

# Results Playbook: A Bridge from Programmatic to Results Work

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Programmatic thinking, at its best, is very effective in creating programs that create positive outcomes for those who engage with the program. With this type of thinking, leaders focus on their programs and how to improve what they do. To make progress towards a population level result<sup>1</sup>, however, requires leaders to move beyond the singular activity of programmatic thinking to that of population level results thinking. By engaging in results thinking, leaders acknowledge that their work is to make progress at a population level and that no one agency, system, sector, or person is accountable for or “owns” a population-level result. Rather, all stakeholders and partners all have a contribution towards a result and their contribution is through their programs.

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Joining with other organizations and sectors to work towards a population level result with aligned contributions is a complicated and difficult process. It often requires leaders to move past competition and fragmentation in order to create an actionable plan where all can make their aligned contribution.

A first step towards an actionable plan is development of a “results playbook”. A results playbook is, on the most surface level, a metaphor used to help results leaders know they are on the same team playing the same game. It is also a physical representation of the steps and hard work needed to get to an actionable results plan. It helps results leaders engage in results work by connecting their programmatic contributions to a shared population level result through a set of overarching strategies.

## I. Three Levels of Work

These three “levels”—the population level, the strategy level, and the program level—are the foundation for the results playbook. By asking and answering a similar set of questions at each level, results leaders begin the initial analysis that helps to shape the shared results work. These questions and answers are:

### Population Level:

- Question: What is the result at this level? Answer: The population level result
- Who is this result for? All people in a geographic area
- How is progress measured at this level? By indicator or set of indicators
- How will you make progress? Through a set of strategies

### Strategy Level:

- What is the result at this level? A strategy level result
- Who is this result for? All people targeted by the strategy
- How is progress measured at this level? By performance measures
- How will you make progress? Through a set of programs

### Program Level

- What is the result at this level? A program level result
- Who is this result for? All people targeted by a program
- How is progress measured at this level? By performance measures
- How will you make progress? Through a set of activities

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<sup>1</sup> [Mark Friedman, Trying Hard is Not Good Enough](#)

## II. Working Towards a Result and Indicator

The goal of the results work is to make progress towards a population-level **result**. A population-level result is a result that shows improvement in a “quality-of-life” condition for a whole population of individuals, children, or families in a specified place, or for a place itself.

Question to Address to identify a population level result:

- What is the “quality-of-life” condition for a whole population of people that is desired? What is the geographic boundary for this work?
- *Example: All children in “our community” enter school ready to learn*

To know you are making progress towards a result requires having an agreed-upon data point or set of data points in order to know “the score” in the results work. These data points or **indicators** help leaders know they are doing the right work

Questions to Address to identify population level indicators:

- What measures can be used to track progress?
- What data available in a timely fashion?
- What does disaggregating the data (e.g., by race, class, gender, age etc.) reveal?
- *Example: Kindergarten readiness assessment*



## III. Developing Overarching Strategies

Achieving a population-level result requires multiple strategies—usually a broad mix of direct service, policy, and systems strategies to move the indicators in the desired direction. They are the means—the method or “the how”—for progress. Strategies also enable multiple leaders (and the programs they lead) to identify their aligned contributions toward achieving that population-level result.

Questions to Address to identify overarching strategies:

- What key factors are contributing to the status of each indicator? What works to address those factors?
- What works to address the disparities that are revealed by disaggregating the data?
- What do research, evidence-based practices, and experience suggest will make a difference?
- *Example: High quality formal early learning experiences*

## IV. Programs, Activities, and Individual Actions

Leaders focus on their unique contributions to the result through their programs and activities as well as their individual actions. In doing so, they create a set of performance measures (their “how much”, “how well”, and “difference made” measures) that will support achieving a declared goal or target.

Questions to Address to identify programs and activities:

- Who are the “customers” of the program—the people who are served by the work?
- What is the program-level result—in other words, the impact or difference that is expected to make for these people as a result of programmatic work?
- What activities does the program carry out in service of the result?
- What are the performance measures?
- *Example: The number of children in a local head start early learning program*
- *Example: The implementation of evidence-based curriculum*

Questions to Address the individual actions:

- What actions or tasks do I take—in my role—to contribute to the desired result?
- What are the performance measures I use to assess the effectiveness of my contribution?
- What are reasonable, but challenging targets for my performance measures?
- *Example: The classroom teacher holding fidelity to an evidence-based curriculum*