

RAND

*Countywide Evaluation of
the Long-Term Family
Self-Sufficiency Plan*

*Assessing the Utility of the LTFSS
Plan Service Delivery and Planning
Framework*

*Lois M. Davis, Jacob Alex Klerman, Elaine Reardon,
Sarah C. Remes, Paul S. Steinberg*

RAND Labor & Population

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*Prepared for the
County of Los Angeles*

RAND Labor & Population

The research described in this report was conducted by RAND Labor & Population for the County of Los Angeles.

ISBN: 0-8330-3278-X

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Published 2002 by RAND

1700 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138

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PREFACE

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (the Board) adopted the Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency (LTFSS) Plan on November 16, 1999. The LTFSS Plan consists of 46 projects whose goal is to promote self-sufficiency among families that are participating in the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Act of 1997 (CalWORKs) program, former CalWORKs families, and other low-income families. The Chief Administrative Office (CAO) is the lead agency responsible for implementing the evaluation of the LTFSS Plan. On December 5, 2000, the Board approved the implementation plan for the evaluation of the LTFSS Plan, LTFSS Project #46. Following an open and competitive bidding process, the Board awarded RAND a contract to conduct a Countywide evaluation of the LTFSS Plan.

The LTFSS Plan is explicitly guided by Mark Friedman's Results-Based Decision Making (RBDM) Framework (the RBDM Framework). LTFSS Plan experiences with the RBDM Framework can provide early indications of the utility of the RBDM Framework, the challenges that are likely to be encountered as County departments attempt to apply the RBDM Framework in the County, and approaches to addressing those challenges. This document is intended to extract those lessons learned by providing insights into the use and utility of the RBDM Framework as it has been adopted and adapted by the County. Most of the analysis in this report represents work completed as of the end of October 2001.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Act of 1997 (CalWORKs) provided Los Angeles County (hereafter, the County) with a large new stream of funding (over \$150 million per year for five years) with relatively few conditions. On April 13, 1999, the County Board of Supervisors (hereafter, the Board) instructed the County's New Directions Task Force (NDTF) to develop a Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency (LTFSS) Plan for CalWORKs recipients and the broader low-income population, with the purpose of selecting projects that would improve the capacity of families to become self-sufficient. The NDTF effort resulted in the 46 projects known collectively as the LTFSS Plan that was approved by the Board on November 16, 1999.

In developing and implementing the Plan, the NDTF and the workgroups it created were explicitly guided by Mark Friedman's Results-Based Decision Making (RBDM) Framework (hereafter, the RBDM Framework). The use of the RBDM Framework has three important implications for the development of the Plan. First, the RBDM Framework urges a focus not just on how well agencies and projects perform, but on population-level results (i.e., the well-being of children, families, and communities). Consistent with this focus on population-level results, the LTFSS Plan projects are designed to address five key outcomes: good health, safety and survival, economic well-being, social and emotional well-being, and education and workforce readiness.

Second, the RBDM Framework urges an open process, emphasizing the importance of opening funding deliberations from narrow department and agency discussions to the broader community. It does so both because broad community involvement leads to decisions that better reflect the preferences of the population and because having an impact on indicators of well-being is viewed as a collaborative process between government, community-based organizations (CBOs), and individual citizens.

Third, the RBDM Framework focuses on performance accountability: Projects are to track project-level performance measures which quantify service inputs and client outcomes. The results of this tracking are expected to flow into future project funding decisions. Countywide indicators of population-level outcomes should also be tracked, and this information should feed back into decisions by the community about how available funds should be allocated.

The County has now embarked on an ambitious effort to use the RBDM Framework throughout the County's planning and budgeting process for child and family well-being programs. LTFSS Plan experiences with the RBDM Framework can provide early indications of the utility of the RBDM Framework, the challenges that are likely to be encountered as County departments attempt to apply the RBDM Framework in the County, and approaches to addressing those challenges. This document is intended to extract those lessons learned by providing insights into the use and utility of the RBDM Framework as it has been adopted and adapted by the County.

To assess the utility of the RBDM Framework, RAND conducted a set of semi-structured interviews with key informants. In total, the research team interviewed approximately 65 observers, gathering a wide range of perspectives. The interviewees included senior County officials, staff in individual departments, and non-governmental observers involved in developing and implementing the LTFSS Plan. In addition to these semi-structured interviews, RAND collected and analyzed a wide range of written materials—official actions of the Board, internal planning documents, budgets, and related California Department of Social Services (CDSS) documents. These materials were augmented with broader perspectives from other ongoing RAND research on California welfare policy and the selection and implementation of social programs. Finally, this evidence was interpreted using relevant social science and management research drawn from the fields of organizational behavior, economics, and sociology.

THE LTFSS PLAN EXPERIENCE APPLYING THE FISCAL POLICY STUDIES INSTITUTE'S RBDM FRAMEWORK

The planning process that led to the development of the LTFSS Plan was viewed by participants as representing a "first" for the County in several respects. The RBDM Framework proved to be a useful planning tool (though as we discuss below, its application could be improved). The planning process brought a wider array of perspectives to the table than had been the case in other planning efforts. Furthermore, the planning process helped the County to think more broadly about the goals it wanted to achieve. The fact that the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) shared the available funds with other County departments (i.e., that these monies flowed from the DPSS to other lead agencies) was also seen as an important step forward from traditional stove-piping of departmental resources.

Despite the fact that the RBDM Framework has relatively little to say about the details of implementation, the Framework urges an overarching plan focused on achieving population-level outcomes (such as family self-sufficiency). It states that achieving the desired outcomes is the responsibility of the community, that the community is accountable for those results. This broad effort requires partners to work together, implying that service delivery programs will entail community involvement. When planning moves toward these goals, the resulting programs tend to be more complicated to implement than conventional programs: Any attempt to break down long-established ways of doing business creates implementation challenges. Therefore, a natural question in assessing the utility of the RBDM Framework is the extent to which the use of the RBDM Framework affects the speed of implementation.

As of October 2001, two and a half years after the initiation of the planning process and two years after the approval of the LTFSS Plan, startup of service delivery to clients is only now getting under way for a number of projects. About half the projects have approved implementation plans (such that they could begin to serve clients), and some projects have approved evaluation deliverables. For most projects, the provision of those services appears to be at least several months away. This schedule is clearly slower than had been expected.

In general, project roll-out has gone about as fast as should have been expected. The LTFSS Plan's project roll-out has been slow because LTFSS projects have three levels of challenges to confront, many of which derive from the use of the RBDM Framework in planning the initiative. First, even though there was high-level involvement in the planning of the LTFSS projects, rolling out new programs—using a RBDM Framework or not—always takes a long time. Experience with other programs suggests that even for standard programs, this process takes 9–12 months, sometimes more. This consideration alone would have been expected to delay actual service delivery until late 2000 or early 2001.

Second, LTFSS projects are often not standard new projects or simply expansions of existing programs. Each of the fundamental ideas of the LTFSS Plan and the RBDM Framework—increasing community involvement, flowing funds between departments, and service integration—requires that a number of details be worked out about cross-agency cooperation and coordination and collaboration with the community. Doing so would be expected to stretch out the initial implementation phase.

Third, because the LTFSS Plan was a prototype for a new model of service provision in the County, there were few precedents for how to accomplish service provision. Before the details of cross-agency coordination for each individual project could be worked out, structures and procedures for attending to those details needed to be developed.

It seems reasonable to attribute some of the delay in project roll-out to the use of the RBDM Framework itself. Some of the delay will also occur with future use of the RBDM Framework (the second item above, the coordination issues). However, if the lessons from the LTFSS Plan experience are learned, some of the delays (the third item above, developing procedures) need not reoccur.

Furthermore, the history of the LTFSS Plan to date can be summarized as follows: the County has shown that it can plan and implement according to this new model—planning for results, as conceptualized by the RBDM Framework. As of October 2001, initial procedures have been developed and most of the steps have been completed for at least some of the projects. As experience

accumulates, refined procedures and processes should allow for improved application of the RBDM Framework.

Those involved in planning and implementing the LTFSS Plan effort expect two types of long-term benefits from the global strategic planning. First, interviewees feel that the LTFSS Plan had begun moving the County further along toward the goal of service integration.

Second, interviewees see a number of potential benefits to clients when all the LTFSS projects have begun providing services. Projected benefits include more services to families, less fragmentation of services to these families, improvements in customer service, more knowledgeable line staff about the range of County programs available to their clients, and more effective referrals.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED IN APPLYING THE RBDM FRAMEWORK

From our observation of the County's first experience with using the RBDM Framework to develop and implement the Plan, we draw three lessons.

Performing the RBDM Framework's Planning Tasks Requires Significant Time

Leaders and planning participants accomplished a great deal in a short planning time frame. Through a collaborative, consensus-building process, those involved in the LTFSS planning process agreed on a definition of long-term family self-sufficiency, selected a set of Countywide outcome indicators to measure progress toward achieving that goal, and developed a suite of projects that represented the "how" of improving the selected outcome indicators.

That said, most LTFSS planning leaders and participants would have liked more time to work through the tasks of the RBDM Framework and to fully consider the different issues that arose. A key lesson learned is that future planning efforts using the RBDM Framework would benefit by having more than six months to finalize a Plan and develop projects. More time would allow planners to bring the best available evidence to the table in determining "what works" and what outcome indicators should be used to measure progress toward achieving the agreed-upon end result(s) or outcome(s). It would also allow

planners to fully involve all the relevant stakeholders (e.g., community advocacy groups, researchers, and service providers) in the planning process and to assess what services already exist in the community and how the developed projects will relate to one another and to the existing service delivery systems. Finally, having more time would allow planners to develop a broader consensus.

In Large Counties, More Formal Links Between Planning and Implementation Are Needed

In a large county such as Los Angeles County, the individuals responsible for planning an initiative will often not be the individuals responsible for implementing an initiative. Thus, those implementing may not understand the planners' intent. Furthermore, even when they understand the planners' intent, implementers may feel that the program is not feasible or does not represent the best use of department resources. Therefore, planning and implementing an initiative the magnitude and complexity of the LTFSS Plan requires addressing three sets of issues.

First, it is essential to get the high-level involvement of the relevant players and of community representatives in the planning process and consensus-building to reach an agreed-upon global action plan. Second, as the LTFSS Plan moves from planning to implementation, a number of details must be worked out about cross-agency cooperation and coordination (e.g., the transfer of funds between departments; standardizing reporting procedures or memorandum of understanding, MOU, formats; determining what contracting requirements will be; and cross-supervision of departmental staff). Third, the individual lead agency and program staff responsible for implementing a specific project must determine what program infrastructure (e.g., site selection, hiring and training of staff, recruitment of program participants) must be in place to start up service delivery.

To successfully address these three issues, it would help if the Plan had specified more formal links between planning and implementation (e.g., mechanisms for ensuring the inclusion of County and non-County service providers or agency representatives in the planning process who would be responsible for implementing an initiative).

In practice, the LTFSS Plan represents a change from “business as usual” in the County and the innovations of the RBDM Framework pose some inherent challenges in addressing these three issues. The RBDM Framework encourages broad community input at planning and emphasizes collaboration and partnerships. It is silent, however, about how this should be accomplished. Actual implementation is a full-time job, of necessity, done by lead agency staff—employees of a particular County department or agency. Thus, one of the challenges is maintaining community involvement and ensuring that the final projects faithfully implement the planners’ and community’s intent.

To ensure the continuity of the vision from the planning process to the implementation phase and to maintain the focus on outcomes, several participants suggested ongoing Workgroup meetings that involve County and non-County representatives who participated in developing the LTFSS Plan. Such meetings may be a useful forum for addressing programmatic issues and constraints that planners may not have fully considered and for reconciling them with the planners’ vision. Meeting invitees might include Workgroup planning participants, lead agency and program representatives, researchers or outside program experts, and contract and finance representatives.

Because the dollars for LTFSS projects come out of welfare reform and federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) legislation, transferring these funds from one department to other departments or agencies with different funding requirements complicates implementation. New procedures needed to be put in place and additional restrictions were placed on how funds could be used. In retrospect, senior planners would have involved finance and contracts representatives early on in the planning phase. Doing so would allow them to begin addressing such issues as departmental fund transfers, and establishing agreed-upon reporting procedures and document templates for the implementation phase. Also, interviewees recognize that ongoing technical assistance is valuable to project staff in the receiving departments or agencies to help them develop project implementation plans and contracts that meet CDSS and federal TANF requirements.

Another lesson learned was the importance of recognizing the support needs of the numerous coordination activities that must occur early on during the

planning phase and continue into the implementation phase. As noted by several senior management leaders, the LTFSS Plan's budget divides a project's funds evenly across the five years and, by doing so, implicitly assumes rapid program start-up and scale-up to full operating capacity. However, as discussed above, to make the changes from "business as usual" embodied in the LTFSS Plan and to undertake the innovations of the RBDM Framework, a number of issues related to cross-agency cooperation and coordination must be addressed early on. In addition, a great deal must occur before projects are ready for service delivery. In particular, projects must contract with service providers, select program sites, hire and train staff, recruit program participants, develop program materials, among a host of other logistical issues. As a result, interviewees felt that budgets should realistically reflect the life cycle of a project, including early funding to address the numerous coordination issues between agencies prior to service delivery, then funding for a period of "ramping up."

The Evaluation Component Is More Complicated Than It Appears at First

Consistent with the RBDM Framework, the LTFSS Plan Evaluation Design includes a two-level evaluation. At the population level, an outside evaluator—RAND—is conducting an overall assessment of the County's progress toward the result, self-sufficiency, and the five outcomes by measuring progress on 26 indicators, such as the infant mortality and the poverty rate, and by assessing the usefulness of the RBDM Framework as a way of organizing diverse efforts toward a general desired result. At the program level, each of the LTFSS projects is required to measure progress on performance measures to determine its own success.

Consistent with the RBDM Framework, the LTFSS Plan's Evaluation Design emphasizes that progress on selected performance measures must be measured. Among the fundamental insights of the RBDM Framework is the importance of refocusing project efforts away from a narrow focus on what the project did to a broader focus on how the project affected client-level outcomes and well-being. To that end, the RBDM Framework requires that each project explicitly state which Plan outcomes it expects to affect, operationalizing those outcomes through specific program performance measures and then carefully

tracking the evolution of those measures over time. Individual projects are urged to track whether their “customers are better off” (Friedman, 2001, Section 3.16).

Building an evaluation component into the LTFSS Plan helps to keep the key stakeholders and lead agencies focused on outcomes and informs the Board about how these funds were used. The Plan’s evaluation component also introduces County departmental staff to Friedman’s approach and to the notion of explicitly thinking about what a program is trying to achieve and how to assess whether what an agency is doing is having the desired effects. Participants in the planning and implementation of the LTFSS Plan have praised the application of the RBDM Framework as having guided County departments and other lead agencies in thinking more formally about program outcomes and as providing a useful framework for prioritizing departmental resources.

However, some interviewees also expressed concern about whether the Evaluation Design will allow for the determination of causation, i.e., the effect of an individual LTFSS project (or even the Plan as a whole) on outcomes. The RBDM Framework is both quite specific and vague about how to evaluate the effect of a given project or a broad effort. The specific instructions involve using historical information to create a trendline (see Friedman, 2001, Section 2.11) and then using the historical trend information to project a future trend in the absence of new programs. The history and forecast create a baseline. Program success is evaluated in terms of deviations between baseline and actual outcomes. If historical data are not available, the RBDM Framework directs projects to collect data on comparison groups.

However, the RBDM Framework notes that simple pre- versus post-comparisons are invalid because other non-project forces would cause outcomes to change even in the absence of a new program. The examples in the RBDM Framework and the description of the “Story Behind the Baseline” process emphasize that many factors will affect future outcomes (see the example about “adequate housing” in Section 2.11 of Friedman, 2001) and that not all the factors are captured by a simple trendline. However, neither the RBDM Framework nor the Chief Administrative Office’s (CAO’s) technical assistance materials offers statistical methods about how to control for such other factors in the historical projections or the comparison group designs.

Those performing project evaluations would, therefore, benefit from additional training and technical assistance. Current CAO training materials describe the application of the basic trendline methods suggested by Friedman. However, the recent path of the economy—rapid expansion, followed by at least a mild recession—suggests that trendline methods are likely to underestimate the true effects of the program. The trendline—computed during the expansion—implicitly assumes that the expansion will continue. Applying trendline methods, any deviation from that trendline—e.g., because of the end of the expansion—will be attributed to the program. Thus, for some outcomes, simple trendline analyses are likely to suggest that the Plan made outcomes worse. Alternative methodologies exist that will (at least partially) correct for economic conditions. Thus, it may be useful to consider significant increases in the level of (and funding for) training for those performing the project evaluations and technical assistance in developing, refining, and implementing their evaluation plans so that they can detect any positive effects of the Plan, despite a slowing of economic growth.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

These lessons learned become a useful base on which to build as the County moves forward both to extend the application of the RBDM Framework outside the LTFSS Plan and to continue the use of the RBDM Framework within it.

For the application of the RBDM Framework outside the LTFSS Plan, a number of key stakeholders view the LTFSS Plan as an important opportunity to test the feasibility of applying the RBDM Framework in the County. From experience using the RBDM Framework in developing and evaluating the LTFSS Plan, the County can infer what adjustments may be needed to apply the RBDM Framework to other areas of the County's budget. Such learning opportunities are particularly important given the County's recent decision to incorporate the RBDM Framework into the County's budget process, specifically, into the Children's Budget.

In terms of the continued use of the RBDM Framework in the LTFSS Plan, the implementation of the LTFSS Plan is moving into its third calendar year, and

lead agencies will move from an emphasis on developing projects' implementation plans and putting an initial program in place to an emphasis on service delivery, refining LTFSS projects, overseeing contractors, and evaluating these projects and tracking outcomes. Fortunately, the lead agencies and DPSS and CAO/SIB begin work on these tasks from a solid base.

In its use of the RBDM Framework in the LTFSS Plan and in its extension of that application to other parts of the County budget, the County is ahead of other jurisdictions in applying the basic concept of "managing for results" to best serve the needs of children and low-income families. Further, by incorporating an evaluation component into the Plan, the County is ahead of others in its quest to learn and improve on the RBDM Framework's application. The utility of the RBDM Framework as an evaluation framework remains to be assessed as projects proceed with their evaluations. Regardless, clearly the preliminary lessons learned from this "experiment" will help inform future planning and application of the RBDM Framework within the County.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report has greatly benefited from the contributions of a number of individuals. We wish to acknowledge the participants in the Countywide planning process, lead agency staff, and non-County representatives who willingly shared their experiences in planning and implementing the LTFSS Plan. We also express our thanks to those who provided us with access to planning documents, expenditure data, and other information related to the Plan's development and implementation.

We also thank the LTFSS project coordinators, the Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency Division and Financial Management Division, DPSS, and CAO/SIB staff for their assistance in ensuring we had access to needed data and other information in support of our fieldwork.

Finally, we wish to express our appreciation to Robert Schoeni, Amy Cox, and Jeffrey Wasserman for their thoughtful review and comments on the draft report. Christopher Dirks and Patrice Lester provided valuable assistance in preparing this report.

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ACRONYMS

AFDC	Aid to Families with Dependent Children
Board	Board of Supervisors
CalWORKs	California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Act of 1997
CAO	Chief Administrative Office
CAO/SIB	Chief Administrative Office/Services Integration Branch
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CDSS	California Department of Social Services
CPC	Children's Planning Council
CPS	Current Population Survey
CWDA	Countywide Welfare Directors Association
CWS	Child Welfare Services
CYSA	Comprehensive Youth Services Act
DCFS	Department of Children and Family Services
DHS	Department of Health Services
DPSS	Department of Public Social Services
FPSI	Fiscal Policy Studies Institute
FY	Fiscal Year
GAIN	Greater Avenues for Independence
HSAA	High School attendance area
IOG	Interagency Operations Group
IS	Information Science
LAUSD	Los Angeles Unified School District
LEP	Limited English Proficient
LTFSS	Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
PIF	Performance Incentive Funds
PROB	Probation Department
PRWORA	Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996
RBDM Framework	Fiscal Policy Studies Institute's Results-Based Decision Making Framework

RFP	Request for Proposal
SD	Supervisory District
SPA	Service Planning Area
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
WTW	Welfare to Work

1. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Act of 1997 (CalWORKs) provided Los Angeles County (hereafter, the County) with a large new stream of funding (over \$150 million per year for five years) with relatively few conditions. On April 13, 1999, the County Board of Supervisors (hereafter, the Board) instructed the County's New Directions Task Force (NDTF) to develop a Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency (LTFSS) Plan for CalWORKs recipients and the broader low-income population, with the purpose of selecting projects that would improve the capacity of families to become self-sufficient. The NDTF effort resulted in the 46 projects known collectively as the LTFSS Plan that was approved by the Board on November 16, 1999.

The influence of Fiscal Policy Studies Institute's Results-Based Decision Making Framework (hereafter, the RBDM Framework) on the Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency Plan (hereafter, the LTFSS Plan) is apparent at many levels—in the process used to choose projects, in the projects actually chosen, and in the requirements that each project measure their performance. As we will see in the body of the report, these RBDM Framework-based ideas have had important consequences for the projects chosen and for the speed with which those projects have begun providing services to County citizens.

The County has now embarked on an ambitious effort to use the ideas of the RBDM Framework throughout the County's planning and budgeting process for child and family well-being programs. LTFSS Plan experiences with the RBDM Framework can provide early indications of the utility of the RBDM Framework and of the challenges that are likely to be encountered as County departments attempt to apply the RBDM Framework in the County.

OBJECTIVE

As part of an ongoing contract with the County's Chief Administrative Office (CAO), RAND is conducting the Countywide evaluation of the LTFSS Plan. That

evaluation will produce three annual reports, each of which will be comprised of the results of both an impact analysis and a process analysis.

The impact analysis component is intended to identify and track measures of outcomes and the effects of the LTFSS Plan. As we discuss in detail in the next chapter, these activities—analyzing the population-level outcomes that the County would like to affect in reaching its goal of family self-sufficiency—are themselves key components of the RBDM Framework.

To date, RAND has released two documents as part of the impact analysis: (1) a report that evaluated the data sources that can be used to measure the 26 indicators identified in the LTFSS Plan and that identified five “headline indicators” from the original 26 that will be used to track each of the five proposed outcome areas (Hedderson and Schoeni, 2002); and (2) a report that lays out a “baseline” trend for the headline indicators and that describes the factors that have caused the baseline trends to appear as they do for each of the headline indicators—i.e., telling the “story behind the baseline” (Schoeni et al., 2002).

The process analysis component is intended to provide complementary insights into the use and utility of the RBDM Framework as it has been adopted and adapted by the County. As we noted earlier, the development and evaluation of the LTFSS Plan were strongly influenced by the RBDM Framework. As the County moves to expand the use of the RBDM Framework, experiences with using the RBDM Framework in designing and evaluating the LTFSS Plan and its component projects can provide important insights and lessons learned.

APPROACH

In general terms, process analyses generate constructive suggestions for improving processes and procedures by combining three types of information:

- A careful and rich description of experiences to date. What are the official processes and procedures? What processes and procedures were actually used? To what extent have the

processes and procedures succeeded in generating the desired outcomes?

- The impressions and suggestions of participants and observers in the LTFSS Plan. What has “worked”? And, what has not “worked”? Which people, organizations, policies, and procedures have helped and which have hindered? And, most important, how may problems be resolved?
- The project team’s observations of similar programs in other evaluations and perspectives from relevant academic literatures.

In general, the first two types of information are collected through project-specific field work and document analysis, while the third type of information is drawn from the previous experiences and training of the project staff. Combining these three types of information yields suggestions for changes in policies and procedures, in this case, suggestions related to the RBDM Framework.

At the core of this research strategy is the collection of detailed information on actual implementation to date and the perspectives of participants and observers involved in planning or implementing the LTFSS Plan. To collect such information, RAND designed and implemented a multi-method research plan. The foundation of the research plan is a set of semi-structured interviews with key informants. In preparation for the semi-structured interviews, RAND developed a set of research questions and working hypotheses. These research questions and working hypotheses were then used to develop a master interview protocol.

With the assistance of the CAO and the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), RAND identified knowledgeable potential interviewees and assigned particular questions from the master interview protocol to specific interviewees. Most interviews were conducted with two-person teams. Some interviews were taped, transcribed, and added to the project’s computer files; for the other interviews, detailed notes were taken, transferred to computer files, reviewed by project staff, and added to the project files.

In total, the research team interviewed approximately 65 observers, gathering a wide range of perspectives. The interviewees included the following:

- County departmental staff from each of the lead agencies
- DPSS staff responsible for planning and implementing the LTFSS Plan
- CAO/Services Integration Branch (SIB) staff responsible for the evaluation of the LTFSS Plan
- Non-County departmental participants, including advocacy groups, nonprofit organizations, and academicians.

To encourage frank discussion of procedures and issues and following standard procedure in such efforts, RAND promised anonymity to all interviewees. Thus, except with their explicit permission, we do not quote them by name nor even list their names.

In addition to these semi-structured interviews, RAND collected and analyzed a wide range of written materials, which included the following:

- Official actions of the Board
- Planning documents, as well as related memorandum and correspondence
- Documents of the Workgroups' planning activities, including minutes of meetings, notes taken by individual participants, and related correspondence
- Training materials, including implementation guides and other technical guides developed for use by the lead agencies and Workgroup participants
- Projects' implementation and evaluation deliverables, as well as project documentation
- Project status update reports and other written materials
- Related California Department of Social Services (CDSS) documents.

These materials were augmented with broader perspectives from other ongoing RAND research on California welfare policy and the selection and implementation of social programs, including RAND's Statewide Evaluation of the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program

and its Evaluation of the Comprehensive Youth Services Act (CYSA). Both evaluations examine the impact of welfare-to-work (WTW) reform within California and the use of federal Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) funding by the State of California.

Finally, this evidence was interpreted using relevant social science and management research drawn from the fields of organizational behavior, economics, and sociology.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

The balance of this report proceeds in five chapters. Chapter 2—Overview of the RBDM Framework and the LTFSS Plan Process—describes the RBDM Framework and provides an overview and status of the planning, implementation, and service delivery processes. Chapter 3—Findings About the Utility of the RBDM Framework in the Planning Process—discusses the utility of the RBDM Framework in planning the LTFSS Plan. Chapter 4—Findings About the Effects of the LTFSS Plan on the Implementation Process—discusses the service delivery approach taken by the LTFSS Plan. Chapter 5—Findings About the Utility of the RBDM Framework in the Evaluation Process—discusses the utility of the RBDM Framework in the evaluation process.

Finally, Chapter 6—Lessons Learned and Future Directions—concludes this report with a summary of the key lessons learned and a discussion of future directions in applying the RBDM Framework.

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2. OVERVIEW OF THE RBDM FRAMEWORK AND THE LTFSS PLAN PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

As we noted in Chapter 1, the goal of this report is to explore the use and utility of the RBDM Framework in developing and implementing the LTFSS Plan. To understand our findings on the application and utility of the RBDM Framework—which appear in Chapters 3, 4, and 5—it is crucial to first provide some context for those findings and to provide an overview of the LTFSS Plan effort.

Thus, in this chapter, we begin with an overview of the RBDM Framework and the LTFSS Plan, as well as of the Los Angeles Children's Planning Council (CPC), which served as a bridge between the two. We then outline the steps with which the LTFSS Plan was put into place, from the initial planning phase through to the implementation and evaluation phases. Our discussion considers the time frame over which this occurred, as well as the policies and procedures that evolved to create a plan and then to turn a plan on paper into an actual enterprise that could improve families' well-being. Finally, we report on the status of these efforts as of the end of October 2001. In subsequent chapters, we assess the utility of the RBDM Framework as it was adopted and adapted by the County, based in large part on the County's experience as described in this chapter.

THE RBDM FRAMEWORK

Like the body of this report, we organize our overview of the RBDM Framework into three parts: planning, implementation, and evaluation. Here, we provide a high-level discussion of each of these parts.

Planning

In the County, as in most governments, planning occurs within limited domains. To deliver services, governments are organized into functional

departments. In the County, such functional departments include DPSS, which is responsible for CalWORKs, Food Stamps, and MediCal; the Department of Health Services (DHS), which is responsible for health programs; the Department of Mental Health Services (DMHS), which is responsible for mental health programs; and the Probation Department (PROB), which is responsible for the supervision of court-mandated offenders, both adults and juveniles. In addition, there are also County-related but separate agencies, such as the Los Angeles County Office of Education, which is responsible for providing education services.

This organizational structure, while necessary for providing services, has the unintended and unfortunate effect of encouraging narrow planning within the individual organizations, while discouraging coordinated planning across multiple departments and agencies. As a result, program consequences tend to be narrowly focused on the domain of the particular department or agency, ignoring interactions with other programs in other departments and agencies. The resulting service delivery structure is often compartmentalized and difficult for citizens to use. Instead of providing a holistic approach with integrated service provision, the structure addresses each service issue and each family member separately. This tendency is reinforced both by standard bureaucratic considerations (e.g., the desire of senior bureaucrats to protect and expand their organizations) and by categorical external funding. Such categorical external funding usually flows to a particular department or agency (e.g., the designated welfare agency) and may be used only for specified purposes. Together, these factors discourage both global planning across multiple departments and the integrated delivery of services.

Another feature of planning is that performance has traditionally been measured in terms of the effort expended rather than on ultimate outcomes. How many cases did the agency serve? What was the response time? Were there complaints? These narrow measures focus on the efforts of individual programs rather than on "results"—i.e., effects on the client-level outcomes. This approach is imperfect because, as Friedman says, "trying hard is not good enough. We need to be able to show results to taxpayers and voters" (Friedman, 2001).

The RBDM Framework is intended to change these two traditional aspects of government planning and budgeting. It urges that planning start with ends and work backwards to means (Friedman, 2001). Specifically, before selecting projects, planners should identify the population-level outcomes they want their programs to affect. These outcomes are then operationalized through the selection of specific indicators.

This focus on population outcomes then provides an overarching objective for planning and budgeting. Rather than focusing on individual funding sources and individual programs in isolation, the RBDM Framework emphasizes population outcomes, encouraging global planning across programs and funding streams. How can we coordinate services provided by different departments to address these outcomes? How can we deliver services from multiple departments in a way that is seamless (or at least less fragmented than current practice)? How can we move funds coming into one department to the department that can operate the program that is most likely to affect the outcomes of highest priority? These indicators are to assess the program's (in this case, the LTFSS Plan's) effect on outcomes. To do so, historical data on these indicators is used to construct a forecast of future levels of the indicators in the absence of the new program. Actual outcomes in the future are compared to pre-program outcomes and to this forecast baseline to assess the effect of the program.

In the RBDM Framework, the selected population outcomes and their corresponding indicators are used to select individual projects. Projects are then to develop evaluations to assess the impact of their efforts on client-level outcomes. Specifically, historical data on the outcomes are used to plot the historical trend and this trend is then used to develop a forecast of future levels of the indicator in the absence of program intervention. Together, these two trends are considered a baseline. Underlying this baseline is a "story behind the baseline" that incorporates an analysis of the forces that shift the indicator. This analysis is important for two reasons. First, it suggests causal paths through which programs might affect the indicator. Second, it suggests factors beyond simple extrapolation of recent trends that need to be considered in developing the forecast.

Finally, the RBDM Framework calls on projects to identify “partners”—public- and private-sector agencies that can help to affect the indicators. Such partners are particularly important in the RBDM Framework approach. The RBDM Framework is explicitly and deliberately open. It emphasizes the importance of opening deliberations from narrow department and agency discussions to the broader community. It does so, both because open deliberations make for decisions that better reflect the preferences of the population and because changing indicators (“turning the curve”) is viewed as a collaborative process between government, community-based organizations (CBOs), and individual citizens.

Thus, in the planning stage, the community chooses a global action plan composed of individual projects. Ideally, the resulting projects are very different from “business as usual.” They are developed with broad community input, rather than from within individual departments. As much as possible, they transferred funds from the departments nominally receiving the monies to the departments that can best implement the programs that are most likely to affect the population-level outcomes. Finally, they sometimes involve close coordination and coordination or integration of services across County departments, both at the senior management/planning level and at the caseworker/service delivery level.

Implementation

The RBDM Framework is nearly silent about implementation, but its vision for planning implies major changes in the programs to be implemented and the challenge of doing so. Developing new programs is always harder than running, or even refining, existing programs. Furthermore, line staff whose primary responsibility is managing ongoing programs may have little experience or training in developing new programs.

This inherent challenge of rolling out new programs is compounded by the innovations of the RBDM Framework. While actual implementation is a full-time job, of necessity, done by employees of a particular County department, the RBDM Framework encourages broad community input at planning. Thus, the challenge is to maintain community involvement and to try to ensure that the final

project faithfully implements community intent. In addition, the Plan moved funds from receiving departments or agencies to those that can best implement the programs. Such flowing of funds, however, complicates implementation. Rather than one responsible department, there are now two (or more). The effort required to develop programs more than doubles. It is not enough that each department review and approve the same plan. Implementation cannot proceed until both departments approve the plans and such approval cannot occur until any disagreements about the plans are surfaced and resolved. Doing so requires a high level of coordination by the two oversight groups. Delays because of coordination and priority setting should be expected.

The Plan also encourages the integration of the delivery of services at the caseworker/service delivery level. Doing so, in some instances, requires joint oversight of line operations and the interconnection of lines of control, and any decisions made by front-line staff must be consistent with the regulations of both departments. There also needs to be regular communication between line staff in different departments. Developing such coordination can be difficult and time-consuming.

Accomplishing all this would be difficult enough in an environment in which there were precedents and procedures for such issues (e.g., continuing community input, flowing funds across departments, coordinating front-line service delivery). In fact, as we will see, the LTFSS Plan represents a first attempt along many of these dimensions. As a result, to proceed with the implementation of specific projects, basic procedures and processes needed to be established.

These implementation challenges put a premium on careful oversight of the implementation process. This means setting specific intermediate goals and deadlines for those goals and then carefully tracking process toward those intermediate goals and the timing of that progress. (See Friedman, 2001.)

The Plan's emphasis on service integration also underscores the importance of interdepartmental coordination. High-level planning for interdepartmental coordination is relatively easy. Senior management can make agreements among themselves. There is often attention (and implicit pressure)

from global management (in the case of the County, the Board) for such coordination and cooperation. However, actual implementation of such cross-department efforts is likely to be more difficult because it takes place out of the spotlight of global management and involves a group of people much larger than just senior management. Therefore, a key issue in the final success of global planning efforts will be how well such efforts succeed in keeping narrow department-specific considerations and priorities from redirecting or even derailing cross-departmental initiatives.

Evaluation

The final component of the RBDM Framework is a focus on evaluation through a particular evaluation model. We have already discussed some of the components of the RBDM Framework evaluation model in our discussion of planning.

LOS ANGELES CHILDREN'S PLANNING COUNCIL

Locally, these ideas—outcome-based planning, service integration, measurement of outcomes—and the RBDM Framework have been championed by the Los Angeles Children's Planning Council (CPC), a Countywide public/private collaborative. Originally established in 1991 by the Board, with roots going back another decade, the CPC (along with its proponents) had worked to craft a unified vision of child policy within the County. (For more on the CPC, see McCroskey, 2001.) That unified vision is intended "to integrate the fragmented child and family services system, support the development of comprehensive community-based initiatives, and move toward collaborative cross-system, cross-jurisdiction planning" (McCroskey, 2001). Specifically, the CPC has focused on outcomes and the integrated delivery of services through a series of publication efforts, including developing a "Children's Scorecard" for Los Angeles (2001, 1999, 1998, 1995, 1994, 1986), defining "service planning areas" (SPAs), and compiling a unified "Children's Budget for Los Angeles" (Children's Planning Council, 1999). As we discuss below, CPC members would be quite active in developing the idea of a unified Plan and, as important, in developing the specific LTFSS Plan that emerged.

OVERVIEW AND DESCRIPTION OF THE LTFSS PLAN PROCESS

The LTFSS Plan embodies the RBDM Framework's approach to decision-making. The Plan begins with the Board's vision of a "holistic" service delivery system. Rather than "figuring out how to comply with highly prescriptive federal and state regulations", the Board and the Plan attempted to address "the most fundamental question ... What programs and services will best help CalWORKs and other low-income families achieve long-term self-sufficiency?" The formal planning process followed many of the steps of the RBDM Framework. In addition, the Plan's Evaluation Design is guided by the RBDM Framework's methodology and requires each of the resulting projects to undertake evaluations using such RBDM Framework concepts as the four quadrant performance measures, baselines, forecasts, stories behind the baseline, and the comparison of actual outcomes to forecasts.

In this section, we first provide a brief overview of the environment within which the LTFSS Plan was developed and, in particular, the budgetary and programmatic context just prior to its development. We then discuss the LTFSS Plan development process, looking at the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes separately.

Budgetary and Programmatic Context

As part of welfare reform, the County's NDTF conducted a broad-based effort to review the delivery of services by County health and human service agencies to families enrolled in the CalWORKs program, to former CalWORKs families, and to other low-income families. This effort resulted in the LTFSS Plan adopted by the Board on November 16, 1999 (New Directions Task Force, 1999).

The LTFSS Plan itself was strongly shaped by the social policy context that existed at the end of the 1990s. The nation, California, and the County transitioned from a recession in the early 1990s to a long and robust economic expansion through 2001. Employment and tax revenues were rising, and the welfare caseload was falling. New streams of funding for social services—

Proposition 10, the tobacco settlement, new mental health funding, a federal Medi-Cal waiver—were becoming available.

Nationally, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) and in California, CalWORKs, had radically reformed the welfare system. A combination of federal funding through block grants with a State Maintenance of Effort requirement, rapid caseload decline (resulting both from the economy and from welfare reform itself), and slow roll-out of expanded County programs resulted in generous funding for State and County welfare operations. (For more detail, see Klerman et al., 2001.) Senior DPSS staff noted that the available funding was in excess of what the County projected it could spend on the conventional welfare and programs on WTW services.

In addition to this generous funding of core WTW programs, the CalWORKs legislation provided a second source of funds. Partially to encourage counties to move recipients into the labor force and off cash assistance, the CalWORKs statute provided that all the savings resulting from any decline in aid payments were to be returned to the counties in the form of "Performance Incentive Payments" (CalWORKs Statute S 10544.1).

The robust economy and the rapidly dropping caseload led to the accumulation of such Performance Incentive Funds (PIF) monies well in excess of any initial expectation. By early 1999, the County had "earned" about \$400 million in PIF monies (later raised to about \$460 million). In fact, after the LTFSS Plan was approved and partially because the earned PIF money was so large, a sequence of actions by the State had the effect of deferring and then essentially ending the accumulation of PIF monies and delaying the actual paying of the some of the funds. (See County Fiscal Letters No. 99/00-34 and 99/00-41, and All County Letter No. 00-57; 2000-01 budget trailer bill for social services, Chapter 108, Statutes of 2000, AB 2876 Aroner.)

Description of the Planning Process

These funds provided the opportunity from which the LTFSS Plan emerged. Figure 2.1 presents the timeline for the development of the LTFSS

Plan. The time from first conceptualization of the Plan to its approval is less than nine months. The initial spur to develop the Plan appears to have come from Supervisor Gloria Molina and her insistence that rather than have the available PIF monies doled out in small pieces and with only limited oversight from the Board, the County should develop a unified plan for the use of these funds aimed at “stabiliz[ing] families by building their capacity to become self-sustaining” (Board Minutes, April 13, 1999). That vision was incorporated into a formal Board Resolution of April 13, 1999 “instruct[ing] the Director of Public Social Services to immediately delegate to the [County’s] New Directions Task Force on Welfare Reform (NDTF) the responsibility of creating a cohesive ‘Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency Plan’” and requesting a report back within 60 days. This NDTF (originally known as the Welfare Reform Steering Committee) had originally been created to craft the County’s reaction to welfare reform and included representatives of many County departments.

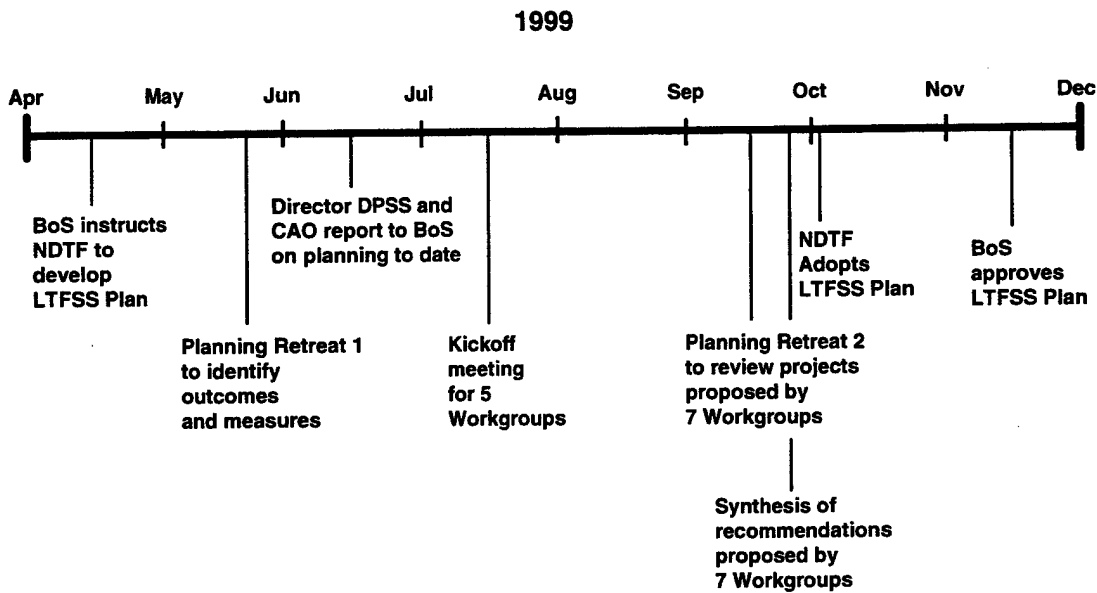


Figure 2.1—Timeline for Developing the LTFSS Plan

Following the initial instruction of April 13, NDTF convened a small group that included representatives from various County and community entities. This

group's charge was to draft a preliminary list of outcome indicators that potentially could be used to measure long-term family self-sufficiency.

On May 21, 1999, the NDTF convened a Planning Retreat to develop a set of measurable indicators of "long-term family self-sufficiency." Participants at the Retreat included representatives of County departments, representatives from the CPC and from each SPA Council, and selected community advocates and researchers. At the Retreat, the draft list of 45 potential outcome indicators was presented. Presentations were made at the Retreat on the available funding and using Fiscal Policy Studies Institute (FPSI) materials on Friedman's approach to planning and evaluation (i.e., the RBDM Framework). Then, following the steps of the RBDM Framework, Retreat participants selected the five outcome areas—good health, safety and survival, economic well-being, social and emotional well-being, and education and workforce readiness—that had previously been defined by the CPC, adopted by the Board, and used in CPC's Children's Score Card. Corresponding to these five outcome areas, they identified 26 specific measurable indicators. That list, shown in Table 2.1, served as the basis for the final set of indicators.

On June 14, 1999, a report was sent to the Board from the Director of DPSS and the Chief Administrative Officer summarizing the findings from the May Planning Retreat and describing the creation of LTFSS "Planning for Results Workgroups," (hereafter, Workgroups) one for each of the five outcome areas.

The kick-off meeting for the five Workgroups was held on July 12, 1999. Their charge was to develop services that would positively impact the identified measurable indicators of long-term family self-sufficiency. Chaired by corresponding County agency heads, membership on the Workgroups included representatives from County agencies, service providers, other public agencies, advocates, and researchers. During the process, additional Workgroups for teen services and cross-cutting organizational issues were established, bringing the number of Workgroups to seven.

**Table 2.1
Initial List of Outcome Areas and Indicators for LTFSS Plan**

Outcome Area	Indicators
Good Health	Low birth weight births (-) Access to health care (+) Infant mortality (-) Births to teens (-) Individuals without health insurance (-)
Safety and Survival	Domestic violence incidents (-) Child placement in out-of-home care (-) Juvenile probation violations (-) Successful minor/family reunification after out-of-home placement (+) Youth arrests for violent crimes (-)
Economic Well-Being	Annual income under Federal Poverty Level (-) Adults employed by quarter (+) Percent of family income used for housing (-) Access to transportation (+) Adults earning a living-wage (+) Homeless "episode" within prior 24 months (-)
Social and Emotional Well-Being	Personal behaviors harmful to self or others (domestic violence, child abuse/neglect, substance abuse) (-) Access to quality child care (+) Participation in community activities (voting, volunteering, mentoring, church, etc.) (+) Parent-child time together (+)
Education and Workforce Readiness	Teenage high school graduation (+) Adult educational attainment of high school diploma, GED, or eight grade reading level (+) Elementary and secondary school students reading at grade level (+) Mother's educational attainment at child's birth (+) High school graduation among mothers who gave birth before graduating high school (+) Adult participation in education or vocational training (+)

NOTE: Parenthetical sign indicates desired direction of impact.

The Workgroups were given broad guidance that was strongly influenced by the RBDM Framework:

- Start with the initial list of indicators and develop project proposals tied directly to one or more of the indicators
- Develop recommendations in each of the outcome areas and proposals to address programmatic or systemic issues
- Revisit the list of measurable indicators and suggest modifications to them, only after having derived a set of recommendations and proposed projects
- Develop the proposals, when possible, through a consensus-building process, with Workgroups to note any non-consensus-derived recommendations
- Report back in eight weeks with recommendations.

The Workgroups were given no specific guidelines about the amount of funding available for each of the specific outcome areas; however, the Workgroups were aware of the overall estimate of available PIF monies.

On September 16, 1999, a second Planning Retreat was held in which the individual Workgroups reported their recommendations and project proposals to the larger group. The Workgroups had developed 67 proposals that were consolidated and refined by a committee of 20 County and non-County representatives into 59 proposals, of which 55 had a "full consensus." The full package of 59 proposals was forwarded to the NDTF, which added four additional proposals and approved the resulting package on October 5, 1999. At this point, the proposals were also organized into eight strategy areas for promoting long-term family self-sufficiency. Subsequently, these 63 proposals were combined into the 46 projects that make up the LTFSS Plan, formally approved by the Board on November 16, 1999.

As was true throughout this process, the final Plan clearly reflects the influences of the RBDM Framework and the CPC, beginning with explicitly noted "common themes":

- "Where possible, services to families should support the family as a unit, rather than focusing on individual family members in isolation.

- Just as individuals live in families, families live in communities. Therefore, strengthening communities is an important element of strengthening families.
- Services are most effective when integrated at a community level.
- Focusing on positive outcomes for families is key to delivering effective services.”

Also consistent with the RBDM Framework and CPC’s emphasis on measurement and evaluation, the Plan specifically states that “[m]easurable outcomes are critical, both in shaping program design/redesign and determining program effectiveness.” Thus, each proposal was required to have “an adequate evaluation design to track achievement of measurable outcomes.”

Many other “mandatory elements”:

- does not duplicate existing services,
- does not supplant other funding,
- addresses a clearly documented need,

and some of the “desirable elements”:

- promotes service integration and does not increase fragmentation,
- enhances existing systems,
- has proven to be effective,
- is cost-effective,
- is complementary to existing programs,
- leverages other funding,
- has a positive long-term impact for participants),

are also in consonance with RBDM Framework and CPC themes.

This Plan had a total cost of approximately \$174 million per year, i.e., \$870 million over the five-year planning horizon of July 2000 to June 2005. About \$201 million of those funds came from the CalWORKs Single Allocation. For a variety of reasons, County expenditures of Single Allocation funds were well

below the budgeted level, allowing for full funding of the Single Allocation components of the LTFSS Plan. The situation with respect to PIF monies was different.

The balance of the funds, about \$668 million, or about \$133.7 million per year, was to come from PIF monies. Available PIF monies, however, were not sufficient to fully fund all the proposals over the entire five-year period (approximately July 2000 to June 2005). As of mid-1999, the best estimate of available PIF monies was only slightly more than \$400 million. Of those funds, about \$59 million had already been allocated to non-LTFSS projects (After-School Enrichment Program, Child Care Grant and Loan Program, and a one-time allocation for the Child Welfare Services (CWS) Emergency Assistance Program); thus, only about \$345 million (or \$69 million per year) was available for the LTFSS Plan over the five-year planning horizon.

After considering various options, the NDTF (apparently with the strong guidance of Lynn Bayer and Phil Ansell of DPSS) recommended that the 14 largest projects (those requesting at least \$1 million per year) be funded at half the initially funded level. Table 2.2 lists the 46 projects and their initial annual project funding. Projects initially requesting under \$1 million were deemed indivisible and funded in full. As a consequence, the six projects requesting between \$0.5 million and \$1.0 million were funded at a level higher than those requesting \$1 million: Project 22, Services to CalLEARN and Other Teen Parents; Project 24, Public Library Services for Children and Youth; Project 25, Operation READ; Project 28 Domestic Violence Prevention; Project 40, Strategic Planning Data Center;¹ and Project 41, SPA Council Staff and Technical Assistance.

¹Project 40 since then has been renamed to Data Partnerships.

**Table 2.2
46 Projects by Strategy and Initial Annual Funding**

Strategy/Project	Funding
PROMOTING SELF-SUSTAINING EMPLOYMENT	
1. CalWORKs Welfare-to-Work Strategy	\$4,000,000
2. Employer-Linked Education/Training	\$2,500,000
3. Transitional Subsidized Employment/Paid Work Experience	\$0
4. County Apprenticeship Program	\$0
5. Business Micro-Loan and Incubator Program for CalWORKs Participants	\$1,000,000
6. Housing Relocation Program	\$7,800,000
7. Strategic Information and Technical Assistance to Support Targeted Job Creation Activities	\$325,000
8. Community Economic Development Initiatives	\$500,000
9. Mini-Career Centers	\$1,500,000
ENSURING ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE	
10. Community Outreach to Increase Access to Health Care	\$5,000,000
11. Hotline to Resolve Health Care Access Issues	\$0
12. Health Care Transportation	\$0
13. "Health First"	\$0
SUPPORTING STABLE HOUSING	
14. Transitional Support for Homeless CalWORKs Families	\$8,800,000
15. Emergency Assistance to Prevent Eviction	\$3,750,000
16. Housing Counseling/Training	\$500,000
HELPING TEENS BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT ADULTS	
17. Community-Based Teen Services Program	\$17,500,000
18. Services to Teens With Special Needs	\$2,500,000
19. Services for Emancipated Foster Youth Who are Parents	\$550,000
20. Teen Passport to Success Providers	\$743,000
21. Staff Development for Teen Services Providers	\$500,000
22. Services to CalLEARN and Other Teen Parents	\$2,400,000
23. Youth Jobs	\$6,750,000
PROMOTING YOUTH LITERACY	
24. Public Library Services for Children and Youth	\$679,000
25. Operation READ	\$790,000
CURBING VIOLENCE	
26. Safe Places	\$2,400,000
27. DART/STOP For CalWORKs Families	\$0
28. Domestic Violence Prevention	\$650,000
29. School-Based Probation Supervision	\$2,100,000
30. Support Group for the Families of Children Aged 11-18 on Probation	\$150,000
BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES	
31. Strategic Support for Child Care	\$5,000,000
32. Federal Family Support Services Network	\$4,500,000
33. Family Preservation	\$8,500,000
34. Home Visitation Program	\$5,250,000
35. Peer Self-Help Support Groups	\$275,000
36. Support and Therapeutic Options Program (STOP)	\$600,000
INTEGRATING THE HUMAN SERVICES	
37. School Attendance Areas	\$100,000
38. Multi-Disciplinary Family Inventory and Case Planning Teams	\$7,000,000
39. County Family Resource Centers	\$1,350,000
40. Strategic Planning Data Center	\$575,000
41. Service Planning Area Council Staff and Technical Assistance	\$637,000

Strategy/Project	Funding
42. CalWORKs System Review	\$500,000
43. New Directions Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency Committee	\$0
44. CalWORKs Case Management	\$0
45. TranStar Enhancement	\$215,000
46. Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency Evaluation	\$2,000,000
TOTAL	\$132,389,000

NOTE: Table reflects original project names.

Description of the Implementation Process

Understanding how the Plan was implemented in the County is essential for understanding how useful the RBDM Framework is as something other than simply a guide to planning; in the final analysis, the County adopted the RBDM Framework's vision to achieve its goal of long-term family self-sufficiency, in part by changing the way services are actually delivered. Here, we discuss the timeline over which the Plan was put into practice and the procedures that were put into place to do so and about the context in which this occurred. We then turn to the status of these efforts as of October 2001.

Key Points in the Implementation Timeline. Figure 2.2 provides a timeline of key dates within the LTFSS Plan implementation process. When the Board approved the Plan in November 1999, they directed the NDTF to come back to the Board within 45 days with a timeline for implementation. The timeline and a matrix with the different implementation steps were developed jointly by the LTFSS planning team and the lead agencies and were submitted to the Board in December 1999. At that time, DPSS also initiated project coordinators' meetings that would bring together representatives from each of the lead agencies on a regular basis to meet and discuss progress on the LTFSS projects and any implementation issues that might arise.

leadership of LTFSS activities shifted from the Chief of the Inter-Governmental and Inter-Agency Relations Division to the Chief of the LTFSS Division. The shift resulted in some loss of continuity with the planning process.

In September 2000, DPSS convened a Technical Advisory Workshop to provide lead agencies with an overview of the approval processes for project implementation, contracts, and budgets. Then, in April 2001, DPSS held another Technical Advisory Workshop, at which projects were provided with an overview of the approval process for the Board letter and for memoranda of understanding (MOUs, interagency agreements where another County department will provide services for a project), or contracts, as well as step-by-step guidelines on how to develop the various required implementation documents (i.e., Board letter; implementation plan; line-item budget; MOUs; and contracts) consistent with DPSS practice and the required DPSS review. In the summer of 2001, the new LTFSS Division instituted one-on-one meetings with the individual projects to help them develop individual elements of their project implementation plans and supporting documents.

Key Elements in the Implementation Process. The LTFSS Plan, under the influence of the RBDM Framework, implied that a management structure and corresponding procedures needed to be established to manage the cross-department efforts before the projects could begin to deliver services to County residents. In Chapter 4, we discuss the evolution of these procedures and their effect on implementation and in terms of what they imply about the usefulness of the RBDM Framework. Here, we note the management structure and procedures as useful background material both for that discussion and for the discussion of the current status of implementation below.

The newly created LTFSS Plan Division within DPSS plays a central role in administering the Plan's projects. The Division is responsible for DPSS's fiscal oversight role. It is also responsible for coordinating all the LTFSS projects (internal and external to DPSS) and for overseeing the review and clearance process for projects' implementation plans and MOUs or contracts. The review and clearance process is a preliminary step prior to formal Board approval of a project. Board approval of a project's implementation plan is required for all projects at least partially funded by PIF dollars (i.e., for the majority of the LTFSS

projects). Board approval of a project's implementation plan is also required for any project that uses an outside contractor (for greater than \$25,000).²

Once the Board approves a project's implementation plan, a project can proceed with developing its MOUs or contracts. Once written, contracts/MOUs may require separate CAO, County Counsel, and/or Board Approval. LTFSS projects that involve only County departments (i.e., no contractors) and are funded solely by Single Allocation dollars do not require Board approval. For these projects, the review process is less involved, requiring only a memo to inform the Board about the project's implementation plan.

The documents required for the implementation of a project and for the approval process include the following: (1) Board Letter (jointly signed by the lead agency and DPSS); (2) an implementation Plan that describes the project, MOU and contractual arrangements, funding and estimated costs, how the project will be implemented, target population, type of services to be provided, and scope of work; (3) a line-item budget; and (4) MOU(s) and/or contract(s). In addition, all projects are required to fill out an immigrant planning guide to ensure that the special needs of immigrants, refugees, and limited English proficient (LEP) participants are fully addressed. To be approved, each of the documents has to go through a lengthy and detailed review and clearance process by all lead agencies involved with a project's administration, as well as by the DPSS, the CAO, and County Counsel.

Description of the Evaluation Design Process

The Board ultimately wanted to know who the LTFSS Plan projects help, how the funding was used, and what impact the projects had on children and families. The idea of results-based accountability underlying the RBDM Framework and thus the LTFSS Plan meant that each project should be able to show how it affected specific family and child outcomes. In approving the Plan, an important Board consideration was that a strong and independent evaluation design be put into place.

²LTFSS Technical Advisory Workshop Manual, April 23, 2001.

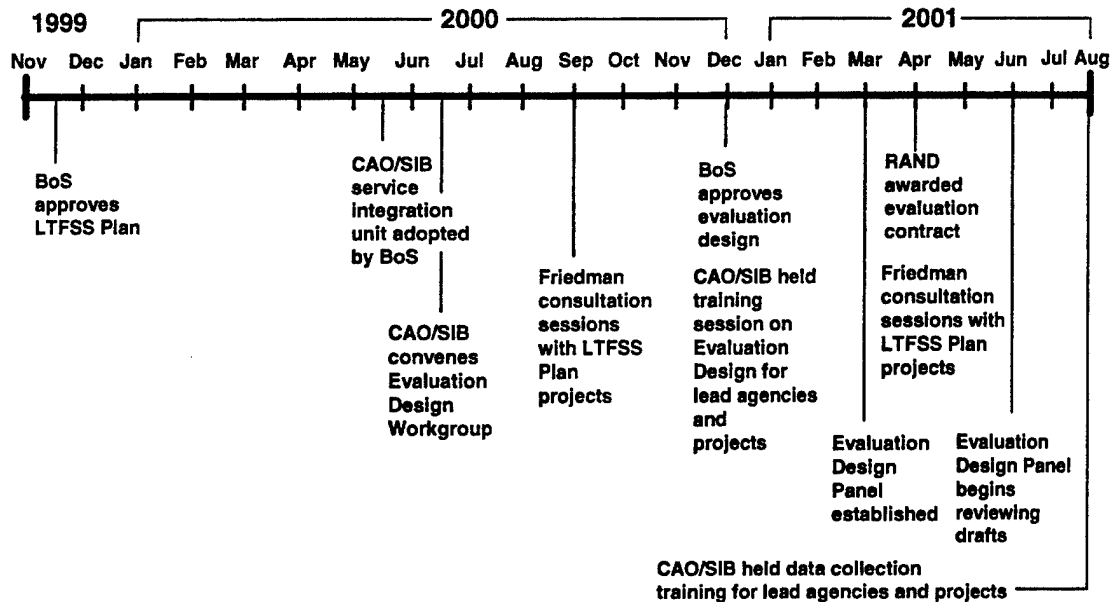


Figure 2.3—Evaluation Design Process Timeline

As Figure 2.3 suggests, the development of the LTFSS Plan's Evaluation Design and the individual project evaluations did not get under way until the creation of the CAO/SIB in May 2000. One of its first tasks was to develop the LTFSS Plan's Evaluation Design. On June 15, 2000, the CAO/SIB convened an Evaluation Design Development Kick-off Meeting, bringing together representatives from each of the lead County agencies to begin working together on developing the LTFSS Plan Evaluation Design. The Evaluation Design was to be based on the RBDM Framework model. At that meeting, Friedman provided participants with an overview of his results-based decision-making model and made suggestions about how the Workgroup might approach their task, including the following:

- In defining "the population," the perspective they adopt should first be the County as a whole and second the poor families within the County
- The Workgroup should narrow down the list of indicators and consider choosing 3–5 of the most important 26 outcome indicators to focus on initially

- The Workgroup should not limit the evaluation process to County departments; instead, it should also involve community partners, such as community agencies and welfare rights advocates
- The Workgroup should approach evaluation from the top down and bottom up simultaneously. That is, Friedman encouraged them to approach evaluation from the view of the Board and from the perspective of the customers/participants.³

Further, the LTFSS Plan's Evaluation Design should be based on FPSI's RBDM Framework. The Evaluation Design Workgroup members also received a plan summary outline listing the elements that should be addressed in the draft Evaluation Design, such as collecting and analyzing data on performance measures, producing reports on project-level outcomes, and identifying needed resources and technical assistance.⁴

The Evaluation Design Workgroup met a total of five times, with the goal of submitting an Evaluation Design to the Board by November 2000 for approval. In December 2000, the Board approved the LTFSS Plan's Evaluation Design. At the request of DPSS and the LTFSS Departmental Coordinators, the CAO/SIB held an all-day training session for more than 100 County departmental representatives to introduce them to the Evaluation Design and the overall RBDM Framework approach. At that session, a detailed Project Evaluation Implementation Guide was provided to projects. The CAO/SIB also provided hands-on technical training at that meeting on how projects should implement the Evaluation Design.⁵

³LTFSS Evaluation Design Development Kick-off Workshop, Meeting Notes, June 15, 2000.

⁴ibid.

⁵The LTFSS Evaluation Design calls for the continuation of the Evaluation Design Workgroup, which is charged with continuing to guide the design and implementation of the LTFSSP evaluation. The Workgroup also is charged with oversight of the Countywide evaluation deliverables: (a) data development agenda; (b) headline indicators; and (c) geographic units of analysis (County of

The lead County agency is responsible for a project's evaluations, regardless of whether other County departments or agencies may be involved in the project. With respect to evaluation, the projects themselves have six deliverables: (1) a logic model; (2) a list of headline and secondary performance measures; (3) a data sources document; (4) a data development agenda; (5) a story behind the baselines that includes a progress graph; and (6) semi-annual reports thereafter. The first five deliverables are preliminary ones, which are compiled and condensed into the sixth deliverable, the semi-annual report, due approximately 11 months after a project is implemented and every six months thereafter.

The project evaluations contribute to the specific goals of the Evaluation Design⁶ by serving as a means by which CAO/SIB can assess the progress of individual projects and help identify projects' support needs. In the Spring of 2001, CAO/SIB established an Evaluation Design Panel comprised of representatives from the DPSS Evaluation, Research, and Quality Assurance Division, Department of Health Services (DHS), CPC, implementing agencies (e.g., contractors), and the CAO. It oversees a formal review of project evaluation deliverables.

Not all the members of the Evaluation Design Panel had been previously involved in developing the LTFSS Plan Evaluation Design. Thus, the first step was to orient the Panel members to the Evaluation Design. In the early summer of 2001, the Panel began reviewing projects' draft evaluation deliverables. The

Los Angeles Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency Plan Evaluation Design, page 3, October 23, 2000).

⁶The LTFSS Evaluation Guide states that the specific goals of the LTFSSP evaluation are:

- to evaluate the success of the LTFSSP in terms of assisting CalWORKs and low-income families to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency in relation to the identified outcomes, vision, and key project elements;
- to monitor the effectiveness of the various projects and services included in the Plan to both track progress and to guide future programmatic, fiscal, and operational decisions;
- to complement other Los Angeles County evaluation efforts related to initiatives that help children and families achieve and maintain self-sufficiency.

review is an iterative process between the projects, CAO/SIB, and the Panel until a project's evaluation deliverables are finalized and approved.

STATUS OF LTFSS PROJECTS' IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

In this section, we discuss the current status (as of the end of October 2001) of the lead agencies in their efforts to implement and evaluate their projects.

Status of Implementation

Table 2.3 summarizes the implementation status of the various projects as of the end of October 2001. The table includes information on the implementation status of not only the 46 projects but also of their individual subcomponents.

The table is based on the steps in the review and clearance process, but it expands a little beyond that. We subdivide the approval process into four process checkpoints: (1) whether the project has received Board memo/letter approval; (2) whether the implementation plan has been approved; (3) whether there is MOU approval; and (4) whether there is approval for contracts/subcontracts. As noted above, not all projects require approval in all these areas.

Assuming projects have moved beyond the approval process, the next step is to start providing services. Of course, before services can be provided, projects need to put their infrastructure into place (e.g., hiring staff, hiring contractors, putting into place interagency agreements, finding space for the program, training staff, and recruiting program participants). This distinction is not highlighted in the table, although it has led to significant delays in the actual start-up of service delivery. Finally, the table considers whether the projects are actually spending funds.

**Table 2.3
Implementation Status of LTFSS Plan Projects**

No.	Project Name	Approval Process				Svc Delivery Start-up	Have Spent Funds
		Board Memo/ Letter App.	Imp. Plan App.	MOU App.	Contr/ Sub-contr		
1	CalWORKs WtW Strategy						
1a	Career Plan and Prep Seminar		N/A	N/A			
1b	Enhanced Appraisal	N/A	N/A	N/A			
1c	Targeted Initial Job Search	N/A	N/A	N/A			
1d	Part-Time Work w/ Educ/Training	N/A	N/A	N/A			
1e	Voluntary Enhanced Motivation		N/A	N/A			
2	Employer-Linked Educ/Training	X	X	N/A	N/A		
3	Transitional Subsidized Employment		N/A	N/A		X	
4	County Apprenticeship Program			X	X	X	X
5	Business Micro-Loan and Incubator						
5a	Business Micro-Loan Program		N/A	X			
5b	Incubator Without Walls		N/A	X			
6	Housing Relocation Program	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	X	X
7	Strategic Info—Supp Job Creation		N/A	N/A			
8	Community Economic Development			N/A			
9	Mini-Career Centers	X	X	X			X
10	Community Outreach—Health Care						
10a	1931 (b) Medi-Cal Outreach	X	X				
10b	Prenatal Outreach	X	X		X	X	
10c	CalWORKs Family Assistance		N/A	N/A	N/A	X	
10d	Media Outreach						
10e	Improving Inter-dept Capacity			N/A			
11	Hotline to Resolve Health Care		N/A	N/A	N/A	X	
12	Health Care Transportation	X	N/A	N/A		X	
13	Health First		N/A	N/A	N/A	X	
14	Transitional Support—Homeless						
14a	Relocation Grant—Homeless Families			X			
14b	Tenant-based Trans. Rental Asst.			Deleted			
14c	Trans. Subsidized Employment			X			
15	Emergency Assistance—Eviction			X			
16	Housing Counseling/Training		N/A				
17	Community-Based Teen Services	X	X	N/A	X		X
18	Teens with Special Needs	X	X	N/A	X		
19	Emancipated Foster Youth-Parents				N/A		
20	Teen Passport to Success	X	N/A	N/A			
21	Staff Development for Teen Service Providers						
22	Cal-Learn and Teen Parents						

No.	Project Name	Approval Process				Svc Delivery Start-up	Have Spent Funds
		Board Memo/ Letter App.	Imp. Plan App.	MOU App.	Contr/ Sub-contr		
22a	Teen Career Enhancement	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	X	
22b	Career Counselors			N/A	N/A		
23	Youth Jobs	X	X	X	X	X	X
24	Public Library Svcs for Children						
24a	Homework Center				N/A		
24b	Teen Library Card Campaign				N/A		
24c	Support Services for After-School Program				N/A		
25	Operation READ	X	X	X	X	X	X
26	Safe Places						
27	DART/STOP for CW Families				X		
28	Domestic Violence Prevention						
28a	Risk Assessment Tool						
28b	Research: What Stops DV						
28c	DV Teen Curriculum						
29	School-Based Probation Supervision	X	X	X	N/A	X	X
30	Support—Families of Probation Child	X	X		X	X	
31	Strategic Support for Child Care						
31a	Child Care—Non-needy Caregiver			N/A	X		
31b	Inc Non-traditional Child Care						
32	Federal Family Supp Svcs Network						
33	LTFSS Family Preservation	X	X		N/A	X	
34	Home Visitation Program						
34a	Nurse Home Visitation Prog	X	X	X	N/A	X	X
34b	Home Visitation and Case Management	X	X	X			
35	Peer Self-Help Support Groups		N/A				
36	Support and Therapeutic Options	Deleted: Funding provided by different source					
37	School Attendance Areas				N/A	X	
38	Multi-Disciplinary Family Inventory	X	X		X	X	X
39	County Family Resource Centers						
39a	County Family Resource Centers				X		
39b	DPOs for Family Resource Centers				X		
40	Data Partnerships			N/A			
41	SPA Council Staff and Tech Asst.	X	X	N/A	X	X	X
42	CalWORKs Systems Review		N/A	X			
43	New Directions L-T Fam Comm	N/A	N/A	X	N/A	X	
44	CalWORKs Case Management	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	X	
45	TranStar Enhancement		N/A				
46	L-T Family Self-Suff Evaluation	X	X	X	X	X	X

As the table shows, the project roll-out is proceeding slowly. As of October 2001⁷, 17 projects and 4 subcomponents have been implemented, i.e., they have reached the point of being able to start up services (the Xs in the second-to-last column). Five of the 17 projects at this stage are projects that do not provide services to recipients: 12, 37, 41, 43, and 46. Thus, considering only those projects providing direct services, we are left with only 12 projects and 4 subcomponents that have begun delivering services to the residents of the County.

As noted, the final stage of implementation for most (but not all) projects involves spending funds. For example, seven of the 20 projects that have reached the point of start up of services do not have any initial monetary allocation: 3, 4, 11, 12, 13, 43 and 44 (Table 2.2, above). Another 11 projects have reached the point of being able to start up services and start spending their monetary allocations, and are spending funds. Of the 11 projects, 9 provide direct services to recipients.

When and how much those projects are spending is summarized in Table 2.4. It tabulates the most recent available data covering the period through June 2001 (the end of Fiscal Year, FY, 2000–2001). For budgeting purposes, the original project budgets assumed (except for some small one-time costs) constant-level expenditures for the period July 2000 to June 2005. Actual expenditures have followed a very different pattern.

Two projects—Project 29, School-Based Probation Supervision; and Project 34(a) Nurse Home Visitation Program—started spending funds in late FY 1999–2000 (i.e., before July 2000). These two projects appear to have spent at approximately their budgeted levels. Another project (Project 23, Youth Jobs) began in FY 2000–2001 and is spending at approximately its budgeted level. It alone accounts for nearly half the expenditures to date (\$10.4 million of the combined FY 1999–2000 and FY 2000–2001 total of \$22.1 million).

⁷In assessing where the projects are in the process, we relied on interviews, LTFSS Project Status Update charts, and other sources during the process assessment, information-gathering stage, which ended in October 2001.

**Table 2.4
LTFSS Plan Expenditures by Month (\$)**

Proj #	6/00	Actuals FY 99-00	10/00	11/00	12/00	1/01	2/01	3/01	4/01	5/01	6/01	Actuals FY 00-01
4											41,751	41,751
6			1,500	405	2,305	2,981	50	2,350	910			10,501
9											150,000	150,000
17											573,190	573,190
23									7,316,142	1,360,630	1,771,737	10,448,509
25						36,861	22,255	21,534		59,554	96,183	236,387
29	505,588	505,588			644,116	324,566		283,096	74,582	260,032	520,765	3,302,318
34a	954,476	954,476		254,945	603,371	273,634	183,983	203,440	212,037	501,221	832,913	4,790,713
38											798,793	798,793
41							43,100	59,600				102,700
46							30,271				74,365	104,636
TOTAL	1,460,064	1,460,064	1,500	255,350	1,249,792	638,242	279,659	570,020	7,803,671	2,181,437	4,859,897	20,559,486
YEARLY TOTAL		1,460,064										20,559,486

Interpreting the spending levels of the other projects is complicated by the fact that the billing patterns from month to month are far from level. While we might expect a slow ramp-up of monthly expenditures, for some projects the first month with recorded expenditures is much higher than it is for subsequent months (e.g., Project 29, where the opposite pattern—slow ramp-up—might have been expected), suggesting that expenditures were held and then billed as a bunch.⁸ Given those caveats, three other projects started spending toward the end of FY 2000–2001 and appear to have expenditures that might put them near the budgeted levels on an annualized basis—Project 9, Mini-Career Centers; Project 25, Operation Read; and Project 38, Multi-disciplinary Family Inventory. Another five projects have some expenditures, but the limited available evidence suggests that those expenditures are well below the budgeted level—Project 4, County Apprenticeship Program; Project 6, Housing Relocation Program; Project 17, Community-Based Teen Services Program; Project 41, SPA Council Staff and Technical Assistance; and Project 46, LTFSS Plan Evaluation. A few projects currently exist under different funding sources and will be picked up by the LTFSS Plan at a later date (e.g., Project 10). Finally, as noted earlier, the remaining projects with monetary allocations have no expenditures at all.

⁸Projects 14 and 15 had their single allocation funding eliminated, with PIF monies subsequently allocated for these projects in a February 2001 Board motion. In the case of Project 29, the program was implemented in March 2000, but the MOU was not finalized by DPSS until January 2001. Once that process was finalized, the lead County agency billed for the full period.

Status of Evaluation

As was true for implementation and expenditures, relatively few project evaluation formative deliverables have been submitted and even fewer have been reviewed after initial Evaluation Design Panel comments.⁹ As of October 2001, 21 projects had evaluation deliverables due. As shown in Table 2.5, 16 projects' draft evaluation formative deliverables have been submitted for review and of those 16, six have been approved by the Evaluation Design Panel: Project 4, County Apprenticeship Program; Project 22a, Teen Career Enhancement; Project 23, Youth Jobs; Project 25, Operation READ; Project 34a: Nurse Home Visitation Program; and Project 38: Multi-Disciplinary Family Inventory. In addition, three projects have received partial approval of their draft evaluation formative deliverables. That is, two out of the three formative deliverables of these projects' evaluations (logic model, performance measures, and data sources document) have been approved. These three projects are: Project 2, Employer-Linked Education/Training; Project 29, School-based Probation Supervision; and Project 41, SPA Council Staff and Technical Assistance.

As noted, 16 projects' evaluation formative deliverables have been submitted for review. Other projects have also made progress in developing their evaluation formative deliverables (e.g., selecting performance measures, developing a logic model, identifying potential data sources and information systems requirements), but they have not yet focused on the development of their overall project evaluation, nor have they yet submitted any individual project evaluation formative deliverables for approval.

In assessing the current status of projects' evaluation formative deliverables, it is important to keep in mind the broader context of the overall evaluation process. As shown earlier in Figure 2.3, although the Board approved the LTFSS Plan in November 1999, the Evaluation Design itself was not put into

⁹By formative deliverables, we mean that projects have selected performance measures, developed a logic model, and identified potential data sources and information systems requirements.

place until December 2000. A review process then had to be put into place and training sessions conducted on the Evaluation Design.

An additional important reason for the delay in the development of projects' evaluation formative deliverables is that the lead County agencies have tended to focus initially on developing their implementation plans, getting those plans through the Board approval process, and creating the infrastructure to deliver services. Projects believed that it was necessary to get their implementation plans into place first before they could start developing their evaluations, particularly those projects involving contractors. As discussed earlier, development of project implementation plans has been a slower and more complex process than initially anticipated, given initial budgets and implementation timelines. Given the sequencing—implementation and only then development of the evaluation plan—the longer timeline for implementation also pushed back the development of evaluation plans.

**Table 2.5
Status of Projects' Evaluation Formative Deliverables**

No.	Project Name	Prior to Submittal	Submitted for Review	Resubmitted	Approved
1	CalWORKs WiW Strategy				
1a	Career Plan and Prep Seminar	X			
1b	Enhanced Appraisal	X			
1c	Targeted Initial Job Search	X			
1d	Part-Time Work w/ Educ/Training	X			
1e	Voluntary Enhanced Motivation	X			
2	Employer-Linked Educ/Training			P	P
3	Transitional Subsidized Employment	X			
4	County Apprenticeship Program				X
5	Business Micro-Loan and Incubator				
5a	Business Micro-Loan Program	X			
5b	Incubator Without Walls	X			
6	Housing Relocation Program			X	
7	Strategic Info—Supp Job Creation	X			
8	Community Economic Development	X			
9	Mini-Career Centers	X			
10	Community Outreach—Health Care				
10a	1931 (b) Medi-Cal Outreach	X			
10b	Prenatal Outreach		X		
10c	CalWORKs Family Assistance		X		
10d	Media Outreach	X			
10e	Improving Inter-dept Capacity	X			
11	Hotline to Resolve Health Care		X		
12	Health Care Transportation	X			
13	Health First		X		
14	Transitional Support—Homeless				
14a	Relocation Grant—Homeless Families	X			
14b	Tenant-based Trans. Rental Asst.			Deleted	
14c	Trans. Subsidized Employment	X			
15	Emergency Assistance—Eviction	X			
16	Housing Counseling/Training	X			
17	Community-Based Teen Services	X			
18	Teens with Special Needs	X			
19	Emancipated Foster Youth-Parents	X			
20	Teen Passport to Success	X			
21	Staff Development for Teen Service Providers	X			
22	Cal-Leam and Teen Parents				
22a	Teen Career Enhancement				X
22b	Career Counselors	X			
23	Youth Jobs				X
24	Public Library Svcs for Children				
24a	Homework Center	X			
24b	Teen Library Card Campaign	X			
24c	Support Services for After-School Program	X			
25	Operation READ				X
26	Safe Places	X			
27	DART/STOP for CW Families	X			
28	Domestic Violence Prevention				
28a	Risk Assessment Tool	X			
28b	Research: What Stops DV	X			
28c	DV Teen Curriculum	X			
29	School-Based Probation Supervision		P		P
30	Support—Families of Probation Child		X		

No.	Project Name	Prior to Submittal	Submitted for Review	Resubmitted	Approved
31	Strategic Support for Child Care				
31a	Child Care—Non-needy Caregiver	X			
31b	Inc Non-traditional Child Care	X			
32	Federal Family Supp Svcs Network	X			
33	LTFSS Family Preservation		X		
34	Home Visitation Program				X
34a	Nurse Home Visitation Prog				
34b	Home Visitation and Case Management	X			
35	Peer Self-Help Support Groups	X			
36	Support and Therapeutic Options	Deleted; Funded from a separate source			
37	School Attendance Areas	X			
38	Multi-Disciplinary Family Inventory				X
39	County Family Resource Centers				
39a	County Family Resource Centers	X			
39b	DPOs for Family Resource Centers	X			
40	Data Partnerships	X			
41	SPA Council Staff and Tech Asst.			P	P
42	CalWORKs Systems Review	X			
43	New Directions L-T Fam Comm	X			
44	CalWORKs Case Management	X			
45	TranStar Enhancement	X			
46	L-T Family Self-Suff Evaluation	N/A			

NOTE: There are three evaluation formative deliverables for the project evaluations that must be approved: logic model, performance measures, and data sources document. If two of these deliverables have been approved and the third deliverable is still pending, we use the letter "P" to designate partial approval. For example, Project 2 has had two of its evaluation formative deliverables approved, with the third evaluation formative deliverable having been resubmitted to the Evaluation Design Panel for consideration. On Project 29, two of its evaluation formative deliverables have been approved by the Evaluation Design Panel, with the third evaluation formative deliverable just recently submitted for review.

DISCUSSION

This chapter has provided an overview of the RBDM Framework and the LTFSS Plan and outlined the policies and procedures that evolved over time to turn an idea into an operational County effort to help families achieve long-term self-sufficiency. We discussed how the planning process led to the LTFSS Plan and how the next steps of the process—implementing and evaluating projects—are still under way. This background information sets the context for our analysis of the utility of the RBDM Framework in the County in the subsequent chapters, because an assessment of how useful the RBDM Framework was must start with how the RBDM Framework was actually used. Those experiences, described in the next chapter and elaborated upon in later chapters, are an indispensable source of insight and knowledge on which to build as the County considers how it might adapt and refine the RBDM Framework for future applications.

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3. FINDINGS ABOUT THE UTILITY OF THE RBDM FRAMEWORK IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

The RBDM Framework provides clear guidance about how to conduct strategic planning and the RBDM Framework was used in developing the LTFSS Plan. The previous chapter described the development of the Plan and the status of implementation and evaluation. In this chapter, we report the impressions of our key informants about the use and utility of the RBDM Framework in the planning phase (i.e., the development of the Plan). We consider how the RBDM Framework was used in practice, what issues arose, how they were addressed, and what changes—based on this experience—participants thought future applications of the RBDM Framework in Los Angeles County should consider.

THE UTILITY OF THE RBDM FRAMEWORK IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

The RBDM Framework Succeeds in Focusing Attention on Ultimate Results

As discussed in Chapter 2, the RBDM Framework urges planners to begin by identifying the result(s) or outcome(s) they want to improve and to identify a list of outcome indicators that quantify the achievement of the outcomes. It then urges planners to choose projects that they believe will improve those outcomes. Further, the RBDM Framework urges planners to involve all the relevant stakeholders in a collaborative process in deciding which result(s) and outcome(s) the Plan should achieve and to select indicators to measure progress toward the outcomes.

In practice, the LTFSS planners followed the RBDM Framework in defining the Plan's overall objective of helping families to achieve long-term self-sufficiency. Following Friedman's guidance, in the spring of 1999, a small task force convened by DPSS drafted a preliminary list of 45 outcome indicators that might be used to measure long-term family self-sufficiency. This draft set of indicators, along with the RBDM Framework, were presented at a May 1999

Planning Retreat that brought together a diverse group of individuals from inside and outside County government. They included representatives from County departments, major agencies outside of the County (e.g., the Los Angeles Unified School District, LAUSD), the City of Los Angeles, the CPC, SPA Councils, and selected community advocates and researchers. Retreat participants were asked to help develop a definition of “long-term family self-sufficiency” and to modify the draft set of measurable indicators based on the RBDM Framework.

Retreat participants reached a consensus on the definition of long-term family self-sufficiency and on reducing the draft list of 45 outcome indicators to a set of 26 indicators to measure progress toward the goal of achieving self-sufficiency for children and families. The 26 indicators were then grouped into five outcome areas—good health, safety and survival, economic well-being, social and emotional well-being, and education and workforce readiness—that had previously been defined by the CPC, adopted by the Board, and used in CPC’s Children’s Score Card. Subsequent discussions about what programs would help the County achieve its goal of self-sufficiency for low-income families was then guided by this list of indicators.

In short, many of the steps in developing the LTFSS Plan followed the procedures of the RBDM Framework and the RBDM Framework proved to be a useful planning tool. The planning process brought a wider array of perspectives to the table than has been the case in other planning efforts, this new collaborative approach helped the County think broadly about what it wanted to achieve. Only after setting overarching goals would the County turn to the methods for achieving those goals.

While using the RBDM Framework was reported by interviewees to have improved planning, we also heard that changes in the way the Framework is applied could make it even more useful. The following sections discuss those areas where changes in the application of the RBDM Framework would make it even more useful in planning.

Applying the RBDM Framework Would Have Been Facilitated by a Longer Planning Process

The RBDM Framework does not specify a time frame over which planning should be accomplished, only that planning is an iterative process, in which results feed back into additional planning and efforts to refine the overall Plan and its component projects. The County used its previous experience planning welfare reform as a guide, allocating six months for overall planning, including eight weeks for developing proposals.¹⁰ The LTFSS planning leaders noted that this choice of a short, intensive planning process was based on experience with planning for welfare reform. There, a short, intensive planning process led to quality products while keeping the engagement of the key players. Given this experience, these leaders used a similar planning process for the LTFSS Plan. They felt that six months was the longest period of time they could ask for to accomplish this task.

Following the May Planning Retreat, five Workgroups were created corresponding to the five outcome areas.¹¹ The Workgroups were given eight weeks to develop project proposals and recommendations in the five outcome areas that are tied to the list of 26 Countywide indicators.¹² This focus on ultimate outcomes is in keeping with the RBDM Framework's intent and, for the most part, appears to have followed the planning guidance outlined by the RBDM Framework. Nevertheless, when interviewed, most Workgroup participants did not explicitly know about the RBDM Framework or recalled using it.

¹⁰The entire planning process for developing the LTFSS Plan spanned a little over six months, starting April 13 with the Board's instructions to the NDTF to begin the process and ending October 5 with the NDTF's adoption of the approved Plan.

¹¹Subsequently, two additional Workgroups were created to address the needs of teens and integration of services.

¹²The steps of this process are described in more detail in Chapter 2. The Workgroups had no specific guidelines about the amount of funding available for each of the specific outcome areas; however, they knew the overall estimate of available PIF monies.

Looking back on their experiences with the LTFSS Plan, many interviewees thought that in future applications of the RBDM Framework, the planning and project selection process would benefit from more time. They felt more time would lead to a number of improvements: even wider community participation in planning, more thorough discussion of all possible options for spending the funds, more attention paid to the Plan's strategy of integrating the human services delivery objectives and how new projects fit into existing services in the County, and more time to bring research evidence to bear on project efficacy and cost-effectiveness. We discuss, in turn, the context for each of these areas for improvement.

The RBDM Framework advocates broad community involvement in the planning process and calls for ensuring that all the key stakeholders are at the table. While there does appear to have been broad involvement of the community and non-County stakeholders in the May 21, 1999, meeting convened by the NDTF to develop a set of measurable indicators of "long-term family self-sufficiency," the Workgroup planning process that started in July 1999 appears to have been less successful in maintaining a high level of community involvement as these ideas were transformed into the final plan between July and November 1999. Further, there does not appear to have been strong overlap between the May Planning Retreat participants and those involved in the Workgroup planning process itself, so that there was often little institutional memory of earlier community input. The resulting divergence between community input and final Workgroup decisions appears to have frustrated some of the community participants involved in the initial planning process.

The degree of community involvement also appears to have varied across the Workgroups. For example, about a third of Workgroup planning participants (including representatives of community groups, academics, and County employees) interviewed felt that the meetings and the selection of proposed projects was dominated by individual County departments. Further, those participants usually felt that the process of assigning a lead agency for each project was also dominated by the County departments. In addition, they felt that DPSS had a strong influence on the final selection of projects. Then again, six participants felt that community advocacy groups in several Workgroups had

particularly strong voices in the planning process and were successful in getting their proposed projects adopted. In one instance, an advocacy group recognizing the importance of getting lead agency buy-in felt that it had worked closely with a Workgroup chair to garner support within the Workgroup and with DPSS for the group's proposal.

The second suggested area that could benefit from an extended planning period concerned funding decisions. Some Workgroup participants suggested that because of the short planning phase, alternative views were not fully addressed. For example, several interviewees wanted PIF monies to be used to fix problems with existing programs or to expand existing programs rather than develop new projects. Another view expressed by interviewees was that PIF monies perhaps ought to be concentrated in a few areas, for example, either to fund fewer well-developed programs or to target specific programmatic areas such as housing, health, or child care. A third view expressed was that PIF monies should be used to build a better safety net that would benefit the largest number of families possible rather than, in their view, focusing on specific subgroups. A fourth view was that, given the unavailability of data for many of the selected outcome indicators, a smaller set of indicators (e.g., 10–15) should have been selected. The point is not that one view was right and another wrong, but that reconciling opposing views and building consensus, as the RBDM Framework guides, takes considerable time, time that was not available given the short planning period.

The third suggested area for improvement concerned the interrelation of the projects. Those involved in the Workgroup planning process felt that the short planning time frame did not allow for full consideration of how the Plan's projects fit together. The RBDM Framework states that as part of the planning process, it is important to "fit the pieces together" and to consider how proposed programs or approaches fit together into a system of services and supports, "not

just a loose confederation of good ideas.”¹³ The results of the planning process ideally should be reviewed by the broader community.

Interviewees commented that there was little time to integrate proposals at the end of the Workgroup planning process. The Workgroups had been set up to address each of the outcome areas, with each group tasked to develop recommendations and proposals to address both programmatic and systemic problems in each area. However, as noted by five Workgroup participants and planning leaders, the short time frame within which they had to do this work left little time for cross-fertilization of ideas between Workgroups nor time to fully integrating similar concepts.

Interviewees from the Workgroup planning process also commented that there was little time to consider how to integrate LTFSS projects with existing service delivery systems. Some observers were concerned that because LTFSS projects were overlaid on top of existing service delivery systems, the integration of LTFSS Plan services with existing programs might be incomplete, and that not having existing service providers more involved in planning would lead to integration problems during implementation.

Interviews with lead agency and project staff suggest that some such problems did arise in the project implementation phase. For example, staff of several lead agencies expressed concerns that LTFSS projects would be making referrals to an already overburdened service provider network. Similarly, as four lead agency staff commented, although referrals can be made to other programs within the County, if it still takes a participant 4–6 weeks to get an appointment with a treatment provider or eligibility worker, then the system breaks down. Lead agency interviewees noted that community service providers felt that some of the LTFSS projects duplicated existing services. Staff from several other lead agencies remarked on LTFSS projects that in their view could hurt existing relationships with the community by supplanting already well-established CBOs that had been providing similar services to the community. In general, it was

¹³The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide, Section 2.12, “How do we identify what works to improve conditions of well-being?”, http://www.raguide.org/2_12.htm.

thought that extending the planning period might have helped prevent some of these issues from arising.

The final area interviewees suggested could be improved by additional planning time was in providing evidence for projects' efficacy. The RBDM Framework urges planners to use the best available evidence in choosing projects. Such evidence would include formal research evidence, knowledge of the community, and information based on practical experience. The Workgroups varied in their approaches. Based on our interviews, Workgroup participants who attempted to bring research evidence to bear on the project selection process were limited in their ability to do so by the short planning time frame. As one Workgroup chair commented:

There wasn't enough time to allow for in-depth research as to program options. So a trade-off had to be made between focusing solely on evidence-based programs versus considering also other approaches that either the research hadn't been done yet or programs based on what line staff or CBOs felt were effective.

Proposed projects that were enhancements of existing programs relied on the lead agency's experience with that program as an indicator of its effectiveness. Our field work identified only one project that was based on an evidence-based, best-practices program model. Several Workgroup chairs commented that their approach was to try to ensure that the proposed set of projects put forward by their Workgroup included some projects suggested by community groups, even if there was no research evidence to support including them.

One of the reasons the County wanted to keep the planning phase relatively short was that it realized that it can be difficult to sustain intensive time commitments for extended periods of time. Even with just a two-month project selection window, this concern was in part borne out. Because participants in the Workgroup planning process varied from meeting to meeting, several Workgroup chairs commented that this made it challenging to keep the process moving forward, since new participants wished to revisit discussions and decisions previously made. As a result, these chairpersons felt that at times

discussions at meetings had to be condensed to keep the Workgroups moving forward with proposal development.

To the extent that adopting the RBDM Framework calls for wide community involvement and for a unified plan, it brings with it vigorous debate about how to achieve those goals. In any collaborative process, there will be different opinions about what the final product should look like and different levels of agreement about how well the final product will help achieve the overarching goals that guided the planning process. This is unavoidable, but it is also the case that involving more people in the planning process and achieving genuine consensus takes time. It is also the case that people have limited amounts of time and energy available for extended planning efforts, as well as competing demands on their time. In retrospect, many of the LTFSS planners believe that achieving the goals of the RBDM Framework planning process takes longer than six months, though how long the process should and could realistically take in Los Angeles County remains unknown.

DISCUSSION

How useful was the RBDM Framework in planning the LTFSS Plan? The RBDM Framework served to focus planners on ultimate results and on an explicit objective of helping families to achieve long-term self-sufficiency. It also encouraged broad community involvement which appears to have been achieved in the initial planning process (i.e., in defining long-term family self-sufficiency and in selecting outcome indicators to measure). However, the Workgroup planning process that led to the development of the 46 projects appears to have been less successful in maintaining the high level of community input called for by the RBDM Framework.

Applying the RBDM Framework would have been facilitated by a longer planning period. For example, the RBDM Framework urges planners to use the best available evidence and states as part of the planning process it is important to "fit the pieces together" and to consider how proposed programs or approaches fit together into a system of services and supports, "not just a loose confederation of good ideas" (Freidman, 2001, 2.12). However, the RBDM Framework does not specify a time frame over which planning should be

accomplished, only that planning should be an iterative process, in which results feed back into additional planning and efforts to refine the overall program and its component projects.

In contrast, the LTFSS planning period was quite short. Based on the County's previous experience in planning welfare reform, only six months were allocated for overall planning, including eight weeks for developing project proposals. The end result of this short, intensive planning process was that little time was available to discuss other possible options for spending the PIF, to cross-fertilize ideas, to bridge similar concepts between Workgroups, to consider more fully the Plan's service integration objectives and how proposed projects would fit into existing services in the County, and to bring more research evidence and practical experience to bear on project efficacy and cost-effectiveness. In other words, little time was available to accomplish some of the planning steps outlined in the RBDM Framework and, as a result, the usefulness of the RBDM Framework in the planning process was attenuated.

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4. FINDINGS ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF THE LTFSS PLAN ON THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, we presented our findings about the utility of the RBDM Framework for the planning process that led up to the final LTFSS Plan. In this chapter, we consider the Plan and issues that arose in implementing the individual projects and the Plan's progress toward service integration. As noted earlier, the RBDM Framework emphasizes collaboration and partnerships but is relatively silent about how this might be accomplished. The RBDM Framework urges an overarching plan focused on achieving population-level outcomes. It states that achieving the desired outcomes is the responsibility of the community, that the community is accountable for those results. This broad effort requires partners to work together.

As we noted in Chapter 2, project implementation and expenditures are rolling out more slowly than anticipated. Some of the slow project roll-out is generic to the roll-out of any new project. However, some of the slow project roll-out also appears to have been the result of the LTFSS Plan itself and of the more complicated program designs (e.g., flowing funds across agencies, integrated service delivery, high levels of community involvement). Research on service integration and service coordination suggests that the slow roll-out and many of the implementation challenges we discuss below are common to these kinds of efforts. Commonly cited barriers (Martinson, 1999; Holcomb et al., 1993; Burbridge and Nightingale, 1989; Trutko et al., 1991) to service coordination and integration include:

- Bureaucratic barriers and turf protection (e.g., differences in reporting processes and procedures, concerns about loss of decision-making autonomy, and lack of ownership of projects)
- Different philosophies or missions (e.g., different perceptions about which clients should be served, how they should be served, and how success should be measured, as well as

differences in the relative emphasis placed on social services versus employment and training)

- Differences in performance measures and in obtaining credit for services and results (e.g., health services, education, housing, and welfare programs are accountable to different oversight bodies to whom they must provide different evidence on their programs' performance; loss of control over flow of clients or concerns about meeting numeric service goals may lead to a reluctance to participate in integrated service delivery)
- Incompatible management information systems (e.g., inconsistency in data collection and management and different data systems and restrictions about sharing client information)
- Different eligibility restrictions (e.g., differences in eligibility restrictions for welfare programs versus education, health, training, or other types of programs).

Finally, some of the slow project roll-out appears to have been the result of one-time issues related to developing generic procedures to implement the more complicated project designs of the LTFSS Plan. For example, before any non-DPSS project could begin spending funds, DPSS needed to create procedures for reviewing project materials. Project roll-out was delayed while procedures were developed. The next time a project is to spend DPSS funds, the basic procedures are now in place and this cause of slow project roll-out should not reoccur.

THE EFFECTS OF THE LTFSS PLAN ON THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The LTFSS Plan Has Encouraged County Departments and Other Lead Agencies to Work Together Toward a Common Set of Goals

In adopting the RBDM Framework, the LTFSS Plan served to focus the County on achieving a set of common goals. A number of interviewees commented that the LTFSS Plan encouraged and facilitated County departments and agencies in working together to help needy families in the County by shifting the emphasis from individuals or specific service needs to a focus on all of the needs of a family unit.

One lead agency interviewee commented that establishing multidisciplinary teams has required each agency to conduct business more flexibly and to work together to determine what is best for each participant. A third of lead agency interviewees agreed that working together on LTFSS Plan has led to a growing level understanding of, and respect for, each other's programs and approaches to working with clients. For example, interviewees of one lead agency discussed how other departments' line staffs were initially wary of having them involved in a particular program. However, after extensive training, the staff learned that each of the participating lead agencies had similar approaches to working with clients. Thus, as a result of the LTFSS Plan, program and line staff from the various agencies became more comfortable working collaboratively on this project. This appears to be true even where there was resistance. At least four interviewees observed that the LTFSS Plan will "force" agencies to become familiar with each other's programs so that they are better able to make appropriate referrals for these families. As one interviewee noted, "LTFSS is different than previous attempts because it really focuses our efforts on service integration in a meaningful way."

The LTFSS Plan Has Helped to Improve Relationships Between County Departments and the Community

The Plan has facilitated cooperation not only between County departments, but also between the departments and the community. Moreover, for a number of projects, closer relationships between County departments/agencies and the community resulted in closer collaboration on non-LTFSS Plan service delivery issues. For example, a side benefit of one LTFSS project has been the formation of a Countywide advisory committee of public and private home visitation programs, which is now jointly addressing issues broader than the LTFSS Plan itself.

Another LTFSS project found that the community contractors who conduct outreach activities have served as important advocates for the County department's program and have helped to break down preconceptions within the community about this department. Nor have the changes in preconceptions been one-sided. One LTFSS project helped a County department work with the

community and, in the process, opened up the way the department views its role and approach to those kind of programs. As summarized by one interviewee:

The County system is not used to working with the community. Only within the past five–seven years have we realized that there is something else out there. . . . Our LTFSS project has helped to overcome past negative impressions by the community of our department “steamrolling” over community organizations. The community is finally getting to know and to trust us.

This view was echoed by several lead agencies, who commented that working with the LTFSS Plan target population and, in particular, CalWORKs recipients, is new to their department. Their LTFSS projects have enabled them to begin developing new relationships with the community (as well as with other County agencies). These cooperative alliances, it should be noted, are exactly what the RBDM Framework was designed to accomplish.

In addition, the LTFSS Plan encouraged the formation of both public and private partnerships. Table 4.1 presents a summary of relationships within the LTFSS Plan between the lead agencies and other entities across the individual projects.

**Table 4.1
Coordination Issues among the LTFSS Plan Projects**

Project No. and Name		Lead	Provider/Supporting Agency					
1	CalWORKs WtW Strategy	DPSS	Contr.					
1a	Career Plan and Prep Seminar	DPSS						
1b	Enhanced Appraisal	DPSS						
1c	Targeted Initial Job Search	DPSS						
1d	Part-Time Work w/ Educ/Training	DPSS						
1e	Voluntary Enhanced Motivation	DPSS						
2	Employer-Linked Educ/Training	DPSS	Contr.					
3	Transitional Subsidized Employment	DPSS	Contr.					
4	County Apprenticeship Program	DPSS	Contr.					
5	Business Micro-Loan and Incubator	CDC						
5a	Business Micro-Loan Program	CDC						
5b	Incubator Without Walls	CDC						
6	Housing Relocation Program	DPSS						
7	Strategic Info—Supp Job Creation	CDC	Contr.					
8	Community Economic Development	CDC	Contr.					
9	Mini-Career Centers	CSS						
10	Community Outreach—Health Care	DPSS	DHS	DMH	Contr.			
10a	1931 (b) Medi-Cal Outreach	DHS						
10b	Prenatal Outreach	DHS						
10c	CalWORKs Family Assistance	DPSS						
10d	Media Outreach	DPSS						
10e	Improving Inter-dept Capacity	DPSS						
11	Hotline to Resolve Health Care	DPSS	DHS	DMH	Contr.			
12	Health Care Transportation	DPSS	CAO/ SIB	Other Depts				
13	Health First	DPSS						
14	Transitional Support— Homeless	CDC	Contr.					
14a	Relocation Grant—Homeless Families	CDC						
14b	Tenant-based Trans. Rental Asst.	Status Pending						
14c	Trans. Subsidized Employment	CDC						
15	Emergency Assistance— Eviction	CDC	Contr.					
16	Housing Counseling/Training	DPSS	Contr.					
17	Community-Based Teen Services	DPSS	Other Depts	Contr.				
18	Teens with Special Needs	DPSS	Other Depts	Contr.				
19	Emancipated Foster Youth- Parents	DCFS	Contr.					
20	Teen Passport to Success	DPSS	Contr.					
21	Staff Development for Teen Service Providers	DHS	Contr.					
22	Cal-Learn and Teen Parents	DPSS	Contr.					
22a	Teen Career Enhancement	DPSS						
22b	Career Counselors	DPSS						

Project No. and Name		Lead	Provider/Supporting Agency					
23	Youth Jobs	CSS	Contr.					
24	Public Library Svcs for Children	Library	Contr.					
24a	Homework Center	Library						
24b	Teen Library Card Campaign	Library	Contr.					
24c	Support Services for After-School Program	Status Pending						
25	Operation READ	Prob.	DCFS	LACOE	Library			
26	Safe Places	LACOE	Contr.					
27	DART/STOP for CW Families	CSS	Other Depts					
28	Domestic Violence Prevention	CSS						
28a	Risk Assessment Tool	CSS						
28b	Research: What Stops DV	CSS						
28c	DV Teen Curriculum	CSS						
29	School-Based Probation Supervision	Prob	LAUSD	Indep School Distrs.				
30	Support—Families of Probation Child	Prob		Contr.				
31	Strategic Support for Child Care	DPSS	Contr.					
31a	Child Care—Non-needy Caregiver	DPSS						
31b	Inc Non-traditional Child Care	DPSS						
32	Federal Family Supp Svcs Network	DPSS	DCFS					
33	LTFSS Family Preservation	DCFS	Prob	Contr.				
34	Home Visitation Program	DHS	Contr.					
34a	Nurse Home Visitation Prog	DHS						
34b	Home Visitation and Case Management	DHS	Contr.					
35	Peer Self-Help Support Groups	DMH	Contr.					
36	Support and Therapeutic Options	Funded from another source						
37	School Attendance Areas	CAO/SIB	LACOE	LAUSD	Contr.			
38	Multi-Disciplinary Family Inventory	DPSS	DHS	DCFS	Prob	LACOE	DMH	Contr.
39	County Family Resource Centers	DPSS	DHS	DCFS	Prob	DMH	Contr.	
39a	County Family Resource Centers	DPSS						
39b	DPOs for Family Resource Centers	DPSS	Prob					
40	Data Partnerships	CPC	CAO/SIB					
41	SPA Council Staff and Tech Asst.	CPC						
42	CalWORKs Systems Review	DPSS						
43	New Directions L-T Fam Comm	DPSS	Other Depts					
44	CalWORKs Case Management	DPSS						
45	TranStar Enhancement	DPSS						
46	L-T Family Self-Suff Evaluation	CAO/SIB	Contr.					

There are 11 lead agencies for the LTFSS Plan, each assigned individual projects to implement. As shown in the table, in addition, the lead agencies also play supporting roles to other projects, including:

- Serving as service providers for other projects
- Co-locating staff with other departments or agencies as part of an LTFSS project or having staff that comprise part of multi-disciplinary teams
- Having treatment providers who may be affected by other LTFSS projects (e.g., referrals will be made to these providers)
- Co-leading an LTFSS project with another lead agency
- Providing technical support to other projects (e.g., assistance in developing monitoring tools).

As shown in the table, 35 out of the 46 projects and subcomponents have at least one provider/supporting agency relationship to coordinate, usually a contractor. Moreover, 12 of the 46 have more than one provider/supporting agency to coordinate, and projects 38 and 39—Multidisciplinary Family Inventory and County Family Resource Centers—have six and five relationships to coordinate, respectively. Overall, the table highlights the complexity of the coordination issue.

In addition, coordination further has to occur with other entities not listed in this table, including the SPAs, the Board, law enforcement agencies, school districts, city agencies or departments, colleges, Housing Authorities, private industry, and planning bodies, as well as with other entities that either may be affected by LTFSS projects or that may serve as contractors.

Coordination requires consensus-building and reconciling differences between lead agencies in departmental philosophies, in professional cultures, and in fundamental views about the approach for some projects. In one case, two lead agencies have faced the challenge of jointly developing a project that required reconciling fundamental differences in their programmatic approaches to this type of program. They needed to come to an agreement about how broadly the target population should be defined and about the role of community-based providers. As the agencies noted:

The biggest challenge in working with other agencies is to “change their thinking,” to bring everyone together to implement a project. Over time, we have seen different agencies open up and share their views . . . [and] we’ve begun working toward a common set of goals.

There are more practical concerns to consider as well. Co-location of staff or forming of multidisciplinary teams requires not only selecting sites and forming teams, but also addressing such issues as managerial structures and the sharing of client data. On a project where six lead agencies’ personnel comprise the multi-disciplinary teams, we heard that, “[y]ou can multiply by three what is required to set up the administrative and supervisory structures necessary to oversee these teams.” Another interviewee commented:

This project hasn’t moved along as quickly as I had hoped. The concept was new—more than just co-location of staff. There was a need to come up with a better case management plan that would cross bureaucratic boundaries and deal with the problem of lack of a common database across departments and [with the] ability to share data about cases we now had in common.

The Plan’s High Coordination Demands, in Turn, Require Resources for Coordinating Planning Activities Prior to Service Delivery

One implication of the Plan’s high coordination demands is that someone has to pay for the significant time and effort that goes into building strong working partnerships between service providers, both public and private. Overall, the majority of interviewees noted that the sheer amount of coordination required for LTFSS projects involved considerable staff time and administrative resources. However, the majority of interviewees also commented that since projects are not allowed to start spending their funds until their implementation plans have been approved, there is no funding to support many of these activities. Yet much planning and coordination must take place beforehand to fully develop programs and address such issues as co-location and cross-supervision of staff, definition of target populations and program eligibility, and selection of program sites. Further, a number of project interviewees commented that coordination is required not simply for the projects on which they were the lead agency, but also for projects on which they have supporting roles. Most of the lead agencies did not expect to receive reimbursement for many of these activities. Some interviewees suggested that future applications

of the RBDM Framework take these additional “planning for implementation” costs into account when constructing budgets.

Applying the Plan Is Problematic Given the County’s Structure

By its charter and by its practices, the County has a Board, no elected executive, and strong departments that report directly to the Board. As a result, inter-department operations require inter-department negotiations—negotiations that are between equals. The Board attempted to address this issue by delegating authority over, and responsibility for, the LTFSS Plan to the NDTF—an inter-agency group. However, the NDTF structure does not appear to have been sufficient to ameliorate inter-departmental coordination issues. Thus, it remained true that inter-department operations were negotiations between equals. As a consequence, project roll-out was often delayed by a drawn-out process of negotiating cooperative agreements. However, the Plan does not account for this additional complication (e.g., by adding additional time and resources up front to plan for implementation before projects are expected to begin).

Furthermore, our interviews suggested that the NDTF was unable to prevent the LTFSS Plan from being perceived as a DPSS effort and that some interviewees interpreted that as being the Board’s intention. To elucidate the issue, we turn first to the interagency structure of the County and then to how the Plan is managed by the agency tasked with oversight. Figure 4.1 shows that 11 different lead agencies are assigned responsibility for implementing specific LTFSS projects. The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of projects (out of the total 46) that each lead agency is responsible for. DPSS has, in addition to its projects, a fiscal oversight role and the responsibility for coordinating the implementation of LTFSS projects. In this capacity, DPSS oversees and coordinates the review and clearance process for Board approval of projects’ implementation plans and MOUs/contracts.

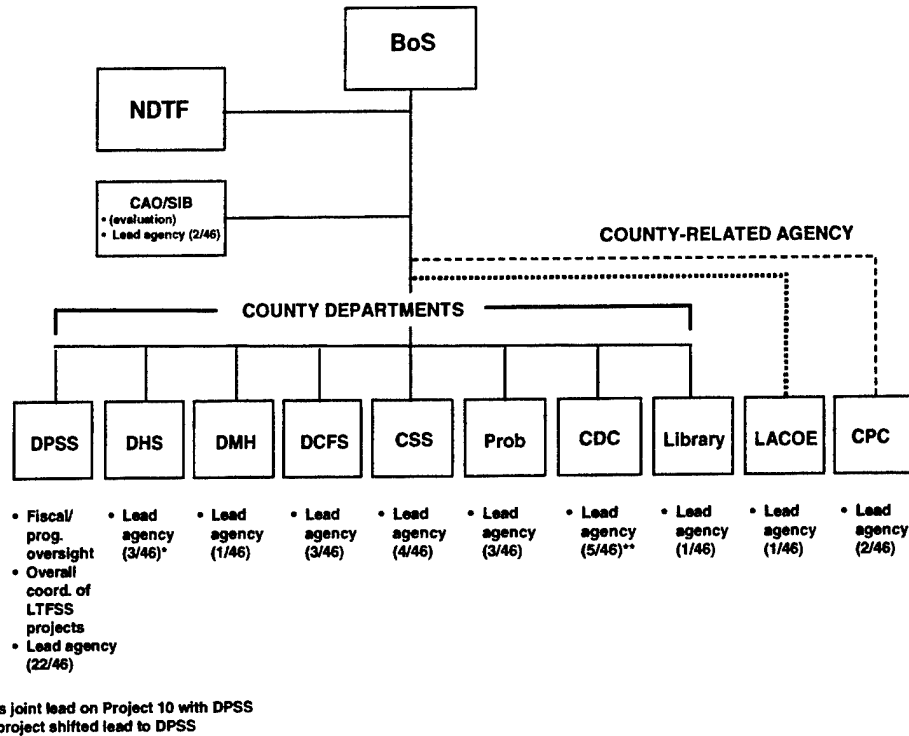


Figure 4.1—LTFSS Plan Organizational Structure

Overall oversight of LTFSS projects' implementation was assigned to DPSS. The Board wanted one department to be accountable for how the money was being spent. DPSS, as Chair of the NDTF, had led the initial development of the LTFSS Plan, and the SA and PIF dollars resulting from the CalWORKs legislation passed through this department. Thus, several interviewees explained that it was DPSS to whom the Board would turn to if it felt a project was rolling out slowly and for an accounting of how the LTFSS Plan funds were spent.

To deal with these new responsibilities (new LTFSS Projects and the LTFSS Plan oversight role), DPSS, as part of the department's reorganization, created the LTFSS Plan Division (as shown in bold in Figure 4.2). This new division is responsible for coordinating all the LTFSS projects and for overseeing the review and clearance process internally for LTFSS project documents. It is also the lead on six of the twenty-two LTFSS projects assigned to DPSS and has

responsibility for the contracts and monitoring function for a number of the LTFSS projects for which DPSS is the lead agency.

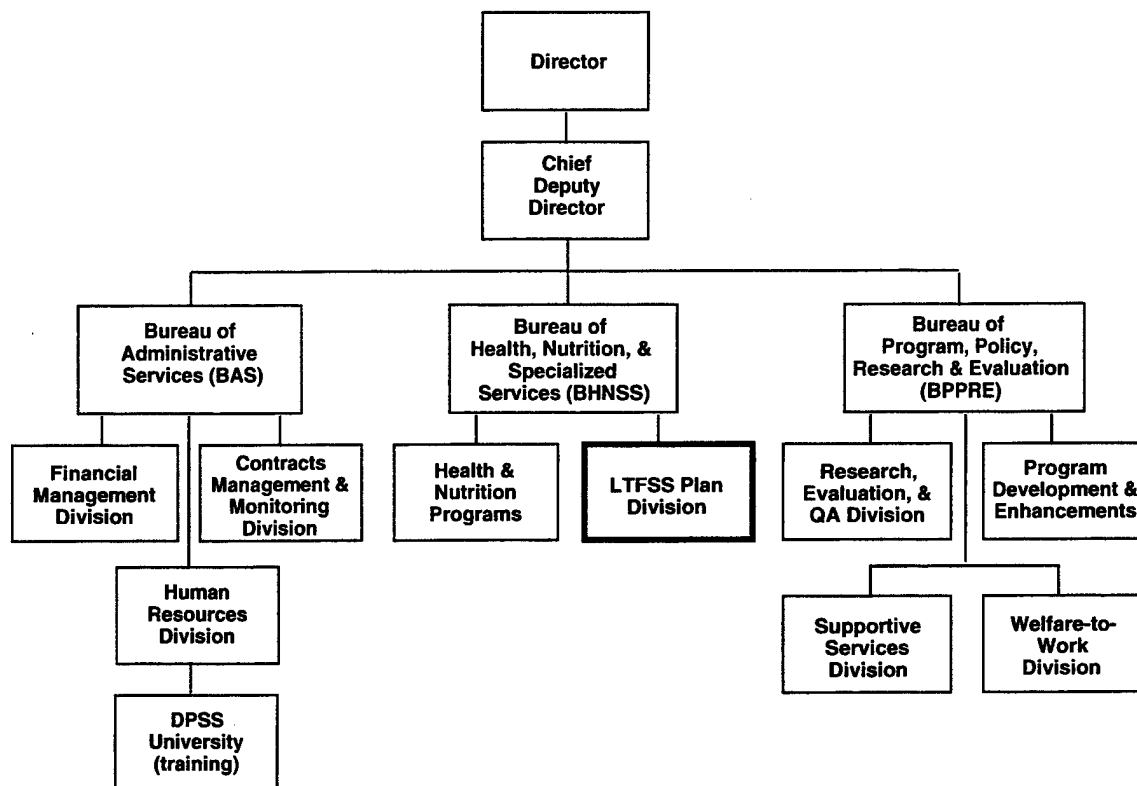


Figure 4.2—How the LTFSS Plan Division Fits Within DPSS

In addition to the LTFSS Plan Division, the Contracts Management and Monitoring Division and the Financial Management Division have played important roles in the LTFSS Plan. The Contracts Management and Monitoring Division is responsible for reviewing relevant LTFSS Plan documents (i.e., implementation plans; requests for proposals, RFPs; and contracts) and for overseeing the writing of contracts for the LTFSS projects that DPSS has the lead on, as well as for providing support to the LTFSS Plan Division.

The contracts being written for LTFSS projects represent a new area for DPSS. Under the LTFSS Plan, some RFPs are written very broadly, giving only general guidance about the type of programs in which the projects are interested. As a result, the proposals submitted by the community may cover a wide range of services, for example, from anger management classes, to mentoring programs, to sex education classes. The proposals also vary

considerably in their level of specificity about what services will be provided and how proposed programs will realize TANF goals.

These exploratory approaches to service provision involve the community to a great extent in shaping the LTFSS Plan, which was one of the Plan's goals. However, DPSS interviewees note that the variation in quality and level of specificity has represented a significant challenge for DPSS contracts staff reviewing the proposals and writing statements of work to allow for effective monitoring of services delivery and compliance with the terms and conditions of these contracts.

Just as the LTFSS Plan expanded the role of the Contracts Management & Monitoring Division, it has also expanded the role of the Financial Management Division. DPSS has primary fiscal responsibility for LTFSS Plan funding, including review of project budgets, implementation plans, RFPs, and contracts (when needed). The Financial Management Division is responsible for the fiscal oversight of the LTFSS projects, including the clearance of LTFSS project documents with County Counsel and their CAO Budget Analysts; the division also provides support to the LTFSS Plan Division.

During the Countywide planning process, projects only had to provide an estimate of costs, whereas in the implementation phase, projects are required to submit detailed line-item budgets and comply with DPSS's fiscal reporting requirements. However, because County agencies and departments vary in their fiscal reporting policies and procedures and in how their budgets are set up, DPSS fiscal staff interviewees commented that this initially created some problems in terms of standardizing the development of project budgets, contracts and subcontracts, MOUs, and fiscal reporting procedures for LTFSS projects.

This structure had two major operational consequences for projects. The first is largely the result of the Plan's emphasis on collaboration, which takes time. Project roll-out was slowed as the departments—DPSS and the other lead agencies—recognized that there were considerable formal coordination issues that needed to be worked out and that procedures needed to be developed to address them. These procedures, however, had to conform to DPSS' legal obligation to account for spending federal and state dollars, which meant that

DPSS had a significant role in approving projects' implementation plans. This responsibility was not obvious at first to the other agencies.

Thus, the second consequence was that although both the RBDM Framework and the Plan call for coordination and cooperation, DPSS came to be seen as dictating the terms of collaboration when it came to the details of implementation. This was partially due to DPSS's need to impose the procedural requirements of the sources of the funds and this was partially the result of trying to implement the Plan within the existing County governmental structure.

DPSS provided some technical assistance. A first Technical Advisory Workshop was held in September 2000. A second workshop was held in April 2001 after the establishment of the new LTFSS Division in January 2001 and the formalization of the review and clearance process in the spring of 2001. Nevertheless, projects felt that initially they had received minimal guidance from DPSS on developing their implementation plans and Board letters. In fact, the majority of project interviewees commented that it was not apparent at first that the lead agencies would have to follow DPSS's detailed requirements in developing their Board letters, line-item budgets, and other components of their implementation plans. One of the leaders in the earlier Countywide planning process commented that, in retrospect, he would have involved DPSS contracts and fiscal staff earlier in the planning process so that they could start working on some of the administrative issues that would need to be addressed during the implementation phase.

Project interviewees also noted that the fiscal reporting and budgeting process was a challenge. Each of the lead agencies has its own set of guidelines and regulations it has to follow, with no standardized contracting or budgeting processes across County departments. One third of project interviewees commented on problems associated with these two processes. As summarized by one interviewee:

It wasn't the program pieces that got questioned or challenged, but rather the funding and budget pieces. The fundamental problem is that different funding sources have different levels of accountability. Our funding is pretty direct and so the requirements aren't as detailed, whereas this is not the case for DPSS. Also, we each use different languages. For example, DPSS refers to an MOU, whereas

our department uses MOBs. Further, DPSS has a large budget staff, whereas our administrative staff is small, with one individual working fiscal issues for all our projects. DPSS just couldn't tell us what to do. They were looking at us as contractors, not another County agency. It meant that they were asking for things we couldn't provide—e.g., a detailed line-item budget that breaks out employment benefits.

Many of the projects perceived that the detailed fiscal reporting and other requirements for the implementation plans were being imposed on them somewhat arbitrarily by DPSS. This led several project interviewees to comment that, "this really was a DPSS initiative." Two-thirds of project interviewees also expressed frustration with the extensive review and clearance process, requiring input from a number of different entities both inside and outside DPSS—steps that the department itself must follow. As a result, projects noted, it often took up to two months before they received comments back from DPSS on their draft implementation plans, RFPs, or other documents, with no guarantee that reviewers comments would not contradict each other.

Frustration with the process of negotiating cross-agency contracts and financial reporting requirements was not one-sided. From DPSS's perspective, projects did not understand that many of these requirements were set by a state agency (CDSS) and the federal TANF regulations, not by DPSS per se. Thus, DPSS found wide variation in the format and content of projects' draft implementation plans and other documents submitted for review. This led to DPSS holding a second Technical Advisory Workshop in April 2001 to provide projects with step-by-step guidelines on developing the different implementation documents and with an overview of the review and clearance process for the implementation plans and for contracts and MOUs.

Once the new LTFSS Plan Division was established, the project coordinators and liaisons also initiated one-on-one meetings with the individual projects, where the Division brought together all the relevant players within DPSS to work with a project on its implementation plans; this process helped to address many of the coordination issues. Indeed, these meetings were the ones most often cited by project interviewees as being particularly helpful. In general, the LTFSS Plan Division has been increasing the amount of technical support it provides to the projects.

These kinds of implementation challenges are directly related to the Plan's objective of coordinating services and programs across multiple agencies, as well as to the LTFSS Plan's intent that PIF dollars be used by multiple agencies to provide services to the population being served. Organizational differences in reporting processes and procedures must be addressed so that funds can flow across County departments and agencies, while also adhering to state and federal regulations and reporting requirements. This is a slow, difficult process in any service integration effort. However, it is even slower in the County because of the County's governmental structure, with strong departments who report directly to the Board and no strong overarching management entity that can mediate interdepartmental matters. This structure reinforces the compartmentalization of different social services into different organizations. (Separate funding streams with separate reporting requirements have a similar effect.) In turn, this governmental structure can contribute to the sense that one agency in its position as "first among equals," imposing its will on the others. We note that this is a potential risk to any effort to integrate or coordinate services in the County, regardless of whether the oversight role falls to DPSS or to another agency. It is partially the governmental structure itself that makes the RBDM Framework difficult to implement in the County.

In Large Counties, More Formal Links Between Planning and Implementation Are Needed

Individuals who developed the LTFSS project proposals were not necessarily the same ones responsible for implementing the projects, leaving room for differences in interpreting the proposed projects. This frustrated some planners, who thought that their vision for the project was being altered; it also frustrated some implementers who thought that they did not necessarily have a good understanding of the planners' intent in designing a project. Several Workgroup participants remarked that detailed project proposals were briefly summarized in the LTFSS Plan. The initial proposals submitted by the Workgroups during the Countywide planning process contained more detailed program descriptions in some cases than the summary descriptions that made it into the final LTFSS Plan.

In addition, County staff charged with implementation thought that their expertise was being overlooked with regard to project content or with regard to how a project fit into the service delivery system. Six project interviewees stated that they would have constructed specific LTFSS projects differently or had ideas about how they might be improved but did not feel they had the authority to change the scope of a project.¹⁴ Another interviewee from a lead agency noted that his department already had an existing program model and experience in knowing what works and what does not; but the LTFSS project takes a different approach. As a result, projects can sometimes be perceived as imposed from without. One observer commented that his organization was not involved in developing two of the projects but now had responsibility for "implementing someone else's vision," adding that: "If the lead agency can see a better way to run a program that wasn't in the original Plan, there needs to be some flexibility to make these adjustments." These tensions were apparent not only when planners were not County employees, and, thus, were unfamiliar with County practices and capabilities, but also when representatives from one agency were planning for projects that would be housed in another agency.

One of the advantages of using the RBDM Framework in developing the LTFSS Plan is that it helps bring new voices and new perspectives to the table. However, this can also mean that plans can be heavily influenced during a consensus-building Workgroup process by individuals who may be unfamiliar with particular County departments and their various programs. Four LTFSS Plan project interviewees thought that planners did not necessarily understand what a department's capabilities, expertise, or priorities were. Another commented that his department does not necessarily have the staff or resources to provide these types of programs, nor much experience in working with the particular population being addressed in the program.

This is not just a tension between community representatives and the County agencies. There were also differences in views between the lead

¹⁴Although there are procedures by which a project's implementation plan can be modified, the perception of these interviewees was that it was difficult to make such changes.

agencies and DPSS about projects' foci and about how broadly target populations should be defined. Underlying these differences are fundamental differences between departments in organizational philosophies and in approaches to programs and service provision. For example, on several projects, DPSS and the lead agencies disagreed over how broadly a project's target population should be defined. In one case, DPSS wanted to verify that all eligible CalWORKs recipients had been referred before broadening the definition of the target population. The lead agency, however, felt that staying with the target population defined in the LTFSS planning process would limit the recruitment of program participants. In another case, the lead agency felt that by staying with the definition of the target population developed during the planning process, the program would omit the age group most likely to benefit from this program's services.

In Chapter 3, we noted that the early implementation stage can be equally frustrating for those who participated in planning if they believe that their original vision has not always been realized. For future initiatives, this is an area in which a longer planning phase and a more formal carryover of the planning Workgroups into the early phase of implementation might be a useful strategy. Departmental or project representatives could work in tandem with the planning Workgroup in the planning and early phases of implementation to allow for project concerns to be aired and for planners to clarify their vision and amend the project as necessary on an ongoing basis. This, in turn, could increase the departments' sense of "ownership" of, and thus commitment to, the projects, and Workgroup oversight could ensure that their collaborative vision was realized.

The LTFSS Plan Made Partial Progress Toward an Integrated Health and Human Services Delivery System

The RBDM Framework states as part of that process it is important to "fit the pieces together" and to consider how proposed programs or approaches fit together (i.e., with other projects in the LTFSS Plan and with existing programs) into a system of services and supports, "not just a loose confederation of good

ideas.”¹⁵ Given the rapid pace of the Countywide planning process (which was discussed in Chapter 3), the individual Workgroups had a limited amount of time to consider how the various projects might be related or could be restructured to fully integrate the various concepts and projects. Those involved in the Workgroup planning process felt that the short planning time frame did not allow for full consideration of the Plan’s service integration objectives.

Planners were not the only ones concerned about projects being insufficiently integrated with the existing service delivery system; implementers raised similar issues. In at least two instances, interviewees reported that projects overlap with already existing programs, meaning that the implementers must determine how to ensure that these LTFSS projects complement rather than duplicate existing programs. For example, three interviewees raised the issue of LTFSS projects increasing referrals to existing service delivery systems that already may be operating at capacity. They noted that the intent of a number of LTFSS projects was to improve service integration by being able to refer families to a range of programs within the County to more comprehensively address their service needs. However, some providers (e.g., substance abuse and mental health providers in some areas) are already dealing with a greater demand for services than there is a supply. Further, although referrals can be made to other programs within the County, it may still take a participant four–six weeks to get an appointment with a treatment provider or eligibility worker.

Six interviewees also raised the question of the degree to which County departments’ line staff are aware of LTFSS projects and, thus, able to make appropriate referrals to these programs. For one project, DPSS field offices were not aware of an LTFSS Plan program and, thus, were unable to make referrals to them; in another instance, staff of another DPSS program were concerned that a particular LTFSS project might compete with theirs for clients.

In future applications of the RBDM Framework, more planning time would help address some of these concerns. Of course, it is also the case that people

¹⁵The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide. Section 2.12.

have limited amounts of time and energy available for extended planning efforts, and competing demands on their time. In retrospect, many of the LTFSS planners believe that achieving the goals of the RBDM Framework planning process takes longer than six months, though how long the process should and could realistically take in Los Angeles County remains unknown. Finally, ongoing discussions between Workgroup planners and project implementers could also help in this area, by anticipating service bottlenecks and by disseminating knowledge about existing services.

Adopting the LTFSS Plan Has Led to Specific Initiatives That Extend Beyond the Plan Itself

The LTFSS Plan has led to specific initiatives that extend beyond the Plan and that promise to yield important long-term benefits for the County and its goal of applying the RBDM Framework Countywide. For instance, the LTFSS Plan, along with welfare reform, has led to a statewide re-examination of contracting requirements through a workgroup process involving all the counties and the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) to streamline those procedures that may not be legally mandated.

The Interagency Operations Group (IOG) also has recently begun addressing as a Countywide issue the objective of incorporating community relationship-building as an important consideration in decisions about rental space and the location of program sites. One interviewee commented that this decision was partly the direct result of projects' experience under the LTFSS Plan.

Further, the LTFSS Plan is viewed by many as being a test case to assess the feasibility of applying the RBDM Framework in the County. As per CAO/SIB staff, the LTFSS Plan represents an important opportunity to learn what adjustments may be needed in applying the RBDM Framework and which areas in the RBDM Framework should be concentrated on. As a result of the perceived success of the use of RBDM Framework in the development of the LTFSS Plan, the RBDM Framework and its focus on results and performance accountability is now being expanded to other areas of the County beyond the LTFSS Plan itself. For example, the decision was recently made to incorporate

the RBDM Framework into the County's budget process, with the CAO currently moving forward with phased implementation of a plan to restructure the children's budget beginning in FY 2002-2003.

DISCUSSION

This chapter has considered the effects of the LTFSS Plan on implementation. Compared to individual projects reviewed and approved directly by the Board, the Plan required more inter-project and interdepartmental interaction. Projects were developed by a public process, selected by the NDTF (a cross-departmental group), approved by the Board collectively, and, in many cases, then approved again individually by the Board. Furthermore, the Plan provided that funds received by DPSS from the state would be spent by other County departments.

Some aspects of the LTFSS Plan and the resulting inter-project and interdepartmental interaction facilitated implementation and County processes more generally. The Plan has encouraged County departments and other lead agencies to work together toward a common set of goals for providing services to these children and families. The LTFSS Plan also helped to facilitate cooperation between County departments and the community, and, in several instances, cooperation on LTFSS projects led to improved relationships on issues broader than the LTFSS Plan, itself.

Other aspects of the LTFSS Plan and the resulting inter-project and interdepartmental interaction hindered implementation. The high coordination demands associated with the LTFSS Plan meant that a number of the planning and coordination activities necessary to implement the projects were unanticipated and funding and other resources (e.g., staff) to perform those tasks were often not available when they would have been most useful. The lack of formal links in the LTFSS Plan between those responsible for planning this initiative and those responsible for implementing it led to concerns by some planners that their vision for a project was being altered and to concerns by some implementers that they did not necessarily have a good understanding of the planners' intent in designing a project, or that that intent was misguided. The short planning horizon for developing the Plan and the individual projects did not

allow sufficient time for considering how to integrate LTFSS projects with existing service delivery systems.

Finally, applying the LTFSS Plan was problematic given the County's organizational structure and the limited amount of previous inter-departmental cooperation. As a result, it took time to set up mechanisms to allow for the flow of PIF monies across agencies and to formalize procedures such as the review and clearance process for projects. In conclusion, the overall effect of the LTFSS Plan and its implementation in Los Angeles County has been that project roll-out was slower than might have been the case in the absence of the LTFSS Plan, or if County departments had had more experience with inter-departmental cooperation. Through the implementation of the LTFSS Plan, considerable experience has accumulated. This experience should ease the roll-out of future inter-departmental efforts.

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5. FINDINGS ABOUT THE UTILITY OF THE RBDM FRAMEWORK IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is a key component of the RBDM Framework, because it generates estimates of the “results” that are then used to refine the implementation and to guide future project decisions and budgeting. As Friedman notes:

Performance budgeting can present better choices by requiring each budget unit (internal and contract) to answer the basic questions in performance accountability: Who are your customers? How do you measure if your customers are better off? How do you measure if you’re delivering service well? . . . These questions should be answered on a regular basis throughout the year, and used once a year to drive the budget (Friedman, 2001, Section 3.16).

Consistent with this role of evaluation in the RBDM Framework, evaluation plays a prominent role in the LTFSS Plan, both in planning and in implementation. With some notable exceptions (e.g., the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation’s, MDRC’s, evaluations of the County’s GAIN program), evaluation has not traditionally been a component of program roll-out in the County. Thus, the fact that there is a strong evaluation component is itself a reflection of the positive effect of the RBDM Framework. Participants in the Countywide planning process and in the Evaluation Design Workgroup process stated that the RBDM Framework focused County departments and other key stakeholders on outcomes and on accountability. Furthermore, interviewees explained that the RBDM Framework and the materials produced by the CAO/SIB helped County departments to think more formally about program outcomes and has served as a useful framework for prioritizing departmental resources.

During the planning process, projects were to be selected based on prior research and evaluations whenever possible. In the implementation phase, an outside evaluator—RAND—is responsible for conducting a Countywide evaluation of the impact of the LTFSS Plan on designated indicators, such as

infant mortality and poverty rates, and to describe the utility of the RBDM Framework in developing and evaluating the LTFSS Plan. This report is one of the products of that ongoing analysis. In addition, each project is required to develop an evaluation report in accordance with the LTFSS Plan Evaluation Design to assess program impact.

In this chapter, we provide a brief overview of the evaluation process. We then consider the extent to which those involved in the evaluation felt that the RBDM Framework was useful.

EVALUATION TASKS

As specified in the County's LTFSS Evaluation Design, project-level evaluations are to include the following steps, as described below.

Logic Model. Each project is to specify the theoretical relationship between the project's intervention and the outcomes for children and families.

Performance Measures. Projects need to articulate performance measures, against which to evaluate their impact. Those performance measures are classified according to the four quadrants depicted in Table 5.1. Project performance measures should be both at the level of project input or effort (Quadrants I and II) and at the level of client effects (Quadrants III and IV).

Table 5.1
Four Quadrant Schema

	Quantity	Quality
Input (Process or service delivered)/ Effort	Quadrant I How much service did we deliver?	Quadrant II How well did we deliver the service?
Output (Product of client condition achieved)/ Effect	Quadrant III How much effect/change did we produce?	Quadrant IV What quality of effect/change did we produce?

Data Sources Document. Having identified the performance measures, the project then develops a document describing the sources and methods to be used to collect this data over time, both before and after project implementation. If historical data are not available, the project is to construct a comparable group who do not receive services to compare outcomes to project participants.

Progress Graph. From the identified data sources, the project should tabulate and plot the historical data for the headline performance measure. The project should then use the historical trend to develop a forecast of the future level of the headline indicator "in the absence of the project." As much as possible, the forecast should include information on other factors that may affect the headline performance measure.

Stories Behind the Baseline. A project then constructs a narrative discussing the factors likely to affect the baseline. What explains differences in outcomes across subgroups? What contributed to the historical trend? What factors influenced the forecast's development? What factors may have influenced actual trends after program implementation? What differences exist between baseline and actual data trendlines, and why do they differ?

Identifying Partners. The RBDM Framework emphasizes that outcomes do not change because of government efforts alone. Each project is asked to identify other organizations—public and private partners—that have affected or could affect the outcomes of interest.

Quality Improvement Steps. Having considered outcomes to date, projects should consider what changes can be made to improve outcomes. This is the key step in continuous quality improvement.

UTILITY OF THE RBDM FRAMEWORK IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The LTFSS Plan Evaluation Design Helped Introduce Lead Agency Staff to the RBDM Framework

Under the clear influence of Friedman, the LTFSS Plan emphasizes the importance of focusing on outcomes and on measuring progress toward those outcomes. Consistent with the emphasis on outcomes, every project has been

required to develop an evaluation that conforms to an explicitly specified version of the Friedman approach. A number of participants praised Friedman's model for how it focuses individuals at all levels on client-level outcomes, rather than simply on process measures. This focus is, in several ways, constructive. First, it is a noteworthy accomplishment that the model has served to guide County departments and agencies in thinking more formally about program outcomes. Second, it has also allowed them to focus on a common set of outcomes. Third, it has also provided a useful framework for prioritizing departmental resources. And fourth, participants felt that the Friedman model has helped County departments and agencies to learn to "speak a common language" focused around strategic planning, outcomes, and evaluation. These were goals of the LTFSS Plan and are important steps toward the County's goal to stabilize families by building their capacity to become self-sufficient.

Consultations with Friedman on the RBDM Framework were described by four interviewees as having made evaluation more accessible to senior managers and to staff without research training. As one senior manager noted, "when Friedman spoke, it represented a complete turn around by senior management in that there was a sense of 'Now I get it. . . . ' An understanding that evaluation can be done by regular people." Another lead agency interviewee noted that evaluation is new to their project staff and Friedman's training sessions have helped them to think about evaluation in a more straightforward way.

Training on Applying the Evaluation Design Has Been Helpful, but Interviewees Feel More One-on-One Training Is Needed

In addition to the consultation by Friedman himself, the CAO/SIB has provided other training and technical assistance. In December 2000, the CAO/SIB held an all-day training session with over 100 County departmental representatives. The training was intended to provide them with an overview of the project evaluation implementation plan and to introduce them to the Evaluation Design itself and Friedman's approach. CAO/SIB prepared and distributed a detailed Project Evaluation Implementation Guide to help projects in developing project evaluation deliverables. The Project Evaluation Implementation Guide provides projects with step-by-step guidelines for

developing their own evaluation, and sources for additional references that explain the Framework and its application.

In recognition of the challenges associated with developing the project evaluations, since July 2000, CAO/SIB also has provided one-on-one assistance to projects to help them develop their logic models, to refine their performance measures, and to work through the other evaluation deliverables. This includes helping projects identify best-practice program models and models of change that might serve as a theoretical basis for their programs, as well as examples of programs that have been implemented. In addition, CAO/SIB is helping projects to identify appropriate comparison groups and data sources, and provide technical assistance to projects in the area of information systems development.

Finally, the CAO/SIB meets at least quarterly with the Evaluation Design Workgroup. These meetings bring together representatives from all the lead County agencies. The Workgroup is charged with continuing to guide the design and implementation of the LTFSS Plan Evaluation and to oversee Countywide evaluation deliverables.¹⁶ Interviewees indicate that these meetings also represent a chance to share progress on their projects' evaluation deliverables and to discuss problems encountered and how they are being addressed.

Project interviewees reported that the training provided them with a good introduction to the RBDM Framework and the LTFSS Plan Evaluation Design. However, the majority of the interviewees felt they needed more one-on-one assistance in developing their logic models and in working through the steps of the projects' evaluation development process. Part of the reason for the perceived lack of sufficient training was that project coordinators and program staff varied in the amount of training they had received, either because of project or lead agency staff turnover or because of schedule conflicts. In addition, as noted by CAO/SIB, at some of the earlier sessions, some projects were not far enough along to fully benefit from the training. Finally, interviewees from one lead agency anticipated a future challenge as providing training for project

¹⁶County of Los Angeles Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency Plan Evaluation Design, page 3, October 23, 2000.

contractors on the Evaluation Design to ensure that they implement it appropriately.

Projects Have Experienced Various Difficulties in Applying the Evaluation Design

While other evaluation approaches focus only on services delivered (input) without considering their effect on outcomes, Friedman's approach emphasizes both input and outcome measures. Involving project staff in the effort to measure services delivered and client-level outcomes is also important. Careful measurement—over a long period of time, with detail on geography and background characteristics—is the foundation of any evaluation effort.

The RBDM Framework itself is seen by many participants as valuable. Nevertheless, in our interviews, interviewees expressed concerns that the RBDM Framework itself was difficult to implement and, thus, that individual projects might implement the Framework differently. This difficulty was recognized early, as was evident in the early discussions of the Evaluation Design Workgroup. As summarized by several participants, the nature of those Workgroup discussions centered on how to apply the RBDM Framework and how to make it work. Their discussions included how to conceptualize the relationship between the individual project evaluations and that of the Plan as a whole, as well as the timing of the different elements of the Evaluation Design.

More generally, interviews with the members of the Evaluation Design Panel indicated three areas where projects were having difficulty applying the evaluation component of the RBDM Framework: (1) logic models that were missing a theoretical basis or a model of change for the proposed project; (2) confusion about which quadrant a performance measure may fall in and, in some instances, duplication between the headline and secondary measures; and (3) the fact that a few projects identified more performance measures per quadrant than the Panel felt was unrealistic.

As a result, a number of draft project evaluation formative deliverables submitted initially were returned to the lead agencies for revisions, with some requiring multiple revisions. The time line for when deliverables were due was deliberately set by the Evaluation Design Workgroup to allow for the early

identification of problems that projects may be experiencing. As part of the review process, Panel members and the CAO/SIB provided a variety of suggestions to projects on how to strengthen their evaluation formative deliverables, including possible data sources, relevant comparison groups or historical controls, and additional performance measures to consider. Several interviewees stated that the Panel members thought it was important to address design problems early on rather than have projects implement flawed evaluations. This is consistent with the emphasis the RBDM Framework places on evaluation. Evaluation Design Panel members also noted that projects are making progress in this area. In their view, projects appear to be improving in such areas as identifying appropriate performance measures in identifying a theoretical basis for their programs.

Interviewees commented that the Evaluation Design Workgroup meetings were only somewhat helpful to them in working through the development of their project evaluation deliverables. Several interviewees commented that staff turnover among the lead agencies has meant that issues discussed or decisions made in previous meetings had to be repeated with new project staff at subsequent meetings. They also commented that the individuals the lead agencies sent to these meetings varied in level of expertise (e.g., data staff and program staff), which led to some unevenness in the experience and focus of Workgroup discussions. Several interviewees felt that CAO/SIB staff clearly understood the evaluation concepts and RBDM Framework, but that they had not yet explained it well to the projects.

The CAO LTFSS Plan Evaluation Project's budget includes a supplemental funding set-aside that the lead agencies can request support for their project evaluations. Based on input from the lead agencies, the Evaluation Design Panel identified five priority areas for the use of these funds: (1) purchase computer hardware or software; (2) train staff on the use statistical or database software; (3) hire evaluation or information science (IS) consultants; (4) cover evaluation reports' printing costs; and (5) pay for staff time to retrieve data from

DPSS information systems.¹⁷ Given the projects' slow roll-out, project interviewees and CAO/SIB expect that the amount of supplemental funding requested for project evaluations will rise in the latter half of the current FY and the beginning of next FY (FY 2002–2003) as the evaluation-related technical assistance needs of lead agencies rise.

The projects' requests for supplemental funds to support the technological infrastructure required to track data do not solve all their data concerns. Members of the Evaluation Design Panel indicate that one of the major areas in which projects are having difficulties in applying the RBDM Framework is data-related. The Panel noted two key data-related issues: (1) difficulties in identifying data on pre-program outcomes or outcomes for comparison groups; and (2) difficulties in identifying data sources and a lack of knowledge about what data might be available. About half of project interviewees stated that they were not far enough along in their Evaluation Designs to address data-related issues. Still, a review of projects' draft Evaluation Designs and data sources documents indicate that projects have also recognized a number of data quality issues that may ultimately affect their ability to accurately measure performance measures and track service delivery.

Data quality issues may seem like minor technical issues, but the RBDM Framework places great emphasis on using data to inform fiscal and operational decisions. It is useful as something other than a planning tool to the extent it is implementable; thus, the issue of data quality and availability (as well as the availability of skills to understand and interpret data, as we discuss below) speak directly to the utility of the RBDM Framework.

Not all data-related problems are directly RBDM Framework-related. Issues related to confidentiality restrictions, sharing of client information, and sharing of data (e.g., no consistent, unique identifiers across departmental databases) also have been experienced by the State and other counties in the implementation of welfare reform and CalWORKs, as well as the LTFSS Plan

¹⁷Memo entitled "LTFSS Plan Evaluation Supplemental Resources", sent to LTFSS Coordinators, from A. Drakodaidis, CAO/SIB, May 7, 2001.

(Klerman et al., 2001). Other problems are a direct implication of moving toward results-based accountability, not just in the County but across the country. Research on applying results-based decision making and budgeting approaches indicates that an important challenge facing funders and administrators is establishing the infrastructure necessary to collect and analyze outcomes data (Liner et al., 2001). This is true not just for County entities but also for contractors and community participants. Outcome measurement is relatively new to many private nonprofit organizations, who are used to only monitoring and reporting such information as the number of clients served and the quantity of services, programs, or activities provided (Morley et al., 2001).

Underlying these issues is the fact that evaluation or research expertise is uneven across the different projects and across County departments and lead agencies, something the Evaluation Design Panel called attention to. Some County departments have in-house research and evaluation units, whereas other departments do not. Project coordinators and program staff vary in the amount of education or formal training they may have had in research and in their experience in conducting evaluations. This variation has posed a challenge both in terms of developing the projects' evaluations and in recognizing the amount of technical support individual projects may require. This variation also potentially has implications for how well project evaluations may be carried out.

Finally, several interviewees noted that the lead agencies were ambivalent about the value of the evaluation process itself. This is certainly not unique to the LTFSS Plan. Research on results-based decision making models and budgeting has found that one of the difficulties of implementing such models is overcoming staff and/or management fears about assigning blame if the results are not positive (Liner et al., 2001). Of course, the LTFSS Plan's intent in adopting the RBDM Framework was to focus on measurable performance and accountability. With time, these fears may ease as comfort levels rise with familiarity; however, easing these fears also points to the need for ongoing education about the RBDM Framework and its purpose at all levels of organization, from management to line staff.

Projects Expressed Concern About the Ability of the Evaluation to Measure Program Impact

Interviewees also noted concerns that the Evaluation Design may not allow the lead County agencies ultimately to “prove effectiveness” or to measure “program impact.” In measuring program effects and linking interventions to outcomes, a number of factors must be considered that may affect one’s ability to measure causation. These factors include: (1) changes in the economic environment that may positively or negatively impact the outcome indicators of interest; (2) potential biases in the selection of program participants; (3) effects of other social programs on the outcome indicators of interest. The difficulty of properly considering such factors makes it difficult to identify the impact of a particular program (Rossi et al., 1999). Recognizing this, interviewees commented that they thought the way a number of LTFSS projects were currently designed would make it impossible to evaluate their impact. For example, projects note, as we discussed above, that incorporating economic conditions and other factors into the forecast of future trends is difficult.

The RBDM Framework acknowledges that evaluation is difficult. It warns against allowing the technical statistics to dominate the process but notes that “it can often help to have a statistical expert as part of the team,” because the hard part about the baselines is the forecasting. “Turning the curve” analysis—changing an indicator’s trend trajectory—is an important part of judging whether a program has been successful.

The example provided in Friedman (Friedman, 2001, Section 2.11) forecasts the number of vacant houses in a community, which was the indicator for the result “stable community with adequate housing.” The forecast is generated by combining data on the trend in vacancies in the past, trends in local demographic change, and trends in economic conditions. Program success is judged by its ability to change the trend (e.g., in vacancies) against what that trend would have been in the absence of the program (e.g., the forecast).

A key element, then, is to correctly forecast future trends. Consider, for example, what the trend in vacancies would look like as the community entered a

recession: Vacancies would most likely rise as residents moved out and new ones stopped moving in. Thus, a program that prevented the number of vacancies from rising could be considered a success in a recession even if the number of vacancies remained constant, the program would be a success. However, if the forecast had not incorporated the effect of the economy on vacancies and instead had projected a flat or declining trend in vacancies, then the project would be judged a failure.

Programs in the LTFSS Plan face exactly this challenge. It now appears that the economic expansion has ended and that the County is entering into a recession of uncertain length and depth. It seems likely that such a recession will leave families with fewer resources and greater stress, which will appear in the data as downturns in many of the outcomes of interest. A simple pre/post evaluation (i.e., comparing outcomes after the intervention to outcomes before the intervention) or a comparison of outcomes with a forecast trendline that did not incorporate the effect of the economy will not incorporate such a downturn. Such methods would, therefore, conclude that the LTFSS Plan had had no effect (or had made things worse).

In some interviews, it was difficult to tell if the underlying issue was confusion about the RBDM Framework itself, methodological concerns, or resistance to the idea of evaluation. For example, project interviewees questioned whether other evaluation designs might be better suited for individual projects and felt that there should be flexibility in projects' selecting what approach to use. Half of project interviewees, for example, felt the RBDM Framework was too rigid because the results had to fit into the four quadrants of the model and, thus, did not allow for measurement of other important information.

The RBDM Framework in fact anticipates some resistance. As it notes, the "[t]he truth of the matter is that it is very rare to find an organization that 'wants' to do performance measurement. The reasons for this can range from organization inertia to fear about losing jobs, and everything in between" (Friedman, 2001, Section 3.6). Friedman then specifies steps that organizations may take to address this, such as assigning a coach or more training to those

who are resisting its use or demonstrating how the results of evaluation are practical and are used to affect decision-making.

That it can be difficult to distinguish confusion, concern, or resistance is evident in project evaluation deliverables that have identified (as required) a number of internal and external mediating factors that may affect the ability of a lead agency to measure a project's impact. These include the "buy-in" of the community; constraints imposed by shortages of services not in the projects' control, such as housing or child care; the willingness of participants to complete training or programs; and uneven knowledge across County departments' line staff about what programs are available, limiting referrals to needed services. These factors certainly can affect the ability of projects to achieve their goals, but some—like community buy-in or participants' willingness to complete a program—are within projects' ability to influence, and projects should be expected to do so. The RBDM Framework notes that mediating factors in some circumstances can serve as a crutch:

[T]he point is that all programs' performance measures are affected by many factors beyond the particular program's control. This lack of control is usually used as an excuse for not doing performance measurement at all. Turnover rate, staff morale, you name it is "beyond my control." In fact, the more important the performance measure . . . the less control the program has over it. This is a paradox at the heart of doing performance measurement well. If control were the overriding criteria for performance measures then there would be no performance measures at all (Friedman, 2001, Section 3.1).

Whatever its cause, some projects appear to be frustrated with the evaluation component of the Friedman RBDM Framework. As one interviewee commented:

Although it is a useful planning tool at the strategic level, at the individual project level is where it appears to have been less well thought out. To answer the question: "Are you better off now than you would have been?" is where things break down, because the tools to fully address that question have been less well developed.

As the RBDM Framework indicates, technical assistance and additional training may help clarify areas where projects are unclear about the purpose of the evaluation and about how to carry it out.

DISCUSSION

At present, the RBDM Framework seems to be useful in promoting the concept of performance accountability; however, the utility of the RBDM Framework as an evaluation framework remains unclear. Initial experiences by the lead County agencies with developing evaluation formative deliverables and in trying to apply the RBDM Framework raise several issues that should be monitored as the evaluation unfolds.

The LTFSS Plan Evaluation Design, which is based on the RBDM Framework, has helped to introduce County lead agency staff to the concept of results-based accountability and performance measurement. Specifically, the RBDM Framework has helped County departments and agencies to think more formally about program outcomes, to focus on a common set of outcomes, and to prioritize departmental resources. However, projects have experienced various difficulties in applying the official LTFSS Plan Evaluation Design which is adapted from the RBDM Framework. Specifically, projects are having difficulty applying the evaluation component of the RBDM Framework in such areas as developing logic models, understanding what quadrant a performance measure may fall in, and in identifying data sources and data on historical or comparison groups as called for by the Evaluation Design to accurately measure performance measures and track service delivery. In addition, some project staff have raised methodological concerns about the Evaluation Design's ability to measure program effects and to link interventions to outcomes. Although the RBDM Framework anticipates some resistance to implementing the evaluation component and acknowledges that data can be scarce, whether technical assistance and additional training can fully address all of these concerns remains to be seen. As projects proceed with their evaluations, the utility of the RBDM Framework as an evaluation framework should be monitored.

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6. LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

This report is designed to “evaluate the utility of the service delivery and planning approach taken by the LTFSS Plan as a way of organizing diverse efforts toward a general desired result and in its use of evaluation as a means to improve service delivery.”¹⁸ The development and evaluation of the LTFSS Plan were strongly influenced by the RBDM Framework. As the County moves to expand the application of the RBDM Framework to other parts of the County budget, it is worthwhile to consider early experiences applying the RBDM Framework in the context of the LTFSS Plan and to identify important insights gained from this experience.

Following a brief overview, this chapter provides a summary of the key lessons learned based on the experiences and suggestions of the LTFSS Plan participants and on RAND’s analysis about the utility of the RBDM Framework in the context of the LTFSS Plan. We also examine future directions in applying the RBDM Framework, both in new areas within the County and in its continued use as part of the LTFSS Plan in the coming year.

OVERVIEW

The planning process that led to the development of the LTFSS Plan was viewed by participants, in several respects, as representing a new approach for the County. First, the flowing of funds from DPSS to other County departments was seen as a new and important way for the County to do business, an important step away from traditional stove-piping of departmental resources. The LTFSS planning process was also viewed as the first Countywide test of applying the RBDM Framework to planning for health and human services delivery. Further, many participants commented that the LTFSS planning

¹⁸Contract for the Evaluation of the Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency Plan, Exhibit A, section 2.8, page 36.

process represented a major shift toward broad community involvement and toward a consensus-building, collaborative approach to planning.

As of October 2001, two and a half years after the initiation of the planning process and two years after the approval of the Plan, startup of service delivery to clients is getting under way for a number of projects. Few projects expended anything approaching their budgeted allocations in the FY 2000–2001 and the early results from FY 2001–2002 do not suggest major changes in rates of expenditures. Only about half the projects have approved implementation plans (such that they could begin to serve clients), and even fewer projects have approved evaluation plans. The LTFSS Plan will not start to affect the lives of the County's children and families until services are being provided in volume. For most projects, the provision of these services appears to be at least several months away.

Second, in as much as they use the RBDM Framework, LTFSS projects are not standard new projects or simply expansions of existing programs: The fundamental ideas of the LTFSS Plan and the RBDM Framework included increased community involvement, flowing of funds from the department nominally receiving them to the departments and agencies that can best provide the needed service(s), and integration of projects and services at the planning stage and at the street-level/service delivery stage. Each of these fundamental ideas—increasing community involvement, flowing funds between departments, and integrating the service delivery system—requires that a number of details be worked out about cross-agency cooperation and coordination and collaboration with the community. Addressing such details would be expected to stretch out the initial implementation phase.

Finally, because the LTFSS Plan was a prototype for a new model of service provision in the County, there were few precedents. Thus, even before the specific issues raised by a particular project could be addressed, the general issues involved in implementing the new RBDM Framework needed to be identified and procedures developed to deal with them. These tasks of identifying issues and developing procedures to deal with them added even more time to the initial implementation process. Therefore, it seems plausible to argue that the slow roll-out of the LTFSS Plan projects is partially the result of the

application of the RBDM Framework and the County's underlying objective of changing the way it does business in providing services to children and their families. Some of the delays are intrinsic to any application of the model, and some of the delays are one-time events involved in working out procedures to deal with Friedman-type projects.

Despite the slow project roll-out, much progress has been made and the history of the LTFSS Plan to date suggests promise. The County has shown that it can plan and implement according to this new model—"planning for results" as conceptualized by the RBDM Framework. At this time, initial procedures have been developed and most of the steps have been completed for at least some of the projects. As experience accumulates, refined procedures and processes should allow for improved application of the RBDM Framework.

Those involved in the planning and implementation phases of the LTFSS Plan effort expect two types of long-term benefits from the global strategic planning. First, interviewees think the LTFSS Plan has stimulated progress on such issues as allowing data sharing across agencies for common clients, developing cross-agency procedures and processes for reporting or contracting, improving working relationships between County departments and agencies, establishing lasting partnerships between the County departments and the community, and focusing County departments and key partners on a common set of outcomes and on "planning for results" in the development of programs.

Second, interviewees see a number of potential benefits to clients when all the LTFSS projects have begun providing services. Projected benefits include more services to families, less fragmentation of services to these families, improvements in customer service, more knowledgeable line staff about the range of County programs available to their clients, and more effective referrals. More globally, interviewees have detected a positive shift toward a comprehensive approach to service delivery that focuses on building up families' strengths rather than focusing simply on what's wrong or on service delivery to individuals apart from their family context.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

From our observation of the County's first experience with using the RBDM Framework and results-based decision-making model to develop and implement the Plan, we draw four lessons that should improve the utility of the RBDM Framework as it is used more widely in the County.

The RBDM Framework Requires Significant Time for Planning

The RBDM Framework calls for an iterative planning process that starts by identifying the desired end result(s) for population outcomes and working backwards to means (Friedman, 2001, Section 1.1). In addition, the RBDM Framework encourages broad community involvement in the planning process and the identification of all relevant "partners" from the public and private sectors who may have a role in affecting the end result. Further, Friedman urges the iterative planning process to "fit the pieces together" and to consider how proposed programs or approaches fit together into a system of services and supports, "not just a loose confederation of good ideas."¹⁹ Although Friedman is not specific about the amount of time required to fully implement the RBDM Framework, he is specific about the planning steps and processes to be followed to successfully undertake such a global approach to planning and budgeting.

In applying the RBDM Framework, leaders and planning participants involved in developing the LTFSS Plan were working under real-life constraints. They perceived that the large pool of PIF and SA monies available to the County was at risk of being lost if a plan was not finalized quickly. Given that the County was just coming out of a recession, there were competing pressures about how these dollars might be used. The Board decided it wanted a comprehensive, long-term plan developed for using the estimated available PIF and SA monies before these dollars were spent for other purposes. The Board directed the NDTF to report back to them in six months with a comprehensive plan for spending these funds and other CalWORKs dollars to achieve the desired result

¹⁹The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide, section 2.12, "How Do We Identify What Works to Improve Conditions of Well-Being?," http://www.raguide.org/2_12.htm.

of helping families achieve long-term self-sufficiency. Thus, the planners' charge was to do what could be done within the time frame allocated for this planning process.

Much was accomplished in that short planning time frame. Through a collaborative, consensus-building process, those involved in the LTFSS planning process agreed upon a definition of long-term family self-sufficiency, selected a set of Countywide outcome indicators to measure progress toward achieving that goal, and developed a suite of projects as a means of achieving those goals.

That said, most LTFSS planning leaders and participants would have liked more time to work through the RBDM Framework and to fully consider the different issues that arose. A key lesson learned is that future planning efforts using the RBDM Framework would benefit from more time to work through the RBDM Framework's steps. More time would allow several benefits. First, it would allow planners to bring the "best available evidence" to the table in determining what works and what outcome indicators should be used to measure progress toward achieving the agreed upon end result(s) or outcome(s). Second, additional time would also allow planners to more fully involve all the relevant stakeholders (e.g., community advocacy groups, researchers, and service providers) in the planning process and to assess what services already exist in the community and how the developed projects will relate to one another and to the existing service delivery systems. Finally, consensus-building is hard to do and takes time to fully consider differing viewpoints and to reach agreement on an approach; having more time would allow planners to do an even more thorough job of reaching consensus.

In Large Counties, More Formal Links Between Planning and Implementation Are Needed

In a large county such as Los Angeles County, responsibility for planning and implementing often fall to different people. The RBDM Framework emphasizes community involvement at planning, but day-to-day implementation is the responsibility of County employees. This leaves room for differences in interpretations of the vision laid forth by the planners and the possibility of developing programs that may not be feasible or represent the best use of

agency resources. Further, planning and implementing an initiative the magnitude and complexity of the LTFSS Plan requires addressing three sets of issues. First, it is essential to get the high-level involvement of the relevant players and of community representatives in the planning process and consensus-building to reach an agreed-upon global action plan. Second, as the LTFSS Plan moves from planning to implementation, a number of details must be worked out about cross-agency cooperation and coordination (e.g., the flowing of funds across departments, standardizing reporting procedures or MOU formats, determining what contracting requirements will be, and cross-supervision of departmental staff). Third, the individual lead agency and program staff responsible for implementing a specific project must determine what program infrastructure (e.g., site selection, hiring and training of staff, recruitment of program participants) must be in place to start up service delivery. To successfully address these three issues, it would have helped if more formal links between planning and implementation has been specified (e.g., mechanisms for ensuring inclusion in the planning process of County and non-County service providers or agency representatives who would be responsible for implementing an initiative).

In practice, the LTFSS Plan represents a change from "business as usual" in Los Angeles County and the innovations of the RBDM Framework pose some inherent challenges in addressing these three issues. The RBDM Framework encourages broad community input at planning and emphasizes collaboration and partnerships, but it is silent about how this might be accomplished in the implementation phase. The LTFSS planners also adopted integration of service delivery as one of the Plan's strategies. However, actual implementation is a full-time job, of necessity, done by lead agency staff—employees of a particular County department or agency. Those involved in developing the LTFSS projects are not necessarily the same individuals responsible for implementing those projects. Thus, one of the challenges is maintaining community involvement and ensuring that the final projects faithfully implement the planners' and community's intent.

To ensure continuity of the vision from the planning process to the implementation phase and to maintain the focus on outcomes, several

participants suggested that ongoing Workgroup meetings that involve County and non-County representatives who participated in developing the LTFSS Plan would be useful. Such meetings might be a useful forum for addressing programmatic issues and constraints that planners may not have fully considered and for reconciling them with the planners' vision. Meeting invitees might include Workgroup planning participants, lead agency and program representatives, researchers or outside program experts, and contract and finance representatives.

Ongoing technical assistance could be useful in other areas. Because the dollars for LTFSS projects come out of welfare reform and federal TANF legislation, the flow of these funds from one department to other receiving departments or agencies complicates implementation. For example, senior planning leaders felt that finance and contracts representatives should have been involved earlier in the planning phase. Doing so would have allowed them an earlier start at addressing such issues as cross-agency flow of funding, and setting up agreed-upon reporting procedures and document templates in preparation for the implementation phase. Also, interviewees recognize that ongoing technical assistance is valuable to project staff in the receiving departments or agencies to help them develop project implementation plans and contracts that meet CDSS and federal TANF requirements.

Planning and Coordination Require Considerable Resources

Another lesson learned was the importance of recognizing the resource demands of the numerous coordination activities that must occur early in the planning phase and continuing through the early part of the implementation phase. As noted by several senior management leaders, the LTFSS Plan's budget divides a project's funds evenly across the five years and, by doing so, implicitly assumes rapid program start-up and scale-up to full operating capacity. However, as discussed above, to make the changes "from business as usual" embodied in the LTFSS Plan and to undertake the innovations of the RBDM Framework, a number of issues related to cross-agency cooperation and coordination must be addressed early on. In addition, a great deal must occur before projects are ready for service delivery. In particular, projects must contract with service providers, select program sites, hire and train staff, recruit

program participants, develop program materials, among a host of other logistical issues. Further, as one senior management leader noted, it can be a cumbersome process to spend dollars in the County, with such tasks as putting contracts into place taking between 6 and 8 months, obtaining facility space taking a minimum of 12 months, and hiring staff taking at least 6 months. Interviewees felt that budgets should realistically reflect the life cycle of a project—where one would expect to see a period of ramping up, full-scale operations, and then ramping down—but that budgets should also build in early funding to address the numerous coordination issues between agencies prior to service delivery.

The Evaluation Component Is More Complicated Than It Appears at First

Evaluation plays a prominent role in the LTFSS Plan. An outside evaluator—RAND—is responsible for conducting a Countywide evaluation of the process of developing, implementing, and evaluating the Plan and of the impact of the LTFSS Plan on County operations and on the Plan's designated outcomes, such as infant mortality and poverty rates. Also, each of the LTFSS projects is required to develop an evaluation report in accordance with the Evaluation Design to assess program impact. Within the RBDM Framework's results and performance accountability method, evaluation is key to focusing the County's efforts on the set of 26 LTFSS Plan outcome indicators and to measuring progress toward the LTFSS Plan's goal of helping families to achieve long-term self-sufficiency.

Consistent with the RBDM Framework, the LTFSS Plan's Evaluation Design emphasizes that progress on selected performance measures must be measured. Among the fundamental insights of the RBDM Framework is the importance of refocusing project efforts away from a narrow focus on what the project did to a broader focus on how the project affected client-level outcomes and well-being. To that end, the LTFSS Evaluation Design requires that each project explicitly state which outcomes it expects to affect, operationalizing those outcomes through specific measures and then carefully tracking the evolution of those measures over time. Individual projects are urged to track whether its "customers are better off" (Friedman, 2001, Section 3.16).

Building an evaluation component into the LTFSS Plan helps to keep the key stakeholders and lead agencies focused on outcomes and informs the Board about how these funds were used. The Plan's evaluation component also introduces County departmental staff to Friedman's approach and the notion of explicitly thinking about what a program is trying to achieve and how to assess whether what an agency is doing is having the desired effects. Participants in the planning and implementation of the LTFSS Plan have praised the application of the RBDM Framework for having stimulated and guided County departments and other lead agencies in thinking more formally about program outcomes and as providing a useful framework for prioritizing departmental resources.

However, some interviewees also expressed concern about whether the Evaluation Design will allow for the determination of causation, i.e., the effect of an individual LTFSS project (or even the Plan as a whole) on outcomes. The RBDM Framework is both quite specific and vague about how to evaluate the effect of a given project or a broad effort. The specific instructions involve using historical information to create a baseline (see Friedman, 2001, Section 2.11) and then using the historical trend information to project a future trend in the absence of new programs. Program success is evaluated in terms of deviations between the projected trend line and actual outcome. If historical data are not available, the RBDM Framework directs projects to collect data on comparison groups.

However, the RBDM Framework notes that simple pre- versus post-comparisons are invalid because other non-project forces would cause outcomes to change even in the absence of a new program. The examples in the RBDM Framework and the description of the "Story Behind the Baseline" process emphasize that many factors will affect future outcomes (see the example about "adequate housing" in Section 2.11 of Friedman, 2001) and that not all the factors are captured by a simple trendline. Still, neither the RBDM Framework nor the CAO's technical assistance materials offers specific guidance about how to control for such other factors in the historical projections or the comparison group designs.

Those performing project evaluations would benefit from additional training and technical assistance. Current CAO training materials describe the

application of the basic trendline methods suggested by Friedman. However, the recent path of the economy—rapid expansion, followed by at least a mild recession—suggests that trendline methods are likely to underestimate the true effects of the program. The trendline—computed during the expansion—implicitly assumes that the expansion will continue. Applying trendline methods, any deviation from that trendline—e.g., because of the end of the expansion—will be attributed to the program. Thus, for some outcomes, simple trendline analyses are likely to suggest that the Plan made outcomes worse. There exist alternative methodologies that will (at least partially) correct for economic conditions. Thus, it may be useful to consider significant increases in the level of (and funding for) training for those performing the project evaluations and technical assistance in developing, refining, and implementing their evaluation plans so that they can detect any positive effects of the Plan, despite a slowing of economic growth.

Finally, interviewee comments suggest that while the RBDM Framework is accepted as a useful guide to planning, there may be some resistance to it in practice (i.e., in evaluating how successful projects are in affecting certain outcomes and using this information to guide future decision-making and funding). The RBDM Framework, in fact, anticipates this and specifies steps that organizations may take to address such resistance. Those steps largely entail ongoing education and training in the principles of the RBDM Framework and how it can be valuable for decision-making.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

These lessons learned become a useful base on which to build as the County moves forward to both extend the application of the RBDM Framework outside of the LTFSS Plan and to continue the use of the RBDM Framework within it.

LTFSS Plan Has Laid the Groundwork for Extending the Application of the RBDM Framework

The LTFSS Plan represents a new model of service provision in the County based on broad community involvement in planning and in determining “what

works” to achieve desired results. This new model of service provision also directly confronts the challenges inherent in overcoming bureaucratic barriers to improve cross-agency coordination and collaboration in service delivery and in working together with the community to comprehensively meet families’ needs.

A number of key stakeholders also view the LTFSS Plan as a significant application of the RBDM Framework in the County. The County’s experience in the LTFSS Plan’s development and implementation is seen as an important opportunity to learn what adjustments may be needed in applying the results-based decision-making model to other areas of the County’s budget. Such learning opportunities are particularly important given the County’s recent decision to incorporate the RBDM Framework and results-based decision-making model into the County’s budget process, specifically, into the Children’s Budget to enable the County to measure progress toward Goal 5, Strategy 2 in five outcome areas. Phased implementation of this plan has begun, with County departments initially being requested to help the CAO develop an inventory of current County programs that serve children and families. The development of program performance measures by County departments using the RBDM Framework is slated to begin in FY 2002–2003, with full implementation projected by FY 2006–2007 (CAO/SIB, 2001).

In its use of the RBDM Framework in the LTFSS Plan and in its extension to other parts of the County budget, the County is ahead of other jurisdictions in applying this RBDM Framework to best serve the needs of children and low-income families. Further, by incorporating an evaluation component into the Plan, the County is ahead of others in its quest to learn and improve on the RBDM Framework’s application.

The Continued Application of the RBDM Framework Within LTFSS Plan Presents Opportunities and Challenges

As the LTFSS Plan moves into its third calendar year since approval of the Plan, lead agencies and LTFSS projects enter a new phase. From a management perspective, lead agencies will move from an emphasis on developing projects’ implementation plans and putting an initial program infrastructure in place to an emphasis on service delivery, refining LTFSS

projects, overseeing contractors, and evaluating these projects and tracking outcomes. According to the RBDM Framework, the process is iterative. We are now well into the first cycle of planning (project selection and funding decisions), implementation, and evaluation. Lessons learned from implementation and evaluation should then cycle back into a follow-on planning phase.

Based on those lessons, some projects would have their funding increased, some projects would have their funding decreased, some projects would be terminated, and some new projects would be initiated based on new or newly perceived needs and new program models developed elsewhere. Moreover, California as a whole and the County face likely changes in their fiscal situation. It is too early to predict what changes will be enacted, but it seems likely that funding will be considerably tighter and that there may be pressures to use some of the PIF monies for basic services.

Clearly, according to the RBDM Framework, future LTFSS planning choices should be influenced by the accumulating evidence. Successful and fast implementation contributes to a case for continued and perhaps increased funding. Similarly, RBDM Framework-based evaluation evidence of effectiveness should also contribute to a case for continued and perhaps increased funding. Finally, conventional research evidence of program efficacy and cost-effectiveness should also contribute to a case for continued and perhaps increased funding. Conversely, programs that rolled out slowly, had poor RBDM Framework-based evaluation outcomes, and had limited or negative research evidence from elsewhere should be at higher risk of lower funding or even termination.

The changed operating philosophy embodied in the LTFSS Plan itself has begun to stimulate real cultural change in the County and the lead agencies. Over the next year, lead agencies have an opportunity to show that their programs can contribute to the well-being of these families and can positively impact the outcomes of interest.

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MR-1563-LTFSS

ISBN 0-8330-3278-X



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