



Comprehensive Plan Section 8 – Next Steps

The South King County Community Network has engaged in a series of discussions focused on defining how it wants to function in the community. While its ultimate role is not yet clearly defined, some central elements have repeatedly emerged in these discussions.

The Network is committed to working in partnership with providers, other funders and coordinating bodies, and local coalitions in finding solutions to the challenges facing South King County families and youth.

- In building these partnerships, the Network is seeking ways to ensure cross-representation on the Board where possible, as well as ways to establish strong and regular communication channels.

The Network is committed to becoming representative of the diversity of South King County communities. This diversity encompasses not only ethnicity and gender, but age, occupation, income, and interests.

Network members are seeking ways to function as a body which is continually learning. This plan does not represent a static outcome, but rather a point at which the Network Board has set a direction to follow and identified areas to explore.

The Network is seeking ways to reach out to people in the community who have not typically been represented in processes to build community services, increase community volunteerism, and direct the use of our community resources. Finding ways to engage people in community efforts is at the core of the Network's mission and vision.

The Network's work over the next two years will build on these values and seek to move towards the outcomes it has prioritized. The workplan the Network is considering will include several elements.

1. Community consultation to shape the services the Network will fund.

The Network will engage in a cooperative process with community based providers and local community coalitions to identify the specific strategies best suited for reaching its prioritized outcomes in South King County communities. This collaborative process will include a Request for Qualifications to determine the providers qualified to participate in shaping these strategies, and consultation with local community coalitions to assure that strategies involve a broad range of community members.

2. Community outreach and education efforts.

Community outreach will help community members understand how they can become involved in shaping the resources and services available to support youth and families in South King County communities. It will encourage grassroots participation not only in Network activities, but in activities that will broadly build community cohesion.

3. Benchmarking and developing outcome indicators.

The Network will work cooperatively with other funders and human services planning groups to develop outcome indicators and community benchmarks that can be commonly used by providers to measure their progress and make program adjustments.

4. Studying decategorization issues as they relate to specific state funded programs.

The Network will seek technical assistance from the Family Policy Council and information and cooperation from agencies to fully understand the scope of state funded programs and the implications of decategorization recommendations on the policy and funding levels.

In addition to these community-oriented efforts, the Network Board will continue work to strengthen its internal function. In this area, the Board has prioritized:

- o Balancing committee work and full formal Board review in carrying out Board functions; and
- o Increasing Board cohesiveness through orientation, training and team building.

Resources needed

In undertaking its workplan, the Network is aware that it will need to rely on the resources and collaboration of others concerned with the welfare of children, youth and families. An exhaustive list is not possible here - but at the least, the Network recognizes the need to work in partnership with:

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| Businesses | Human service providers |
| Community clubs, service groups and associations | Law enforcement |
| Community coalitions | Local, county and state government |
| Ethnic minority community associations and organizations | Parent groups |
| Faith communities and clergy | Schools and educators |
| Funders and planners of human and community services | Youth and student groups |
| Tribal groups | |

As partnerships are built and joint efforts identified and pursued, the shape of the Network’s specific workplan will likely shift - though its core focus will remain strengthening families and supporting children and youth in South King County.

Review and Evaluation

The Network is aware that the work it has accomplished in setting this plan is only the first phase of its work as a community network - and is, in fact, anxious to get on with the next phases of its work. In these next steps, the Network will seek to support community efforts, build bridges between existing community efforts, and participate in existing local planning and coordination.

Evaluation measures for the projects which the network supports will be set collaboratively with community coalitions and providers involved in further defining strategies.

The Board is responsible for defining ways to seek, review and integrate input from community and stakeholder groups on its progress towards its own goals, and will do so on a biennial basis. This input will be tied specifically to the outcomes that are defined through community collaboration.

Conclusion

The expectations, timelines and outcomes expected of the community health and safety networks were built on a model that may work well in smaller communities with more straightforward community and service structures. In an area like the South King County Network - with many coordinating agencies, government structures, and service systems - those expectations have required a level of sophistication and analysis that have been a challenge to meet - and would be for any community and voluntary board.

The Network Board members have given their committed efforts and time to this task, and are aware that this effort is only the beginning of their work. At the same time, in the process they have reviewed sources of data and input from disparate sources that consistently returned the same themes. This consistency has given the Network some confidence that the themes reflected here are indeed significant in the experience of South King County communities.

The job of restoring connection and mutual support for families and youth in our communities is one that must involve each of us. We each have separate gifts to offer this effort. Together those gifts and capacities can make a whole community working together for a healthy and safe future for our youth. The South King County Community Network looks forward to continuing to explore with its community partners what each of us can offer to this most important task.