

Outcome Based Evaluation (OBE) Fact Sheet

What is Outcome Based Evaluation?

- Outcome Based Evaluation (OBE) is an evaluation tool that measures the impact and effectiveness of human service programs in Pierce County
- OBE goes beyond counting the number of clients served and instead measures the change in client condition that has occurred as a result of program services
- OBE addresses the “So What?” factor. For example, a program provides 30 hours of anger management classes to youth. So what? What difference has the program made in the lives of those youth? OBE attempts to answer that question.

Who is involved in OBE?

- Pierce County Funders—a group comprised of public and private funders within Pierce County which allocate money to human service programs
 - City of Lakewood, City of Tacoma, and Pierce County are the primary members
- Local nonprofit organizations that provide human services to the community (i.e. homeless shelters, food banks, youth programs, etc.)
 - Approximately 125 human service programs are currently funded by Pierce County Funders and participate in OBE

When did OBE get its start in Pierce County?

- OBE was adopted by the Pierce County Funders in 1994 as part of a collaborative effort to develop a funding application and a method for evaluating program performance that was common to all (i.e. provide consistency and efficiency across jurisdictions)

Why is OBE used today?

- Program Improvement: Programs use data collected on their clients to determine whether their services are having the desired effect; if not, changes can be made to improve service delivery
- Accountability: Funders use data submitted by programs to measure the results of money invested; they can determine whether or not a program accomplished its intended purpose.
- Facilitating funding decisions: Funders use data to allocate resources; they award money to programs that demonstrate positive results.

How does OBE work?

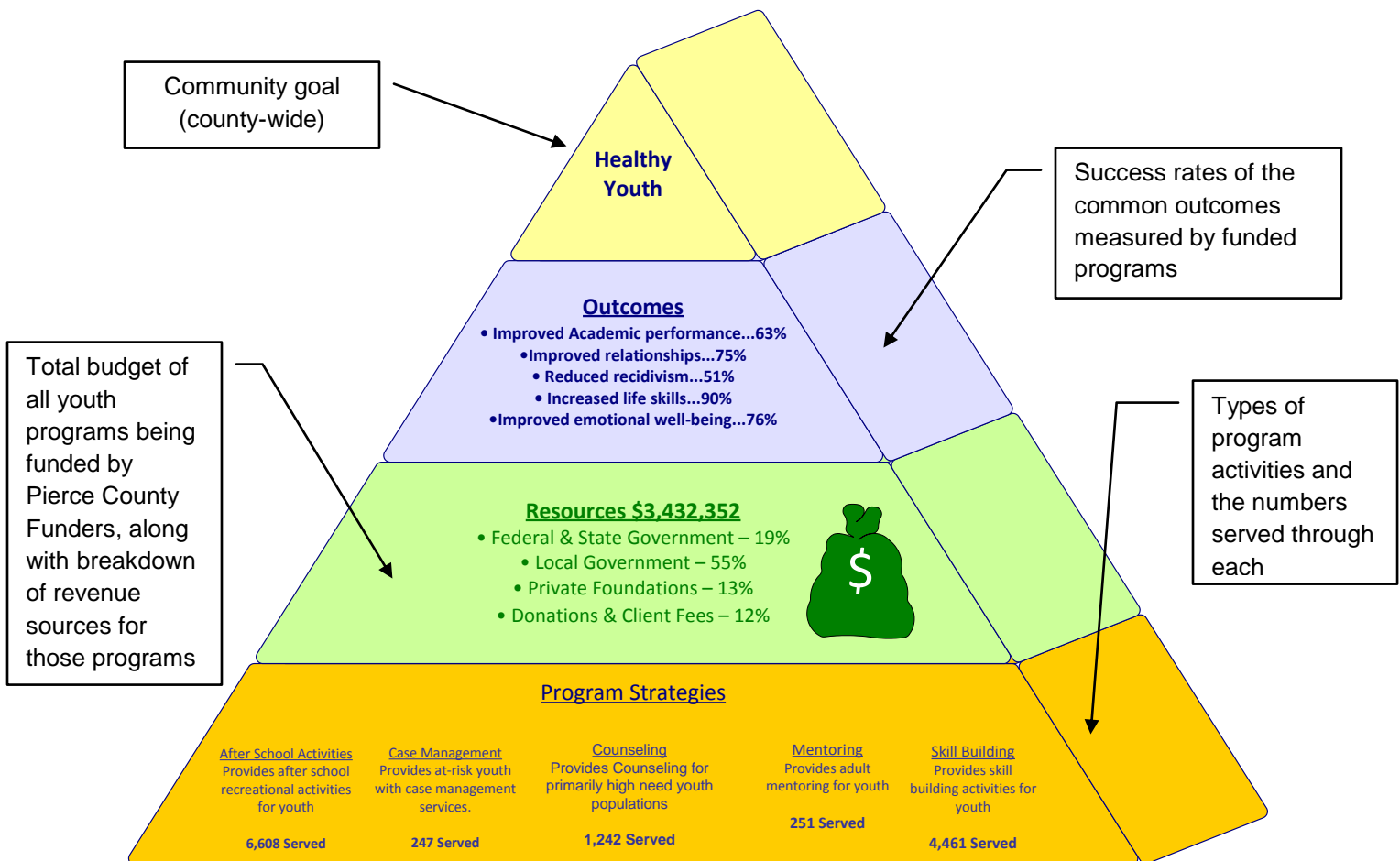
- Contracted human service programs (those receiving funding from a Pierce County Funder) work with funders to develop performance measures and an evaluation system for which they are held accountable. Programs collect data, submit reports, and receive site monitoring visits by funders as part of this process.
- Funders review each program’s performance and assign point values to the various elements of review. Results/scores are used to evaluate the success of each program, as well as to provide information to citizen review panels that are tasked with making funding recommendations to decision makers during application processes.

Showing Results: Using OBE at the Community Level

In Pierce County, OBE is used to show the return on funders' investments, not only for each individual funder, but across the entire community. Impact is demonstrated by looking at outcome achievement rates across similar programs. The Pierce County Funders have divided programs into categories, called "service strategies," in order to look at results of human service programs that work with the same population on similar goals. (See full list of service strategies at bottom of page.)

Below is an example of one service strategy (youth) that has been broken down to show the layers of data, including outcome data, which can be combined to demonstrate the overall impact that is being made by investments in these programs. The best way to understand the pyramid is to read it from the bottom up. Program activities and resources (first two levels) are invested in the school-aged population, resulting in specific behavior and skill changes (outcomes) which contribute to the overarching goal of having healthy youth in the community.

School Aged/Youth Development Strategy – 2007 Results



County-wide service strategies:

- School-aged/Youth Development
- Family Services
- Emergency Services
- Intimate Violence
- Health and Seniors/Disabled
- Housing and Case Management
- Community Mobilization
- Employment and Education