

Ten Tips for Developing Your Outcome Measurement Strategy

1. **Measure what you can, and measure what you should:** Consider your project's objectives to ensure that they are actually measurable. When assessing the progress of your sub-awardees, measure that which is most vital to the intended results of your program.
2. **Plan the evaluation and the programs together:** If possible, flesh out your evaluation plan and your program design concurrently, rather than waiting to devise an outcome measurement strategy as an afterthought when your program activities have already begun
3. **Consult the standards:** If there is no expert on your staff to competently identify measures and indicators, consult the generally accepted tools, models and standards to define your own. For example, the Foundation for Community Empowerment (FCE) makes use of the "*McKinsey 7 S*" framework and other tools to assess the capacity of their sub-awardees.
4. **Get the know-how:** You may wish to acquire the expertise in measuring outcomes that your staff may lack through partnerships, not just through hiring or contracting.
5. **The "before" snapshot:** When your strategy consists of taking "pre-test" and "post-test" measurements, the "pre-test" snapshot of your sub-awardees is known as a baseline profile. Baseline profiles help intermediaries tailor their program activities to address the technical assistance needs of sub-awardees.
6. **Take the baseline profile early:** Capture the sub-award baseline profiles as soon as possible to ensure the most accurate measurement of the program's impacts. Many organizations concurred with GMCC's use of mandatory informational sessions wherein the application material is distributed and explained. At that time, the intermediary organization can record baseline information on prospective sub-awardees.
7. **Integrate the baseline profile:** Integrate your means of capturing the baseline profile, such as a survey tool, within the application. This will make the "pre-test" portion of your assessment seamless to the applicant. You will already have the baseline profiles of your sub-awardees as soon as you have selected them. However, this will also yield data on the declinees, which may be either cumbersome or helpful to the intermediary.
8. **Flesh out the details of the baseline:** Many intermediaries find it helpful to augment self-administered surveys with staff-conducted interviews, site visits, etc.
9. **Full Service or Self-Serve?** Self-administered baseline surveys are fine for collecting quantitative data. But staff administered baseline surveys, which are more time and resource consuming, can yield more forthright, accurate and qualitative data
10. **The Cycle of Refinement:** Assessment shapes programs; programs shape assessment, and so on. Periodically revise your sub-awardees work plans and technical assistance efforts according to the information yielded from your evaluative activities.

Measures of accomplishments:

Accomplishment measures report what was provided and achieved with the resources used. There are two types of measures of accomplishments—outputs and outcomes. Outputs measure the quantity of services provided; outcomes measure the results of providing those outputs.

(1) Output measures:

(a) ***Quantity of a service provided:*** These indicators measure the physical quantity of a service provided. For example, measures may include the number of students promoted or graduated; the number of passenger miles provided by public transit; the number of lane-miles of road repaired; and the number of crimes investigated.

(b) ***Quantity of a service provided that meets a certain quality requirement:*** These indicators measure the physical quantity of a service provided that meets a test of quality. For example, measures may include the percentage of students graduated or promoted who have met a minimum pre-specified standard of achievement; the percentage of buses meeting a pre-specified on-time standard of achievement; the percentage of lane-miles of road repaired to a certain minimum satisfactory condition; and the percentage of criminal investigations performed that result in the identification of prime suspect. In some cases, meeting a quality requirement may turn an "output" indicator into an "outcome" indicator.

(2) Outcome measures:

(a) These indicators measure accomplishments or results that occur (at least partially) because of services provided. Results also include measures of public perceptions of outcomes. For example, measures may include the percentage of students achieving a specified skill-level gain in reading; the percentage of the population being served by public transportation; the percentage of lane-miles of road in excellent, good, or fair condition; and the clearance rate for serious crimes or the percentage of residents rating their neighborhood as safe or very safe.

(b) Outcome measures are particularly useful when presented as comparisons with results from previous years, entity-established targets or goals and objectives, generally accepted norms and standards, other parts of the entity, or other, comparable jurisdictions (both public and private). For example, measures may include 75 percent of the students achieving a specified skill-level gain in reading when the school district's objective is for at least 70 percent of the students to achieve the specified skill-level gain in reading or where 65 percent of the students statewide achieve the specified skill-level gain; 25 percent of the population being served by public transportation when the transit system's objective is to serve at least 35 percent of the population or where the norm for similar transit systems is that 30 percent of the public is being served; 88 percent of the lane-miles of road in excellent, good, or fair condition when the entity's objective is for at least 85 percent of the lane-miles of road to be in excellent, good, or fair condition or where an average of 80 percent of the lane-miles of road were in excellent, good, or fair condition for the previous five years; and 25 percent of serious crimes cleared by indictment when the entity's objective is to clear 35 percent or where the national average is 21 percent.

(c) Sometimes the secondary effects of a service on the recipients, state, or community may be identified and may warrant reporting. These measures include significant indirect consequences, intended or unintended and positive or negative, that occur as a result of providing a service. For example, measures may include a decrease in the unemployment rate in a community as a result of a decrease in the school dropout rate (more students are staying in school and are not looking for employment); a decrease in traffic accidents because of an increase in the percentage of the population using public transit; a decrease in vehicle repair costs because of an increase in the percentage of lane-miles of road in good condition; and an increase in the reported crime rate because a new street patrol system results in a larger percentage of committed crimes being reported. These measures often are difficult to identify and to relate to the actual service being provided. This occurs because of an inability to establish a definite correlation between the secondary effects and the service and because extraneous factors may affect the results.

Measures that relate efforts to accomplishments:

(1) Efficiency measures that relate efforts to outputs of services: These indicators measure the resources used or cost (for example, in dollars, employee-hours, or equipment used) per unit of output. They provide information about the production of an output at a given level of resource use and demonstrate an entity's relative efficiency when compared with previous results, internally established goals and objectives, generally accepted norms or standards, or results achieved by similar jurisdictions. For example, measures may include the cost per full-time-equivalent student or the cost per student promoted or graduated; the cost per transit passenger or per passenger-mile; the cost per lane-mile of road repaired in total or repaired to good condition; and the cost per serious crime investigated or per arrest.

(2) Cost-outcome measures that relate efforts to the outcomes or results of services: These measures report the cost per unit of outcome or result. They relate costs and results so that management, elected officials and the public can begin to assess the value of the services provided by an entity. For example, cost-outcome measures may include the cost per student who achieves a specified skill-level gain in reading; the cost per transit passenger arriving at his or her stop within a specific time schedule; the cost per lane-mile of road improved or maintained in excellent, good, or fair condition; and the cost per serious crime cleared by indictment

Coordination: Clear documentation of coordination efforts will be an asset to the evaluation process. Copies of documents that support coordination efforts