High Quality Performance Measures

What is Performance Measurement?

What makes a high quality performance measure?
Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

• Describe key performance measurement concepts
• Identify high quality performance measures

Performance measurement helps you:

• Manage your program
• Tell your story
Module Overview

Performance Measurement
- Review of concepts and definitions
- Comparison to Impact Evaluation

Ensuring High Quality Performance Measures
- Understand alignment within theory of change
- Review characteristics of a high quality outcome
- Check alignment of outputs and outcomes
Performance measurement is a systematic process of tracking outputs and outcomes:

**Outputs**
- Amount of service provided (e.g. people served, products created, or programs developed) through your planned intervention

**Outcomes**
- Reflect the changes or benefits that occur as the result of the intervention
- Can reflect changes in individuals, organizations, communities, or the environment
- Address changes in attitudes/beliefs, knowledge/skills, behavior, or conditions
## Differences: Key Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Performance Measurement</th>
<th>Impact Evaluation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Causality</strong></td>
<td>Assumes causality; does <em>not</em> “prove” theory of change</td>
<td>Seeks to show causality and “prove” theory of change</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td>Tracks outputs and outcomes on a regular, ongoing basis</td>
<td>May occur from time to time, but not on a regular, ongoing basis</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Time Focus</strong></td>
<td>Shorter term focus; what can be measured within one year</td>
<td>Longer term focus</td>
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## Differences: Key Areas

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<td>Balances rigor* with practicality; measurement implemented by program staff with limited resources and expertise</td>
<td>Uses most rigorous evaluation design and methods that are right for program (e.g. quasi-experimental design)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Capable of producing valid (accurate) results.
Aligning Theory of Change Elements

Planning

Theory of Change (ToC)
- Problem/Need
- Intervention
- Outcome

Performance Measure
- Intervention
- Output
- Outcome

Align elements within ToC
Review for quality outcome
Align output and outcome

High Quality Performance Measures
Alignment: Logical flow and connection between the different elements helps you:

- Strengthen your theory of change
- Articulate your performance measures
- Measure more accurately
- Clearly report changes
High Quality Performance Measures

Alignment within Theory of Change

- Strong alignment among the theory of change elements sets the stage for identifying quality performance measures

- Community Problem/Need
- Specific Intervention “cause”
- Intended Outcome “effect”
Theory of Change: Veterans Example

Community Problem/Need
Young veterans have high rates of unemployment

Specific Intervention
Assistance in finding programs and financial aid; tutoring resources and internship placement.

Intended Outcome
Veterans find or are placed in jobs.
High Quality Performance Measures

Review for Quality Outcomes

Planning

Theory of Change (ToC)
- Problem/Need
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- Outcome

Performance Measure
- Intervention
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Align elements within ToC

Review for quality outcome

Align output and outcome
Identifying a High Quality Outcome

The Outcome should:

- Be meaningful
- Be ambitious yet realistic
- Reflect the type of change (attitude, knowledge, behavior, or condition) you want to measure
Meaningful Outcome

Criteria for a meaningful outcome. Consider:

- **Community Need/problem:** Is the outcome addressing it?
- **Compelling/powerful:** Is the outcome central or peripheral?
Meaningful Outcome

Criteria for a meaningful outcome. Consider (continued):

- **Beneficiaries.** Is the target audience identified in the outcome?
- **Scope of the outcome.** How many will benefit?
- **Magnitude of the outcome.** How much change will occur for beneficiaries?
- **Evidence.** Is the outcome supported by evidence for the intervention?
Ambitious yet Realistic

Is the outcome too modest? Consider:

- Outcome should reflect an ambitious change expected from the intervention
- Outcome resulting from full “dosage” of intervention
Ambitious yet Realistic

Is the outcome too ambitious?
Consider:
• Program timeframe
Ambitious yet Realistic

Is the outcome too ambitious?
Consider:
• Program timeframe
• Scope of the intervention
Ambitious yet Realistic

Is the outcome too ambitious? Consider:

• Program timeframe
• Scope of the intervention
• Severity of the problems being addressed
Is the outcome too ambitious? Consider:

- Program timeframe
- Scope of the intervention
- Severity of the problems being addressed
- Program resources
**NEED:** Documented high rates of chronic absence from school lead to other problems, e.g. low school engagement, poor academic performance (Social Work Practices, 2010).

**INTERVENTION:** Weekly individual and group mentoring to 6th grade students with attendance problems over 10 months. Focus on promoting re-engagement with school through social development and leadership skills.
Has the outcome type been identified: attitude, knowledge/skills, behavior or condition?

- Outcome type should be same as theory of change
- Outcome type will inform instrument
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Veteran Example: Type of Outcome

**NEED:** 35% of young veterans (18-24 year olds) are unemployed (Department of Veteran Affairs, 2011). Economists cite a lack of marketable civilian skills and the need for education degrees, vocational certifications...

**INTERVENTION:** National service participants support veterans in completing training programs by assisting in locating appropriate programs, securing financial aid, and by providing tutoring resources and internship placements.

**Which type of outcome?**

1. Veterans report increased confidence about finding employment. (attitude)

2. Veterans demonstrate new technical skills. (knowledge/skills)

3. Veterans are placed in jobs. (condition)
High Quality Performance Measures

Align Output and Outcome

Planning

Theory of Change (ToC)
- Problem/Need
- Intervention
- Outcome

Performance Measure
- Intervention
- Output
- Outcome

Align output and outcome

Review for quality outcome

Align elements within ToC
High Quality Performance Measures

Alignment of Outputs and Outcomes

- Intervention produces output
- Output leads to the outcome
- Output and outcome measure the same intervention and beneficiaries
**INTERVENTION:** Construction teams assess housing request, plan and execute housing upgrades and repairs and complete inspection requirements for individuals with disabilities.

**OUTPUT:** Individuals with disabilities receive housing service (upgrades and repairs).

**OUTCOME:** Construction team members improve construction skills.

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**Do the intervention and output align?**

**Why or why not?**
**INTERVENTION:** Construction teams assess housing request, plan and execute housing upgrades and repairs and complete inspection requirements for individuals with disabilities.

**OUTPUT:** Individuals with disabilities receive housing service (upgrades and repairs).

**OUTCOME:** Construction team members improve construction skills.

**Do the intervention and output align?**
- Yes
- No

**Why or why not?**
Logical to assume if well-designed and implemented.
**INTERVENTION:** Construction teams assess housing request, plan and execute housing upgrades and repairs, and complete inspection requirements for individuals with disabilities.

**OUTPUT:** Individuals with disabilities receive housing services (upgrades and repairs).

**OUTCOME:** Construction team members improve construction skills.

Do the output and outcome align?

Why or why not?
INTERVENTION: Construction teams assess housing request, plan and execute housing upgrades and repairs and complete inspection requirements for individuals with disabilities.

OUTPUT: *Individuals with disabilities* receive housing service (upgrades and repairs).

OUTCOME: *Construction team members* improve construction skills.

Do the output and outcome align?
- Yes
- No ✓

Why or why not?
2 different groups of beneficiaries
### Examples of Aligned Output-Outcome National Performance Measures

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<tr>
<th>Focus Area</th>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Number of children that completed participation in CNCS-supported early childhood education programs. (ED21)</td>
<td>Number of children demonstrating gains in school readiness in terms of social and/or emotional development. (ED23)</td>
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### Examples of Aligned Output-Outcome National Performance Measures

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<td>Healthy Futures</td>
<td>Number of individuals receiving support, services, education and/or referrals to alleviate long-term hunger (H11)</td>
<td>Number of individuals that reported increased food security of themselves and their children (household food security) as a result of CNCS-supported services (H12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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National performance measures at the Knowledge Network: www.nationalservice.gov/resources/npm/home
Summary of Key Points

• Performance measurement is a systematic process of measuring progress (outputs and outcomes)

• Performance measurement does not seek to “prove” a theory of change, but can provide snapshots.

• Impact evaluation can determine if results occurred because of the intervention.
Summary of Key Points

• Strong performance measures align with the theory of change (need, intervention and outcome)
  – The intervention is based on evidence that supports a cause-and-effect relationship between the intervention and an intended outcome.
  – The theory of change helps identify an appropriate outcome to measure.
Summary of Key Points

• Quality outcomes should:
  – Be meaningful
  – Be ambitious yet realistic
  – Match the type of change you want to see (attitude, knowledge/skills, behavior, condition)

• Strong performance measures are aligned
  – Output comes from the intervention
  – Outcome is likely to result from output
  – Output and outcome measure the same intervention and beneficiaries
Resources

- CNCS Priorities and Performance Measures:
  https://www.nationalserviceresources.org/npm/home

- Program Specific Notices of Funding Opportunities and Application Instructions:
  http://www.nationalservice.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa.asp