



Ensuring the Future Success of Harlem's Youth

To: Geoffrey Canada (CEO and President)


From: [REDACTED] (Trusted Aide)

Re: Measuring Successes in Harlem Children's Zone

Date: 1/22/14


Few things are nobler than aiding those in need, and coming to the aid of a child is a step beyond noble. This is a critical part of what inspires the program directors, workers, volunteers, and donors at The Harlem Children's Zone. HCZ has a provocative mission: to create significant, positive opportunities and outcomes for children living in a 24-block area. **Where HCZ falls short** is in providing a clear and concise way to measure and expand our success without overburdening workers or diminishing program quality. Measuring success is critical for several reasons: primarily, it keeps HCZ on track and ensures that donors' funds are used effectively. Conversely, an unclear process of measuring success fails to accomplish any of the above, and puts a heavy burden on already taxed workers.

SUGGESTIONS:

- **Clearly Define Success:** Provide a clear definition of our long-term and short-term goals and performance targets. 
- **Measuring Success:** Change focus from measuring initiatives and programs to measuring success. Measure ends, not means.
- **Utilize Bright Spots:** Build upon previous success.

Current Situation:


HCZ currently provides services to a 24-block area, but is set to expand with the help of donors like the Edna McConnel Clark Foundation and the Robin Hood Foundation. Research Associates hired by donors work alongside program directors to record and assess program participants. Directors feel overwhelmed by the request for numbers.

 Directors are concerned with objective views taken while measuring data. Directors are furthermore concerned with maintaining quality programs while growing rapidly.


Clearly Define Success


Problem: While HCZ has an inspiring mission, it lacks a clear and decisive path by which to achieve this mission. HCZ's current mission is changing, but it has not yet taken a stance on what this mission is. With an unclear definition of success, donors, workers, and management get caught on an elephant with lots of momentum, but little direction from the rider: there is no way to differentiate between outputs, outcomes, and program goals.




Solution: Avoid the pathology of trying to be everything to everyone. Determine our goals and give the rider direction, such as increasing High School graduation rates by x% in y amount of time in z area as an outcome goal. 


Measuring Success


 **Problem:** Lack of a clear objective also makes it difficult to measure progress and success. Faced with a complex task, such as finding a cost-effective, reliable, and novel means of measuring long-term impacts, the rider can spin his wheels, and get caught in analysis paralysis. HCZ must understand how its outputs interact with societal processes to produce outcomes.

 **Solution:** Bring together program directors, research associates, management, and donors to brainstorm a logic model and a comprehensive metric for success. Grades and tests like SMART (Shaping Minds Around Reading and Technology) are not the only indicators of a child's welfare, opportunities, and outcomes. Consideration should be paid to scholarships, awards, self-esteem, and quality of life improvements.

Utilize Bright Spots

Problem: HCZ is blessed to have highly qualified staff from a diverse background  Previously the staff was left to their own devices to determine their programs' paths. With the expansion, some directors are worried that their programs will not be able to accommodate more children without sacrificing quality. We do not want to alienate our most valuable asset, our workers.

Solution: Listen to our program directors: bring them in on decision-making processes. Provide esteem opportunities for program directors who have overcome common obstacles – “Would you please come to next month's meeting and tell us how you did it?” 

 Not only would this increase the morale of our workers, but it would also provide technology transfer, increasing operational capacity.

Judgment Calls

Harlem Children Zone's mission evokes compassion, but you can wear out HCZ workers by putting them through too much change without giving them direction. Make your decisions carefully, but be comfortable making subjective judgment calls. 