Statewide Technical Assistance Bulletin

NCSC
National Center for State Courts

Since 2002, the Bureau of Justice Assistance has awarded a series of grants to the National Center for State Courts to provide technical assistance services to state-level agencies (i.e., administrative offices of the courts, alcohol and drug abuse agencies) to:

1. Enhance the leadership of statewide drug court efforts

2. Improve coordination and collaboration between the drug court agencies

3. Increase the likelihood of the institutionalization of drug courts into the mainstream of court operations

The National Center for State Courts is providing technical assistance services to state administrative offices of courts (AOCs) and state alcohol and drug abuse agencies (AODs) that include:

1. On-site technical assistance

2. Off-site technical assistance (e.g., facilitates peer-to-peer consultation via e-mail and conference calls)

3. A series of topical publications on integrating drug courts into mainstream court operations

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THE GEORGIA STATEWIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EXPERIENCE: A STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS THAT WORKS WITH LARGE GROUPS AND COMPLEX ISSUES

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Abstract: NCSC Technical Assistance Consultants used two innovative approaches, strategic mapping and logic modeling, to assist the Georgia judiciary and invited drug court stakeholders in forming a long-range plan for development and sustainability of the state's drug court programs. The strategic mapping group process resulted in a comprehensive list of 58 initiatives needed to achieve that goal. After rating and computing group mean scores for importance and feasibility of each initiative, a priority list of initiatives helped the group focus their efforts. Grouping the initiatives in "like activity" clusters also facilitated organization of the strategic plan. A logic model process was then used to define specific activities, staff and material resources, outputs, and timeframes for accomplishing the initiatives. The result was a prioritized list of needed activities and "how to" steps for accomplishing statewide drug court development and sustainability.

The Need for Quantitative Methods to Organize Nominal Group Input

Assembling diverse stakeholders to jointly plan successful program implementation ensures both diversity of input and needed project buy-in. However, negatives associated with large group planning are potentially overwhelming to project success. Large groups risk domination by vocal members resulting in passive and disinterested participation by more introverted members. When perceived status differences exist, the suggestions of higher profile persons may carry weight and divergent opinions ignored. Large groups may give refuge to those wanting to hide from added responsibility and result in few people volunteering their energies to achieve project goals. National Center for State Courts Technical Assistance Consultants, Dan Becker and Dr. Donna Boone used two innovative strategic planning processes to maximize the positives and minimize the potential negatives of large group strategic planning. Becker and Boone were asked to lead 23 Georgia judges, drug court staff, and district court administrators in developing a long-range strategic plan for Georgia's drug court programs.

Boone and Becker used a strategic mapping process to gather the group members' suggestions of how to develop and sustain Georgia's drug courts. Strategic mapping employs quantitative ratings to organize and prioritize group input. After gathering, organizing, and prioritizing the group's suggestions, a logic model process was used to generate specific action steps, activities, and timeframes for achieving these goals.

Strategic Mapping Defined

Strategic mapping is a nominal group process that includes quantitative methods for rating, ordering, and prioritizing large group input. Strategic mapping includes the following steps:

1. A few weeks before the scheduled workshop, workshop leaders distributed the following focus question: *"How can the judiciary spearhead full development and stable sustainability of Georgia drug courts?"* They asked workshop enrollees to come to the session prepared with five written answers to the question.

2. The leaders began the workshop by systematically going around the group and asking each person to give their first suggestion. A succinct description of each suggestion was entered into an Excel file. The growing list of suggestions was projected to ensure that the suggestion was accurate and clear. After the "first round" of suggestions was recorded, leaders solicited the second suggestion on each person's list. This orderly process continued until every suggestion was offered and recorded.

3. During the suggestion gathering process, leaders asked participants to abstain from giving evaluative comments about the suggestions. This

resulted in a quick process (1 ½ to 2 hours) for gathering and recording the information. However, leaders recognized that evaluation was important in organizing the suggestions into priority order. After printing the list of suggestions, participants were asked to rate each suggestion on two dimensions – importance and feasibility (A=very important or very feasible; B= important/feasible; C=somewhat important/ somewhat feasible; D=not important/not feasible). The mean scores and standard deviations for the aggregate importance ratings and feasibility ratings on each suggestion were computed. An Index Score Mean was also calculated. The Index Score is produced by multiplying the feasibility mean score and the importance mean score. While some groups prioritize their project actions according to only the importance rating or only the feasibility rating, many groups select those initiatives that have the highest index scores (combined high ratings on importance and feasibility) to tackle first. The ratings allow initiatives to be sorted from highest to lowest on the three dimensions. A small sample of 58 initiatives and their three ratings follows in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample of the Ratings of Suggested Initiatives

#	Action Steps	Feasibility Mean	Feasibility Standard Deviation	Importance Mean	Importance Standard Deviation	Index Score Means
1	Collect all current state drug court cost benefit analysis	4.20	1.58	5.43	0.93	22.80
2	Collect all current national drug court cost benefit analysis	4.20	1.82	4.00	1.49	16.80
3	Develop uniform statistical data collection	4.67	1.15	5.65	0.79	26.35
4	Develop drug court treatment standards	4.18	1.37	5.43	0.93	22.70

4. Because initiatives tended to group into "like activities," they were then grouped into dimensions resulting in six major types of activities as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Dimensions in Rank Order

Dimension Name	Dimension Mean
Data Collection and Evaluation Dimension	18.36
Standards Dimension	17.11
Networking and Outreach Dimension	16.29
Funding Dimension	14.90
Technical Assistance Dimension	13.49
Collaboration Dimension	7.92

A Summary of the Initiatives Included in Each Dimension

Dimension 1: Data Collection & Evaluation- The theme underlying this highest rated group of initiatives is the need for standardized data collection leading to evaluations of the effectiveness and cost benefits of drug courts. While Georgia drug court evaluations were viewed as most persuasive for increasing state funding and achieving statewide institutionalization of drug courts, the group also valued national research.

Dimension 2: Standards- Rated second in importance, contents of this dimension speak to the need for developing standards for distribution of state funding, measures of drug court compliance with the ten key components, treatment provider standards, and policies and protocols for transferring drug court cases between jurisdictions and between different court types and court levels.

Dimension 3: Networking and Outreach- This dimension focuses on the need to reach out to drug court stakeholders and spread the message of drug court effectiveness. A need to convince colleagues in the Judiciary to support and start new drug courts was voiced. Increased education of the Judicial, Executive, and Legislative Branches was viewed as important. The group suggested that the Chief Justice make drug court development a priority in her State of the judiciary address. The group also recommended developing a public relations campaign to increase grassroots public support for increased drug court funding.

Dimension 4: Funding- The group explored various ways of increasing drug court funding including identification of local and county revenue streams, circuits banding together to write grant proposals, exploring foundation and corporate funding possibilities, charging participant fees, and decreasing program costs by negotiating statewide contracts for various drug court services.

Dimension 5: Technical Assistance- This cluster offers a number of diverse action initiatives aimed at supporting and maintaining drug courts including hiring a statewide drug court coordinator and AOC provision of technical assistance to sustain existing programs. The group also suggested establishing participant mentor programs and networks/support groups for drug court graduates. The group voiced the need for evaluation and training support for new and existing drug court programs. The group believed that technical assistance was also needed to identify treatment providers versed in the drug court model and effective in helping addicts achieve and sustain sobriety.
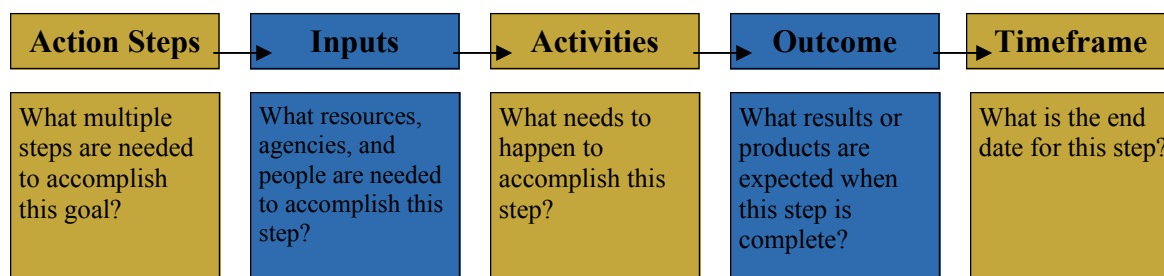
Dimension 6: Collaboration- The collaboration dimension implies the need to work with other agencies to expand services for recovering addicts. These services include comprehensive drug treatment, housing, and day treatment centers. Addressing the treatment needs of multiple DUI offenders in Superior and State drug court programs was also suggested.

Using a Logic Modeling Process for Sharp Definition of Needed Actions

The logic model process was used to design the activities, staff and material resources, outputs, and timeframes for accomplishing the initiatives outlined in the strategic mapping portion of the workshop. Logic modeling outlines a chain of action steps needed to accomplish the initiatives. Starting with the action steps, a chain of sequenced activities, resources, outputs, outcomes, and timeframes are outlined and become the plan of action for each initiative (or group of initiatives). Table 3 displays logic modeling steps used by the group to "flesh out" their plans for achieving the suggested initiatives.

Table 3: Logic Model Process

*A Strategic Plan for the Development and
Sustainability of Georgia Drug Courts*

Action Steps	Inputs	Activities	Outcome	Timeframe
What multiple steps are needed to accomplish this goal?	What resources, agencies, and people are needed to accomplish this step?	What needs to happen to accomplish this step?	What results or products are expected when this step is complete?	What is the end date for this step?

Of the many logic model plans developed to accomplish the suggested initiatives, one has been selected as a sample of the degree of detail involved in planning for initiative goal accomplishment:

Action Steps	Inputs	Activities	Outcome	Timeframe
Develop Drug Court treatment standards for: · Professional roles & responsibilities · Professional credentials · Needed compensation to attract and keep competent drug court professionals	· What intensity and frequency of treatment (group & individual) is needed to achieve stable sobriety? · Examine the quality of treatment (best practices, EBP, etc.) · Educate non-clinicians on what is quality treatment.	· Set up committee to include treatment qualified Drug Court Coordinators to educate and assess treatment fidelity, quality, and treatment standards. · Include judge representatives on committee · Committee to be appointed by October 31, 2006	Report to the Standing Committee for Drug Courts	June 30, 2007

Summary: When tackling a complex project such as planning for statewide drug court development and sustainability, the input and commitment of a large number of drug court stakeholders are desirable. However, collecting, evaluating, and integrating the opinions of such a diverse group can be an unwieldy process. The authors offer two innovative processes – strategic mapping and logic modeling as complementary processes for gathering, organizing, prioritizing, and developing a detailed plan for accomplishing a unified goal.