

Example 11. Rhode Island’s Strategic Use of TPC Subcommittees

Rhode Island Reentry Steering Committee Meeting--Tier II Workplan

Work Activities: Each subcommittee is tasked with developing a detailed understanding of one or more specific substantive topic areas. To assure continuity in the type of information collected in order to achieve this depth of understanding, each subcommittee is expected to gather the same type of information. Although the work products and outcomes should and will be similar, the methods and timetable for gathering this information will be decided by each individual subcommittee. Subcommittees are expected to:

1. *Establish the structure of the subcommittee.* Select those who will serve as chair, facilitator, recorder and reporter. Agree on a regular meeting schedule and location.
2. *Discuss specifically the goal of the subcommittee.* It is important for all members to be clear about the purpose of their work; this will make it easier to determine the path for achieving it and reduce the likelihood that the team will be anything less than fully successful. Articulate a goal—one that each member understands with absolute clarity—that describes the importance of a clear understanding of this area in order to assure that the essential components are in place to achieve successful offender reentry.
 - a. *For example:* The goal of the Supervision, Violation, and Revocation Subcommittee of the Rhode Island Reentry Steering Committee is to gather and analyze information that is key to understanding this area of offender management in service of assessing the effectiveness of our current efforts to manage the reentry and post-release supervision of prisoners returning to the community.
3. *Discuss the composition of the subcommittee team.* Determine whether additional expertise is needed to accomplish your task and if so, enlist the participation of others who are well positioned to help.
4. *Develop a strategy to undertake the analysis phase of your work.* To develop a comprehensive understanding of your area of responsibility, it will be necessary for the subcommittee to collect the following:
 - **Offender Population Data:** Identify the data that would be helpful in understanding this issue area in a more specific way. Spend a full work session asking yourselves, “If we had data to tell us everything we needed to know about this issue as it relates to transitioning offenders, what would that report include?” Make a list of your responses (For example, “What is the marketable skill level of the incarcerated population?” “Of the offenders in need of housing upon release, how many have no contact provisions and what are the relevant restrictions?”).
 - *Supports to this phase of the work:* The national TPC project staff will be available to assist subcommittees in terms of reviewing the research questions identified, assisting the subcommittee in refining them as needed, identifying sources for the collection of these data, designing a data collection effort, and potentially, the analysis of the data collected.
 - **System Mapping:** Develop a system map reflecting processes and decision points in this area. System maps detail the specific steps that are taken in moving an individual through a system of activities. They reflect the professionals involved at key decision points and the time elapse between each step of the process. Before beginning the development of a system map from ‘scratch,’ be sure that one has not already been developed.
 - *Supports to this phase of the work:* Samples of system maps are available for review as are more detailed instructions for developing them.
 - **Resource Inventory:** Develop a resource inventory that documents the program and services currently available in your area. Resources include specialized expertise by certain individuals, services available to support staff in the accomplishment of their work, services available to support offenders, etc. Document the services and capacity available, the extent to which these services

are utilized, etc. (Some examples of ‘resources’ include: individuals who provide offender assessment services or those who have the capacity to serve as trainers on assessment or classification instruments; the number of supervision officers and particular areas of expertise or specialization some might possess; the vocational training services available, inside the institutions and in the community; or the types of treatment services available to support transitioning/released offenders.

- **Policy and Practice Analysis.** Determine as a group the additional information you need to collect in order to understand your area.
 - a. Consider collecting agency policies that reflect the philosophies and procedures used to make decisions or deliver services.
 - b. Consider interviewing key staff (either individually or in a focus group) to develop a deeper understanding of ‘the way things really work.’
 - c. Consider observing key practices (a revocation hearing, a treatment group, or a release planning session) to enhance your knowledge and understanding further.

- **Best Practices Analysis.** Understanding one’s own system of offender management and service delivery is best assessed against the backdrop of national best practices. In this last stage of information gathering, look outside the state to understand the what has been learned through empirical research, and the best practices approaches that have been adopted in other jurisdictions.
 - *Supports to this phase of the work:* National project staff can assist subcommittees in identifying resources from around the country, including Web sites, documents, relevant research, models from specific jurisdictions, and individuals to contact for further information.

- **Gaps Analysis.** Once the information noted above is collected, the subcommittee’s task will be to organize and synthesize it in such a way that Steering Committee members can: (1) understand the current state of practice in this area, and (2) the strengths and weaknesses of the current state of practice in Rhode Island. While the subcommittee’s role is not to make decisions regarding actions that might be taken to address the gaps identified in current practice, it will be valuable for the subcommittee to be prepared to share their thinking about this with the Steering Committee.

Work Products: Subcommittees should work toward the preparation of a final report—verbal and written—to the Steering Committee that synthesizes the way in which the work was conducted; that provides, in essence, a detailed review of the findings from the information collection and analysis phase; and the subcommittees’ recommendations for advancing this particular area of work. The subcommittees’ written products should include reports detailing the above, with attachments representing meeting records, information collected, etc. In the interim period before subcommittees are prepared to make their final report, progress reports will be expected and will serve as ‘check in’ points to elicit feedback from the Steering Committee on the progress and direction of each subcommittee.

Timeline: While each subcommittee will have the ability to develop its own work plan and accompanying time line, subcommittees are expected to complete their work no later than March 15, 2005.

First Check In Opportunity: For the next Steering Committee meeting, each subcommittee should be prepared to report out on the following:

1. The goal of the subcommittee;
2. The composition of the team;
3. The individuals who have assumed the roles of chair, facilitator, reporter, and recorder;
4. The first three tasks the team has agreed to undertake, and their timeline for each task (to provide a flavor for the work the subcommittee is planning); and
5. Questions, concerns, or issues the subcommittee wishes to bring to the Steering Committee for discussion and resolution.