Connecticut Appropriations Committee
Glossary of RBA Terms Used in Connecticut

Population Accountability: This is about the well-being of whole populations, like all children birth to five, all citizens of Connecticut, or all children in a community.

Program Accountability: Program accountability looks at the well-being of those clients served by a program, agency, or service delivery system. The distinction between population and program accountability is essential to RBA.

Quality of Life or Population Result: A statement of the condition of well-being for children, adults, families, or communities. Examples: All children healthy and ready for school success by age 5; a clean and healthy long Island Sound; all children born healthy; safe streets. The result does not include reference to a program or service delivery. It is the end that lawmakers wish to achieve when they create or fund programs.

Indicator: A measure that helps quantify the achievement of the population result. It tells us how we are doing in reaching the result. The percent of low-birth weight babies tells us whether all children are born healthy.

Strategy: A set of actions that have a reasonable likelihood of improving the population result. Strategies are made up of our best thinking about what works, and include the contributions of many partners. Ensuring that all young children are screen for developmental delays and receive appropriate services is a strategy that will improve the result of all children healthy and ready for school success by age five.

Performance Measure: A measure of how well a program, agency or service delivery system is working. Performance measures answer three questions: How much service did we provide? How well did we provide it? Is anyone better off? The last question is referred to as a client outcome. Programs are one of the means by which the population result is achieved. The number of School readiness preschool teachers with a bachelor's degree is a program measure for how well the service was provided. The number of children scoring at a mastery level on a standardized reading test is a client outcome measure that tells us if anyone is better off.

See Attachment I for a more detailed explanation by Mark Friedman.

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Attachment I

From Mark Friedman's Results Accountability Guide

The Language of Accountability

The most common problem in this work is the problem of language. People come to the table from many different disciplines and many different walks of life. And the way in which we talk about programs, services and populations varies, literally, all over the map. This means that the usual state of affairs in planning for children, families, adults, elders and communities is a Tower of Babel, where no one really knows what the other person is saying, but everyone politely pretends that they do. As a consequence, the work is slow, frustrating and often ineffective.

It is possible to exercise language discipline in this work. And the way to do this is to agree on a set of definitions that *start with ideas and not words*.

Words are just labels for ideas. And the same idea can have many different labels. The following four ideas are the basis for definitions used at the beginning of this work. Alternative labels are offered:

Results (or outcomes or goals) are conditions of well-being for children, adults, families or communities, stated in plain English (or plain Spanish, or plain Korean...). They are things that voters and taxpayers can understand. They are not about programs or agencies or government jargon. Results include: "healthy children, children ready for school, children succeeding in school, children staying out of trouble, strong families, elders living with dignity in setting they prefer, safe communities, a healthy clean environment, a prosperous economy." (An interesting alternative definition of a result is provided by Con Hogan: "A condition of well-being for people in a place - stated as a complete sentence." This suggests a type of construction for a result statement as "All _____ in _____ are _____." e.g. All babies in Vermont are born healthy.")

Indicators (or benchmarks) are measures which help quantify the achievement of a result. They answer the question "How would we recognize these results in measurable terms if we fell over them?" So, for example, the rate of low-birth weight babies helps

quantify whether we're getting healthy births or not. Third grade reading scores help quantify whether children are succeeding in school today, and whether they were ready for school three years ago. The crime rate helps quantify whether we are living in safe communities, etc.

Strategies are coherent collections of actions which have a reasoned chance of improving results. Strategies are made up of our best thinking about what works, and include the contributions of many partners. No single action by any one agency can create the improved results we want and need.

Performance Measures are measures of how well public and private programs and agencies are working. The most important performance measures tell us whether the clients or customers of the service are better off. We sometimes refer to these measures as *client or customer* results (to distinguish them from *cross-community population* results for all children, adults or families). It is sometimes useful to distinquish "program performance measures," from "agency performance measures" from "service system performance measures."

The principal distinction here is between *ends and means.* Results and indicators are about the ends we want for children and families. And strategies and performance measures are about the means to get there. Processes that fail to make these crucial distinctions often mix up ends and means. And such processes tend to get mired in the all-talk-no-action circles that have disillusioned countless participants in past efforts. You actually have choices about which labels to use in your work. And clarity about language at the start will help you take your work from talk to action.

See 1.1 What are the basic ideas behind Results Accountability, and results-based decision making and budgeting?

Adapted from Results Accountability for Prop 10 Commissioners, A Planning Guide for Improving the Well-Being of Young Children and Their Families

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What about Mission and Vision, Values, Goals, Objectives, Problems, Issues, Inputs and Outputs?

Many of us have grown up with these traditional words in strategic planning and budgeting. Where do they fit?

First, remember that words are just labels for ideas. These seven words have no natural standard definition that bridges across all the different ways they are used. They are terms of art which can and are used to label many different ideas. This is why we pay so much attention to getting language discipline straight at the very beginning. It's the ideas that are important not the words. So you can choose to label the ideas in this guide with any words you like, provided you are consistent.

The word "mission" is usually used in relation to an organization, agency, program, initiative or effort. It is therefore mostly used in connection with agency or program performance accountability. Mission statements are usually concise statements of the purpose of an organization, sometimes also telling why and how the organization does what it does. Mission statements can be useful tools in communicating with internal and external stakeholders. It is possible to construct a mission statement from the performance measurement ideas in the upper right ("How well did we deliver service?") and lower right ("Is anyone better off?") quadrants of the performance measurement framework: For example: "Our mission is to help our clients become self sufficient ("Is anyone better off?" lower right) by providing timely, family friendly, culturally competent job training services ("How well did we deliver service?" upper right)." One mistake that is often made is that organizations spend months and sometimes years trying to craft the perfect mission statement before any other work can proceed. In the FPSI framework, mission statements are set aside, allowing the work of identifying and using performance measures to proceed quickly. Then, on a parallel track a small group can, if it is useful, use the work of the performance measurement groups to craft a workable mission statement.

The word "vision" is often used to convey a picture of a desired future, often one that is hard but possible to attain. This is a powerful idea. And in fact one can think of the set of desired results for children and families as one way of articulating such a vision. "We want our community to be one which is safe and supportive, where all children are healthy and ready for school, where all children succeed in school, and grow up to be

productive and contributing adults." This is an example of a vision statement made up of desired results or ends. It is possible to craft such a statement before or after the development of results.

The word "values" in some ways defies definition. It is about what we hold most dear, how we view right and wrong, how we believe we should act, and how those beliefs are, in fact, reflected in our actions. Our values underlie all of the work we do. And that is nowhere more true than in the work on the well-being of children, families and communities. Our values will guide our choice of results for children and families and the decisions we make about how we and our partners take action to improve those results.

The word "goal" is often used interchangeably with "result and outcome" to label the idea of a condition of well-being for children, adults, families or communities (as in the case of Georgia, Missouri and Oregon for example). The word goal has many other common usages as well. It often serves as an all-purpose term to describe a desired accomplishment. "My goal for this month is to fix the roof." "Our goal is to increase citizen participation in the planning process." " The primary goal of the child welfare system is to keep children safe." and so forth. The word goal (or target) is sometimes used to describe the desired future level of achievement for an indicator or performance measure. "Our goal is 95% high school graduation in 5 years." "Our goal is to improve police response time to under 3 minutes." These are widely different usages. Still another use of the word "goal" is in relation to an implementation plan. Given a strategy and action plan to improve a particular result (children ready for school for example), it is possible to structure the action plan as a series of planned accomplishments (goals) with timetables and assigned implementation responsibility. For example, a goal in a "children ready for school plan" might be to "increase funding for child care by 25% this year and 50% next year." This is a specific action which will contribute to achieving the result. There is nothing wrong with any of these usages, provided they are clearly distinguished, used consistently and do not confuse the underlying concepts labeled results, indicators, strategies and performance measures discussed above.

The word "objective" is often paired with the word goal to specify what amount to a series of "subgoals" required to achieve the "higher" goal. The set of terms "mission, goal and objective" have a long history in the military to describe the strategic and tactical components of a large or small action or engagement. And some of their usage in the business sector and the public and private service sector derives from this history. In

this framework, the terms goal and objective are most often used to structure the action plan and specify who will do what, how, and by when.

The words "problem" and "issue" are used in more ways that just about any planning term. They can be used to describe almost anything. "The problem with this computer is that the keyboard is too small." "The problem with our community is that there is not a safe place for children to play." "We must solve the issue of affordability if we are to provide child care for all who need it." These are three different uses of the words and there are countless others. Again, there is nothing wrong with any of these usages, provided that they do not interfere with the language discipline discussed above about ends and means.

The words "input" and "output" are commonly used categories for performance measures. There is no standard usage. The word "input" is most often used to describe the staff and financial resources which serve to generate "outputs." "Outputs" are most often units of service.

Change Agent vs. Industrial Models: Much of the tradition of performance measurement comes from the private sector and in particular the industrial part of the private sector. Work measurement - dating back to the time and motion studies of the late 19th and early 20th centuries - looked at how to improve production. Industrial processes turn raw materials into finished products. The raw materials are the inputs; the finished products are the outputs.

This model does not translate very well to public or private sector enterprises which provide services. It does not make much sense to think of clients, workers and office equipment as inputs to the service sausage machine, churning out satisfied, cured or fixed clients. Instead we need to begin thinking about services in terms of the change agent model. In this model, the agency or program provides services which act upon the environment to produce demonstrable changes in the well-being of clients, families, or communities. If the input/output language is maintained, then providing service is the input, change in customers' lives is the output.

One common situation illustrates the problems which arise when industrial model thinking is applied to services. It is the belief that the number of clients served is an output. ("We have assembled all these workers in all this office space; and we are in the business of processing unserved clients into served clients.") This misapplication of

industrial performance concepts to services captures much of what is wrong with the way we measure human service performance today. "Number of clients served" is not an output. It is an input, an action which should lead to a change in client or social conditions - the real output we're looking for. ("We served 100 clients - input - and 50 of them got jobs - output - and 40 of them still had jobs a year later - even more important output.") This is a whole different frame of mind and a whole different approach to performance measurement.

A closely related industrial model problem involves treating dollars spent as inputs, and clients served as outputs. In this distorted view, dollars are raw materials, and whatever the program happens to do with those dollars are outputs. It's easy to see why this over-simplification fails to meet the public's need for accountability. In this construct, the mere fact that the government spent all the money it received is a type of performance measurement. This is surely a form of intellectual, and perhaps literal, bankruptcy. In this perverse scheme, almost all the agency's data is purportedly about outputs. This gives the agency the appearance of being output-oriented and very progressive. It just doesn't happen to mean anything.

Much of the confusion about performance measurement derives from the attempt to impose industrial model concepts on change agent services. The best model would be one which could span industrial and change agent applications. Some government services still involve industrial-type production (although these are often the best candidates for privatization and a diminishing breed.) In other cases, discussed below, the service itself, or components of the service, have product-like characteristics and industrial model concepts apply well. But most government and private sector human services fall into the change agent category. The approach to performance measurement described in this website can be used for either industrial or change agent applications. (Excerpt from "A Guide to Developing and Using Performance Measures, Finance Project, 1997)

A Tool for Choosing a Common Language

After all the exhortations about the importance of language, finally, the Guide has a tool to help you and your colleagues choose a common language. Unlike past work on glossaries, this tool does not start with words that need to be defined, but rather ideas that need to be labeled. So this means some words will go without definition in a glossary developed this way. It will be important to comfort those whose favorite words are not selected - or let them use different words and develop a translation guide (See the Rosetta Stone discussion in Language of Accountability).

A word about the "glossary trap." Many past publications on accountability, in its various incarnations, have included lengthy glossaries where every conceivable word which might possibly be used is carefully defined. These glossaries sometimes run 10 to 20 pages! The authors appear to think that unless they can account for all the terms of the planning, budgeting and evaluation professions, their framework is somehow incomplete. The problem with this approach is that there are more words in use than there are useful ideas. And since words are just labels for ideas, it's the ideas that are important, not the words. Good frameworks start with a coherent set of ideas and then offer choices about word labels for those ideas.

The glossary trap derives from the practice of starting with words. Imagine that you are attending an international conference on marine biology. And you notice that the French, Chilean and Japanese delegations each have a different word for humpback whale. You might think that there were in fact three different animals out there in the ocean. But of course there is only one animal with three different labels. The same applies to the concept of "a condition of well-being for children, adults, families and communities." This idea is called an "outcome" in Vermont, a "result" in Georgia and Missouri, and a "goal" in Oregon - one idea - three different labels.

So always start with a coherent, common sense set of ideas. Keep your glossary as short as possible. Define only the minimum set of terms you need to describe the basic ideas you plan to use. (The language tool offers definitions for over 25 terms and phrases but you do not have to put this many in a printed glossary.) Keep all of the language in the definitions as simple and easy to understand as possible. Plain language and a short, simple set of definitions will go a long way to helping people feel included in, and not excluded from, the work.