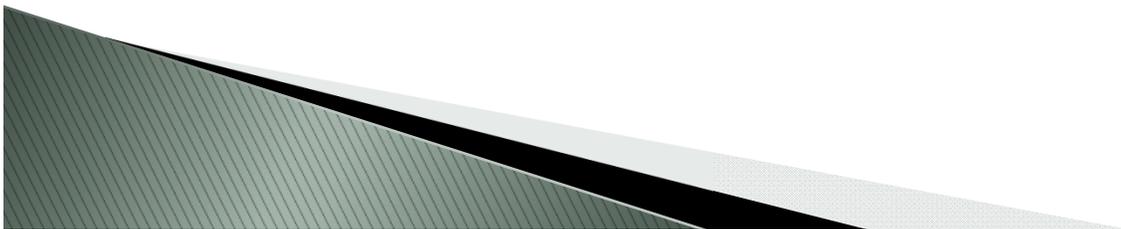


The Road and Barriers to Data Evaluation in Complex Environments

Dorcas Place Adult Education and Family Learning Center

March 11, 2012



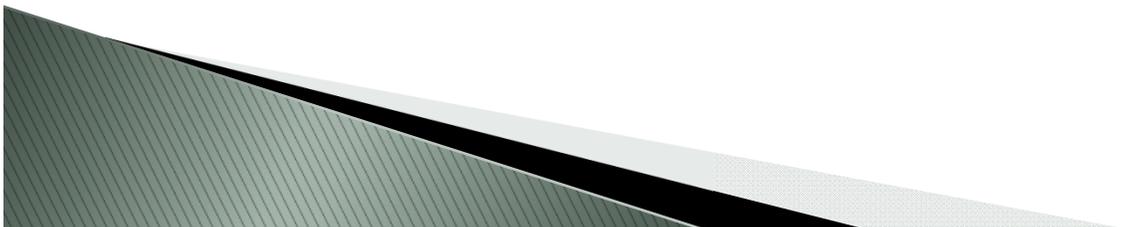
The Road and Barriers to Data Evaluation in Complex Environments

Data Points

- Based on funder, operational, program, and administrative requirements.
- Data points can come from in house or funder specified systems.
- Comparison data must be accessible for proper evaluation of summary data.

Agency Outlook

Dorcas Place should develop methods and tools to access comparative data sources. In the past, we reported student enrollment numbers in a vacuum. Going forward, we want to compare our results and outcomes to agencies on the state and national level. These comparisons will give us a clearer picture of our programs.



The Road and Barriers to Data Evaluation in Complex Environments

Data Collection/Data Systems

- Data collection techniques must insure high quality data. High quality data is accessible, complete, valid, consistent, timely and accurate.
- Agency data systems must be selected or designed based on current and anticipated data needs.
- Organizations must juggle multiple data reporting requirements.
- A rule of thumb ... design a data system by looking at the end result (reports, analysis and evaluation). Once these outcomes are identified, work backwards towards your necessary data points.

Agency Outlook

Dorcas Place is a leader in this area. The primary database allows Dorcas Place staff to modify data points, processing logic, queries and reports in house, a competitive advantage over agencies that rely on outside vendors. It allows us to create diverse reports for our funders such as TANF, Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), Governor's Workforce Board, etc.



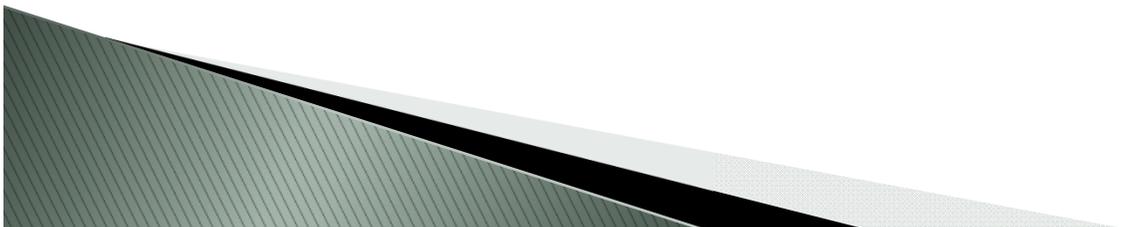
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Data Sharing

- Data sharing contracts and agreements are vital to support data access to multiple systems.
- Access to multiple data sources allows evaluators to tell more in depth data stories.

Agency Outlook

Dorcas Place has experience negotiating data sharing agreements. In the last year, we have partnered with The Providence Plan DataHub and the Providence School District (PPSD). After the PPSD agreement was reached, Dorcas Place and the PPSD were able to link community partner data with district data. This linkage allows Dorcas Place to evaluate the effectiveness of its Full Service programming on academic achievement.



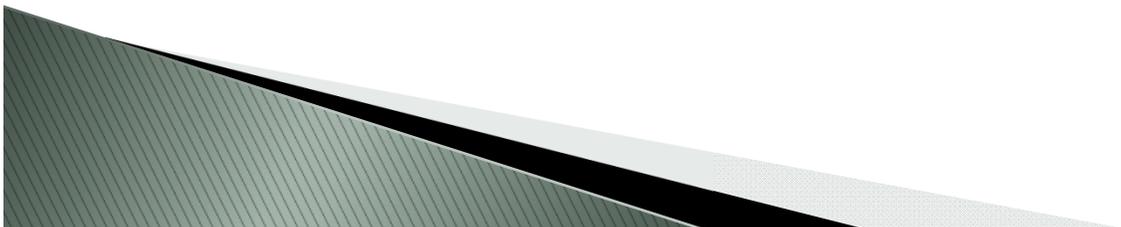
The Road and Barriers to Data Evaluation in Complex Environments

Data Integration

- Supporting multiple databases requires a method for integrating various data sources.
- At minimum, data systems should have an import/export feature.
- Ideally, they would have the capability for real-time data access.
- Supporting the agency's data universe will require collecting, cleansing, transforming and analyzing diverse external data sources.

Agency Outlook

Dorcas Place receives funding from various sources. Some funders require use of a particular data system. Our Financial Opportunity Center is funded by LISC which requires use of an ETO variant, RIDE requires a custom web-based system, and our Full Service Community School initiative requires use of Youth Services from CitySpan. Going forward, Dorcas Place should develop a more streamlined system for integrating multiple data systems.



The Road and Barriers to Data Evaluation in Complex Environments

Data Reporting/Evaluation

- Reports should be available from a self-service report switchboard.
- Stakeholders have different requirements. For instance, the Board of Directors requires “Key Performance Indicators”, and LISC requires financial, employment and income totals; both generated from different data systems.
- Funders are requiring evidence of nonprofit program efficacy, not just enrollment and attendance hours. Outcome evaluation is a much deeper look at programs, which leads to a richer data story.
- Agencies need access to data and program evaluators.

Agency Outlook

Dorcas Place has an excellent data infrastructure to support stakeholder reporting requirements. However, the organization will need to enhance its reporting and evaluation capabilities to meet more stringent funding requirements. Recently, data and program evaluation responsibilities were added to the MIS department. MIS staff will need to be trained in evaluation methods and techniques.

