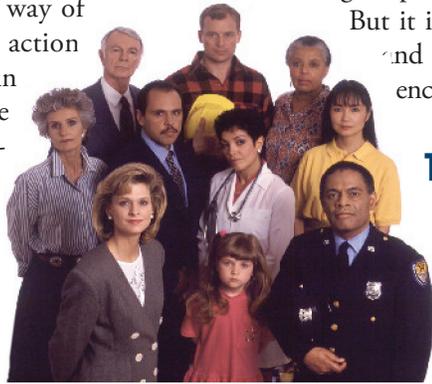


# Results-Based Accountability™

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

### What is RBA?

RBA is a disciplined way of thinking and taking action that communities can use to improve the lives of children, families and the community as a whole. RBA can also be used by agencies to improve the performance of their programs. RBA can be adapted to fit the unique needs and circumstances of different communities and programs.



*Deciding together to make a difference.*

### How does it work?

RBA starts with ends and works backward, step by step, towards means. For communities, the ends are conditions of well-being for children, families and the community as a whole. For example: “Residents with good jobs,” “Children ready for school,” or “A safe and clean neighborhood.” or even more specific conditions such as “Public spaces without graffiti,” or “A place where neighbors know each other.” For programs, the ends are how customers are better off when the program works the way it should. For example: What percentage of people in the job training program get and keep good paying jobs.

### How can it help?

Many people have been frustrated by past efforts that were all talk and no action. RBA is a process that gets you and your partners from talk to action quickly. It uses plain language and common sense methods that everyone can understand. The most basic version of RBA (the “Turn the Curve” exercise) can be done in less than an hour, and produces ideas that can be acted on immediately. RBA is an inclusive process where diversity is an asset and

everyone in the community can contribute.

Like all good processes, RBA is hard work.

But it is work that you control and that makes a real difference in peoples’ lives.

### The RBA thinking process

We all use the thinking process behind RBA to solve problems in our every day lives. Have you ever had

leaking roof? You know it’s leaking when you see water dripping down. How do you go about fixing the leak? First, you think about who could help you. Then someone has to get up on the roof and figure out why it’s leaking. Next, you think about how it could be fixed. And finally you decide what you will actually do to fix it. You know it’s fixed when you stop seeing water. This sequence gets more complicated when you’re trying to “fix” conditions in your community, the RBA steps come from this same process.



*RBA concepts can be found in the book “Trying Hard is Not Good Enough” by Mark Friedman and the Results Accountability 101 DVD. Both can be purchased at [www.resultsleadership.org](http://www.resultsleadership.org)*

## THE STEPS FROM TALK TO ACTION

*The community step by step process* starts by bringing together a group of partners who wish to make things better. This group then uses the following thinking process:

**Step 1:** What are the quality of life conditions (results) we want for our community and the children and families who live here?

**Step 2:** What would these conditions look like if we could see, feel and experience them?

**Step 3:** How can we measure if these conditions exist or not (indicators)? Are the measures getting better or worse? Where are we headed if we just keep doing what we’re doing now?

**Step 4:** Why are these conditions getting better or worse?

**Step 5:** Who are the partners that have a potential role to play in doing better?

**Step 6:** What works to do better? What can we do that is no-cost or low-cost in addition to things that cost money?

**Step 7:** What do we, individually and as a group, propose to actually do?

*The program step by step process* starts with managers who care about the quality of their services. The managers, individually or in groups, use the following thinking process:

**Step 1:** Who are our customers?

**Step 2:** How can we measure if our customers are better off (customer results)?

**Step 3:** How can we measure if we’re delivering services well?

**Step 4:** How are we doing on the most important of these measures?

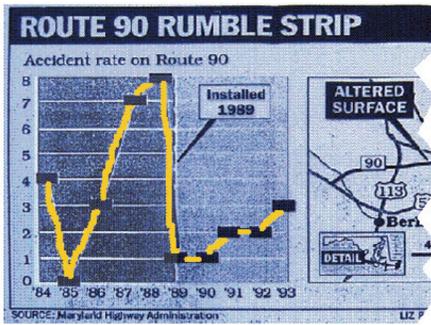
**Step 5:** Who are the partners that have a potential role to play in doing better?

**Step 6:** What works to do better, including no-cost and low-cost ideas?

**Step 7:** What do we propose to actually do?

Repeat the steps each time you meet.

The steps can be done in any order as long as you do them all.



## Why is data important?

When you're trying to fix a leaking roof, you really don't need data. You can see if the roof is leaking or not. But community conditions and the way programs work are much more complicated. If we rely on just stories and anecdotes, we really don't know if things are getting better or worse. By using common sense measures, we can be honest with ourselves about whether or not we're making progress. If we work hard and the numbers don't change, then something more or different is needed. We rarely have all the data we need at the beginning. But we can start with the best of what we have, and get better. And data doesn't always have to be gathered by the experts. You can use simple, common sense methods, like community surveys with just a few questions, or a count of vacant houses each month, or even a show of hands at the monthly meeting about how many people know someone who was a crime victim in the last 30 days.

## Why is common language important?

Whether it's English, Spanish or another language, we often use words and jargon in ways that no one really understands. Pilots could never fly airplanes that way. Community groups could never build playgrounds that way. We need to agree on how to use plain language so we can work together successfully. RBA asks groups to agree on what words they will use to describe a few basic ideas:

**Results (or outcomes):** What conditions do we want for children, families and the community as a whole?

**Indicators:** How could we measure these conditions?

**Baselines:** What does the data show about where we've been and where we're headed?

**What works (or strategies):** What works to improve these conditions?

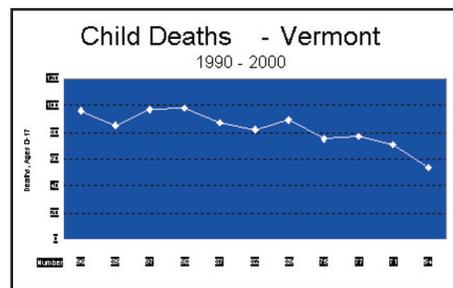
**Turning the curve:** What does success look like if we change the direction of the baseline for the better.

**Performance measures:** How do we know if programs are working? RBA uses three common sense performance measures:

**How much did we do?**

**How well did we do it?**

**Is anyone better off?**



## Where has RBA worked?

RBA is being used, in whole or in part, in over 40 states and at least 8 countries. There is a growing network of people with success stories to tell. To name a few: Vermont state and local partners have turned the curve on a wide range of measures including child abuse rates, high school dropout rates and the rate of delinquents in custody. Santa Cruz County California has turned the curve on teen alcohol and drug use and other measures. Maryland, California, and other states and counties are turning the curve on measures of children ready for school. Georgia's Family Connections Collaboratives have turned the curve on immunization rates, school attendance and many other measures. And, state and local governments, school districts, and non-profits in Arizona, Idaho, Kentucky, Minnesota and many other places have used RBA to improve the performance of their programs and services.

Even where people don't call it RBA, this kind of thinking process has helped turn the curve on drunk driving, juvenile crime, traffic safety, and clean air and water.

## 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 may need help with community organizing and group facilitation. Agencies and programs will need to involve their employees in creating a healthy workplace. Both kinds of efforts will need to support the growth and development of new and existing leaders.

## Where can you get more information?

The website [www.raguide.org](http://www.raguide.org) is an implementation guide for the RBA framework, sponsored by national, state and local foundations, including the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Foundation Consortium for California's Children and Youth, the Colorado Foundation, the



Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, and the Finance Project. It contains answers to over 50 commonly asked questions and provides tools, formats, exercises, and links to other important resources. The website can help you decide if RBA is the right approach for your community or your organization.

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