

The Art & Science of 21st Century Strategic Planning Webinar Transcript January 31, 2011

Presenters:

- Gary De Carolis, Senior Consultant, National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care
- Gary Ander Director, System of Care, Alamance County Department of Social Services, NC
- Susan Franklin, Program Manager, Department of Human Services, Jefferson County, CO

Gary De Carolis: Good afternoon everyone and good morning to those on the west coast. This is the Art and Science of 21st Century Strategic Planning. My name is Gary De Carolis, senior consultant for the National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care (SOC). The Center is a part of a grant program funded by the Children's Bureau, called the Improving Child Welfare Outcomes through Systems of Care. On the phone with me are two project directors from that grant program who were very much involved in successfully doing strategic planning. We have Susan Franklin from Jefferson County Child Welfare Agency in Colorado, and Gary Ander, System of Care project director in Alamance County, North Carolina. Thank you both Susan and Gary for joining us on the call today.

Susan Franklin: Absolutely.

Gary De Carolis: I'm going to take you through the first set of slides here, and then we are going to turn it over to both Susan and Gary to give you some ground level, what it takes to be successful at a strategic planning process and you will see a little bit later we've set this up so that there are five times during the call where you can type in some questions that you may have and Gary, Susan or I will field them for you. So let's go to the second slide, learning objectives. Hopefully if we do what we intend to do here, we can give you a good sense of what it takes to be, to understand what strategic planning is all about and what it brings to your efforts. Whether you are in a SOC, or whether you are in an organization or community that wants to do some strategic planning. We will identify some key activities that you want to involve yourself with in a successful strategic planning process. Sprinkled throughout this presentation you'll see some slides that are quotes from people who have been involved in strategic planning. We are going to share with you some of their wisdom along with Gary and Susan, and by the way both of them are featured throughout this presentation as well with some of their own quotes and then also identify your own strengths and challenges within your own strategic planning process and hopefully where there are challenges, you can ask questions. The three of us will try to give you some thoughts on how best to get through those challenges.

Some questions that we hope will be answered are: How are we addressing strategic planning if you have a child welfare lead SOC?; Why is strategic planning important, not only in a SOC but any kind of organized activity that you might be involved with?; What are some of the barriers

that can hold you back from being successful in strategic planning? And also, what are the solutions that will help you have a successful strategic planning process?

As I said earlier, this strategic planning work was done in the context of a Children's Bureau grant program which was to implement a SOC approach with Child Welfare being the lead agency, some of the principles that were foundational to this program were that the child, youth and families were involved and in many cases were partners with the interagency group of folks that were leading in building a SOC. That there was cultural and linguistic competence throughout the activities of the effort, that children, youth and families are best served in the context of their home and community, that...where this planning evolved to actually serving children and families that it was an individualized process and focusing on a child and family's strengths versus what is wrong with the child and family. And that incumbent in a comprehensive SOC is this whole idea that all the child serving agencies need to work together and within the child welfare agency itself, there needs to be a lot of collaboration on behalf of the children and families that were the target population (children and families in the child welfare system). And the last principle is accountability, and that means that there were identified outcomes and benchmarks that were pretty foundational to the strategic planning effort, and I should say that the Children's Bureau required these grantees to have a strategic plan at the end of the first year that served as their first year report of activities for that particular grant program, and then was updated annually throughout the life of the grant. On the last slide of this webinar is a "for more information" and there is a couple links. One of them is a link to documents called "closer looks" and what we did there was take each of these system of care principles and built a nice 6-8 page profile of that principle with a lot of evaluation data that we gathered over the life of the grant. A lot of the experiences of the grantee and how they actually actualized each of these principles and then just some external research around these principles and we fused that all together for a nice, concise document. They are called A Closer Look, and there is one for each of those principles, and I recommend if you want to know more about each of these principles, those are great source documents to take a look at and use in any way you see fit.

The next slide is called SOC infrastructure components, and you'll see nine different components outlined here. We are going to be focused on the first one. In this grant program we spent a lot of time defining what is the infrastructure, because that was really the focus of this grant program building the infrastructure to a SOC. Which sets the stage for serving children and families in a much more dynamic way. Again, with each of these infrastructure components there are two documents but there is one monograph that really looked at each of these in a very comprehensive way, and that is again referenced in the back slide. But then there were nine toolkits built for each, infrastructure component, and the outline that we are going to take you through in the next hour and half will give you a sense of what you can expect in those toolkits. They are very comprehensive toolkits with a ton of resources that the grantees developed during the life of their five year grant and very hands on.

So the format for the webinar is laid out here on this next slide. There will be a definition of strategic planning, we will look at key partners that could be involved in your strategic planning process and then we are going to take you through four different stages of strategic planning, from the early pre-planning stage right through to continuous quality improvement stage where you are actually evaluating some of the activities that you've been involved with. You will see little stars on the right here, at those stars, we are going to pause at the end of each of these sections and give you an opportunity to type in questions for the panelists and then we will address those questions for you before we move on to the next section. After we finish with continuous quality improvement, there is a little section on sustainably tips and Gary and Susan

will share with you some things they did to sustain their strategic planning efforts after the grant ended, and then some lessons learned that they both will again share with you some of their own wisdom, and that last slide they mentioned earlier, for more information you can go to these sources on the Information Gateway. So again, as we are starting to go through this, if you have questions, type away, there is a little section on the side of your screen for questions, and I can see them if you type one in, I can just throw that question to the panel. We anticipate this running no later than 3:30, and so we have ample time to really stretch out and give you all the information you want to really be successful at strategic planning.

So here is the definition of strategic planning. It is a very dynamic process, as it says there, and you want to include as many stakeholder groups as possible. In fact, the more robust the involvement of people, the better off you are going to be in terms of the rich amount of information you are going to be able to glean from them so that whatever you end up planning, it's likely to be right on target. The worst kind of strategic planning is someone sitting in a room, writing that plan, and no engagement with any of the stakeholders. You can almost guarantee that it may look terrific, and it's probably going to sit on someone's shelf and not be actually utilized. The more people you involve, the more people who feel like they have an investment in the plan, and will do everything they can to actually implement that plan. Very key part. Which means, and we will talk a little later about the gathering of information, but some people may like the phone call interview, some the personal interview, some the focus group, some the town hall meeting, there are all kinds of ways to gather people's input. And then you will have a solid body of information to begin your planning process from. So let's go on to...key partners. And you will notice that the last one here I have other members, with a question mark because there is no finite list, but you clearly want advisory board members, in a SOC, that are going to be cross agency people from child welfare, mental health, education, juvenile justice, substance abuse, you want a very broad interagency group. You also want community stakeholder groups such as: the faith community, business community, providers of service, families of course should heavily be involved. Youth representation is key. You want evaluation team members that have an eye to be looking for 'how can they build some outcomes based on what they are hearing for you.' Also evaluation team members are very good at helping you design logic models for your system of care efforts. Service delivery staff and administrative support are also important advisory group members. Now let me turn it over to Gary and Susan who have other ideas about who should be involved, and how did you go about building the team involved in your strategic planning process.

Gary Ander: Yeah Gary, this is Gary Ander, and I'd like to begin this by talking about each community, you know, you already have lots of members who are at different tables. And some of those are mandated members, in North Carolina the legislators have mandated that there be five child serving committees that are locally based in every community and they have responsibilities for mental health issues, for education issues, for public health issues, for child protection issues, so when we started this process we looked at what was already happening, and I think Susan would probably support that as well. I would recommend that you not start from scratch but that you utilize what has already been built in your community and a lot has been built in your community and sometimes you have to go out and find them because some of them are real active and some of them are not real active. So I would start there, looking at juvenile justice areas and mental health areas, etc. I would also look from here to looking at, you know, what are the other committee structures that are actually doing work. And the final thing relative to membership is you have to do membership issues on this, your partners are at multiple levels so it is not only worker bees which we generally are, the folks who are actually getting things done, but you also are looking at administrative levels. In our community and this may be like in your community because I know that in most communities in North Carolina, the

administrators of our public, child serving systems had no forum to ever talk to each other. They are actually legislatively mandated to be on committees but the legislation also said you could send your designees, which they always did. So we created a forum to actually have these leaders talk to each other in a monthly meeting. And that's been really helpful, because when you want things to happen you also want administrative support for that so that the worker bees aren't just talking to each other and saying, "You know, but I can't make this happen." So that's where I would start with this, looking at who is already at the table that you want to bring together to really create a SOC and then develop cross system strategic planning out of that.

Susan Franklin: And I agree with you Gary and it's really important I think to take a look at who already are the players. In addition though, in Colorado we did take a look at some non-traditional partners and they ended up being really, really good partners to have around the table because they not only were questioning, "well why do you do this, this way, or that way," but it kind of challenged us to think about some of our processes, so some of the people that we also invited to be around the table was like our local housing authority, and the reason we did that is because so many times we were unable to return children home because of unstable housing, so parents could have done everything they needed to do in a treatment plan, but we couldn't send the kids home because of stable housing, so we developed a really good partnership with them and they ended up opening up a lot of slots just for our families. So that ended up being a really good resource to have around the table. Another resource was, you know often times we involve juvenile probation, but a lot of our parents are also on probation. So we also reached out to adult probation to also be around the table so there was more communication about what parents were doing or not doing. And then of course the jails. I don't know about other communities but it does seem like we have folks coming in and out of the jails an awful lot and we wouldn't necessarily know that. The jails didn't know that maybe they had a child welfare open case and we didn't know when parents were in the jails, so we started that communication to. And also the fourth one is the faith based community. They have really stepped up. It's been a slow process, but it seems like about every other week now I get a call from a member of the faith community wanting to help our families, whether that's with car repairs or home repairs, that kind of thing. So I encourage you to think outside the box too about who else could help you in terms of you strategic planning. Who do you need at the table?

Gary Ander: And I guess I would add to that too, and I think Gary mentioned this, is getting family members to the table from the get go is really important and getting family members to the table, you have to figure out, how do you get them there? How can you compensate their time for being in meetings? You know, everybody else is compensated for their times, how can you compensate them to be in meetings? And then the things that you have to think about all the time with family members are child care and how can you support child care and can you support transportation as well.

Gary De Carolis: What strategies did you use to get the families to the table?

Susan Franklin: One of the things we did is we really reached out to folks who had completed their treatment plans successfully. And that word successful was something that we really struggled with, because if we had terminated parental rights, was that successful? And we ended up having folks that had completed their treatment plans successfully and got their children back as well as folks who had had their parental rights terminated. So we did a lot of work with them about what it is to sit around these committees of professional people and give your input. And it can be pretty intimidating. So we also required at least two family members be at all meetings. And we did compensate them. That was an interesting process because initially we were giving them cash, and at one point they were saying you are messing up my food

stamps, you are messing up my TANF, don't give me cash. So we ended up giving them gift cards. But they would record the amount of time, they had time sheets just like employees do, and they would record their time. And the other piece about having family members around the table is you not only need to prepare them but you need to prepare the professionals. And we took two or three meetings just talking about this thing that was going to happen, which was that we were going to have families attending these meetings. And I'll never forget one of our county attorneys looking at me and saying, "Are you telling me that when I was in court that potentially one of these family members that I was on the opposite side of the table and saying all these things about is going to walk into this room?" And I said yes. I mean that could happen. So there was a lot of fear from professionals about having family members around the table. That ended up, you know, resolving itself over time, but initially it was something that we had to really work through.

Gary De Carolis: How did it resolve itself Susan?

Susan Franklin: You know, I think the family members came, they were appropriate, they gave really good information. I think that the professionals started to see, "wow, they really do have something to say and they can be helpful." We brainstormed a lot of things they could help us with, whether it was to review forms that we were going to be sending out to family members to say, "does this make sense or is this mumbo jumbo professional language?" and they would tweak our forms. So the professionals began to see that families do have things to say and a lot of them deep down inside, as professionals we know are true, but I think it takes family members to really talk about the experience and what it is like to go through the Child Welfare system in order for us to really hear it.

Gary De Carolis: Sounds like they added quite a nice value to the work.

Susan Franklin: They did.

Gary De Carolis: Gary, do you have anything you want to share around that? Getting families involved?

Gary Ander: I think that we did similar things to what Susan was talking about and I think after a period of time the professionals do find that there is value added in having families at the table. I think the point that she made about preparing the so-called professionals is as important if maybe not more important than preparing families to be at those meetings together.

Gary De Carolis: Before we move onto the next slide Gary I've got the Alamance Child Serving Committee Structure up. Is there anything more you want to say about that or are we ready to move on?

Gary Ander: I just want to mention that this is sort of how we reorganized our community around child serving issues, and this was part of a larger strategic plan to get this level of detail. And I'll come back to this later as we talk about operationalizing objectives within the strategic plan because all that work is done by subcommittees.

Susan Franklin: And Gary before you move on, I just wanted to say in terms of seeking out tested tools, methodologies and experts, there are a lot of tools out there that we used. We did a number of surveys and we borrowed those tools from California but there was an excellent tool on cultural competence that we gave to not only our social workers but also our family members and there was another tool that we used extensively which was a family involvement

tool and we also gave those to both professionals and families. We used those, we got a baseline and then we did those surveys twice after that. And that provided a lot of good information for us to see in terms of are we doing what we say we need to do in terms of the SOC principles.

[25:55] **Gary De Carolis:** Susan actually helped bridge to the first slide here on pre-planning and these are some key activities. Now in the early, early phases of strategic planning, identifying key partners, that need to be at the table or involved in some way, embracing a planning to implement strategy, and what I meant by that is many times when you go ask people to get involved in a strategic planning process, they kind of look at you and say, “well what’s going to happen here?” And you know, talking about your planning to do something, not just planning for planning’s sake I think is a key piece here, it’s not just a planning exercise, but it’s actually to help move our system or organization forward to a more desired state. And then as Susan was saying, you know you want to seek out some real tested tools, some methodologies, if there are people out there who are good at strategic planning, it’s good to engage them and seek their help and support as you move forward. I mentioned earlier the whole focus groups or interview surveys, public forums, town hall meetings as a way to gather information, so...question for you two, Gary and Susan, how did you two enlist support from your partners to engage in this strategic planning process early on? What did you say or what did you do that they said, “We are ready to sign on. Let’s go for it.”

Gary Ander: In North Carolina we looked at general outcomes that we wanted for children in child welfare and more generally in our community, and so the strategic planning process was to figure out how we wanted to move those outcomes that you could agree with. So how do we reduce time in foster care for children? How do we reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect? How do we increase our graduation rate in high school? How do we decrease our juvenile crime rate? And so looking then at strategic planning across our multiple systems was a way to get folks to buy in. They knew that what they were doing in their solo operations weren’t making that happen.

Susan Franklin: The other thing that we needed to do is we really needed to meet with each of our partners individually and invite them. I mean really get them to see how it would be in their best interest to be around the table for all of the others. And some of our partners we had to meet with more than once, even more than twice sometimes because they didn’t quite understand what it was we wanted them to do. So really took some one-on-one discussions before we all met together.

Gary De Carolis: Very important. So building a relationship, developing some trust in you and what you were planning on doing became critical.

Susan Franklin: And I have to say providing some food.

Gary Ander: Food for thought.

Gary De Carolis: Yes, food for thought. I also want the audience to realize that both of you have been in the child welfare field for a number of years so you had some legitimacy as a leader in your community built up over time, is that correct?

Gary Ander: We talked about that here as, you know, personal political capital.

Susan Franklin: Very true.

Gary Ander: In part people I think initially came to the table because they trusted you and then secondly because they trusted what you were asking them to do. But the initial piece on any of this, and I think Susan put this well, is you have to establish relationships, and you have to do that over and over again.

Susan Franklin: And I think people were curious and they didn't want to be left out. So I think they came the first few times because they really didn't know what this was all about, they wanted to chat with the partners they knew and say what is going on here, but I think after a period of time, they realized that it was in the best interests of the kids and the families.

Gary De Carolis: So we are on the wisdom shared, pre-planning slide here. And these are two quotes, both from Kansas. One from the project director from Kansas, and [one] from a family member. The family member is saying "Engage and involve families from the start by meeting them where they are." And then the director really is saying that everything that we planned needed to have a purpose behind it, that you just didn't do something for doing something but make sure that it literally was strategic. They involved their evaluation team a lot and had much success with developing logic models for every aspect of their plan, for example they had a communications logic model. They had one overriding logic model that encompassed all the different aspects of their SOC work. And you've heard Gary and Susan also share some early wisdom of what they did, building relationships was key, having legitimacy in the work that you were doing also was another key piece here.

So before we go further though, this is the first point...let's stop for a second, if you have any questions out there, there is some 70 of you on the phone right now, type in a question or two and let's see if we can't field that question for you on this early, early part of strategic planning. There is a little section down below that says 'type message here'. And if anyone would like to do that, there is bonus points involved in the first question by the way.

While folks are doing that, I hear typewriters clicking away over there, did you both involve your evaluation team in your strategic planning process?

Gary Ander: We certainly did that. The evaluation folks brought a lot of information from surveys and focus groups that they did in Alamance County, North Carolina that we utilized in the strategic planning process. It certainly brought to light what issues we needed to be looking at.

Susan Franklin: And Gary I think this was an area for Colorado on lessons learned. We initially hooked up with a university that was really not in our neighborhood. They didn't understand SOC very well. Our first year of evaluation ended up being very, very difficult. It was a real struggle. And we ended up not using them the second year, so we were kind of behind, and we needed to catch up. And we ended up then working with the University of Denver, which has an excellent social work program and really were able then to take off with the evaluation piece. But I also have to say not only with evaluation but it's critical to have your IT people around the table too, because with evaluation you need an awful lot of IT expertise and folks talk a different language and when you talk about relationship building there is a lot that needs to happen there too. And so it's important to make sure that those folks are around the table, learning each other's language and how we do things.

Gary De Carolis: That's a great point. I think your lesson learned about evaluation team that's more local versus than farther away is one that I've heard others say too, that the more they can

be involved with the day to day activities of the SOC work, the better value they are to you, and in fact to them. The farther away they are the more remote they become to really understanding what's going on, so good point.

Gary Ander: I would certainly echo that. Even though they may be knowledgeable of the general construct and information, they may not be real knowledgeable about what is going on in your specific community.

Gary De Carolis: So let's move now to the planning stage. So we have gone from pre-planning to planning. And again, what you see here is a small snippet of the toolkit that goes along with this strategic planning work that you can find in the Information Gateway. The one I focused on here is identifying appropriate community locations for strategic planning meetings. So you know, where and when and how your meetings will be held, making sure that there is considerations for child care, travel expenses, family members some form of honorarium, we've talked about this a little bit for family members to attend and then using, on the next slide, using a number of mechanisms to gather information and then developing consensus among stakeholders wherever possible.

Gary Ander: Certainly Gary in Alamance County, we would identify a committee to work on our strategic planning, to do the set up for it, so they were to arrange for the meeting, where it was, when it was. Invitations, getting that list of invitees together, developing an invitation, getting the food together. There was a time when we actually had some money so we did some of these strategic planning sessions that were two, two and half days, and they were out of town, and that was a great way to get people to the table here in North Carolina where we have lovely beaches, but that is certainly not always the case, and certainly not in these economic times so we had to change that, but we've generally had a planning committee of each of our strategic planning sessions here.

Gary De Carolis: So it sounds like you had retreats Gary, annually. And I know from being involved with you a bit, throughout the year, after those retreat ended, did you have check in points during the year where you looked at how you are doing with the plan that you developed at the retreat?

Gary Ander: Well we had a process in which we had community meetings during this process which we combined some of our major child serving committee meetings, and the major committees who were responsible for areas of strategic planning like training, or like new service developments which came out of our care review committee, or our child and family team committee would make monthly reports on the work that they were doing. Then that work got updated at our annual SOC strategic planning meetings. They would review the last year and update and begin a process about what their objectives were for the new year and how they would operationalize that so there was a process in place for them to report primarily to worker bees, and then every other month report to our Children's Executive Oversight Committee so all the administrators.

Gary De Carolis: How about you Susan?

[39:52] **Susan Franklin:** I think there were like 11 of them, although some of them had subcategories, and we met every month and then once a year we'd have like a half day, I wish we had two days at the beach but, and then we would report out and show charts and graphs and lines and all those kinds of things in terms of family to family outcomes, and I think that really helped people see if we were on target or not.

Gary De Carolis: This next slide is an... Gary I think this might be an invitation to come to a strategic planning meeting.

Gary Ander: Yeah I thought it would be fun to show this slide. So this was a couple years ago, we just finished, actually this is September of 2010, our sixth annual strategic planning retreat in Alamance County, and again, strategic planning was happening in the state of North Carolina locally in Alamance County but also on a state level with our Child Welfare, and at a state level as well with our state collaboratives for children, youth and families, so there is strategic planning going on in multiple levels in North Carolina around SOC development. This is an example of an invitation that we had. This was a day and half local strategic planning event. And you'll note that one of our evaluators was one of the guest speakers, and then our superintendent of schools was the other guest speaker to kind of kick off the strategic planning session.

Gary De Carolis: And that is you on the left I assume.

Gary Ander: That's right, and I've just had my last birthday, I was 16.

Gary De Carolis: That is a great example, and Liz Snyder, your evaluator, is just super. Tremendous work. So here is the wisdom shared for this planning. And this actually is a quote from Gary Ander. Gary I don't know if you want to say anything more about this, you've talked about it already. That last part though, people need to see a product to make the strategic planning real, it needs to show results of the efforts short and long term.

Gary Ander: I think that this is really important, you know. We talked about the importance of relationships. Clearly, you can get people to the table for a period of time based on your past relationship with them and based on your motivation towards these shared outcomes that we'd like to see in our community but if you aren't getting results they aren't going to stay at the table and so there has to be results made, short term results to get people to stay at the table long term. And so as you do strategic planning, you need to keep track of what your outcomes are. You need to really pay attention to the data that comes in. Susan talked about the outcomes that they were looking at with Casey and whatever your outcomes are for your community it's important to be able to somehow track those. I was never a huge fan of data because I'm not that detail oriented but you know, data is your best friend in getting people to stay at the table. As you are showing what you are able to accomplish you are going to get more and more support at multiple levels.

Gary De Carolis: Well said.

Susan Franklin: One of the things we did in Jefferson County, Colorado was we did have them sign an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Just to put it in writing about what was our mission, what was our purpose, who are the members that are going to be around the table, who were voting members and who were non-voting members, officers meetings, we put in subcommittees, we talked about subcommittees in our MOU, conflicts of interest. And we had each of our partners sign it. That way there was some commitment on their part. And also what we had in our MOU was that each partner had to write up where all their funding came from. How much funding there was, what was the purpose of the funding? Our MOU ended up being very, very long, but we just wanted everything to be very transparent. We wanted everybody to know what was going on. What did Child Welfare have, what did probation have, what about the

schools? So it was a good way for people to really put down in black and white what they had to offer.

Gary De Carolis: Susan you talk about “we” a lot, not “I.” I am assuming that’s your interagency partners. How did you get to that point where it became a “we” and that people were willing to be forthcoming with budgets and how much funds they have for whatever part of the system they are responsible for. That can be a major fear for interagency partners is to show your cards, so to speak.

Susan Franklin: It was. That took about a year. People were real hesitant to do it. And Child Welfare had to be the example, we did it first, we brought it to the group, we kind of showed them what an example would be, what we were looking for, but that was a very interesting process and it was kind of pulling teeth a little bit to get people to really show their cards and to say this is what we have to offer and this is how we can collaborate with you. But it took a while, definitely.

Gary De Carolis: Great. We are at the second point now, we are willing to pause a bit. If you have any questions you want the panel to answer, please type them in there. We are just at the end of the planning stage, the next stage we are going to talk about is implementing your strategic plan. Any questions from folks? Maybe someone can type in a question just to see if it’s working. That’s an important consideration here, that you actually can type one in. I don’t see any questions popping up. So we will go to the next phase. So now we are on the implementation phase of strategic planning. Gary earlier on showed you his layout of committees and workgroups and executive committees all working together and an example of some of the committees that could be actualized within a strategic planning process, everything from interagency collaboration to policy development, system management, data management, marketing, you want families and community representation on all of this work obviously, anything Gary and Susan you’d like to add on this side of the strategic planning process?

Gary Ander: Well this is certainly where whatever you determine in strategic planning that needs to be implemented, this is where it is operationalized, within these committees. Clearly then you have to have these committees have to have been a part of the strategic planning process so that they are committed and have buy in to accomplish the work. Lots of our work here in Alamance has been with these sort of mid management folks working on these implementation strategies to make these things happen. What is important here, as noted, there needs to be cross agency representation on each of the committees so that as they are laying out new policies, new protocols, new procedures, that there is buy in from each of the child serving organizations. And they are really the meat of the program development here, so we have a training committee here locally that is very active. We have a care review committee that actually extends into some program development because it actually establishes gaps. We have a protocol committee that is made up of supervisors that actually establishes policies. So we’ve put together a number of committees and sometimes we have to establish ad hoc sub committees to actually look at some particular issue that you know, are only in place until that issue is taken care of.

Susan Franklin: I have to say that child welfare really had to take the lead on a lot of these because, although it was interagency and we had some great partners around the table, I think because it was a system of care for child welfare, folks kind of expected us to take the lead, so we had to. But as time went on and there was some turn over, you really need to look for what other champions are out there. So that if somebody does leave or even if they miss a meeting, who can take that role. And sometimes that is easier to find than other times. Sometimes it just

comes naturally that somebody pops up and really is able to carry on those roles and then other times it's a struggle and it takes a lot of patience to kind of let the group really struggle with who is going to take the lead. A lot of times then they would look at like me, and I'd be like no. I cannot take on all of this, so it has to be somebody else. But sometimes that takes just time of being quiet and letting the process work itself through.

Gary De Carolis: This is useful and this quote here, in the implementation phase, some of your wisdom, your strategic planning was successful because everyone saw themselves in it. And involvement helped open up discussion about the state of affairs in child welfare and this made it easier to make a culture shift within child welfare. You want to talk a little more about that?

Susan Franklin: I think too that we were very fortunate in that we did have legislation that passed called House Bill 1451 and it did help us kind of outline who should be around the table, and it was interesting because in the initial legislation, and to be honest with you I'm not in child welfare anymore so I haven't followed this real closely, but initially we didn't have parent involvement in the legislation, and that was really unfortunate, and that was something that we continued as a group to say we have to have. Although it wasn't something required, we did put that in and made it a requirement of our group.

Gary De Carolis: And the next quote here is, Gary this is you.

Gary Ander: That's my quote!

Gary De Carolis: Yes, it is.

Gary Ander: Well, it's an interesting process. It's kind of circular, so what you do builds on itself. So your strategic planning process continues to grow your infrastructure for you SOC. We certainly have found that. I have moved onto another SOC grant in which we are building supports for young children 0-5, but our older system of care is still going and now we are in the process of combining both. The work that we've done over the last six or seven years now continues to build on what we initially started, so you know I think that this process as you work it and get buy in, the sustainability comes from continuing to have people buy in to what you are doing, and as you are doing that you develop a bigger and bigger contingency group that supports you SOC initiative. So strategic planning process in and of itself is a vehicle that helps to make that happen.

Gary De Carolis: Success builds on success it sounds like too.

Gary Ander: Right. You know, and your long-term sustainability has to do with people having buy in but then going ahead and putting policy procedures into place as well as working on changing agency culture. So you can have the policies and procedures in place, but if the people still don't buy it in their hearts that this is important, it's not going to have long term effects unless it's really in the culture and people buy into that.

Gary De Carolis: The other thing that I'm hearing both of you say, overall is that what strategic planning does is it puts focus and direction to your work. And the direction is built by everyone involved in it from all the different sectors that are stakeholders, and leading that strategic planning process, you move forward where people want you to go basically, there is no rocket science here, but it avoids you veering off to the left or the right you know because of the events of the day. It's bigger than that. It's really setting some benchmarks and some outcomes that will pull you through when things can get pretty chaotic in a day to day or week to week basis.

Gary Ander: Yeah so like if you have a change of players or if you seem to get lost in the bureaucratic process that seems to happen periodically you can come back to your strategic plan and say okay, where are we at with this. What have we accomplished, what are our next steps, and that is really important to be able to review that periodically. And to celebrate your successes, because sometimes we lose that in the process. And sometimes you don't recognize that until you go back to your strategic plan and say, "oh yeah, we've accomplished that, we've done a great job on that."

Susan Franklin: And you know, in Colorado it seemed like our SOC work was being pushed by middle management. For the first couple years it was and then I think because we did celebrate and we did get the information out about what we were doing, and we were involving so many community members and they were really liking what we were doing, they were seeing results, they were buying into it; our executive management teams for all the different partners are now meeting and that's something that had not happened before. So it was really something that had to come from middle management to show the success of it and now the executive team folks have really bought into it.

Gary Ander: That's exactly what happened in North Carolina Susan. It was middle management push and now we have the administrative folks from the child serving agencies buying in, which is apparent given the fact that whenever you apply for new money they are looking for a community, collaborative SOC approach to even apply for new initiative work.

[59:06] **Gary De Carolis:** You just raised a very important point here Gary, that many of the federal initiatives that come out are looking for that strategic planning process, the engagement of all the stakeholders, interagency, families, community, faith community and others. Without that you are at a disadvantage when you are going into those kinds of competitions for federal dollars.

Gary Ander: That's exactly right. You know, we have written grants here for a half a dozen major initiatives that have come out of this process. And we've written for more than that but we've been funded for a least a half a dozen. And that is major, including our SAMHSA SOC grant which came out of this process because of our community responding so positively to our strategic planning around our initial SOC initiative.

Gary De Carolis: That's an important point for all of you that are listening, is that you might not have a grant today, but if you can engage in some level of a strategic planning process you are setting the stage for yourself to get funded for tomorrow. And it might not be the biggest, most robust process because you don't have a federal grant behind you, but if you can do some things, of pulling your community stakeholders together, beginning to forge a vision of where you want to go, you are at a big advantage when you are competing for federal dollars or even private foundation dollars.

Susan Franklin: And you really need to meld your strategic plan with other strategic plans out there. I have to tell you, any more and I'm getting like PTSD whenever I hear the word strategic plan, it's become one of those buzz words you hear so much, but they are critically important. If you can use the work that you are doing to meld with education or probation or other systems, it creates more momentum, more enthusiasm for the project and for any funding that you are going to go for.

Gary De Carolis: Let's move onto the fourth stage here, and that is continuous quality improvement. Again, in all the toolkits, there is this section you will see so that whatever is being implemented there is a part of that, work that will tell us how well did we are doing with what we said we were going to do. In terms of strategic planning it's really engaging the evaluation team to be a part of all that you are doing. So some of the points here are ensuring some of the foundational information for the strategic plan is available to all participants. Nothing you want to hold onto, you want to get that information out. Tracking the outcomes as both Gary and Susan talked about, identifying them in your strategic plan and why are you able to accomplish some outcomes and what's holding you back on other outcomes and making some mid-course changes so you can get to where you want to be. Reporting out to all your advisory groups on the progress made is very critical for those who are more at the center of the strategic planning process. Having both an internal and external communication plan, again to disseminate information out there about what's happening and using the strategic plan to inform program development activities of all your different stakeholder groups. When you go out for various grants it might be because you learned in a needs assessment that you really don't have enough of a particular service.

Gary Ander: Yeah Gary I think that that's a really important piece, as you know, the strategic planning process has both needs assessments and then does kind of continuous evaluation on where you are at in the community and what your gaps are in the community, what your needs are in the community, which allows you to then use that information to apply for additional money or additional initiatives that will support. So in Alamance we have done that with family court, we've done a family drug court, we've done a strengthening families grant. We've developed a family justice center; we have an office for violence against women's grant, multiple grants that have kind of come out of this that all support our SOC here in Alamance.

Susan Franklin: We have also encouraged our partners and anybody to use our materials. So if we put out a newsletter and we have all this information out there, outcomes and that kind of thing, we really encourage them to take that information and put it in their newsletters. And it is really kind of funny when you happen upon something, you are like, oh wait that's mine, but then you realize, yeah it's getting it out to more and more people. So that's a way to celebrate it and get it out there to a wider community.

Gary De Carolis: On this next slide there is another key point here is that using the information you develop from stakeholders to shape your training activities for the upcoming year, again it's a way to feed relevant, fresh information for those to build their plan from.

Susan Franklin: I have to say that one of the things that carried along our strategic plan and SOC work most was our training. We had an awesome trainer. She was very creative, very hands on. We did brown bag lunch discussions on cultural issues, we used the Wizard of Oz to explain our SOC principles, we did scavenger hunts, community resource fair, game shows, all kinds of things. And we invited the community in, everybody, anybody. And I think that really was a way of saying we want to be open, we want to listen to your ideas, we want you to be involved, and people really got to understand what SOC was all about by coming to those.

Gary De Carolis: Okay Susan you have to explain to the group how you got the Wizard of Oz to come to Jefferson County and what did he or she do?

Susan Franklin: You know what we did, we got the DVD and we picked out certain parts of it that related to the SOC principles and we showed the audience certain clips. And we said, what SOC principle do you think this relates to. And it was a real interactive, fun workshop. It was at a

conference and it was an hour and a half workshop and it really turned out being quite interesting and they got it, versus us standing up there and saying, “these are the SOC principles and blah, blah, blah” we decided to do it in a fun, more creative, way.

Gary De Carolis: Good for you. Well again, if anyone has any questions they want answered please type them in and we will be glad to answer those for you. We are going to move to the next stage, which are some sustainability tips, some tips that we’ve gleaned from various grantees on how they kept all this going.

The first one, Susan might be able to talk about this because of the legislation passed in Colorado, embedding strategic planning process in legislation, for example the legislation might require you to have a strategic plan on your SOC on an annual basis that has to go to the Governor or county commissioners, something like that.

Susan Franklin: And that was true of our legislation. They wanted a report out yearly, and to be honest with you I think that was a little too often but it certainly made...it kind of kicked us in the butt to get going. I think every other year might have been a better amount of time.

Gary De Carolis: I would agree with you on that. Any tips from you Gary on sustaining the SOC work? You’ve kept your system going for six years or so now you’ve said.

Gary Ander: Yeah, since 2004 and we are expanding ours. One of our major sustainabilities, I guess really two things. On the State level we have SOC coordinators in each community mental health locality and then our administration at child welfare actually decided to keep our SOC coordinator position and is funding that with local money. So those are huge sustainability pieces, although our entire infrastructure is still in place with our committees, our executive committee and our subcommittees that comes out of our community collaborative and our juvenile justice, our juvenile crime prevention council and our child welfare protection committee. Those have all been maintained and I think part of what I was saying before relative to sustainability is that it kind of grows on itself. The children’s executive oversight committee is now the oversight committee for a number of other grants that are cross agency on child welfare that we talked about and so that in of itself is perpetuating our SOC , and as Susan talked about with their MOU we have an annual MOU that is signed every year with our children’s executive oversight committee. And again, in September we did our 6th annual strategic planning session so that strategic planning is continuing, and a couple of committees have made major progress, so that’s important. We certainly have areas we are struggling with, Susan talked about her faith based and we have a faith based committee that has come out of our strategic planning session and that is primarily resource based for us, but that could get much bigger and expand dramatically and it’s one of our continual goals.

Gary De Carolis: Gary, this is for both you and Susan. Do you have someone who watchdogs the whole strategic planning process? Is that either or both of you that do it in your individual communities? That is focused on making sure that groups meet and what they come up with is fed back to larger groups and all that?

[1:11:33] **Gary Ander:** Right now in Alamance County, North Carolina, that’s done by our SOC coordinator between mental health and child welfare, so that’s a shared responsibility between them. And I’m responsible for bringing some of that to our Children’s Executive Oversight Committee.

Susan Franklin: And I'm doing strategic planning but now I'm doing it on all the baby boomers who are getting older, so I'm doing something completely different. But that task lies with our Children Youth Leadership Committee Coordinator. So our partners did end up hiring a coordinator to keep this work moving forward.

Gary De Carolis: I think that's an important thing for folks who are on the call here is that it doesn't happen by itself. Without that person who is focused on keeping everyone moving, it could easily fray and go in all kinds of different directions and just stop, to be honest with you. Having an identified one or more people that are charged with keeping this moving forward is very important.

Gary Ander: We would talk here in North Carolina that there needed to be someone with the responsibility of getting up in the morning and thinking about SOC every day, and I still think that that is important. I think it takes a long time to change systems and to get this piece incorporated and totally operationalized into all the child serving systems, continue to work together in the strategic planning and in the SOC development. So until that happens you have to have someone continuing to push that agenda.

Gary De Carolis: Now we are on the last slide before the information slide and its on lessons learned. There are three identified lessons learned and feel free to expand on that, but we have the use of data, getting the right people at the table, and what happens when the money or champions go away.

Gary Ander: Let me say this, especially about the first two. I talk about data now, I say, "In God we trust, everybody else bring data." The deal here is, and I've mentioned this before, I'm not a detail person so I'm not all that generally interested in data but data is imperative to support what you want to do and to support it with the people you need to have at the table or you need to have supporting your process someplace, either at the legislature or at the county commissioner level but the data is imperative. Don't hesitate on the front end of this to try to put in some system to start collecting data from the very beginning of this process so you have it to support what you are doing in the future. That's really important. And as Susan talked about, there are data people who love this stuff who you can engage to really help you in that process.

Susan Franklin: And there are some people that are not going to listen to you even for two seconds without data. So it's really critical to get that and to use that on occasion, every so often, whether that's every six months or once a year to show comparatively where you were and where you are.

Gary De Carolis: In using data, which is critical to this work, did you have to find evaluators that were able to use their analytical skills and at the same time translate the data such that the average person who is not in the evaluation world could understand...how did that go?

Susan Franklin: It was painful. You know though it took a long time to find someone and we found a really good person. And someone who can take the information and talk to case workers so that they understand versus them just using all this terminology that either IT doesn't understand, you know, what a residential child care facility is, so it took a long time of really being able to talk the same language.

Gary De Carolis: And I know Gary, you have an evaluator that is able to...has one foot in both worlds.

Gary Ander: Yep. So she has been really good in helping both people inside the system and then families kind of understand what that data means.

Gary De Carolis: The last bullet, what happens when money or the champion goes away? What's the lesson learned around that?

Gary Ander: That means either you have to have one of those continuing to be present until that's totally incorporated into the both policy and the actual culture of your, not only of your organization but of your community. So you have to stay at it and figure out some way, as we've talked about in both our communities, that there is some sustainability by someone continuing to take charge and responsibility and push these issues. Because it takes a long time, I mean, my understanding is it takes about 15 years for an idea to totally be incorporated, not just in the policy, and policy is great, but we have lots of policies that people don't follow or they don't believe in all the policies and until the culture actually changes, that redefining that this will then just develop a life of it's own, it will be part of what we do and how we engage families.

Susan Franklin: And on both of these you need to be constantly be looking for them. So you have to constantly be looking for money and you have to constantly be looking for champions because they are out there, and I think sometimes if you massage them and work with potential champions, then when the time comes to make a transition, to move on to do something different, they will be so ready.

Gary De Carolis: So you have to invest in them so that they are ready when things do change.

Susan Franklin: Yep. And always have your radar out there for those people because you will need them.

Gary De Carolis: Alright, well thank you. The last slide we have is just what I had mentioned early on, it's where you can find this information. Of course, this is being recorded and a transcript of today's event will be up on Childwelfare.gov shortly, but if you want to go find the closer looks that we talked about, a nice six-eight pages on the SOC principles...the toolkits, the information on this slide which is also going to be available, this whole package of slide, you can find that, these toolkits on the Information Gateway. Aracelis Gray is the director of the National TA and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care and that is her contact information, and for folks this is the first of five webinars this year that we will be doing. Upcoming in March, will be one on family involvement and supporting kin caregivers and then one in May on community involvement to improve family outcomes. A little later in June we will have one on generating buy-in for change, a social marketing focus and then our last one will be on assessing where you want to go with policy to support and sustain your practices. So I want to thank Gary and Susan for your time today in preparation for this and for doing this and to all of you that attended, we had a nice group of folks here. Look forward to again meeting everyone in a couple months. With that, I think we will end for today.

Susan Franklin: Thank you!