

Using performance targets to drive results: asking the right questions

There are two ways to get better results:

1. Do something that works better.
2. Serve more children and families.

Do something that works better. (Will effect population-level and program-level results)

- Make sure your targets are grounded in evidence that supports your continuum of solutions
 - Why did your Promise Neighborhood choose these solutions?
 - What is the evidence base for your chosen solutions?
 - Does the evidence show impact on the indicator the solution is aligned with?
 - Does the evidence show impact on the target population for the indicator?

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about your middle school solutions? What indicators do you think you will move and how'd you choose your solutions for those?

Promise Neighborhood: There's a lot of research and evidence on our Safe Students solution that we think will increase school safety in each of our middle schools. There is a lot of information about implementing this solution with middle school age children so we feel confident about implementing it fully and with fidelity. We know from this research we should see significant results in about 2 years for the first students who received this programming, and then we'll decide whether and how to scale up to deliver the program to more students.

We also have some health and wellness solutions focused on influencing middle schoolers' behaviors and forming healthy habits for families. We are not directly providing physical activity and healthy eating each day to each student, but instead are implementing solutions we think will slowly change the way students think about exercise and eating and help families understand how to make healthier choices. However, there's not much evidence yet on how these changes happen within families so we're not sure when and how we should scale this solution to more students.

- Make sure you have a way to take action on evidence generated by implementing solutions
 - How will the Promise Neighborhood know if solutions are working for children served?
 - Is the Promise Neighborhood tracking individual-level outcomes at regular intervals?
 - Is the Promise Neighborhood sharing child and family data with other partners?

Interviewer: It sounds like you have some new solutions that you don't have a ton of data on yet, but you think they could be really promising. And you want to make sure you understand how the program does and doesn't work for each student before committing additional resources to it. Do you have a way to track which students participate in your programs and whether their individual outcomes are changing? How are you going to use that information to figure out how to scale your program?

- Make sure you have a way to know if/how different solutions and partners are contributing to performance targets and a way to take action on that evidence.
 - Has the Promise Neighborhood identified performance measures for each solution, and for partners implementing solutions?
 - Is data entered in a data system? Does the Promise Neighborhood have a process for monitoring performance and making adjustments?

Promise Neighborhood: We know it's really important to have our partners implementing this new solution track the students they are serving and their individual health and wellness outcomes, especially because we're operating on a small scale right now and likely won't be able to see population level results yet. We are counting on our partners to learn how well the program is working through program data collected on individual participants and entered in our shared data system. We've talked with our partners about the expectations for the programs and the health and wellness outcomes we expect to see for participants. Together we have set some program targets we all expect to see met before we decide on program funding for next year.

Interviewer: What other programs are you implementing in middle school?

Promise Neighborhood: We're also implementing a program designed to help support middle schoolers who change schools in the middle of the year and make sure they have a smooth transition without any setbacks academically. We're measuring student mobility at the population level but there are so many other things that effect that indicator, we're not sure we'll see any meaningful changes in the short term. Since this is a difficult indicator for us to move, in the short-term we're going to track the success of students we directly serve with the transition program and make sure they're succeeding academically despite their moves. If it's working well, we'll try to scale up and reach all of the students who are moving schools. Over the long-term, as we reach more students, we think our solutions will make our community a better place to live, and we will see mobility go down as families choose to stay here.

Serve more children and families. (Will effect population-level results)

- Make sure you have plans to scale your most effective solutions in a way that gets results.
 - Is the number of participants served by effective solutions expected to increase?
 - Are you considering new partners to provide the effective solutions to more students?
 - What portion of the Promise Neighborhood target population do you expect to serve?

Interviewer: Can you tell me about some of your solutions that are really working well? What kind of data do you have on those programs and how will you use that to know when to scale?

Promise Neighborhood: Yes, our home visiting program for children under 5 is one of our most successful programs and really sets up kids and families for long-term success. We have data that shows over 80% of participating 3 year olds were ready for kindergarten according to the school district's kindergarten readiness assessment given at the start of the kindergarten year. We also see that 100% of parents in the program reported they were reading to their children at least 3 times a week. We're trying to figure out how to expand this successful program with our current resources. Even though this is a great program,

we're currently only serving about a quarter of our total population under 5, so if we can't expand the number of children we are serving, we won't really see results at the population level.

Interviewer: It's fantastic to see you've identified a program that seems to work so well. Maybe you could identify more partners for this work? Or additional home visiting programs that could target children in your neighborhood? Is there anything else going on that might impact this indicator?

Promise Neighborhood: We identified a few more programs in our community that provide home visiting services, but we realized their providers aren't trained at the same level our providers are, and high quality providers really drive the results we see from this program. So right now, before we scale, we're focusing on how to provide some professional development opportunities for these other programs, and then hopefully partner with them to serve more children and see better results too.

Discussion Questions:

How do you want to tell the story of your Promise Neighborhood?

- **What population-level results does the Promise Neighborhood expect to see in the next 5 years?**
 - Are there certain priorities the Promise Neighborhood wants to focus on?
- **What program-level results does the Promise Neighborhood expect to see in the next 5 years?**
 - Population-level change will take a long time. In the meantime, how will the Promise Neighborhood measure and communicate about the success of its programs?

What are your primary strategies for improving results?

- **Doing something that works better?**
 - Selecting more evidence-based programs?
 - Development of a case management system to generate new evidence on what works?
 - Regular collection of individual outcome data?
 - Ability to track partner and program performance and make adjustments based on what is working?
- **Serving more children and families?**
 - Increasing the percentage of the target population served?
 - Finding new partners who can implement the most effective programs?