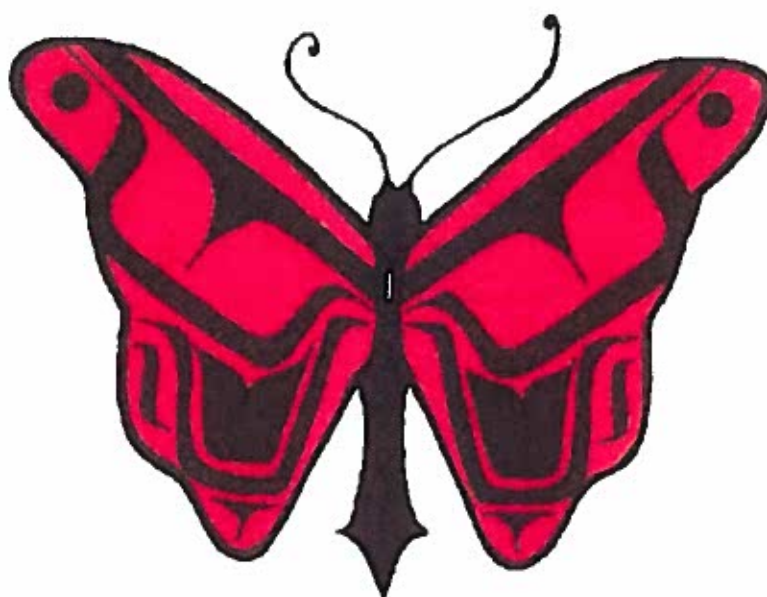




EVALUATION & LEARNING



CHAPTER 7 EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Evaluating our Progress

The evaluation process for the Lummi Ventures Plan will ensure that evaluation serves as a central tool in building a learning community in Lummi. In addition to fostering greater mutual accountability among partnering programs and stakeholders, evaluation will be a primary vehicle through which we will learn from each other how best to proceed toward our overall mission of reducing poverty and building wealth in Lummi.

In our evaluation plan, we continue to emphasize building partnerships that allow existing community resources, and existing programs to be more effective in transforming systems that reinforce poverty. Solid data will drive action, helping each program “keep focused” on systems change.

During the eighteen-month development of this plan, it has become evident that the wisdom in our community is our best starting point. Our evaluation process recognizes this invaluable source. It also proposes that this local wisdom will increase as Lummi partners become more adept at addressing poverty. Each year, participants will ask each other what we have learned about the systems that uphold poverty, and will identify the leverage points we have found that promote more effective systems change. Hence, our evaluation process is flexible enough to ensure that a new wisdom is gained in the community, and new indicators can be defined that reflect what is newly learned throughout.

A core set of indicators, consistently collected over time, will ensure reliable monitoring of key outcomes. These will help both internal and external stakeholders quantify changes experienced by the community.

Our evaluation process will be led by the community members themselves. Given their understanding that our community is caught in a system that creates and reinforces poverty, our indicators focus more on community conditions than upon the lives of the individual poor members.

Each year, as the Lummi Ventures staff asks Lummi community members to assess the outcomes of recent accomplishments, community members will have at their fingertips solid counts on the equity and assets built by community members. Tribal members will also have specific tallies of ways that living costs have been reduced, whether through individual lifestyle decisions or through community investments. With these data in hand, and with clear measurements of the outcomes of Lummi Ventures activities, community members will reflect together on our progress. Three questions will be asked each year:

- What have we learned about the systems of poverty?
- What are the leverage points we can use to alter those systems?
- What external issues are having the most important impact on our community?

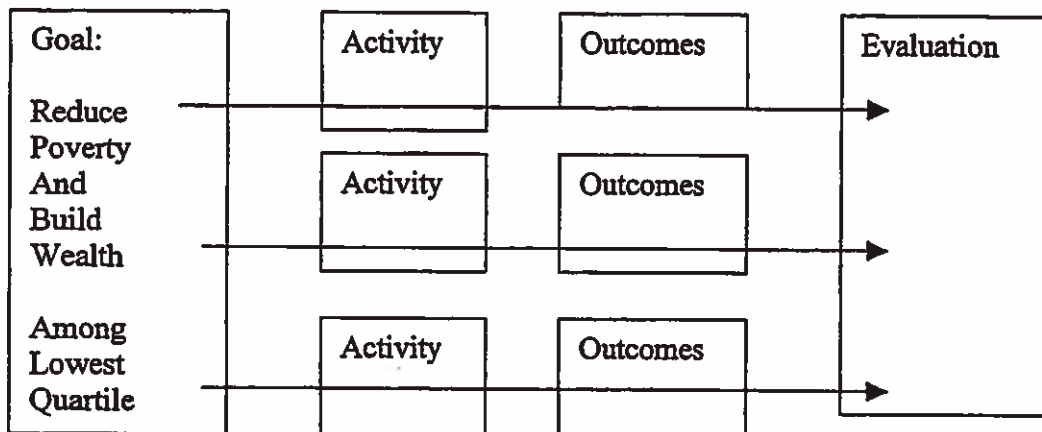


Figure I – Systemic Evaluation

Systemic Indicators may link several outcomes at once

Figure I shows how our systems evaluation approach has shaped our selection of indicators. Our mission guides the selection of strategies and activities. Over time, all this activity will achieve multiple outcomes. For instance, expanding daycare and before and after school care has impacts on parent employment, business development education, training, child development, child socialization (tribal tendency to teach by observation results in 50% deficit in communication skills in children), and provides time for counseling and treatment.

As the diagram shows, the indicators used for evaluation will cut across these outcomes, reflecting more than one issue or outcome at a time. In short the evaluation process will help us look at systems rather than silos. Our indicators attempt to recognize and express this complexity.

Commitment to Learning

In order to ensure that proper evaluation is being conducted throughout the Lummi Ventures Program and that lessons learned are implemented in this process, the Ventures-funded staff positions have a responsibility for maintaining connections with the Ventures data collection/research position. The Executive Director will be responsible for ensuring that there is clear communication of data reports to the Board of Directors and community members as well. The data collector/researcher will be responsible for obtaining baseline measurements of the outcomes and indicators in Chapter 6, and also maintain and update these numbers on a regular basis. Statistical support people will complement the data/researcher efforts by interpreting statistical information. The staff will report to the Ventures Executive Director. Information regarding the outcomes and indicators will be reported to the Board of Directors as well, according to the timetable in Chapter 6. Reports will include baseline work that is being conducted, as well coordinated documentation efforts being done with the Lummi Indian Business Council and Whatcom County. Indicators for success will be looked at and reported to the Executive Director.

It is expected that each Ventures committee established will first have a needs assessment conducted by the Lummi Ventures staff. Assessments will provide insight as to whether certain strategies or actions are necessary for the desired outcome. This will deter actions taking place that are based on “feel good” actions or simply putting something in place because it feels like the right thing to do. Actions will be based upon assessments, data and research that

support strategies. In addition, the Ventures staff will also measure progress and provide recommendations as to whether a certain action or approach is helpful or if adjustments need to be made.

NWAF and the Learning Network

On-going communication between the Lummi Ventures Program and the Northwest Area Foundation (NWAF) will be maintained through the Executive Director of the Lummi Ventures Program. The Executive Director will provide a contact person at the Northwest Area Foundation for a quarterly report on activities, progress, opportunities and threats. These reports will be done either through phone, mail or email, depending on the preference of the NWAF and circumstances surrounding the Executive Director's schedule.

Since the NWAF works diligently at providing learning opportunities for Native communities, the Lummi Ventures Program will make efforts to attend the Learning Network Conferences, as well as other conferences that the NWAF supports and endorses. A travel budget will be set up so that the Executive Director or other Ventures staff can attend at least three meetings a year. Any Staff that is in attendance of these conferences will be required to report back to the Lummi Ventures Staff and Board of Directors. If the staff and Board of Directors find that the information reported would be useful for the community, the staff that traveled would be asked to make a presentation or workshop at one of the Ventures Community gatherings. Gatherings are to be scheduled every month. In general, the Lummi Ventures team will do their utmost at keeping the community and other programs informed of their learning and progress.

