

Action Plan Development and Tracking

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Children's Bureau, ACYF
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Presentation Purpose

- Build upon guidance set forth in Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) Technical Bulletin #1: Action Plan Guidance and Examples issued December 2005
- Based upon State action plan submissions DSS believed there was a need for guidance in the construction of an action plan
- The intended audience is project managers familiar with action plans

Presentation Goals

- Provide direction on how to construct action plan
- Identify common pitfalls when creating an action plan
- Identify the benefits of the action plans
- Describe the tracking process for action plans

Action Plan Purpose

- Although an action plan provides an overview of the approach to achieve SACWIS compliance, it should never be viewed as just a means to Federal approval and closure of a SACWIS Assessment Review Report (SARR)
- It is a corrective action plan; a documented direction for project work to bring the **project's future performance in line with the Federal SACWIS requirements**

Action Plan Opportunities

It is also an opportunity for a project to:

- Reassess how the system supports the **program practice and user's needs** for the requirement or requirements in question
- Enhance, create, or correct functionality that will improve the users experience, assists them in completing their tasks and results in better outcomes for their clients

Action Plan Opportunities – The Nebraska Example

- The SACWIS had to automate tracking trust fund accounts to complete #63
 - Instead of building screens to track deposits and debits to just meet the requirement the project consulted local office workers and supervisors, central office program staff and fiscal staff responsible for the actual maintenance of these funds to identify needs, and desired functionality

Action Plan Opportunities – The Nebraska Example

- The project's analysis indicated:
 - Caseworkers could not identify if there was a trust fund account for a child without contacting fiscal staff
 - Caseworker would contact fiscal staff a second time to request funds
 - Fiscal staff often overlooked these request
- The SACWIS team saw an opportunity for automation to manage these accounts, which ultimately helps the child

Action Plan Opportunities – The Nebraska Example

- This approach resulted in:
 - Functionality for fiscal staff to maintain trust fund accounts in the SACWIS, read access for workers, automated request to expend funds with the ability to track the progress of the request including alerts for key actions such as creation and check issuance
 - The implementation of direct deposit of SSA/SSI/IV-D funds and family donations

Action Plan Opportunities – The Nebraska Example

- The expansion of the IV-D/IV-E interface to transfer excess child support funds from the IV-D to the IV-E agency
- Automated reconciliation of the SACWIS online accounts with the bank accounts
- The creation of reports, which eliminated manually, maintained spreadsheets for fiscal staff and workers

Action Plan Pitfalls Examples

- Lack of analysis: solution is a restatement of the SACWIS requirement finding or findings
- Inadequate resources: plan is developed by one or two staff without adequate program or technical input

Action Plan Pitfalls Examples (cont.)

- Inadequate expertise: staff assigned to the development of the action plan is unfamiliar with the SACWIS requirements, system functionality, or the business practice
- Stand alone plan: the plan is not integrated into the overall project plan
- Lack of schedule: there are no measurable scheduled milestones that the support implementation date

Action Plan Pitfalls

Consequences

- Fails to move the project toward SACWIS compliance
- Fails to address **business, or users'** needs
- DSS requests the project try again at drafting the plan, which results in a loss of time and resources

Action Plan Preparation

- Best practice is to assemble a team consisting of users, program, and technical staff to analyze the problem and then develop the solution
- The approach and preparation is similar to a change request
- Compose the action plan so that it describes all the relevant proposed changes
 - Include all of the steps and changes needed to address the issue (e.g. screen changes, code value changes, data model changes, and report changes)

Action Plan Preparation (Cont.)

- Review the completed action plan carefully to check for completeness
- Write it in a clear manner so that it is apparent to the reader what the solution is and who will be doing what and when

Action Plan Contents - The How - Analysis

- In order to identify a solution to any problem, you need to recognize the nature of the issues involved
- The analysis of the identified issues is critical to the development of a good action plan

Action Plan Contents - The How (cont.)

The solution will:

- State clearly what is the issue and root cause
- Answer the following questions:
 - What is happening?
 - What is the effect?
 - How can it be fixed?
 - How will the solution satisfy the SACWIS requirement?
 - How will the solution support **the users'** business needs and practice?

Action Plan Contents - The How (cont.)

- As part of answering the questions be sure to describe any system changes in detail, including where in the system the changes occur

Action Plan Contents - The How (cont.)

- The solution is not always system changes, it should also:
 - Describe any additional training or documentation required to meet the requirement, including the format
 - Describe any additional technical assistance required to meet the requirement and how will it be delivered

Action Plan Contents - The WHY

The rationale will:

- Include a description of the process for identifying the solution (e.g. the convening of a focus group of intake workers, policy staff, and programmers to identify a solution to a navigation problem with intake)
- Illustrate that the project did a thorough analysis of the issue

Action Plan Contents - The WHY (cont.)

- Answer the following questions
 - Why was the solution selected?
 - What makes it the best option in addressing the SACWIS requirement?
 - How does the proposed solution support the case practice model and user needs?

Action Plan Contents - The What, When and Who

The schedule will:

- Be a tool that makes the proposed solution real and measurable
- Set a timeframe for implementation
- Be integrated with the overall project plan schedule to realistically identify resources and timeframes for the solution

Action Plan Contents - The What, When and Who (cont.)

- Include tasks or milestones such as:
 - Requirement gathering
 - Design documentation
 - Development
 - Testing
 - Training
- Include projected due dates for tasks or milestones

Action Plan Contents - The What, When and Who (cont.)

- Identify who will be doing the work for each major task including if they are:
 - State personnel, contractors or a combination of the two and
 - Technical or business staff
- Purchase of servers, software or network upgrades should be included as they can affect the schedule

Action Plan Contents

Additions

- Supply supporting documentation such as change requests, design documentation, and updated project plan that includes action plan
- Identify any potential risks to the implementation of the Action Plan and mitigation plan
- Identify any potential qualifiers or conditions that may delay or derail the implementation of the Action Plan

Action Plan Benefits

- Obtains **users'** buy in of the project by including them in the identification of a solution as opposed to imposing one upon them
- Creates an understanding for system users and Federal partners of what is and is not possible for the project to do, as they may not be aware of the technical, resource, and funding limits for a project

Action Plan Benefits (cont.)

- Saves time, money, energy, and resources in the end; poorly developed plans have a higher risk of failure, which will result in multiple attempts to resolve the issue
- Promotes State and Federal partnership by demonstrating the project is well managed and focused on provided a system that supports business needs

Action Plan Benefits (cont.)

- Provides a method of tracking progress towards SACWIS compliance
- Allows for accurate and realistic project management
- Facilitates program, policy, and technical coordination

Action Plan Benefits (cont.)

- Creates the opportunity to reassess the **system support of practice and user's** needs, to enhance, create, or correct functionality to improve users experience, assist in the completion of tasks, which will result in better outcomes for their clients

Action Plan Review

- DSS will assess an Action Plan to confirm:
 - **The plan's narrative, project plan, and supporting documentation are complete**
 - The resulting functionality conforms to SACWIS requirements
 - It will be implemented in a timely manner

Tracking Action Plans

- DSS will review proposed Action Plans through the open SARR
- DSS will review and monitor approved Action Plans through the Advance Planning Document (APD) process
 - The APD Update or Operational APD must include a section on the status of the approved Action Plans

References and Resources

- Action Plan Technical Bulletin :
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/sacwis-tb1>
- Jenette Nagy and Stephen Fawcett Edited by Bill Berkowitz and Jerry Schultz, Community Tool Box: <http://ctb.ku.edu>
- MyFedTrainer.com, HOW TO WRITE A CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN:
<http://blog.myfedtrainer.com/2011/how-to-write-a-corrective-action-plan/>

References and Resources

- PlanDone:
<http://www.plandone.com/node/58>
- NHS Institute:
http://www.institute.nhs.uk/quality_and_service_improvement_tools/quality_and_service_improvement_tools/action_planning.html