

How to Review Data Collection Plans

(April 26, 2018)



Text Transcript

Barbara Reynolds: Hi everyone, good afternoon. This is Barbara Reynolds at the Corporation for National Service. I'm delighted to kick off our Webinar today. I see a bunch of folks have logged in to join us. Thank you so much for making time to talk about this very important topic. I can also see on the screen, hopefully you can as well, there a bunch of folks who put yourselves on the map. I believe Margy in Alaska is our furthest away participant. Welcome. Thank you for doing that. If you haven't put yourself on the map already please do now. There's also a quick little poll here in the lobby if you want to just take a second to answer, this is again, informal, trying to gather some information on the types of data collection activities or yeah, the categories of activities that you have at your commission. So I'm going to give it three seconds now for you to answer the poll and then I'll end the poll. So three, two, one. We are ending it. Excellent and hopefully you can see some results now.

All right so we will go ahead and jump into our content today. As I said, welcome. Thank you again for making time out. I hope you're able to see everything on the slides, you can hear me clearly. We are going to do, I'm going to do just a quick technology check with you and make a couple of introductory comments before we jump into our content today.

So a couple of things about the layout of the screen in front of you right now. You should be seeing the PowerPoint slide in front of you. To your left you should see the chat box. And then on the bottom of your screen there's a box called web links. And there are three things that are posted for you there. I want to make sure that you see there's a link to the page on the knowledge network where the slides, the PowerPoint slides for the presentation are now posted. You have active access to these slides right now. There's also a link to the handout that our presenters will use today as well as a link to the training evaluation form. The evaluation we're going to come back to at the end so don't worry about that. I just wanted to let you know that that link is posted for you already right there.

As you heard and saw hopefully when you logged in, and on your screen, you can see that this presentation's being recorded. The audio's being recorded as well as the slides so if you don't want to be recorded please hang up and log off. We will take this presentation, do some conversion work to it and make it publicly available in probably the next seven to eight business days. So just to let you know the recording of these slides and the audio that you'll hear today will go up on the Knowledge Network in early May.

So in addition to looking at slides today, we are going to use the chat box a couple of times for the presentation. We'll also have the chat box open throughout the presentation and multiple staff will have our eyeballs on this chat box. So I want to make sure that you have that feature open and that you are using it, so it's working for you. So if you could, go ahead and test the chat feature. Type a short greeting to your colleague, I see Margy says hello, and the link isn't working. Hang on one second I'll make a comment about that. Erin, greetings from Pennsylvania, thank you so much. Great, I see lots of howdies and his coming in. Thank you very much to our commission colleagues as well as our own CNCS colleagues. Thank you some Program Officer's is also chiming in. Terrific, thank you guys for confirming both but you can hear my voice, which is always comforting in a webinar type situation. And also that the chat feature is going to work for you.

So as I said, the chat box is going to stay open throughout the presentation. They'll be a couple of times when you're asked to answer questions in the chat box. And you can also use the chat box if you have a question or comment as Margy just noted, that something ... there's a technical challenge you're having or there's some sort of question you have. We will look at the chat box casually, I will say, for the most part throughout the presentation. We'll definitely look at everything that you put in there. The way that we respond and the timing of our response and how we respond will depend on what you're asking. So just a heads up. Please feel free to chat in anything you want and be prepared that we may hold off on answering it or responding to your question.

Okay, so I see some back and forth about the link for the data collection planner review tool, so hopefully amongst yourselves and with some technical help you'll be able to access that web link. Just as an aside, Margy, and for anyone else who may not be able to get to this document, the data collection plan review tool is also posted on the

Knowledge Network. It's its own standalone document on nationalservice.gov/resources, so you can get to it that way as well if for some reason the Adobe connect feature isn't working perfectly.

Alright, so I am going to make just a few introductory comments about these webinars. Generally, just to provide a frame for what it is we're going to be doing together and why. Many of you know, I recognized your names in the participant list, many of you know that we have these ongoing series of staff or program development webinars. For this year we're looking at targeting some of our sessions just to commissions like today's session. And targeting some of our sessions just to program staff, to new program staff or Tribal program staff. So you can see all of that in our training calendar. We hope today, as we do with all our webinars, we hope it gives you a chance to take a step back from the day-to-day business of the crazy hard work that you have to do at your commission and focus on something that's a big issue, and a longer term issue. So just to give you a bit of a break from the work that we're doing.

So the series for this year, as I said, has a combination of commissions specific sessions as well as combo program and commission related topics. The items are here for you, these are the titles of the workshops and the webinars that appear on our training calendar, just an FYI on that.

So we are looking today, you guys probably saw in the email promotion for the webinar, the presenters I think have really targeted the content to State Commission staff who are directly involved in assessing the subgrantee data collection plans, and really providing kind of hands on, real-time assistance. I think the content they've put together for you is very practical and very applicable so I just want you to know that's definitely the intention and what we're going for. We do think this content is relevant for program staff certainly relevant for Tribal program staff. You'll just see though the words we use and the words on the screen, a lot, are targeting commission staff.

Okay, so I just want to take one more quick minute and get a little more information on our audience so our presenters will know. We saw a little bit in the first poll about the kinds of data collection activities you do. Right now if you would please, those of you who are hearing my voice, if you could go into the chat box and just type in your job title, right, we can see your name. We see your full name on the screen now in the chat box. Just want to know for those of you from the commissions if you are the Director of the Commission, Program Officer, etc. So I see a bunch of folks, yep. Grants and Contracts Officer, terrific. Monitoring and Compliance, Assistant Director, perfect, yep. As you guys can see, lots of different exact job titles in the commission network, but I'm seeing the things to scroll here instead of typing in a good combo of folks who are identified as Program Officer's, training officers or consultants, financial staff etc. so thank you for that. Keep it coming. If you haven't typed in your job title yet please keep doing. As I said, we'll keep an eye on this chat, definitely want to get this information for all of our participants today.

The next question I have is to just get a sense of your length of time working with CNCS grants. So hopefully on the screen in front of you right now, you'll see ... oops sorry it's supposed to be a different poll. That's fine. The poll question you have in front of you right now, what is your level of experience with data collection? And level just meaning years, amount of time that you've worked with it. So you can just take a few seconds, trying to get everyone to identify in one of these categories. I see a bunch of people making selections, thank you. Hopefully at this point you guys can also all see these results. So of this poll in terms of level of experience, right now, most of you have been getting close to half, right? Half of our folks are identifying as intermediate level, so one to five years of experience. Looks like a couple folks maybe newbies, pretty new to data collection. That's awesome, welcome. Number of folks identify as experts so that's terrific, advanced and then experts as well. Okay, I'm going to go ahead and end this poll now. You can see the results.

And then we just have one more. Alright this is my first poll question, just want to get a sense of how long ... we know your names, we've been greeted by you from your various locations, we know a lot of your job titles, we know how you identify your level of experience in data collection. Now we just want to get a sense of how many years of service with CNCS grants. So, yep take a couple seconds just to complete this poll. I believe, you can see again, we have a good mix. A couple of folks identifying as having worked at CNCS grants for less than a year. Awesome, welcome. Number of folks in the one to five year range. Good combination of six to ten and more than ten years. All right. Thank you so much. Alright, so I'm going to end that poll.

As I said, we want to ... we take the time to do this type of introductory information so the presenters can get a little more of a sense of who we're talking to in real time. We know because you registered for today's session we had some information on your names and your organizations. Obviously our presenters know many of you as your program officers, but we just wanted to get an overall sense of our audience. So thank you for doing that. And now it is my pleasure to turn it over to your first presenter today. Curtis, please take it away.

Curtis Cannon: Good afternoon, this is Curtis Cannon, Program Officer here at the Corporation for National Community Service, and thank you Barbara for the introduction. As you can see here there was some pre-work assigned

today. Participants were asked to review the previously-recorded "Building Effective Data Collection Plans" webinar prior to joining. Here's the link for the session just in case you missed it earlier. During this webinar we presented a sample outline for a high-quality data collection planning and described the key elements that should be part of the plan.

If you weren't able to do the pre-work prior to attending today's webinar, that's okay, we still want you to be part of this session. There is a handy resource in the Knowledge Network that will give you a quick overview of the elements of an effective data collection plan. We will paste the URL for this document in the chat bar right now. After today's training is over you can follow the link in the PowerPoint to review the full content of the recorded "Building Effective Data Collection Plans" webinar. And we're posting that link.

And just to go over the session outline, during today's session we will discuss data collection plan expectations, and the review process and key elements for developing data collection plans. We'll also walk through the review of sample data collection plans. And at the end of the session we'll share helpful CNCS resources as well as provide time for questions.

Okay, data collection plan expectations. Programmatic data collection and reporting is the fundamental requirement of being an AmeriCorps grantee or subgrantee. Just like financial data tracking, in order to do this well programs need to have plans for what data they'll collect and how they will collect it. The plans should cover all the data elements that are required by CNCS. CNCS, including the performance measure outputs and outcomes in the programs awarded application. As well as required demographic data such as the number of volunteers leveraged by the program and the number of AmeriCorps applicants. In addition, the data collection plan should include other types of information both qualitative and quantitative that tell the story of program impact and that help staff assess how well their program is working and making decisions about how to improve it. The data collection plan should be in place in the very beginning of the program year so data collection is done effectively and consistently from day one.

The 2018 Notice of Funding Opportunity required all new applicants to submit a data collection plan as part of their application. These plans were to include a description of the applicant's data collection system and how it is sufficient to collect high quality performance measurement data. And a description of how the applicant will use performance data, including CNCS performance measures and other process and outcome measures if applicable, to improve its program. If the applicant did not have a data collection system at the time of application submission, they were asked to describe the plan and timeline for developing a high-quality system.

Distinct from the pre award grant resolution process, commission staff are expected to review and provide feedback on all data collection plans submitted by new competitive grantees as well as formula subgrantees if desired. Here are a few things to note. This is not a formal approval process and does not require revisions in the eGrants application. This is meant to be a starting point for ongoing discussions and TTA with your subgrantees. The goal here is to ensure that an effective data collection plan is in place by the start of the program year. CNCS Program Officers will be doing the same thing for new National Direct and Tribal grantees, on our end.

Here are the steps to follow in data collection plan review process. The first step is to read the data collection plan submitted in the Evaluation Summary or Plan section of the application. The second step is to use a Review Tool that follows the format of the data collection plan outline. You will mark each component of the plan as satisfactory or needs further development and provide any comments as needed to explain the rating. The review tool has already been posted on the Knowledge Network as discussed earlier, alongside the PowerPoint for this presentation.

Continuing the review process, the third step is to provide the completed review tool to the grantee and schedule a call to talk through your feedback. And finally, the fourth step, through ongoing and program management is to work with the grantee to strengthen and implement their data collection plan during the program year. For competitive applications, external reviewer feedback may also touch on relevant elements from the application narrative. Specifically whether the applicant's data collection systems are sufficient to yield high quality process and data outcomes and whether the applicant demonstrated adequate capacity used process and outcome data including performance measurements. And evaluation data is applicable to perform continuous learning as the program improvement. Although the content and the application narrative is separate from the data collection plan we are talking about today in this webinar, the reviewers feedback about the topics may provide a helpful perspective to inform a broader conversation about the grantees strategies for data collection and usage.

Now I'd like to hand it over to Sarah Foster to discuss the key elements of data collection plans.

Sarah Foster: Thanks, Curtis. So as Curtis mentioned in the beginning of the webinar you were asked to look over the "Building Effective Data Collection Plans" webinar that was presented last October as a refresher for this session. I'm

going to take a few minutes to quickly go through the key elements of data collection plans. These elements should be included in a high quality data collection plan.

First, the grantee will determine the data to be collected. There are three basic buckets of data. First, performance measures outputs and outcomes from the approved application which will include at least one aligned performance measure connected to the primary service activity. The data collection plan should mirror the language in the performance measure text and should provide additional details as needed including the definition of key terms such as improvement.

Second, demographic indicators required by the notice of funding opportunity which includes the number of applicants for AmeriCorps positions and the number of episodic and ongoing volunteers recruited and or supported by AmeriCorps members. Other optional demographic indicators are listed in the grantee progress report instructions. Grantees should collect data on any of these indicators that are relevant to their program designs. And while AmeriCorps state and national requires programs to report of performance measures and demographic indicators, other programmatic data should also be collected to help the program tell the story of its impact and to inform continuous program improvement. All data collected should be guided by the program's theory of change.

Next, the grantee must determine the source of the data. A data source is the person, groups, or organization that has information to answer measurement questions. The source needs to be appropriate. Appropriate includes following the national performance measure instruction for that measure as some NPM's have required data sources. The source needs to be valid and authentic for the type of change being measured and the source needs to be objective. There may be a variety of sources that provide appropriate, valid, and objective data but the public records, local authorities, or program beneficiaries themselves, grantees need to determine the source that works best for them.

The third step is choosing appropriate instruments and describing them in detail. Instruments need to measure what they're supposed to measure. An output instrument should ensure an unduplicated count of your data as well as track the dosage or amount of service provided. The outcome instrument needs to be appropriate for measuring the type of change that you're assessing. An instrument that tracks the change in knowledge is different than an instrument that tracks the change in attitude or behavior. And ideally your outcome instrument can be used for pre/post measurements. That is you use the instrument both before and after the intervention to see the impact of the intervention.

Additionally, instruments need to work for all beneficiaries. For example, a survey should use language that everyone can understand and should be able to be used across multiple service locations. Along the same lines of the data source some national performance measure outputs and outcomes have required instruments. Therefore, the program must follow the NPM instructions for that measure if applicable.

The fourth key element is selecting the person or people responsible for data collection. Data collectors can come in the form of program staff, AmeriCorps members, or volunteers. There are also many roles in working with data such as collection, analysis, and reporting. The individuals who are responsible for data collection should have access to the sources and instruments, ideally are qualified or experienced in collecting programmatic data, and are as objective as possible when administering the instruments.

The grantee should determine a data collection schedule. The schedule will ensure that the program has the resources, as in sources, instruments, and collectors in place to effectively collect program data. The schedule may include training, administering both a pilot test and program data collection and due dates for recording. A data collection schedule should also allot enough time to achieve a reasonable response rate, providing quality data for timely meaningful results. And everyone who is involved in collecting and using data should be informed of the schedule.

The sixth element is the creation of the data storage plan. All source documentation needs to be stored to ensure verifiability of reported data. Source documentation includes survey responses, attendance sheets, or any other completed instrument used by the program to collect data. Additionally, the data should be stored in a user friendly format. This will allow for easier aggregation and analysis of data once it's been collected. And documentation needs to be secured storely to protect any sensitive information such as PII. If your source data is hard copies they should be locked away when not in use. And if on a computer the documents can be password protected so only those working with data have access to it.

The seventh element is implementing training for data collectors. It is important for all data collectors to be trained so that they understand the importance of the data, how the data will be use, how and when to use the instruments, and how to properly store data. Training should prepare the data collectors for gathering high quality data for the program supporting needs as well as to provide solid information for decision making.

The eighth element is pilot testing the program data collection methods and instruments. The pilot test will work best if the methods and instruments can be used with a similar population before the program starts. For example, if the program measures change in a student's behavior during the school year, a pilot test could take place during summer school. And the data from the pilot test will allow the program to see if the collected data provides the proper useful information. If not, the program will have time to make changes before implementing its methods and tools before the program year.

Once the grantee has collected data, the next element is analysis. Data analysis allows the grantee to assess the quality of its program and the effects of its intervention. The analysis can be used to show whether or not the program is on target to reach its goals. And not only can you aggregate your data for reporting outputs and outcomes, but you can also break it down to see if there are interventions that work better in one setting or for one population than others. All results should be used to inform the program continuous improvement.

The final key element of the data collection plan is to take all the data gathered and analyzed and use it for program improvement. Using data for decision making encourages a culture of learning. The grantee can explore where there are gaps in service so that the program can extend its reach. The grantee can use the collected and analyzed data to determine how to increase the program's effectiveness in achieving output and outcome goals. And finally, the grantee can use the results of that analysis to help build the evidence base for the program.

The data collection plan review tool, which is based on a data collection plan outline document we described earlier provides space to assess each of these ten key elements of a data collection plan. For each element you can mark the review tool as satisfactory or needs further development and provide comments about specific aspects that need to be strengthened. To practice this, Amy will start us off by taking a look at the sample programs featured in the previous "Building Effective Data Collection Plans" webinar.

Amy Hetrick: Hi everyone. Yes, we are going to use the sample program that was in the last webinar as an example program to practice reviewing these key elements in a data collection plan. This will help you to help you get your review programs off to a great start. So just as a refresher of what this program design included, it was Safer Cities AmeriCorps. The goal of the program is to increase public safety and improve police and community relations, that'll operate in five cities, they'll have 20 half time members who will develop activities to connect police and community members. They'll also share information about strategies to improve public safety and reduce local crime rates.

So, in this activity that we're going to do together, we're going to assume that Safer Cities AmeriCorps is a new, competitive sub applicant and they submitted the data collection plan that you see on the slides as part of their application in the evaluation summary or plan part of that application. So I'm going to read it to you.

The Safer Cities AmeriCorps program will collect data to assess progress towards meeting performance measures and identify opportunities to improve the program. We will count how many people attend the trainings and events led by AmeriCorps members. We will also assess pre and post-surveys to assess improvements in public safety and police officer-community relations in order to measure performance indicators. We will develop our survey and tracking tools over the summer of 2018. Members will input data about their service activities and impact into a secure and robust database called SafeCityBase. Staff will also use this database to track program compliance with AmeriCorps requirements.

Okay, so let's break it down a little bit. The first part of the assessment tool looks at the data to be collected. And here are the key elements we talked about needing to see in the data collection plan. So performance measure outputs and outcomes from approved applications, which is at least one aligned performance measure connected to the primary service activity, the demographic indicators, such as number of episodic or ongoing volunteers, number of AmeriCorps applicants, other indicators if relevant, and then other programmatic data that are clearly connected to the program theory of change, tell a compelling story of the program's impacts and informed continuous improvement.

So, looking at the top of that slide and reading that, it appears what they're planning to collect actually focuses on just the program's performance measure only. The other required data points are not mentioned so that's an important note. It's also unclear what specific aspects of public safety or police officer and community relations will be assessed. So will it be the public's perceptions, is it actual crime rates, is it the frequency of clashes between community members and the police? We just don't know. It's also not clear how the grantee's defining improvement and whether that definition is meaningful. So what kind of magnitude of change is the program looking for? So in looking at the data to be collected, the grantee really needs to describe the data more clearly.

So, in filling out our tool for this item because there are a number of things blocking, we would mark it as needs further development on this tool. And we would provide some helpful constructive feedback back here in the comment section to ask them to fill in those gaps.

Okay, the next item of our assessment is looking at the source of the data in the Safer Cities AmeriCorps data collection plan. So again, here are the key elements of the data source. We want it to be appropriate for the type of information collected. We want it to be valid and authentic source. And we want the source to be objective. So avoiding [inaudible 00:29:45] or bias. In looking at their plan, the sources of the data, it's the source of how many people attended the member led trainings and events. That seems pretty clear. However, the source of the data for the outcomes is missing. They don't tell us who's going to be surveyed to assess improvements in public safety and police officer community relations. So we really can't tell whether the source for that outcome is appropriate, valid, authentic, or objective. So again, for this element of the plan we would also mark this one as needs further development and provide some suggestions for improvement in the comment section.

Next we will consider the instruments proposed in the data collection plan. So the key elements for instruments for the output we want the instrument to ensure unduplicated count and we want it to track the amount of service provided, which we call dosage. For the outcome we want the instrument to be valid for the type of change, we want it to be able to assess before and after the intervention if appropriate, and we want that instrument to work for all beneficiaries. So the grantee basically told us that they haven't developed their tools yet. So there's really no way for us to assess whether the instruments meet those criteria. And that's really okay, they weren't required to have that level of detail at the time they submitted their grant application. But we would like for the commission to work very closely with the grantee during the summer of 2018 or prior to their start to make sure that the data collection tools are high quality and appropriate. Also, they really should not begin their program operations until these tools are in place. This will ensure that they can do any necessary pre-surveys for the outcome and can also track outputs and demographics indicators in a robust way from the very beginning of the program here. This also means that they need to get their instruments developed and finalized as soon as possible.

So not surprisingly, you'll mark this one needs further development and then provide some helpful comments.

Okay, moving on to the next element in our data collection plan is the review of the person or persons responsible for data collection. So per our key elements, these individuals should have access to data sources and instruments, so accessibility. They should have qualifications or experience in collecting programmatic data and also have the ability to be effective.

The grantee proposes to have AmeriCorps members input the data about service activities and impact. Involving AmeriCorps members in data collection is a pretty common approach for a lot of AmeriCorps programs and it's usually a very reasonable approach in terms of the members accessed, qualifications, and objectivity. However, it's unclear in this case, whether members will actually collect the data. That is, will they actually take attendance [inaudible 00:33:16] trainings and events and administer and gather the pre and post-survey. Or will they just input the data after the fact? Also the plan doesn't specify who will collect the data on the required demographic indicator.

So given these gaps this item would also be marked as for needing further development and again, we would provide some helpful comments.

Next we'll look at the grantees data collection schedule. We're looking for a schedule that provides timely and meaningful results and achieves a reasonable response rate from program beneficiaries. Unfortunately, this section is almost completely missing from the Safer Cities AmeriCorps data collection plan. We know that they'll be administering a pre and a post-survey but we don't know when. And we also don't know when the output data about service activities for example, the participant attendance will be collected. So for the data collection schedule we'll mark it as needing further development and ask the grantee to consider some things in the comment sections.

The next element of the data collection plan review is about data storage including plans for storage of source documentation such as attendance rosters, completed surveys, and volunteer sign in sheets. As we described earlier, data storage needs to ensure verifiability of reported data and also protect sensitive information. So data systems should also be user friendly. For Safer Cities AmeriCorps we know that the program will be using a database that they describe as being secure and robust. Since AmeriCorps members apparently have this direct ability to input information into the database, it's likely that the system is reasonably user friendly but it wouldn't hurt to ask for more details about the mechanism or interface that the members will be using. And a secure database is also likely to include protections for sensitive information. Although, again, it wouldn't hurt to ask about the nature of those databases security protections, especially if the collected data includes personally identifiable information or PII. However, the most significant weakness

in this section of the data collection plan is that the grantee doesn't explain how the program source documentation will be stored.

Source documentation for outputs, outcomes, and demographic indicators needs to be maintained in some fashion and whether scanned or electronically into the database or stored as hard copies, or saved in some other form. I think you all might be seeing a trend here. This one will also be identified as needs further development. And providing comments to have them consider the storage of the source documents.

So in addition to knowing who will collect the data, we also need to know how those data collectors will be trained. Key elements of this part of the plan should include training about the purpose and importance of data collection, the process and timeline, and then also how to ensure high-quality data. The Safer Cities AmeriCorps data collection plan is completely silent on this matter so we do need to follow up and ask the grantee to address this. It's important for the program to be ready to implement this training at the start of the year so that they will be able to follow those collection protocols correctly and consistently, right from day one.

So the training for data collectors needs further development and we provide, again, some comments for their helpful feedback. I will now turn it over to Sarah Yue to take us through the next part of our example.

Sarah Yue: Okay, thank you, Amy. I am the fourth runner on this relay race and so my job is to take us to the finish line, hopefully still holding the baton in the process. So here you have on this slide the second part of our Safer Cities AmeriCorps data collection plan example. So I'll read this to you as well.

It says, staff will generate reports from the database in order to compile the information for grantee progress reports and to identify areas for improvement on both the individual and programmatic level. Staff will analyze the data to determine whether performance measure were met and look for trends for which sites and activities are most successful in order to drive replication and deeper impact. Any risks or opportunities for improvement will be addressed by program staff to ensure that the program is operationalized effectively and efficiently.

So going on in our sequence of the data collection plan the next element was pilot testing. Now, as Sarah Foster mentioned, in her overview, pilot testing the program data collection strategies is an important part of a robust data collection plan because it lets grantees catch and correct weaknesses in their instruments or protocols before those program activities actually get underway.

Unfortunately, pilot testing can be a tough thing to fit into that whirl wind stretch of time before a new program starts. Some of you may be able to relate to that very personally. And that's probably why as you can see from the text on this slide, pilot testing is missing from the Safer Cities AmeriCorps data collection plan. The text you can see here makes no reference to trying out the tools or the data collection approaches before the program activities actually start. And we can certainly be sympathetic about the many competing demands on new program staff and time. However, in the feedback that we provided here it is important to encourage them to make the time to test out the instruments, to try out those data collection protocols before they actually start using them. It's a prevention step and it could save the program a lot of corrections and headaches farther down the line.

Now to make that pilot test is relevant as possible it should be done using beneficiaries and settings that are the same or at least similar to the actual program activities. So because this aspect is completely missing from the data collection plan we're going to mark it as needs further development and then provide a comment asking the grantee to add in this component.

The last two steps in the data collection plan sequence are really important in order to make the collected data useful for the grantee and that's the primary point of data collection in the first place is to be able to use that data for program improvement. If data analysis, this current step, is done thoughtfully and well, it would help the grantee assess the quality of their program implementation, figure out how far they've progressed toward those output and outcome targets, provide some insights about the level of effectiveness and whether that's what was expected, and then also reveal areas of possible variation within program activities or the results of the program.

This slide shows the text of the portion of that data collection plan from Safer Cities AmeriCorps that relates to data analysis. And I have to say, the strategies mentioned here are actually pretty good but the details are a little bit light. The plan really should provide more details about specific methods, particular calculations, that the program will use to determine whether performance measures were met and then also look for those possible differences among sites and activities. So as a reviewer of this data collection plan you should ask the program how they will calculate the size of the change, hopefully improvement, that is occurring in public safety and police community relations. And then how program staff will figure out whether that level of change is sufficient to be counted under the outcome measure as the program defined it earlier in their plan. So we will mark this aspect as needing further development and provide

feedback that asks for those missing details about how to calculate the output and outcome totals and how to look for differences among sites and among activities.

The final part of the data collection plan focuses on how the grantee is going to use the analyzed data to improve their program. And as our previous presenters have mentioned this is an essential part of developing a culture of learning within the grantee organization, a culture that uses data productively to make the program better. And again, it can be really hard for a new program to think about doing that. Programs that are just starting out may not know how to implement data driven decision making or what that might look like on the ground. And as a result the content that you're likely to find in subgrantees submitted data collection plans may be rather vague just like what you're seeing here on this slide, the language from Safer Cities plan. The plans you see here promises that they will improve things when they can, when the opportunity arises but it doesn't provide any details about what they might improve and how they might do that. So it's important to help lead new grantees through a more detailed thought experiment about the types of data trends they might see, in the first couple of years of program implementation, and then what they could do to respond to those trends effectively.

Obviously this will be hypothetical at first but it's going to become real very quickly once program activities and data collection get underway. So working through some possibilities ahead of time will help the grantee be prepared to adjust their program design, adjust their training strategies, change up their resource allocation as needed to improve their program reach and/or to increase the effectiveness of their activities. And it's also never too early for a program to start thinking about how they might build the evidence base for their program model effective data collection and analysis is a huge part of developing a strong evidence base for a program.

So here's the feedback we can provide for this component of the data collection plan asking for specific approaches for using the results of data collection and analysis to improve the program effectiveness. And we're going to mark this aspect as needs further development.

And so, you probably noticed by now that none of the areas in Safer Cities AmeriCorps data collection plan were fully satisfactory in their current form. That is not unexpected. Writing a data collection plan is an unfamiliar exercise for many new grantees, frankly for many experienced grantees as well. And they may need a lot of help from you to get to the point where the plan is really ready to guide their data collection activities on the ground. So the message for you guys today is, that is okay and please don't give up on this process as you're providing feedback, phrase it as constructive suggestions rather than criticism. And think of it as a first step, this feedback is the first in a series of training and technical assistance conversations about effective data collection that are likely to continue throughout the lifecycle of the program.

By starting these conversations now and making them a regular part of your check ins with your grantee, you'll end up with a better understanding of the program and hopefully a lot less unpleasant surprises on both sides when progress report season comes around.

Let's draw this part to a close by talking about some resources that CNCS has for you to help support data collection among your grantees. We have a lot of resources regarding training and technical assistance on data collection. The first of course is the webinar that we hope you did for homework before joining today's session, that's the "Building Effective Data Collection Plans" webinar and the data collection plan outline that goes along with that. If you didn't get a chance to look at that webinar and that data collection plan handout please do that, or plan to do that, as soon as you can after today's webinar wraps up.

We also have Core Curriculum series for both performance measurement and evaluation and both of those include courses on data collection, which you can see listed here. And you can also see the links for the Core Curriculum landing pages on this slide.

On the other performance measurement resources page, on the Knowledge Network, we have a data quality review best practices course and then of course we also have the national performance measure instructions, which we referenced a number of times today, which give you those required parameters for collecting data under our set of CNCS defined performance measures. Now in addition to these online resources there are a lot of people who are here to help you and support you as you work with grantees, subgrantees, on data collection. Your peers in the field can be a great resource for each other, certainly your CNCS program officer, speaking as one of them, and then all of us here presenting here today are Program Officers and Senior Program Officers and so we are here to support you in this process. Now this webinar didn't talk about financial data directly, the collection and analysis of financial data, but certainly these are also essential elements of effective program management so please reach out to your CNCS grants officer for resources and suggestions about financial data collection.

So I think that been talking to you for a long time and this would be a good time to pause and see if there are questions from all of you or thoughts that you might have that you might want us to talk about more or think you'd like us to answer. And Barbara, you want to talk a little bit about logistics for this part?

Barbara Reynolds: Sure, thanks Sarah. Yeah, hey folks, because of the number of people we have on the line and the way the system works, we're going to ask you to type your questions into the chat box. I see a few folks are typing already. So the line's going to go quiet for a minute to give you time to type and give us time to read. So don't be alarmed, it'll just be silent for a few ... maybe 50 seconds. And then we'll come back on.

Barbara Reynolds: Ok, great. We just put the line open again, I saw a bunch of folks were typing. You guys I think can all see in the chat box, so I just want to recognize Hope Driscoll, asked if we have an example of a model data collection plan. I turn it over to our presenters for an answer on that.

Sarah Yue: So that is a great question and also a great suggestion. We don't at this point. Our hope is that in your portfolio you might be able to find a strong data collection plan, maybe of the ones that you're reviewing as part of the 2018 grant review process. If you have a strong data collection plan that you would like to share with us please send it to your program officer or alert us that it is in an application close to us. We'd love to take a look at it and certainly that's something that we'd be glad to develop down the line as a resource for all of you to help set a standard for what a strong data collection plan would look like. So thanks again, for the suggestion.

Barbara Reynolds: Yeah, great Sarah. Heather also typed in, I think simultaneously the same comment that it'd be really helpful to have an example of a strong plan. That's really, really great question, thank you.

Sarah Yue: Obviously the plan that we created for you was intentionally designed as not such a strong plan that was of course for the purpose of demonstration. My hope is that you are going to see some great things from your field as you get into this review process but let us know. We'll be staying tuned for that.

Barbara Reynolds: I think our hope is we'll see some great ones too, right?

Sarah Yue: Yes on the national direct [crosstalk 00:50:36]. Yeah, absolutely.

Barbara Reynolds: So we can take another minute or two if you have questions or comments. Yep, I see a few folks potentially typing in the chat. Again, we'll just go silent for a few seconds to give you time to get your questions or comments in.

Okay, last call for questions. Any final comments, questions you have for today's presenters?

Okay, great this Barbara again and I just want to let you know if you do ... the chat box is still open if you were typing and I'm interrupting you, I apologize. We're going to go ahead and start to move to our wrap up for today's presentation. We do have an evaluation of this webinar that we hope you'll take just a minute or less to complete. You can see on the slide in front of you, the link as well as find this link to the survey under the web links. To access that, just as a heads up, if you click on the link that says webinar evaluation, then click underneath the browse to button, your browser, whatever browser you use or have open on your computer is going to open up this link. I hope. That's the desired of what's about to happen.

So if you could please, for folks who are hearing us and who are online take a second to complete the survey. As I said, the recording for today's presentation's going to go up in early May. It usually takes us seven or so business days to get this together so I want to make sure you know that'll be there and where it is on Knowledge Network. Next month we have another webinar specifically for state commissions. We're going to talk a little bit about how to orient new commission staff to CNCS specifically. What is it about this agency that's particularly important for new commission staff to know and we have a couple of great guest speakers from commissions who are going to join in and also talk about how they orient their own commission staff so please make a note it's May 24 at 3 PM. And I just want to conclude by thanking you all very much for participating today as well as thanking Curtis, Amy, Sarah, and Sarah for being on and being our leaders, our relay runners, hopefully this content, I think it's fantastic and I hope that it's really, really applicable to your work, your work to your commission as your subgrantees. So thank you guys very much we're going to go ahead and hang up and stop the recording. Have a good afternoon.