

Outcome Assessment: Making The Case For Your Program

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What is outcome assessment?

- Measuring “benefits or changes for individuals or populations during or after participating in program activities” (United Way, 1996)
- “The outcomes of a program or policy are changes, intended or not, in the program’s targets that accompany exposure to the program” (Rossi, 1996)
- “Program evaluation extends beyond the tracking and reporting of program outcomes into examination of the extent to which and the ways in which outcomes are caused by the program” (Affholter, 1993)

Why is outcome assessment important?

- “To see if programs really make a difference in the lives of people ...
- To help programs improve services...
- Outcome measurement provides a learning loop that feeds information back into programs on how well they are doing...
- It offers findings they [programs] can use to adapt, improve, and become more effective” (United Way, 1966).

Advantages of outcome assessment

- Can provide information on a regular and more timely basis to managers, funders, elected officials, and the public
- Can help to:
 - Demonstrate accountability for results
 - Provide evidence to decision-makers that programs are cost effective
 - Assess the distributional aspects of a program
 - Track outcomes related to specific programs rather than jurisdiction-wide data

Disadvantages of outcome assessment

- Performance data do not by themselves tell why outcomes occurred
- Getting to the measurable consequences of programs is difficult and complex; some outcomes cannot be measured directly
- Difficulties are encountered in identifying target populations
- Social programs usually have multiple intended outcomes and often several unintended ones as well

Outcome Assessment Model (United Way, 1996)



Inputs

- Resources used to produce program activities, outputs, and outcomes
- Inputs include:
 - Paid staff
 - Facilities
 - Equipment
 - Volunteers
 - Funding
 - Popular (public) support

Activities

- Actions taken by a program with its inputs to meet its objectives
 - Services provided by a program
 - Actions performed by agency, such as mentoring, sheltering, training, rehabilitating, counseling, etc.

Outputs

- Products of a program's activities
 - A program's outputs should produce desired outcomes for program's participants
 - For example:
 - Number of outreach events
 - Number of calls answered
 - Number of clients visited
 - Hours of courses offered
 - Hours of operation provided, such as 24/7 services
 - Number of customer service announcements presented

Outcomes

- Results for clients, the outside environment, or society sought by the program
- Event, occurrence, or condition outside the activity or program itself of direct importance to clients and often public more generally

Outcomes (cont.)

- Outcomes include:
 - Improvement in the quality of services
 - Reduction in the amount of unmet need
 - More equitable results for client groups
 - Benefits gained by participants during or after their involvement with a program
 - Benefits relating to knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, behavior, or condition

Outcome Indicators

- Specific items or measures that track a program's achievements with respect to outcomes
- Measurable characteristics or changes that indicate attainment of desired or intended results of a program

Outcome Indicators (cont.)

Outcome	Outcome Indicator
Increased Driver Safety	Number of Moving Violations in Past 12 Months
Healthier Eating Habits	Number of Times Eat “Fast Food” in a Week
Improved Physical Fitness	Number of Times Exercise for at least 15 Minutes in a Week
More Affordable Housing	Number of Units Available Meeting Local Standards as “Affordable”
Safer Neighborhoods	Number of Crimes Reported in Neighborhood per Month
Greater Community Involvement	Number of Community Meetings Attended Over 6 Month Period
Effective Job Training	Percent of Trainees Who Find Job in Chosen Field within 3 Months

Thank you!

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