OneCare Vermont
Network Success Story

RESULTS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY (RBA) IN ACTION

In 2014 the Vermont legislature enacted legislation requiring the use of Results-Based Accountability (RBA) for the planning and monitoring of state government programs. This framework, from the work of Mark Friedman, supports a disciplined way of thinking about results. RBA asks us to differentiate ends from means and asks three key questions to understand results: *How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off?*

RBA is used by Vermont Promise Communities at the start of their planning phases to ensure they are thinking strategically about what makes children and families in their community "better off." Promise Communities are diverse coalitions of people within high need, rural Vermont communities supporting children from birth to age six. The Vermont Promise Communities initiative is one of 24 projects in the Early Learning Challenge – Race to the Top grant award to the State of Vermont by the Federal Department of Education and Health and Human Services.

Promise Community Handbook, March 2017, page 4.

SPOTLIGHT ON: THE ASCUTNEY MOUNTAIN PROMISE COMMUNITY

Key Drivers

- Windsor was awarded a Promise Community grant in early 2017.
- Receipt of this grant required use of Collective Impact and Results-Based Accountability (RBA) to develop an evaluation plan.
- Prior to using the framework, it was important for the committee to understand the key concepts of RBA. Many of our local partners lacked familiarity with RBA.
- The Ascutney Mountain Promise Community (AMPC) Steering Committee was struggling with the RBA requirements of its grant proposal and having difficulty moving forward.

Working with RBA

- Alice Stewart, a staff member of the Mt. Ascutney Prevention Partnership, and a Promise Community Steering Committee member, was trained in RBA by Benchmarks for a Better Vermont and had experience using RBA in her previous role at ReThink Health.
- Using tools from her training and Mark Freidman's book, Trying Hard is Not Good Enough, Alice lead the AMPC steering committee through the RBA steps needed to select measures and draft an evaluation plan.
- With a basic understanding of RBA among committee members, the individuals were able to work together more efficiently to identify key metrics for the evaluation plan.

OUTCOMES

Using RBA methods, in just three meetings, the Windsor Promise Community:

- ✓ Answered the seven required performance accountability questions
- ✓ Brainstormed using the RBA Key Questions on each of their five proposed strategies
- ✓ Decided on 3-5 measures per strategy
- ✓ Developed a draft evaluation plan for State evaluators

…and all prior to the State's deadline!

Most Promise Communities require two, face-to-face meetings with evaluators to complete their plan. **After one meeting**, the evaluator determined that sufficient progress was made and a second meeting was not required.

"**I am impressed!** You've done great work and clearly have used the RBA framework to clarify your intentions."

State Evaluator's response to plan

LESSONS LEARNED

- Having a facilitator who is well-versed in RBA made it easier for the AMPC steering committee follow its steps.
- Working through the key questions in RBA did not seem that complicated, but it does require careful consideration, especially metrics to determine if anyone is better off as a result of the initiatives planned.
- By using the RBA framework, AMPC will be able to measure the impact of the Promise Community work, using an evaluation plan that has local support as well as local understanding of how and why data are being gathered and used.