INNOVATION BRIEF

The Campaign for GRADE-LEVEL READING

Driving With Data >

Driving with data is critical as Campaign for Grade-Level Reading communities work to make measurable gains in the number of U.S. children from low-income families who read proficiently by the end of third grade.

"Data, for many people, is a scary thing," says JaNel Jamerson, community lead for Flint, Michigan's GLR campaign coalition. "But driving with data makes it so much easier because people can see why grade-level reading is so important."

More than 140 communities are using a formal data-management online platform to support their work with data. Flint is among 53 communities using the Results Scorecard, an interactive online platform that helps communities establish clear baselines, set targets, track progress, disaggregate for subgroups and promote coalition partners' shared accountability for results.

Over half of the GLR communities using the Scorecard are participating in a GLR Campaign pilot initiative begun in 2012 — and now available to additional GLR communities — that offers a discount on the Scorecard and other resources from Results Leadership Group (RLG), a Maryland-based firm that developed the Scorecard and also specializes in Results-Based Accountability (RBA)™.

The Scorecard incorporates principles of RBA™, an approach to accomplishing change that begins with coalition partners agreeing on a result, working backwards to determine how best to achieve the result and using data to assess progress. They learn to speak a

common language and use a step-by-step "turn the curve" process to get from ends to means, addressing questions designed to drive action while building consensus and collaboration.

Along the way, data points are entered into the Scorecard, which generates trend lines and forecasts of what will likely happen if the community does not act. Communities use the graphics to guide strategy sessions and refine what is measured as well as to bolster public presentations, reports and grant applications.

"We've learned how to look at data better, how to use data-based decisions to drive our process and to understand the role each group's program has toward achieving the overall community goal," says Evelyn Seidenberg of the GLR campaign in Southern Pines/Moore County, North Carolina.

The GLR Campaign pilot is designed to help GLR communities:

• Engage coalition partners to agree on shared results, indicators of progress and performance measures for campaign-related programs, supporting a "collective impact" approach that involves partners working together rather than in isolation.

• Identify data sources, review data and prioritize action to improve indicators for school readiness, attendance, summer learning and grade-level reading proficiency.

• Share research and best practices to develop aligned strategies and programs to improve indicators for low-income children.

• Build the Results Scorecard to view the most current community indicator data to track results and to report progress.

More than 140 GLR communities are using a formal data-management online platform to support their work with data.

"It's highlighted the need to be more strategic and precise," says Alison Schwedner, of the GLR campaign in California's Tahoe Truckee region.

The GLR Campaign pilot offers a GLR community several benefits including one Results Scorecard user license ($960 value) for one year at no cost, an unlimited number of additional user licenses for partner organizations at $240/license (a 75 percent discount) and a 20 percent discounted rate on the first 15 hours of technical assistance from a certified Results Scorecard coach. Each user license can be renewed annually at the discounted rate of $240 per license.

The community, in turn, makes commitments including to pay a one-time Scorecard set-up and training fee of $1,500 to RLG (to cover the initial 15 hours of technical assistance referenced above) and to allocate sufficient staff time to identify data sources, enter data into the Scorecard and maintain the Scorecard by updating data annually.

Participation in the pilot also provides a community access to other technical assistance from RLG, free or fee-based depending upon a community's request. RLG is prepared to work directly with a community or in collaboration with GLR Campaign national implementation partners to accelerate progress in school readiness, summer learning and school attendance.

In fact, several communities have purchased additional technical assistance, beyond the first 15 hours, from RLG in order to drill down deeper into the data and develop strategies using RBA™, and in the process, further fleshing out the Scorecard.

Here is a look at three GLR communities' experience with the Results Scorecard and RBA™.

read on!

southern pines
moore county

North Carolina

Using the Results Scorecard and RBA™ has streamlined the grade-level reading work underway in the small rural community of Southern Pines, North Carolina.

"It has really served to refocus and redefine our process," says Evelyn Seidenberg of the Southern Pines Public Library, the lead organization for the community's campaign until December 2015, when the effort expanded to include all of Moore County.

The community began looking at local data in 2012 when it created a Community Solutions Action Plan to become a GLR community. Joining the GLR Campaign Results Scorecard pilot a year later, the community then pinpointed some results to achieve that were fleshed out with indicators to gauge progress.

"A lot of agencies were involved and the community was very enthusiastic but it wasn't as focused an attempt as we thought necessary to make progress," says Seidenberg.

The data effort gained steam in November 2014 when 22 local campaign partners worked to pare down their original 38 indicators to a far more manageable five with workgroups to address each indicator.

For example, the result *Children Retain Learning Over the Summer Months* now has one indicator: *the percentage of children from low-income families Pre-K to 3rd grade who participate in high-quality summer learning opportunities that include a literacy or pre-literacy component.*
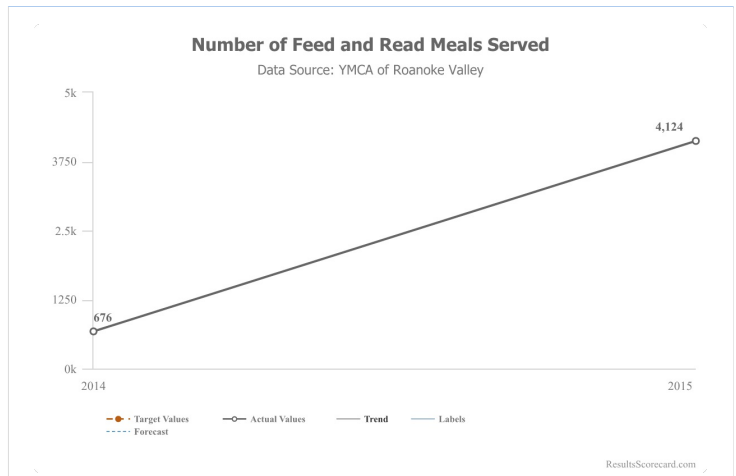
These improvements came after a face-to-face, day-long training led by an RLG coach, made possible by purchasing about six hours of additional technical assistance. A few months later, the community began using a new Scorecard, which serves as a guidance document for the workgroups.

"It's important to get an understanding of the theory first and then implement the Scorecard, which is a wonderful tracking mechanism," says Seidenberg. "Having the technical assistance is invaluable when we come up against hurdles, to get clarification in our thinking and to make sure we're moving forward in the correct way."

Moving forward includes using the RBA™ approach to identify existing campaign-related programs (for example, specific summer literacy-related programs) and establish performance measures, documented on the Scorecard, to gauge each program's impact on the children participating.

R Children Participate in Library Summer Reading Programs

I Number of Feed and Read Meals Served

Number of Feed and Read Meals Served
Data Source: YMCA of Roanoke Valley

4,124

676

2014   2015

Target Values   Actual Values   Trend   Labels
Forecast

ResultsScorecard.com

Shown here is a portion of the Results Scorecard used by the Roanoke, Virginia, GLR campaign.

For people who have a hard time with data, the line graphs that the Scorecard generates are a very clear visual explanation and very powerful to look at.

"RBA™ is such a good model to understand that the overall result we want for third-grade reading is reached through all this effort," says Seidenberg. "Sharing information leads to new ideas, projects, programs and understanding of what's going on. The collaboration increases."

The local campaign's expansion countywide should address a challenge that once limited use of the Scorecard: difficulty extracting data specifically for Southern Pines (pop. 13,000) from countywide data provided by several partners who serve all of Moore County (pop. 95,000).

Now when Moore County partners get together to assess and plan, they look at a screen full of data organized in crisp graphics by the Scorecard that display the lay of the land and forecast the future, prompting community "turn the curve" conversations.

"For people who have a hard time with data, the line graphs that the Scorecard generates are a very clear visual explanation and very powerful to look at," says Seidenberg. "It's a tool with a lot of strengths."
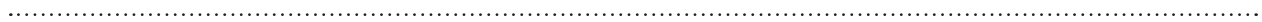
tahoe truckee

California

For the grade-level reading campaign in California's Tahoe Truckee region, the benefits of the Results Scorecard and RBA™ have been external and internal.

In its community outreach, the Tahoe Truckee campaign used Scorecard data to create an issue brief distributed to town managers, county officials, service clubs and local media.

"Over the last 15 months, we've gone on a road show around our community and region to talk about third-grade reading scores and kids in poverty. It's been really powerful," says Alison Schwedner, executive director of Community Collaborative of Tahoe Truckee, a program of the Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation and a GLR campaign partner.

Creating a narrative (in English and Spanish) to accompany the data helps grab attention. The issue brief notes, for example, that 38 percent of all local school district students and 68 percent of low-income students are not proficient readers by the end of third grade, based on 2013 data.

"There's always a fear of being too data-driven," says Schwedner. "You kind of miss the story part. And often the data doesn't reflect some of the good work that's being done, so we talk about having a data-driven and story-driven collaborative."

In its coalition work, the Tahoe Truckee campaign uses the Scorecard as an organizational tool to track its many efforts and RBA™ to further its collective impact approach. "It's made us look more closely at the data we're collecting and make sure they are relevant and useful," says Schwedner. And "it's a way to hold ourselves accountable."

She also points to untapped potential, due partly to limited resources. "The Results Scorecard is a really robust tool and we're using a fraction of it," she says. "In a rural region like ours, we are limited in fully realizing all the ways in which this tool could inform valuable strategic discussions."

Tahoe Truckee, she adds, hopes to broaden its Scorecard use by inviting partners "to measure the cumulative impact of all the collective efforts happening on the ground, no matter how small, to see if they ultimately lead to an overall change in the population-level result."

Tahoe Truckee has benefited from a data-driving history that predates the 2012 launch of its GLR campaign. "It's been a little bit easier for us because we were already on this path," says Schwedner.

In 2007, Community Collaborative of Tahoe Truckee developed community report cards (on paper, not online) to provide a data snapshot of the region's health, education and economic well-being every five years, working with local experts to determine the best progress indicators.

In its coalition work, the Tahoe Truckee campaign uses the Scorecard as an organizational tool to track its many efforts and RBA™ to further its collective impact approach.

"We wanted to use data to find out: 'Are we actually making an impact?'" she says. "Recognizing that we spend a lot of time in meetings and a lot of resources on community issues, we asked the question: 'How do we know we're making a difference?'"

In 2009, Schwedner and a colleague went to an RBA™ training by Mark Friedman, who developed the approach. "It seemed very logical and a good framework to create true community change," she says. To better reflect the RBA™ approach, Tahoe Truckee switched to using the Results Scorecard to produce its community report cards in 2012.

Soon after, Tahoe Truckee launched its GLR campaign — and then joined the Campaign's Results Scorecard pilot, creating a specific grade-level reading Scorecard. "It has really been able to reflect the community change process and guide us," she says.
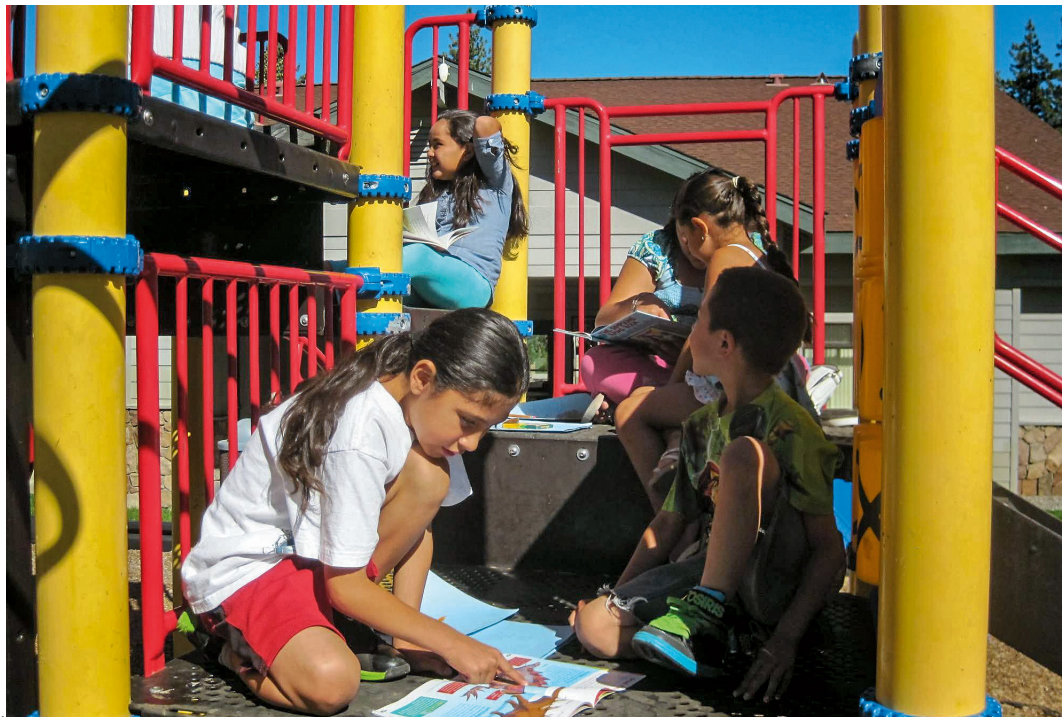
38%

of all local school district students and 68 percent of low-income students are not proficient readers by the end of third grade

38%

of all third graders and 57% of third graders from low-income families do not read at grade level

35%

of all children in Genesee County, including Flint, are not reading on grade level at the end of third grade and 30 percent of children under 18 live in poverty

flint

Michigan

The Results Scorecard and RBA™ are helping Flint, Michigan's grade-level reading campaign move from talk to action.

"It's changed the conversation and the course of our campaign," says JaNel Jamerson, director of the Flint & Genesee Literacy Network, a broad cradle-to-career literacy effort that includes the local GLR campaign.

In 2014, over 100 partners in Flint and beyond in Genesee County launched the cradle-to-career effort, going through a planning process, developing action teams and defining some results and strategies. But they didn't figure out how best to make their case to the community until joining the GLR Campaign in 2015 and the Results Scorecard pilot.

"We focused for the first time on *why* we're doing this and what results we want to see — coming up with four results to work on as a community," says Jamerson. "Before, we were in love with solutions and talking about how various programs can solve the issue. Now we are in love with the problem, which has led to broader conversation about causes and how to address those with a broader set of strategies that may include existing programs but also go beyond."

Flint has been able to plunge deeper and faster into using the Results Scorecard and RBA™, thanks to 25 additional technical assistance hours, supported by local funders, some of which are considering using the tool and approach to aid their individual grant making.

The Scorecard and RBA™ are helping Flint better align results and strategies; increase community understanding of the issues; and mobilize a broader constituency to be involved, beyond the school district, including business and philanthropic groups.

Improvements to Flint's initial plan have been made by the campaign's "Performance Accountability action team" including pursuing more participation by critical groups such as parents and other caregivers. They are now the focus of a revamped public awareness effort, "Literacy for Life," that promotes parental involvement and encourages families with children to spend time on "learning time" and educational play.

By developing and using the same performance measures to gauge the impact of similar campaign-related programs — for example, a variety of mentoring programs — Flint hopes to better determine what is having an impact.

Program providers are more comfortable with this, in part, because RBA™ helped the community move away from its original goal ("100 percent literacy through 100 percent community engagement") toward "turning the curve" in areas such as school readiness, says Jamerson.

Ultimately, the Campaign pilot has helped Flint get what it knew it needed from the start — a method for driving with data.

"When we first started, there was this elephant in the room — what if we don't reach our target?" he says. Now one main goal is to have all children ready for kindergarten — by working continuously to eliminate barriers to school readiness and celebrating small wins en route.

As a result, says Jamerson, "We're seeing higher levels of collaboration. Everyone is able to see how they can help. It increases their willingness."

Ultimately, the Campaign pilot has helped Flint get what it knew it needed from the start — a method for driving with data. "It lifted a weight off of our shoulders," says Jamerson. "It helped us organize information so the community could understand it and so we could track it."

For additional information

Network communities are encouraged to visit the Results Scorecard website for additional information and a demonstration of how the Scorecard can be used. If you have additional technical questions, contact Michael Adrian at Results Leadership Group at (424) 225-1841 or Michael@ResultsLeadership.org. If you are interested in joining the GLR Campaign's Results Scorecard pilot, contact Bob Saffold of the GLR Campaign at (919) 710-1065 or bob@smarterlearninggroup.com.

For more information about the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, visit gradelevelreading.net. Follow us on Twitter @readingby3rd.