Building an Outcomes Orientation for Service Providers

Enhancing Capacity to Participate in Performance-Based Funding Models

Brian Bieretz and Matt Eldridge
June 2019

Service providers are critical partners in making progress on many challenging social issues. They are at the front line of service delivery, and they inform public strategies on behalf of the vulnerable populations they serve. Increasingly, they are asked to adapt to outcomes-oriented approaches that are promoted by governments and other funders to find programs that effectively address stubborn social challenges and combat emerging ones. Although this adaptation brings potential benefits for providers, funders, and the communities they serve, it also requires a change in thinking and reporting on progress, and it carries potential risks and challenges.

An "outcomes orientation" is a broad concept that refers to an approach to contracting, procurement, and service delivery that emphasizes achieving results as measured by predefined outcome metrics. Instead of only describing the services to be delivered and reporting on outputs, many foundations and local, state, and federal government agencies are focusing on the outcomes of those services, and they are writing the contract or funding model to include specific measures to be achieved as a way to demonstrate impact. Because of this shift, service providers' ability to track outcomes and demonstrate impact is becoming more critical. Moreover, developing the systems and capabilities to do so benefits service providers by providing them with the information necessary to refine and improve their service delivery models and make a stronger argument for future funding.

This brief looks at what an outcomes orientation means for service providers, offering practical reflections and recommendations. We illustrate our points by considering service provider "readiness" to participate in a specific performance-based funding model: pay for success (PFS). Performance-based funding models tie at least a portion of a contract's funding to verified achievement of performance
metrics, including outcomes. The PFS model shifts some of the risk of implementing new programs or of scaling existing ones from governments to private and nonprofit investors. These investors provide the up-front capital for a program, a service provider implements the program, a third party evaluates the outcomes, and if outcomes meet certain targets, the government will repay the investors with interest.

Despite focusing on PFS, we intend this brief to be relevant and beneficial for all service providers looking to become more outcomes oriented regardless of their baseline capacities or their interest in participating in a PFS project. Because many PFS principles and concepts are the same as those for evidence-based policymaking and decisionmaking broadly, becoming PFS ready can hold several benefits for service providers: it can improve their effectiveness through data-driven decisionmaking, demonstrate their impact through data collection and evaluation, and spur collaboration with other stakeholders in their community.

Service Providers Are a Critical Part of PFS

The central innovation of the PFS model is that it shifts government contracts from paying for services to paying for outcomes. As with other forms of outcomes orientation (e.g., outcomes- or performance-based contracting), PFS allows governments to focus on what matters most—the outcomes—by tying payment and other incentives to achievements. Unlike outputs (e.g., the number of teachers trained, housing units created, or clients served), outcomes are improvements that, at least in theory, can be linked to a program (e.g., improved housing stability for participants over time).

Outcomes-oriented approaches aim to determine whether a program “moved the needle” on an outcome the government and the public values. PFS projects, for example, pay investors on outcome metrics such as a reduction in days people spend in jail or an increase in housing stability (rather than just the number of people who receive the service).

Each PFS project must carefully define the outcomes of interest to the government and the community and clearly outline how success will be measured and payments awarded. Although PFS projects generally use an impact evaluation that measures outcomes and estimates whether the program caused them, other types of models often employ simpler evaluation tools such as rate cards, which simply count the units of outcome achieved and assign a dollar value to each unit.

PFS projects differ in another key way from other performance-based funding models: in PFS projects, service providers are paid up front by private investors who bear the risk of not being paid back. Although provider payment is not contingent upon the outcomes achieved, the providers are still a critical project partner. As with standard government contracting, the provider is responsible for delivering the intervention or program to the best of its ability. PFS requires greater emphasis on monitoring and measuring results and puts more pressure on providers to build and maintain appropriate capacities to collect and report on outcomes. PFS projects give providers an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to data and outcomes, positioning them well for future outcomes-oriented funding opportunities.
Benefits and Risks of an Outcomes-Oriented Approach

Adopting an outcomes orientation does not automatically ensure improved results for a given target population, encourage better provider effectiveness, or herald better value for public taxpayers. Achieving a beneficial outcomes-oriented approach is a multiyear process, enabling key stakeholders (including providers) to engage in a frank discussion on what outcomes matter and how to measure and award progress toward those goals. This effort requires significant investments in data capacity to track and measure outcomes, relative consensus on important outcomes, and a carefully planned payment schedule to encourage the right results.

PFS projects offer service providers an opportunity to reorient themselves more deeply toward results, but this brings new risks and new benefits service providers should consider. Many of these risks and benefits can be thought of as two sides of the same coin—a change can be beneficial or harmful depending on what happens during the project. Here we’ll consider three specific changes and how they could benefit or harm service providers.

First, service providers must interact with potentially unfamiliar partners: investors, evaluators, and intermediaries. Intermediaries (organizations that help structure the project) and investors operate under different constraints and are driven by different priorities. Although intermediaries and investors may have a socially oriented mission, they are focused on achieving the outcomes tied to payment. Service providers can benefit from innovative ideas and assistance from these new stakeholders to manage and achieve outcomes. Further, the capital provided by investors can help service providers increase their capacity. But to be successful, service providers must manage risks associated with these new relationships. Some providers may have an asymmetrical relationship with investors and intermediaries who have more experience with the financial mechanisms being used and often have more institutional capacity, particularly for legal matters.

Second, service providers have the opportunity to engage government in a productive conversation on outcomes and targets that both sets of partners agree are reasonable, measurable, and meaningful. PFS project negotiations allow providers an opportunity to advise on outcome measures and, as project partners in direct contact with the service population, to elevate the voices, perspectives, and needs of that population. Service providers, who are likely selected because of their records of success or their strong theory of change, can provide valuable insight into what achievements are possible and practical with these types of projects. But because outcomes take on special scrutiny, service providers need to think carefully about risks for outcomes that are not achievable. This means they need a thorough understanding of the evidence base behind programs, the connection between evidence and outcomes, and the likelihood that outcomes can be achieved. Failure to understand how the evidence supports the alignment of an intervention, specific population, and outcomes could lead to underperformance, which in turn may lead to nonpayment or underpayment to the service provider. Although PFS shields service providers to some extent because investors are taking on a large share of this risk, other performance-based funding models typically do not. Service providers, especially those operating on tight financial margins, may go under because of poorer-than-expected performance.
Finally, even when service providers are not drastically changing the structure of their programs, the additional scrutiny that accompanies PFS projects increases the pressure to be successful and track success. This means more meticulous data collection and analysis, investing in data systems upgrades, and increasing staffing and capacity. PFS projects, particularly because of their need for an evaluation, can be an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of the service provider’s program. But the evaluation that accompanies a PFS project can lead to increased public scrutiny that, should the project be unsuccessful or achieve poorer-than-expected results, can negatively affect the service provider’s reputation. Reputational risk is present for all parties, but damages to reputation may affect service providers’ access to future funding and contracts.

Service providers as well as governments and other partners must understand and thoroughly discuss the risks and benefits associated with a move to performance-based funding models. A hastily conceived process could threaten the viability of critical providers, present barriers to service access, and align financial incentives around the wrong outcomes. Governments should acknowledge the significant risks posed to service providers by performance-based funding models. The risk of nonpayment because of a failure to achieve outcome targets can undermine their ability to serve their population and even threaten their existence. Providers, for their part, should recognize government partners’ objectives of ensuring public funds are maximizing their impact and ensuring increased accountability and transparency.

What Does “PFS Readiness” Mean?

Several resources exist that describe components of PFS readiness and how they relate to other project partners (Blum 2015; Katz et al. 2017; Milner et al. 2016) but we focus on two broad concepts: willingness and ability. Although the focus here is on PFS readiness, the questions and ideas we describe are relevant to outcomes-oriented readiness more broadly; PFS-ready providers are better positioned and equipped to achieve and demonstrate outcomes generally, regardless of whether they participate in a PFS project.

The willingness component of readiness means that providers adopt the following:

- **An outcomes-oriented mindset.** Most traditional service funding models focus on inputs (e.g., resources available) and outputs (e.g., widgets delivered or heads in beds) rather than what providers, governments, and end beneficiaries really care about: impact and outcomes (how the program leads to longer-term improvements for the beneficiaries). This can create perverse incentives (such as focusing on those easiest to serve), lead to inefficient resource allocation, and undermine progress for the service population. PFS and other performance-based funding models realign resources to elevate a focus on outcomes of interest. This shift, however, requires a reorientation in thinking.

- **An openness to innovation and evaluation.** Most PFS projects involve testing a programmatic innovation: a program that is new to the community, implemented on a different scale, or delivered to a different population. Being prepared to try something new is an essential quality
of a PFS-ready provider. Related is the willingness and ability to assess whether that innovation was effective. Not all great ideas will lead to the intended outcome, and some great ideas need to be refined as they move from theory to practice. Evaluating outcomes and impact builds knowledge of what works and informs process improvements.

- **Comfort with multistakeholder complexity.** PFS projects can be difficult to develop and complex to run, and they involve multiparty agreements. Service providers need to work with intermediaries, investors, and evaluators, all of which have different incentives and constraints. Providers that can demonstrate comfort with such complex relational environments are better positioned for a PFS project.

- **An appreciation of project risks.** PFS projects carry risks for service providers. The most prominent one is the risk of reputational damage if the project fails to achieve the target outcomes. Although this risk is always present, a PFS project has heightened scrutiny and potentially ties current or future funding to results; this means the risk is greater and has tangible relevance. Playing an active role in project and evaluation design and ensuring strong data systems help mitigate this risk.

**Ability** relates to questions of capability and capacity and covers the nuts and bolts of running a PFS project. Ability can touch on many different issues, but here are four key questions to consider:

- Does your organization have **consistent leadership support** for the project, including clarity on how the project fits into the providers’ long-term strategy?
- Do you have the **staff capacity to meet the needs of the project**, including interacting with all the partners?
- Do you have the **resources to scale a program** to new populations or new areas if required or to serve the population size necessary to achieve the target outcomes?
- Do you have the **data systems and processes in place to track inputs, outputs, and outcomes**?

**How Can Service Providers Enhance Readiness?**

Building readiness for PFS helps position providers to qualify not just for PFS projects but for the growing number of outcomes-oriented funding opportunities from public and philanthropic sources. The first step is for providers’ leaders to make a conscious choice to engage in outcomes-oriented approaches after considering the challenges with innovation, complexity, and risks associated with these models. Once this step is complete, providers can take several specific actions to enhance their readiness.

**Leadership’s Motivation to Adopt an Outcomes Orientation**

The management of an organization is critical regardless of the sector or the type of project, PFS or otherwise. Leaders are responsible for activities such as setting organizational cultural norms,
articulating long-term organizational goals and strategies, and finding and managing people with diverse and complimentary skills (Porter and McLaughlin 2006). Successful PFS service providers will have leadership that successfully manages these activities and thinks creatively about solutions and business practices.

As noted, linking payment to outcomes rather than activities creates a host of different benefits, risks, and challenges. For PFS projects, the leadership of the organization, both management and the board, must be fully committed to the project and understand these risks and challenges. Paramount is the potential financial risk. If part of the service provider's payment is linked to successfully achieving the outcomes, then service providers and investors may be taking on some of the project's financial risk. There are examples in outcomes-based contracting (although not PFS) in which service providers have been forced to close because they were overstretched and failed to deliver results. But this risk comes with the chance of increased financial benefit: better-than-expected performance may yield bonus payments or other incentives.

PFS projects can also take a long time to plan, frequently one to two years. Service providers will need to be engaged during this time, which can be difficult from both a capacity and financial standpoint.

Here are a few questions to consider:

- Is your organization’s leadership, including board members and senior staff, supportive of the project and an outcomes orientation generally?
- Does management understand the risks associated with being paid based on outcomes achieved?
- Has your organization ever been involved in a pay-for-performance or outcomes-based contract or an impact evaluation?

**Organizational Capacity**

Organizational capacity refers to the nuts and bolts of running a successful project and includes financial and administrative experience. Organizations should be on sound financial footing and have both the expertise to manage the money and the cash reserves necessary to cover short-term operating expenses. Depending on the contract structure, service providers may experience a delay in payment, particularly if they are bearing some of the financial risk of the program. Operationally, service providers must have the experience to scale up (whether geographically, financially, or in other ways) to meet the needs of the project. This may include hiring and training more staff, increasing the services and programs offered, or expanding facilities into new communities.

Important project-related questions to consider include the following:

- Does your organization fully understand the risks of the project and how you will be assessed?
- Does your organization have the financial capacity and resources to manage the project?
Does your organization have the operational capacity to scale your staff and functions to implement the program?

Does your organization have experience working in the target jurisdiction or the capacity to expand into new areas?

**Track Record of Success Implementing the Program**

Although payment is no longer tied to activities, that doesn’t mean activities aren’t important. In fact, because payment is tied to outcomes, the specific activities become more critical. Service providers must have the experience and capacity necessary to deliver high-quality services that are true to the program model. If service providers are still learning how to provide certain services, PFS, with its high stakes and scrutiny, is probably not the best framework to gain that experience. Grant-funded pilots that emphasize learning and outcomes may be a better opportunity to develop this baseline experience.

In particular, service providers should have (1) experience understanding the specific needs of the population, particularly any unique challenges involved in helping this population and (2) programmatic experience to be able to implement the program with fidelity to the program model (i.e., evidence of what’s effective) and to maintain those standards while scaling.

Here are a few important questions to consider:

- Have you ever worked with this specific population?
- Does the intervention or program model you are implementing have a strong evidence base? Are best practices available that have been tested through an impact evaluation?
- What is your experience delivering the program? Are you able to implement it with fidelity or have you had to adapt it for different service delivery contexts?
- Have you tracked the outcomes previously and, if so, how reliable are those prior outcomes as predictors of future success? (That is, if the local economy changed, would your outcomes be affected?)

**Experience Tracking and Using Data**

High-quality, relevant data underpins all steps of the PFS process, supporting feasibility, transaction structuring, implementation, and evaluation. Although much of the data used to set up, run, and evaluate the project will come from administrative and government systems, service providers will need to have data systems in place to collect information that helps them provide services to their clients, track outcomes, and attribute program success.

Service provider data is critical for streamlining enrollment and referral procedures, improving service delivery, and establishing baselines for future evaluation. This can include screening project participants, collecting demographic and programmatic data to understand their service needs, monitoring their progress through the program, and tracking their outputs and outcomes.
service provider systems are unable to collect a key external piece of information, they should work with other organizations to access the information by setting up data-sharing agreements and confidentiality agreements if needed. Integrated data systems provide the best opportunity to seamlessly share data across providers and sectors, enabling a more comprehensive picture of individual clients, the broader population, and program interaction.

When thinking about data systems broadly, it is helpful to consider the following:

- How do you currently track participant data?
- Who is collecting the data, and how are they being collected and stored (e.g., are the data stored electronically)?
- Do you have the systems in place to collect and analyze program data?
- Do you have experience using data to improve the delivery or quality of program services?
- Do you have experience sharing data with other organizations?
- How easily can you add new data fields to your existing systems?

The specific data elements will vary depending on the program area of the PFS project. When thinking about general data quality, consider the timeliness, accuracy, consistency, and completeness of the data being collected. Some considerations specific to data quality include the following:

- **Timeliness.** How frequently are data elements being collected? Does that frequency match your needs?
- **Accuracy.** Do that data elements capture what you think they capture? For example, some mental health screening tools screen for the likelihood of a mental illness, but they do not tell you if a person is actually diagnosed with a mental illness.
- **Consistency.** Is the information being collected in a consistent manner across clients and program staff?
- **Completeness.** Are there large gaps in the data for a particular individual? Are there large gaps in collection of a data element across individuals?

Efforts to improve data quality, data systems, and data monitoring and reporting are beneficial investments regardless of PFS because they allow service providers to demonstrate impact and effectiveness, which can help attract funding and grants.

**Willingness and Capacity to Be Evaluated**

PFS projects typically include some type of evaluation. High-profile, quality evaluations can be an opportunity for the service provider to demonstrate the impact of the services they offer. Evaluations are also an excellent opportunity for providers to learn more about their model, particularly if providers study the process and implementation on top of assessing outcomes. Moreover, moving beyond a
single evaluation to engaging in continuous improvement (also called action research) can ensure that a provider is constantly becoming more effective and more efficient. Evaluations in PFS, however, are tied to the programmatic risk that a program is ineffective. If the project is unsuccessful at meeting the outcome targets, the evaluation will show that as well, creating potential reputational risks.

Organization leadership must therefore be fully committed to executing the project successfully. Further, service providers need to be willing to work with evaluators to craft the evaluation and outcome measures of the program to ensure that they are using the right metrics. If an evaluation design element or outcome target is inappropriate for the service population or the program model, the service provider, as the subject matter expert, needs to flag this for the evaluator and other project partners to ensure the chosen evaluation design is appropriate and will accurately measure impact.

Here are a few important questions for service providers to consider:

- Have you ever been evaluated? What was your experience?
- Are you willing to be evaluated for this project?
- Is your service population willing to participate in necessary follow-up data collection, and is that population large enough for a robust study?
- Do you understand the potential risks associated with an evaluation showing your project did not meet its intended outcomes?
- Do you understand what will be expected of your organization with an evaluation?
- Are you familiar (and comfortable) with the approaches and requirements of different evaluation designs (e.g., randomization of service access as part of a randomized controlled trial)?

Forging Effective Outcome Partnerships with Government

Governments are often the driving force behind a shift to a system of outcomes-oriented contracting. If done unilaterally (that is, with little input from service providers and other stakeholders) the benefits of this outcomes focus can be outweighed by the risks associated with transitioning to a new payment model and reporting structure, which can threaten the viability of providers and access to services. Though the onus is on governments to ensure this shift is done appropriately, service providers have a strong incentive to be proactive.

Governments need to build the intellectual, human, and physical capacity necessary to support outcomes-oriented contracting and funding models. Service providers have limited ability to compel governments to undertake changes necessary to become outcomes oriented, but they can still influence the conversation as partners for the government and experienced voices within the community. Partnering with government through an open dialogue on outcomes is perhaps the best way to ensure
the opportunity presented by an outcomes-orientated service procurement structure are realized with minimal unintended consequences.

All stakeholders should acknowledge the limitations of an outcomes-based model: not everything that matters can be measured, and not everything that can be measured matters. Balancing a well-intentioned drive toward rewarding results and a healthy concern that likely no model can capture all the important community- and individual-level work of providers is a useful place to begin discussion.

These recommendations are geared toward helping service providers engage with government, but they can also help government understand the concerns and perspectives of their service provider partners.

Demonstrate Good Faith and Build Trust around an Outcomes Orientation

As this brief describes, an outcomes-oriented procurement approach can bring benefits to both service providers and to the communities that they serve. By recognizing these benefits and embracing the spirit of an outcomes orientation, providers can signal their alignment with the overall objectives of improved results for the service population and the public at large, avoiding an unhelpful adversarial relationship. This signaling can include proactive steps to better manage and track outcome indicators and earnestly engaging stakeholders (including staff and clients) on outcomes and measures of interest. The results of those proactive steps should be shared with the government and the community so they understand the importance of the services provided and how they are working to serve the community.

Work with Other Service Providers to Effectively Convey Perspective

Not only do many service providers lack the capacity or connections to effectively engage government one-on-one, governments often have difficulty addressing individual provider concerns and questions. In many communities, coalitions or platforms already exist to help unify providers, if not on messaging than at least on issues of interest, and to help them effectively convey these concerns and perspectives to the government. Such efforts can be replicated for an outcomes orientation to help establish common understanding among service providers and elevate the most pressing and common concerns.

Work with Government on a Phased Transition to Performance-Based Funding

Communities should consider moving to an outcomes orientation in phases. As noted throughout this brief, service providers can take many steps to become more outcomes oriented, and smaller, transitional can incentivize many larger one. For example, service providers could agree to accept payment for improved data collection measures for several years before accepting payment for performance. Or, they could suggest that governments begin by linking only a small percentage of funding to performance metrics and increase that percentage over a period of years.
Encourage Government to Invest in Data Infrastructure

The assessment component of an outcomes-oriented contract will only be as good as the underlying data used. Service providers can develop their own systems (and we encourage them to do so) to be able to better understand their own success at serving their populations. However, governments will likely draw primarily (or partially) on governmental administrative data to determine achievement of key outcomes, such as improvements in education or reductions in recidivism. This means that the ability to assess the performance of service providers will likely depend, at least in part, on the quality of the underlying government data. If these data have large gaps or inconsistencies, then the assessment may not be accurate or reflective of the service provider’s success.

Although service providers are likely limited in their ability to affect improvements in government data systems, they can still raise concerns and offer suggestions for improvement. In particular, if the service provider has taken steps to improve its own data, then it can use an analysis of that data to highlight potential limitations in government data.

Work with Government Officials to Develop Metrics

One of the chief concerns about an outcomes orientation is that it will measure the wrong things or measure things that are outside of a provider’s control. It’s critical that providers work actively with government officials to develop metrics and targets that are meaningful and measurable and that providers feel they can improve through their service delivery. Adopting outcomes that are really outputs,6 rewarding or penalizing providers for outcomes that are unrelated to their service delivery model and theory of change, and selecting metrics with unreliable data all defeat the purpose of an outcomes-oriented funding approach.

To the extent possible, service providers should leverage their expertise to help government officials select appropriate outcomes and thresholds, and governments should be prepared to receive their feedback. For example, if incentivizing a particular outcome is likely to cause unintended harm, then service providers should communicate this concern. Or, if they believe an outcome is outside of their control, they should explain why and suggest alternatives. The more the conversation can be rooted in quality data, results from past service delivery, and results from similar studies in the field, the stronger the argument the service provider can make for or against paying for certain outcomes.

Advocate for a “Hold Harmless” Period

Any major change in funding models is likely to have some missteps: thresholds may be set too high or too low, reporting may be more difficult than expected, or data may take longer to collect than expected. So that providers are not unfairly punished for issues that arise from adopting new practices or procedures as outcome models are implemented and improved, communities should strongly consider building in “hold harmless” periods that give service providers time to adjust to the new funding framework without penalizing them. For example, for the first year of a project, the government might collect data and assess service providers for the outcomes achieved but pay providers in full
regardless of their success meeting outcome targets. The length of this period will differ by communities, but fine-tuning and enhancing metrics, targets, and data capacities could take a few years.

**Conclusion**

Just as PFS projects are not an end in themselves, engaging with these principles is meant to be a continuous process that spurs providers to accelerate their effectiveness and yield improvements for the people they serve.

This brief contains several tips and suggestions service providers can use to ensure a smooth transition to an outcomes orientation. But a crucial first step before changing data infrastructure or enhancing staff capacity is developing the willingness within the organization to engage in outcomes-oriented approaches or funding models. After that, improving readiness among the areas listed above—capacity, data infrastructure, and evaluability—should move providers further along the path of readiness.

Remember that making improvements is a mutually reinforcing, positive feedback loop that enhances service provider performance regardless of the funding model. Improving data quality, for example, will improve capacity to deliver the program and evaluate the results. With data, organizations can start small by building more sophisticated intake forms and periodic surveys. With that information, they can assess where their operations are strong and where they need improvements. Following on that, providers could seek technical assistance to enhance capacity, and as they become more effective, upgrade their data systems to track more outcomes to demonstrate their effectiveness to funders. Any advances in willingness and capacity to engage with data, focus on outcomes, and evaluate impact will allow service providers to be more effective and show positive results.

**Notes**

1 In this brief, we use “outcomes orientation” to refer to a shift in organizational behavior toward focusing on measuring and achieving results and improving performance based on past assessments. We use “performance-based funding models” to refer to specific strategies that link payment to success.

2 Not all program models are a good fit for PFS, and some high-quality service providers may not be a good fit for PFS, particularly those that have legal or practical restrictions regarding data collection. Even if PFS is not an appropriate strategy, however, this brief can still be valuable to those organizations looking to improve their performance and better understand the effects of their programs.

3 This is typically not the case in PFS projects, but certain performance-based contracts stipulate some payments are only made after successful achievement of certain metrics or mileposts.


5 A “process/implementation evaluation determines whether program activities have been implemented as intended.” See the Types of Evaluation short guide from “Practical Use of Program Evaluation among Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Programs,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last reviewed August 14, 2014, [https://www.cdc.gov/std/program/pupestd/types%20of%20evaluation.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/std/program/pupestd/types%20of%20evaluation.pdf)
Some outputs that have a time and quality component can be helpful metrics in a performance-based funding model. The key consideration is that the metrics align with and can measure what governments and providers actually care about.

References


About the Authors

Brian Bieretz is a policy associate with the Research to Action Lab at the Urban Institute. He provides training and technical assistance to local governments interested in pay for success and implementing evidence-based programming. His work includes strategic planning, research translation, training and technical assistance, stakeholder engagement, and data analysis.

Matt Eldridge is a policy program manager in the Research to Action Lab and the research products manager of Urban’s Pay for Success Initiative. His work focuses on pay for success and other forms of results-based financing and impact investing. He has a keen interest in the potential for innovative financing solutions and evidence-based policymaking to yield improved social and environmental outcomes domestically and internationally.
Acknowledgments

This brief was funded by the Laura and John Arnold Foundation. We are grateful to them and to all our funders, who make it possible for Urban to advance its mission.

The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders. Funders do not determine research findings or the insights and recommendations of Urban experts. Further information on the Urban Institute’s funding principles is available at urban.org/fundingprinciples.

The authors thank Melissa Skahan and members of the Greater Portland Addiction Collaborative who provided substantial feedback on the brief during a workshop. The authors also thank Rayanne Hawkins, Will Engelhardt, and Kelly Walsh of the Urban Institute for reviewing and providing helpful comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this brief.