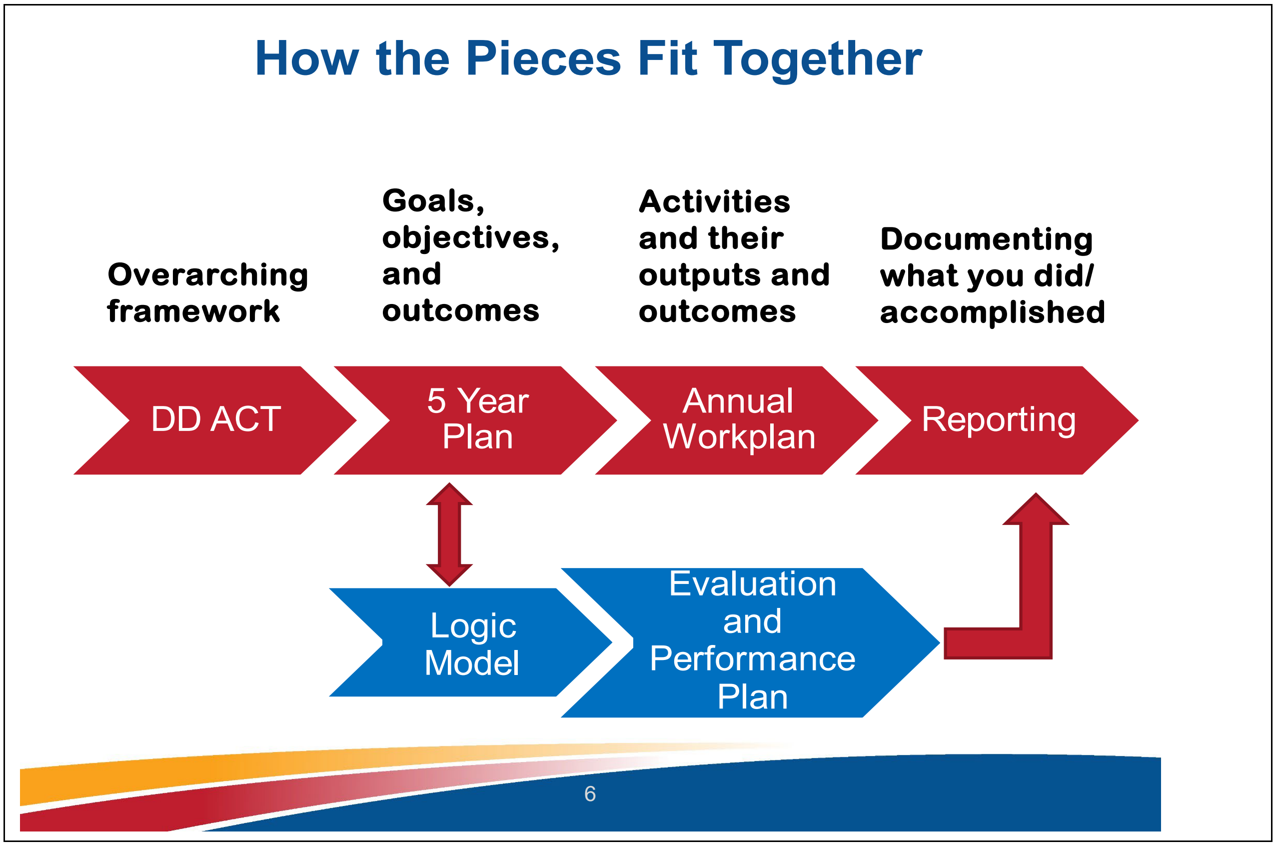
Make sure you are not ignoring other measures of your work that may be important to the Council. Performance targets can be broader than the Federal Performance Measures required by the ACL/AoD/OIDD.

For example: A Council wanted to change the perceptions and attitudes of people who work in agencies that provide supports and services to people with ID/DD for the better. This was a system change effort because we wanted to change policy to make this training and information a requirement of the agency and it was important to gather data that showed there was a positive shift in the attitudes of people at the end of the project as compared to the beginning of the project. We also gathered data from people with ID/DD and their families about how they perceived their interactions with agency personnel.

Tying it All Together

- ✓ Planning your work with timelines supports better planning and decision making.
- ✓ Collaborating and communicating with your coworkers and partners (grantees/contractors) support learning and exchange of information and ideas.
- ✓ Collecting data supports the reporting process by verifying involvement of people with ID/DD and their families, those who are unserved and underserved, and demonstrates progress toward the outcomes the Council desires from investing in projects and activities.
- ✓ Closure supports telling “the story” of Council work and provides accountability to ACL/AoD/OIDD and the citizens of your state or territory.

When thinking about how the DD Council Program works, the figure below shows how the different pieces fit together.



The DD Act guides us in terms of what we are trying to do, and you make it more specific to your State or Territory through your 5-year plan and for the purpose of advancing public policy and systems change that help individuals gain more control over their lives.

Your annual work plan should operationalize what you will do. It outlines what activities you will conduct over the next year in pursuit of the goals and objectives of your 5-year plan.

Both the 5-year plan and your annual work plan have goals and objectives. They vary in terms of scope.

The annual work plan should support the achievement of the goals and objectives that are in your 5-year plan. Whenever you have goals and objectives, you know that ultimately you will need to report on whether you reached them.

Reference: Administration for Community Living, Center for Policy and Evaluation, Office of Performance and Evaluation; https://itacchelp.org/evaluation-plans-and-logic-models-explaining-the-value-of-your-program/