

RESEARCH REPORT

# Evaluation of Phase II Technical Assistance for Evidence-Based Decision-Making in Local Criminal Justice Systems

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# Contents

Contents	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Executive Summary	v
TA Approach and Delivery	vi
Key Findings and Observations	vii
1. Introduction	1
2. Evaluation Approach: Design and Methods	4
3. EBDM Phase II Technical Assistance Approach	7
Overview of EBDM Phase II Seed Sites and Site Selection Process	9
Technical Assistance Delivery in Phase II	10
4. Examining the Broader Impact of Phase II: Key Findings from the Evaluation	24
Findings from the Process Analysis	25
Findings from the Cross-Wave, Cross-Site Stakeholder Survey	31
Agency Collaboration	36
Stakeholder Engagement and Coordination among Key Leaders	37
Perceived Benefits of Technical Assistance	39
Implementation Readiness	42
Level of Involvement in EBDM	44
Stakeholder Sphere	44
Summary	46
5. Conclusions and Implications	47
References	53
<b>Appendix A. EBDM Phase II Roadmap</b>	
<b>Appendix B. Survey Scales</b>	
<b>Appendix C. Scale Scores by Stakeholder Level of EBDM Involvement</b>	
<b>Appendix D. Scale Scores by Stakeholder Sphere</b>	

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# Executive Summary

In 2008, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) launched the Evidence-Based Decision-Making in Local Criminal Justice Systems (EBDM) Initiative. For Phase I of the initiative, NIC and its consortium of partners—the Center for Effective Public Policy (CEPP), the Pretrial Justice Institute (PJI), The Justice Management Institute (JMI), and The Carey Group—developed the Framework for Evidence-Based Decision-Making in Local Criminal Justice Systems (“the Framework”). The Framework distills two decades’ worth of “what works” research (incorporating both factors associated with reoffending and strategies that reduce the likelihood of reoffending); it seeks to achieve harm reduction (NIC 2010:20) defined as:

“decreases in the ill effects of crime experienced broadly by communities (e.g., resources allocated to the justice system that could otherwise be directed to alternative public priorities, unsafe streets, abandoned businesses, etc.), by victims (e.g., fear of reprisal or revictimization, financial losses, etc.), by citizens (e.g., lack of confidence in community protection efforts, generalized fears of victimization, etc.), by families of offenders (e.g., loss of wages by a family member who is justice-system involved, inability of incarcerated fathers/mothers to fulfill their parenting roles, etc.), and by offenders themselves (e.g., homelessness, unemployment, etc.)”

In June 2010, NIC launched Phase II of the EBDM initiative, which was designed to facilitate collaborative, evidence-based decision-making in local criminal justice systems across the nation by drawing on and applying the findings noted in the Framework.

Partnering with a consortium of technical assistance (TA) experts led by the Center for Effective Public Policy (CEPP), NIC selected seven jurisdictions (Charlottesville/Albemarle County, VA; Eau Claire County, WI; Grant County, IN; Mesa County, CO; Milwaukee County, WI; Ramsey County, MN; and Yamhill County, OR) through a competitive process to receive targeted technical assistance to support an intensive planning process guided by the Framework’s four principles. These four principles (NIC 2010: 25-28) state:

1. The professional judgment of criminal justice system decision-makers is enhanced when informed by evidence-based knowledge;
2. Every interaction within the criminal justice system offers an opportunity to contribute to harm reduction;
3. Systems achieve better outcomes when they operate collaboratively; and
4. The criminal justice system will continually learn and improve when professionals make decisions based on the collection, analysis, and use of data and information.

NIC selected the Urban Institute (UI) in September 2010 to evaluate the Phase II technical assistance, specifically to (1) assess the quality, relevance, and content of the training and technical assistance provided and

(2) examine the effect of TA on the sites' implementation readiness (i.e., the "value-added" of technical assistance to this effort). A participatory action research framework guided the evaluation, meaning that the research team worked closely with the sites, the TA providers, and NIC to monitor TA implementation and refine operations based on early and frequent feedback from the evaluation team. The overarching goal of the evaluation was to "tell the story" of EBDM planning efforts in the sites and to identify lessons learned and their implications not only for Phase III implementation but for other jurisdictions seeking to implement the Framework.

The evaluation drew on multiple sources of information including monthly discussions with the Local Initiative Coordinator (LIC) in each community and the TA coordinators to document Phase II progress, milestones, challenges, and lessons learned. UI also reviewed site documents including monthly policy team meeting agenda and notes, team charters, and other materials. Members of the evaluation team visited each EBDM community twice to observe technical assistance and training events and to interview stakeholders who were central to each site's EBDM effort. The purpose of these interviews was to discuss the progress and pace of Phase II planning, the benefits of TA provision, and site satisfaction with it. UI's EBDM stakeholder survey collected input from a broader cross-section of constituents, some less directly involved with the EBDM initiative but for whom EBDM was relevant to their work, regarding the quality and relevance of TA and the benefits (and challenges) of participation in Phase II with respect to collaboration, coordination, information-sharing, knowledge development and transfer, and support for EBDM.

This report describes the EBDM Phase II technical assistance approach and presents findings and themes from the process evaluation and outcome assessment (conducted from October 2010 to February 2012) of the technical assistance delivered to the seven sites selected under Phase II of the EBDM initiative. In doing so, we explore the effect of Phase II technical assistance on the sites' readiness for implementation and examine the broader impacts of Phase II participation for these communities. The report concludes with a discussion of implications and recommendations for future technical assistance efforts, informed by the lessons learned as part of this assessment. It should be noted that the information presented in this report reflects the status of the sites' planning efforts and TA activities as of February 2012, and includes any updates obtained by UI between February 2012 and submission of the report to NIC in June 2012.

## TA Approach and Delivery

The Phase II technical assistance approach sought to facilitate both the Framework's goals of recidivism reduction and harm reduction. This involved the adoption of well-evaluated principles and practices, while also

allowing for some level of adaptation of these principles and practices to other parts of the criminal justice system. While much of the TA approach focused on helping sites identify and prioritize areas of their system that could be improved through the use of evidence-based practices, innovation was encouraged where the research literature was less developed regarding effective recidivism reduction practices for a specific decision point in the legal process.

Phase II TA provision initially followed a general blueprint in each site, focused on building a solid foundation for future work and consisting of five key activities: 1) monthly facilitation by the TA coordinator; 2) mapping the site's local criminal justice system; 3) conducting mini-assessments and providing substantive expertise specific to locally identified priority areas of the site's criminal justice system; 4) developing subject-specific materials including various "starter kits" designed to assist sites in their planning efforts; and 5) other initiative-wide activities, including monthly cross-site LIC calls and webinars with nationally recognized subject matter experts.

## Key Findings and Observations

Evaluation results offer ample evidence that Phase II training and technical assistance enhanced site capacity in critical areas (i.e., strengthened collaboration, increased EBDM and system knowledge, increased support for EBDM principles and practices, identified change targets, and facilitated strategic planning) essential for successful implementation. Furthermore, stakeholders generally rated the TA positively, giving it high marks on relevance, quality, responsiveness, and utility. Selected observations include:

- Stakeholders unequivocally identified the TA coordinators as the essential component of Phase II assistance. Simply stated, stakeholders across the seven EBDM sites identified the aid of their respective TA coordinator as the single element that they could not have done without.
- Universally, stakeholders involved in the mapping process identified this effort as one of the most important activities in Phase II; the value of not only having a visual portrait of case flow in the criminal justice system, but also having a better understanding of other agencies' policies and practices made the work in Phase II worthwhile.
- Stakeholders viewed the system-wide "EBDM awareness" training sessions as beneficial to building local expertise and to engaging agency staff from across the criminal justice system. All sites, however, recognized that this training activity had to be one of many efforts to educate staff on EBDM principles and the implementation of changes throughout the criminal justice system.

- Other TA activities, such as the logic model development and scorecard development, were more difficult for the sites to engage in; stakeholders reportedly had a harder time seeing how these activities fit into the “big picture” perhaps, in part, because many sites did not engage in these activities until toward the end (April–June) of Phase II. Stakeholders also reported that webinars, while informative, were less helpful in readying the sites for implementation.
- The sites identified various Phase II components that proved to be challenging, including the truncated timeline and enormous time commitment required of policy team and working group members. Many stakeholders estimated spending the equivalent of one day a week on EBDM in addition to their full time positions.

In addition to soliciting regular input from EBDM participants on Phase II TA activities, the Urban Institute surveyed a broader cross-section of EBDM stakeholders twice during the initiative—once shortly after Phase II TA began and again after Phase II concluded but prior to Phase III site selection. The survey measured stakeholder perceptions regarding the benefits of TA and the initiative, collaboration and coordination, knowledge development, and support for EBDM and EBDM principles. Cross-wave analyses of survey data indicate that all sites registered marked improvement in a number of critical areas including stakeholder engagement, coordination among criminal justice leaders, and support for and knowledge of evidence-based decision-making. Sites’ attitudes toward agency collaboration and coordination among criminal justice agencies did not consistently improve, but overall remained positive; many were already quite high at the first survey administration. More stakeholders also identified key pre-implementation activities, including data collection and analysis and community engagement, as current priorities at Wave 2 of the survey. Additionally, all sites reported seeing more benefits from TA and from Phase II participation over the course of the initiative.

During on-site interviews, stakeholders reiterated that the structure of the initiative (both in terms of the LIC and policy team leader positions) was crucial to keeping the team on task and on time, as well as engaging other stakeholder groups in EBDM. Though TA coordinators were helpful in reaching out to reluctant participants, this proved to be particularly challenging for law enforcement and prosecutors. These groups were more skeptical of evidence-based principles, particularly when they thought that the initiative was too focused on offender outcomes and did not emphasize the importance of effectively balancing the interests of the criminal justice system and the community (specifically victims).

While the stakeholders consulted for this evaluation reported a number of benefits from the TA and participation in the initiative, they also identified a number of challenges in the planning phase and identified specific areas for improvement. Stakeholder feedback and the results of the survey support the following recommendations for future planning efforts and technical assistance provision:



- **Increase emphasis on data collection and performance measurement in Phase II.** Although the sites and TA providers all recognized the importance of data analysis for their EBDM work, relatively little analysis was conducted during Phase II due in part to limited site capacity, resources, and time for analysis.<sup>1</sup> They also identified data collection and analysis as a critical gap going forward into implementation: for sites to have set performance measures on their scorecards without having any baseline data was a challenge (and may have led to implementation plans that do not have appropriate outcomes or are not realistic). More emphasis in Phase II on measurement and data collection and analysis would have been beneficial.
- **Make research more accessible.** TA coordinators went to great lengths to make the research underlying the “evidence-base” available to stakeholders for their review (i.e., TA coordinators provided the sites with research articles and reports, as well as webinars with subject matter experts). While appreciated, some stakeholders found the research literature challenging to digest and recommended that TA providers translate and summarize the research findings into practitioner-friendly language to make it more accessible for those who actively seek out the research, as well as those who would like to but do not have the time to read entire articles or reports.
- **Prioritize agency staff engagement in Phase II.** Each EBDM site made a strategic decision about when and how (at what level) to engage agency staff in Phase II. The decision to engage staff often provoked difficult conversations, yet stakeholders in the sites that chose to engage staff in Phase II indicated that doing so put them in a better position to implement their EBDM plans in Phase III. Conversely, sites that did not engage their agency staff in Phase II reported more concerns about sustainability of the EBDM initiative. This suggests that staff engagement should be emphasized as a component in future planning efforts, as opposed to waiting until implementation. Stakeholders in all sites reported that more EBDM training—both cross-system and discipline-specific training—would be beneficial in Phase III.
- **Focus initiative on challenges related to the adversarial nature of the criminal justice system.** Many stakeholders reported that the adversarial nature of the criminal justice system (if I win, you lose; if you lose, I win), particularly between prosecutors and defense attorneys, posed challenges in Phase II and would likely continue to do so in Phase III. Whether these groups stay engaged in the initiative and implement their components of the EBDM work plan with fidelity remains to be seen. While this

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<sup>1</sup> The sites tackled this gap in different ways. Albemarle County/Charlottesville partnered on a grant to fund a system analyst, and tapped the University of Virginia’s capstone program for assistance with data collection and analysis. Similarly, Grant County engaged a local university professor in the Phase II efforts as a policy team member and drew on his research and evaluation expertise to assist with performance measurement, as well as other aspects of Phase II planning while Mesa County’s TA coordinator reached out to university faculty with evaluation expertise.

challenge was a reflection of implementing EBDM in the real world criminal justice system, additional TA and education may be necessary to reinforce the potential EBDM “win-win” themes for these stakeholders and the constituencies they serve.

- **Extend timeline for Phase II.** The vast majority of EBDM stakeholders identified the condensed Phase II timeline as a critical challenge and one that placed a tremendous burden on key stakeholders and their staff. While the timeline was helpful in moving the initiative forward and keeping stakeholders focused, some suggested that it came at a cost in terms of planning (some desired more time to prepare and plan before meetings) and preparedness (i.e., stakeholders reported that receipt of the of EBDM materials, including the Starter Kits, earlier in the process would have allowed more time for review and discussion of the application of the information with their colleagues or TA provider). Planning and implementation efforts should carefully weigh the potential benefits and costs for stakeholders and the overall initiative when settling on a timeline.
- **Provide more structured opportunities for peer learning.** At various points during the planning phase, different stakeholder groups expressed a desire for more peer-to-peer learning opportunities. Though the competitive nature of Phase II may have limited communication between sites, those stakeholders who attended the cross-site meetings found them to be extremely helpful for peer learning (and for team bonding) and wished that there had been more than two opportunities to interact with their counterparts during the initiative. Cross-site meetings and other structured events permitted stakeholders to make this interaction a priority; while stakeholders acknowledged that they could have initiated contact with their peers during the initiative, there were often more pressing priorities competing for their time and attention.
- **Encourage participation from less involved participants.** Each site had different approaches to engaging stakeholders outside of the criminal justice system, particularly victim advocates and community representatives.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, some chose not to reach out to these groups in Phase II, while others actively sought to involve them. Likewise, each site actively worked to engage key criminal justice stakeholders from across the system. Some stakeholders outside the criminal justice sphere resisted further involvement because they viewed the EBDM initiative or the Framework as too focused on offender outcomes and recidivism (as opposed to other system objectives); other stakeholders within the criminal justice system struggled with the broader harm reduction goals that the Framework identified. Future efforts to replicate EBDM planning and implementation should work to more clearly

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<sup>2</sup> This engagement is an important part of the Framework, and will be important for sites with implementation plans that require some type of community or victim involvement.

outline the components of the Framework and EBDM that are most relevant to specific stakeholders in order to facilitate greater engagement.

- **Use policy team leadership position to engage other stakeholders.** There were benefits and potential drawbacks to having specific policy team members in leadership positions and/or serving as the coordinator for the initiative. In some sites, the LIC and policy team chair were based in the same agency, which meant that that agency tended either to drive the initiative or to assume the majority of the Phase II work; this arrangement could run the risk of functionally excluding other key stakeholders from decision-making or important EBDM work. Alternatively, some stakeholders reported that it was beneficial to have someone less knowledgeable about EBDM as chair of the policy team. Doing so not only allowed the policy team to “grow together” in its knowledge of EBDM but often produced an enthusiastic champion of EBDM that helped bring other stakeholders along in the effort particularly those in the same sphere as the policy team chair. This configuration reportedly resulted in greater buy in and broader knowledge development.



# 1. Introduction

There has been a concerted effort in recent years among academicians, researchers, practitioners and policymakers to determine “what works” in the criminal justice system and to develop a comprehensive literature of “evidence-based” practices<sup>3</sup> that can be replicated with success (see for example the Office of Justice Programs *CrimeSolutions.gov* online resource, National Reentry Resource Center *What Works In Reentry Clearinghouse*, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention *Model Programs Guide*, and the *Campbell Collaboration Library of Systematic Reviews*). This effort to identify tested practices that reduce crime and enhance public safety is particularly critical in this era of shrinking budgets that increasingly require criminal justice leaders to do more with less. Nonetheless, knowing where to invest scarce resources to obtain the best return (both fiscally and from a public safety standpoint) is often easier said than done.

Addressing the challenges practitioners face in attempting to understand and implement evidence-based practices, particularly at the local level, is crucial to developing practical and successful criminal justice reform efforts. With that goal in mind, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) launched the Evidence-Based Decision-Making in Local Criminal Justice Systems (EBDM) Initiative in 2008. In Phase I of the Initiative (2008–2010), NIC and its consortium of

## Figure 1. Overview of the EBDM Framework Principles

Four principles form the foundation of the EBDM Framework (NIC 2010:25-28):

1. The professional judgment of criminal justice system decision-makers is enhanced when informed by evidence-based knowledge;
2. Every interaction within the criminal justice system offers an opportunity to contribute to harm reduction;
3. Systems achieve better outcomes when they operate collaboratively;
4. The criminal justice system will continually learn and improve when professionals make decisions based on the collection, analysis, and use of data and information.

<sup>3</sup> Defining these terms presents its own challenge. Indeed, a critical question that still engenders much debate concerns what makes something evidence-based: Is “evidence” a particular principle that research has shown to produce desired outcomes, or is it an approach to use data to guide decision-making? Is it sufficient to call a certain practice “evidence-based” if a single evaluation deems it effective at meeting its desired goals or outcomes, or does a practice have to be implemented and evaluated in a number of different places before it can be deemed evidence- or research-based? How does one distinguish between principles and programs in assessing the evidence-based practices literature? The field has struggled to answer these questions, and has developed an even more extensive set of terminology (e.g., promising, model, effective) to further explain what works (and what doesn’t work) in the criminal justice system. However, the effort of researchers to determine what makes something evidence-based has limited the ability of practitioners to digest, understand, and potentially implement evidence-based practices.

partners—the Center for Effective Public Policy (CEPP), the Pretrial Justice Institute (PJI), The Justice Management Institute (JMI) and The Carey Group—developed the Framework for Evidence-Based Decision-Making in Local Criminal Justice Systems (“the Framework”) to facilitate collaborative, evidence-based decision-making in local criminal justice systems across the nation.<sup>4</sup> The Framework draws on the findings of two decades’ worth of “what works” research literature (incorporating both factors associated with reoffending and strategies that reduce the likelihood of reoffending) and seeks to achieve harm-reduction.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, it strives to improve public safety, as well as reduce offending and the negative consequences (i.e., harm) of reoffending for the community at large.

To advance these goals, NIC launched Phase II of the EBDM Initiative in 2010. Partnering with the same consortium of technical assistance (TA) experts led by CEPP, NIC selected seven jurisdictions through a competitive process<sup>6</sup> to receive targeted technical assistance to support an intensive planning process guided by the Framework’s four principles (see figure 1). The key goals of Phase II were to

1. establish collaborative partnerships among local criminal justice stakeholders;
2. foster the development of a shared philosophy and vision among stakeholders;
3. enhance capacity for data collection and analysis necessary to support future implementation of the Framework;
4. increase knowledge, skills, and abilities regarding research-based risk reduction strategies; and
5. develop jurisdiction-specific tools to assist in the implementation of evidence-based decision-making at the system, agency, and case (individual) level.

Together, these five goals formed the basis of TA delivery in Phase II—the planning phase—designed to prepare the seven seed sites for implementation of the Framework in Phase III.

Although the official start date of Phase II was August 2010, Phase II work began in earnest in the seven sites following the October 2010 grantee kick-off meeting in Bethesda, Maryland. The kick-off meeting was

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<sup>4</sup> Go to <http://www.cepp.com/documents/EBDM%20Framework.pdf> to access a copy of the Framework online.

<sup>5</sup> Defined in the Framework (NIC 2010:10) as “decreases in the ill effects of crime experienced broadly by communities (e.g., resources allocated to the justice system that could otherwise be directed to alternative public priorities, unsafe streets, abandoned businesses, etc.), by victims (e.g., fear of reprisal or revictimization, financial losses, etc.), by citizens (e.g., lack of confidence in community protection efforts, generalized fears of victimization, etc.), by families of offenders (e.g., loss of wages by a family member who is justice-system involved, inability of incarcerated fathers/mothers to fulfill their parenting roles, etc.), and by offenders themselves (e.g., homelessness, unemployment, etc.)

<sup>6</sup> At the start of Phase II, in June 2010, NIC released a competitive solicitation for EBDM seed site selection. In the solicitation, NIC asked the sites to name a local initiative coordinator and policy team chair, as well as identify other key members of the policy team (all of whom were required to submit letters of support for the project). Following a multistage review process that included site visits (staffed by NIC and members of the TA consortium) and an evaluability assessment by the National Institute of Justice in nine candidate jurisdictions, seven sites were selected for Phase II: Charlottesville/Albemarle County, VA; Eau Claire County, WI; Grant County, IN; Mesa County, CO; Milwaukee, WI; Ramsey County, MN; and Yamhill County, OR.

attended by multidisciplinary (law enforcement, judiciary, prosecutors, defense attorneys, victim advocates, and social service providers) site teams of approximately seven people. While this kick-off meeting served multiple purposes (to build or solidify site teams, expose grantees to the work and interests of other jurisdictions, and introduce technical assistance resources), a primary goal was to convey the expectations of Phase II work and begin the process of educating key stakeholders on the evidence-base and its potential application to their respective criminal justice systems. The team of TA providers discussed how the evidence-based principles detailed in the Framework could inform a method of decision-making in local criminal justice systems, and how the sites could both apply evidence-based practices as discussed in the literature and develop innovative strategies from research findings. The TA providers explained to the sites how their Phase II technical assistance delivery plan would help the sites assess current practice in the criminal justice system and identify areas for changes in policy and practice. The objective was to make informed changes that would increasingly align site-level criminal justice practice with research principles and the use of “evidence” to improve their system efficiencies and outcomes.

NIC selected the Urban Institute (UI) in September 2010 to conduct an assessment<sup>7</sup> of the Phase II technical assistance. The evaluation’s main objectives were: (1) to assess the quality, relevance, and content of the training and technical assistance provided; and (2) to examine the effect of TA on the sites’ implementation readiness (i.e., the “value-added” of technical assistance to this effort). A participatory action research framework guided the evaluation, meaning that the research team worked closely with the sites, the TA providers, and NIC to monitor TA implementation and refine operations based on early and frequent feedback from the evaluation team. The overarching goal of the assessment, however, was to “tell the story” of EBDM planning efforts in the sites and to identify lessons learned and their implications, not only for Phase III implementation but for other jurisdictions seeking to implement the Framework.

This report presents findings and themes from the process evaluation and outcome assessment of the technical assistance delivered to the seven sites selected under Phase II of the Framework for Evidence-Based Decision-Making (EBDM) in Local Criminal Justice Systems. Section 2 of this report describes the evaluation design, data sources, and analytic strategy employed by the current study and notable modifications to the evaluation approach. In Section 3, we examine Phase II technical assistance, including the proposed approach, delivery structure, the range of assistance provided, and factors influencing the scope, content and nature of the technical assistance delivered across the seven sites. Section 4 explores the effect of Phase II technical assistance on the sites’ readiness for implementation as well as the broader impacts of site participation in Phase II;

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<sup>7</sup> Through the remainder of this report, the terms “assessment” and “evaluation” are used interchangeably to describe UI’s work during Phase II.

findings from the EBDM stakeholder survey are also presented. The report concludes with a discussion of lessons learned (Section 5) and recommendations for future technical assistance efforts.

## 2. Evaluation Approach: Design and Methods

The extent to which the training and technical assistance provided by CEPP and its partners achieved the stated goals of Phase II and in doing so, effectively enhanced the sites' knowledge of the Framework's principles and increased their readiness to implement the Framework in Phase III, formed the basis for UI's evaluation.

Although technical assistance can be an extremely effective tool in facilitating system improvement, the extant research suggests that it must be perceived by stakeholders as relevant and responsive to local needs and realities, cogent and accessible, and delivered in a timely and strategic manner. Otherwise, technical assistance runs the risk of being "ad hoc and discontinuous" or unresponsive to local needs (Brown 1980: 20). Moreover, if the necessary level of technical assistance is not maintained over time, it will not yield the desired results. To avoid these potential pitfalls, technical assistance approaches need to be evaluated and re-evaluated over time (Brown 1980).

While our review of the extant literature indicates that there have not been many independent assessments of technical assistance provision in the criminal justice system, there have been evaluations in other fields (e.g., education, community service, and public health). For example, an evaluation of AmeriCorps (a national organization that promotes volunteerism through building private and public partnerships and engaging the community and government agencies) assessed whether its programs were implemented effectively and provided the necessary assistance to its partner organizations (Minkus and Duster 1996). Through collecting qualitative data, the evaluator examined whether AmeriCorps offered assistance consistently for the duration of the program. During semi-structured and structured interviews with agency staff, AmeriCorps members, and community residents, the evaluators inquired about overall impressions of AmeriCorps, the actual activities that they engaged in, and the overall lessons learned and challenges they experienced (Minkus and Duster 1996). In contrast, Eber and Rolf (1997) conducted pre-post surveys and focus groups with 80 technical assistance recipients one year after TA services were delivered to assess both intermediate and longer-term outcomes of the TA on recipient knowledge of key concepts and changes in actual work practices. The study's analysis indicated that the TA was effective in promoting knowledge transfer and resulted in the adoption of new practices and procedures consistent with the training provided.



Regardless of the methods used, there are four levels at which evaluation of technical assistance should occur: reaction, knowledge, organization change, and results (OJJDP 1998). Each level builds on the other; thus, change at one level should inform the TA approach and impact the outcome at the next level. Evaluation at the reaction level assesses participants' immediate reaction to specific training or technical assistance (i.e., were the concepts clear, was the content comprehensive and relevant, can the recipient identify the immediate application of the TA) and occurs immediately after a TA session. At the knowledge level, evaluators look for evidence that recipients have acquired and are using new knowledge, or have developed the new skills the TA intended to promote. Evaluation of organization change examines the extent to which knowledge transfer from individual recipients has led to changes at the organizational level such as new procedures, policies or ways of doing business; organization change assessment rests on the collection of baseline data. The final level, results, involves measuring the extent to which key outcomes have been achieved (i.e., the "problem has been solved or the need has been met") and involves changes at a more micro-level (OJJDP 1998: 58). UI used a mixed methods evaluation strategy in response to each of these "best practices" in order to yield actionable information that NIC and its TA partners (CEPP and its consortium of partners) could use to modify and enhance technical assistance to the seven jurisdictions selected under Phase II.

UI's evaluation approach consisted of two components:

- **Process evaluation**—the process evaluation documented the scope of TA provided to the seven sites to facilitate their readiness to implement the EBDM Framework, specifically the scope and content of the TA delivered; the extent to which TA was modified over time to address site needs and challenges; barriers to TA provision and the solutions employed; and the extent to which the TA provision addressed the sites' needs.
- **Outcome evaluation**—the outcome evaluation examined the influence of TA delivery on the sites' operations and procedures; capacity for EBDM; and general readiness to implement the EBDM Framework under Phase III.

Evaluation activities consisted of:

- **Phone interviews with EBDM stakeholders**—UI conducted regular telephone interviews with individuals central to each site's EBDM initiative (policy team members and others) to gather stakeholder impressions and satisfaction with TA provision and document the effect of TA on site operations, including implementation of new practices or procedures, shifts in organizational mission, and knowledge transfer. These semi-structured interviews were guided by a brief protocol to ensure systematic investigation of key topics, although discussion often expanded to touch on a variety of other, related issues of importance to the site.

- **Site visits**—the UI team visited each site twice during Phase II to observe TA activities, meet with core stakeholders (typically policy team members and occasionally staff from their respective organizations), and document changes in procedures and practices tied to TA delivery. Visits were staggered to observe sites at different points in the planning process and a variety of technical assistance activities. Initial site visits were conducted between January and June 2011. UI made its second and final visit to the sites between October 2011 and January 2012 to examine the “legacy” of Phase II planning activities, particularly with regard to collaboration, and the extent of implementation on-going across the sites. These visits also provided the opportunity for stakeholders to reflect on Phase II, including the competitive nature of that phase and the pros and cons of that approach, as well as challenges they anticipated moving forward into Phase III implementation.
- **Online key stakeholder survey**—UI surveyed a broad set of stakeholders in each site twice during Phase II—first in February 2011, roughly three months into the planning phase, and again in July 2011, shortly after sites submitted their Phase III applications but before selection decisions were announced. The EBDM survey measured stakeholder impressions of the TA received, levels of perceived support for evidence-based decision-making in their community and their agency, and the benefits and challenges of participating in the EBDM initiative. Each site received a brief memorandum summarizing the findings from each wave of the survey; these memoranda offered stakeholders constructive feedback to assist and advance their respective planning efforts. When possible, survey findings were also presented at site policy team meetings (i.e., Eau Claire County in October 2011, Grant County in June 2011, Mesa County in December 2011, Milwaukee County in November 2011, and Ramsey County in October 2011).
- **Monthly activity reports and document review**—UI worked with both the sites’ local initiative coordinators (LICs) and CEPP’s TA coordinators to obtain and review key materials developed for the Phase II effort, as well as document the scope and content of TA provided each month, including site participation in, application of, and satisfaction with the TA provided. In addition, the UI team conducted separate monthly phone interviews with the sites’ EBDM coordinators (and core team in Charlottesville) and TA coordinators to document TA plans and to track planning progress, milestones, and challenges affecting Phase II work.

UI’s assessment work in the sites spanned a 16-month period between October 2010 and February 2012, culminating with our attendance at the Phase III grantee kick-off meeting in Aurora, CO in late February 2012. As the final evaluation activity, attending the cross-site meeting allowed the UI team to observe the sites and the TA providers in their transition into Phase III implementation work. All of the above activities informed the development and content of this report submitted to NIC in June 2012.

# 3. EBDM Phase II Technical Assistance Approach

Phase II technical assistance focused primarily on assisting the seven EBDM sites in identifying areas of practice to which the evidence-base could be applied to improve the efficiency and outcomes of their respective criminal justice systems, and on preparing the seven EBDM sites for eventual implementation of those practices.

Ensuring a proper level of collaboration and cooperation across and outside the criminal justice system, as well as stakeholder understanding of and support for EBDM principles, were also critical to the success of the planning phase. Collaboration and stakeholder education—both building a common understanding of how the criminal justice system functioned in their respective communities and its policies, and evidence-based decision-making—were foundational components of the **Phase II Roadmap** (see **Appendix A**) and arguably essential for other key components of the Roadmap such as building individual agencies that are collaborative and ready for change. Data collection, measurement, and analyses, while relevant, figured less prominently on the Roadmap and in Phase II TA.

Before describing the scope and nature of the TA provided and efforts to facilitate implementation readiness, it is important to clarify how the Framework and Phase II activities approached and applied the “what works” research (i.e., the “evidence-base” in the criminal justice field). As noted earlier, the purpose of the EBDM initiative is to help jurisdictions integrate research findings into their local criminal justice decision-making processes and practices. The Framework for EBDM distills seven key principles<sup>8</sup> for practice from the research literature (NIC 2010: 13-15):

1. Use risk assessment tools to identify risk to reoffend and criminogenic needs.
2. Direct programming and interventions to medium and higher risk offenders.
3. Focus interventions for medium and higher risk offenders on their individual criminogenic needs.
4. Respond to misconduct with swiftness, certainty, and proportionality.
5. Use more carrots than sticks.
6. Deliver services in natural environments where possible.
7. Pair sanctions with interventions that address criminogenic needs.

These seven principles for criminal justice practice emphasize the use of data collected on individuals in the criminal justice system to guide the allocation of scarce resources, from incarceration to programming and

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<sup>8</sup> Although these seven principles are illustrative of practices drawn from the research, sites were encouraged to adopt evidence-based strategies across the criminal justice continuum that extended beyond risk and recidivism reduction.

service delivery, and to promote recidivism reduction, the primary outcome measured in the evidence-based practices (EBP) literature. In brief, the EBDM Framework identifies practices at key junctures in the legal process for which there is evidence (i.e., research findings) of effectiveness and presents them as principles of effective practice that may be applied at various decision-making stages to reduce recidivism and harm; it does so with the intent of facilitating greater application of those principles and practices in jurisdictions nationally. These seven principles for criminal justice practice underlie the decision-making process that serves as the basis of the EBDM initiative.

Although not explicitly articulated in the Framework, Phase II planning also encouraged some degree of innovative adaptation by transferring evidence-based practices traditionally used for one decision-making purpose in one area of the system to another point in the decision-making process. Perhaps the best example of this is the application of the Proxy screening tool—a brief three-item instrument traditionally used to screen for the risk of reoffending at the “back end” of the system (i.e., to aid in supervision decision-making—to supervise or not, and at what level)—to inform cite and release decisions at the very front end of the system. The EBDM initiative may have taken this approach for two reasons: first, mere replication (i.e., limiting the application of practices to the exact manner to which they were originally designed and evaluated) of well-evaluated practices does not necessarily advance the field of practice; and second, there is a significant gap in the EBP literature specific to the “front end” of the system.

To the latter point, the vast majority of research focuses on the back end of the criminal justice system and post-conviction offender outcomes. The programs and methods of supervision and service delivery that have been shown to reduce recidivism—which is measured as either re-arrest, re-conviction, re-incarceration, or all three—are typically employed at sentencing (in deciding to sentence to incarceration or some alternative to incarceration), during incarceration and/or community supervision, and at reentry from jail or prison (see for example Lipsey and Cullen 2007; Aos et al. 2006; Andrews 2006; MacKenzie 2006; Lowenkamp et al. 2006; Gaes et al. 1999; Gendreau et al. 1996; Andrews et al. 1990). Methods of pre-conviction programming, supervision, and service delivery are far less researched and the evidence supporting these methods is less conclusive. In turn, while there is considerable research evidence on policing practices, outcomes focus primarily on reduction in community-level crime and increased public safety, as opposed to reductions in individual-level offending.<sup>9</sup> This model would be considered an evidence-based approach to crime prevention, but not for recidivism reduction.

Finally, while the EBDM initiative emphasizes the goal of “harm reduction” in the criminal justice system, the evidence-based principles on which EBDM is based are largely designed to reduce recidivism (an individual-

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<sup>9</sup> While the two concepts—reductions in community crime and individual-level recidivism—would seem to go hand-in-hand, there is research which suggests this is not always the case (see for example Roehl et al. 2006).

level outcome). Nonetheless, in the EBDM initiative, harm reduction could be conceived as both an individual-level outcome (reduce harm to the offender caused by subjective pretrial practices, for example) and a systems-level outcome (increase public safety through crime reduction).

In summary, the Phase II technical assistance approach to the EBDM initiative sought to achieve both the goals of recidivism reduction and harm reduction through the application of well-evaluated principles and practices while also allowing for some level of innovation. While much of the TA approach focused on helping sites identify the EBP gaps in their systems, prioritizing which gaps to address first, and selecting the “right” approaches to fill those gaps, innovation was encouraged where the EBP literature was silent on effective recidivism reduction practices for a specific *decision-making point* in the legal process. The subsequent sections describe the TA approach to facilitating site readiness for Phase III implementation following the key components of the Phase II Roadmap. First, we briefly discuss how Phase II site selection assessed the characteristics of the seven sites chosen for Phase II and how these characteristics affected TA work. The section ends with a summary of the sites’ Phase III plans and change targets.

## Overview of EBDM Phase II Seed Sites and Site Selection Process

The Phase II EBDM seed sites were selected through a competitive process. NIC issued a request for proposals to local jurisdictions interested in the EBDM initiative in late spring 2010, and upon reviewing the applications, NIC and the TA provider consortium selected nine jurisdictions to visit to further examine site readiness for the EBDM planning phase. Prior collaborative history, current collaborative structures, orientation to the concepts outlined in the Framework, experience implementing EBP, capacity for data collection and analysis, and willingness to commit local resources<sup>10</sup> factored heavily in the site selection process. At the conclusion of the review process, NIC selected seven EBDM Phase II seed sites: Charlottesville/Albemarle County, VA; Eau Claire County, WI; Grant County, IN; Mesa County, CO; Milwaukee, WI; Ramsey County, MN; and Yamhill County, OR.

The seven EBDM seed sites vary on a number of key characteristics including collaborative structure, geography, population, and size of the jail and criminal justice system, thus allowing the Framework to be applied in different settings. For example, in four of the seven EBDM sites a community corrections agency

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<sup>10</sup> Sites were asked to commit to supporting a 50 percent full time employee as the LIC and the ongoing engagement of key stakeholders from all criminal justice agencies as demonstrated by brief letters of support that stated their interest, role, and commitment to the initiative.

(probation, parole or correction services) served as the initiative’s lead agency, while the coordinators of the local criminal justice coordinating councils served as LICs in the two Wisconsin sites.<sup>11</sup> The City of Charlottesville/Albemarle County is unique in that the initiative is situated in conjoined jurisdictions (i.e., the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County) and the LIC is housed in the area’s regional Community Criminal Justice Board (CCJB); this board not only serves Charlottesville and Albemarle County, but other neighboring counties as well.

While all the sites vary in size and demographics, both in terms of their overall population and their criminal justice population, this variation is also reflected in the complexity and capacity of the local criminal justice systems. Three sites (Eau Claire County, WI; Grant County, IN; Yamhill County, OR) comprise relatively small jurisdictions. The remaining sites consist of large counties or cities. The larger EBDM sites tend to have more complex criminal justice systems; for example, Charlottesville/Albemarle, Mesa, Milwaukee, and Ramsey Counties all have identified pretrial agencies, while Eau Claire, Grant, and Yamhill Counties do not have a separate agency making pretrial release recommendations or providing pre-adjudication supervision services. The sites’ jail populations also varied according to the size of the jurisdiction; the average daily jail population among the EBDM sites ranged from 3,522 (two jail facilities in Milwaukee County in 2008)<sup>12</sup> to 263 (Grant County in 2009).<sup>13</sup> Additionally, some of the sites (Eau Claire, Mesa, and Milwaukee Counties) are part of unified criminal justice systems, meaning that the majority of the criminal justice agencies functioning within the counties are state-run and split into districts that include multiple counties.

As might be expected, the seven seed sites also had differing levels of prior collaboration and experience implementing EBPs. Both are discussed in the relevant sections below.

## Technical Assistance Delivery in Phase II

CEPP spearheaded Phase II technical assistance provision supported by the Framework’s consortium partners. Three CEPP staff, Madeline (Mimi) Carter, Becki Ney, and Phyllis Modley, divided their time among two sites each, serving as the dedicated TA coordinator for those jurisdictions. Mark Carey of The Carey Group, an EBDM consortium partner, served as the TA coordinator for the Charlottesville/Albemarle County site.

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<sup>11</sup> The Milwaukee site strategically enlisted three individuals to serve as co-LICs—an Assistant District Attorney, an Assistant Public Defender and the coordinator of the county’s Criminal Justice Coordinating Council—to facilitate participation from both prosecution and defense.

<sup>12</sup> Data obtained from the Pretrial Justice Institute 2010 report, “Milwaukee County Jail Population Analysis,” [http://www.milwaukee.gov/ImageLibrary/Groups/cjcouncil/Documents/Milwaukee\\_Jail\\_Population\\_Analysis\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.milwaukee.gov/ImageLibrary/Groups/cjcouncil/Documents/Milwaukee_Jail_Population_Analysis_Final_Report.pdf) (accessed 5/21/12).

<sup>13</sup> Data obtained from Grant County Justice Reinvestment Initiative letter of interest, submitted to the Bureau of Justice Assistance in February 2011.

As the sites' primary contact with the initiative, the TA coordinators worked closely with the sites' LICs and policy teams (usually the team's chairperson) to shepherd the planning process, build local capacity for collaboration, develop knowledge of both evidence-based practice and evidence-based decision-making among policy team members, and identify and address emerging technical assistance needs. As such, they wore multiple hats throughout the planning phase: educator, facilitator, consensus-builder, "keeper of the big picture," and to some extent researcher. To accomplish this work, TA coordinators visited each site monthly, often spending the better part of a week on-site. To ensure work continued in between site visits, TA coordinators maintained regular contact with LICs by phone and email, and did occasional "progress checks" with other policy team members charged with specific tasks. TA provider activity logs, designed by UI to gauge the frequency and nature of interaction between providers and the sites, indicated regular contact around a variety of Phase II Roadmap issues.

As might be expected, initial contacts and activities largely focused on issues related to collaboration and engagement but became more diverse, both in substance and across sites, consistent with how planning efforts unfolded in each community. Early on-site TA work focused on building a strong foundation and collaborative structure. Drafting, finalizing, and executing a policy team or project charter was a critical early milestone for all sites followed by the formation of working groups. The former was designed to help sites articulate their shared vision for the EBDM initiative and in doing so secure the support of all policy team members. The latter cultivated site capacity and support for EBDM by engaging policy team members and agency staff to examine issues within their jurisdiction. As planning activities progressed and "change targets" were identified, the working groups took on more direct planning responsibilities, typically focusing on the "drill down" points associated with the identified change targets (e.g., a site's pretrial work group might research pretrial risk assessment tools for their jurisdiction and formulate plans for its administration and use).

TA provision initially followed a general blueprint in each site, aligned with the key objectives identified in the Roadmap. Though Phase II TA was presumably intended to be tailored in each seed site, all sites had access to four key TA activities:

1. Monthly facilitation with their TA coordinator. TA coordinators maintained close contact with the sites' LIC and other key stakeholders via email and frequent teleconferences as well as monthly site visits (typically two days in length) designed to facilitate technical assistance delivery and planning, and troubleshoot emerging issues.
2. Mapping the site's criminal justice system. Mapping the local criminal justice system was a critical first step for all sites in their EBDM work. Following this exercise, which took anywhere from one month to three months depending on the sites and the level of detail they put into their map and corresponding narrative, the sites worked with their TA coordinator to determine what areas of the criminal justice

system could or should be the focus of further analysis. The centrality of the system mapping exercise to Phase II planning cannot be overstated: it facilitated a common understanding of the site's local criminal justice system among a diverse stakeholder group, raised awareness of the potential gaps in EBP locally, and drew on local data to examine local decision-making and policy.

3. Mini-assessments and substantive expertise specific to locally identified priority areas of their criminal justice system.
4. Development and distribution of subject-specific materials including various "starter kits" designed to assist sites in their planning efforts.
5. Other initiative-wide activities, including monthly cross-site LIC calls and webinars with nationally recognized Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) around such topics as evidence-based policing and pretrial risk assessment. Some webinars also addressed components of the Roadmap. For example, The Justice Management Institute (JMI) conducted a webinar on EBDM logic models.

Phase II TA delivery became more tailored to site needs and requests following completion of the system mapping, particularly with respect to the use of mini-assessments and other TA resources. Some sites, for example, chose to use their TA resources to conduct a system-wide EBDM awareness event to engage a broader cross-section of criminal justice system staff. Here, the Phase II TA coordinators drew on the consortium's partners for targeted technical assistance around specific topics and issues. As noted above, JMI conducted a webinar on logic models and assisted with some of the EBDM awareness events. PJI also conducted webinars (pretrial) and several site mini-assessments. Occasionally, TA coordinators tapped one another for assistance in their sites: Mimi Carter, for example, conducted mini-assessments of sites' technical violations policies and procedures while Mark Carey looked at supervision and programming. TA coordinators searched outside the consortium if subject matter expertise was not readily available, such as in Charlottesville/Albemarle County when stakeholders identified domestic violence as a critical issue for their jurisdiction (efforts to connect with a subject matter expert on effective domestic violence assessment tools and intervention programs, however, did not prove fruitful but pursuing additional resources did). Additionally, Marilyn Van Dieten, Mimi Carter, and Mark Carey piloted the Principle Two assessment (a tool named after Principle Two of the Framework: "every interaction within the criminal justice system offers an opportunity to contribute to harm reduction" (NIC 2010) in five sites: Charlottesville/Albemarle, and Eau Claire, Grant, Mesa and Milwaukee Counties.

The following sections discuss Phase II TA delivery, both in the context of specific TA activities as well as site needs and challenges, in the seven seed sites across five dimensions: agency collaboration, stakeholder engagement, understanding of current practice and evidence-based decision-making; capacity for data collection and analysis; and community engagement.<sup>14</sup> Again, the goal of Phase II technical assistance was to

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<sup>14</sup> For this report, we condensed the eight objectives listed in the Phase II Roadmap into these five dimensions.



facilitate site readiness for implementation. Therefore, we discuss and assess Phase II TA activities through that lens.

## Agency Collaboration

Developing infrastructure to support agency collaboration was a key priority for Phase II. Related goals of the planning phase were to develop a collaborative climate and organizations that were ready for change, and to engage agency staff.

To assess agency collaboration at the start of Phase II, the TA consortium's university research partners conducted an agency-based collaboration survey that was intended to inform the sites' approaches to building agency collaboration. Summary results, which were provided to sites at the Phase II kick-off meeting, captured the degree to which agencies perceived organizational collaboration and fragmentation within their agency. Unfortunately, many sites found the results somewhat difficult to interpret and apply to their early work.

The site's policy teams were the primary vehicle for Phase II collaboration and the entity with which TA coordinators worked most closely. In most sites, policy teams were grounded in preexisting criminal justice coordinating councils or criminal justice leadership boards.<sup>15</sup> While Ramsey County did not have a formal collaborative body prior to the initiative, stakeholders had developed relationships through collaborative projects centered around alternatives to incarceration for juveniles, domestic violence prevention, and programs for individuals with special needs and leveraged these relationships to facilitate Phase II work. Among the other six sites, previous collaborative work largely focused on specific criminal justice populations leading to the development of specialized courts, alternatives to incarceration, and treatment. Regardless of the nature or extent of prior collaboration, each site's history of collective efforts provide a foundation on which to enhance and strengthen the EBDM collaboration.

In all sites, the policy team had a designated chair (or co-chairs) and at least one LIC.<sup>16</sup> While the LICs in every site held other positions, those in Grant and Yamhill Counties were also the directors of local community

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<sup>15</sup> Mesa County's EBDM policy team evolved from the County's Criminal Justice Leadership Board (CJLB); the CJLB reports to the Board of County Commissioners and sets county priorities, standards, long-range plans, and financial support for correctional services, thus offering the EBDM initiative a strategic platform to leverage support and assistance. Similarly, Yamhill County's team grew out of its Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSC), which met weekly to discuss ongoing operational issues regarding policies and practices, even at the case level. Again, the other EBDM sites typically grew their policy teams from existing collaborative councils, although the responsibilities and influence of those bodies differed as illustrated by the examples of Mesa and Yamhill Counties.

<sup>16</sup> The LIC in every site held other positions, but devoted at least 50 percent time to the initiative per the RFP. In Grant and Yamhill Counties, the LICs were also the directors of county agencies. In several sites, including Grant and Yamhill, one or two other stakeholders assisted with coordinating responsibilities. With the exception of Milwaukee, where three

corrections agencies. In Eau Claire, Grant, Milwaukee and Yamhill Counties, the chair of each policy team was a judge. In Mesa County, the policy team was co-chaired by a defense attorney and sheriff, while community corrections agency heads led the teams in Charlottesville/Albemarle County and Ramsey County (though in Ramsey County, leadership was transferred to the Sheriff's Office at the end of Phase II).

While policy teams were largely similar in composition to their antecedent collaborative structures, the TA coordinators encouraged several sites to broaden and diversify their teams. The collaborative structures in certain sites were missing key stakeholders (e.g., city police chief, human services representative, etc.). In Charlottesville/Albemarle County, for instance, the Chief Magistrate was invited to join the policy team, which was particularly important for discussing decision-making specific to their role in the criminal justice process, a point which was not well-understood by other stakeholders prior to the initiative. Similarly, in Yamhill County, a defense attorney representative joined the collaborative.

As Phase II progressed, the sites discovered that collaboration was more challenging for certain agencies than others and that traditional criminal justice roles could also significantly constrain collaboration. Across the seven sites, one of the greatest challenges to agency collaboration was the mentality of a “zero-sum game” between prosecutors and defense attorneys. The notion that if one side wins, the other side loses is not conducive to true collaboration. Furthermore, some agencies have specific performance measures that reinforce the adversarial nature of the criminal justice system—such as conviction rates or acquittal rates—and may preclude cooperation and collaboration within or across agencies. However, this was not a consistent problem within each site; other agencies had prior histories of collaboration, particularly in jurisdictions where they had established specialized courts or community-based alternatives to incarceration, or other efforts that required cross-agency collaboration to establish and sustain specific initiatives. While not a pervasive issue, the challenge posed by the adversarial nature of the criminal justice system in some sites underscored the considerations associated with the EBDM framework and a potential need for additional technical assistance.

## Stakeholder Engagement

NIC and its consortium of TA providers viewed stakeholder engagement across the criminal justice system as a necessary precondition for successfully meeting the objectives of the EBDM initiative, and took this into consideration when selecting Phase II seed sites. During the site selection process, they examined the capacity for and level of collaboration in the site, and whether there was opportunity to develop the collaborative body throughout the initiative. A related goal of Phase II was to foster increased staff engagement across and within

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individuals formally served as the initiative's LICs, most of these arrangements were informal. Nonetheless, the need for additional coordinating capacity highlighted the intensive nature of the initiative's work and truncated timeline.

the system. At the outset of Phase II, TA coordinators worked with each site's policy team to establish ground rules and operating norms, develop a stated shared vision, articulate roles and responsibilities of team members, and draft statements of support.

#### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AT THE LEADERSHIP-LEVEL

Early in the Phase II planning period, TA coordinators worked with principal members of the sites' policy teams (typically the LIC and the policy team chair) to gauge stakeholder support and engagement across the system and to reach out to any reluctant stakeholders. Almost every site worked to engage at least one reluctant stakeholder. Some "reluctant" stakeholders supported the EBDM effort but could not commit the time required to fully engage in the planning effort; in such instances, the TA coordinator and LIC often worked with the stakeholder to identify a sufficiently seasoned individual in the organization who could participate in their stead. In some cases, the stakeholder had a less time intensive role such as a working group member once potential change targets were identified. Other stakeholders liked the concept of the EBDM initiative but wrestled with its relevance to their agency, and a small number simply did not agree with the basic principles of the EBDM initiative.

In each instance, TA coordinators, after consulting with the LIC and Policy Team Chair, typically reached out to the stakeholders to address their concerns and discuss the EBDM initiative, including its benefits for the stakeholder and his or her agency. This outreach often involved a series of meetings with an emphasis on relationship development. As with any approach, it was more effective with some stakeholders than with others. In Yamhill County, for example, some local law enforcement officials responded to the initiative's efforts to engage them by attending the policy team and staffing workgroups; one local law enforcement officer, however, attend the EBDM awareness event but declined further participation.

At the end of Phase II, although several sites were still struggling with at least one reluctant stakeholder, all sites experienced a greater level of stakeholder engagement than they had experienced at the start of the EBDM initiative (for more discussion on this topic, see Section 4 of this report). Law enforcement seemed to be the most challenging to engage, specifically local police with patrol-only responsibilities. While not unsupportive or obstructionist, these stakeholders reportedly wrestled to see the relevance of the EBDM initiative for their work.

#### STAFF ENGAGEMENT AT THE LINE-LEVEL

Sites took different approaches to engage middle management and "line-level" staff during the planning phase and achieved varying levels of success. TA coordinators typically tailored efforts to site priorities in this area. Some sites decided not to engage staff in the effort until its objectives were more tangible and there was a clear "ask" or role for staff to assume (see below). Others engaged policy team members in staff outreach and

education across the criminal justice system early on (Mesa County, for example, held lunch time presentations for staff in different departments to raise awareness of the EBDM initiative and its objectives). Generally, staff members were phased in to sites' EBDM work at various stages of Phase II: key line staff typically attended EBDM activities such as the mapping exercise and system-wide awareness events, and in some sites staffed the initiative's working groups (though this tended to occur later in the initiative).

The structure and priorities of specific departments (i.e., courts, community supervision, law enforcement, prosecution, defense, community-based organizations, and non-criminal justice agencies) made it more difficult for certain stakeholders to engage their agency staff in the initiative. Sometimes this was a matter of agency resources; in many of the EBDM sites, particularly larger jurisdictions, the prosecutors and defense attorneys at the line-level were overwhelmed with casework and did not have time to engage in the EBDM workgroups. In other sites, stakeholders made a conscious decision to postpone agency staff engagement until Phase III. In Grant County and Eau Claire County, staff involvement was perceived as a Phase III implementation activity, as opposed to a Phase II planning activity, whereas in Mesa County agency staff-level buy-in was viewed as critical to success in the planning phase. Mesa County, Milwaukee County, and Charlottesville/Albemarle County had the greatest level of agency staff involvement, since their workgroups each had a number of staff from multiple agencies.

Some sites received TA specifically designed to facilitate staff engagement. These technical assistance activities were called EBDM awareness or system-wide training events; the primary purpose of the event was to familiarize line staff with the purpose of the initiative and how it fits into their work. Several counties conducted single or multiday cross-agency trainings in order to facilitate not only education, but also interaction among agencies. Some sites were more targeted in their agency outreach; for example, Charlottesville/Albemarle County conducted bi-agency trainings specifically for magistrate and jail staff, and Milwaukee held their training immediately prior to the launch of universal screening in the jail to tie the EBDM principles into their specific plan.

At the start of Phase III, the EBDM sites considered expanding the reach of the initiative as they began to execute their implementation plans. At the Phase III EBDM cross-site meeting, speakers addressed the importance of engaging agency staff in EBDM work, given that without this engagement, the principles of EBDM would not filter down to agency staff and may affect implementation of the sites' Phase III work plans. This issue is particularly important in the sites that have recently experienced or are about to experience turnover in key leadership, and it will take engagement from other staff to ensure that EBDM outlasts their legacy.

## Understanding of Current System Practice and EBP

A key component of the EBDM Framework and of the work in Phase II was to increase understanding of the current practice within each agency and across the criminal justice system, and to determine where criminal justice decision-making could be improved through evidence-based practice. To advance this objective, the TA providers conducted system mapping of the sites' existing criminal justice system and mini-assessments to determine which parts of the criminal justice system could improve through use of evidence-based practice.

Prior to the EBDM initiative, only Charlottesville/Albemarle County and Mesa County had engaged in system mapping activities, whereas almost every site had engaged in some kind of formal training or assessment on evidence-based practices. These trainings were typically specific to a particular agency or sphere of the criminal justice system, and did not encourage system-wide participation. Across all seven seed sites, community corrections agencies had the most experience implementing evidence-based practices in their agencies, either at the state or local level. Ramsey County, for example, had conducted extensive trainings with all stakeholders involved in the probation violation process (from probation officers to judges) to communicate how the shift toward implementing evidence-based practices would impact their work. Eau Claire and Grant County had conducted trainings specifically for their drug courts and other problem-solving courts so that stakeholders would understand how the new process was supposed to achieve better outcomes for drug court participants. However, in many sites, stakeholders outside of community corrections had little if any understanding of case flow and decision-making throughout the criminal justice system, and were unaware of how (or if) research findings fit into their work.

One of the sites' key tasks at the start of Phase II technical assistance was to develop a comprehensive map of the site's criminal justice system that demonstrated each agency's authority, responsibility, and activities in each possible stage of an individual's case processing (from the first criminal incident to completion of community supervision). This mapping activity required stakeholders at multiple levels—from line staff to department heads—to teach their agency's role and practices to other agencies within the jurisdiction, ask and answer procedural questions including the degree to which current practices are evidence-based, and learn from other stakeholder agencies. This work helped jurisdictions identify which practices were consistent with what research has shown to be effective practice in the criminal justice system, and which practices were not. TA coordinators played a key role by facilitating these discussions, generating actual maps (flow charts of system processes and decision points), and tracking the pressing issues unearthed by the mapping.

After this exercise, sites began to identify certain decision points in the criminal justice system that they wanted to concentrate on in their EBDM work. These decision points became the focus of mini-assessments in Phase II in that TA providers with specific substantive expertise would visit the site, meet with key stakeholders

and staff involved in that particular decision point, and review key documents and cases to understand how decisions were made. These mini-assessments identified certain gaps in current practice, and made recommendations for how the jurisdiction’s policies could become more evidence-based.

Throughout Phase II, the TA providers also set up initiative-wide webinars to focus on evidence-based practice in specific areas of the criminal system that had been challenging for sites. These webinars identified key research findings in areas like law enforcement, pretrial, and prosecution. The TA providers selected these substantive areas for the webinars because many sites were struggling to drill down into these parts of the system and understand how they could make them more evidence-based (either because they were unable to engage those stakeholder groups in the EBDM initiative, or did not have resources available in that particular part of the system—e.g., did not have a pretrial supervision agency).

At the end of Phase II, to facilitate the transition to EBDM implementation, some sites added specific training activities into their Phase III work. For example, in Eau Claire County the Sheriff’s Office held a training event for all deputies who were going to implement the Proxy screening tool at arrest; the training required engaging supervisors prior to line staff, and bringing them up to speed about their responsibilities associated with the EBDM implementation plan. In other sites, additional training activities after Phase II led stakeholders to add to components of their implementation plan; for example, after receiving assistance around pretrial services, the Milwaukee policy team decided to add an effort to overhaul case processing at the front end of the system to their implementation plan. The sites’ continued commitment to training showed the importance of this Phase II TA activity, from the stakeholder- to the line staff-level.

## Capacity for Data Collection and Analysis

In assessing how Phase II TA activities address site data collection and analysis, it is important to remember that the term “evidence” may have two meanings: (1) using research on what works in the criminal justice system to improve decision-making and outcomes; and (2) using data to “drive” decision-making about which policies and practices make sense in the local context. Data-driven strategies can help identify where changes to policy can have the most impact, and can determine if those changes to policy are producing the desired outcomes. The majority of sites’ Phase II applications identified greater capacity for data-driven decision-making as a key need and something they wanted the planning phase to address.

The Phase II TA plan reflected the importance of data collection and analysis in the EBDM initiative, and sought to enhance site data collection and analysis capacity; performance measures also figured prominently in the Phase II objectives noted in the Roadmap. According to the Roadmap, at the end of Phase II each site was to

have: “a set of agreed upon performance measures that will enable an objective, empirical evaluation of the effectiveness of the justice system agencies in achieving their agreed vision; baseline data against which longer term outcomes can be measured; and methods to routinely collect and analyze data on an ongoing basis to inform policy and practice” (CEPP 2010; a copy of which is included in Appendix A).

Prior to the start of Phase II, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) commissioned an evaluability assessment of all seven seed sites, which included an assessment of their data systems.<sup>17</sup> Overall, the NIJ reports showed that data do exist in the sites’ criminal justice information systems, but these systems are in separate “siloes” (i.e., do not have cross-agency identifiers, do not have ways of automatically populating information collected from one end of system to another, etc.). Both the EBDM sites and their TA providers used these evaluability assessments to inform their assessment of the relevant data systems, but did not rely solely on the reports for this review.

Different sites began data collection at different stages in Phase II. During the mapping session, some sites pulled data to help them understand how people and cases moved through the criminal justice system. This exercise frequently helped sites identify specific populations or decision-making conjunctures for closer examination. Ramsey County, for example, wanted to drill down into the warrants process when it became clear in the mapping sessions that the courts’ caseload, particularly the number of warrants issued, were drivers of the criminal justice system. Likewise, during the mapping sessions in Mesa County, stakeholders focused on the use of work release as an alternative to full-time jail sentencing, and began to collect data to understand who was being sentenced to work release and why. During the mapping session in Charlottesville, stakeholders identified opportunities for data collected by one agency to be useful to another (e.g., the magistrate judge would like to know probation status of individuals before deciding release) and began to think about how this information could be shared across agencies.

The TA providers assisted with data collection in a number of ways. The “Gathering Baseline Data” Starter Kit provided information about specific performance indicators and information sites should be tracking. The sites’ TA coordinators also encouraged them to form working groups and tap local resources for data collection assistance. Grant County had a local professor on the policy team who helped with data issues, and Mesa County also partnered with a local professor later in Phase II. Charlottesville drew upon the expertise and capacity of the University of Virginia’s engineering practicum to do systems analyses. These examples reflect the efforts of local stakeholders and TA coordinators to focus on data collection. However, in other sites, data

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<sup>17</sup> At this point, NIJ had released a request for proposals to evaluate the EBDM initiative and commissioned an evaluability assessment in anticipation of funding one of those proposals. Ultimately, no proposals were funded, but the evaluability assessments were shared with the TA providers and sites midway through Phase II.

collection activities did not begin until later in Phase II when stakeholders began to develop the logic model, performance measures and scorecard for their Phase III implementation plans.

As the sites began to think about the change targets they identified in their logic models and the types of performance measures they wanted to establish, they realized that they did not have baseline data related to many policy and practice changes. When the sites began setting goals and outcomes for their implementation plan—for example, measure rates of recidivism for the target population and reduce the rate of recidivism by 25 percent within two years—they generally did not know the current (i.e., baseline) rate of recidivism for the target population. The lack of baseline data made it challenging for the sites to know if their proposals were feasible and whether the proposed outcomes would signify meaningful change for the criminal justice system populations they were targeting. TA did not specifically focus on this issue until the Phase III cross-site meeting, where there were information sessions and speakers who discussed performance measurement and data collection for EBDM.

When assessing their data system capacity, sites encountered two overall challenges: a) data are not collected or b) data systems do not link to one other, making it difficult to track people across agencies in the criminal justice system. This issue was particularly challenging in sites where certain key local agencies (e.g., probation, courts) were actually part of the state system, and therefore their data were collected by state agencies, making the goal of linking data across systems even more challenging.

Moving into Phase III, sites were still experiencing challenges with data collection and analysis. Some sites realized that even if they did not have baseline data, they could begin collecting it for their implementation plan; for example, the Ramsey County Data team had plans to collect FY2010 data in early 2011, which would serve as a baseline for future reporting. Mesa County reorganized the Data subcommittee and prioritized data collection at the start of Phase III to make sure the Executive Team members would have a full understanding of the criminal justice population as they began to make changes to the system.

Other sites had been selected for the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI), where technical assistance focused on collecting and analyzing data to inform policy changes to the criminal justice system. As of February 2012, five sites (Charlottesville, Eau Claire, Grant, Milwaukee and Yamhill) had been selected into JRI and were working with the same TA coordinators they had through EBDM. The sites and TA providers both expressed a desire to use JRI resources to inform the EBDM performance measurement framework and scorecard<sup>18</sup> development. All EBDM sites wanted to establish intermediate performance measures to determine if things are happening as they should (i.e., whether assessments are being

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<sup>18</sup> A key component of the Phase II Roadmap was the development of performance measures and a scorecard—a visual, “easy-to-read interface that presents key indicators and allows users to quickly gauge progress” (UI memorandum developed for the Raise DC project)—to track future operations.



delivered, etc.) and troubleshoot issues as necessary. However, the sites' ultimate goal is to use data for regular, long-term oversight and outcome measurement in their criminal justice system and to understand the effects of their EBDM work over time.

It is clear from where the sites ended up at the end of Phase II that they needed (and still need) more assistance with data collection. This assistance would need to speak to the challenges with data collection (e.g., how do we get the information and interpret what we have?) and data analysis (e.g., how do we connect these data to other parts of our EBDM work and make data-driven decisions about what to change in our system?). These issues are explored in more detail in Section 5 of this report.

## Community Engagement

The Framework for EBDM states that improving community-wellness is a key priority of the EBDM initiative, and that community representatives should be considered key stakeholders in the criminal justice system (NIC 2010). With this goal in mind, engaging the community and gaining community support for the EBDM initiative was an objective of the Phase II TA Roadmap. The Roadmap stated that at the end of Phase II, the seed sites would have a “strategy for engaging the community in meaningful dialogue about the vision/goals of the justice system, the state of knowledge and research, and the system’s performance in achieving these goals.” In Phase I of the EBDM initiative (during the development of the Framework), NIC collaborated with Zogby International to conduct a nationally representative public opinion poll to determine whether there was public support for using research in local criminal justice decision-making. Findings from the survey, which are very supportive of the principles of EBDM, are referenced in the Framework.

When Phase II began, the sites had different approaches to community engagement. Some sites invited representatives from community-based organizations to join the policy team, while others chose to inform the public of EBDM through their existing communication mechanisms (e.g., having EBDM updates at a regular council meeting that is open to the public). Other sites did not make any attempt to engage the community or inform the public of the county’s EBDM work, and made a conscious decision to divert community engagement to Phase III of the initiative once implementation had begun. All of these community engagement strategies had different purposes and required different levels of technical assistance in Phase II.

Prior to the EBDM initiative, some sites were engaged in community outreach through other collaborative work in their criminal justice system. For example, some sites had public outreach and/or education subcommittees on their criminal justice council and/or other pre-existing criminal justice leadership group. These subcommittees had pre-existing mechanisms of communicating with the public in different ways,

including through council meetings (which are open to the public) or regular press releases. However, many of the sites saw the EBDM initiative as distinct from their regular council work, and discussed whether and how to communicate the work of the EBDM initiative to the public.

At the start of Phase II (even before the cross-site kick-off meeting) some sites developed “marketing” materials for their local EBDM initiative. In Ramsey County, for example, the documents emphasized the “One Less” image of the EBDM initiative, and summarized the goals and objectives of the initiative. This spoke to a specific goal of the Phase II TA plan—helping sites compile information and a clear set of messages that stakeholders could use to inform and engage the community about EBDM. Milwaukee County developed a kind of “elevator speech” describing EBDM, while Eau Claire stakeholders spoke to a local reporter who wrote a story about the initiative in the early stages of Phase II. Other sites developed ways of tying EBDM-specific work into broader outreach efforts through the criminal justice coordinating councils.

Even though community outreach was not a core component of the sites’ Phase II EBDM work or TA, at the end of Phase II the TA provider consortium developed a Communications Strategy Starter Kit. The sites had the option of using this document to draft a communications plan and timeline for their Phase III application, which NIC required. However, given the other priorities at the end of Phase II and the push to complete a comprehensive implementation work plan, most sites did not prioritize this component of their application and decided that Phase III would be the appropriate time to develop their communications plan.

#### EBDM IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

Phase II TA and planning activities culminated in the development of site-specific work plans focused on a select set of change targets informed by system mapping and mini-assessment activities. These plans formed the core of the sites’ Phase III application along with a list of anticipated technical assistance needs specific to implementation. The sites’ work plans (also referred to as implementation plans) were unique from one another, yet shared certain key components that built upon specific principles of the Framework. For example, the Framework has a clear focus on using empirical research findings to inform decision-making. To this end, the seven sites selected a variety of change targets that were empirically-based. For instance, six of the seven EBDM sites planned to implement new or redesign existing risk assessment instruments for use in various stages of the criminal justice system. At the front end of the system, two sites—Mesa County and Eau Claire County—planned to implement the Proxy tool at arrest to screen for risk of re-offense upon first interaction with law enforcement. Mesa County also intended to administer the Proxy at the first appearance center, while Eau Claire will do so as part of its jail booking process. The pretrial stage is also a change target for a number of sites: Ramsey, Milwaukee and Yamhill Counties planned to revamp their pretrial conditional release processes and manage pretrial supervision based on risk, while Mesa and Grant Counties planned to implement new

pretrial risk assessment tools to assess the likelihood of pretrial misconduct and inform bail decisions and Charlottesville/ Albemarle planned to implement risk assessment recommendation guidelines. Additionally, Milwaukee intended to use risk assessment to inform diversion and deferred prosecution decisions.

Though the focus on the front end of the criminal justice system is a key part of the Framework, sites also incorporated the principles of EBDM into the sentencing and community supervision stages of their criminal justice system. Both Mesa County and Charlottesville/Albemarle County planned to revamp their pre-sentence investigation report to provide risk/need information at sentencing and inform the decision to incarcerate or sentence to community supervision and/or community interventions. Within the community supervision arena, many sites' implementation plans are designed to make supervision practices more evidence-based; Grant, Eau Claire, Yamhill and Milwaukee Counties planned to revamp their probation systems to base caseload supervision and programming on offender risk. Eau Claire focused specifically on violation responses in an effort to reduce the number of probation holds in jail, while Milwaukee plans to implement dosage-based probation where the supervision term is based on the number of intervention hours needed and received, rather than a fixed or predetermined length of time. Charlottesville/Albemarle County also worked with Mimi Carter to complete a mini-assessment of supervision violations (state and county), resulting in a probation violation matrix.

Understanding that performance measurement is an important part of EBDM, five sites developed specific data collection/analysis components of their implementation plans. Charlottesville is redesigning their data management systems to facilitate information sharing across the criminal justice system, Grant County is developing a performance measurement scorecard to collect data related to specific components of its implementation plan, Mesa County has integrated data collection into its proxy norming process and plans to develop a system-wide performance measurement process, and Eau Claire and Milwaukee Counties are continuing their baseline data collecting and establishing performance measurement criteria for their EBDM work. Additionally, the Ramsey County performance measurement subcommittee has continued to meet and collect data on the performance measures associated with their EBDM work.

While there are many similarities across the sites' EBDM implementation plans, many of the sites are targeting a specific population or segment of their criminal justice system that the other sites are not. For example, Charlottesville and Milwaukee are both focusing parts of their EBDM work on a particular offender population (domestic violence and mental health, respectively). Mesa County is piloting an evidence-based court, meaning that its Chief Judge has committed to implementing evidence-based practice at every stage in his decision-making (in an effort to compare current defendants' outcomes to defendants who were processed in his court prior to the transition to EBDM). Grant County is analyzing its victim restitution and assistance process, and is the only site to have a specific component of its EBDM plan focused on victims. Ramsey County

is developing a system to reduce the number of warrants in its court system, including a court notification process and an online warrant service system. The differences within the sites' EBDM plans show that even though there was consistency in how certain principles of the Framework were applied in each site, the sites still developed implementation plans that were specific to local priorities and needs within their jurisdiction.

To summarize, while each of the TA coordinators worked with their sites to develop a site-specific TA plan and ready them for EBDM implementation, the overall TA approach and activities were relatively consistent across the EBDM sites and mainly focused on building collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and support for evidence-based principles. The majority of TA was provided by the TA coordinators, who had the most direct contact with the sites and facilitated the monthly policy team meetings on-site. Materials and resources were developed as needed, and consortium partners were tapped as subject matter experts during the mini-assessments, awareness events, and webinars. All of the sites received Starter Kits on building collaborative bodies; understanding current practice; readying agencies for change; performance measurement and data collection; and implementing evidence-based practices; and developing communications strategies, which were developed throughout Phase II to mirror the work the sites were about to undertake (according to the Phase II timeline). Though there were many partners involved in TA provision, the sites had the most contact with their TA coordinators, who had the “big picture” view of the initiative and knew where the sites needed to be at the end of Phase II. The following section discusses the sites' views on Phase II and the TA that was provided, drawing upon site visits, stakeholder interviews, and surveys that UI conducted throughout Phase II.

## 4. Examining the Broader Impact of Phase II: Key Findings from the Evaluation

The Phase II TA evaluation, as discussed earlier, documented and measured the impact of TA activities on site readiness for Phase III implementation, including capacity-building and knowledge transfer around evidence-based decision-making, support for EBDM, and the broader benefits of participating in such an initiative. Semi-structured interviews with site stakeholders and TA providers, and direct observation via site visits were key sources of information regarding Phase II progress, milestones, challenges, and lessons learned, as well as the more subtle benefits of TA provision and site satisfaction with it. The EBDM stakeholder survey collected input from a broader cross-section of constituents, some less directly involved with the EBDM initiative but for whom EBDM was relevant to their work. This section presents the findings from both the process analysis and cross-site, cross-wave analysis of the stakeholder survey. Taken together, these findings offer insights about the sites'

TA and EBDM experiences and implications for implementation not only for the EBDM sites but for other communities as well.

## Findings from the Process Analysis

The process evaluation drew heavily on the semi-structured interviews mentioned above to document the scope and nature of TA delivery, stakeholder impressions about the TA, and the TA coordinators' perspectives on site needs, challenges, and strategies for addressing both. UI researchers spoke separately with EBDM LICs and TA coordinators on a monthly basis to track activities, issues, and changes in the structure, approach or local support for the initiative. Potential TA needs and lessons learned throughout the process were also discussed. UI routinely spoke with key stakeholders on the policy team (e.g., team chair, core team of coordinators) on a less frequent basis to discuss similar topics related to the EBDM initiative. During the two visits to each site, UI conducted formal interviews with members of the policy team and other individuals deeply involved in other parts of the initiative (subcommittee/workgroup chairs, etc.) Additionally, each month TA coordinators provided UI with all relevant site materials (e.g., meeting agendas and minutes, team charter, system map, mini-assessments) and a tracking log documenting all their contact with the sites that month.

The EBDM LICs offered a unique perspective on Phase II and the TA delivery. They had the most contact with the TA coordinators and policy team members, and were also responsible for keeping the initiative on track throughout the planning phase. Additionally, CEPP scheduled a monthly LIC call where all EBDM LICs could discuss any challenges they were encountering and/or voice any concerns about how the initiative was progressing. Overall, the LICs were also most aware of how much time and effort the initiative took, not only because of the frequent meetings but because of the overall project management required to keep the initiative on track. Their work was crucial to moving the initiative forward at a pace consistent with the Phase II timeline.

The TA coordinators, who, as noted earlier, wore multiple hats throughout the planning phase, kept the big picture in mind while facilitating site progress on all the "little" things vital to compiling a well-conceived Phase III implementation plan. Keeping the big picture and the end in mind was frequently cited by stakeholders as one of the most-appreciated functions of the TA coordinator. TA coordinators also conducted outreach to key constituencies throughout Phase II to ensure the sites had the level of stakeholder engagement necessary to develop a system-wide plan for Phase III implementation. Even though their work was (to some extent) the subject of UI's evaluation, their cooperation was instrumental in providing us with a unique perspective on the sites' progress, as well as the overall strengths and weaknesses of the initiative.

Although UI spoke less frequently with core members of the sites' EBDM policy teams, these interviews offered critical insights about the Phase II planning experience. These stakeholders were asked about their involvement over the course of the initiative, their agency's staff engagement with respect to EBDM, their expectations and anticipated challenges for Phase II and Phase III, their perspectives on the technical assistance, and lessons learned throughout the planning phase. The remainder of this section discusses the evaluation findings regarding the Phase II planning process and TA provision—the relevance, satisfaction, benefits, and challenges—from the perspectives of the EBDM LICs, policy team members, and TA coordinators.

Site stakeholders (i.e., policy team members and LICs) identified a variety of TA activities they thought were particularly helpful in Phase II, and were equally candid about any short-comings or gaps in the TA provision. The following bullets summarize their perspectives:

- **TA Coordinator Indispensable.** Across all seven seed sites, stakeholders emphasized that the most important component of the Phase II TA was the monthly facilitation that the TA coordinators provided. This facilitation was seen as a key component of building collaboration and creating dialogue among stakeholders (something that the UI stakeholder survey showed increased in all sites throughout Phase II). The monthly visits were also helpful in keeping policy teams and subcommittees on track and ensuring that deadlines were met. When stakeholders were asked what component(s) of the TA were absolutely essential to their success (i.e., if NIC were to fund Phase II again, but did not have the same level of resources, what is most important to retain?), stakeholders emphasized this component more than any other element of Phase II TA.
- **System Mapping Provided Greater Understanding.** Universally, stakeholders involved in the mapping process identified this effort as one of the most important activities in Phase II; the value of not only having a visual portrait of case flow in the criminal justice system, but also having a better understanding of other agencies' policies and practices in the criminal justice system, made the work in Phase II worthwhile. The system mapping exercise also made the EBDM initiative more concrete, and in some sites helped stakeholders encourage their staff to become involved in EBDM. Despite being time-consuming, many stakeholders reported that the mapping exercise was crucial in fostering a system-wide perspective; helping identify potential areas of change; and facilitating new or deepened dialogue among stakeholders about current practice.
- **System-Wide Perspective Gained.** Additionally, stakeholders noted that specific Phase II TA activities were helpful in increasing their understanding of current practice and how evidence-based practices could improve their decision-making. Stakeholders viewed the system-wide "EBDM awareness" training sessions as beneficial to building local expertise and saw them as a key step in engaging agency

staff in a cross-system way. However, all sites recognized that this training activity had to be one of many efforts to educate staff on EBDM principles and the implementation of changes throughout the criminal justice system. Likewise, the Phase II mini-assessments guided elements of the planning process and helped offer substantive expertise to specific components of the sites' Phase III implementation plans.

- **Webinars Received Mixed Reviews.** The sites recognized that the TA providers devoted significant resources to helping them understand current practice and how evidence-based practice could improve their decision-making, and saw the webinars as another component of this process. While some sites identified the webinars as helpful resources for engaging staff and learning more about specific disciplines, they did not find it as helpful as the on-site TA they received either from their TA coordinators or the substantive experts who conducted mini-assessments or training activities. The webinars specific to logic model development and performance measurement were more helpful for the team members who were directly involved in assembling those materials for the Phase III applications.
- **Logic Models Challenging.** Some stakeholders questioned why they were spending time on specific activities like logic models, although there was considerable variation in site responses with respect to this element of the TA and the Phase II Roadmap. Stakeholders across all sites differed in whether they found it to be a useful process or not; while some reported it was not really relevant to what they were doing in Phase II, others said it helped them determine what data they would need to collect to monitor implementation of the Phase III work plan and measure targeted outcomes. At the start of Phase III, some sites' data workgroup or subcommittee staff indicated that the logic model was helpful in figuring out exactly what data need to be collected and where gaps in their implementation plan existed. Sites also reported that the logic model helped them realize that certain parts of their plan were more well-defined and well-thought out than others; many of the key questions in the implementation plan—such as “what do we need to make this change happen?”—were answered through the development of their logic model.
- **Scorecards and Performance Measures Challenging.** Many stakeholders noted that this was the first point at which they understood that they did not have baseline data throughout the criminal justice system. When the sites discovered that they wanted to include certain information as a key part of the EBDM scorecard (e.g., recidivism measure at a particular stage in the criminal justice system) but that information was not currently collected, stakeholders came up with a plan to collect the data going forward; however, they still had to address the challenge of establishing a performance measure for which there is no baseline data.

- **Time Commitment Far Exceeded Expectations.** While it was clear to the sites during the Phase II application process that they had to identify a 50 percent FTE as an LIC for the initiative, policy team members (particularly those who had not been involved in TA projects before) were not necessarily aware of how significant their time commitment would be. Balancing their full time jobs and the needs of their departments was challenging, as was the frequency of meetings and additional reading required to stay on top of the EBDM-related information and activities. In some sites, stakeholder groups refused to engage their agency in the initiative, whereas in other sites it was common for overcommitted stakeholders to have a deputy attend policy team meetings. Though many concede the amount of work was helpful in the long run in preparing sites for implementation, it was a painful process at times.
- **Initiative Timeline Truncated.** Many stakeholders reported that the timeline for Phase II (12 months including the site selection process; nine months from the cross-site kick-off meeting to the Phase III application submission) was too short given the amount of work that was undertaken. Though stakeholders recognized that the tight timeline helped sustain momentum and focus the sites' work, others reported that it came at a cost; it was hard to sustain their effort, and it was difficult to process all the information that was being provided. Additionally, as the sites were receiving many of the TA materials (e.g., Starter Kits) as they were being developed, it became difficult to take the time to digest all the information they were receiving. At the start of Phase III, many stakeholders were still "catching their breath" (as one stakeholder put it) before heading into implementation.

The policy team members, LICs, and TA providers also had the following insights regarding which components of the sites' team structure and stakeholder engagement proved to be more beneficial for Phase II planning and readying the sites for implementation:

- **Importance of Project Management.** All three groups emphasized the importance of the LIC's and TA coordinator's project management skills in keeping the team together and helping the initiative move forward; during the height of TA activities in Phase II, both the LICs and TA coordinators had to plan site visits with multiple TA providers and other EBDM initiative staff (including members of the UI evaluation team) in addition to coordinating the policy team members' already busy schedules. Doing all of this in the compressed, ambitious EBDM timeline was particularly challenging.
- **Policy Team Chairs Provide Critical Leadership.** The policy team chair played an important role throughout the initiative, particularly in terms of encouraging other stakeholders to become involved in EBDM. Stakeholders pointed to the advantage of having a judicial authority as the chair of the policy team, whose agency is often considered the centerpiece of the justice system and who can facilitate



relationship-building across multiple agencies. Other sites found it advantageous to have multiple policy team co-chairs, or allow non-chairs to have a meaningful leadership role on the policy team; having these kinds of partnerships automatically in place garnered support and recognition among stakeholder groups, particularly those that were difficult to engage.

In deciding who would serve as the policy team chair(s), sites considered the leader's prior experience with implementation of EBP and ability to garner support across the criminal justice system. While the chair's agency was considered the "lead agency" for the initiative, in many sites the LIC's agency typically had a larger role and seemed to orient and structure the initiative. This was evident in Ramsey, Grant and Yamhill Counties, where the Phase II LICs were housed in community corrections. In these sites, given the agency's experience with EBP, this placed much of the work burden on community corrections (coordinating the initiative, leading the policy team, and trying to engage other agencies in EBDM). In Ramsey County, leadership was transferred to the Sheriff's Office at the end of Phase II, which demonstrated the team's desire to ensure that the initiative was perceived as a county-wide effort.

Stakeholders in multiple sites noted that it was important to have the county-level leadership on board with the initiative, even if this person (or persons) was not typically engaged in criminal justice planning or existing criminal justice leadership boards. Sites reported this support was particularly helpful in negotiating local budget issues across policy team members, particularly when it could affect part of their EBDM planning (e.g., if the Sheriff's Office budget was getting cut but the agency was supposed to take on new responsibilities for EBDM implementation). Having leaders engaged at the state level (e.g., chief judge, DOC leadership) was beneficial as well, especially for sites that are part of a unified criminal justice system.

- **Challenges of Stakeholder Engagement.** Though stakeholder engagement and collaboration challenges varied from site to site, some stakeholder groups were particularly difficult to engage in multiple sites. One of these groups was law enforcement; even after TA coordinators and policy team members sought out law enforcement representatives, they were not always willing to be involved in the collaborative. While law enforcement may have been supportive of the underlying logic and ultimate goals of the initiative, in many sites it was difficult for law enforcement leaders, particularly local police chiefs, to find their agencies' roles within the scope of the initiative. Sites that did not pursue the most common pre-arrest implementation strategy (i.e., use of the Proxy prior to arrest) raised the question of whether the Framework could be implemented pre-arrest, or whether the initiative should be focused on the middle and back end of the criminal justice system.

Similarly, engaging prosecutors represented a challenge for many sites. Like law enforcement, prosecutors were largely supportive of and involved in the initiative, but were not always on the same page with the team members regarding what specifically they should change in the criminal justice

system. Prosecutors expressed skepticism about applying evidence-based practices to their decision-making; for instance, in some sites, prosecutors approached the implementation of the pretrial risk assessment tool with caution, as it either curtailed their decision-making power or they were skeptical of its ability to predict risk of recidivism accurately. However, these concerns were reduced as TA providers emphasized that the risk assessment would only inform the decision-making process (and would not take away their discretion). Prosecutors also emphasized the importance of effectively balancing the interests of the criminal justice system and the community (specifically victims), and sometimes worried that the initiative was too offender-focused.

- **Community Engagement Was Not Prioritized.** As the initiative unfolded in each of the jurisdictions, it became clear that the sites had very different opinions regarding the appropriate level of community engagement. Some stakeholders were wary about the potential challenges of conveying the EBDM message to the public when the community may expect that the criminal justice system should already be working toward the initiative's stated goals (i.e., reduce harm, keep the public safe, etc.) In addition, some sites were focusing on engaging their agency staff in the initiative (which required a lot of coordination and effort) and decided that Phase II was not the appropriate time to engage the community. Other stakeholders wanted to wait until the goals and objectives of the implementation plan were more concrete, and the strategy could be communicated more clearly to the public. Overall, the sites differed between wanting the community to be part of their EBDM work in the planning phase, and fearing that reaching out to and engaging the public during Phase II would be both premature and potentially detrimental to the stakeholders' frank, open discussions about making changes to the criminal justice system.

While those stakeholders closest to the initiative identified clear benefits and challenges to Phase II participation and the TA received, it is important to note that all seven seed sites submitted Phase III applications; no site declined to continue. All sites successfully submitted their implementation plans on time and moved into Phase III, which speaks to both the commitment of the seven sites and the perceived value and benefits of both the TA and the initiative. Further, all seven sites sent teams to the Phase III cross-site kick-off meeting, and continue to work with their TA coordinators on a regular basis. In addition, since five of the seven sites have joined BJA's Justice Reinvestment Initiative, they have been able to leverage resources that enable them to continue to work with their TA coordinators on a regular basis. They have also applied for and received local training and TA resources outside of the EBDM initiative to assist them with EBDM implementation.

In the next section, we explore the benefits and impact of both TA provision and Phase II participation based on data collected from a broader cross-section of stakeholders and at different points in time.

# Findings from the Cross-Wave, Cross-Site Stakeholder Survey

The EBDM survey measured stakeholder impressions of the TA received, levels of perceived support for evidence-based decision-making in their community and their agency, and the benefits and challenges of participating in the EBDM initiative. A cross-section of stakeholders in each EBDM site was surveyed twice during the planning phase, once in February 2011 and again in July 2011. At each wave, they responded to a series of forced-choice questions about current practices, agency collaboration and coordination, the initiative's "impact," and satisfaction with the technical assistance provided. The survey instrument also collected basic demographic and career information from respondents and provided an open-ended response opportunity for survey participants to comment on the survey, technical assistance provision, or the initiative. The instrument's design and content were informed by the EBDM Roadmap and a review of other systems change survey instruments including those developed by UI for its Transition from Jail to Community (TJC), Justice Reinvestment at the Local Level (JRL), Reclaiming Futures, and Serious Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) evaluations, and the New York City Jail Reentry Project evaluation conducted by John Jay College. The analysis strategy drew heavily from that used for the Reclaiming Futures (Butts et al. 2007) and TJC (Buck Willison et al. 2012) systems-change evaluations.

The survey response format largely followed a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or don't know). The only open-ended survey question recorded respondents' stated technical assistance needs. Simple instructions, repetitive forced-choice response formats, and clear navigational prompts were basic elements of the online survey's user-friendly design. Respondents logged on to the survey using a unique username and private password assigned by UI. Online instructions reminded respondents that participation was voluntary and completely confidential. Most respondents completed the survey in 20 minutes.

## Sample Construction and Composition

The survey targeted a wide range of individuals in the local community whose work intersected with EBDM. The goal was to include both individuals who played a central role in Phase II of the initiative and those who were more peripherally involved in order to gauge perspectives from across the system and not simply among initiative "insiders." Construction of site samples were largely informed by review of site materials, including membership rosters of the policy team, policy team work groups, and attendance rosters from TA events. UI circulated these lists to the site's LIC and policy team chairperson(s) to identify any omissions or additions, and to verify that the list was a valid representation of the "expert" population (i.e., individuals who were knowledgeable about the local criminal justice or service delivery systems and with a stake in EBDM) in that

community and not simply a group of people disposed to favorably rate their local criminal justice or service delivery systems. These lists typically included

- jail administrators;
- sheriffs;
- judges;
- prosecutors;
- defense attorneys;
- victim advocates;
- local law enforcement;
- community corrections;
- elected officials including county administrators and city council members; and
- a range of community-based partners from across such areas as employment, general social services and emergency support, health and medical care, housing, mental health, reentry, and/or substance abuse.

Local initiative coordinators reviewed and updated the sample prior to each survey wave. The composition of the sample changed slightly at each survey wave due to staff turnover (relocation, retirement, resignations, etc.). For this reason, the evaluation structured the survey to support a repeated, cross-section design. In doing so, the evaluation sought to collect comparable data from the most knowledgeable respondents (i.e., those best-positioned to assess and report on progress on the EBDM initiative) at the time of survey administration.

Across the seven EBDM seed sites, a total of 328 individuals were invited to participate in Wave 1 of the stakeholder survey; 248 of those stakeholders completed the survey for an overall response rate of 76 percent. The average sample size in each site was 35; site-specific response rates in Wave 1 ranged from 68 percent to 96 percent, with an average response rate of 79 percent. At Wave 2, of the 316 individuals who were invited to take the second wave of the survey, 216 stakeholders participated for an overall response rate of 68 percent (91 percent of Wave 2 respondents took Wave 1 of the survey). Table 1 describes the survey sample across all seven EBDM sites at Wave 1 and Wave 2.

The composition of samples was similar across survey waves. In both survey waves, Mesa and Milwaukee Counties had the largest samples due to the fact that they had more people involved in the EBDM initiative at the time the Wave 1 survey was administered. With regard to professional arena and experience, at Wave 1 respondents from community supervision, the courts, law enforcement, and prosecution represented the largest portion of the sample. At Wave 2, these proportions decreased for community supervision and law enforcement, increased for the courts, and remained largely the same for prosecution.

Concerning self-reported roles in the EBDM initiative, levels of participation largely remained the same from Wave 1 to Wave 2. The vast majority of the sample (80.6 percent at Wave 1 and 82.4 percent at Wave 2) reported having some formal role in the EBDM initiative. Likewise, at both waves, respondents reported having

held their current position for an average of eight years and having worked in the criminal justice field for just under 19 years. These characteristics suggest that respondents were likely knowledgeable about and well-positioned to report on issues pertaining to their local criminal justice system and the EBDM initiative.

Although subsequent sections explore the perceived impact of TA on the EBDM sites, we have replaced the names of the sites with an alphanumeric identifier (i.e., EBDM 1, etc.) in the charts and discussion. This was deemed appropriate given the assessment's focus fell squarely on measuring the influence of TA on site readiness for Phase III and the benefits and challenges of participating in the EBDM, not site performance (i.e., the sites were not the focus of evaluation). This approach permits meaningful comparisons while protecting the sites from any unintended negative consequences that might result from misinterpretation of the results or assignment of results to specific groups.

TABLE 1. Cross-Site EBDM Survey Sample		Wave 1 N (%)	Wave 2 N (%)
<b>Site</b>			
EBDM 1		33 (13.3)	29 (13.4)
EBDM 2		26 (10.5)	26 (12.0)
EBDM 3		23 (9.3)	24 (11.1)
EBDM 4		64 (26.2)	52 (24.1)
EBDM 5		53 (22.2)	39 (18.1)
EBDM 6		21 (8.9)	20 (9.3)
EBDM 7		28 (11.7)	26 (12.0)
	<i>Total</i>	248 (100.0)	216 (100.0)
<b>Stakeholder Sphere</b>			
Jail		16 (6.5)	19 (8.8)
Courts		39 (15.7)	43 (19.9)
Community supervision (probation/parole/pretrial)		54 (21.8)	35 (16.2)
Law enforcement		35 (14.1)	20 (9.3)
Prosecution		36 (14.5)	31 (14.4)
Defense bar		17 (6.9)	18 (8.3)
Community-based agency or program		24 (9.7)	27 (12.5)
Non-criminal justice government		21 (8.5)	18 (8.3)
Other		6 (2.4)	5 (2.3)
	<i>Total</i>	248 (100.0)	216 (100.0)
<b>Participation in EBDM</b>			
Policy team member <u>only</u>		34 (13.7)	37 (17.1)
Subcommittee/workgroup member <u>only</u>		103 (41.5)	76 (35.2)
Local criminal justice leadership committee member <u>only</u>		11 (4.4)	7 (3.2)
Site coordinator <u>only</u>		8 (3.2)	4 (1.9)
Two or more roles in EBDM initiative		44 (17.7)	36 (16.7)
No specific role in EBDM initiative		48 (19.4)	38 (17.6)
	<i>Total</i>	248 (100.0)	216 (100.0)
<b>Professional Experience</b>			
Average number of years in <i>current</i> position		8	8.1
Average number of years in CJ field		18.6	18.8
Previously held a criminal justice position		155 (62.5)	130 (60.2)
Previously held criminal justice position matches current sphere of work		102 (40.3)	80 (37.0)

## Analytic Approach

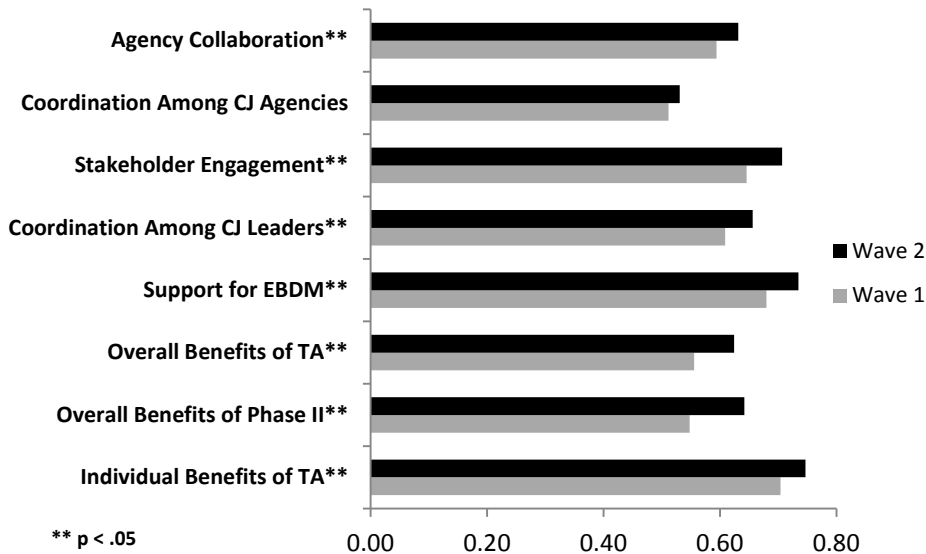
To aid analysis, survey questions were grouped into several indices or scales using factor analysis. Each scale includes multiple but different survey questions, and therefore, is able to more efficiently represent complex constructs (collaboration, coordination, knowledge of EBDM, etc.) than individual survey items. Factor analysis identifies whether certain items in a survey can be grouped together into one scale measuring the same overall concept. The reliability of each of these scales, measured by an Alpha score, is noted in **Appendix B** along with the individual items composing the scale. Following convention, the closer the Alpha score is to 1, the stronger the reliability of the scale (i.e., an Alpha score of .7 or higher is desirable). As the scale key in Appendix B indicates, all eight scales had Alpha scores of .6 or higher.

Once factor analysis determined that each of these items could be grouped together, the survey items were recoded to form an additive scale. Other variables were “reverse recoded” in order to ensure that the positive values (Strongly Agree, Agree) were associated with being in favor of a particular concept (e.g., criminal justice leaders are supportive of evidence-based practices). “Don’t know” responses were coded as missing for the purposes of scale creation.

ANOVA tests were performed on each of the scales to identify statistical significance ( $p < .05$ ) between the average scores (i.e., to determine if the differences in average scores were meaningful and “not by chance”); analysis explored overall change on the scales between Wave 1 and Wave 2, as well as differences in scale scores by site, level of EBDM participation, and criminal justice stakeholder group. Figure 2 presents scale scores by survey wave (the value shown in the graph is the mean score as a percentage of the total possible score for the entire sample in each wave). As illustrated there, seven of the eight scales were statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level although all eight registered improvement over the course of the initiative (the scale measuring coordination among criminal justice agencies registered improvement, however the change was not statistically significant).

FIGURE 2

Total Sample Change across Survey Waves



## Agency Collaboration

Across all sites, the perceived level of agency collaboration increased between Wave 1 and Wave 2 of the survey—this finding was significant at  $p < 0.05$ . In terms of coordination among agencies (i.e., data and resource sharing, system-wide planning, frequency of meetings), while there was a slight increase in perceived agency coordination between waves this was not significant.<sup>19</sup>

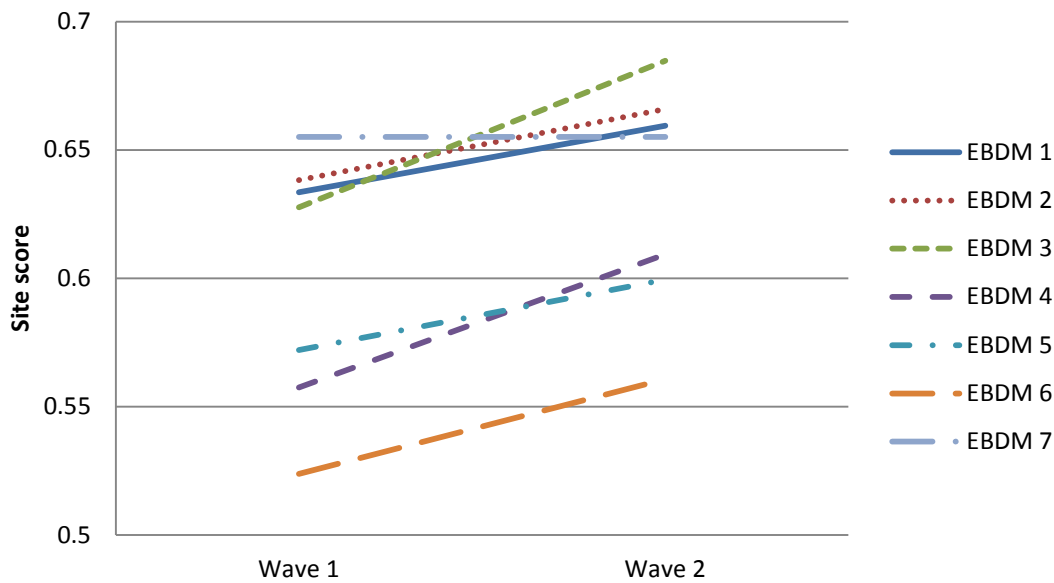
While sites had different approaches to staff involvement in the planning phase, agency collaboration remained a priority for all sites engaged in EBDM. Looking at differences across sites in figure 3 below, perceptions of agency collaboration increased throughout Phase II in six sites. Statistical significant tests are not shown because the results reflect the difference in site sample sizes, not the site-specific degree of change in the scales (which range from  $N=20$  to  $N=65$ ). The EBDM 7 site had the highest level of agency collaboration in Wave 1, but their perceptions did not increase over time; EBDM 3 had the highest levels of perceived agency collaboration at Wave 2, and saw one of the largest increases among the sites, along with EBDM 4.

<sup>19</sup> Site-specific results are not shown for the scale measuring coordination among criminal agencies because the changes are too small to detect on the graph.



FIGURE 3

### Site-Specific Agency Collaboration



## Stakeholder Engagement and Coordination among Key Leaders

A key goal in Phase II was to increase stakeholder engagement and leadership coordination from Wave 1 to Wave 2. Across all sites, respondents' attitudes regarding the level of stakeholder engagement and coordination among leaders increased significantly from Wave 1 to Wave 2. Figures 4 and 5<sup>20</sup> below show the site-specific changes in reported stakeholder engagement and coordination among criminal justice leaders from Wave 1 to Wave 2 of the stakeholder survey.<sup>21</sup> All sites' levels of engagement and coordination among key stakeholders increased throughout Phase II; the increases in the scale measuring stakeholder engagement were greatest for EBDM 1, EBDM 6, and EBDM 7, while the increases in reported coordination among criminal justice leaders were greatest for EBDM 4 and EBDM 6. The EBDM 2 site had the highest levels of reported stakeholder engagement and coordination among criminal justice leaders in Wave 1 and Wave 2 of the survey.

<sup>20</sup> Although it appears that there are only six graphs in Figure 5, the figure presents data from all seven sites. Two sites, EBDM 1 and EBDM 7, have almost identical scores at Wave 1 and Wave 2 so the lines representing the change in these sites overlay one another.

<sup>21</sup> Again, statistical significance tests are not shown because the results reflect the difference in site sample sizes, not the site-specific degree of change in the scales. This is consistent for the remainder of this section.

FIGURE 4

Site-Specific Stakeholder Engagement

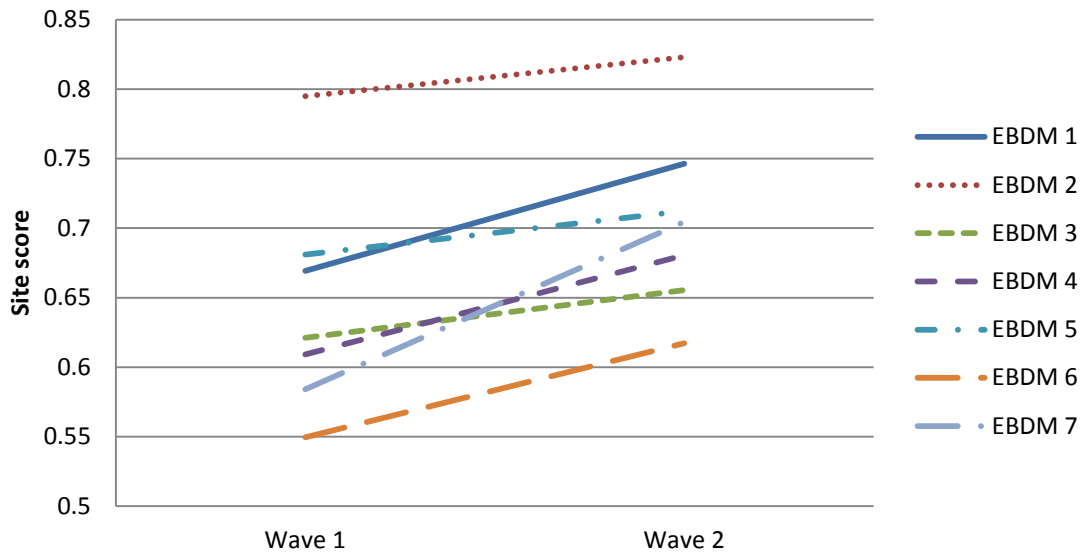
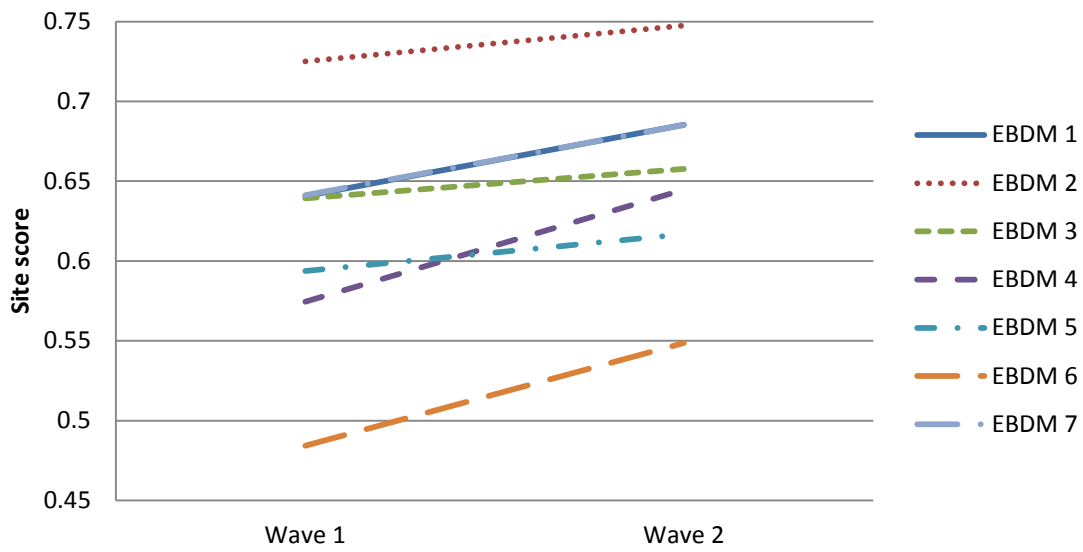


FIGURE 5

Site-Specific Coordination among Criminal Justice Leaders



# Perceived Benefits of Technical Assistance

Another key objective of the Phase II evaluation was to determine if and how the sites reported benefiting from Phase II TA and their participation in the EBDM initiative. These benefits ranged from developing a shared vision for the criminal justice system to using research to make objective decisions (see Appendix B for a breakdown of each item included in each scale measuring the benefits of TA and Phase II). As the initiative progressed, respondents reported different levels of benefiting from TA and Phase II overall for themselves (as individual stakeholders) and for the jurisdiction as a whole. Figures 6 and 7 show that from Wave 1 to Wave 2, six sites (with the exception of EBDM 6) reported an increase in individual and overall benefits of TA. The change in individual benefits was greatest for EBDM 4, while the change in overall benefits was greatest for EBDM 1.

FIGURE 6  
Site-Specific Individual Benefits of TA

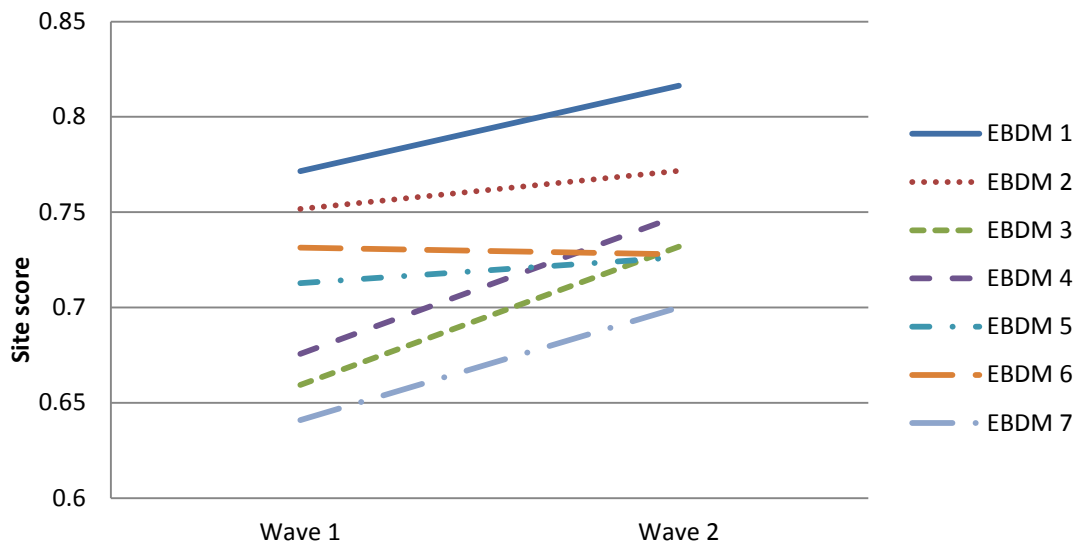
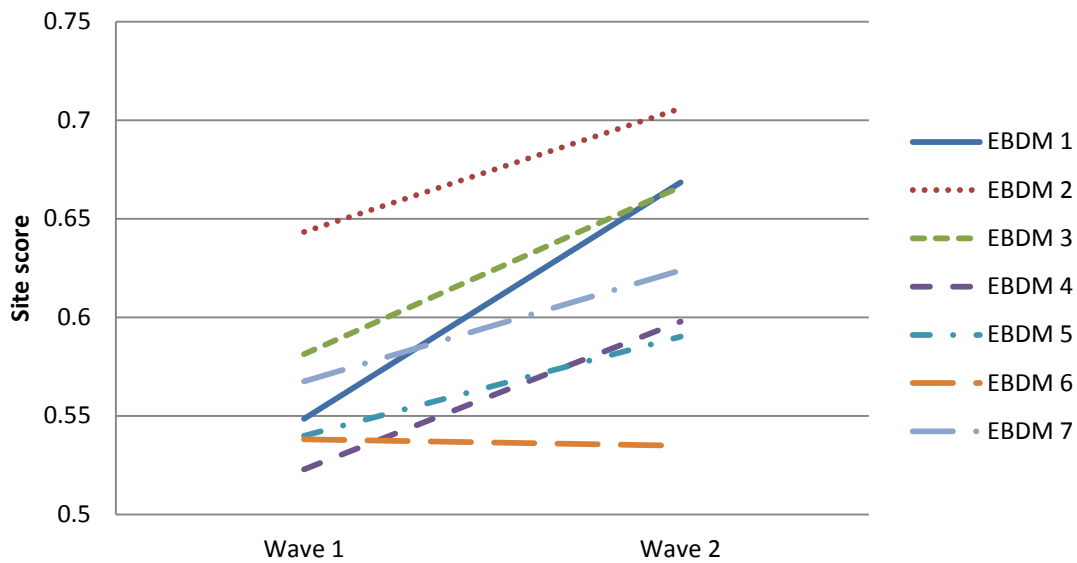


FIGURE 7

Site-Specific Overall Benefits of TA



Figures 8 and 9 below show the changes in sites' reported support for EBDM and the overall benefits of Phase II participation. The benefits of Phase II scale included questions ranging from accessing external resources to measuring performance in the criminal justice system, while the support for EBDM scale included questions related to whether the political atmosphere and collaboration in the jurisdiction was supportive of the EBDM initiative. All seven sites registered higher scores on both these scales at Wave 2 than they did at Wave 1. In both waves, EBDM 2 recorded the highest level of overall benefits from Phase II participation, while EBDM 1 reported the highest level of support for EBDM in Wave 2 (a marked increase in their score from Wave 1). The EBDM 1 and EBDM 4 sites had the largest increase in support for the initiative and overall benefits of Phase II from Wave 1 to Wave 2.

FIGURE 8

Site-Specific Support for EBDM

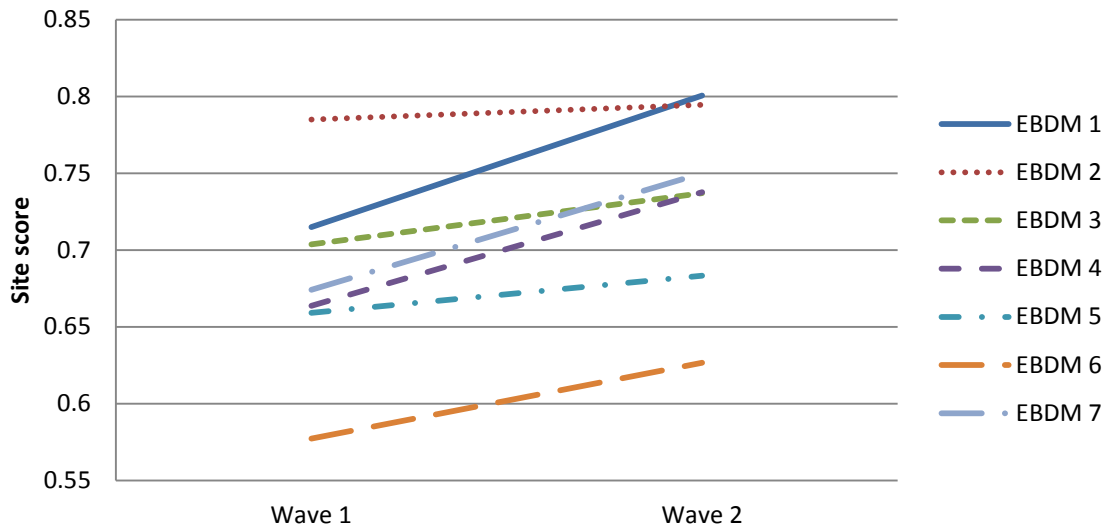
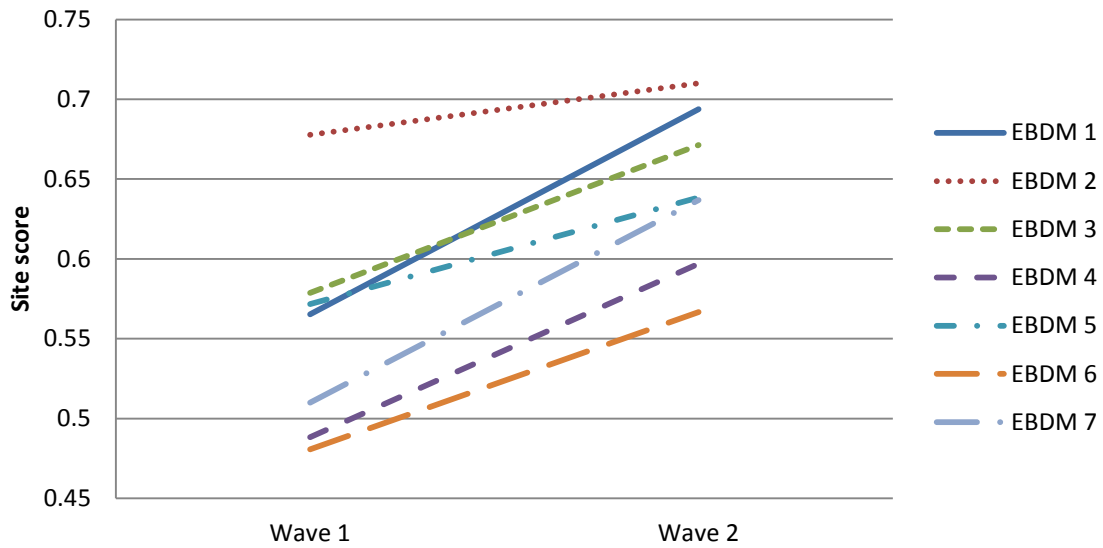


FIGURE 9

Site-Specific Overall Benefits of Phase II Participation



The following sections provide a summary of **cross-site findings** from the stakeholder survey, examining specific items related to implementation readiness, as well as differences on each survey scale based on the respondents' level of involvement in EBDM and their specific stakeholder sphere.

# Implementation Readiness

The UI survey examined respondents’ attitudes regarding eight activities that support EBDM implementation. The survey posed two questions for each activity: one focused on whether the practice is a current priority in their jurisdiction, while the other focused on whether the practice should be a priority in the jurisdiction. Table 2 summarizes these results across the entire survey sample in Wave 1 and Wave 2.

	Wave 1 (N=243)	Wave 2 (N=214)	Wave 1 (N=243)	Wave 2 (N=214)
<b>TABLE 2</b> EBDM Implementation Readiness	Practice is a priority— %	Practice is a priority— %	Practice <u>should be</u> a priority— %	Practice <u>should be</u> a priority— %
Training line staff on using evidence-based practices	64.61*	72.43*	88.48*	92.99*
Engaging community leaders in how research should be applied to criminal justice decision-making	55.97**	65.42**	91.77	94.86
Developing knowledge of evidence-based practices throughout the criminal justice system	80.66	83.64	95.47	95.33
Understanding how cases move through the criminal justice system	82.30	85.05	97.53	95.79
Collecting and analyzing data on a regular basis	70.78	75.70	95.06	95.79
Identifying duplicative data collection efforts in the county	50.62*	58.41*	89.71	93.93
Working collaboratively with other criminal justice agencies	86.01	86.92	96.71	95.79
Using data to measure key outcomes	71.19**	80.37**	96.71	96.73

\*p<.10 \*\* p<.05

Across the seven seed sites, it was clear from the stakeholder survey that even early on in Phase II, understanding current practice and how evidence-based practice could improve decision-making in the criminal justice system were key priorities for stakeholders involved in EBDM. The survey also showed that more stakeholders found these activities to be current priorities as the initiative progressed, and maintained even greater sentiment that these activities should be a priority (as evidenced by their positive change in attitudes from Wave 2 compared to Wave 1).

During Wave 1 of the stakeholder survey, the largest percentage of respondents (86 percent) across all seven sites reported that working collaboratively with other criminal justice agencies was a current priority in Phase II. This percentage increased slightly at Wave 2 (to 87 percent) and retained the largest percentage of

respondents reporting that this was a current priority for the jurisdiction in Phase II. While many stakeholders reported that training line staff was not a current priority at Wave 1, the percentage of stakeholders in agreement increased by nearly 6 percent by Wave 2 (significant at  $p < 0.10$ ). Further, almost all stakeholders across sites reported that working collaboratively is and should be a priority for the EBDM initiative—this belief was consistent across both survey waves.

Despite the sites' different approaches to community engagement, across all the sites, significantly more stakeholder survey respondents reported that engaging the community was a current priority in their EBDM work at the end of Phase II, compared to the early months of Phase II. At Wave 1, 56 percent of respondents identified the practice of engaging community leaders in the initiative as a priority while at Wave 2 roughly 66 percent did so (significant at  $p < .05$ ). Over 91 percent of respondents said it should be a priority to engage the community in EBDM at Wave 1, and at Wave 2 over 95 percent said it should be a priority (though there was no significant change on this item).

While the sites encountered various challenges with building capacity for data collection and analysis and integrating it into their EBDM implementation plans, stakeholders in the seven sites reported that data was a key part of EBDM work, and began to prioritize data collection more as Phase II went on. Our stakeholder survey included three items that measured whether data collection and analysis were current priorities in the county, and whether these practices should be priorities. Across survey waves, there was a significant change in the percentage of stakeholders who said identifying duplicative data collection and using data to measure key outcomes were current priorities in the county ( $p < 0.10$ ). The percentage of respondents who said collecting and analyzing data on a regular basis was a current priority also increased between waves, though not significantly. This is consistent with how stakeholders approached data collection in relation to their EBDM work—as noted earlier in the report, most sites began data collection toward the end of Phase II, after the first survey was administered. There was no significant change on what practices should be priorities for the sites, but the gap between what was rated as a priority and what should be a priority did close on all three measures.

As noted earlier in this section, analyses also examined **differences in scale scores by level of EBDM participation and criminal justice stakeholder group** to detect if the EBDM initiative (and the Phase II technical assistance, specifically) may have influenced criminal justice stakeholders differently. We found a number of statistically significant differences based on the respondents' level of participation in EBDM and sphere in the criminal justice system.

## Level of Involvement in EBDM

In addition to looking at how the sites differed in their attitudes about EBDM, we looked at whether attitudes on each of the eight scales differed based on the level of involvement in the initiative (i.e., number of roles the respondent reported having in the initiative). Graphs showing the mean scores on each scale based on respondents' reported level of involvement in EBDM are included in **Appendix C** and can be summarized as follows:

- Respondents who reported having *no official role* in EBDM did not report any significant change on any scales from Wave 1 to Wave 2 (six scales had positive change in the means, while the benefits of TA and coordination among criminal justice agencies scales had negative change).
- Respondents who had *one role* in the EBDM initiative reported significant positive change on all scales except coordination among criminal justice agencies (which was positive but not significant).
- Respondents who had *two or more roles* reported significant positive change on their support for EBDM, the benefits of TA, and positive (but not significant) change on all other scales except the individual impact of TA (which did not change).
- Respondents who had *three or more roles* reported significant positive change on the scales measuring the benefits of TA, the benefits of Phase II participation, and positive change on all scales except coordination among criminal justice agencies (which did not change).

## Stakeholder Sphere

Stakeholder attitudes toward the key components of the EBDM initiative, as measured at Wave 1 and Wave 2 of the survey, varied based on their sphere of work. Graphs showing each stakeholder sphere's mean scores on each scale are included in **Appendix D**. The findings from these stakeholder sphere-specific analyses can be summarized as follows:

- Respondents from the *courts* registered significant positive change on four scales: the individual impact of TA; support for EBDM; stakeholder engagement; and agency collaboration (and positive change on all scales except coordination among criminal justice agencies).
- Respondents from *community supervision* agencies recorded significantly more positive attitudes on the scales measuring the benefits of TA; benefits of Phase II participation; support for EBDM; existing leadership; stakeholder engagement; and agency coordination (and saw positive change on all scales).



- *Law enforcement* respondents recorded significantly higher mean scores on the scales measuring support for EBDM; stakeholder engagement; and coordination among criminal justice agencies (and had positive change on all scales).
- *Prosecutors* only saw significant, positive change on the scale measuring support for EBDM (but had positive change on all scales, with the exception of coordination among criminal justice agencies, where there was no change) indicating that prosecutors grew in their support for EBDM over the initiative.
- Representatives from *community-based organizations* registered significant positive change in their attitudes regarding the individual impact of TA; the benefits of TA; benefits of Phase II participation; and stakeholder engagement (and saw positive change on all scales).
- Respondents who identified as *jail administrators/staff* did not have significantly different attitudes at Wave 2 (compared to Wave 1) but did show positive change on all scales except coordination among criminal justice agencies.
- Respondents who were *non-criminal justice government* representatives had positive change on all scales, but the change was not significant.

While the vast majority of stakeholder groups surveyed rated each of the EBDM scales more positively over time, one stakeholder group did not: respondents from the *defense bar* registered negative change on the individual impact of TA and the benefits of TA. However, they reported positive change on all other scales besides coordination among criminal justice agencies (where there was no change). The interpretation and implications of this negative rating is unclear.

Survey respondents were also asked to report on the level of engagement and support from specific EBDM stakeholder groups. Respondents were asked about 12 stakeholder groups at Wave 1 and Wave 2 of the survey, and answered on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree (with a “don’t know” response option) whether each group was engaged in and supportive of the EBDM initiative in the county. Figure 10 shows the percentage of respondents across all seven sites who said they agreed or strongly agreed that the stakeholder group was engaged in and supportive of the initiative (significant cross-wave change identified with \*\* at  $p < .05$ ).

FIGURE 10

Cross-Site Stakeholder Engagement

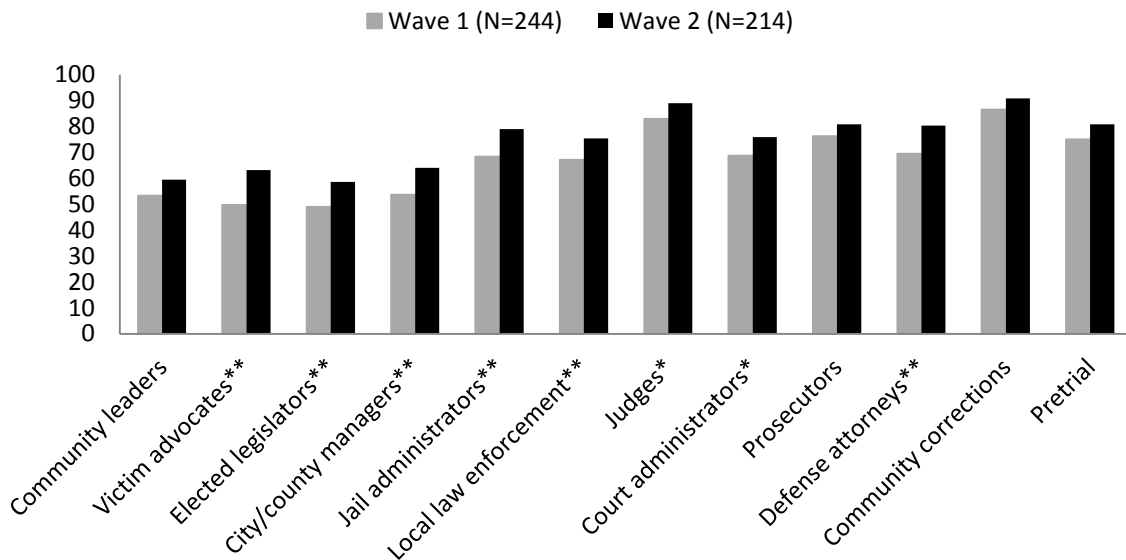


Figure 10 also indicates that all 12 stakeholder groups registered higher levels of support for and engagement in the EBDM initiative at Wave 2, compared to Wave 1 of the survey. This change was significant for eight stakeholder groups (victim advocates, elected legislators, city/county managers, jail administrators, law enforcement, judges, court administrators and defense attorneys). At both waves, community corrections stakeholders were perceived to be the most engaged in the initiative, followed closely by judges. These measures provide a helpful contrast to the scales shown in Appendix D (the breakdown of scale scores by stakeholder group) and the earlier discussion in this section. (To be clear, the graph in figure 10 shows the level of *perceived engagement* in the initiative, as opposed to Appendix G which presents data on how stakeholders rate their *own attitudes* about EBDM.)

## Summary

Our evaluation findings indicate that there was significant value added from the TA the sites received during Phase II; there were a number of perceived and reported benefits of the initiative for individual stakeholders, their agencies, and the entire jurisdiction. The sites ended Phase II with a greater readiness to implement EBDM (as evidenced by their greater prioritization of data collection and analysis, and training line staff on evidence-based practices, over the course of the initiative) and reported a number of benefits stemming from Phase II

participation (e.g., an ability to leverage additional funding and TA resources, more partnerships between agencies within the jurisdiction).

The gaps identified by stakeholders are specific to data collection efforts and engaging both agency staff and the community in the initiative. The following section discusses the conclusions and implications of the evaluation, along with specific recommendations for future planning efforts similar to Phase II EBDM.

## 5. Conclusions and Implications

The National Institute of Correction's EBDM Phase II initiative sought to achieve the following objectives in seven communities across the nation: establish collaborative partnerships among local criminal justice stakeholders; foster the development of a shared philosophy and vision among stakeholders; enhance capacity for data collection and analysis necessary to support future implementation of the Framework; increase knowledge, skills, and abilities regarding research-based risk reduction strategies; and develop jurisdiction-specific tools to assist in the implementation of evidence-based decision-making. To accomplish these objectives, NIC provided each community with 12 months of intensive, targeted technical assistance through a dedicated technical assistance coordinator and the ability to leverage additional TA resources from a consortium of nationally recognized subject matter experts and their organizations. UI's evaluation of Phase II technical assistance suggests that these objectives were largely accomplished. Here we summarize the key findings from our evaluation and consider both the lessons learned and the implications for Phase III technical assistance work.

UI's evaluation examined the impact of technical assistance and its value added in preparing the sites for implementation. The process analysis and stakeholder survey both showed that Phase II enhanced collaboration, knowledge, and support for EBDM; the TA was critical to capacity building in these areas. Despite the overall success of Phase II in each of the seven seed sites, the sites experienced a number of challenges in the planning phase and identified specific areas for improvement. Stakeholder feedback and the results of the survey support the following recommendations for potential changes to the planning process if it were implemented in other sites:

- **Increase emphasis on data collection and performance measurement in Phase II.** At the start of Phase II, all sites were struggling with their lack of experience with data collection and analysis during the planning phase. Though the sites understood the importance of using data to inform their decision-making early in Phase II, they did not focus on assessing or building their data collection capacity until they started developing their scorecards (toward the end of Phase II). The sites and TA providers recognize this is a major gap for sites going forward into implementation: for sites to have set

performance measures on their scorecards without having any baseline data was a challenge (and may have led to implementation plans that do not have appropriate outcomes or are not realistic). To assess whether they are achieving their EBDM goals during implementation, the sites will need to determine how they are going to measure their implementation performance (including process measures to determine if their plans are being implemented as they should be).

- **Make research more accessible.** Though many EBDM stakeholders acknowledged that their TA coordinators were extremely helpful in providing them with research articles when they wanted to read the actual research, others felt that it would have been more helpful if the research findings were translated into more practitioner-friendly language. Many stakeholders did not have time to read entire academic reports or journal articles, nor make sense of the research abstracts, and those who did set aside the time to read these materials still needed assistance navigating them. Practitioner-friendly summaries or one-page overviews of findings would have been helpful for the stakeholders who actively sought out the research, as well as those who wanted to but did not have time to tackle it.
- **Prioritize agency staff engagement in Phase II.** Each EBDM site decided whether Phase II was the appropriate time to engage agency staff in the initiative, or whether it should be a priority in Phase III. The sites that did engage staff in Phase II reported that this engagement provoked difficult conversations, particularly among prosecutors and defense attorneys, but also put them in a better position to implement their EBDM plans in Phase III (i.e., since agency staff were already engaged in the process). Stakeholders in sites that did not engage their agency staff, particularly in larger jurisdictions, reported more concerns about sustainability of the EBDM initiative because implementation will require resources and time to engage and train staff on EBDM. Regardless of the decisions made to engage agency staff in Phase II, stakeholders in all sites reported that more EBDM training—both cross-system and discipline-specific training—would be beneficial.
- **Focus initiative on challenges related to the adversarial nature of the criminal justice system.** Many stakeholders reported that the adversarial nature of the criminal justice system—sometimes referred to as the “zero-sum game” (if I win, you lose; if you lose, I win)—posed challenges for them in Phase II and would likely continue to do so in Phase III. Some stakeholders noted that the sites’ implementation plans lacked specific performance measurement for courts, prosecutors, and defense attorneys. For example, it may have been decided that prosecutors and defense attorneys would use risk assessment to guide sentencing and plea recommendations, and that judges would follow this guidance, however, these stakeholders also emphasized that this information would inform, but not dictate, their decision-making and that they would still have their discretion. Whether prosecutors and defense attorneys actually use risk assessment information as agreed to remains to be seen, and may become an issue for

EBDM implementation. While this challenge reflects a reality of implementing EBDM in the criminal justice system, additional TA and education may be necessary to reinforce the potential EBDM “win-win” themes for these stakeholders and the constituencies they serve.

- **Extend timeline for Phase II.** The vast majority of EBDM stakeholders felt that the Phase II timeline was too condensed and that it placed a tremendous burden on key stakeholders and their staff. While the timeline was helpful in moving the initiative forward, some stakeholders said they would have benefited from having more time to prepare and plan as opposed to meeting so frequently (in some cases on a weekly basis) in order to keep up with their workload. Finally, receiving materials (such as the EBDM Starter Kits or meeting materials) as they were being created was challenging, particularly for the LICs and policy team members who wanted more time to process information before having to pass it on and discuss it with their colleagues. Future EBDM planning efforts should carefully weigh the potential benefits and costs for stakeholders and the overall initiative in settling on a timeline.
- **Provide more structured opportunities for peer learning.** At various points during the planning phase, different stakeholder groups expressed a desire for more peer-to-peer learning opportunities. Some stakeholders reported that the competitive nature of Phase II may have negatively impacted the sites’ willingness to communicate openly with their counterparts in the other sites. Other stakeholders stated that they were too busy during Phase II to pick up the phone and call their counterparts in other jurisdictions, or felt that they did not have anything concrete to discuss (before their implementation plans were solidified). Though the webinars provided a forum for discussion across the sites, most stakeholders did not think they accomplished this goal. All stakeholders who attended the cross-site meetings reported that these meetings were extremely helpful for peer learning (and for team bonding), and wished that there had been more than two opportunities over the course of the initiative.
- **Encourage participation from less involved participants.** As noted throughout this report, each site had different approaches to engaging stakeholders outside of the criminal justice system, particularly victim advocates and community representatives. Though the TA providers generally did not force the policy teams to recruit participants from these spheres, working with stakeholders outside of the criminal justice system is an important part of the Framework, and will be important for sites whose implementation plans require some type of community or victim involvement. Additionally, when the sites had a challenge engaging at least one stakeholder group from the criminal justice system, it was generally because that group did not see their role in the Framework or did not identify with its stated goals. Some of these groups reported that the EBDM initiative was too focused on recidivism reduction and offender outcomes, and did not embrace the broader harm reduction goals that the Framework

identified. Future efforts to replicate EBDM in other sites should work to more clearly outline the components of the Framework that are most relevant to specific stakeholders in order to facilitate greater engagement.

- **Use policy team leadership position to engage other stakeholders.** Though NIC and the consortium of TA providers were not prescriptive in determining what the structure of each site’s policy team should be, stakeholders reported that there were certain benefits and potential pitfalls to having specific policy team members in leadership positions and/or serving as the coordinator for the initiative. Sites that had their LICs housed in the same agency as the policy team chair tended to have that agency take on the majority of the work for the initiative. This became problematic in some cases when that agency also had the most experience with implementing evidence-based practices and was most engaged in the EBDM initiative; the extensive involvement and commitment from that agency allowed other policy team members to be less engaged during Phase II and take on less work throughout the process. Some stakeholders reported that if the policy team chair was less knowledgeable about EBDM, the leadership position still helped this person (and the relevant stakeholder sphere) be more engaged in the initiative than they would have been otherwise.

#### Transition from Phase II to Phase III

A key goal of Phase II was to help sites prepare for Phase III implementation (e.g., identify change strategies, build collaborative team, assess state of EBDM knowledge, develop communication strategy). However, the Phase III Roadmap reflects some of the limitations of Phase II as well; parts of both the Phase II and Phase III roadmaps mirror each other in recognition of the challenges sites faced with meeting the objectives of the Phase II Roadmap. For instance, the communication strategy component of both roadmaps is largely the same, indicating that sites were not able to develop such a plan in Phase II. Further, establishing baseline data on past practices (identified as an action step in the Phase III Roadmap) was also an action step for Phase II. Additionally, while the sites submitted a proposed timeline for their implementation plans in their Phase III applications, some sites have already begun revising their timelines; the Phase III Roadmap acknowledges these adjustments (e.g., “establish specific start dates for each change initiative.”)

Though the sites all attended the Phase III workshop and were engaged and ready to continue their EBDM work, many sites experienced a loss of momentum in transitioning from Phase II to Phase III. Part of the difficulty with this transition stemmed from the nature of the Phase III site selection process. Though the original plan was to select two sites at the end of Phase II to receive TA in Phase III, NIC instead decided to provide some level of TA to all sites. Three sites (Eau Claire, Mesa, and Milwaukee Counties) were chosen to receive Tier I TA and the other four (Charlottesville/Albemarle, Grant, Ramsey Yamhill Counties) were chosen

to receive Tier II TA in Phase III. When asked if the competitive nature of Phase II was valuable or not for their sites, many stakeholders had mixed opinions on this; some reported that the competition was valuable and kept them moving forward, but others said that they lost motivation because of the new distinction between the “winners” and “losers” among the sites who were all receiving some form of “prize” (Tier I TA versus Tier II TA). Some stakeholders in the Tier I sites felt like the process was unfair because they expected to receive more TA than the Tier II sites, and did not see any distinction between Tier I and Tier II. On the other hand, some stakeholders in Tier II sites said that they were not seen as winners in the process, despite NIC’s decision that all sites merited some form of TA in Phase III.

### Implementation and Sustainability

At the start of Phase III, all sites were concerned with their ability to implement and sustain their EBDM work, particularly in the long term without TA. Many of the components of the EBDM implementation plans had specific TA needs (e.g., subject matter expertise, training) without which it would be hard to continue their EBDM work. Many sites remedied this by seeking out other TA resources, such as BJA’s Justice Reinvestment Initiative and/or other federal or state grants that could provide them with financial assistance. At the Phase III workshop, much emphasis was placed on developing an infrastructure for implementation and defining the “drivers” of implementation success like coaching, training, and performance measurement (Van Dyke 2012); though the sites consider some of these TA needs, the question of when and how sites can build their internal capacity for sustainability remains unanswered.

Many sites have decided to pilot parts of their EBDM plans or implement them with a phased approach in order to identify and remedy any challenges prior to full implementation. Other sites have begun full implementation in an effort to identify early outcomes as to whether the initiative is achieving its desired goals or not. Regardless of their implementation process, all sites understand the importance of having process measures in place to determine if and how their staff are implementing the EBDM plans (with fidelity or not).

Each site has concerns about staff engagement in at least one specific stakeholder sphere. For example, many law enforcement officers will need to change their reactive arrest role to focus more on the use of risk information and improved offender outcomes; many of these officers may not only challenge this change in their work, but the fundamental principles of the EBDM framework (i.e., question whether this is truly in the interest of public safety). For community corrections and supervision officers, using new supervision strategies will also require a transition (i.e., not just using sanctioning responses but employing behavior change techniques to prevent violations from occurring). Judges may change the way they focus not only on charge and criminal circumstances, but also on risk and criminogenic need (a concept that may not currently be featured prominently in a courtroom). Prosecutors and defense attorneys must figure out how risk information fits into

an adversarial process—how it works in the legal world of discovery, evidence presentation, plea bargaining, and sentencing recommendations. Ultimately, the concerns of these stakeholder groups may be challenges for the EBDM policy teams going forward, but their engagement will be crucial for EBDM implementation.

Sustainability will ultimately depend on whether EBDM will “filter down” to agency staff in each jurisdiction. As noted at various points in this report, most EBDM sites did not engage agency staff in Phase II; however, as sites move forward with implementation, they have begun to engage more agency staff in the initiative. Some components of the sites’ implementation plans require more direct line staff involvement than others (e.g., officers administering the Proxy tool at arrest versus agency heads developing new system-wide performance measurement scorecards). However, some agency staff may be more on board with the initiative than others, and ensuring EBDM is implemented across the criminal justice system may require more technical assistance and methods of monitoring implementation fidelity. Ultimately, if EBDM is successfully filtered down throughout each agency, the initiative will be sustained long after the leaders involved in the planning phase leave their positions.



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