

Measuring Program Impact on Participants

Linda Gerber

Impact Council Volunteer

Expected Outcomes for Today

- Initial Outcomes
 - Increased understanding of what outcomes are
 - Increased ability to determine outcome measures
 - Increased knowledge of benefit of outcome measurement
- Intermediate Outcomes
 - Increase in outcome measures meeting impact council expectations
 - Increased ability to measure benefit/impact of program
- Longer-Term Outcomes
 - Improved ability of program to meet participant needs
 - Improved effectiveness and efficiencies of agency
 - Improved ability to communicate benefit of program to stakeholders (community, funders, participants, boards)

Why Measure Outcomes?

- To see if programs really make a difference in the lives of people
 - In 1993 Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) required federal programs to identify and measure their outcomes (impact)
 - Provide clearer evidence that the resources expended actually produce benefits for people
 - Assure donors, volunteers, and granting bodies that the money, time and other donations are making the maximum impact

Why Measure Outcomes?

- To help programs improve services
 - Outcome measurement provides a learning loop that feeds information back into programs on how well they are doing
 - Provides findings that can be used to adapt, improve and become more effective and efficient in meeting participants needs

Benefits to the Agency and Program

- Outcome Measurement can be used to:
 - Recruit and retain talented staff
 - Enlist and motivate able volunteers (including board members)
 - Attract new participants (clients)
 - Engage collaborators
 - Garner support for innovative efforts
 - Win designation as a model/demonstration site
 - Retain or increase funding
 - Gain favorable public recognition

Benefits to the Agency and Program

- Outcome Data can be used to:
 - Strengthen existing services
 - Target effective services for expansion
 - Identify staff and volunteer training needs
 - Develop and justify budgets
 - Prepare long-range plan
 - Develop strategic initiatives and partnerships
 - Focus board members' attention on programmatic issues
 - Anticipate increase or decrease in program need

Terminology Notes

- **Agency** is the organization that develops and administers the program. Agencies provide administrative (overhead) support
- **Program** is the defined activity resulting in specific benefits for targeted participants
- **Participant** is the individual or family served by the program (NOT VOLUNTEERS)
- **Activities** are the direct contact services pertaining to the program's purpose

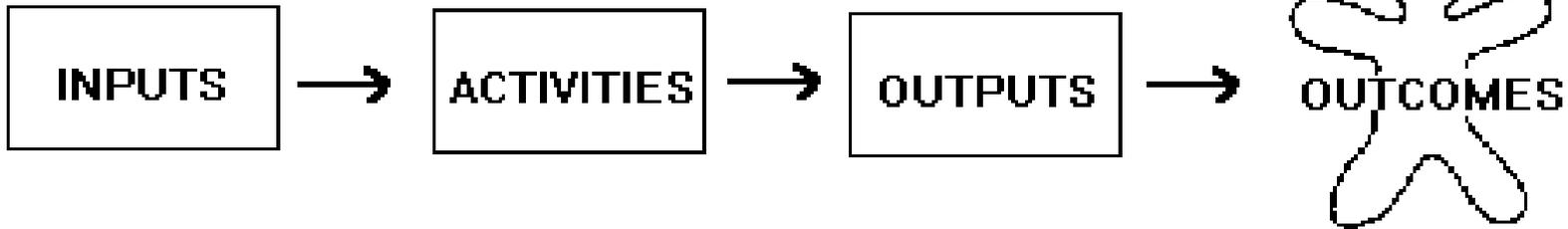
STEPS TO MEASURING OUTCOMES



Get Ready

- Decide which program to submit for grants
- Identify and Define:
 - **Inputs:** Resource dedicated or consumed by program or constraints on program
 - **Activities:** Strategies, techniques and types of treatments that comprise the service methodology
 - **Outputs:** Direct products of program activities, usually measures in volume of work accomplished

Program Outcome Model



INPUTS

Resources dedicated to or consumed by the program

e.g.

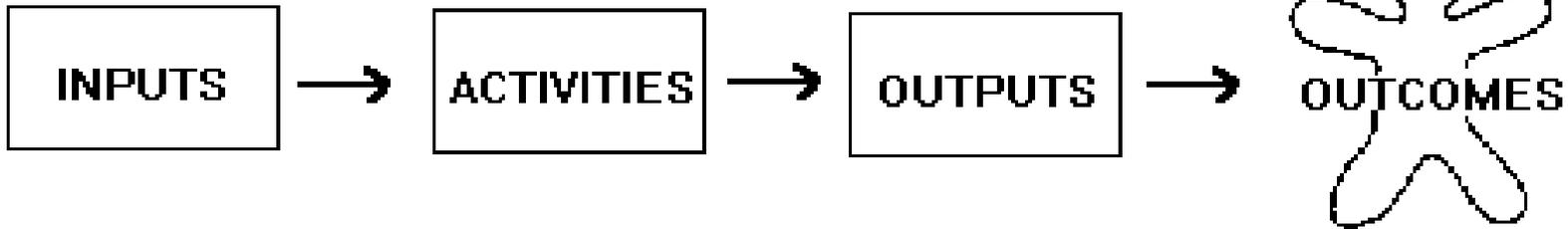
- money
- number and type of staff and staff time
- number of volunteers and volunteer time
- facilities
- types and amount of equipment and supplies

Constraints on the program

e.g.

- laws
- regulations
- fundings' requirements

Program Outcome Model



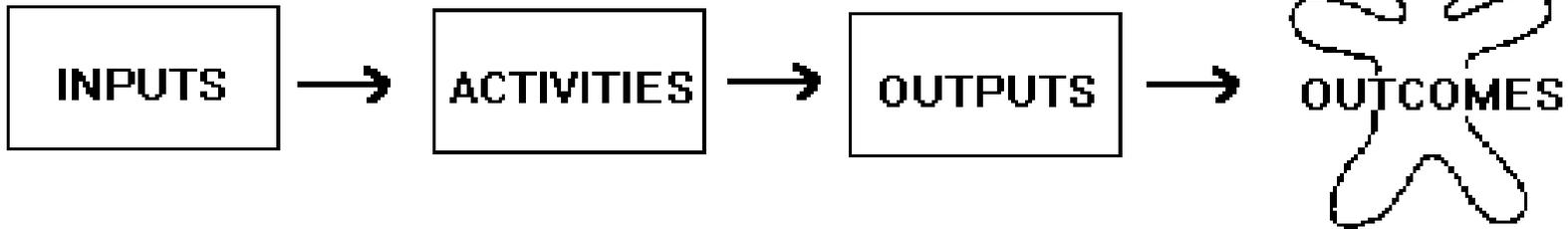
ACTIVITIES

What the program does with the inputs to fulfill its purpose

e.g.

- feed and shelter homeless families
- provide job training
- educate the public about signs of child abuse
- counsel pregnant women
- create mentoring relationships for youth

Program Outcome Model



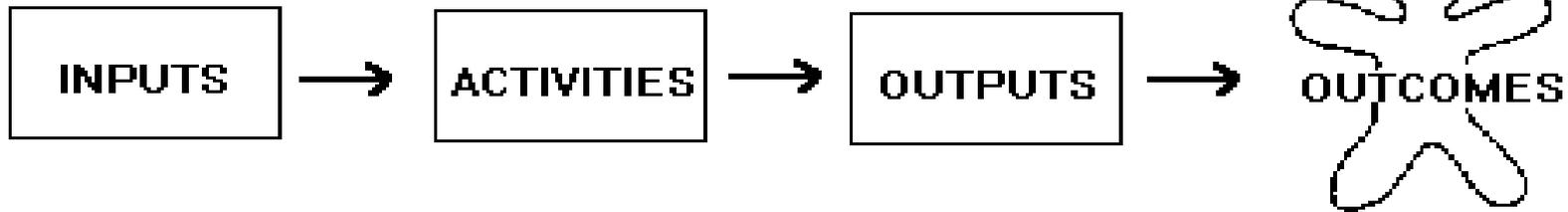
OUTPUTS

The direct products of program activities

e.g.

- number of classes taught
- number of counseling sessions conducted
- number of educational materials distributed
- number of hours of service delivered
- number of participants served

Program Outcome Model



OUTCOMES

Benefits for participants during and after program activities

e.g.

new knowledge
increased skills
changed attitudes or values



modified behavior



improved condition or altered status

STEPS TO MEASURING OUTCOMES



Questions for Developing Good Outcome Statements¹

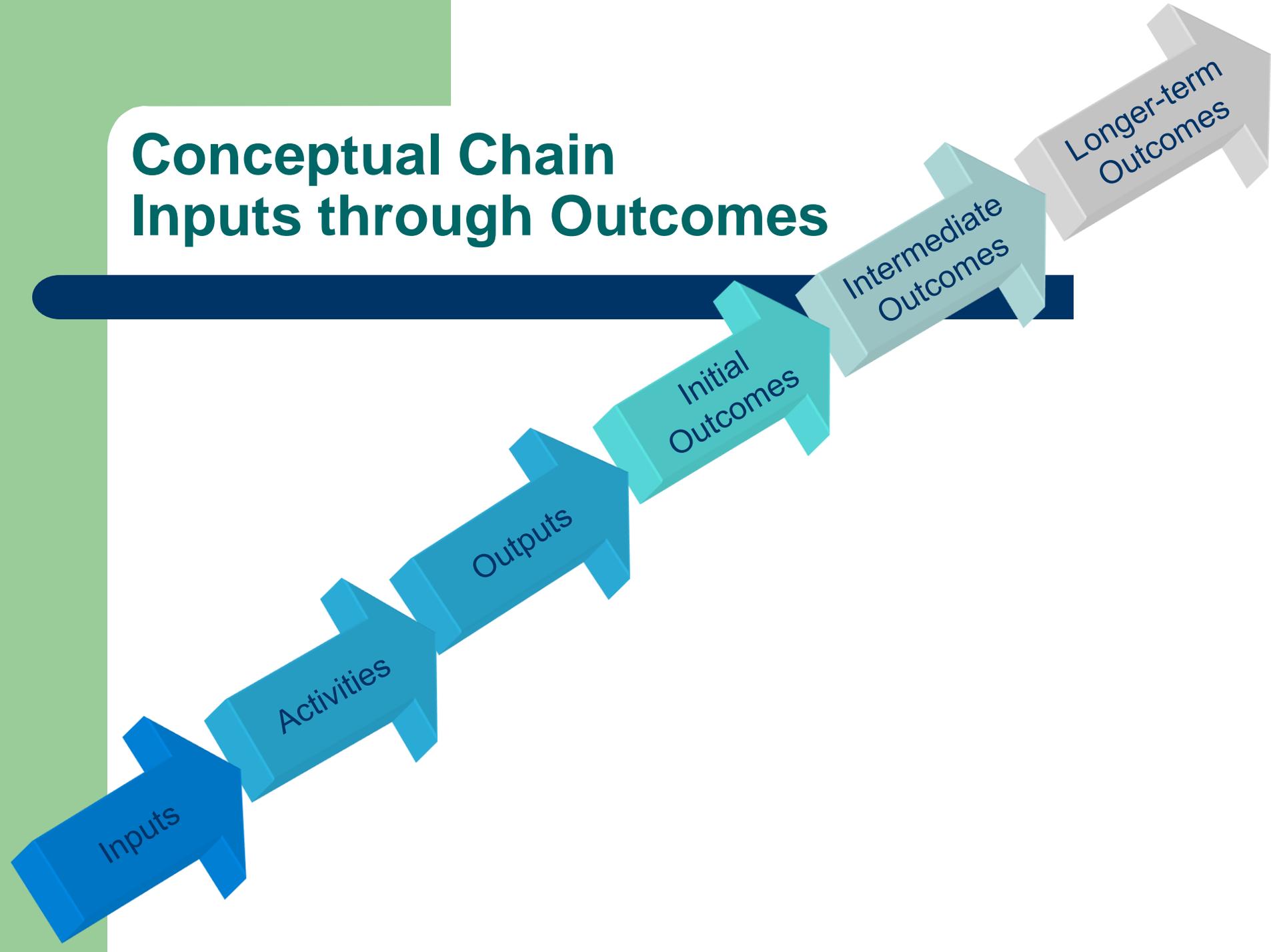
- What is the intent of the program?
- What is the target population that you want to benefit?
- Is there a specific geographic area?
- What magnitude of change can the program impact?
- What is the timeframe of the program?
- What would success look like?

Levels of Outcomes

- Initial Outcomes
 - First benefit or change participants experience
 - Change in knowledge, attitudes, or skills
- Intermediate Outcomes
 - Links initial outcome to longer-term outcome changes
 - Changes in behavior resulting from new knowledge, attitudes, or skills
- Longer-term Outcomes
 - Meaningful changes in participants condition or status
 - Participant status or condition does not decline or declines more slowly

Conceptual Chain

Inputs through Outcomes



Determine Outcomes by If-Then

If stop-smoking classes teach about health hazards and effective quitting techniques (output), **then** smokers acquire knowledge, change their attitudes, and gain skills to stop smoking (initial outcomes). **If** smokers know smoking is harmful, want to quit, and have skills to minimize withdrawal symptoms, **then** they will quit smoking (intermediate outcomes). **If** they can quit smoking then they will remain smoke free. (longer-term outcomes).

Determine Outcomes by If-Then

If youth are mentored by adults who stress the importance of education (output), **then** the youth will see education as important (initial outcome). **If** the youth see education as important, **then** they will attend school more regularly (intermediate outcome). **If** youth attend school more regularly, **then** they are more likely to graduate (intermediate outcome). **If** they graduate, **then** they are more likely to become employed or continue to further education (longer-term outcome).

Issues in Defining Outcomes

- There is not a right number of outcomes for a program
- Some programs may have more than one “outcome track”, a single outcome may have multiple “If-Then” chains
- For some programs, initial outcomes appear to be closer to outputs
 - Child in day care will be regularly present
- The more immediate the outcomes; the more influence a program generally has on it achievement
 - Child entering day care at age 3 progress toward age appropriate motor, verbal, and social skills.
 - Children entering day care at age 3 will be kindergarten ready by age 5
- The longer term the outcomes; the less direct influence a program has over its achievement.
 - Children entering day care at age 3 will perform better through 3rd grade
- Keep the program’s purpose/target audience in mind. Don’t make unrealistic leaps to outcomes as in the following examples:
 - Children entering day care will have a higher graduation rate
 - Parents’ of children in day care will be more involved with the child’s education

STEPS TO MEASURING OUTCOMES



Determine Indicator for Outcomes

- Indicator is:
 - A specific outcome measurement indicating how well the program is doing regarding the outcome
 - An observable, measurable characteristic or change that will represent achievement of the outcome; and
 - Used to provide specific statistic(s) (e.g. # and % attaining the outcome) to summarize the programs level of achievement
 - Unambiguous and data driven

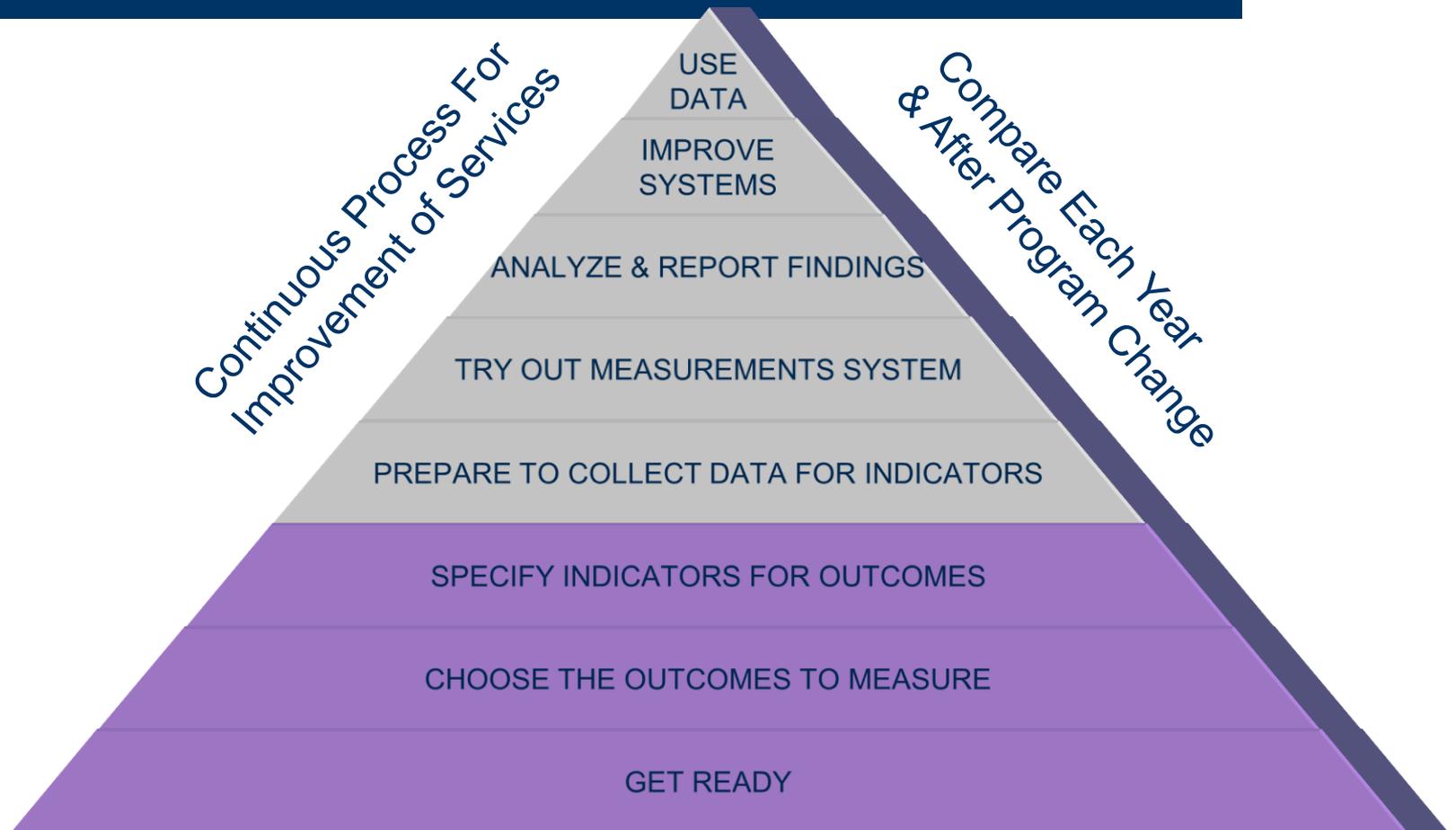
Specific Indicators for Outcomes

- Check indicators for the following:
 - Is there at least one indicator for each outcome?
 - Does each indicator measure some important aspect of the outcome that no other indicators measure?
 - Is the wording of each indicator sufficiently specific to the outcome? Does it tell you what characteristic or change you will count?
 - Does each indicator identify the statistic that will summarize the program's performance on the outcome? Will the statistic convey your level of achievement effectively?

Check Indicator of Outcomes

- Make sure Outcome Indicators:
 - Use local data
 - Address local need
 - Measure specific targeted demographic
 - Take into account influencing factors and, if needed, determine different target subsets within the factors
 - Can be measured by the tools available to the agency and tools are specific enough to track the change expected in the outcome

STEPS TO MEASURING OUTCOMES



Types of Measurements

- Pre and Post Testing
- Number and % completing program (not for all programs)
- Observable change in of behaviors, skill, attitude
- Self-reported change in behavior, skill, attitude
- Third-party reported change in participant
 - School/Work attendance, Grades/Job performance, Job skills
- Number and % of participants no longer needing program
- Number and % participants achieving program goals
 - Job Interviews, Job obtained, Job retained
 - Independence, Education, Better health/coping skills
- Decrease in criminal activity or interaction with courts

SOME OF THE CURRENT LOGIC MODEL and OUTCOME ISSUES SEEN

- Unclear program definition
 - Agencies list every activity as part of a program
- Listing the training and recruitment of volunteers
 - Volunteers needed for the program are an input the agency needs to address; not a program indicator
- Using number of participants as an outcome indicator
- Using incomplete or inappropriate demographics for counting participants
- Inability to show or track changes in the number of participants who improved or maintained condition or status
- Indicators don't match the outcomes, outcomes don't match the program's purpose statement, activities aren't program specific
- Indicator targets are unrealistic or there are no plans to get better by changing the program
- No comparison of data from year to year to show improvement, growth, or increase or decrease in need

Final Thought

“Everything should be made as simple as possible, but no simpler”

ALBERT EINSTEIN

THANK YOU

FEEDBACK

QUESTIONS

COMMENTS

Building Your Own Logic Model

1. Assemble all program staff along with a few non-program staff, board members or clients
2. Label columns on a board/wall with: inputs, activities, outputs.
3. Using post-it notes have all staff write down inputs, activities and output, one thought per post-it for no more than 5 minutes.
4. Have team members place them under a column heading.
5. Have all team quietly review the columns and repeat step 3 and 4.
6. Discuss and refine the columns; after consensus begin to build outcomes.

Building your own logic model

7. Again have team members use post-its to write how you expect participant to benefit from the programs.
8. Post on the wall; sort into short-term, intermediate and long-term expectations/outcome,
9. Determine how each expectation is currently measured.
10. Determine the most important short-term, intermediate, long-term outcomes using if/then statements.
11. Identify or create a measurement for each outcome.
12. Develop targets for success, measure, compare, modify, repeat annually.

STEPS TO MEASURING OUTCOMES

