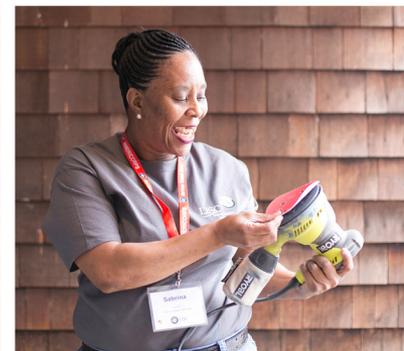




Guiding Subgrantees and Sites in Data Collection

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AmeriCorps State and National Symposium

SEPTEMBER 18-20, 2019 | ARLINGTON, VA



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Session Outline

- Goals of data collection
- Common questions and possible answers:
 - What data do I have to collect?
 - Where should I get the data?
 - How should I collect the data?
 - What should I do with the data after I collect it?
 - What if the data makes my program look bad?
- Activities and discussion
- Resources



Goals of Data Collection

- Provide a sound basis for decision making
- Improve service quality and outcomes
- Increase accountability
- Tell your story in a more compelling way



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What Data Do I Have to Collect?

Programs are required to collect:

- Performance measure data
 - Outputs and outcomes specified in the approved grant application
- Demographic data
 - Demographic indicators listed in the Notice of Funding Opportunity and/or the Grantee Progress Report instructions (**updated for 2019**)
- Evaluation data (for re-competing grantees)
 - See “Choosing Data for Your Evaluation” presentation



What Data Do I Have to Collect?

Programs are recommended to collect:

- Anything that helps the program tell its story effectively
 - Long-term outcomes
 - Qualitative data/stories
- Anything that helps guide the program's continuous development
 - Member-focused data
 - Implementation-focused data
 - Impact-focused data



Where Should I Get the Data?

Look for sources that are practical, reliable, and provide high quality information

- Put safeguards in place related to those sources (e.g., data sharing agreements)
- Be proactive about setting up sources of backup data (e.g., collecting information directly from beneficiaries as well as from third-party sources)



How Should I Collect the Data?

Select a tool/instrument that is valid for the type of data being collected AND feasible for the beneficiary populations, partner organizations, and data collectors

- Option 1: Look for tools that already exist
- Option 2: Make your own tool



How Should I Collect the Data?

Option 1: Look for tools that already exist

- Pro: Already tested and proven to work
- Con: Not fully under the program's control
- Things to consider:
 - Cost
 - Accessibility
 - Fit with specific program circumstances or populations served
 - Ability to modify/customize tool without impacting proven effectiveness



How Should I Collect the Data?

Option 2: Make your own tool

- Pro: Easier to access
- Con: Hasn't been tested/proven to work
- Things to watch out for:
 - “Leading” questions
 - Questions that do not adequately assess change
 - Questions that create barriers



Activity: Part A

Based on the description of the hypothetical AmeriCorps program

HANDY:

- What type(s) of data should the program collect?
- What source(s) should the program use for each type?
- What kind of tool(s) should the program use to collect each type of data?



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Small Group Discussion: Part A

- What challenges have you encountered among your subgrantees/sites related to data sources or data collection tools?
- What solutions, if any, have you shared with them?
- What questions/advice/suggestions do you have for your peers on this topic?



What Should I Do With the Data I Collect?

- Report it
 - To funders (progress reports, evaluation reports)
 - To stakeholders (annual reports)
 - To the public (press releases and social media)



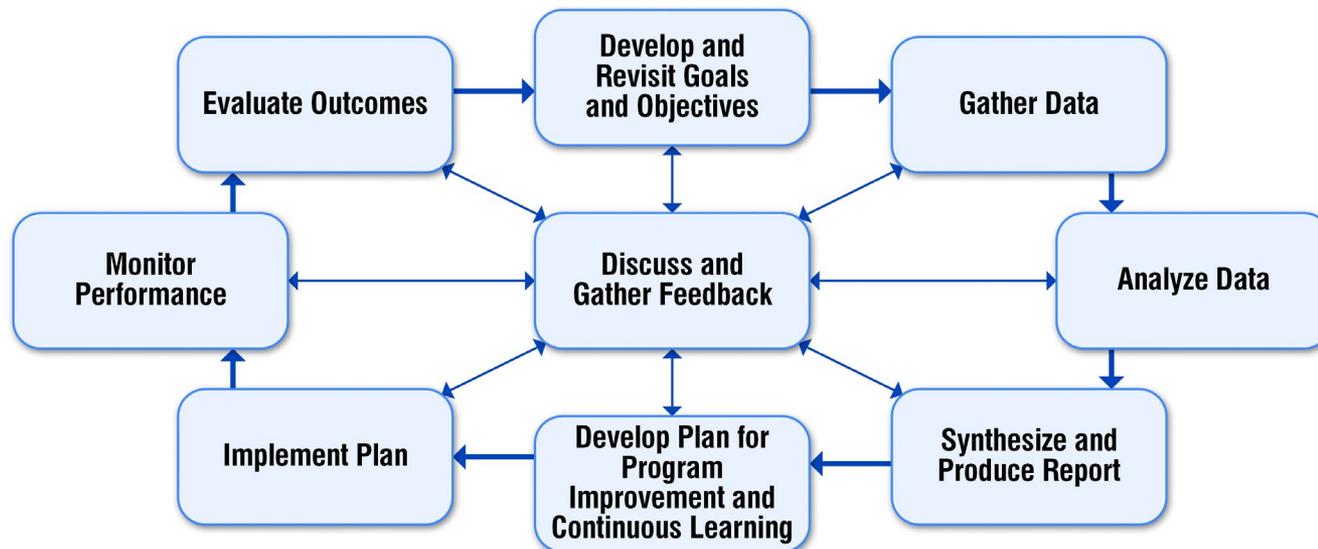
What Should I Do With the Data I Collect?

- Analyze it
 - **Compare actuals to targets:** are you achieving what you expected?
 - **Assess scope of impact vs. scope of need:** are you addressing the community problem in a meaningful way?
 - **Look at resource allocation patterns:** is your program using time/money/personnel effectively?
 - **Compare results for subgroups:** are you seeing different outputs/outcomes for different sites or populations?
 - **Evaluate links between activities and outcomes:** do some activities produce better results than others?



What Should I Do With the Data I Collect?

- Use it for continuous improvement
 - Celebrate successes and work to replicate/expand them
 - Pinpoint areas of concern and brainstorm strategies for improvement



What if the Data Makes My Program Look Bad?

- Make it better! Use data to fuel continuous growth (culture of learning)
 - Primary goal of performance measurement and evaluation: to understand areas of strength and challenge and guide program improvement
- Be honest in reporting your data
- Look for ways to strengthen your data collection strategies
- Re-assess your Theory of Change and program model if necessary
 - Look for existing evidence-based approaches that address similar needs



Activity: Part B

Review the data collected by the hypothetical AmeriCorps program
HANDY:

- What area(s) of strength or concern are revealed by the data?
- What potential actions could the program explore to improve its effectiveness?



Small Group Discussion: Part B

- What challenges have you encountered among your subgrantees/sites related to data analysis or using data for program improvement?
- What solutions, if any, have you shared with them?
- What questions/advice/suggestions do you have for your peers on this topic?



Resources

- Performance Measurement Core Curriculum:
<https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/training-resources>
- Collecting High Quality Outcome Data courses (Part 1 and Part 2)
- Data Collection and Instruments resources

- Evaluation Core Curriculum:
<https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation/all-evaluation-resources>
- Data Collection course
- Reporting and Using Evaluation Results course



Resources

- Other Performance Measurement Resources:
<https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/other-amerikorps-performance-measurement-resources>
- Data Quality Review Best Practices course
- AmeriCorps Program and Staff Development Series:
 - <https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/amerikorps/new-amerikorps-program-start-institute>
 - Building Effective Data Collection Plans (recorded webinar)
 - How to Review Data Collection Plans (recorded webinar)

