

ARORP Transparency Evaluation

Updated Transparency Evaluation Design, January 2025

While the collection and reporting of process and outcome data is relatively straight forward, a transparency evaluation is more complicated. Transparency of public spending and public projects, like that of the National Prescription Opioid Litigation, has been seen as more and more important over the past two decades. Literature on the issue of transparency in public administration has followed this trend, and several academic articles provide guidance on how to proceed with an ARORP evaluation of transparency that addresses the ARORP objective to “ensure transparent stewardship of opioid settlement funding.”

Transparency refers to the visibility of recorded information. It is the opposite of opacity or secrecy of information, and this includes the degree to which information is complete, findable, and simple (provided for public consumption). It also should be accessible to and used by the public (Michener & Bersch, 2013). Researchers have noted the relationship between transparency and accountability; freedom of information and penetration of information; and decision making and expenditures (Rodriguez-Navas, Sola, & Rius, 2017) (Erkkila, 2020).

Much of the literature on measuring transparency comes from the fields of economics, public administration, and comparative politics. Hollyer, Rosendorff, & Vreeland (2014) focus on transparent data dissemination and created objective criteria for measuring it in 125 different countries. Ferreira da Cuz, Taveres, Marques, Jorge, & de Sousa (2016) developed an index for measuring local government transparency in Portugal. And Mungiu-Pippide (2022) created a transparency index with 14 different components. These included items like the publication of expenditures or the disclosure of contract entities.

In sum, an outside evaluation of transparency involves the measurement and documentation of the degree to which a project publishes its resources, expenditures, decision-making, and data in useful and straightforward ways. WYSAC evaluators have designed a targeted evaluation of ARORP transparency based upon these principles and the above literature. It is an evaluation of ARORP itself, at the state level, and not of each service provider. **This updated design accounts for what was learned over the past year and current efforts to improve the measurement of transparency. This includes a rethinking of specific elements and a more detailed scoring of each element to better reflect the work of ARORP.**

The new design involves gathering data in the four areas, each with **three specific elements in four areas for a total of 12 elements**. The first area is *organizational*. This includes the advisory board, meeting agendas, and decision making. The second area is *financial*. This includes foundations, allocations, and expenditures. The third area is *informational*. This involves publication, clarity, and use. The fourth area is *provisional*. This includes awards, services, and numbers served.

One of the largest improvements to the design is the addition of more detailed scoring. Rather than scoring each element as present (1) or absent (0), elements will be scored on two dimensions, each with a five-point scale. The first dimension is how *easily the element can be found*. The scale ranges from absent (0), very difficult to find (1), difficult to find (2), easy to find (3), and very easy to find (4). The second dimension is how *easily the element can be understood*. The scale ranges from absent (0), very difficult to understand (1), difficult to understand (2), easy to understand (3), and very easy to understand (4). Evaluators will collect this new data biannually (twice a year) starting in January of 2025. This will lead to scores between 0 and 8 for each element and an index score between 0 and 24 for the transparency of each area. The latter value can be analyzed as a percentage or in other useful ways. To ensure reliability, five individuals will score each element separately and then meet to discuss and finalize scores. Individuals will be chosen by the evaluation team every six months to ensure past scoring does not influence current scoring. Individuals who score every month may remember where to find elements or have a bias to previous scores. Over time, evaluators will look for increased transparency and make recommendations on how to improve transparency, including specific areas and elements that need to be made more transparent. Table 1 below summarizes the areas, elements, and analysis of the transparency evaluation.

Table 1: Transparency Evaluation Data Collection Framework

Transparency Area	Transparency Element	Analysis
Organizational	Advisory board Meeting agendas Decision making	Collected biannually, in January and July of each year. Elements scored on how easily they can be found (0 to 5) and how easily they can be understood (0 to 5).
Financial	Foundations Allocations Expenditures	Collected biannually, in January and July of each year. Elements scored on how easily they can be found (0 to 5) and how easily they can be understood (0 to 5).
Informational	Publication Clarity Use	Collected biannually, in January and July of each year. Elements scored on how easily they can be found (0 to 5) and how easily they can be understood (0 to 5).
Provisional	Awards Services Numbers served	Collected biannually, in January and July of each year. Elements scored on how easily they can be found (0 to 5) and how easily they can be understood (0 to 5).

Transparency Elements Defined

The following 12 elements are used to score the transparency of the ARORP project biannually. Each element is defined below.

Organizational Elements

1. The *Advisory Board* is fully transparent when its membership is made public and contains diverse statewide representation. You are looking for a list of Advisory Board members with affiliations.
2. *Meeting Agendas* are fully transparent when past agendas are made public following an Advisory Board meeting. You are looking for the most recent agenda with a date and meeting topics.
3. *Decision Making* is fully transparent when the ARORP funding decision process is made public. You are looking for basic directions about how to apply for and win funding.

Financial Elements

1. Organizational *Foundations* are fully transparent when strategic goals and the process ARORP goes through to receive funding are made public. You are looking for a basic description of ARORP, why it exists, and where it gets its funding.
2. *Allocations* are fully transparent when ARORP makes public the distribution of funding to local service providers. You are looking for simple details on what providers get funded by which project type. You are not looking for provider budgets.
3. *Expenditures* are fully transparent when basic funding for ARORP service providers are made public. You are looking for basic categories of spending by project type.

Informational Elements

1. *Publication* is fully transparent when critical information (in this case the funding and application process) is made publicly available. You are looking for basic information on how providers apply for and receive funding.
2. *Clarity* is fully transparent when critical information (in this case the funding and application process in the above element) is clear, consistent, and complete in its presentation. You are looking to see if the funding application is written in lay person language and avoids jargon.
3. *Use* is fully transparent when public usage of critical information is collected and reported by ARORP. Note ARORP will be asked for these numbers biannually. You are looking to see if ARORP provides these numbers to us.

Provisional Elements

1. *Awards* are fully transparent when grants to local service providers with provider information are made public. You are looking for a list of funded providers and information about them.

2. *Services* are fully transparent when a list of funded services and activities are made public. You are looking for just the basic types of ARORP projects and services. You are not looking for specific services for each provider or by community.
3. *Numbers Served* are fully transparent when the number of individuals served by each project type is regularly summarized and made public. You are looking for the Quarterly Report summarizing people served across the state.

References

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