Corporation for NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE

# Best Practices in Performance Measure Design


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# Performance Measurement

- Ongoing, systematic process of tracking your program or project outputs and outcomes
- **Outputs:** Amount of service provided (people served, products created, or programs developed)
- **Outcomes:** Changes or benefits that occur
  - Can reflect changes in individuals, organizations, communities, or the environment
  - Typically include changes in **knowledge, attitudes, behavior,** or **condition**
  - Must have a logical connection to the intervention and be aligned with outputs

# Purpose of Performance Measurement

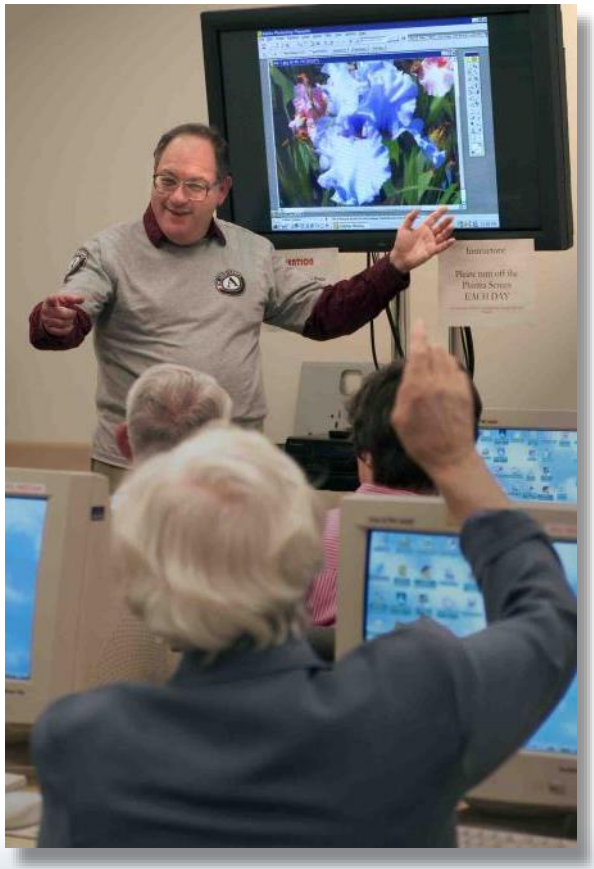
- Recognition of progress
  - Collect reliable information about the intervention's implementation and progress toward outcomes
- Accountability to funders and stakeholders
  - Communicate achievements in a meaningful and compelling way
- Program improvement
  - Spot and correct problems
  - Strengthen the intervention
  - Determine where to allocate limited resources

# How CNCS Uses Performance Measures

- Tell the story of the collective impact of national service programs
- National Performance Measures:
  - Reflect CNCS Strategic Plan and programming priorities
  - Allow for consistent terms, definitions, and approaches to measurement ("speaking the same language")
  - Priority Measures: used across multiple CNCS programs
  - Complementary Measures: customized for particular programs (e.g., AmeriCorps)
- Applicant-determined Measures*:
  - Intended for programs whose interventions, outputs, or outcomes do not fit under existing National Performance Measures

**Some National Performance Measures have applicant-determined outcomes*

# Best Practices: Performance Measure Design



- Select PMs that fit your program design and theory of change, not vice versa
- Read the instructions
- Less = more: focus on a small number of high-quality measures
- Measure outputs and outcomes for program beneficiaries*
- Clearly define all terms used
- Include a full set of information in the PM screens

**Except for member development and teacher corps measures*

# Best Practices: Performance Measure Design

- Use national measures when they fit the program design
- Clearly distinguish outcomes from outputs while maintaining logical alignment
- Choose outcome measures that are ambitious but realistic; ensure that the program can realistically document or track the required information.
- For outcomes that require participant follow-up, set targets that take into account response rate attrition
- For longer-term outcomes, set targets that are achievable in a single grant year

# Best Practices: Performance Measure Design (continued)

- Use numerical targets, not percentages
- Use pre-assessments to get baseline data so that changes can be objectively assessed, rather than measuring perceptions of change retroactively
- Select data collection instruments that are valid (measure what they are supposed to measure) and reliable (yield consistent results)
- Choose data collection instruments that are accessible and yield timely data
- Allocate sufficient resources toward data collection efforts:  money, time, personnel
- Self-assess your measure using the Performance Measure Checklist

# Designing a Measure: Education

Program Overview:

*The EduCorps Program is requesting six half-time AmeriCorps members to lead one-on-one and small-group tutoring programs for middle-school students at a high-poverty school. The primary goal of the program is to improve students' achievement levels in mathematics and to help students stay on track for high-school graduation. Members will meet with groups of 1-3 students after school each day for about an hour each, using mathematics enrichment materials that complement the normal classroom curriculum. Members will also lead daily large-group activities focused on physical activity and healthy eating.*

# Step 1: Choose the Right Measure(s)

- Primary service activity: academic tutoring (K-12 Success)
- CNCS has several PMs related to K-12 Success:

**Education**

| Type of Measure | Selection Rule | | Strategic Plan Objective |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Output | Outcome | |
| Priority | ED20 and ED21 | ED23, ED24, and/or ED25 | School Readiness |
| Priority | ED1 and ED2 | ED5, ED27A, and/or ED27B | K-12 Success |
| Priority | ED3A and ED4A | ED5, ED27A, and/or ED27B | K-12 Success |
| Complementary | ED1 and ED2 | ED9, ED10, ED26, and/or ED30 | K-12 Success |
| Complementary | ED3A and ED4A | ED9, ED10, ED26, and/or ED30 | K-12 Success |

- The structure and goals of EduCorps' tutoring intervention are consistent with measures ED1, ED2, and ED5.

# Step 2: Study the Instructions for Each Measure

- Read the NPM Instructions carefully for each measure to make sure the program can meet all requirements (eligibility, measurement types, etc.)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Measure ED2** | Number of economically disadvantaged students or students with special/exceptional needs that completed participation in CNCS-supported K-12 education programs. |
| **Definition of Key Terms** | **Students**: Individuals younger than 21 years of age who are enrolled or eligible for enrollment in grades K-12<br>**Economically disadvantaged**: Eligible for free (at or below 130% of poverty) or reduced (between 130% to 185% of poverty) lunch or enrolled in a school where the majority of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch; may or may not actually be accessing free/reduced lunch. See: http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/ChildNutrition/lunch.htm. If data about free/reduced lunch eligibility is not available, economically disadvantaged may alternatively be defined as receiving or meet the income eligibility requirements to receive (either individually or at a family level): TANF, Food Stamps (SNAP), Medicaid, SCHIP, Section 8 housing assistance. |

# Step 2: Study the Instructions for Each Measure (continued)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Measure ED5** | Number of students with improved academic performance in literacy and/or math. |
| **Definition of Key Terms** | **Students:** Those reported in either ED2 or ED4A.<br>**Improved academic performance in literacy and/or math:** as measured by an improved demonstration of skill/knowledge at post-test as compared to pre-test (gain score) using a standardized test/instrument.<br>**Literacy:** includes English, language arts, and/or reading<br>**Standardized test/instrument:** has been validated externally on a randomly-selected population of students. |

- Applicants that cannot meet the requirements for a measure should not use it.

# Step 3: Define All Terms Clearly

- ED2:
  - "In the approved grant application, the program should indicate how much time (i.e. how many days or hours) is required in order to complete the activity."
  - *EduCorps definition: At least 3 one-hour sessions per week for a minimum of 20 weeks.*
- ED5:
  - "The amount of progress required to count as 'improved academic performance' must be specified in the approved grant application."
  - *EduCorps definition: At least 1.1 years of growth from the beginning of the year to the end*.

# Step 4: Calculate MSY and Member Allocations

- Determine how many members, and what portion of member time, will be devoted to activities captured by the PM
- Members can be counted toward more than one PM; MSYs cannot
- Not all members and MSYs need to be allocated to PMs
- *EduCorps MSY and member allocations:*
  - *6 members*
  - *2.0 MSY (2/3 of total member time [3.0 MSY])*

# Step 5: Set Output and Outcome Targets

- Targets should be ambitious but realistic
- Outcome targets should relate logically to output targets

*EduCorps targets:*

- *ED1: 100 students*
- *ED2: 90 students*
- *ED5: 60 students*

# Step 6: Select Appropriate Instruments

- Must meet requirements stated in the National Performance Measure instructions

> Programs must select a standardized test that:
> (1) measures the types of student skills/knowledge the program is trying to improve through its efforts, (2) is appropriate for the grade level, (3) has demonstrated validity or reliability for the population they are serving, and (4) is compatible with, and acceptable to, the school where the program is providing services (different tests may be used at different schools).

- Must be valid, reliable, consistent, accessible, and timely
- Must be clearly described in the performance measure (including assessment name if possible)

# Step 7: Put it All Together

Performance Measure Title: Helping Students Improve in Math

| **Focus Area:** Education | **Objective:** K-12 Success | **No. of MSY's:** 2.0 | **No. of Members:** 6 |
|---|---|---|---|

**Output:**

ED1: Number of students who start in a CNCS-supported education program

**Target:** 100 Students

**Measured By:** Attendance Log

**Described Instrument:** Members will record in the program's secure database the name and ID number of each student who enrolls in the tutoring program. The list of names/IDs will be checked to ensure that no student is counted twice.

**Output:**

ED2: Number of students who completed K-12 education programs

**Target:** 90 Students

**Measured By:** Attendance Log

**Described Instrument:** Members will record in the program's secure database the number of tutoring sessions completed and the total number of hours of attendance for each student. Students who have participated in at least 3 one-hour sessions per week for a minimum of 20 weeks will be counted as having completed the program.

# Additional Resources

- 2017 Performance Measure Instructions: http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2017%20Performance%20Measures%20Instructions.pdf
- Performance Measurement Core Curriculum: http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/training-resources
  - **Performance Measurement Basics**
  - Theory of Change
  - Evidence
  - **Quality Performance Measures**
  - **Data Collection and Instruments**

# Additional Resources (continued)

- How to use the CNCS National Performance Measure Instructions: http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/how-use-cncs-national-performance-measure-instructions
- How to navigate the eGrants Performance Measure Module: http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/egrants-performance-measures-module-americorps