

Achieving Organizational Change in the Children and Youth Branch  
Redefining Priorities, Structure and Culture

Leadership Project

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## Project Abstract

The purpose of this project is to advance the work I initiated within the Children and Youth (C & Y) Branch to: 1) reassess priorities for children's services through an outcomes oriented planning process that incorporates logic models as a guide to future direction and evaluation; 2) create an optimal organizational structure to meet identified needs; and 3) support the necessary cultural changes related to a successful and major restructuring.

The C & Y Branch is part of the Women's and Children's Health Section (WCHS), North Carolina Division of Public Health (DPH). As in many other areas of state government, our Branch experienced three years of progressive budget and staff reductions that resulted in a fragmented and ineffective organizational structure struggling to respond to competing demands. Therefore, a major redirection of the Branch was initiated and has been ongoing since mid 2003. Based on the information outlined in Dangerous Opportunity: Making Change Work 1, First Break All the Rules 2, Now, Discover Your Strengths 3 Workplace Wars and How to End Them 4, Time Management for Teams 5, Tips for Teams 6, The Tipping Point 7, and Hidden Dynamics 8, the organization is currently in the "investigating/implementing" phase of the transition. Many accomplishments are complete and many remain to be addressed but those that remain are perhaps the most challenging.

## Introduction/Background

The Children and Youth Branch is the second largest of five branches located in the WCHS with approximately 95 staff and a budget of about \$46,000,000. Program responsibilities for staff include initiatives that have existed for more than 30 years as well as those that are less than a year old. Programs have been created for a variety of reasons including legislative action, division or department directives, and identified need. Staff become vested in programs they manage and changing directions of an organization this large offers numerous challenges.

The very breadth of budget and staff reductions offered an opportunity and a need to reexamine existing programs and priorities. When I accepted this position, the Branch was organized into three management units, two extremely large and one fairly small. Managers of two of the Units were in their positions for twenty and thirty years respectively and were vested in maintaining the current structure and functions. They were responsible for program development, budget and contracting, supervision and personnel development. The workload was daunting, programs were operating in isolation, and existing managers had skills in either program development or administrative operations but did not possess strong skills in both areas. After two years in my position, I began discussing the possibility of changes with staff and managers. At this time, we were experiencing about a 50% manpower shortage through a combination of positions vacant or "lost" through reductions. We also had millions of dollars reduced from the operating budget and were basically in a state of "operational crisis".

Losses and changes to the Branch were of sufficient impact that we identified a need to reassess priorities and use of remaining resources. To provide a foundation for redefining our role, the WCHS Section Chief, Kevin Ryan, MD, MPH, identified through a collaborative process at the Section level, the primary goals for the entire Section. This identification of goals provided a way to describe needs, priorities and resources to a variety of stakeholders, including legislators, families and providers. We identified those applicable to the C & Y Branch and developed logic models to provide a global picture of the thinking and rationale behind identified needs/programs and expected outcomes. The

development of logic models was performed through committees, each comprising representatives from organizational units in the branch. This facilitated cross-unit understanding, training and support. The logic models were written with the purpose of developing and strengthening commitment around a defined set of goals, and clarifying the interrelationship of branch, program and individual contributions. During this process of logic model development, staff were encouraged to do “zero based thinking”, i.e., to think from the ground up; not based on what we were currently doing but rather with the perspective of what we needed to be doing.

The WCHS established the primary goals listed below. Those where C & Y has primary responsibility are italicized but there is overlap among the branches and we are involved in certain aspects of all the goals, even those where we do not have primary lead responsibility.

1. Reduce infant mortality to the lowest possible rates (overall, and for disproportionately affected racial/ethnic groups;
2. Promote the health of women of childbearing age;
3. *Reduce preventable child fatalities;*
4. Reduce or eliminate incidence of vaccine preventable diseases;
5. *Assure access to primary and preventive health care services for women, children and families;*
6. *Assure that children with special health care needs have access to health and related services required for optimal functioning in home, school and community;*
7. *Assist women, children and families to establish and maintain healthy behaviors throughout life;*
8. *Assure that all students are ready to learn, and that the school environment is healthy;*
9. *Eliminate preventable birth defects; and*
10. *Assure earliest detection, treatment and optimal recovery from non-preventable congenital defects and hearing disorders;*
11. Provide timely and comprehensive early intervention services for children with special developmental needs and their families.

Logic models were developed for each of the italicized areas but require additional refinement, annual updating and input from external stakeholders.

The reorganization was planned with a significant amount of involvement from my supervisor, branch unit managers, and staff of the Branch. It required about a year to phase in the major changes and develop preliminary logic models. While completing this work, the Branch continues to face major challenges. We operated with a severe manpower shortage for over a year. Division budget problems continue to impact our ability to fill positions in a timely manner. Although some of these challenges have eased, we still find timelines in filling the vacant positions a challenge. Approximately twenty positions remain vacant in the Branch although we do have viable candidates for some of these positions. While I operated for about a year with only one unit manager position filled, currently five of the six Unit Manger positions are filled with strong and skillful managers.

The remaining challenges include two major areas:

1. Identify the remaining steps and activities to achieve full implementation of the organizational changes. This includes redirection based on feedback from the past year on needs that are still unmet, or not fully met, through the restructuring that has already occurred. A last phase

- of structural changes will be implemented to address this feedback from managers and staff.
2. Additional support must be provided to staff in the Branch to encourage the cultural changes of the organization that accompany this level of redefinition. Although some progress has been made in this arena, a formal plan must be developed to strengthen individuals in management positions to provide ongoing growth and support to the organization as well as to sustain progress toward the desired outcomes.

#### Benefits of the Project:

1. The remaining steps to reach full implementation of the restructuring are crucial to successful operation of the Branch but have proven difficult to prioritize, based on competing demands for time and energy.
2. I scored a 14 on the Originator scale, and not surprisingly tend to avoid dealing with the part of the process that requires detail analysis in order to fully implement the organizational changes.
3. This project will strengthen my management skills at their weakest points: attention to detail and working more effectively with conservers and pragmatists.
4. Unit managers have contributed significantly to the restructuring and have identified full implementation, as a priority need.

#### Project Description and Objectives

Unit managers and staff have worked hard to implement the Branch changes and are still partially in the investigating phase, and moving in and out of the implementation phase, while identifying optimal solutions for management operations across the Branch.

The overall goals of the project are outlined below.

1. Logic model planning
  - a. Refine the logic model planning system to fully link outcomes to individual work plans, contracts and grants.
  - b. Formalize a process for annual review and updates of logic models.
2. Organizational restructuring
  - a. Organizational restructuring decisions have been based on improving the design of management groups to better meet the deliverables defined as high priority through the logic model process. Based on analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the changes during the past year, some additional modifications are needed. I will finalize the last phase of organizational changes based on feedback received from managers, staff and direct observation (Appendices A1 & A2). In this project, I will identify the remaining steps and activities required to complete the final phase of the structural changes and move the organization restructuring into full implementation phase.
  - b. Identify and prepare a written outline, in conjunction with Unit Managers that specifies the primary steps remaining to complete implementation, set priorities and assign timelines and activities for completion. (Appendix B)
3. Identify ways to support the cultural changes that accompany major organizational changes and strengthen the management structure in order to meet desired outcomes.
  - a. Utilize the chart in Dangerous Challenges as a guide for improved support to managers and staff.

- b. Provide training and assistance to unit managers in the change model and other skills from the PHLI to assist them in working more closely together.
  - c. Identify ongoing means to support Unit Managers direct involvement in decision making.
  - d. Identify training and resources for regional staff to enhance consultation and technical assistance skills. Clearly define consultation model.
  - e. Set aside a specific time frame for planning and feedback (day long quarterly retreats) with Unit Mangers.
4. Evaluation
- Develop a survey to measure progress on the desired outcomes for the Branch including the following:
- e. Increased collaboration
  - f. Targeting resources more effectively and clearly
  - g. Sustaining smaller and more responsive management units
  - h. Consolidation of administrative functions to enhance overall operation
  - i. Improving and clarifying communication among Branch members
  - j. Maximizing planning time and effectiveness of unit managers with the Branch Head.

Significant partners will include unit managers, branch staff, Section Chief for WCHS, the other 4 branches in the Section, Public Health Leadership Institute, and numerous external partners affected by our organizational operation such as the Division of Medical Assistance, North Carolina Pediatric Society, approximately two hundred contractors, Division of Mental Health / Developmental Disabilities / Substance Abuse Services, Division of Social Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, and local health departments, etc.

#### Leadership Development Opportunities

This project meets the overall theme of the Public Health Leadership Institute training on systems development and strengthening organizational operation. It will require further development of management skills in handling change effectively, enhancing time management skills to address competing demands within the organization, and developing workforce capabilities through enhanced training of managers and consultants in the Branch. Five of the six unit managers are strongly supportive of the changes that have occurred to date and are eager to move forward, however there is significant resistance from one unit manager, which must be dealt with in a positive way since it is affecting progress in completing successful and full implementation. Staff in consulting positions will develop new position descriptions as needed. They will require re-training, reassurance of role definition and support to move into the new structure. Incentives to retain staff at this point in state government positions are few and far between; salaries are inadequate and not competitive with the private market. Staff in the Branch operate in an environment of high output demand and their workweeks often exceed that of forty hours. It has taken over a year to recruit strong and appropriate individuals to vacant positions and it will take successful completion of the items outlined in this project to retain them.

This project will focus on strengthening my weakest areas as a manager, which is dealing with detail in planning and working more effectively with conservers and pragmatists. It will focus my efforts on attending to the details needed to fully implement the organizational changes already initiated, and establish a plan to ensure positive listening and dealing with diverse perspectives from managers and

staff.

### Evaluation of Leadership Development

To evaluate progress in the project, I will request feedback from Unit Managers at each of the quarterly daylong retreats through a written checklist that addresses the specific objectives listed for the project. All Branch staff will complete a formalized survey by the end of March as a pre test measure of where we are as an organization and a second survey to measure progress will be completed in the subsequent six months. Questions will cover both specific outcomes such as improved communication and collaboration to successfully clarify role expectations and benefits/problems of organizational changes.

### Results

#### *A. Needs Assessment and Logic Model Development*

1. A five-year statewide needs assessment was completed as required by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, our federal funding agency. The assessment was broken down into three major categories: a) women's health; b) preventive and community health services for children; and c) children with special needs. The Children and Youth Branch had primary responsibility for completion of the two sections related to children's services and capacity. Information for the assessment was gathered through a review of state data, focus groups, surveys and key informant interviews. The needs assessment set the parameters for the review and update of the logic model content (Appendix C-Needs Assessment Table of Contents).
2. Teams composed of representatives from each unit with a mixture of central and regional office staff members and individuals from the Family Advisory Council were identified. Each team was given lead responsibility for reviewing and updating one of the logic model goals and for obtaining input from the remainder of the Branch staff. The team leaders scheduled joint meetings and specific timelines were established for the initial update of each logic model. After the initial reviews were completed, team leaders created wall charts, posted them in the hallways and staff members provided additional comment and input by adhering notes to the chart to indicate additions or questions. The initial reviews of the 7 logic models are complete. External input from key governmental, private and service recipient partners was obtained through the needs assessment process. The final drafts will be distributed and discussed with key partners at coalitions, advisory, and partnership meetings. Final changes to the logic models were in place April 2005 for work plans, contract and grant purposes.
3. Unit managers are responsible for developing work plans with each member of their units at the beginning of the fiscal year (July), reviewing and updating them mid year (January/February) and jointly reviewing and discussing performance at the end of each year (May-June). The logic models are posted on the computer share drive and are used in development of all work plans in the Branch.
4. The Children and Youth Branch develops approximately four hundred agreement addenda for health departments each year for negotiated service delivery and approximately two hundred contracts with public and private vendors. Each agreement / contract is now required to outline performance measures for each deliverable. The performance measures for each agreement / contract are tied to activities outlined in the 7 logic models for children's services.
5. The Branch historically writes between 6 to 10 grants annually. Staff currently use the logic model framework to provide a clear sense of service needs and goals for the state child health programs, and use them as a basis for grant proposals with a focus on outlined service priorities.

6. A final benefit of the logic model process is clear identification of key partnerships both internal and external to the organization. We are attempting to link each activity included in the logic models with specific data resources to assure evaluation capacity and evidence based service provision. We also list key partnerships needed to accomplish each activity. (Appendix D-Sample Logic Model).
7. The Branch calendar reserves specific time in April of each year, prior to work plan development, for “lead” teams using the process outlined above to review logic model content and update as appropriate for the following year’s planning.

*B. Organizational Restructuring*

Despite the numerous benefits of aligning organizational structure along the lines of major goals, there is no single “right” way to structure a complex organization. The prospect of change creates a variety of challenges to individuals in an organization. I used a combination of methods to communicate with Branch staff including small team meetings, larger Branch meetings and solicitation of both verbal and written comments. All input was discussed in Branch Management meetings with unit managers, and they in turn provided feedback to their unit team members. Consensus recommendations were developed and submitted for final decisions to Kevin Ryan, Section Chief, and myself. Final decisions were disseminated through meetings and written communications. Considerations for final restructuring of the Branch included the type of services provided, functions / roles of the staff, size of the management unit, workload of the manager, maximization of resources, and interrelationships between unit members and others. Organizational decisions were also heavily based on the logic models which were used to assess potential links among the units, identify overlapping functions and as a starting point for improving coordination of activities both within and external to the Branch structure.

Input from participants was considered in the following categories:

Service Consideration	Overarching Themes
Population Based Services (newborn screening, immunizations, etc)	Health promotion Disease prevention
Nutrition, overweight, physical activity	Disparities
Smoking Cessation	Cultural Sensitivity
Children with special needs (care coordination, technical assistance, transition, family support and involvement, and direct service provision)	Technical assistance Training
Insurance and access to care	Data collection / evaluation Planning
Child / youth mental health	Coordination / Collaboration
Child abuse and neglect prevention	Key partners
Health in school settings	Community focus
Health in child care settings	Funding / resources
Chronic illness / prevention	Quality assurance
Medical care (policy, best practices, training, medical homes)	Family involvement
Domestic violence	
Injury prevention	
Oral health	

1. Service needs were identified and prioritized based on logic model results, lead responsibilities were delegated, roles were finalized, job descriptions were updated, training needs with timeframes were completed, and positions / funding resources were reallocated based on the strategic plan developed for the Branch.
2. Each unit manger led their staff in development of resource proposals for funding to support their unit work. A format was developed and each unit submitted zero based funding requests.
3. Traditionally, unit managers have been responsible for both program and administrative functions. At their request, creating two new units centralized the following responsibilities: a) Administrative support has been centralized in the Operations Unit; and b) Data analysis, program evaluation, resource identification, cultural diversity / Title VI support and training, and program review/quality assurance initiatives was located in the Best Practices Unit. (Revised organizational structure is outlined in Appendix E1; Original structure is outlined in Appendix E2)  
The two units work closely with staff across the entire Branch.

*C. Staff Support for Change Model*

1. We purchased a number of publications pertinent to organizational change and based on staff input, created a centralized library of resources, encouraged staff to read materials, and set up a monthly schedule for voluntary “book review and discussion” meetings. These meetings are popular and well attended by staff in the Branch.  
Unit managers utilized the worksheet entitled “Effectively Managing Change” from Dangerous Opportunity, Making Change Work to help them improve and anticipate resistance and contributions from staff. (An example, with individual names deleted, is attached as Appendix F).
2. The Section Chief, Kevin Ryan, holds weekly management meetings with the five branch heads. To help move us toward organizational excellence, he has expanded one meeting a month to include all unit managers in the Section. These meetings focus on topics that improve management skills and resources.
3. I hold weekly Branch Management meetings that include unit managers, the medical director and Lead Child Health Nurse Consultant. These meetings target discussions of unit initiatives to ensure coordination in planning and implementation. I have also instituted quarterly one-day retreats with these individuals to assess our progress; redirect efforts as needed; identify barriers; and prioritize activities. Unit managers are responsible for disseminating information to their staff.
4. A major concern for the Branch was redirecting and formalizing the quality assurance and consultation model used by regional staff. As part of the reorganization effort, the child health nurse consultants have developed a formalized model, identified related training needs and developed a plan for meeting these needs. Pending a successful pilot, this model will be replicated to apply to other consultants in the field (Appendix G).
5. At the suggestion of staff we have created a resource library, identified and ordered pertinent journals and books, accessed tapes and videos to meet identified training needs, consolidated materials and resources on data sources and centralized this information so it is accessible to all staff. This has been a very popular development and materials are checked in and out as needed. A portion of our budget has been formally allocated for purchase of materials to enhance management, planning, evaluation, cultural sensitivity and other areas of identified interest.
6. We have created a bulletin board to “celebrate our successes”. Staff members take pictures to

- symbolize a work-related success and post it on the board with a paragraph of explanation.
7. To encourage collaborative planning and discussion we have established dates for Branch wide meetings every four months. Each unit will have an opportunity to showcase their work, discuss upcoming needs and solicit discussion and comment from other members of the Branch.
  8. To assure equity in training accessibility we have identified a “budget” for individual staff members and track their participation in training through a central log to help ensure equity.

## Conclusion

1. This project represents the sustained effort of all staff in the Children and Youth Branch with both demonstrable successes and a few painful learning experiences. One very important success is the creation of a clear blueprint for action for programs and initiatives within the Branch. Every staff member has helped create the system plan and is comfortable with the process for its annual review and update. The result is a clear set of expectations and interrelated program goals that link internal program efforts, resources, training needs, contractual services, and grant / resource obtainment. It has allowed for a systematic redirection of positions to focus on service priorities, evidence based practices and a more systematic evaluation of our various work products. I am definitely pleased with the increased clarity in direction and purpose outlining the future work of the Branch and the methods in place for maintaining a current perspective on priorities. Equally important, it establishes a framework for effective partnerships among management units, individual members of the Branch, within government agencies, with external partners and with families and recipients of health services for children.
2. During the past year our vacancies have been reduced from approximately 20% to 12%. The Unit Manager who was unable to accept the organizational changes found a position out-of-state. The new manager has created a plan of action that offers support across the Branch, which has received a very positive reception from staff.

We have experienced a significant turnover in staff during the transition period, some of it welcome and some a real loss to the organization. Although it is hard to determine the exact percentage related to organizational redirection, I have included that question in exit interviews and it has not been indicated as a motivator during the last six months. All of the managers in the Branch indicate a higher comfort level in their ability to match skills to position responsibilities and individual styles to specific objectives.

3. The information received through the Leadership Institute has been shared specifically with unit managers and made available to all staff. It has generated positive discussions and greater interest and involvement in the changes made during the past year. It has laid a basis for staff to become focused on achieving end results and reduced the resistance to changes occurring. Managers have consciously opened communication channels by welcoming suggestions for improvement and identification of issues by staff, but they also require staff to provide viable options for improvements and address issues constructively.
4. Although initial indications are that we have created an improved service system, the true success of these organizational changes will be measured over time. We utilized the survey from First Break All the Rules to measure employee satisfaction. I missed the September deadline for redistributing the survey, but did distribute it electronically to staff on November 1, 2005 (Appendix H). Results from the interview will be compared to the one distributed

earlier in the year. The amount of staff turnover may not allow enough consistency for direct comparison, but the results should provide interesting overall comparisons of employee satisfaction. Current plans are to reissue the survey on an annual basis.

5. We have made progress in increasing channels of communication, but it is an ongoing challenge. The sheer volume of information created among ninety-five staff is difficult to direct effectively without becoming overwhelming.
6. Meetings are being streamlined by using a checklist (below) taken from Hidden Dynamics. The facilitator completes it prior to each meeting to clarify the primary purpose of the meeting and focus on desired outcomes.
  - Solicit input and ideas about a problem
  - Communicate information and ensure understanding
  - Help the group or person reach a decision
  - Explore new options and solutions
  - Determine the best solution to a problem
  - Gain commitment to act in new ways
  - Encourage differences of opinions
  - Resolve differences of opinions
  - Reach consensus on a decision
  - Learn new information
  - Critique a proposal and give feedback
  - Understand why something is not working 9
8. The greatest challenge is to continue the growth of the organization. Efforts will specifically target staff satisfaction, collaboration, communication, and evaluation / quality assurance in service delivery.

### Leadership Development

Although I have always valued an approach of self-honesty and analysis of my own behavior and attitudes with the goal of “learning from my mistakes”, the reality of achieving that goal is, of course, biased by my own innate opinions and beliefs. The opportunity for feedback through the combination of testing profiles, conferencing, and classroom discussion was extremely beneficial. It was especially helpful to consider how different styles can have either positive or negative effects depending on the situation and how individuals use their style to approach problem solving. These particular exercises not only provided a broader understanding of my own attitudes and behaviors and their effect on others, but also gave me greater insight about individual and group interactions. In reflecting over the past year some concrete examples of benefits from this part of the Leadership Institute information include:

- Improved communication skills
- Increased ability to understand different work styles and approaches to problem solving
- Improved interaction skills
- Increased flexibility

The amount of information we received through these exercises cannot be quickly assimilated and I’ve found that periodically reviewing my individual profiles provides an opportunity for greater development over time.

The books, materials and verbal presentations shared in the two meetings of the Institute have offered new perspectives and tools that were useful in moving forward the organizational redesign of the Children and Youth Branch. I have been so busy just “keeping up” at work; I had forgotten how useful

it is to seek out new ideas and options. The materials have also provided a resource at work to engage others in “book club” discussions and stimulated new approaches to solving “old” problems. Staff requested that we order new information on a monthly basis and make it available through a resource library. It also generated a suggestion that members of the Branch share resources rather than pack them away in individual offices. The result is a staff, including myself, that are much more curious and innovative. It has increased individual and team communication about alternatives for service delivery, cause and effect, change style, and much more interest in effective ways to build teams in an organization with many different personalities.

I selected Kevin Ryan as my mentor for this yearlong experience in learning. He is my immediate supervisor, a physician, and a person who encourages different perspectives and a thorough exploration of options. He has not only spent a considerable amount of his time in discussing alternative solutions for the project involving organizational change, but has contributed support by his own ideas and efforts to improve management skills at every level of the organization.

The Institute meetings have provided an opportunity to network with peers in a variety of health professions across several states. These are all people who committed to a year of hard work and growth. Individual discussions, team projects and conference calls have provided a wealth of information, ideas, and a chance to learn from people with different successes and thought provoking questions. Staff in the Children and Youth Branch often “sat in” on the conference calls from the Public Health Leadership Institute.

Since there are always new challenges ahead I anticipate unending chances to learn new skills, but this year has provided new tools, new perspectives, and reminded me how stimulating and “fun” it is to keep exploring ways to improve as an individual and as a leader.

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