

# Results-Based Accountability™

## For Communities and Programs that want to get From Talk to Action

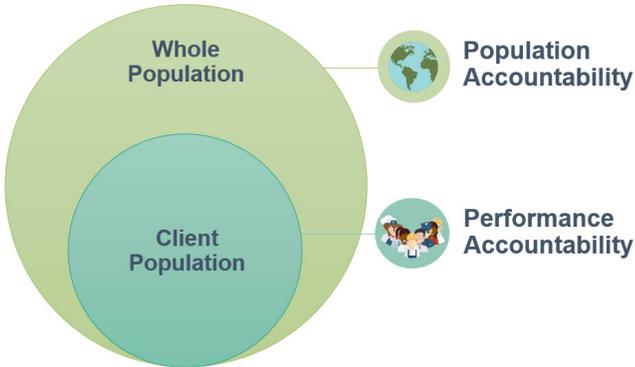
### What is RBA?

RBA is a disciplined way of thinking and acting to improve entrenched and complex social problems. Communities use it to improve the lives of children, youth, families, adults. RBA is also used by organizations to improve the effectiveness of their programs. Developed by Mark Friedman and described in his book *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough*, RBA is being used in all 50 United States and in more than a dozen countries around the world to make measurable change in people's lives, communities and organizations.

### What's different about Results-Based Accountability™?

RBA uses a data-driven, decision-making process to help communities and organizations get beyond talking about problems to taking action to solve problems. It is a simple, common sense framework that everyone can understand. RBA starts with ends and works backward, towards means. The "end" or difference you are trying to make looks slightly different if you are working on a broad community level or are focusing on your specific program or organization.

The population versus performance distinction is what separates RBA from all other frameworks. It is important to understand because it determines who is responsible for what. Population accountability organizes our work with co-equal partners to promote community well-being. In contrast, Performance Accountability organizes our work to have the greatest impact on our customers. What we do for our customers is our contribution to community impact.



### Creating Population Impact with RBA

Population or community impact focuses on the conditions of well-being for children, families and communities that a group of leaders are working to improve. In RBA, these conditions of well-being are referred to as results or outcomes. "Residents With Good Jobs," "Children Ready For School," and "A Safe and Clean Neighborhood" are examples of results.

It is critical to identify powerful measures to determine the progress a community is making towards achieving community well-being. For communities, the measurements are known as community indicators and are usually collected by public agencies. For example, to measure our progress towards achieving Safe Neighborhoods, we could use "crime rate" as a community indicator.

### Creating Client Impact with RBA

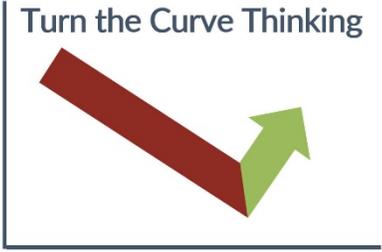
Organizations and programs can only be held accountable for the customers they serve. RBA helps organizations identify the role they play in community-wide impact by identifying specific customers who benefit from the services the organization provides.

For programs and organizations, the performance measures focus on whether customers are better off as a result of your services. These performance measures also look at the quality and efficiency of these services. RBA asks three simple questions to get at the most important performance measures:

- How much did we do?
- How well did we do it?
- Is anyone better off?

In answering these questions, a job training program might measure:

- The number of trainees in its program
- The ability of its trainers to explain concepts
- The percentage of its trainees who obtain and keep a job



## The Turn the Curve Thinking Process

Once you identify the most powerful measures to improve, Results-Based Accountability provides a step-by-step process to get from ends to means. This is called “Turn the Curve” thinking and involves five steps:



**Step 1: How Are We Doing?** Graph the measure you have chosen including a history and a forecast of where you think this measure is going if you do nothing differently.

**Step 2:** What is the **Story Behind the Curve**? This involves analyzing the factors that contribute to the data history and forecast. It is a very important step that is often ignored in other accountability structures. This is similar to a diagnosis from a doctor prior to treatment. It is important to dig deep as you look at the data to identify root causes that underlie the status of conditions in your community and/or organization.

**Step 3:** Who are the **Partners** who have a role to play in Turning the Curve? Whether you are addressing changes within an organization or on a broader community level, partners are critical to ensuring success. Think of the new and existing key partners that can help you to address the most vexing factors in order to make lasting improvements. Determine the specific actions that partners can take.

**Step 4: What Works** to Turn the Curve? The RBA process is very concerned with developing new and innovative approaches to improving indicators and performance measures. This can be accomplished by allowing for free-flowing brainstorming of what works to address the Story Behind the Curve and improve measures. Give people the freedom to suggest “off the wall” and outrageous ideas as well as researched best practices. This should also include engaging the community and at least one low-cost/no-cost idea.

**Step 5:** What is our **Action Plan** to Turn the Curve? Develop and implement a comprehensive action plan. For real change to happen, the ideas generated in Step 4 must be made into specific, implementable strategies and actions. Each action plan must identify specific steps to complete, who will be responsible for completing them, and a timeline for completion. This process is meant to be iterative by continuously reviewing the change in the data and adapting the plan as needed.

## Why use Results-Based Accountability™?

RBA improves the lives of children, families, and communities and the performance of programs because RBA:

- Gets from talk to action quickly;
- Is a simple, common sense process that everyone can understand;
- Helps groups to surface and challenge assumptions that can be barriers to innovation;
- Builds collaboration and consensus;
- Uses data and transparency to ensure accountability for both the well-being of people and the performance of programs.

## What else do you need to get started?

RBA is one part of a larger tool kit necessary to improve the well-being of children, families and communities. Communities also need to agree on how to manage and govern their work, and they may need help with community organizing and group facilitation. Agencies and programs will need to involve their employees in creating a healthy workplace. The Clear Impact Scorecard includes many of the tools you will need to get off the ground and running quickly and sustainably in your RBA effort.

## Where can you get more information?

Visit the Clear Impact website for more RBA resources, answers to many of the most frequently asked questions, publications, and the worldwide RBA success story library.

