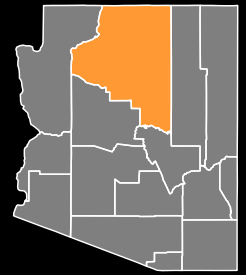


COCONINO COUNTY, ARIZ.

# Building a Culture of Collaboration to Inform Criminal Justice Initiatives



**POPULATION:**  
139,097

In 2010, the Coconino County Board of Supervisors requested a recidivism study on people being released from the county jail. This request kicked off the county's efforts to better collect, share, analyze and use data among county stakeholders and move to a culture of collaboration between partners to generate the best outcomes for individuals involved with the criminal justice system.

The biggest challenge that Coconino County faced when beginning this endeavor was the lack of accessible data. The Sheriff's Office could produce data on the people in its jail and their return to jail, but because these individuals are often transient the county wanted to know about jail admissions statewide to get a broader picture of their recidivism rate and program effectiveness. Leaders also wanted to know about the other services and supports that individuals were receiving in the community and how these impacted the population and their outcomes. Research is ongoing, but the county has learned many valuable lessons through its planning process and reviewing the work of The National Implementation Research Network about the key components necessary to implement effective programs and practices.<sup>1</sup>

## Selection

One of the most important pieces that Coconino County realized as part of its efforts was the necessity of having the right people involved. One of Coconino County's strengths in this area is the level of leadership from the various partner agencies involved in the project, including the sheriff's office, the probation department and the county manager's office. Leaders from these agencies were committed to working together on this issue, but they did not have the capacity to combine and analyze their data to tell the story of what was happening in their county. The county partnered with Arizona State University and Northern Arizona University (located within Coconino County) to help analyze statewide criminal history data from the Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) and evaluate programs within the county.

## Training

Leaders also realized the importance of internal and external training to build successful partnerships and collaboration. Coconino County brought together a coalition of leadership from various county agencies through its Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) as a built-in and recurring platform for policymaker and practitioner training. They have used these meetings to address concerns about sharing individual agency data and perceived barriers around policies such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). One of the activities the CJCC encouraged was bringing

In collaboration with the **Stepping Up initiative**, the **Data-Driven Justice initiative** and the **One Mind Campaign**, the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** convened a **Best Practices Implementation Academy to Reduce the Number of People with Mental Illnesses and Substance Use Disorders in Jails** (the Academy) in June 2017 in Washington, D.C. At the Academy, delegations from 23 jurisdictions involved in one or more of the three initiatives met to showcase best practice strategies and advance implementation efforts to prevent or reduce the jail involvement of individuals with mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

This case study is part of a series highlighting the six counties that constituted the "Best Practices" teams representing the Data-Driven Justice initiative and the Stepping Up initiative at the Academy.



county leadership and practitioners to visit the jail and see the programs in place there, to paint the full picture of what is happening and humanize the work being done. It was important to initiative leaders to show their partners why this work mattered.

## Facilitative Administration

Coconino County leaders found that once they started building relationships and training individuals and agencies about the important role they can play in system improvement efforts, they were then able to get buy-in from leadership across the various county agencies and facilitate more sharing of information. One ongoing challenge was identifying ways to fund the research the county wanted to do. **Leaders realized that they had access to something that university research partners wanted: data on individuals in their jail. They leveraged this untapped resource to build university partnerships around mutual interests and conducted small-scale and pilot projects to demonstrate the value of the work.**

## Systems Intervention and Leadership

Critical to driving change was getting buy-in from key leadership and creating incentives for breaking down silos and creating a culture of “yes.” Coconino County had established a strong collaborative approach to problem solving through its CJCC, had gained support and investment from university partners and was working to align its initiatives with those happening across the state on justice reform. But leaders continued to struggle with getting stakeholder support for sharing and utilizing their data. They worked diligently to educate leaders and stakeholders on the benefits of a system-wide approach and the importance of having all agencies’ data as part of that approach. They created incentives and deadlines to support a sense of urgency to the work. They also addressed legal and other concerns from those who owned the data and continued to build trust to convince agencies to share sensitive data. And they negotiated data-sharing agreements with these agencies to ensure that information was used appropriately.

The county hopes that through research and partnerships with local stakeholders, leaders will be able to better understand the effectiveness of their existing programs and systems and how to better serve individuals involved in multiple service services within the county and state.

SAMHSA contracted with Policy Research Associates (PRA), which operates SAMHSA’s GAINS Center for Behavioral Health and Justice Transformation, to facilitate the Academy. Additional partners included Optum Health, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), as well as the lead organizations of the **Stepping Up initiative** (the National Association of Counties, the American Psychiatric Association Foundation and the Council of State Governments Justice Center), the **Data-Driven Justice initiative** (the National Association of Counties and the Laura and John Arnold Foundation) and the **One Mind Campaign** (the International Association of Chiefs of Police).

**For more information on this county’s efforts, please contact:**

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on The National Implementation Research Network, visit <http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/learn-implementation/implementation-science-defined>.

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