



Systems Integration: A Means of Improving Outcomes for Children and Families

*Institute for Research on Poverty
University of Wisconsin - Madison*



Overview

Integrated Service Delivery Models



Discussion Topics

- Background Information
 - What is happening around the country?
- Service Integration 101
 - What is it?
 - Why the current interest?
- Challenges
 - What challenges have been identified?
 - How can these challenges be overcome?



Background

What is happening around the U.S.?

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Framework for Research, Analysis, and Technical Assistance

- Since 2002, IRP researchers Thomas Corbett and Jennifer Noyes have been participating in an umbrella project involving several partners interested in systems integration that encompasses:
 - A legal analysis of what is possible under current federal law.
 - An operational analysis focusing on sites pursuing service integration.
 - A technical and methodological analysis of accountability and evaluation issues.
- We have adopted an iterative process whereby research and analysis informs technical assistance and technical assistance informs research and analysis.



Iterative Process Components

- Welfare Peer Assistance Network (WELPAN)
- Intensive on-site work in Midwest states
- NGA Policy Academy on Cross-Systems Innovation
- National “lighthouse” site visits and meetings
- Brainstorming meetings with policy analysts, evaluation researchers, and state and local practitioners
- Other analysts and researchers at the local, state, national, and international levels



Key Observations

- Overall belief that systems integration has the potential for improving outcomes for target populations.
- Bottom-up, locally-driven strategies are germinating all over the country.
- Systems integration is easier said than done.
- Innovation benefits from—and often requires—technical assistance and information about “lessons learned” from other sites.
- More evidence is needed to test the hypothesis that systems integration leads to improved participant outcomes.



Systems Integration 101

What is it?

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What is systems integration?

- There's no single definition.
- Other labels include “service integration” and “cross-systems innovation.”
- Common goal: to simplify and streamline access to and coordination of a broad, often complex array of services in order to improve outcomes for a specific population (e.g., children and families, children aging out of foster care, ex-offenders).
- Requires a shift in program management focus from delivering discrete services to a more holistic approach.



“Typical” Service Delivery System Attributes

- The system is too fragmented, leaving those clients with multiple issues vulnerable.
- The goals of individual programs are too limited.
- The services are often provided “in an inefficient, duplicative, and bureaucratically confusing manner to those who have the need.”
- The services tend to be lacking in accountability and to be self-perpetuating regardless of effectiveness.
- The service system is not sufficiently attentive to the long-term needs of clients.



Illustrative Individual and Family Attributes

- Individuals and families are often served by many different systems and have many different needs.
- Illustrative facts:
 - In Milwaukee, nearly 2 of 3 W-2 applicant families experienced at least one CPS investigation and most had multiple barriers to employment.
 - In Arkansas, one year after they leave the TEA program, 80% of leavers continue to access MA/Arkids First and 43% access Food Stamps.
 - In Michigan, of long-term FIP families, 37% lacked a high school diploma or GED, 27% had physical health problems, 15% had mental health problems, and 6% had alcohol and/or drug dependence.



Basic Operating Principle #1

Systems integration is a strategy,
not an end in itself.

Next, some examples of current initiatives, in Michigan,
Utah, and Wisconsin.



Example: Michigan's Jobs, Education, and Training (JET) Pilots

- Vision: To connect Michigan families with the kinds of jobs, education, and training opportunities that will help them achieve self-sufficiency and meet the workforce and skill needs of Michigan businesses.
- In pilot sites, Workforce Boards, Michigan Works! Agencies, and the local Department of Human Services offices are implementing a “comprehensive approach” to connecting families with jobs, education, and training.
- Components include a comprehensive intake process, a single family plan, coordination of all family employment and training services, joint local plans.
- Goals include increased basic skills/credentials, wages, and employment retention; and case closures and caseload reduction.



Example: Utah's Children Aging Out of Foster Care Project

- Vision: Youth who age out of foster care will live successfully as adults.
- Involves the Departments of Workforce Services, Human Services, Health, and the Offices of Education and the Courts.
- Components include coordinated case planning, streamlined referral processes, establishment of service priorities, leveraging existing resources across systems.
- Goals include positive sense of self, supportive and enduring relationships, health care access (physical and mental), educational attainment and stable employment, and safe and stable housing.



Example: Wisconsin's Families Forward Pilots

- Vision: To improve child well-being and family economic stability of families in or at risk of involvement in the TANF and child welfare systems.
- Key strategy is to advance service delivery systems transformation through promotion and support of local pilots designed to coordinate service delivery, build on family strengths, and link to family economic security and child well-being outcomes.
- Components vary by pilot site.
- Goals include increased economic security, improved child safety and well-being, closed academic achievement gaps, empowered families, and an established sustainable process for continuing improvement.



Basic Operating Principle #2

Systems integration can best be conceptualized on a continuum from better communication across programs to full consolidation of several programs.



Relationship Intensity Continuum

Communication



Cooperation



Coordination



Collaboration



Convergence



Consolidation



Basic Operating Principle #3

The current interest in systems integration grows out of emerging reforms of welfare and other service programs.



Current interest is driven by opportunity...

- Natural progression of reforms since the 1980s.
- There has been a fundamental shift in how policy challenges are framed at the state and local level.
- This shift is reflected in evolving program purposes and emerging institutional cultures.



Evolving Purposes of Welfare

Income Support



Job Placement



Work Support



Family Support



Community Support



Prevention



Emerging Institutional Cultures in Welfare Programs

Traditional Attributes	Emerging Attributes
Focus on benefits	Focus on behavior
Limited purpose	Multiple goals
Autonomous agency	Collaborative agency
Autonomous staff	Teams/collaborative staff
Rule oriented	Flexible
Limited target populations	Broader target populations
Short-term focus	Long-term focus
Process oriented	Outcome oriented
Static operations	Dynamic operations



...but also by necessity

- Various populations have multi-faceted needs that individual programs are not designed to address.
- Concurrently, the ability to access flexible resources has diminished.
- The Deficit Reduction Act is requiring a re-examination of current practices.
- Effectiveness is more often being measured by outcomes rather than inputs or outputs.



Challenges

What are the major pitfalls?



Service integration is easier said than done.

- 1) Confusing the means with the end.
- 2) Not starting in the “right place.”
- 3) Failing to appreciate the institutional implications of proposed changes.
- 4) Thinking about service integration as an event and not a process.



Confusing the Means with the End

- “Importing a solution” by picking from a list of tactics such as:
 - Co-location
 - Realigning governance structures
 - Consolidating intake
 - Consolidating job functions
 - Blending or braiding funding
 - Hiring a service liaison or “broker”



Not Starting in the Right Place

- Focusing on implementation of tactics rather than on:
 - A specific population.
 - A set of goals related to that population tied to measurable outcomes.



Failing to Appreciate Institutional Implications

- Concentrating efforts on modifications to practice protocols, administrative systems and policies.
- Neglecting differences in leadership style, organizational culture, and institutional systems.



Integration Intensity-Institutional Similarity Matrix

Program/Agency Type	Relationship Intensity		
	Level 1 Communication	Level 2 Collaboration	Level 3 Consolidation
Routinized Systems	A1	A2	A3
Mixed Systems	B1	B2	B3
Non-Routinized Systems	C1	C2	C3



Thinking of Service Integration as an Event

- Limiting flexibility within the implementation process.
- Failing to adjust to changing circumstances.
- Employing a “once and done” mind-set.



Systems Integration Life Cycle

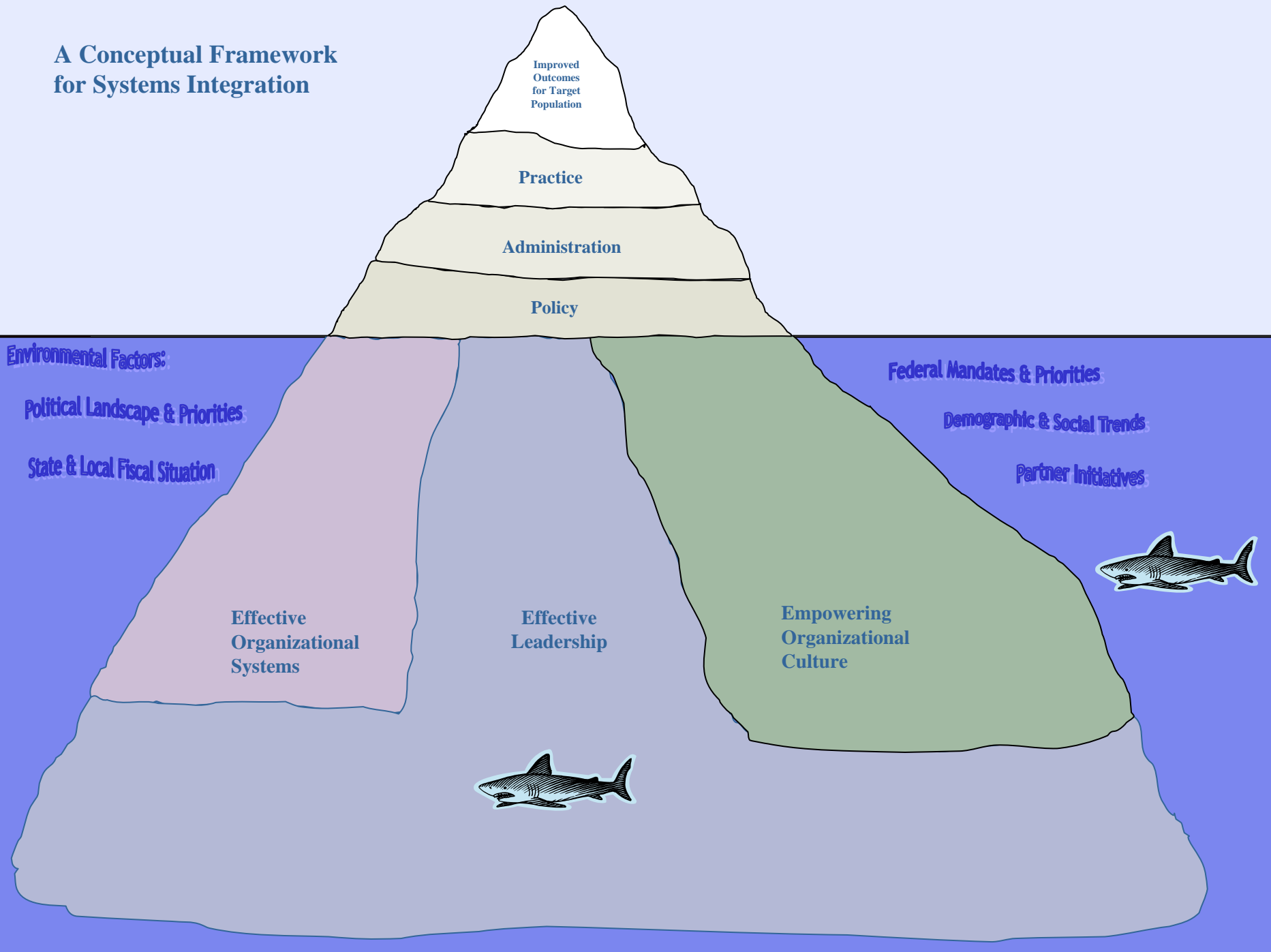




Visualizing the Implementation Challenge

- Think of an iceberg.
- Above the waterline are things we can easily see: practice, administration, policy.
- However, there are other important factors below the waterline: leadership, organizational systems, and organizational culture.
- Below the waterline factors are often overlooked when designing and carrying out these innovations.

A Conceptual Framework for Systems Integration





Overcoming the Challenges

- Start with the ends rather than the means.
- Replace tactical solutions with strategic thinking.
 - Begin with the participant's perspective.
 - Follow with the institutional perspective.
- Determine feasibility.
- Manage to outcomes and modify strategies as needed.



How do we know if systems integration really makes a difference?

The Conundrum

The more successful the effort to integrate (and many agencies/communities are very enthusiastic about their progress on this front), the less successful the ability to apply traditional evaluation strategies. As a result, very little rigorous evaluation has occurred.



Problematic Attributes of Systems Integration Models

- Research designs are complicated by questions about:
 - Which populations are served or targeted?
 - Which service technologies are ‘integrated’?
 - What are the program boundaries?
 - What are appropriate time frames for client outcomes and for when integration is implemented?
 - What are the agreed upon outcomes?



A Proposed Strategy

- Learn from exemplary programs.
- Develop information through a study-design with the following four components:
 - 1) Develop logic models of 8-10 programs
 - 2) Conduct 4-6 comparative case studies
 - 3) Develop evaluability assessments
 - 4) Propose outcome evaluation study designs



Sampling of Exemplary Programs

- Maximize use of information gathered to date.
- Focus on sites identified as being successfully engaged in the “service integration life cycle.”
- Work with these sites to:
 - learn how they evolve,
 - learn why they take the course they do, and
 - develop plausible hypotheses about outcomes and effects.



Component I: Develop Logic Models

- Why?
 - To understand and compare the theories guiding program development in order to bring order and clarity to the field and help shape the appropriate research questions for the case studies.
- Questions include:
 - What is the target population and problems?
 - What are the services available through the interventions?
 - What is the management and administrative structure?
 - What are the expected short term and longer term impacts?



Component II: Complete Comparative Case studies

- Why?
 - To examine how each program's logic model has been implemented;
 - To determine the genesis and initial impetus for moving toward an integrated system and how goals have changed over time; and
 - To analyze data on program use and results.



Component III: Determine Evaluability

- Why?
 - To determine whether there is one or multiple integrated services models and whether any of the models adopted are evaluable.



Component IV: Develop Potential Research Designs

- Why?
 - To develop research designs that will allow the critical question of the ‘counterfactual’—*what are the best ways to learn what would have happened in the absence of these services modeled in this particular way*—to be addressed.



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