

December 9th, 2004

Prisoner Reentry – A Case Example

Panelists:

Andrew M. Alper President, Economic Development Corporation

Richard Cho Program Officer, Corporation for Supportive Housing

Kathleen Coughlin Assistant Commissioner for Discharge Planning, Department of Correction

John Feinblatt Criminal Justice Coordinator for the Mayor

Martin F. Horn Commissioner, Department of Correction

Mark Hurwitz Deputy Commissioner, Department of Homeless Services

Marta Nelson Director, Adolescent Portable Therapy, Vera Institute of Justice

JoAnne Page Executive Director, The Fortune Society

Frank Squillante Warden, Department of Correction

Mindy Tarlow Executive Director, Center for Employment Opportunities

Prepared by

Justin Miller, Doctoral Student, NYU/Wagner

Supporting High Performance Government: Leading Large Scale Change
“Prisoner Reentry – A Case Example”
December 9, 2004

Executive Summary

Introduction

Accenture and the Research Center for Leadership in Action of the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, New York University are co-hosting an Executive Briefing series for public sector managers to discuss the multiple managerial and leadership challenges of implementing large scale change. The series seeks to:

- Encourage the exchange of ideas between senior managers of complex change programs and those emerging leaders charged with undertaking similar efforts.
- Support a cadre of new leaders interested in undertaking such challenges, providing them with the insights, learning and the collegial support that will help sustain their work over time, and
- Promote further learning about how successful complex change initiatives are designed and managed, and capture this information in written reports.

Each session is organized around a central strategic and managerial question of particular relevance to large-scale change. The fourth breakfast on December 9, held at the Economic Development Corporation, focused on “Prisoner Reentry – A Case Example”. In this session, attended by senior managers working in 22 city agencies, participants discussed the key challenges posed by two initiatives that promote effective prisoner reentry. This discussion explored many of the key principles and ideas addressed throughout the series including: approaches to managing cross agency collaboration; internal and external stakeholder roles in leveraging buy-in; strategies for sustaining innovation; and defining scope and pace of change. In addition, it considered a new strategic issue of central importance to large scale change, the creation and development of public-nonprofit partnerships critical to program implementation.

The programs that were discussed in detail in this session help prisoners retuning to civilian life connect immediately with a range of services that will help sustain their effective return. These programs are intended to undercut the cycling of prisoners between the corrections and homeless systems, and to protect the viability of a developing economic growth center in Queens.

Arthur Miller, the Bruce Bromley Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, moderated the December 9th session. The participants for this session were: Andrew M. Alper (President, Economic Development Corporation), Richard Cho (Program Officer, Corporation for Supportive Housing), Kathleen Coughlin (Assistant Commissioner for Discharge Planning, Department of Correction), John Feinblatt (Criminal Justice Coordinator for the Mayor), Martin F. Horn (Commissioner, Department of Correction), Mark Hurwitz (Deputy Commissioner, Department of Homeless Services), Marta Nelson (Director, Adolescent Portable Therapy, Vera Institute of Justice), JoAnne Page

(Executive Director, The Fortune Society), Frank Squillante (Warden, Department of Correction), and Mindy Tarlow (Executive Director, Center for Employment Opportunities)

The following summarizes some of the central ideas and observations offered by the lead discussants and during an audience-wide conversation.

Key Idea: Forming a Public-Private Partnerships

Commissioners Martin Horn, Department of Correction (DOC) and Linda Gibbs, Department of Homeless Services (DHS) recognized a shared interest in addressing the problem of prisoner reentry – Commissioner Horn because of the large number of inmates leaving DOC that required housing and support from other agencies and providers and Commissioner Gibbs because thirty percent of the shelter population was comprised of DOC inmates. Many of these individuals repeatedly cycle back and forth between the homeless and correction systems. Commissioner Horn noted, “How we define the problem determines how we define the solution...we were experiencing a shared problem, therefore it had to be a shared solution.”

Mark Hurwitz of DHS elaborated Commissioner Horn’s sentiments, “In homeless services ...the size of the homeless population is a barometer for the failure of the healthcare, corrections and foster systems. We had to get these other agencies on board by agreeing to share data and to create a magic moment where several agencies could come together to solve a problem common to all.” Hurwitz was describing a system that includes not only key City agencies but also a network of nonprofit organizations providing employment, substance abuse, housing and health and mental health services.

As a first step toward creating a successful partnership, the participants needed to recognize that they shared a common problem. Agreeing on a common frame with which to understand the problem was critical to ensure that the resultant solutions were not fragmented or, potentially, conflicting. An important step was a collaborative effort to understand the details of the multiple challenges of prisoner reentry. Panelists all agreed that in the case of prisoner reentry, it was serendipitous that key City agencies focused on how the impact of the corrections system. Commissioner Gibbs was examining how state inmates became involved in the shelter system while Andrew Alper, of the Economic Development Corporation (EDC), was considering how to deal with the fact that Queens Plaza was an up and coming business district into which prisoners were released daily. Taking advantage of such a “magic moment” in which agencies’ interests appear to be aligned is key to establishing effective partnerships.

John Feinblatt observed that multiple constituencies benefited from the new approaches to prisoner reentry. He said, “Discharge planning isn’t just good for those being discharged, it is good for businesses, housing services etc...it works for everyone and that has been a big and necessary shift in thinking that has helped sustain this partnership and the systems changes that have come with it.”

Another aspect crucial to creating successful partnerships is the value each participant brings to the table. In the case of the prisoner reentry initiatives, each participant was chosen for their ability to contribute to the solution. Commissioner Horn summed up this issue, “Although we had the power to include or exclude people from our ‘tent’, it wasn’t just our tent, it was a shared tent. There was a time when many groups clamored to get in, to be a part of the solution to the prisoner reentry problem. What emerged from the group was an inclusion criteria, ‘you can come, but what value do you add?’ Everyone

For articles relating to the formation of collaborative public-private partnerships see:

Googins BK and Rochlin SA. (2000) Creating the partnership society: Understanding the rhetoric and reality of cross-sector partnerships. *Business and Society Review*, 105:1 pp127-144.

Huxam C ed. (1996) *Creating Collaborative Advantage*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications Ltd.

Schaeffer PV and Loveridge S. (2002) Toward an understanding of types of public-private cooperation. *Public Performance and Management Review*, 26:2 pp169-189.

*For more literature on the breakfast theme public-private partnerships, see the annotated bibliography posted at: www.wagnerbriefing.com

who became involved had a capacity to contribute something which enabled us to keep the existing dynamic. “

Key Idea: Strategies for Furthering Trust Among Partners

Most panelists cited trust as the key element necessary for partnerships to work. Transparent sharing of information among potentially competing partners is a critical challenge in developing authentic partnerships. As a member of the collaboration, JoAnne Page of the Fortune Society noted that she had access to information that she would not have had under normal circumstances. She understood this as evidence of trust. While she did not know the ground rules for using the information she obtained, she did not want to break the trust that was offered by Commissioner Horn. Ms. Page noted, “It’s not control, it’s not co-opting, it’s not muzzling, it’s giving access to information and also giving a sense of shared values about outcomes, even though there may not be a shared emphasis on means. All of this breeds trust between two or more agencies.” Commissioner Horn noted that in his experience, you have to learn to give a little away in order to get something back. He said, “If a complicated problem exists, then the way to work on that problem is to create an environment where there is trust and the messiness of the problem will not destroy the relationships, the trust or the process.”

Fostering and maintaining trust between colleagues and between participating agencies is key to effective public-private partnerships. In this instance, the panelists noted that they had all worked together over the last 15 years in one way or another. These long-term relationships supported the present collaboration. Marta Nelson said “I think that what got me into the tent was a pre-existing relationship with Commissioner Horn from work that he has done with Vera and work I’ve done on reentry. When partnerships are in their infancy, they need a core group that is used to working with government and one another.” JoAnne Page also noted, “we’ve all been working in this arena for a while. We may shift roles but we don’t shift universes.” Additionally, it was noted that by engaging partners you build relationships for the future.

The literature has also highlighted trust and previous relationships as important precursors for starting and maintaining partnerships across sectors. For relevant examples see:

Kanter RM. (1994) Collaborative Advantage: The art of alliances. *Harvard Business Review*, 72:4 pp96-108.

Mandell MP. (1999) The impact of collaborative efforts: Changing the face of public policy through networks and network structures. *Policy Studies Review*, 16:1 pp4-17.

Lasker R, Weiss E and Miller R. (2001) Partnership synergy: A practical framework for studying and strengthening the collaborative advantage. *The Milbank Quarterly*, 79:2 pp179-205.

Frank Squillante, Warden of Rikers Island, described deep changes in the culture of Rikers Island that are supported by senior management, shifts in incentives, redesign of processes and training. He spoke of involving every member of his staff as well as the prisoners in the culture change. His reach includes educating visitors about the need to provide documentation for family members, and incentives given to prisoners for working while they were in jail and for participating in the CEO bus-to-work program upon release. Warden Squillante said, “I tell officers and other employees that I want discharge planning heard, preached, supported and supported some more. In addition, by providing steady tours and steady post assignments for officers I am giving them an added incentive to promote all of the discharge planning activities.” Warden Squillante also noted that in order to insure that a vision is sustained after a leader has gone, in this case Commissioner Horn, one must imbed the policies in the routines of the prison workers and other’s involved in the process. Mindy Tarlow, Executive Director of CEO, cited additional process changes that further support sustaining the new discharge programs such as allowing those who were being bused to work to be awakened at a later hour, to shower before release and to spend less time in the bullpen before release.

Marta Nelson observed that the new process of early assessment, so critical for effective discharge planning, would be sustained because forms created to streamline the process of gathering inmate information are now embedded in an institutional process and will continue to be used “indefinitely.”

Systems are sustained by success, suggested John Feinblatt. He felt that the entire process of busing prisoners directly to work upon release has worked so well that it is now an institution and will continue to be the “best practice” for this type of prisoner release

Shared data across public and nonprofit organizations also provides an infrastructure that promotes sustainability. JoAnne Page noted that sustaining this partnership and these changes will be easier than similar efforts in the past because of increased access to information within and across public and private agencies. She felt that this increased access would allow all parties to use staff more effectively, accomplish goals more effectively, and identify problems that need to be addressed more effectively.

Observations from the third Executive Briefing which examined the topic of introducing and sustaining innovation also investigated the significance of creating profound culture change as was described at Rikers Island. Among other observations, in that Briefing participants observed that persistent cultural change needs to reach line workers and be embedded in their routine work, as it appears to have done at Rikers Island as well.

The second Briefing exploring stakeholder management also suggested that stakeholders external to the agency need to support culture shifts in order to ensure that they are sustained. One of the significant values of the extensive public-nonprofit partnership at the core of the prisoner reentry initiatives is the support it provides to shifts in goals, sought outcomes, and processes within Corrections. These outside stakeholders – the nonprofit organizations in the partnership - played a central role in crafting these changes, and play key roles in providing responsive initiatives in their own agencies that further reinforce these new efforts.

Important to note is that the shift of culture extends to the partner vendors whose own processes have been created or revised to support partnership initiatives.

Fostering culture change through partnerships and then sustaining both the partnership and the system changes can be a challenging aspect of collaboration. Some readings that offer advice on this subject are:

Rosenau, PV ed. (2000) *Public-Private Policy Partnerships*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Shortell SM, Zukoski AP, Alexander JA, Bazzoli GJ, Conrad DA, Hasnain-Wynia R, Sofaer S, Chan BY, Casey E, and Margolin FS. (2002) Evaluating partnerships for community health improvement: Tracking the footprints. *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, 27:1, pp49-91.

Scope and Pace of Change Revisited

Scope:

The Prisoner Reentry case study also highlighted many of the management and leadership challenges discussed in previous Briefings. Defining the scope and pace of change is a critical strategic decision. In this case, the focus of the initial effort was refined through the use of data and other criteria that purposely narrowed the target group of prisoners to be the focus of this work. Instead of looking at the broad array of prisoners in the corrections system in New York, the committee tackling the issue of prisoner reentry decided to focus on those prisoners who cycled between the jails and the shelters continuously. 3400 prisoners fit this profile, and these prisoners were dubbed “heavy users.” The data analysis that pinpointed this group allowed the Partnership to make this strategic decision. Although this subset of prisoners is a small percentage of the total prison population, it is responsible for using a large percentage of city resources. It is also a population that has traditionally been resistant to discharge planning. Focusing on the data of the heavy user population also encouraged collaboration. Richard Cho noted that it is critical in any collaboration for an agency to focus on a concrete problem as a starting point – in this case the heavy users. Otherwise, the efforts and focus tends to be too diffuse and interest wanes. He pointed out that by focusing on the heavy users of jails and shelters, the parties could remain engaged in addressing the needs of a particular sub-population, and in solving a concrete problem. This focus promised the possibility of achieving changes and outcomes and served to fuel the sense of success of any such large-scale change endeavor.

For a case study of the heavy user problem by Richard Cho of the Corporation for Supportive Housing, please see:

http://www.csh.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=document_showDocumentList&parentID=53

Another subcommittee is looking at short-term stayers, those who are in the facility for three days or less, although in the case of Rikers, the heavy users may overlap significantly with the short-term stayers. JoAnne Page articulated what the strategic

concerns were. She noted, “we need to identify groups that have a significant impact on City resources and then find out more about the usage patterns of those groups. It is possible that there are different interventions for different groups, but by putting information together from multiple agencies we can alleviate the burden on each agency and find a solution that is mutually beneficial.”

Pace:

In addition to targeting one or two subpopulations of prisoners, the committee dealing with this issue is also faced with the challenge of deciding when to roll out different parts of the intervention to maximize impact and minimize chance of failure. In addition, the Partnership will need to decide how much time each of the interventions will take to reach a point where, if successful, they will be sustained as integral components of the reentry process. This point was illustrated earlier in the section that discussed sustaining a partnership. The various interventions aimed at alleviating the problem of prisoner reentry have all been underway for some time, and the committee is still meeting to determine the next steps that will be taken to continue to improve the current situation.

Large-scale change processes take time, and this ongoing process of lowering prisoner reentry rates is an excellent example of that concept. For more on scope and pace of change, see the Executive Summary from Breakfast 2 posted at www.wagnerbriefing.com.

Stakeholder Management Revisited

The idea of collaborating across agencies and forming public-private partnerships is inherently rooted in the realm of stakeholder management. The second breakfast explored the theme of how to involve stakeholders and how to work with them once they were involved in a project. This breakfast expanded upon that theme by showing a particular approach to involving stakeholders by making them partners in an ongoing collaborative effort to produce systemic change. The first twenty minutes of the breakfast dealt with the issue of who to include in the partnership, how to include them and how to make a partnership with multiple parties work. For example, the idea of including everyone, so as to generate as many ideas as possible and to keep “enemies” abreast of the situation (so that they don’t go derail the group’s efforts) was mentioned. The contrasting idea of keeping the group small and select so as to maintain focus, lessen potential distractions or figure out what the general direction of the partnership is before the activities become more widely known was also explored.

In another example, the panelists all agreed that in the case of prisoner reentry, it was wisest not to include elected officials “under the tent” because it would significantly change the existing dynamic. The panelists felt that elected officials might seek solutions that would give them an advantage to their position or career, whereas the current group

had no such personal aims. For additional literature on stakeholder management, see the Bibliography and Executive Summary from Breakfast 2 posted at www.wagnerbriefing.com.

Introducing Innovation Revisited

One of the main themes introduced during the third breakfast, where the topic was “Introducing Innovation” was the use of crisis as an opportunity to promote innovation. During the case study of prisoner reentry, the idea of using crisis as a leverage for substantial procedural and cultural change was also discussed. John Feinblatt noted, “A c trick that has always worked for is to look for a crisis. Here we had a clear push on the part of the City to see economic development in the Long Island City area, yet this was the same area where offenders were being dropped off which was not good for business. When the issue came to my attention, I started to think that this was a good way to use crisis as an opportunity.”

Andrew Alper echoed Mr. Feinblatt’s sentiments. Mr. Alper felt that there was more of a perception problem, in terms of safety of an area where prisoners were dropped off upon release, on the part of businesses rather than an actual problem. In reality, the prisoners usually stopped at the coffee shop, bought a doughnut and went on their way. Mr. Feinblatt realized that there had to be a way to marry the perception problem to the problem of inadequate discharge planning that led to prisoner reentry. In this way the committee could address both the economic development problem in addition to the reentry problem. Other parties such as the Fortune Society, Vera and CEO were brought on board because they had an important contribution to make to both of the issues at hand. For a more extensive discussion about useful strategies for introducing and sustaining innovation in government agencies see the Executive Summary and Bibliography for Breakfast 3 located at www.wagnerbriefing.com.

Large-Scale Change – The Process

Introducing large-scale change in the public sector is an extremely challenging process. It incorporates many facets of both the public and private sector, usually has a large number of stakeholders involved and requires innovative thinking and ideas that are implemented at the correct scale and at the correct pace. The case study of prisoner reentry has demonstrated all of these aspects of change and has also been a strong example of how many different agencies from the public and private sector can collaborate to implement creative program innovations that have required extensive cultural and procedural changes at the agency level. In addition, this case study has incorporated the themes of other breakfasts and shown how these themes become integrated into a single change effort that has been successful and will likely continue to be successful in the future.

For a “how-to” manual which gives strategic guidance and tools for public sector managers who want to engage in public-private partnerships to affect large-scale change see:

http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/epic/internet/inpupr-bdpr.nsf/en/h_qz01549e.html

This website is a link to the P3 Public Sector Readiness Assessment Guide.

Program Sponsors

Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company. Committed to delivering innovation, Accenture collaborates with its clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. With deep industry and business process expertise, broad global resources and a proven track record, Accenture can mobilize the right people, skills, and technologies to help clients improve their performance. With approximately 90,000 people in 48 countries, the company generated net revenues of US\$11.8 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2003. Its home page is www.accenture.com.

NYU Wagner

School of Public Service

Established in 1938, the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service offers advanced programs leading to the professional degrees of Master of Public Administration, Master of Urban Planning, Master of Science in Management, and Doctor of Philosophy. NYU Wagner is known for its ability to integrate theory and practice. At Wagner, students transform personal commitment into public leadership and engage with a faculty that is changing the way the world looks at issues of public concern. NYU Wagner School alumni are in leadership positions in nonprofit, health, and public sector roles in this country and internationally.

For more information visit: www.nyu.edu/wagner.

Research Center for Leadership in Action

The Research Center for Leadership in Action is a hub where people from multiple sectors and disciplines, undertaking critical public challenges, come together to explore the complexities of their work, and find creative ways to address them.

The Center promotes the transformation of practitioner “learned wisdom” into knowledge about leadership by:

- Encouraging collaborations between practitioners and academics
- Using leading-edge methodologies to encourage dialogue and inquiry
- Creating opportunities for reflection and personal growth
- Recognizing and supporting diverse approaches to leadership
- Applying social science scholarship to create practice-grounded theory
- Offering publications and other products to wide audiences

The Center works in local, national and international arenas. For more information visit: www.nyu.edu/wagner/research/leadership.html.

“Prisoner Reentry – A Case Example”
For More Information: www.wagnerbriefing.com
Research Center for Leadership in Action
212 992 9880