

Counting and accounting for public health program performance in a federal system

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ABSTRACT

This paper will address the issues surrounding the development of a reporting framework for core national public health programs (e.g. HIV/AIDS, cancer screening programs, national Drug Strategy, national Immunisation program) where responsibilities for the achievement of health outcomes exist at both federal and state levels.

The paper will draw on Australian experience in the negotiation of Public Health Outcome Funding Agreements between Federal and State governments. These Agreements allocate Federal resources to states for core public health programs according to a need-based formula, and in exchange, States report performance against agreed process, quality and outcome indicators.

Discussion will highlight issues such as:

- what to report, to whom and how often to report it;
- what to do where there is little data on which to assess performance;
- how to deal with issues of mutual responsibility for achievement of outcomes; and
- analysing and comparing performance.

The paper will also touch briefly on questions of variations in performance and what sense to make of them. What do poorer outcomes reflect? Should we reduce or enhance funding to those whose outcomes are poor?