



# KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

APRIL 1, 2020

## Follow-up on Best Starts for Kids Evaluation Plan Audit

**The Best Starts for Kids evaluation team has completed or made significant progress on all seven recommendations to improve the evaluation plan's transparency and reliability.** The evaluation team has built on the progress made in the last follow-up report. In order to ensure that it will be able to analyze the effectiveness of all Best Starts for Kids (BSK) programs, the team has added the missing performance measures to the programs that we identified in our audit. It has procedures in place to develop the necessary performance measures for the remaining programs that are still being rolled out. The evaluation team has also formed agreements with management to have final review of all final BSK evaluation reports. Documenting these agreements will help ensure that the results are represented accurately to stakeholders and the public. Finally, the team is in the process of ensuring the reliability of the new data system. It has embedded data validation in the system but still needs to train the organizations that will use the system.

We made seven recommendations in our 2017 audit, "BSK Evaluation: Leverages Limited Budget but Could Improve Transparency and Reliability." Four of the recommendations were already completed by the 2018 follow-up. This report provides status updates on the three remaining recommendations and a breakdown of all seven recommendations by status.

Of the seven audit recommendations:

	5 DONE		2 PROGRESS		0 OPEN
<b>Fully implemented</b> Auditor will no longer monitor.		<b>Partially implemented</b> Auditor will continue to monitor.		<b>Remain unresolved</b> Auditor will continue to monitor.	

Please see below for details on the implementation status of these recommendations.

## Recommendation 1

DONE



**The Department of Public Health – Seattle & King County and the Department of Community and Human Services should develop performance measures that adhere to the results-based accountability model for all programs receiving Best Starts for Kids funding.**

STATUS UPDATE: The evaluation team has worked with the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS), individual King County programs, and state programs in order to develop performance measures that satisfy all three elements of BSK's results-based accountability model. This model requires that performance measures answer three questions:

- How many did we serve?
- How well did we serve them?
- Is anyone better off?

In our audit, we found several programs that lacked performance measures answering one or more of these questions. Most notably, multiple public health programs used pre-established statewide performance measures that pre-dated BSK and did not answer all three questions. Since then, the evaluation team has added the missing performance measures for these pre-existing state programs. For example, the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program did not include a performance measure that answered the question "How well did we serve them?" The evaluation team has added measures that address quality of service, including measuring the percentage of client visits in which nutrition educational information was provided and the number of clients that were referred to preventative services.

BSK is still rolling out programs and receiving requests for proposals, so these new programs do not all have performance measures yet. However, all up-and-running programs have measures that satisfy the three elements of BSK's results-based accountability model. Additionally, the BSK evaluation team has plans and procedures to develop the measures for the remaining programs.

IMPACT: Developing these measures for all BSK programs sets up the initiative to achieve its overall evaluation goals. The information learned from these measures can help King County promote strategic learning, ensure accountability, and assess the effectiveness of the BSK initiative.

## Recommendation 2

On December 28, 2018

DONE



## Recommendation 3

On December 28, 2018

DONE



## Recommendation 4

On December 28, 2018

DONE



## Recommendation 5

PROGRESS



**The Department of Public Health – Seattle & King County and the Department of Community and Human Services should update quality control practices for the new data collection system, including service provider training, before the new system is implemented.**

STATUS UPDATE: The departments have worked with King County Information Technology and an outside vendor to develop the new database called the Client Outcomes Reporting Engine (CORE). The evaluation team has developed and built automated data quality requirements into the system and estimate that the system will be fully functional by mid-2020.

WHAT REMAINS: The BSK evaluation team is planning provider training for CORE, including training on data entry. This training will be important to ensure data accuracy, which is necessary to produce reliable evaluation results.

## Recommendation 6

On December 28, 2018

DONE



## Recommendation 7

PROGRESS



**The Department of Public Health – Seattle & King County and the Department of Community and Human Services should put procedures in place to protect the independence of the evaluation team. These procedures should include maintaining documentation of any report changes that they or the Executive propose and setting up a process to resolve disagreements with the evaluation team.**

STATUS UPDATE: At the time of the last follow-up in December 2018, the evaluation team had reached an agreement with the BSK strategic management team and departmental management to ensure that the evaluation team will have final review of all final reports. They also agreed that any disagreements would be resolved in a standing meeting between the evaluation leads and the BSK Policy and Planning team.

Since then, they have developed a similar agreement with the Executive's Office. The evaluation team, BSK strategic management, department management, and Executive's Office have agreed that the evaluation team will have final review of annual reports involving evaluation findings. Any disagreements would be resolved in a meeting between evaluation leads and the Executive's Office staff. These agreements align with best practices that evaluators should have final discretion over evaluation findings or reports.

WHAT REMAINS: The evaluation team and the Executive's Office should document the procedures agreed upon in writing to ensure that the agreement is followed consistently.

---

Mia Neidhardt, senior management auditor, conducted this review. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact the King County Auditor's Office at [KCAO@kingcounty.gov](mailto:KCAO@kingcounty.gov) or 206-477-1033.