![The Australian Prevention Partnership Centre — Systems and solutions for better health]

Identifying and monitoring system impacts

What it is

This is a method of data analysis designed to identify **system impacts**. Identifying system impacts is the first step to creating system monitoring processes and structures. System impacts can signal the 'small wins' needed to maintain motivation and momentum when engaging in system change efforts.[1] There are two important works that identify places to intervene in systems to bring about change. The first is by Donella Meadows[2] (places to intervene) and the second is by Kania[3] (three-level intervention framework). Both provide frameworks that help identify system impacts.

How we applied it

We developed a **coding framework** based on the analysis of three system action learning processes embedded in local projects and undertaken as part of Prevention Tracker. These projects reflected the range of prevention activities underway in communities: evaluation, program delivery and coalition engagement.

The coding and monitoring framework was developed to observe and measure systems impacts. The framework created allowed us to:

	Identify some of the conditions needed for systems change
	Link the expected impacts directly with the observed prevention action and then add the Kania framework[3] for system change
	Include structural change: policies, practices, resource flows, relationships and connections and power dynamics[3]
	Include transformative change mental models: new ways of thinking about problems or situations[3]
	Assess the strengths and weaknesses of our own system impact coding frame.

What we learnt about how to use this method

It is possible to identify and then monitor system changes. This was achieved through the coding of the system action learning process which enabled us to observe examples of systems changes in the **System Action Learning** team's work.

What we learnt about the system from using this method

The three system action learning projects we undertook enabled us to identify changes in the system and determine opportunities to monitor these changes. Some examples can be seen below:

Conditions of system change	Coded data	Example
Practices	Creation of new roles/practices	Decision to spend more time out in the community
	Experimentation	Trialling new approaches – healthy menus
Relationships and connections	Changes in networks/boundaries	Decision to reduce network activity to one area
	Creation of new relationships	Between people and organisations
	Alignment of system parts	Policy and organisational objectives
Mental models	New mental models	Realisation that you don't have to include everyone in program delivery
	Identifying actions which are intended to have a system impact	Opportunities to align action

Where to go if you need more information

This is part of a series of fact sheets on the Prevention Tracker project. The series covers topics such as group model building, key informant interviews, social network analysis, system action learning, identifying and monitoring system impacts. The series is available under the Resource tab at: https://preventioncentre.org.au/our-work/research-projects/learning-from-local-communities-prevention-tracker-expands/

References

1. Foster-Fishman P and Watson E. The ABLe Framework: A conceptual and methodological tool for promoting systems change. Am J Community Psychol. 2012;49(3):503–16.
2. Meadows D. Places to intervene in a system. Whole Earth. 1997;91:78–84.
3. Kania J, Kramer M and Senge P. The water of systems change. 2018. Available at: www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/water-systems-change-action-learning-exercise

The Australian Prevention
Partnership Centre
Systems and solutions for better health

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