**A PROGRESS REPORT AND MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT OF
THE WISCONSIN SYSTEMS INTEGRATION INITIATIVE,
FAMILIES FORWARD-WISCONSIN**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of Wisconsin was selected to participate in the National Governors Association (NGA) Policy Academy on Cross-Systems Innovations in 2003. States participating in the NGA Policy Academy were expected to assess their current service-delivery systems and outcomes, develop goals for an integrated system, develop a strategic plan for implementing new ways to meet the goals identified, and make significant progress toward implementing the strategic plan.

The State launched what is now called Families Forward-Wisconsin (FFW) in July 2004. FFW encompasses six pilot projects in the counties of Bayfield, Dane, Door, Kenosha, La Crosse, and Milwaukee. It focuses on improving outcomes for children and families engaged in or at risk of needing services from at least two of three systems: Wisconsin Works (W-2), child welfare, or alcohol and drug abuse treatment systems.

FFW is ongoing, but Wisconsin's formal involvement with the NGA Policy Academy ended December 31, 2004. This report analyzes how the pilot projects have fared two years into the initiative; it is not an evaluation.

The following general observations about systems integration provide the context for the authors' progress report on FFW:

- Systems integration initiatives consistently present similar conceptual, design, implementation, and management issues, no matter how different individual projects appear.
- Systems integration involves developing a new way of thinking about human services and how to manage them; key is the creation of a new organizational culture and a new way of doing business.
- Any attempt to measure impacts prematurely may well lead to false-negative conclusions.

In considering Wisconsin's experience to date, it is apparent that FFW has served to foster steps toward systems integration at both the local and state levels. First, although the pilots have all adopted different approaches and are all at different stages of integrating systems, they have each made progress in transforming the client experience. Such changes are necessary precursors to the ultimate goal of systems integration: improved outcomes for children and families. As a result of FFW, families participating in the pilots are, for example, working with a Home/School Case Manager to coordinate existing or newly identified services; participating as a part of a team to develop and implement a single, coordinated case plan; and utilizing services to which they previously had limited or no access.

Second, the State has modified or is planning to modify specific policies and practices in order to promote and support systems integration at the local level. The State has, for example, confirmed its understanding of two barriers to integration—Medical Assistance coverage for parents of children in IV-E foster care and the W-2 Temporary Absence policy—and is taking steps to address both of them. In addition, W-2 contracts now require every W-2 agency to complete a written service integration plan and agreement with local child welfare agencies. Further, all W-2 Financial and Employment Planners are required to receive training in coordination with local child welfare agencies while child welfare workers have the opportunity to complete a training module designed to introduce them to W-2.

Systems integration is, however, an ongoing process and thus, this overview of Wisconsin's progress to date reflects only a point-in-time snapshot. Given this, the authors believe the key

question to be addressed at this juncture is: What needs to be done to transform the State's current effort from a project to a new way of thinking about how services are organized and delivered, building on the progress made to date?

To accomplish this transformation, the authors believe consideration should be given to revisiting and perhaps modifying the basic concepts and strategies employed under the current initiative; implementing some specific steps at the State level in response to this review; and developing specific strategies to leverage progress made to date at the local level.

The State provided pilots with some training and technical assistance, however, each site operated independently, with modest State direction and external constraints. In hindsight, this approach may have erred in the direction of providing insufficient institutional support and technical assistance as well as ongoing, day-to-day reinforcement of the State's interest.

The key to moving forward is finding the right balance between encouraging local innovation while, at the same time, ensuring that such innovation comports with and supports the overall vision. What is needed is the correct pitch, or balance, in the State's governance strategy. As FFW planners look to the future, they should explore ways to balance the following management principles:

- Provide appropriate State guidance regarding the vision to be pursued. *At the same time, permit locals to shape project parameters in response to the local context and needs.*

- Permit locals to innovate with respect to tactics. *At the same time, facilitate the provision of technical assistance and sharing of promising practices.*

- Develop an institutional culture at the State level that fosters innovation, engages staff, nurtures risk taking, and enhances communication. *At the same time, do not distract staff from carrying out essential functions within their own programmatic arenas.*

- Provide appropriate and aggressive State guidance in developing the ends to be achieved through systems integration, as well as the target populations to be served. *At the same time, locals must be fully engaged in shaping the purposes and targets for systems integration reforms.*

- Facilitate the capacity to deliver holistic, cohesive services to families at the local level. *At the same time, preserve what is special and unique about the individual programs and systems being blended together.*

The authors recommend specific steps that could be taken to achieve the change desired while preserving the previously articulated management principles. These steps relate to revisiting and perhaps modifying the basic concepts and strategies employed under the current initiative; implementing some specific steps at the State level in response to this review; and developing specific strategies to leverage progress made to date, particularly in Milwaukee. In addition, the authors believe that three system attributes—input, process, and operational—are of particular importance to the pilots, and efforts should be made to develop benchmarks related to each of these to indicate whether the pilots are moving toward the level of integration desired.

Given the challenges, Wisconsin can be proud of what it has done. First, unlike some other states selected by the NGA to participate in the Cross-Systems Innovation Policy Academy, Wisconsin

has stayed the course. Second, several pilot projects are well-positioned to become lighthouse sites that inspire others. Finally, we are very impressed with the continued commitment to achieving systems integration, both at the State level and in many local communities.

These positives infuse us with a sense of confidence that this assessment is timely and can be put to good use in developing steps to continue to promote the systems integration agenda. The key is to remember that as policy entrepreneurs push the envelope of change and innovation, the effort's level of difficulty increases. The State must find concrete ways of supporting those who are pushing the envelope.

PREFACE

This paper constitutes a progress report on an initiative to integrate selected social welfare services now known as Families Forward-Wisconsin (FFW). It is not an evaluation; therefore, we will not talk in terms of success or failure. Although we have learned a great deal through our assessment of Wisconsin's initiative, as well as through our work with other sites in the Midwest and beyond, more remains to be done before definitive conclusions can be drawn.

FFW was conceptualized as a bottoms-up, exploratory endeavor designed to rely on the energy and imagination of local policy entrepreneurs who were willing to tackle the systems integration challenge. Local sites were selected as pilots where ideas and innovative practices were to be tried and assessed. These pilot sites were to be "lighthouses," or models from which to learn in order to launch a broader set of reforms. The pilots will serve this purpose, however, only if we periodically reflect upon their experiences and thereby glean insights that might be applied elsewhere.

Integrating human-service systems is difficult and, not surprisingly, has long been considered the "holy grail" of public policy. It involves more than launching a few pilots or initiating a project. It involves developing a new way of thinking about human services and how to manage them. It involves creating a new organizational culture and a new way of doing business. As such, the road to success is long and winding and one for which there are no roadmaps. We are all learning how to do this as we go.

Since 2002, the authors have been working with a loose confederation of organizations and individuals known as the Service Integration Network or SINET. Some of the organizations that have participated in SINET include the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices, the Hudson Institute's Welfare Policy Center, the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Strategic Consulting Group, the Research Forum at Columbia University, and the Rockefeller Institute for Government. Throughout this report we draw upon this collaborative work being pursued throughout the country both to inform our investigation of the Wisconsin experience and to shape our interpretation of the Wisconsin initiative to date. One fundamental lesson that we have learned through our national work is that, no matter how different individual projects appear to the casual observer, extraordinary consistency exists in the conceptual, design, implementation, and management issues that arise.

As you read this report, please bear in mind that we make suggestions, not recommendations. Our intent is reflected in the report's title: "A Progress Report and Management Assessment." Our purpose lies not in providing a ready-made blueprint for the future, but rather in stimulating a dialogue for developing a strategic plan through which further progress is possible. The motivation for this assessment was to develop an independent overview of where the pilots were some 18 months after the Wisconsin initiative was undertaken.

Input into the report comes from four primary sources. First, the authors visited each local site at least once and, in the case of some, several times. At these site visits, the authors met with key staff as a group to develop assessments of progress to date and to identify problems encountered; we often also conducted one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders. Second, the authors reviewed a variety of written documents and reports. This document review included Wisconsin's correspondence with NGA and the pilot sites, all progress reports submitted by the pilots to the state liaisons, and the planning documents developed by the project liaisons. Third, the authors either observed or participated in virtually all of the key milestones associated with the development and execution of the project including the NGA Policy Academy meetings, the

Wisconsin kick-off meeting with the selected pilot sites as well as subsequent State-sponsored pilot site meetings, and Core Team meetings. Finally, the authors drew upon our work with state and local sites pursuing systems integration in the Midwest and beyond. Among other activities, this work includes several lighthouse meetings (sessions that brought together exemplar programs) as well as site visits in Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Utah, Washington, and California.

Wisconsin can be proud of what it has done to date despite the challenges inherent in the effort. First, unlike some other states selected by the NGA to participate in the Cross-Systems Innovation Policy Academy, Wisconsin has stayed the course; it continues to have a viable project. Second, several pilot projects are well-positioned to become lighthouse sites, providing guidance to others about what challenges they have faced and how those challenges have been overcome. Finally, we are impressed with the continued commitment to achieving systems integration, both at the State level and in many local communities.

INTRODUCTION

In July 2004, the State of Wisconsin launched its current systems integration initiative, now known as Families Forward-Wisconsin (FFW).[1] FFW, which encompasses six pilot projects, was fostered by the State's participation in the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practice Policy Academy on Cross-Systems Innovation. The Academy departed from NGA's traditional model in that it focused on program coordination and innovation rather than on the development and implementation of a particular policy.[2] This perspective was reflected in Wisconsin's successful application to participate, submitted in November 2003, which focused on "integrating services to provide a more seamless delivery system for vulnerable families and children."[3] In particular, Wisconsin proposed to use the Academy to develop a strategic plan designed to reduce barriers for families involved in both the Wisconsin Works (W-2) program and the child welfare system. The plan was to design programs to be piloted in Milwaukee and in one other county in the state.[4]

The initiative ultimately adopted by Wisconsin differed somewhat from that articulated in its application to NGA, but maintained the overall intent. While Wisconsin did establish pilots that were required to deliver services and family supports in a more integrated fashion, the selected sites were located throughout the state, rather than in Milwaukee and in one other county, and were invited to focus on improving outcomes for children in families engaged in or at risk of needing services from at least two of three systems—W-2, child welfare, or mental health and substance abuse treatment systems—rather than from only the W-2 and child welfare systems.[5]

A key expectation of the initiative was that the pilot sites' experience would inform a "statewide effort to transform services and results for [Wisconsin's] most vulnerable families."[6] Therefore, the State envisioned a process by which information from the pilot sites was to be regularly submitted, reviewed, and disseminated. This report—which reflects the findings and conclusions of a limited-scope process assessment—is part of this process. It includes the following information:

- The first section provides information about Wisconsin's participation in the NGA policy academy process, including the approach to systems integration adopted by Wisconsin as part of this process.
- Section II provides a framework for thinking about systems integration.
- Section III places the six pilot projects in the established framework for thinking about systems integration.
- Section IV encompasses observations related to the implementation efforts of the pilot sites as well as the State within the context of national research.
- Section V addresses issues related to measuring the effectiveness of the initiative to date.
- Section VI summarizes recommendations for the future.
- The last section includes some concluding observations.

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[1] Although the initiative was not originally known as "Families Forward-Wisconsin," this report designates it as such throughout for simplicity.

[2] Barry Van Lare, "Policy Academy on Cross-Systems Integration," *Evaluation Report to the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices*, August 31, 2005, p. 2.

[3] "Seamless Service Delivery in Wisconsin," *The National Governors Association Policy Academy on Cross-Systems Innovation: Improving Outcomes for Low-Income Families and Children*, November 7, 2003, p. 2.

[4] Ibid., p. 3.

[5] "We're Doing What It Takes for Our Children – Together!" *State of Wisconsin Call for Information*, July 29, 2004, Attachment I, p. 1.

[6] Ibid., p. 2.

I. THE NGA POLICY ACADEMY PROCESS

The National Governors Association Policy Academy on Cross-Systems Innovations was intended to assist up to six states to develop a more integrated human service system that would deliver services to vulnerable families and children in a seamless and efficient manner. States participating in the Academy were expected to:

- Assess their current service-delivery systems and outcomes for populations served by these programs and develop a vision of and goals for an improved, integrated system;
- Develop a strategic plan for implementing new ways to address major policy challenges and to meet the goals identified; and
- Make significant progress toward implementing the strategic plan.

In order to facilitate this process, each state was required to designate a Core Team with significant depth and breadth of knowledge and influence in order to be reasonably expected to create and implement a strategic plan. Wisconsin's Core Team as originally envisioned included the secretaries of the departments of Health and Family Services and Workforce Development, the State Superintendent of Public Schools, the Governor's policy director, the executive directors of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF) and the Wisconsin Association of Family and Children's Agencies (WAFCA), the head of the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin, a county human services director, and a Milwaukee philanthropist. Although the composition of the team has evolved over time, it has been a constant component of Wisconsin's initiative. (Additional information about the composition of the Core Team and its evolution is included in Appendix A.)

As part of the Policy Academy, Wisconsin's Core Team:

- Participated in a pre-Academy site visit designed to orient the team to the Academy process and assist the team in clarifying its goals;
- Completed an assessment of Wisconsin's current policy environment;
- Attended two Academy meetings that included a combination of presentations by outside experts designed to broaden the Core Team's understanding of systems integration and of facilitated Core Team time designed to promote the further development of strategic plans; and
- Received a $5,000 mini-grant to undertake the initial conceptualization and framing of an outcome evaluation that would enable it to identify and track measurable outcomes for families at participating sites.

Wisconsin's Core Team took a major step in implementing FFW between the first and second Academy meetings when it issued a Call for Information (CFI) on July 29, 2004, that solicited concept papers from organizations willing to deliver services and family supports in a more integrated fashion and thus serve as pilot sites. Because the CFI was issued while the State was still involved in the Academy process, the Core Team was able to benefit from the expertise made available to it through NGA as it moved forward in implementing the initiative. Wisconsin's formal involvement with the Academy ended December 31, 2004; it submitted its final report to NGA January 4, 2005.

Wisconsin's Approach

The CFI reflected Wisconsin's overall approach to systems integration: implementation of a competitive process to identify and support local innovation in order "to create community partnerships that would ensure Wisconsin children grow up safe, healthy, and successful in strong

families."[7] The State did not, however, enumerate the specific policies or practices participating sites would need to adopt if selected to participate. Rather, the State chose to articulate the goals and outcomes of the demonstration projects, as reflected in Table 1, and left the specific policies and practices to be employed to the pilots' discretion.

Table 1
Goals and Outcomes for Families Forward-Wisconsin Pilots[8]

Goal	Outcomes
Increase the economic security of families	- Increased job placement - Increased wages - Improved job retention and advancement - Assured receipt of benefits that families are eligible for (e.g., food stamps, EITC, MA, child care, free or reduced-price meals)
Improve child safety and well-being	- Reduced incidence of child abuse and neglect - Assured timely child protective services - Reduced out-of-home placements - Increased stability in children's living situations - Improved access to mental, physical, and dental health services
Close the academic-achievement gaps	- Assured proficiency in reading and math in 4th and 8th grades - Increased graduation rates - Increased access to quality early care and education
Empower families to take charge	- Families are at the center of planning - All plans are written in the families' own terms - Families are pleased that plans reflect their priorities, strengths, and needs - Every plan reflects systematic efforts to develop and rely on family and informal supports
Establish a sustainable process for continuing system improvement	- Lessons from local projects will be shared to stimulate improvements in system policies and practices - Broader engagement of consumers and communities will inform and guide improvement in service systems - Service delivery systems for child safety, economic security, and education will work together so plans with families make sense - Resources from families and their informal supports will be increasingly valued and included in all plans

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[7] Ibid., p 1.
[8] Ibid., Attachment II.

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There was no funding promised at the time of the CFI. Rather, the State enumerated a list of potential benefits including, but not limited to, technical assistance and facilitation resources for local planning and processes; the opportunity to request waivers or flexibility in State-level requirements related to, for example, program design, administration, funding categorization; and information about best practices and models and tools used in Wisconsin and across the country.

The response to the CFI was strong. Ultimately, the Core Team selected eight demonstration sites, taking into consideration geography, focus of target population and service integration approach, and applicant reputation for leadership and innovation. The following eight sites were informed of their selection in October 2004:

- Allied Drive Early Child Initiative (Dane County Department of Human Services)
- Bayfield County Coordinated Service Team (Bayfield County Department of Human Services)
- Children's Service Society of Wisconsin (Marathon County)
- Door County Department of Human Services
- Kenosha County Department of Human Services
- La Crosse County Department of Human Services
- Making Connections Milwaukee (Milwaukee County)
- UMOS/La Causa (Milwaukee County)

Subsequent to their selection, two of the eight sites chose to withdraw their formal participation as pilots: Children's Service Society of Wisconsin (Marathon County) and Door County Department of Human Services. According to the sites, their withdrawal did not reflect a lack of support for the initiative's concepts but rather a recognition that the local circumstances under which they had initially applied to participate had changed. In addition, although a pilot has continuously existed on the north side of Milwaukee, the role of Making Connections Milwaukee has evolved over time. Making Connections Milwaukee is still currently involved in the pilot, but in a partnership role; it is no longer the pilot's lead agency.

The six sites that remain and continue to actively participate in the initiative are diverse in terms of their economics and demographics, as reflected in Table 2. Yet, irrespective of this diversity, each pilot site firmly believes that it must do a better job of delivering services to families involved in or at risk of involvement in the W-2 and child welfare systems.

Subsequent to their selection, each of the pilot sites began a process of negotiating a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) and the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) that spanned the period of January 1, 2005, through June 30, 2006, and reflected:

- Project expectations, including project team and partners, target population to be served, rationale for the project, strategies to be implemented, resources to be deployed, training and technical assistance, evaluation and data collection, and communications; and
- Statewide support, including staff resources, training and technical assistance resources, evaluation, and communication.

Although the MOA's start date was January 1, 2005, the initiative's "kick-off" meeting was not held until March 14, 2005.[9] This meeting, which was attended by each pilot as well as by State staff with

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[9] It should be noted that the site in Milwaukee involving MAXIMUS and CMCP was not operating with an MOA as of August 31, 2006.

responsibilities relevant to the programs encompassed by the pilots, featured an overview of the initiative's goals and anticipated outcomes, a review of some tools designed to support successful integration efforts, and team time designed to promote further development of each site's strategic plan. Although some of the sites already had activities underway related to systems integration, this meeting represented the first step in most of the pilots' implementation efforts as part of the initiative.[10] Given this, the pilots had been operating under the umbrella of FFW for approximately 16 months as of June 30, 2006, which is the date of their most recent quarterly report as submitted to the State and the point in time through which this assessment was completed.

The process of site selection, execution of the MOAs, and planning of the kick-off meeting were all facilitated by two key staff persons who served as project liaisons—one from DHFS and one from DWD—who are policy advisors within each department's Office of the Secretary. These two staff persons, neither of whom has had any special training related to systems integration, assumed day-to-day responsibility for FFW on behalf of the Core Team. Although neither had any direct authority within the relevant programs' chains of command nor any access to additional resources budgeted in support of the initiative, they were charged with facilitating state-level responses to inquiries regarding modifications to established policy, managing the identification and provision of training and technical assistance on both the pilot and state agency level, and monitoring each of the pilot's efforts to integrate systems.

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[10] In particular, the activities taking place in Dane County had been well underway independent of the State's initiative, under the auspices of the Allied Drive Early Childhood Initiative, which was established in 2004.

Demographics[a]	**Bayfield County**	**Dane County**	**Kenosha County**	**La Crosse County**	**Milwaukee County**	**State of Wisconsin**
***Population*[b]**	15,145	458,106	160,544	108,958	921,654	5,536,201
Female-Headed Household[c]	7.8%	7.9%	11.5%	8.4%	16.3%	9.6%
Children in single parent HH[d]	24.4%	20.6%	23.7%	19.8%	36.2%	21.7%
***Educational Attainment*[e]**						
< High School	13.1%	7.8%	16.5%	10.3%	19.7%	15.0%
High School or GED	34.2%	22.3%	33.4%	31.9%	29.4%	34.6%
> High School Diploma[f]	52.7%	69.9%	51.1%	57.8%	50.9%	50.4%
***Marital Status*[g]**						
Never Married	21.0%	34.8%	26.1%	33.3%	35.6%	27.2%
Married	61.3%	52.1%	57.2%	52.4%	46.8%	57.4%
Formerly Married[h]	17.7%	13.1%	16.7%	14.3%	17.6%	15.4%
Social Issues						
Unemployment Rate	6.2%	3.1%	5.8%	4.0%	6.4%	4.7%
Births to Single Mothers[i]	31.5%	23.4%	33.4%	26.5%	49.5%	30.7%
Child Welfare Report Rate[j]	26.1	15.3	17.8	35.3	59.5	30.0
Economic Characteristics						
Median HH Income (dollars)	$33,390	$49,223	$46,970	$39,472	$38,100	$43,791
County Poverty Rate[k]	9.2%	4.0%	5.4%	5.3%	11.7%	5.6%
Child Poverty Rate[l]	16.4%	7.2%	9.3%	9.6%	23.3%	10.8%
W-2 Caseload Size[m]	7/7	279/412	266/390	26/31	5,153/7,868	6,960/10,286
Racial Demographics						
White	88.5%	89.0%	88.4%	94.2%	65.6%	88.9%
African American	0.1%	4.0%	5.1%	0.9%	24.6%	5.7%
Other	11.4%	7.0%	6.5%	4.9%	9.8%	5.4%
Latino/Hispanic (any race)	0.6%	3.4%	7.2%	0.9%	8.8%	3.6%

[a] All data from 2005 Census unless otherwise noted.
[b] July 2005 estimates from U.S. Census Bureau.
[c] As a percentage of all families.
[d] From 2005 Wisconsin Kids Count report.
[e] Population 25 years and older.
[f] Includes some college, and associate, bachelor, and graduate degrees.
[g] Population 15 years and older.
[h] Includes divorced and widowed.
[i] From 2005 Wisconsin Kids Count report.
[j] Rate per 1,000. Child welfare statistics can be found at: http://www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov/cwreview/reports.htm.
[k] Families below poverty line.
[l] Of all individuals.
[m] W-2 caseload as of August, 2006; first number is cases with cash payments, second number is all cases.

II. UNDERSTANDING SYSTEMS INTEGRATION[11]

We start our assessment by thinking through what systems integration means. Although this framework for thinking about systems integration sounds abstract, in reality it grounds our entire discussion of FFW and the Wisconsin pilots. Therefore, we believe it is essential to understand this framework *before* considering the progress made by each of the pilots as of June 30, 2006. This is particularly true given the natural inclination to search for one definition of systems integration and then question whether or not any particular effort meets this definition. We believe, however, that there is no single definition of systems integration against which the pilots can be measured. Rather, we argue that it is more appropriate to think of the pilot sites within a broader framework for thinking about systems integration, based on some of their basic attributes.

This framework begins with the general belief that the existing human services structure is most accurately described as an array of potentially related programs that deliver distinct benefits or services to narrowly defined target populations. Each program can be thought of as representing a service silo: a separate and distinct funnel through which money, regulations, and professional norms and expectations flow. While some overlap across silos has always existed, each usually operates in a relatively self-contained manner. As a whole, the configuration of services available to support and assist families in their efforts to become functioning and self-sufficient members of society can be complex, confusing, redundant, and incoherent.

The opposite of this silo-based approach to organizing and delivering human services is often coined "systems." What exactly is systems integration? Mark Ragan, drawing on extensive fieldwork completed on behalf of the Rockefeller Institute of Government, concluded that:

> *There is no single answer. Based on observations at the sites visited for this study, service integration is a combination of strategies that simplifies and facilitates clients' access to benefits and services. Each site has implemented a distinctive mix of strategies, processes, and partner agencies.[12]*

While our observations support this conclusion, we believe it is possible to bring some order to the discussion, not by seeking a formal definition of systems integration, but by developing an overarching framework for understanding and analyzing the efforts underway. Our past work suggests that there are two dimensions to the pursuit of systems integration that are critical to understanding the character of any particular systems integration effort as well as identifying what it will take to make that effort work. These two dimensions are:

1) Relationship intensity, which is the intensity of the interaction (or degree of blending) sought between participating programs and agencies; and
2) Institutional similarity, which is the similarity or dissimilarity of the institutional cultures of the participating programs or agencies.

Relationship Intensity

The first dimension—relationship intensity—is reflected, in part, in Figure 1, which focuses on the character and quality of the relationships among participating programs and agencies,

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[11] This information is drawn from Thomas Corbett and Jennifer L. Noyes, "Toward a Comprehensive Definition of Human Service Integration," draft unpublished paper, Madison, WI: Institute for Research on Poverty, 2006.
[12] Mark Ragan, *Building Comprehensive Human Service Systems—Service Integration in the United States*, Albany, NY: Rockefeller Institute of Government, February 2003, p. 3. Ragan and the authors independently spent time in several sites, including Kenosha and Racine, Wisconsin; El Paso County, Colorado; Montgomery County, Ohio; Anoka County, Minnesota; and San Mateo County, California.

specifically, how closely the participating systems are blended together.[13] This scale starts with efforts to improve communication across participating systems and steadily moves toward more intensive forms of integration. Ultimately, the farther down the scale one moves, the more participating programs and agencies forfeit some of their identities and defining attributes. Two other observations should be made about this scale: 1) any individual integration effort can start at a different point within the continuum based on previous established relationships and experiences and 2) it is possible that a mix of these relationships can exist at any given point in an integration effort, particularly if the effort is complex and involves a number of different tactics.

Figure 1
Relationship-Intensity Continuum

Communication—Clear, consistent, and nonjudgmental discussions; giving or exchanging information in order to maintain meaningful relationships. Individual programs or causes are totally separate.
↓
Cooperation—Assisting each other with respective activities, giving general support, information, and/or endorsement for each other's programs, services, or objectives.
↓
Coordination—Joint activities and communications are more intensive and far-reaching. Agencies or individuals engage in joint planning and synchronization of schedules, activities, goals, objectives, and events.
↓
Collaboration—Agencies, individuals, or groups willingly relinquish some of their autonomy in the interest of mutual gains or outcomes. True collaboration involves actual changes in agency, group, or individual behavior to support collective goals or ideals.
↓
Convergence—Relationships evolve from collaboration to actual restructuring of services, programs, memberships, budgets, missions, objectives, and staff.
↓
Consolidation—Agency, group, or individual behavior, operations, policies, budgets, staff, and power are united and harmonized. Individual autonomy or gains have been fully relinquished, common outcomes and identity adopted.

The relationship-intensity continuum is useful, but more information about specific initiatives is needed in order to really understand them, as reflected in Figure 2, which provides more information about each dimension (or rung) on the continuum in terms of the specific actions, relationships, and/or agreements that more specifically define what each rung might actually represent. For example, agencies and programs are positioned on the communication rung when they regularly meet, exchange information, and maybe even have some 'informal' agreements about how to handle certain common challenges or clients. The level of communication must intensify, however, before we might call it cooperation.

The quality of interactions, as suggested by the associated tasks and tactics, become even more formal, regularized, and detailed as one moves further along the continuum. One cannot legitimately talk about coordination or collaboration until participating agencies are working together in a meaningful way as evidenced by such actions as developing cross-training programs or integrating application protocols and eligibility standards. Likewise, one probably cannot label

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[13] This figure is adapted from one developed in El Paso County, Colorado. For more information on El Paso's efforts, see Rutledge Q. Hudson, *A Vision for Eliminating Poverty and Family Violence: Transforming Child Welfare and TANF in El Paso County, Colorado*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Law and Social Policy, January 2003.

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a local effort as achieving convergence or consolidation until there is evidence of shared resources and the loss of distinct program identities.

Certainly, one can argue about the ordering or whether the appropriate indicators are positioned under the correct rung. Still, one can trace a path from merely talking to one another to actions designed to work together to contractual arrangements designed to blend operations to more aggressive steps that obscure the distinct identity of the participating programs and systems.

Figure 2
Enhanced Relationship-Intensity Scale

Level 1:	**Communication**	■ procedures for information sharing ■ regular interagency meetings on common problems and opportunities ■ informal service brokering arrangements[*]
	Cooperation	■ task forces, advisory groups, committees that review/ approve plans ■ consensus concerning best practices ■ cross-systems dialogue and/or training ■ cooperative monitoring/case reviews
Level 2:	**Coordination**	■ formal interagency agreements to "coordinate" ■ joint mission statement/principles ■ joint training/retraining/cross-training ■ contractual procedures for resolving interagency disputes ■ temporary personnel reassignments ■ coordinated eligibility standards
	Collaboration	■ coordinated personnel qualification standards ■ single application form/process ■ common case management protocols ■ centralized functional administration ■ coordinated IT/(re) programming authority
Level 3:	**Convergence**	■ contractual provisions for fund transfers/reallocations ■ contractual "lead agency" agreements ■ pooled resources/budget contributions
	Consolidation	■ multiagency/multitask/multidiscipline service plans and budgets ■ seamless interagency service delivery teams ■ fully blended interagency planning/division of labor/responsibility ■ shared human capital/physical capital assets

[*] Linking families to existing services

Figure 2 also introduces the notion of levels, or transition points that mark qualitatively different thresholds in the intensity level of any integration effort. That is, as one moves from Level 1 to Level 2, the degree of difficulty increases significantly, as does the risk of failure. The three levels can be thought of as follows:

- **Level 1**—Integration efforts at Level 1 are thought to rely heavily on better communications across existing programs and systems. Steps are taken to better acquaint participating programs with each other's rules and services; cross-training may take place; new people may be hired to help families take advantage of existing programs; new technologies may expand what staff and customers know about each other's domains. In some instances, this expanded cross-program awareness may effect changes in the way individual programs operate both individually and in concert. That is, evidence of cooperation across participating programs may be apparent. But such changes seldom result in formal or widespread or substantive transformations in existing protocols or service technologies.

- **Level 2**—At Level 2, reform efforts move into more formal, sometimes contractual, agreements across participating programs. Sites at this level begin to develop missions and outcomes that cut across traditional program lines. They begin to formally develop service and management protocols that blend important functions such as diagnosing customer needs at the front end, tracking families along appropriate service paths, or monitoring progress and resolving disputes over how best to address intersystems conflict regarding how best to deal with families. Still, participating programs retain much of their individual identities and core management functions (e.g., distinct budgets and program identities).

- **Level 3**—At Level 3, the separate programs and systems begin to lose their distinct identities. Core functions such as budgeting, personnel decisions, and determining and monitoring success become increasingly blended. Most importantly, customers and the public are less able to identify with which agency or specific program they are interacting. Program boundaries dissolve and agency identity becomes increasingly seamless to consumers. Customer needs, and not the way programs are organized, become the driving force that shapes what the service system looks like and how it functions.

Institutional Similarity

The second dimension—institutional similarity—is the extent to which integration efforts draw together programs and agencies that represent similar or dissimilar institutional milieux. An organization's milieux can be defined as a "shorthand term for the underlying norms, values, and behavioral patterns that shape the way an agency functions and makes decisions."[14] Often, what best dictates an organization's milieux is its fundamental purpose: Does a program essentially distribute a benefit, deliver a defined service, or seek to enable families to remedy difficult problems or transform behaviors and attitudes?

To simplify matters, one can think about a program that distributes food stamp benefits. The required protocols can be complicated but are quite repetitive. These kinds of programs fit well in a bureaucratic, rule-driven, top-down institutional culture. At the other extreme, there are programs and agencies that are transformative in character. They tend to work with whole families or communities and are designed to change the way individuals relate to one another and to society in general. Not surprisingly, these program types function less well in bureaucratic environments. They flower in institutional milieux that facilitate professional norms, risk-taking,

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[14] See Thomas Corbett, James Dimas, James Fong, and Jennifer L. Noyes, "The Challenge of Institutional 'Milieu' to Cross-Systems Integration," *Focus,* 24, no. 1 (Fall 2005): 28-35.

flexibility, and innovation. There are, of course, many programs that contain elements of both extremes.

Given this, we have denoted three basic types of human-services programs or agencies: routinized, mixed, and nonroutinized, where:

- Routinized programs or agencies are those that engage in core tasks or activities that are rule-driven and repeated without significant variation. Most benefits-issuing programs fall into this category.

- Mixed programs or agencies have some routinized elements, such as a focus on determining eligibility for scarce benefits, but also encompass tasks that seek to alter individual or family functioning. Many work-oriented welfare systems are like this, such as those that offer routine job search or basic education help. They may also, however, offer more advanced forms of assistance designed to remedy problematic barriers to sustained success in the labor market such as depression, domestic violence, substance abuse, and a lack of soft skills.

- Nonroutinized programs or agencies typically are characterized by a reliance on professional norms, collegial rule-making environments, flatter institutional hierarchies, and significant discretion at the front lines. Many, though not all, social service agencies that deal with very problematic family issues often fall into this category.

As discussed in other publications, putting together programs with similar institutional milieux, although difficult, is less daunting than blending programs or agencies drawn from different milieux.[15] For example, integrating two benefit programs might demand changes in eligibility criteria and supportive information technologies, but the workers and supervisors in the two systems might feel relatively comfortable working together. This is often not the case in pursuing systems integration across milieux.

Classifying Efforts

Given this, we believe every systems integration effort can be viewed in light of the two dimensions of relationship intensity and institutional similarity. Figure 3, which is a simple 3 x 3 matrix, is designed to illustrate this important point. Along the vertical axis, we position the three types of institutional milieux as discussed. Along the horizontal axis, we position the levels drawn from Figure 2. This gives us a simplified array of possibilities for thinking about systems integration.

There are nine cells in the matrix. Although no system integration effort can be thought of as "simple," the upper left cell (A1) represents the most direct integration challenge. In this cell, which brings together institutional milieux that are routinized, reform can often be achieved by increasing the level of communication across programs. It is possible that mere communication is not enough and the intensity of the integration effort needs to increase. In this scenario, the integration effort moves across the matrix from cell A1 to A2 to A3. This movement will add to the cost and difficulty of the undertaking.

However, other efforts might require the integration of dissimilar programs and agencies that do very different things and thus, have quite distinct institutional milieux. Such an effort might be

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[15] Ibid., p. 29

necessary if desired program outcomes were driven by the premise that economic well-being and family functioning are inextricably linked. In this case, we could envision the need to increase the level of communication among workers who issue benefits with workers who are trying to improve the labor market attachment of adults, strengthen families, and protect children. A modest proposal might be to simply improve communications without seriously altering operations. In this case, the integration effort would involve movement down the matrix from cell A1 to B1 to C1.

Figure 3
Integration Intensity-Institutional Similarity Matrix

INSTITUTIONAL MILIEUX	RELATIONSHIP INTENSITY		
	1 Communication	2 Collaboration	3 Consolidation
Routinized	A1	A2	A3
Mixed	B1	B2	B3
Nonroutinized	C1	C2	C3

On the other hand, we might just conclude that marginal changes are insufficient. Simply improving the level of communication across dissimilar systems, or working toward fuller consolidation across programs with similar milieux, might not be viewed as adequate. In this scenario, we would envision integrating programs or agencies drawn from very different institutional traditions. We would, for example, attempt to blend together programs organized around routinized functions with programs that exercise discretion and professional judgment.

Now, we are envisioning an ambitious reform agenda. Conceptually, the frontier of systems integration is to push the envelope to cell C3. This cell reflects full consolidation of programs and agencies with very different milieux (i.e., routinized, mixed, and nonroutinized systems). In this case, we are not merely talking about getting these diverse systems to talk with one another, or merely cooperate on a few selected functions. Rather, we are touching upon a service delivery world where each participating program and agency loses some of its original identity in order to deliver comprehensive services to families in a seamless, coherent manner. This is the integration agenda that evokes the most problematic challenges tapping the "below the waterline" phenomena discussed in detail elsewhere.[16]

While the framework just introduced is useful, it is best applied with care. A casual reading might well lead to a conclusion that more ambitious integration agendas are always better than less ambitious alternatives, or that pilots will inexorably evolve toward more intensive relationships from, for example, communication to collaboration to consolidation. In truth, however, the scales and matrices used to illustrate these important concepts are not intended to be linear. More

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[16] Ibid.

complete integration is not always better than less integration. Moreover, progress does not inexorably move unidirectionally, from less to more integration. Ultimately, more than any other factor, what you want to achieve, and for whom, determines what intensity and character of integration is to be sought.

III. STATUS OF CURRENT PILOT EFFORTS

In seeking to understand and analyze Wisconsin's systems integration initiative within the preceding framework, one needs to consider the systems and programs participating in the pilot sites as well as the progress made in achieving integration along the relationship-intensity scale. First, by definition, Wisconsin's pilot efforts were intended to enable and support the integration of at least two nonroutinized yet different institutional milieux:

- Wisconsin Works (W-2), which is administered by the Department of Workforce Development through contracts with counties as well as private for-profit and not-for-profit agencies; and
- the child welfare system, which is county-administered in 71 of 72 counties under the supervision of the Department of Health and Family Services, and state-administered in Milwaukee County through the Department's Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare.

Second, given the goals articulated by the Core Team for the pilots, one could assume that significant progress would need to be made along the relationship-intensity scale in order to achieve them.

In considering these two dimensions of the pilots—the institutional milieux involved as well as the progress made along the relationship-intensity scale—it is apparent that each has made some progress in integrating systems under the initiative's broad umbrella. However, not all have actively sought to work across at least two of the three systems specified in the CFI and none has fully consolidated functions to the point of the involved programs and agencies losing some of their singular identity. This is best reflected in a review of each of the pilot's key attributes as well as partners. Although there are some inherent limitations in completing such a review—the most significant of which is that our assessments reflect a point-in-time snapshot of the pilots, which are continuously evolving—it does provide an indication of the pilots' progress to date in achieving the changes necessary to truly effect program participant experience in a manner that one could reasonably expect to lead to improved outcomes.

Key Attributes and Partners

Consideration of the pilots' key attributes serves to illustrate where each of them falls on the Enhanced Relationship-Intensity Scale. As shown in Figure 4, most of the activities noted fall under the headings of "communication," "cooperation," and "coordination." Two of the projects—Kenosha County and UMOS/La Causa—are striving for collaboration, but are using different tactics in order to reach this level of integration.

Table 3
Pilot Projects: Key Attributes
(As of June 30, 2006)

Lead Agency*	Key Process Attributes
Bayfield County Department of Human Services	Home/school case manager connects primary school students and their families with services and ensures information is shared across systems.
Dane County Department of Human Services	Using an enhanced home-visiting model focused on child development, a Family Support Specialist delivers home-visitation services, a Resident Partner provides mentoring and other services, and an Employment and Training Specialist works to overcome barriers to employment for women with children under the age of one.
Kenosha County Department of Human Services	On a pilot basis, a Case Planning Team develops and implements a Single Coordinated Service Plan for families involved in two of three systems: the Division of Children and Family Services, the Prevention Services Network, and W-2.
La Crosse County Department of Human Services	Alternative Response Liaison provides support and linkages to families screened out of child protective services; Family Resource Liaison provides support and links to services for children with mental health diagnoses and other behavioral challenges; information is shared with the community to enhance overall knowledge regarding integrative systems of support.
MAXIMUS, Inc., and CFCP**	A W-2 Liaison, located at CFCP, identifies those families entering the child welfare system that are already participating in W-2, supports CFCP efforts to identify those that may be eligible for W-2, and promotes the coordination of service provision between the two systems.
UMOS, Inc., and La Causa	Phase I: A W-2 Financial Employment Planner (FEP) co-located at La Causa identifies those families entering the child welfare system that are already participating in W-2, identifies those that are potentially eligible for W-2 services, and coordinates the provision of services for those that are or become co-enrolled. Phase II: W-2 participants identified as potentially being at risk of involvement in the child welfare system are referred to La Causa; if enrolled in services, the W-2 case is reassigned to a FEP dedicated to ensuring coordination of service provision for these cases.

* Signatory to MOA.
** As of June 20, 2006, no MOA was in place for the pilot on the north side of Milwaukee. The two key partners as of July 31, 2006, are listed. It is anticipated, however, that YWCA will also ultimately be a signatory under the MOA.

In some cases, the key attributes of each of the pilots reflects the extent to which they are actually striving to bring systems together or to improve the delivery of services within a given system. As noted, although the Core Team's expectation was that the pilots would work across program and agency boundaries in an effort to better integrate services, the pilots have, in fact, differed in the extent to which this has occurred. This is reflected in a review not only of the partners involved in the projects, but also of the type of relationships that are in place. In particular:

- Two of the pilots, although they are seeking to coordinate services across systems, do not truly involve ongoing and sustained efforts across the W-2 and child welfare systems. These pilots—Bayfield County and La Crosse County—focus much more on the

provision of what could be called service brokering to those served rather than on the integration of service systems.

- One of the pilots—Dane County—also seeks to coordinate services for participants, including both the W-2 and child welfare systems. Similar to the efforts of Bayfield and La Crosse, however, the efforts of Dane County also do not focus on changing the systems with which participants interact but, rather, focus on providing a bridge between the program participants and the existing systems.

- Kenosha County's efforts cross program and agency boundaries, seeking to modify the way in which the systems interact in the provision of services. Rather than working with the participant to navigate the system, Kenosha is attempting to realign the system in response to participant needs.

- Both of the Milwaukee County pilots are focused specifically on working on across-the-program and service boundaries of W-2 and child welfare. On the north side, given the evolution of the project to date, the two systems are currently focused on improved communication and cooperation. In comparison, the UMOS/La Causa pilot, given its clear focus on working across the two systems from the initiative's beginning, have been able to implement strategies promoting sustained system collaboration.

It should be noted that some of the sites are continuing to evolve, with the goal of either moving toward an enhanced relationship with existing partners or to establishing new relationships with additional partners. For example:

- On the north side of Milwaukee, there is an expectation that in addition to building on the existing relationships between MAXIMUS and CFCP, another W-2 agency—the YWCA—will be formally incorporated into the pilot. In addition, plans are to include two other systems serving clients in the area: WISER Choice, which seeks to develop a continuum of services that support the recovery of persons with substance abuse and/or co-occurring mental health disorders, and Wraparound Milwaukee, which is a managed care program designed to provide comprehensive, individualized, and cost-effective care to children with complex mental health and emotional needs.

- In La Crosse, an overall strategy exists to build within the greater community the knowledge and skills necessary to implement an integrative system of support. By definition, this effort involves other organizations, such as the Coulee Coalition for Children of Differing Abilities.

Later in the report, we observe that doing systems integration is a process, not an event. Given this, where the pilots are now should bear little resemblance to where they will be in the future. We anticipate that, over time, individual pilots will take stock of what they have accomplished to date and where they might want to head next. Therefore, a point-in-time assessment of their status may yield a different assessment when completed in the future.

Effect on Participant Experience

The core concern of any effort to integrate human services is to transform the customer's experience in the service delivery environment. Given that not all of the sites have fully involved the systems of interest identified by the Core Team and that none have moved beyond

collaboration, the question can be raised: How much progress have the pilots made in transforming the client's experience in order to achieve the desired outcomes? In considering the answer to this question, one must keep in mind that the overall goal of the initiative is not systems integration for its own sake, but rather systems integration as the means to the end of improving child and family outcomes. However, we cannot plausibly argue that the changes that have occurred will result in positive client outcomes unless there is evidence that the targets of integrated systems are being exposed to a service environment that is fundamentally different in relevant ways from the environment they normally would experience.

In order to better understand how the changes made by each of the sites were affecting participant experience, we completed a modified *line-of-sight* analysis for each pilot.[17] Our focus was on developing a narrative that describes the intended customer experience in the new system. Developing such a narrative requires that we recognize an implicit "life-cycle" to the relationship between participants and the system. This life-cycle can be thought of as a sequence of events, interactions, and decision points that play out over the period of an individual participant's tenure in the innovative service delivery model. The key question here is what the new system will look like from participants' perspectives; will it qualitatively differ from prior experience?

To answer this question fully, it is necessary to create a story centered on what participants are likely to experience as each important step in the new system is crafted. How will members of the target population know about the system? What happens when they walk in the "front door"? What happens next, and next, and next? At each step, the question of how this practice or protocol contributes to achieving overall project purposes must be explored. This is a way of testing one's underlying theory of change. If one cannot plausibly defend the "why" of any particular step, perhaps it ought to be revisited.

Rigorously applying this "walk-in-the-customer's- shoes" exercise provides several benefits. If done properly, it leads to a fuller understanding of the changes embedded in the new model for organizing and delivering services. It should lay out more explicitly the underlying theory of change supporting the proposed changes. It articulates more fully how the new arrangements differ from what customers would experience under the old approach, thereby better demarking the intervention from the counterfactual. And not least, it provides a convenient roadmap for doing a more formal process or implementation evaluation.

Using this approach, it is apparent that the experience of some participants has changed in each of the pilot sites. In addition, as one would expect, there is significant variation. Those changes that have occurred as a result of the initiative from the participant's experience are summarized in Table 4.

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[17] For a more complete discussion of this perspective, see "Cross-Systems Innovations: The Line-of-Sight Exercise, or Getting from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be," Jennifer L. Noyes and Tom Corbett, in *Focus*, Vol. 24, no. 1 (Fall 2005): 36-41.

Table 4
Pilot Projects: Changes to Participant Experience
(As of June 30, 2006)

Lead Agency*	Key Attributes
Bayfield County Department of Human Services	Families with children who are identified as potentially benefiting from social services not otherwise available in the classroom are given the opportunity to work with the Home/School Case Manager, who then serves as a Service Broker across existing or newly identified services.
Dane County Department of Human Services	Because Dane County's efforts were already well underway by the time the initiative was established, it is not clear—at least as of July 31, 2006—that its inclusion as a pilot project had any real effect on program participants in the area. However, the existence of the project independent of the initiative has provided Allied Drive residents participating in the pilot enhanced home-visiting services and access linkages to other services that would otherwise not have been readily available. The addition of a community-based Economic Support Worker in August 2006, which was enabled by the State's investment of funds, may further enable a change in the participant's experience.
Kenosha County Department of Human Services	Families participating in the pilot have one, rather than multiple, case plans and a key point of contact through which services are coordinated and facilitated.
La Crosse County Department of Human Services	Families screened out of child welfare services are offered the opportunity to access services for which they are eligible but might not have otherwise been made aware; families with children with behavioral challenges are linked with services at the appropriate intensity rather than placed in a queue for formal services.**
MAXIMUS, Inc., and CFCP***	Families that are referred to the child welfare system are made aware of their potential eligibility for W-2.
UMOS, Inc., and La Causa	Phase I: Families that are referred to the child welfare system are made aware of their potential eligibility for W-2 and the provision of services is coordinated. Phase II: Families that are participating in W-2 and can potentially benefit from child safety services are made aware of the availability of these services and any subsequent service provision is coordinated.

*   Signatory to MOA.
** Note that La Crosse County's strategy to enhance overall community knowledge regarding integrative systems of support, although important, will not be addressed specifically in the remainder of the report.
*** As of June 20, 2006, no MOA was in place for the pilot on the north side of Milwaukee. The two key partners as of July 31, 2006, are listed. It is anticipated, however, that YWCA will also ultimately be a signatory under the MOA.

It should be noted that many of the pilots initially had more ambitious plans to change the experience of program participants through more significant modifications than have occurred to date. Two examples in particular illustrate this point.

- The pilot located on the north side of Milwaukee was conceived within the context of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Making Connections Milwaukee project and, as such, had a broader scope than the current pilot project efforts. One of the key goals of the pilot was

the establishment of a hub designed to serve the neighborhood encompassed by the Making Connections Milwaukee project. The hub, intended to be a physical site, was to be the focal point of a neighborhood network of integrated services, including but not limited to child welfare and W-2 and related services. While Making Connections Milwaukee continues to be interested in this goal, it is no longer the focal point of the pilot or of the key agencies currently involved in the pilot.

- Similarly, La Crosse County also had a place-based vision, which had as a key strategy the development of a comprehensive service center within the Hamilton Learning Center at the Hamilton School. Agencies to be co-located at the Center included Head Start, Family Resources, Health and Human Services, Economic Support, and informal supports. This plan was also tabled, although the decision to do so was made much earlier in the life cycle of the initiative and, therefore, the pilot project invested limited time in this strategy.

The fact that some sites have chosen to modify their plans or have not yet made as much progress as they had planned to in transforming the participant's experience should not be unexpected. Rather, it reflects the difficulty inherent in pursuing systems integration and mirrors the experience of similar efforts across the country.

IV.   SELECTED CHALLENGES

Based on our prior work throughout the country with sites pursuing systems integration, we have identified some common challenges in pursuing and achieving systems integration. These challenges include:

1) focusing on implementation of tactics rather than on a specific population and set of goals tied to measurable outcomes;
2) concentrating on practice protocols, administrative systems, and policies, and not on leadership style, organizational cultural, and institutional systems; and
3) thinking of systems integration as an event rather than as an ongoing process.

Wisconsin's initiative has not been immune to these challenges, either in considering efforts undertaken by the two State departments sponsoring the initiative or by each of the individual pilots. Given this, the initiative's current status in terms of the pilots, as well as overall, is not unexpected and, in fact, comports with the experience of other states. In particular, if systems integration were easily accomplished, we would have witnessed more success over the several decades that sites have been attempting it, and we would have found more prescriptive methods for achieving it. This, however, is not the case.

Starting in the Right Place

One of the challenges to successful systems integration is the lack of a clear delineation of the target population and the outcome desired for it. First, careful delineation of the target population is an essential preliminary to articulating what is wrong with the current configuration of programs for that population. Second, there must be a clear understanding of the intended end outcome for the population to ensure that whatever changes are ultimately adopted can reasonably be expected to help achieve that outcome.

As previously noted, the target population of interest within Wisconsin's initiative was articulated in the CFI. This definition was, however, open to interpretation as no parameters were established by the State regarding how to define "at risk of" involvement in the W-2 and child welfare systems. As a result, each of the sites chose to interpret this definition differently, as reflected not only in their individually identified population of interest, but also in the method employed for identifying this population of interest. As can be seen in Table 5, some sites chose a literal interpretation of the State's identified population of interest and thus defined it narrowly, others maintained the State's identified population but chose to define it quite broadly, and, finally, a third group chose a different definition of the population altogether.

Table 5
Pilot Projects: Target Population and Referral Process
(as of June 30, 2006)

Lead Agency*	Population	Referral Process
Bayfield County Department of Human Services	Students/families in 4-year-old kindergarten through 5th grade in three schools whose families are at risk of involvement or currently involved in the child welfare or W-2 systems.	Anyone exhibiting a "need" can be referred by school personnel.
Dane County Department of Human Services	Pregnant women and families with newborns and children under the age of one living in the greater Allied Drive Neighborhood, a neighborhood in which 27 percent of children under the age of 18 live in poverty.	Referrals can be made by numerous sources including existing home-visiting programs; WIC/public health nurse; one-stop center; local community agencies; referral from an area resident; self-referral; landlords/rental management company.
Kenosha County Department of Human Services	Families that are involved in two of the following three systems: child welfare, W-2 systems, and the Prevention Services Network.	Existing cases identified by individual case managers.
La Crosse County Department of Human Services	1) Families with children with mental health diagnoses, developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, and other behavioral challenges. 2) Families screened out of child protective services.	Families can contact DHS regarding children with mental health diagnoses, developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, and other behavioral challenges. Families who are screened out of child protective services receive a referral at the discretion of the program supervisor.
MAXIMUS, Inc., and CFPC	In the area of overlap between the MAXIMUS and CFCP service areas, families involved in the child welfare system that are already or could potentially be enrolled in W-2.	Identified by W-2 Liaison if already enrolled; identified by CFPC case worker if potentially eligible.
UMOS, Inc., and La Causa	In the area of overlap between the UMOS and La Causa service areas: Phase I: Families involved in the child welfare system that are also eligible for W-2. Phase II: Families involved in W-2 who might benefit from child welfare services.	Identified by La Causa caseworker upon contact with child welfare system as potentially eligible for W-2; identified by UMOS FEP while participating in W-2 as potentially benefiting from voluntary safety services.

* Signatory to MOA.
** As of June 20, 2006, no MOA was in place for the pilot on the north side of Milwaukee. The two key partners as of July 31, 2006, are listed. It is anticipated, however, that YWCA will also ultimately be a signatory under the MOA.

As reflected in Table 1, Wisconsin defined goals and outcomes for the identified population of interest. Each of the pilots also adopted these goals and outcomes in the articulation of their pilot project plans. However, as reflected in Table 6, the key benchmarks adopted and reported as measures of progress to the Core Team have more often focused on process measures rather than on intermediate outcomes clearly linked to the attainment of the overall goals.

Table 6
Pilot Projects: Key Benchmarks
(as of June 30, 2006)

Lead Agency*	Key Benchmarks
Bayfield County Department of Human Services	Number of referrals and enrollments, number of service referrals, number of program enrollments
Dane County Department of Human Services	Selected benchmarks include number and demographics of families enrolled, number of families attached to employment (including level of attachment), training, AODA treatment; number of families placed in jobs through the project; number of families with income source as a result of the project
Kenosha County Department of Human Services	Number of referrals to the pilot, systems involved, number of team meetings
La Crosse County Department of Human Services	Length of time between initial contact and referral; extent to which referrals are made and service linkages actually occur
MAXIMUS, Inc., and CFCP**	FEP attendance at CST meetings; amount of communication between FEPs and Safety Service Case Managers
UMOS, Inc., and La Causa	Phase I: case status and services provided to families Phase II: risk factors, status of risk factors at time of case closure, services provided to families

* Signatory to MOA.
** As of June 20, 2006, no MOA was in place for the pilot on the north side of Milwaukee. The two key partners as of July 31, 2006, are listed. It is anticipated, however, that YWCA will also ultimately be a signatory under the MOA.

The choices made by each of the pilot sites regarding their population of interest as well as the benchmarks chosen for measuring progress toward achieving the overall initiative's goal appear to have had a significant impact on their move along the systems integration continuum. In particular, those projects that have made the most progress to date are those that not only chose to align their definition of the target population with that of the Core Team, but also to set benchmarks directly related to the interim outcomes of interest to these populations.

Appreciating Institutional Implications

A second key challenge to successful systems integration is the failure to consider and address several important contextual dimensions that shape how organizations and systems operate.[18] These three dimensions are:

- **Organizational systems**: What infrastructure support does a system have available? How adaptive and flexible is the infrastructure? How restrictive are the rules and protocols that govern the institutions, including their funding and their data?

- **Organizational culture**: How do the people in the organization or agency perceive themselves and others? How do they communicate with others in their program? What vocabulary do they use?

- **Leadership style**: Who creates the vision for change? How well is it communicated, internally and with the outside world? How is responsibility and authority shared? How do leaders deal with impediments and obstacles? How well do leaders see and exploit opportunity?

Too often, however, these contextual dimensions are overlooked in favor of importing a solution to an identified problem or concern. This can often mean simply picking from a list of tactics associated with the concept, such as collocating programs, coordinating intake, consolidating job functions, or establishing a team approach to case management. We have found that picking from a list of tactics to address an identified problem often results in no progress at all, because the approach fails to take into account the extent to which the necessary organizational systems, organizational culture, and leadership style are in place or can be created to support the proposed approach. From another perspective, problems arise when an attempt is made to blend systems drawn from very different milieux. If these underlying differences across programs are not acknowledged and addressed, clashes and misunderstanding may arise that stall progress. Ultimately, without a proper "fit," the potential success of any proposed integrated strategy will be limited.

Given their participation in the NGA Policy Academy process, Wisconsin's Core Team entered into the initiative with a better understanding than many other sites about the challenges these contextual dimensions would present to its effort. In considering how the Core Team approached the pilot sites, this understanding of the contextual dimensions of systems integration was reflected in at least two ways. First, the CFI did not specify that particular tactics be employed by each of the pilot sites. Second, these concepts were incorporated into the initiative's initial kick-off meeting, held March 2005, during which sites were asked to consider the extent to which the necessary organizational systems, organizational culture, and leadership were in place in order for them to move forward.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that the Core Team explicitly acknowledged these three contextual dimensions at the beginning of the initiative, the extent to which they were ultimately taken into account has been limited. On the one hand, a significant investment was made on the part of the two project liaisons to both identify and, to the extent possible, address issues related to these underlying dimensions, particularly organizational systems. On the other hand, the manner in which these issues were addressed reflects the fact that a similar effort was not maintained

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[18] For a more complete discussion, see Corbett et al., "The Challenge of Institutional 'Milieu'," *Focus* (2005): 28-35. Available online at www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc241e.pdf.

throughout the Departments of Workforce Development and Health and Family Services or within the pilots. This tension is illustrated in the following areas.

Rules and Protocols—At the beginning of the pilot process, the Core Team acknowledged the possibility that existing rules and protocols might serve as barriers to systems integration at the local level. Working directly with the pilots, the liaisons identified a range of barriers and identified the appropriate State staff contact to address the issues raised. Ultimately, almost all of the barriers raised related to local policy or practice and did not require modification of State rules and protocols. In addition, through this process, two previously identified barriers to integration not under local jurisdiction—Medical Assistance coverage for parents of children in IV-E foster care and the W-2 Temporary Absence policy—were reaffirmed.

Although this process appears to have been effective in identifying barriers, it illustrates the fact that the function of ensuring the State is not discouraging systems integration continues to be thought of as somehow "apart" from the day to day operations of both departments. First, the two liaisons, despite their lack of specific knowledge about the programs and policies about which questions were raised, bore the burden of shepherding the process rather than the staff with whom the programs routinely interact. Second, there is currently no standing and well-acknowledged process for continuing this barrier identification in the future; for all appearances, it was a one-time effort that may not be sustained over time. This stands in contrast to the original intent under the initiative: the establishment of some sort of joint team of experts that would serve as the central vehicle for identifying and addressing barriers to systems integration on a routine and ongoing basis.

Financial Support—Although the CFI did not commit to the investment of any additional state funds, the liaisons worked to develop creative strategies for freeing up resources for investment in the initiative. Ultimately, all but one of the pilots received some funding, as reflected in Table 7.

Table 7
Pilot Projects: State Funding
(as of June 30, 2006)

Lead Agency*	Funding	Purpose	Source
Bayfield County Department of Human Services	$45,000 (18 months)	To support the Home/School Case Manager	DHFS (Bureau of Mental Health and Substance Abuse)
Dane County Department of Human Services	$45,000	To fund an Economic Support Specialist in the Allied Drive Neighborhood	DHFS: $25,000 DWD: $20,000
Kenosha County Department of Human Services	$15,384	To evaluate the pilot project	DWD
La Crosse County Department of Human Services	$75,000 (18 months)	To support the Family Resource Liaison position	DHFS (Bureau of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services)
MAXIMUS, Inc., and CFPC	None	n/a	n/a
UMOS, Inc., and La Causa	$573,200 (24 months)	To fund service coordination and direct service provision to W-2 participants assessed as being at risk of child welfare services participation in Phase II	DHFS

* Signatory to MOA.
** As of June 20, 2006, no MOA was in place for the pilot on the north side of Milwaukee. The two key partners as of July 31, 2006, are listed. It is anticipated, however, that YWCA will also ultimately be a signatory under the MOA.

Again, however, for at least two reasons the liaisons' success in working with the pilots to identify and secure this funding should not be construed as a real change in terms of underlying institutional dimensions. First, it appears that in those sites in which an external investment in resources has been made, the investments have served to drive the activities that have occurred. Given this, it is appropriate to ask whether the pilot sites in which such an investment has been made can sustain their efforts without additional funding, particularly given the limited change to systems independent of the addition of personnel that has occurred. Second, none of the projects leveraged additional support from sources other than the State as a part of this initiative, although Dane County does have significant external support that would have been forthcoming with or without the initiative's existence.[19] In addition, the UMOS/La Causa pilot project has identified an opportunity to receive foundation funding to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of its Phase II efforts; this opportunity was facilitated by the Core Team through its discussions with the Milwaukee Child Welfare Philanthropy Group.

Training and Technical Assistance—The liaisons developed strategies for passing on the knowledge accumulated by the Core Team through its participation in the NGA Policy Academy

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[19] This funding comprises the following: $50,000 annually through May 2007 from the Madison Community Foundation; $150,000 annually through March 2008 from the Wisconsin Partnership Program; and $145,000 from Dane County.

to the pilots through several venues, including three pilot site retreats—the kick-off held in March 2005 and two, one-day workshops—as well as through technical assistance on use of logic models and reporting. The liaisons also developed plans to address other identified technical assistance and training needs within each of the pilots, based on their on-site visits as well as a review of information submitted by the pilot sites.

Some of the identified needs were addressed by maximizing the pilot sites' use of other available training opportunities, particularly as related to the pilots gaining additional understanding about the child welfare and W-2 systems and the concept of coordinated service teams. For example:

- Three of the pilot sites—Bayfield County, Kenosha County, and La Crosse County—took advantage of training provided under DHFS's existing contractual arrangement under the Coordinated Service Team Initiative. The Initiative is funded in 23 counties from a combination of federal and State resources, with a local matching fund requirement. Similar training was provided to MAXIMUS staff by the DHFS Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare.
- Four of the pilot sites—Bayfield County, La Crosse County, and both Milwaukee County pilots—participated in the DWD's "Bridges to Collaboration" training seminar, which is an enhanced case management training course.
- All of the pilot sites had opportunities to access training about the W-2 and child welfare systems. Since January 1, 2004, DWD has required all W-2 agency Financial and Employment Planners to "receive training in coordination with local child welfare and other community agencies to facilitate the employment of W-2 participants, their well-being and the well-being of their children."[20] This requirement can be fulfilled either through an online course on collaboration or through participation in "Bridges to Collaboration." Although a similar requirement does not exist for child welfare agencies, child welfare workers are encouraged but not required to complete an online training module, "Introduction to Wisconsin Works."[21]

However, other needs as identified by the liaisons or surfaced by the pilots were not systematically addressed as initially intended. These needs related to, for example, how to develop and sustain service capacity, clarify outcomes and benchmarks, and ensure new policies are put into action. A significant area of need surfaced by at least one pilot striving to work across multiple systems related to issues of power and "turf" that only began to manifest themselves as a push was made to move from Level 2 to Level 3 in the Enhanced Relationship-Intensity Scale depicted in Figure 2. Although the liaisons provided whatever assistance and information they could, a key issue was how to assist sites on an ongoing and one-on-one basis in terms of their project management issues. This issue remained unresolved, due to resource limitations.

In comparison to the areas of rules and protocols and financial support, more progress was made in the area of training and technical assistance in terms of addressing underlying institutional dimensions, particularly as related to efforts to routinize the provision of cross-training for Child Welfare Workers and W-2 Financial and Employment Planners within local agencies. However, concerns can still be raised as to whether progress will be sustained for at least two reasons.

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[20] Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Division of Workforce Solutions, *Administrator's Memo Series Notice*, no. 05-09, June 13, 2005.
[21] Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Division of Children and Family Services, *Information Memo*, no. 2006-13, June 28, 2006.

First, although shared program knowledge is an essential first step in the systems integration process, it does not provide a sufficient knowledge base to move integration forward, as illustrated by the ongoing and yet unmet technical assistance needs in the pilots regarding such things as how to address issues of power and "turf." Second, a similar effort to develop such cross-program knowledge as well as general knowledge of systems integration has not been implemented at the State level. In particular, although staff persons from both departments need to understand the concepts involved in service integration, it appears that the only focused training provided to these persons was that provided to those who attended the initiative's March 2005 kick-off meeting.

In considering these three examples of efforts to address the contextual dimensions of systems integration, it is evident that an essential component to moving the agenda forward and addressing outstanding issues is leadership. In considering Wisconsin's experience to date, it is clear that the importance of this initiative has been emphasized by leadership at the highest levels, as reflected in the comments and actions of the secretaries of the departments of Health and Family Services and Workforce Development and their respective direct staffs. This commitment has been further emphasized by, for example, a W-2 contract requirement to complete a written service integration plan and agreement with local child welfare agencies. However, this leadership commitment has not been sustained by continued action throughout the relevant organizations, as illustrated by the examples provided, resulting in what has been perceived by some as a lack of substance behind the rhetoric on both the State and local levels.

There are many reasons for the lack of sustained leadership, not the least of which is the multiple demands placed on service delivery at both the local and State levels. In particular, too many stakeholders have seen the initiative overall as yet another project rather than as a transformation in the way the programs do business; as a result, it competes with rather than supports other activities and initiatives. For example, during the same time period during which the initiative was introduced and initially implemented, DWD issued a new RFP and executed a new set of contracts for the W-2 program, including a major system redesign in Milwaukee. DHFS, the counties, and its contracted vendors also went through a re-contracting process, set against the backdrop of the PEP and the need to address identified performance concerns. Concurrently, the child welfare service delivery system in Milwaukee underwent a major redesign, with service-delivery region boundaries being redrawn in order to better align with the W-2 regions. Given this, it is not surprising that staff persons at both the State and local levels have a sense of competing priorities and that mixed results have been achieved in seeking to address areas in which the fit necessary to achieve the desired change may not have been sufficient.

Recognizing Systems Integration as a Process, Not an Event

In addition to starting in the right place and appreciating institutional implications, the third key challenge to systems integration is recognizing the ongoing process and avoiding the tendency to think of reform as an event or a transition from something to something that has a clear and distinct end point. Often, a law is passed, a policy changed, or a new program introduced and then it is believed that the presenting problem is solved. In the case of systems integration, this way of thinking compounds an already difficult process and often leads to unrealistic expectations on the part of those involved.

It is accurate to say that although Wisconsin's Core Team certainly had and continues to have high expectations regarding the overall effect of the initiative, the Core Team has also been realistic in how quickly these results could or should be expected. In particular, the Team has recognized the fact that true systems integration is a continuing process. This recognition has not
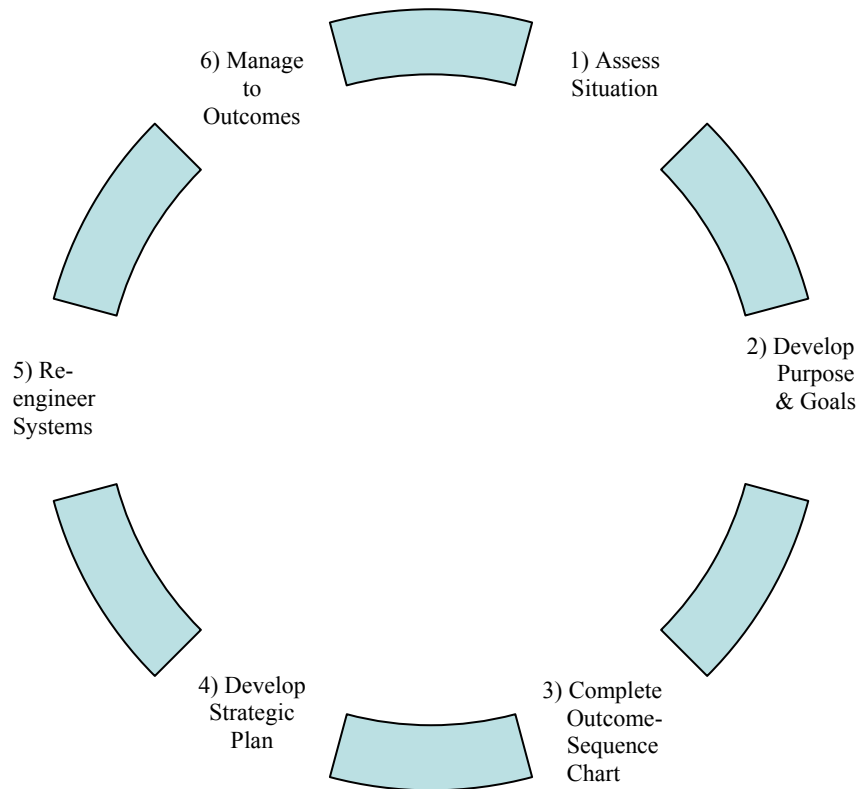
been misplaced, as evidenced by the process that has evolved in many of the pilots. Two of the pilots in particular, the Kenosha County and the UMOS/La Causa pilots, keep developing, testing, and modifying strategies in an effort to figure out what will work in their efforts to integrate systems.

The approach adopted by these sites is similar to that reflected in Figure 4. One pass around the circle should suggest possibilities and opportunities for further change. Monitoring and evaluation ought to be taken seriously, not necessarily as a way of judging success and failure, but for providing input on what comes next. Finally, the life cycle concept suggests that we can start at any place in the scales introduced earlier in this paper and work our way progressively toward the other end.

Yet, the fact that this is the process that is being followed by its very nature creates challenges to achieving systems integration. In particular, not only is it frustrating that the pursuit of systems integration involves a process that never appears to end, it also creates challenges to providing information about outcomes attributable to systems integration efforts. Yet, those responsible for the stewardship of public funds, or for meeting political ends, want to know if the effort is making a difference in terms of measurable outcomes. Without such information, systems integration efforts can be difficult to sustain.

Figure 4

Systems Integration Life Cycle

6) Manage to Outcomes

1) Assess Situation

5) Re-engineer Systems

2) Develop Purpose & Goals

4) Develop Strategic Plan

3) Complete Outcome-Sequence Chart

V.   ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

Despite the fact that the pilots have all adopted different approaches and are all at different stages of integrating their systems to improve outcomes for children and families, each of the sites, as well as the Core Team, want more information about the effectiveness of their models and of integrated service delivery models more generally. We have heard this interest expressed by sites throughout the country.[22] Both local and State officials have repeatedly asked: Can we determine whether the pilots are effectively impacting participants' lives?

This interest in measuring impacts is not surprising. Pursuing systems integration is hard work that challenges traditional processes and practices. Skeptics want proof that it is worth the investments necessary and proponents want evidence to move their agendas forward. However, answering the conventional impact question is not easy.[23] While a rigorous impact evaluation should establish causality—the new service paradigm results in observable differences in client behavior and circumstances—such an evaluation may not be feasible given confusion about the basics (who is served, how, and to what ends). In addition, classic random-assignment experimental evaluations of these systems may be impracticable or politically insupportable (e.g., how does one randomize subjects to treatment and control groups when the entire local system of services is being reworked?).

In Wisconsin, the groundwork for such an impact evaluation has not been established due to resources limitations and, in any event, may not have been appropriate given the lack of clarity even about what was to take place. In particular, given the current status of the projects, it is too early to presume that the participant's experience in the new service delivery environment has really been substantially altered. Absent that, it is not reasonable to assume real impacts. Any attempt to measure impacts prematurely may well lead to false-negative conclusions. There are, however, some measures in place that provide some indication of the extent to which participants are being served and the potential effect of this service on their individual outcomes.

Level of Participation and Services Provided

As would be expected given the benchmarks about which pilots have reported to the Core Team as reflected in Table 6, most of what we currently know about each of the pilot projects is descriptive.

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[22] Feedback on this issue has been gathered through site visits with State and local officials who are developing and implementing integrated system models and in meetings of so-called lighthouse sites sponsored by the authors, the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices through its policy academy initiative, and the federal government. Interest in answering the core-impact evaluation question does not necessarily mean that State and local officials realize what it takes methodologically to measure outcome impacts with rigor.

[23] See Thomas Corbett and Jennifer L. Noyes, "The Service Integration Agenda: Political, Conceptual, and Methodological Challenges," *Focus,* Vol. 22, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 55-56.

Table 8
Pilot Projects: Key Measures
(as of June 30, 2006)

Lead Agency*	Key Measures
Bayfield County Department of Human Services	Seventeen families were referred to the Home/School Case Managers; 15 of these families enrolled.
Dane County Department of Human Services	A total of 75 families were served through the program, with 39 continuing enrollment. Almost 100% of the families served received needs assessments. Forty-eight jobs had been found for 31 clients.
Kenosha County Department of Human Services	Twelve clients participated in the Single Coordinated Service Plan pilot; a total of 29 family team meetings were held.
La Crosse County Department of Human Services	Fifty-two out of 117 families referred to the Alternative Response Liaison accepted referrals; of these, three were to economic support programs and five were to the Job Center. One hundred and eleven out of 128 families with children with mental health diagnoses and other behavioral challenges were referred to the Family Resource Liaison; of these, 70 were immediately linked to community services, 28 were linked to short-term services, and 13 were linked to the formal services.
MAXIMUS, Inc., and CFCP**	Eighty-nine joint cases were identified; 10 FEPs attended at least one CST; 53 contacts were made between FEPs and Safety Services Case Managers.
UMOS, Inc., and La Causa	Phase I: 203 referrals were made from La Causa to UMOS for potential W-2 eligibility; a total of 35 existing or new enrollments were established in W-2, with one additional enrollment pending. Phase II: 30 referrals were made from UMOS to La Causa for potential receipt of services; 23 enrolled in the program through which risk factors were assessed and services provided; seven cases were closed following risk factor mitigation.

* Signatory to MOA.
** As of June 20, 2006, no MOA was in place for the pilot on the north side of Milwaukee. The two key partners as of July 31, 2006, are listed. It is anticipated, however, that YWCA will also ultimately be a signatory under the MOA.

Individual Case Examples

Beginning in January 2006, each of the pilot sites was asked to provide information about individual participants and their families that had been served under the pilots. The following examples, based on this information as provided to the Core Team, are intended to illustrate the range and nature of the services provided. Because the information was provided by the pilots and represents the unique experience of a select set of cases, generalities about the families served and the services provided cannot be inferred from them.

- **La Crosse County:** Family A was referred to the Alternative Response program with concerns that Mother A was not properly supervising her 13-year-old son. A worker was sent to the home to discuss identified concerns. Upon arrival, Mother A enthusiastically welcomed the worker, stating, "Oh, I am so glad you're here!" Mother A subsequently

explained that her live-in boyfriend was emotionally abusive and she wanted him to leave. Furthermore, Mother A was in a tight financial position, as she relied on the money her boyfriend received for disability to make ends meet. Mother A was referred to New Horizons Shelter and Women's Center, the YWCA housing program, and mentoring programs in the community for her son. Mother A has reported that her boyfriend is moving out, she is starting a full-load of classes at the local technical college, and her son is involved with the Boys and Girls Club.

- **Kenosha County:** Kelly, a 20-year-old single parent expecting her second child in July 2006, was enrolled in the following programs: DVR, W-2, food stamps, MA, employment support, and child care. She was also receiving services through Low Income Housing, WIC, KAFASI Pre-Natal Care Coordination, and Service Coordination through the Prevention Services Network. After Kelly had expressed concerns that she was overwhelmed with multiple program requirements, she was referred to and agreed to participate in Kenosha County's pilot project. A total of seven meetings were held with Kelly, four of which were Team Meetings that involved her W-2 case manager, employment support specialist, economic support specialist, DVR counselor, child care case manager, KAFASI worker, and PSN Service Coordinator. A Care Plan was developed, implemented, and monitored for Kelly. Ultimately, the objective of Kelly obtaining work experience and preparing for employment after pregnancy was achieved.

- **UMOS/La Causa:** Ms. Z's W-2 FEP referred her to Phase II of the pilot—the Healthy Families Program—in March 2006, when she had a three-year-old son and was four months pregnant. A case plan was developed that included: secure housing; establish a payment plan with the utility and phone companies; obtain basic home furnishings; apply for WIC for the newborn; obtain a crib, infant carrier and clothing for the newborn; and secure daycare to enable her to work on her employability plan. The case manager met weekly with Ms. Z, focusing first on the priority of ensuring basic needs were met and preparing for the birth of her second child. Referrals were made that enabled Ms. Z to obtain clothing for her son and her new infant; an assigned parent aid helped her to make payment arrangements for outstanding phone bills and utility bills; La Causa purchased a crib, mattress sheets, and infant car seat; a two-bedroom apartment was secured after Ms. Z received an income tax refund of $1,550. Other services were provided following the birth of the second child and while Ms. Z was awaiting receipt of her first full food stamp allotment and W-2 check. At the time of case closure, housing was secured, Ms. Z was on a payment plan with utilities, the house was furnished, and the basic needs of both children were being met. Ms. Z was then able to focus on her W-2 employability plan.

As can be seen from these examples, the pilots have each in their own way made a difference in the lives of individual participants, at least in the short run. It remains to be seen if, ultimately, this results in achievement of the initiative's broader goals as articulated in the CFI.

VI. NEXT STEPS

To some extent, what has occurred to date under the initiative's auspices can be thought of as the State's first journey around the Service Integration Life Cycle. In other words, the Core Team itself embarked on a process similar to that reflected in Figure 4, whereby it developed and implemented a strategic plan designed to address concerns about the situation faced by families at risk of needing or involved in the W-2 and child welfare systems. The specific tactic adopted by the Core Team was the identification and support of demonstration sites that would inform, as previously noted, a "statewide effort to transform services and results for [Wisconsin's] most vulnerable families." [24] Given the information provided in this report, the Core Team's own impressions of what has occurred to date, and the knowledge gained by each of the individual pilots, the State is now faced with, once again, assessing the situation and developing an appropriate response.

Given the State's experience to date, we believe the key question that needs to be addressed at this juncture is: What needs to be done to take the initiative to the next level? By the next level, we mean transforming the State's current effort from a project to a new way of thinking about how services are organized and delivered. We mean pushing the envelope in the matrix we introduced earlier, from merely conversing across agencies to collaborating among systems and ultimately realizing a true convergence of systems functions and identities.

Below, we consider what it might take to make systems integration a governing principle in the management of human services in Wisconsin. That is, what will it take to move from project status to a way of doing business on a daily basis? To accomplish this, we believe consideration should be given to revisiting and perhaps modifying the basic concepts and strategies employed under the current initiative; implementing some specific steps at the State level in response to this review; and developing specific strategies to leverage progress made to date, particularly in Milwaukee.

Revisiting the Current Initiative

Initially, Wisconsin adopted an approach that allowed the pilot sites to have significant autonomy and flexibility based on at least two factors, one philosophical and one practical. First, the Core Team agreed at one of its earliest meetings that pursuing systems integration was best a bottoms-up phenomenon. Adopting a top-down approach would stifle local creativity and might well create push-back or even resistance. This position was in large part developed in response to information shared with the Core Team during the NGA Policy Academy. Second, the State had initially identified few, if any, resources to dedicate to the support of the pilots at the State or local level and thus felt it was not in a position to demand much from them.

Several decades of experience in trying to advance the systems integration agenda appear to validate the philosophical presumption built into the Wisconsin strategy. From the early 1970s, when then Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Elliot Richardson complained that service delivery in the U.S. suffered from a "hardening of the categories," there have been several attempts to push integration from the top, down, with little success. [25] The Wisconsin approach would appear to be the converse of traditional federal efforts to advance systems integration. While the federal government has generally been prescriptive in its approach, Wisconsin proactively sought to let locals find their own way. Essentially, Wisconsin's approach was to

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[24] "We're Doing What It Takes!" *State of Wisconsin CFI*, 2004: Attachment I, p. 1.

[25] See Corbett and Noyes, "The Service Integration Agenda," *Focus,* (2003): 50.

replicate the NGA Policy Academy, but within the state in that, although the State provided some training and technical assistance, each site operated independently, with few external constraints.

We do not fault the Core Team for pursuing this approach, which was supported by consultants working with Wisconsin as part of the NGA Policy Academy process. Based on experience to date, however, it is our judgment at this point that the application of this approach may have erred in the direction of providing too little in the way of institutional support and technical assistance as well as insufficient ongoing, day-to-day reinforcement of the State's interest in transforming this effort from a project to a new way of thinking about how services are organized and delivered. This is reflected in the mixed results to date and the limited progress in terms of modifications to systems as opposed to enhanced "service brokering."

The key to moving forward is to find the right balance in order to encourage local innovation while, at the same time, ensuring that such innovation comports with and supports the overall vision. What is needed is the correct pitch or balance in the State's governance strategy. Finding this proper balance is like walking a tightrope, requiring a periodic effort to assess how things are going and make proper adjustments. As the Core Team looks to the future, it should explore ways to balance the following management principles:

- Provide appropriate State guidance regarding the vision to be pursued. *At the same time, permit locals to shape project parameters in response to the local context and needs.*

- Permit locals to innovate with respect to tactics. *At the same time, facilitate the provision of technical assistance and sharing of promising practices.*

- Develop an institutional culture at the State level that fosters innovation, engages staff, nurtures risk taking, and enhances communication. *At the same time, do not distract staff from carrying out essential functions within their own programmatic arenas.*

- Provide appropriate and aggressive State guidance in developing the ends to be achieved through systems integration, as well as the target populations to be served. *At the same time, locals must be fully engaged in shaping the purposes and targets for systems integration reforms.*

- Facilitate the capacity to deliver holistic, cohesive services to families at the local level. *At the same time, preserve what is special and unique about the individual programs and systems being blended together.*

Implementing Specific Strategies

Based on what we have learned regarding systems integration from sites throughout the country as well as from our interactions with the Wisconsin pilots, we believe there are some specific steps the State could take to achieve the change desired while preserving the previously articulated management principles. It should be noted that these steps are very similar to those recently articulated by the State in a grant application to the U.S Department of Health and Human Services, which outlines ways in which local sites can benefit from working with the State to advance the integration agenda.[26] This similarity should not be unexpected, as

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[26] See Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services response to the Department of Human Services Administration for Children and Families funding announcement, *Collaboration between TANF and Child Welfare to Improve Child Welfare Program Outcomes*, submitted June 2006.

information developed in support of this assessment was shared with key State staff for the purposes of developing the proposal.

In thinking about what needs to occur at the State level, we believe changes need to be made in the relevant agencies' institutional and management philosophies in order to nurture reform and innovation. Although, as previously noted, a commitment to systems integration has been articulated at the highest levels of both DHFS and DWD, it is not clear that this commitment has been disseminated throughout either agency and incorporated into the day-to-day operating environment. In order to facilitate this, steps need to be taken in the areas below.

Redevelop the Vision—Bring together not only top managers but also key State-agency staff persons who relate directly to the counties, contracted child welfare service providers, and W-2 agencies to ensure a common understanding of the State's vision for systems integration. This conversation should be informed by the pilot experience to date and thus, representatives from each of the pilots should also be included. The goal is to reshape key initiative objectives and ensure there is a clear and common understanding of the following questions:

- What are we trying to accomplish?
- What target population are we concerned about?
- What is wrong with our current way of doing business?
- What is our underlying theory of change?
- Why are we doing what we are doing?

It is not clear that the State, itself, has developed a succinct narrative, or story line, that communicates a coherent vision of what the initiative is all about. Absent such a story line, it is difficult, if not impossible, for those responsible for day-to-day development and implementation to consider and incorporate the vision into their work on an ongoing basis.

Cross-Walk to Inculcate the Common Vision and Narrative—DHFS and DWD should develop and execute a plan for communicating the vision of change throughout the two agencies. Not only should all key management be able to discuss the common vision if asked, so should those involved in policy development and implementation. This would mean aggressively seeking out every opportunity to communicate the new vision to staff in both departments, and to seek their input where appropriate. Redundancy is not inappropriate when attempting to transform how one is organizing and delivering human services.

Aggressively Address Institutional Culture Conflicts at the Systems Level—Although DHFS and DWD are both committed to the concept of service integration, by definition the two agencies have different missions and often are required to meet different State and federal requirements regarding outcomes. Obviously, this can lead to a divergence in philosophies, premises, or ways of doing business that must be addressed if true cooperation is to be achieved. Again, at the highest levels of both agencies, it appears that many of these issues have been addressed; this is best reflected in the collegial and productive working relationship established by the two project liaisons. However, such working relationships do not appear to be systematized at other levels within the two agencies.

Ensure Existing, Related Initiatives are Leveraged—An effort should be made to search for new ideas or initiatives not only in other states but also from within the state. From the conversations we have had with State and local staff, it is apparent that there is a great deal happening that may not be considered part of the initiative, but which relates to the concepts being promoted by the

State. Examples include Wraparound Milwaukee, WISER Choice, and the Coordinated Services Team (CST) Initiative. Currently, because these and other efforts are not labeled as being part of the initiative, they are viewed at the local level as competing with rather than supporting current systems integration efforts. We believe that this situation brings us back to the key challenge faced by the State: how to incorporate the concept of service integration as a way of doing business, rather than as yet another project unrelated to activities planned or underway in localities throughout the state.

Develop Cross-System Response Teams—The State should consider developing what we call a cross-system response team by drawing key staff or decision-makers from relevant parts of the State bureaucracy. This team could perform several key functions: answer questions from local sites that require cross-agency responses; work on policy or procedural changes that require cooperation or which have cross-agency impacts; look for opportunities to secure waivers or outside resources, or to push for changes at the legislative or federal level; do environmental scanning; and so forth. The establishment of such a team could also serve to further embed the common vision and narrative in both agencies. This concept of such a team was included in the State's initial application to NGA; it did not, however, come to fruition. As a result, the day-to-day weight of the initiative has been carried by a single staff member in each agency: the project liaisons.

Develop Stronger Monitoring Capabilities—The State can play a key role in developing a capacity to obtain feedback necessary to any system of continuous improvement. This includes developing measures, enhancing data infrastructure, improving data interpretation and use, and so forth. Although a significant time investment was initially made in this area, attention to it has been limited in recent months, with some of the pilot sites questioning the utility of the quarterly reports given the limited feedback they received about their contents.

The concept of an ongoing feedback loop between the State and the pilot sites leads to the second area in which steps can be taken to promote further systems integration as a way of doing business. This area is the relationship between the State and local bureaucracies. The suggestions below are aimed at assisting the development of relationships between the State and local bureaucracies as well as across the local bureaucracies.

Develop a More Aggressive Technical Assistance Program—As previously noted, some effort has been made to provide technical assistance and training to the pilot sites as well as to other sites regarding some integration strategies as well as basic programmatic information. Other efforts appear to be underway, including the development of a more generic course regarding collaborative case management. We encourage these efforts and suggest that top management in the two departments signal that this is a priority and that appropriate staff resources be devoted to this important function. However, direct TA is not the only way to enhance relevant skill sets. In many instances, peer-to-peer dialogues and problem solving proves to be the most effective strategy.

Foster a Robust Network of Learning—We strongly urge the State to develop venues or build on existing venues through which locals can do four critical things: 1) have access to technical assistance, 2) provide input and advice to key State officials, 3) engage in common problem solving though peer-to-peer dialogue, and 4) share emerging solutions and technical or procedural breakthroughs.

Without such a network, opportunities for leveraging the experience gained by the pilots—which is one of the key goals of the initiative—have been missed. For example, the UMOS/La Causa

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pilot project has gone through an iterative learning process through which it tested and discarded a screening tool to be used to identify whether a family involved in the child welfare system was eligible for W-2. Subsequently, the north side pilot pursued the same concept, but it did so independently, without benefit of the UMOS/La Causa pilot project experience. Clearly, this was an opportunity missed for one site to benefit from the experience of another site and to talk through implementation challenges.

A network would also provide a venue for exploring key challenges to doing integration well, including creating techniques for setting out a vision (how do you determine what you want to do for whom), assessing why the current system cannot accomplish those purposes and identifying the kind of integration needed, doing a line-of-sight analysis at the local level, and assessing institutional compatibility at the local level. A network also provides a venue for selecting and measuring operational and process measures to monitor progress and methods for setting up a management framework to pursue continuous improvement (reform as a process, not an event).

Establish an Active Lighthouse Strategy—In using the term "lighthouse," we do not mean to imply that existing pilot sites should somehow be placed on a pedestal and held up as a models of best practices for achieving systems integration. Rather, the pilot sites, as well as others from around the state, have each learned lessons about what has worked or not worked in their efforts to pursue systems integration. Thus, we use the term lighthouse in a broad manner, merely indicating that a site has insights and experiences worth sharing with others engaged in a similar journey.

For example, Bayfield County could share its experience working with school districts and classroom teachers, while Kenosha County could discuss the pros and cons of the methodical process it followed to develop its current pilot protocol. In addition, some of the sites have developed tools and protocols for making the necessary changes to policy, administration, and practice. For example, UMOS/La Causa could share its process for identifying and referring families enrolled in W-2 at risk of child abuse and neglect, including the screening form developed as part of the project. Unfortunately, these lessons have not been disseminated. The key is that the State develop a strategic plan for using the pilots as vehicles for developing new ideas, for serving as inspiration to others, and as active teachers for disseminating new ideas and technologies.

Develop Appropriate Incentives and Rewards—Finally, the State needs to think creatively about how to encourage risk taking and making investments of time and energy at all levels. In general, the pilots are struggling with understanding why they ought to be investing time in this particular initiative, given the competition that exists for their time, energy, and attention to activities that carry with them higher levels of institutional risk and reward. Given the perception that the initiative is a project rather than a way of doing business, this sentiment should not come as a surprise. Until recognition is given to the promotion of service integration within the day-to-day efforts of the agencies and direct service providers, this disconnect will continue to impede progress.

Building on Current Pilot Efforts

Clearly, the suggestions made to this point relate specifically to the State's role in nurturing systems integration as a way of doing business rather than a project with a logical beginning and ending date. However, the majority of the sites also have an opportunity to continue to move forward with the activities they have underway, rather than thinking of the initiative as having an end date. Each site must reconsider its efforts in light of the systems integration life cycle

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introduced earlier and recognize the need to frequently revisit their plans and make modifications as appropriate.

In particular, we believe each site should periodically complete a line-of-sight (LOS) exercise to update planning efforts in response to lessons learned and circumstances that change. The LOS exercise is described in much greater detail elsewhere.[27] Essentially, the exercise demands that planners and managers engage in a thought or visioning exercise whereby they put themselves in the participant's shoes and think through what happens at each step in the participant's experience with the new system. In this way, gaps and problems and potential issues as well as opportunities are revealed. The exercise typically revolves around a set of questions. Some questions each site should ask include:

- Have we developed a plan that will alter the experience of families in such a way that we could expect a change in outcomes?

- For each event, interaction, and decision point of our plan, do we know why we are pursuing this particular strategy and how it will contribute to the intended outcomes?

- Do we know the critical junctures in our plan as it relates to the experience of families? Are we missing any pieces?

- How do we know that we are making progress in implementing the changes? Are we really making progress?

- What do we need to know to determine if we are making a difference for families? What are our benchmarks?

- What should we do to keep making progress? What pieces are we missing?

The LOS exercise can also be used as a critical step toward identifying what aspects of the pilot deserve ongoing attention. The next logical step is to determine how to measure, or empirically document, each task or protocol or decision deemed important to the pilot's functioning. For each management question or concern identified, the pilots can explore whether there is a way of systemically documenting what is going on and how they are doing, which should enable them to develop a strategy for doing continuous management improvement.

Although there are several kinds of systems attributes that can be measured, there are three attributes—input, process, and operational attributes—that we believe are of particular importance to the pilots:[28]

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[27] A more complete discussion of LOS is included in Jennifer L. Noyes and Thomas Corbett, "The Line-of-Sight Exercise, or Getting from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be," *Focus,* 24, no. 1 (Fall 2005): 36-41.

[28] What we do not discuss in this paper are the outcomes associated with more conventional evaluations, such as the following: 1) S*hort-term outcomes,* which are typically measures of participant behavior or circumstances, although they might include measures of community functioning. What differentiates *outcomes* from *outputs* is that they are rooted in changes in the target population of interest, not in changes in how the system operates. Theoretically, we can differentiate these outcomes into short-term and long-term measures. Short-term measures typically tap behaviors and circumstances that can plausibly be captured while people are participating in the program or within a reasonably short time after exit. 2) *Long-term outcomes,* which include some "sleeper" measures that may not be evidenced for some time after participation in the program (e.g., the return on an investment in early childhood development might not be fully realized for several years). A few may be intergenerational (e.g., building stronger families is expected to pay dividends as children mature into adulthood). Although these long-term goals may not lend themselves to short-term

- *Input attributes* cover the essential investments (money, facilities, skills, etc.) required to make the model a feasible, realistic undertaking. This set of benchmarks is intended only to determine whether the resources, technologies, and supports thought to be pivotal to the functioning of the pilot are in place. That is, are the necessary resources available and structured in a way that a dispassionate observer might plausibly argue that a typical customer's service experience will be transformed?

- *Process attributes* cover systems qualities that get at how well a complex service network is functioning as a system. That is, can one empirically measure those points where the implicit narrative embedded in the outcome-sequence chart diagramming the anticipated client experience can go wrong? Assessments (triage), decision points, referrals, key collaborative treatment modalities, cross-system communications, the employment of sanctions, and so forth, are points where complex processes can break down or operate in ways not envisioned by systems designers and managers.

- *Operational attributes* tap qualities of the new system that more directly indicate that the customer's experience has been changed. These attributes are largely rooted in changes in the way the integrated system does business and serve as reasonable proxies for those changes in the quality and character of the participant's experience that lead us to hypothesize differences in the behaviors and circumstances of the target population. Are participants more actively involved in developing service plans? Are service plans more comprehensive, dealing with multiple issues simultaneously? Are services delivered more coherently, or with less duplication of effort? Are plans individualized to the circumstances of the families? Do we have evidence of improved operational efficiencies? Is there evidence of higher quality services?

For each of these dimensions, it ought to be possible to develop quantitative measures that give some idea as to whether or not the pilots are moving in the right direction.

Given their current status, each of the sites will have different answers to each of these questions. It should not come as a surprise if some of the pilots, particularly those that are most dependent on one individual to broker services for families, choose to modify their future approach. Others, however, will likely identify opportunities and threats to their current strategies and make the appropriate adjustments.

Focusing on Milwaukee

One area in which we believe significant opportunity exists is Milwaukee. We believe this for several reasons, including the significant progress that has been made in both pilots to move systems integration forward, the other place-based activities that are underway in Milwaukee, and the unique role of the State in operating both the child welfare and W-2 agencies through contracted service providers in the county.

First, both pilots have adopted processes through which participants in the child welfare systems who are potentially eligible for W-2 services are identified and referred. Although these processes currently differ, their establishment reflects the commitment of the involved agencies to the

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assessments of effectiveness, they are useful in shaping how the system ought to be designed and managed. They provide an ending for the narrative-development exercise.

concept. In addition, one of the pilots—UMOS/La Causa—has taken the second step of identifying and referring those W-2 participants who are at risk of involvement in the child welfare system. While this step has been in large part enabled by the investment of service funds by the State in order to meet the needs of those referred, it is apparent through conversations that the commitment to the concept is strong within the involved agencies.

However, one of the challenges faced by the Milwaukee pilots is that, by definition, those served have only been in the area of jurisdictional overlap between UMOS and La Causa on the one hand and MAXIMUS and CFCP on the other. Through a process of natural evolution, the north side pilot is moving toward inclusion of YWCA, a second W-2 agency, into the cooperative efforts underway. Such an evolution has not occurred in the UMOS/La Causa pilot, although it is clear from the information tracked by the pilot that there is a significant number of MAXIMUS clients who would be eligible for participation. For example, in the second quarter of 2006, 62 percent of the cases identified by La Causa as potentially eligible for W-2 resided outside the UMOS service area. An apparently natural progression of the pilots would be to push their boundaries to encompass the whole of Milwaukee County.

Second, there is a significant amount of activity in Milwaukee that relates directly to the provision of services in an integrated fashion. Some of these activities have been mentioned previously, but a key set of activities appears to be those of the UW-Child Welfare Training Partnership undertaken under the auspices of the PEP. While current perceptions in Milwaukee appear to maintain a separation between the pilot efforts and the efforts of the UW-Child Welfare Training Partnership, it is apparent that State staff persons are working to leverage the two against each other in order to effect true system change. In addition, the recent establishment of the Milwaukee Family Service Integration Office, a collaborative effort of DHFS, DWD, and the Department of Corrections, presents another unique opportunity to promote systems integration.

Third, and significantly, the State's role in the delivery of child welfare services in Milwaukee as compared to the balance of the state provides a unique opportunity for pursuing integration of the child welfare and W-2 systems. Because the State directly administers the child welfare program, it is in a position to tell itself what to do in this area, making it much easier to find the right balance in order to encourage local innovation while, at the same time, ensuring such innovation comports with and supports the overall vision. To some extent, it has already used this leverage by including in both the child welfare and W-2 vendor contracts the requirement to integrate services for families involved in both systems.

VII. FINAL THOUGHTS

In considering the progress made to date under Wisconsin's systems integration initiative, one must remember that the pursuit of systems integration is not easy. It involves much more than picking from a list of tactics designed to address an identified operational problem and imposing the new solution through mandates from the central office. It involves developing a new way of thinking about human services and how to manage them; key is the creation of a new organizational culture and a new way of doing business. As such, the road to success is long and winding and one for which there are no roadmaps. Wisconsin, like every other state that has embarked on this journey, is learning how to do it as it goes along.

In the preface of this report, we observed that Wisconsin should be proud of the fact that it has stuck with this initiative begun as part of the NGA Policy Academy. The intent of the policy academy was never to launch a defined *project* with a defined beginning and end. The intent, rather, was to initiate a process whose end vision might take years to mature fully and whose completion unlikely would be experienced by those involved in its birth.

Given this, success or failure cannot be confined to where the pilots are at a point in time. The uncomfortable reality is that no one really knows what the end of the systems integration journey will look like, nor do they know exactly how to get there. This is a process in which we all are engaged in developing the road map.

We do know two things unequivocally. First, pursuing systems integration is an iterative process, as discussed earlier. A vision is developed; a plan is developed and implemented; progress is monitored; an effort is made to learn from experience; the vision is reassessed; the plan re-engineered. The process continues to evolve; some reversals are unavoidable.

Second, we know that, ultimately, systems integration is about developing a wholly new way of doing human services. It involves seeing service challenges holistically, with a prevention perspective. It means taking the long view of change and thinking through how reforms might continue long after the current actors pass from the scene. It means imbuing all involved with a vision and purpose that are more important than mandates and regulations.

We suspect that some of those involved in Wisconsin's process to date may feel that little progress has been made. In reality, from our broader perspective, there have been many successes. Several pilots are actively committed and appear poised to push their integration efforts further. Top management is aware of the challenges inherent in what has been undertaken and recognizes the investment needed to overcome these challenges. The Core Team is positioning itself to consider how to proceed with the initiative, taking into account feedback provided not only in this report but also by the project liaisons.

These positives infuse us with a sense of confidence that this assessment is timely and can be put to good use in developing steps to continue to promote the systems integration agenda. The key is to remember that as policy entrepreneurs push the envelope of change and innovation, the level of difficulty of the effort increases. Our analogy is of a diver, standing at the end of the diving platform 10 meters above the water. The choice he or she faces is clear: either a safer dive that is easier but which carries less reward, or the more difficult alternative that carries a higher reward but also a greater risk of failure. Working alone, without support and guidance, the waters below will look distant and dangerous. The State must find concrete ways of supporting those who are choosing the more difficult dive.

Appendix A

Families Forward-Wisconsin
Core Team Composition

Kirk Brown[1]	Policy Director, Office of the Governor
Roberta Gassman	Secretary, Department of Workforce Development
Helene Nelson	Secretary, Department of Health and Family Services
Linda Davis	Chair, Milwaukee Child Welfare Philanthropy Group
Elizabeth Burmaster[2]	State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Charity Eleson	Executive Director, Wisconsin Council on Children and Families
John Grace[3]	Executive Director, Wisconsin Association of Family and Children's Agencies
Dave Titus	Director, Dodge County Human Services
Paul Linzmeyer[4]	Head of Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin and President, Bay Towel, Inc.

[1] Kirk Brown was replaced by Katie Boyce, Legislative Director, Office of the Governor, subsequent to Wisconsin's submission of its application to NGA Center for Best Practices. Katie Boyce was replaced by Angela Russell subsequent to the second meeting of the NGA Center for Best Practices Policy Academy on Systems Innovations.

[2] Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster has been represented on an ongoing basis by Assistant State Superintendent Richard Grobschmidt.

[3] John Grace was replaced by Linda Hall in May 2006.

[4] Paul Linzmeyer was replaced by Pat Schramm, Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin, in August 2006.

Appendix B

**Families Forward-Wisconsin
Key Milestones**

Application to Participate in the NGA Policy Academy on Cross-Systems Innovation	November 2003
Selection by NGA for Participation in Policy Academy	December 2003
Core Team Orientation Facilitated by NGA Staff	February 2004
First NGA Policy Academy Meeting	April 2004
CFI Issued	July 2004
Second NGA Policy Academy Meeting	September 2004
Families Forward-Wisconsin Pilots Selected	October 2004
Submission of Final Report to NGA	January 2005
Families Forward-Wisconsin Kick-off Meeting	March 2005
Core Team Meeting	March 2005
Milwaukee Pilot Site Retreat	April 2005
Balance of State Pilot Site MOAs Signed	April 2005
Site Visits Completed by Liaisons	June – July 2005
Legislative and Local Leadership Visits Completed by DWD and DHFS Secretaries and other Core Team Members	July – October 2005
Core Team Meeting	September 2005
Pilot Site Retreat	November 2005
Core Team Meeting	December 2005
Site Visits Completed by Liaisons	March – May 2006
Joint Pilot Site/Core Team Meeting	May 2006

APPENDIX C

Establishing a Robust Network of Learning

We believe that there are two essential challenges faced by the State in advancing the systems integration agenda, and that both challenges can be addressed through what we term a "robust network of learning." The two essential challenges are: 1) developing a venue through which the pilots can routinely dialogue among themselves and have common access to outside resources in order to facilitate continuous learning, identify common problems, and resolve common problems; and 2) developing a framework for moving beyond the pilot concept to engage other communities in the cross-systems integration initiative. This second point is important not only because it appears some other localities are aggressively pursuing similar ends outside of the NGA Policy Academy-inspired process, but also because the State has always intended to use the original pilots as lighthouses through which to expand this initiative.

Before continuing, we should clarify our thinking on the concepts of *lighthouse* and *robust network of learning*. As suggested in the text, a lighthouse site should not be construed as representing an ideal. Even those sites considered ahead in developing integrated systems models are often the most aware of how little they have achieved and that much more remains to be done. The concept of lighthouse as used by us merely indicates that a site has something to share with others. Sometimes these lessons are based on success, sometimes they are based on failure. In either case, these lessons might be useful to others. On other occasions, lighthouses might merely serve as sounding boards for ideas and plans or as sympathetic, experienced networks through which to vent frustrations and share concerns. They can also serve to motivate others who are thinking about going this route. The reality is, however, that seldom will other sites simply import a model from another site. Each situation is unique, and the very process of shaping the model to local preferences and circumstances is vital to eventual buy-in and ownership.

The concept of a network of learning implies some ownership by the local sites over the acquisition and use of knowledge. What does that mean? Typically, we think of training or technical assistance as a top-down process. Information flows vertically from those in command or from outside experts to those at the operational level. In recent decades, management theories have stressed the need for greater participation in decision-making and control from other levels within the organization. One way of thinking about this is to stress horizontal communication patterns in which those most affected by the institutional dimensions of policy and programmatic choices more fully participate in the processes that shape their institutional milieux. We think of this as pushing for horizontal communication patterns where peers work together to address commonly identified problems.

The emergence of the Midwest Welfare Peer Assistance Network (WELPAN) a decade ago reflects this shift from vertical to horizontal patterns of planning and learning. Traditionally, State welfare officials were thought of as recipients of rules and insights delivered top-down from the federal government or from the experts in Washington, D.C. WELPAN was premised on the notion that senior welfare officials should take more control of the learning and planning agendas and work on ways to commonly address the challenges of welfare reform through a dialogue with their peers. WELPAN has proven popular with members for more than ten years.

That being said, we fully recognize that developing a peer-focused framework for advancing the systems integration agenda is far from easy. The State early on developed a listserv (electronic mail messages sent to a group of subscribers) to facilitate communication among the pilots and found it was under-used. The WELPAN listserv, on the other hand, is used and is found to be

helpful, particularly when assistance is needed to address a policy or program implementation challenge. Upon reflection, we believe that face-to-face relationships must first be established before a community of learning dependent on listservs can be developed. In the case of this initiative, the pilots must come to feel that they are in a common enterprise and that their peers, despite the differences in models being pursued and idiosyncratic challenges being addressed, have much in common around which to dialogue and learn. Certainly, the WELPAN states were very different in philosophy and direction when the network started, but they quickly found much common ground.

Therefore, we strongly encourage a renewed effort to create this robust network of learning because we believe that:

- some form of ongoing dialogue will serve to motivate sites to continue and not allow the planning and implementation processes to stagnate;

- local sites experience common issues and challenges, and that it is more comforting to address these as a group rather than in isolation;

- such a network could reduce the tendency for several sites to simultaneously reinvent the same wheel, thus introducing more economy of effort;

- such a network could be a useful forum through which to push ideas and solutions from the bottom-up, from the sites to the State; and

- the forum could be a venue through which to expand to other sites by slowly expanding the membership.

Admittedly, what worked for WELPAN might not work in this context. As with systems integration generally, creating a robust network of learning can be a process of trial and error. We envision, however, such a process starting with a regular set of meetings among pilot sites that are at least partly member-driven. These meetings would be nominally organized around the following purposes:

- To provide access to technical assistance and expertise that are provided in a way that can be digested and discussed.

- To provide systematic input and advice back to key State officials, including comments on where State policy or practice creates impediments to local innovation.

- To engage in common problem-solving through peer-to-peer dialogue as well as to identify issues that may be common to more than one site.

- To share emerging solutions and technical or procedural breakthroughs related to new ideas, protocols, and technologies.

Below, we list some topics that could easily serve to form the initial content of such meetings. The topics, which are drawn from our interactions with the pilots as well as the initiative's liaisons, include:

- Techniques for setting out a vision—how to determine what you want to do for whom.

- Techniques for assessing why the current system cannot accomplish those purposes and for identifying the kind of integration needed (relationship intensity).

- Techniques for doing a line-of-sight analysis at the local level.

- Techniques for assessing institutional compatibility at the local level.

- Techniques for selecting and measuring operational and process measures to monitor progress.

- Methods for setting up a management framework to pursue continuous improvement (reform as a process, not an event).

These sessions might also be opportunities to bring in outside experts and non-Wisconsin sites doing interesting things. Such opportunities would naturally flow from the boundary-spanning activities suggested elsewhere in this report. In addition, as previously implied above, this network might also be used as the venue for expanding beyond the current set of pilots.

We recognize that there are some very real and substantive barriers to making the development of a robust network of learning work, including the following: it takes time and money, it requires the State to relinquish some control at the same time that it continues to be accountable for progress, and it needs to operate in an environment in which some key service providers must compete for their contracts on an ongoing basis. These impediments and challenges are not trivial. Still, based on our WELPAN experience, we believe the development of a robust network of learning is worth pursuing. If done well, creating this robust network of learning would reflect at least a moderate shift in the way business is done, a theme we revisited many times in this report. The process of thinking through how to make this happen would be one step the State could make in that direction.

Appendix D

**Families Forward-Wisconsin
Pilot Site Summaries**

Bayfield County Kids 1st

Lead Agency: Bayfield County Department of Human Services

Service Delivery Area: Bayfield County's northern three school districts: Washburn, Bayfield, South Shore.

Key Partners: South Shore, Washburn, and Bayfield School Districts; Red Cliff Band of the Ojibwa; Bayfield County Department of Human Services; Bayfield County Coordinated Service Team.

Overview: Bayfield County Kids 1st focuses on implementing a strategy through which a lone Home/School Case Manager connects primary-school students and their families with services and ensures information is shared across systems.

Goals: To assist families in accessing needed services within their communities and helping them be more successful and to meet their goals.

Pilot Target Group: Students/families in 4-year-old kindergarten through 5th grade in three schools whose families are at risk of involvement, or currently involved, in the child welfare or W-2 systems.

Referral and Recruitment Strategies: Referrals are made by school personnel and with the permission of the family.

Primary Program Services: After an interview is completed with the family by the Home/School Case Manager, a "Summary of Strengths and Needs" is completed and the family chooses its goals. The Home/School Case Manager then seeks to identify and coordinate needed and/or existing services.

Service Levels (as of June 30, 2006): Seventeen families were referred to the Home/School Case Managers; 15 of these families enrolled.

Families Forward-Wisconsin
Pilot Site Summaries

Allied Drive Early Childhood Initiative (ECI)

Lead Agency: Dane County Department of Human Services

Service Delivery Area: Madison's Greater Allied Drive Neighborhood, bounded by Highway 12/18, Verona Road, South Seminole Highway, and Raymond Road.

Key Partners: Partners in funding include the Madison Community Foundation, Wisconsin Partnership Fund, and Dane County. Other partners include Exchange Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, Dane County Parent Council Early Head Start, Employment and Training Association, UW–Madison Department of Psychiatry, and Joining Forces for Families.

Overview: The ECI focuses on increasing the access of families with children aged birth to four in which parents may experience issues related to income, housing, job readiness, parenting skills, alcohol and other drug abuse, mental health, prenatal care, health and developmental screening and assessment, parenting education and support, immunizations and other preventative health care, basic needs assistance, and employment related assistance.

Goals: Participant families will be physically healthier as a result of addressing critical needs such as prenatal care and coordination, immunization, nutrition, and family planning; become stronger as a result of addressing child abuse and neglect, alcohol and other drug addictions, incidences or patterns of domestic violence, and lack of parenting knowledge where applicable; mentally healthier as a result of addressing critical issues including infant mental health, parent mental health, and infant developmental health; be able to grow from a solid economic foundation by receiving job training, placement assistance and job support, and through SSI advocacy when appropriate; gain stability through addressing housing quality issues, preventing eviction, and building a support network within the community.

Pilot Target Group: Target population for the purposes of the initiative is families with newborns and children under the age of one living in the greater Allied Drive Neighborhood.

Referral and Recruitment Strategies: Possible entry into services includes referrals from existing home-visiting programs, WIC/public health nurses, one-stop centers, local community agencies, an area resident, and landlords/rental management companies, as well as self-referrals.

Primary Program Services: Using an enhanced home-visiting model focused on child development, a Family Support Specialist delivers home-visitation services, a Resident Partner provides mentoring and other services, and an Employment and Training Specialist works to overcome barriers to employment to women with children under the age of one.

Service Levels (as of June 30, 2006): Seventy-five families, with 39 continuing enrollment.

Families Forward-Wisconsin
Pilot Site Summaries

Single Coordinated Service Plan Initiative

Lead Agency: Kenosha County Department of Human Services

Service Delivery Area: Kenosha County

Key Partners: Kenosha County Divisions of Children and Family Services and Workforce Development, W-2 service providers, Prevention Services Network (PSN).

Overview: The pilot focuses on implementing a Single Coordinated Service Plan on a limited basis in order to test its effectiveness in achieving service integration between its child protective services and economic support systems.

Goals: Increase economic security through the identification and resolution of hindrances to participation and compliance with program requirements for vocational assessment, work experience, job development, and placement; improve child safety and well-being through the investigation and processing of referrals for child abuse and neglect, securing safe placement for children at risk of harm, and monitoring family progress toward achieving unification; close the academic achievement gap by improving family functioning to resolve problems that impact school attendance, performance, and behavior for children; empower families by implementing the Single Coordinated Service Plan service integration strategy and case-planning teams to help clients meet multiple program requirements and achieve success; sustain improvement by providing staff training to increase system capacity and preparation for rollout of Single Coordinated Service Plan process throughout the Kenosha County Departments of Workforce Development and Child and Family Services and initiate a front-end screening process to expand the target population.

Pilot Target Group: Families currently involved in two of three major systems: child protective services, W-2, and the Prevention Services Network.

Referral and Recruitment Strategies: Potential participants are referred by staff to a Steering Committee with membership from the Kenosha County Divisions of Children and Family Services and Workforce Development, PSN, Families First, Goodwill Industries, and the Office of Planning and Evaluation. The Steering Committee makes the final determination as to acceptance into the pilot.

Primary Program Services: The pilot does not provide direct services. Rather, it is focused on the development and implementation of a single coordinated service plan developed through multidisciplinary Case Planning Team meetings facilitated by PSN Service Coordinators in which the family participates.

Service Levels (as of June 30, 2006): Twelve clients, two from one family.

Families Forward-Wisconsin
Pilot Site Summaries

La Crosse County Integrated Systems of Support

Lead Agency: La Crosse County Human Services

Service Delivery Area: La Crosse County

Key Partners: Stein Counseling and Consulting (under contract); Family Resources (under contract)

Overview: The La Crosse County pilot focuses on implementing three different strategies: 1) support and linkage to services for children with mental health diagnoses, developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, and other behavioral challenges facilitated by a Family Resource Liaison; 2) support and linkage to services for families screened out of child protective services facilitated by an Alternative Response Liaison; and 3) promotion of knowledge regarding integrative systems of support in the La Crosse community in order to facilitate implementation of such a system.

Goals: Utilize an Integrative System of Support for children and families experiencing challenges in La Crosse County in order to increase economic security, improve child safety and well-being, close the academic achievement gap, empower families, and achieve sustainable system improvement.

Pilot Target Group: Each strategy employed targets a different group. The Family Resource Liaison targets children with severe emotional disturbance or behavioral challenges and the Alternative Response Liaison targets children screened out of child protective services. The third strategy is more general, although efforts have been targeted to the Coulee Coalition.

Referral and Recruitment Strategies: Any family contacting La Crosse regarding the needs of a child with severe emotional disturbance or behavioral challenges comes in contact with the Family Resource Liaison. Materials have been developed to promote knowledge about this service. Families who are screened out of child protective services are referred to the Alternative Response Liaison at the discretion of the program supervisor.

Primary Program Services: The Family Resource Liaison makes three different types of referrals based on need: services designed to address immediate needs, services designed to address short-term needs, or formal services provided through established county programs. The Alternative Response Liaison makes referrals to a range of services such as therapy, counseling, personal care, respite care, transportation, housing, parent education, social/recreational programming.

Service Levels (as of June 30, 2006): Fifty-two out of 117 families referred to the Alternative Response Liaison accepted referrals; of these, three were to economic support programs and five were to the Job Center. One hundred and eleven out of 128 families with children with mental health diagnoses and other behavioral challenges were referred to the Family Resource Liaison; of these, 70 were immediately linked to community services, 28 were linked to short-term services, and 13 were linked to formal services.

Families Forward-Wisconsin
Pilot Site Summaries

CFCP /MAXIMUS, Inc., Integration Initiative

Lead Agency: Shared responsibility between Children's Family and Community Partnerships (CFCP) and MAXIMUS, Inc.

Service Delivery Area: The geographical area of overlap between the CFCP and MAXIMUS, Inc.'s service areas in Milwaukee County. Potential addition of the geographical area of overlap between CFCP and the YWCA.

Key Partners: CFCP; MAXIMUS, Inc.; Making Connections Milwaukee.

Overview: The pilot is focused on increasing collaboration between professionals and increasing the involvement of families involved in both the W-2 and child safety services systems so that families can be better equipped to navigate each system as well as the Family Team Meeting/Coordinated Service Team process.

Goals: Increased collaboration between professionals and involvement of families in both the W-2 and child safety services system as compared to previous experience.

Pilot Target Group: Families involved in the child welfare system that are already or could potentially be enrolled in W-2.

Referral and Recruitment Strategies: A determination is made as to whether families entering child safety services are already enrolled in W-2. If they are not already enrolled, Safety Services staff persons complete a short assessment to determine if they are potentially eligible for W-2.

Primary Program Services: A W-2 Liaison, located at CFCP, identifies those families entering the child welfare system that are already participating in W-2, supports CFCP efforts to identify those that may be eligible for W-2, and promotes the coordination of service provision between the two systems.

Service Levels (as of June 30, 2006): Eighty-nine joint cases were identified, 10 Financial Employment Planners (FEPs) attended at least one Coordinated Services Team meeting, 53 contacts were made between FEPs and Safety Services staff.

Families Forward-Wisconsin
Pilot Site Summaries

Phase I: UMOS/La Causa Collaboration
Phase II: Healthy Families

Lead Agency: Shared responsibility between La Causa and UMOS.

Service Delivery Area: In the area of overlap between the UMOS and La Causa service areas in Milwaukee County.

Key Partners: La Causa and UMOS.

Overview: The initial phase of the pilot focuses on ensuring families involved in La Causa's Safety Services Program were enrolled in W-2 if eligible and willing, and on coordinating services for those co-enrolled. The second phase of the pilot focuses on families enrolled in W-2 who might benefit from the provision of services on a voluntary basis similar to those available to families formally enrolled in La Causa's Safety Services program, called "Healthy Families." Once enrolled, Healthy Families services are coordinated with those provided through W-2.

Goals: To develop and utilize a holistic approach to assisting families to set obtainable goals and implement the necessary services to help them succeed. Specific goals include providing economic empowerment, enhancing knowledge and skills to support parenting, providing interventions to address barriers to performing parental responsibilities and duties, and connecting families with ongoing community resource and supports.

Pilot Target Group: In the initial phase of the pilot, families receiving services through La Causa's Safety Services Program who are also eligible for W-2. In the second phase of the pilot, families involved in W-2 that might benefit from child safety services.

Referral and Recruitment Strategies: All recipients of La Causa Safety Services are referred to a W-2 Financial Employment Planner upon program enrollment in order to determine potential eligibility for W-2. All W-2 Financial Employment Planners can make a referral to the Healthy Families program based on an assessment of potential need.

Primary Program Services: A W-2 Financial Employment Planner co-located at La Causa identifies those families entering the child safety services that are already participating in W-2, identifies those that are potentially eligible for W-2 services, and coordinates the provision of services for those that are or become co-enrolled. All W-2 participants identified as potentially being at risk of involvement in the child welfare system are referred to La Causa. If enrolled in services, the W-2 case is reassigned to a specific FEP dedicated to ensuring coordination of service provision for these cases.

Service Levels (as of June 30, 2006): Under the first phase of the pilot, 203 referrals were made from La Causa to UMOS for potential W-2 eligibility; a total of 35 existing or new enrollments were established in W-2, with one additional enrollment pending. Under the second phase of the pilot, 30 referrals were made from UMOS to La Causa for potential receipt of services; 23 enrolled in the program through which risk factors were assessed and services provided; seven cases were closed following risk-factor mitigation.