

Fund Distribution Glossary of Common Terms

Activities

Activities constitute the core of the staff work in the program for service providers. Activities reflect what the organization does to fulfill its goals and objectives. In Outcomes Measurement, Activities are what an agency will do with its Resources.

Collaboration

Successful collaboration usually brings two or more organizations together to work in synergy towards a common goal.

Data-collection Instruments

Data-collection instruments are the tools used to collect information. Data-collection instruments may also be used as *Indicators* that a program is achieving its projected *Outcomes*. Examples of data-collection instruments include:

- Surveys
- Focus groups
- Questionnaires
- Self-Evaluations
- Third Party Evaluations
- Pre and Post Tests

Evaluation

Program evaluation is the systematic collection of information to answer important questions about activities, characteristics, and outcomes of a program. Evaluation stages include design, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, and reporting.

Goals

Goals are clear statements of success that your program is working to achieve. Your agency's goals should support your agency's mission. Goals provide guidance and direction to staff and keep everyone focused on moving in the same direction. Goals also set a clear direction for future action and set program priorities. Program Goal(s) should come from and be closely associated with the organizations overall mission. Think about three to five major accomplishments that must be reached to further the mission. Goals should be described such that the organization can assess whether it's reached the goal or not. The goal should establish clear direction for the organization or program and portray the direction to others. The program's goal may be to fix a problem or meet a need among customers (internal or external) - not to fix a problem within an organization.

For example, if you are just starting out to develop a new program - goals might be to develop employees, pilot services to one group of clients, evaluate the program process and finalize program process based on evaluation results.

In-kind Contributions

In-kind contributions are materials, equipment, services, and even people that are donated to your program efforts. Contributions can be equipment such as computers, software or cooking utensils and office furniture and supplies. It can also be time, such as a computer programmer donating his/her time. To count as revenue, these donations must be quantifiable.

Mission Statements

A mission statement reflects the organization's core values and reason(s) for existing. It should support your agency's vision for how your programs are going to benefit the community. It should capture what you do, why you do it, how you do it, and for whom you do it. A mission statement broadly addresses the current and future purpose(s) of your organization. Each program should be strongly associated with the

organizations overall mission. That is, the organization's leadership should work from the mission to identify several overall, major goals that must be reached and that, in total, reach the mission. If ideas for new program's come in the organizations strategic planning, executive leadership must ask themselves if the program is really appropriate for the organization.

Objectives

Objectives are interim measurable goals. Think of them as markers along the way to a goal. Though it may be difficult for you to know whether you have achieved your goals, you should be able to measure whether or not you have accomplished your objectives. Whereas goals are broad and achieved over one or more years, objectives are clear, measurable, and can be achieved in much shorter periods of time (typically within 1 year, or program cycle, or less). As you accomplish each objective, you will be closer to reaching your overall goal. Objectives should be worded such that one can rather easily discern if it's been reached or not. They should specify who is going to do what to whom and when and how much.

Outputs

Outputs reflect the measurable products of a program. *Outputs* are an accounting of how many or how much an agency performs its stated *Activities*. Outputs can include anything that can be counted such as people, activities, materials, time, etc. Outputs only measure quantity, not quality.

Outcomes

Outcomes are benefits or changes for individuals or populations during or after participating in program *Activities*. They are influenced by a program's outputs. Outcomes may relate to behavior, skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, condition, or other attributes. They are what participants know, think, or can do; or how they behave; or what their condition is, that is different following the program.

For example, in a program to counsel families on financial management, outputs—what the service produces—include the number of financial planning sessions and the number of families seen. The desired outcomes—the changes sought in participants' behavior or status—can include their developing and living within a budget, making monthly additions to a savings account, and having increased financial stability.

In another example, outputs of a neighborhood clean-up campaign can be the number of organizing meetings held and the number of weekends dedicated to the clean-up effort. Outcomes—benefits to the target population—might include reduced exposure to safety hazards and increased feelings of neighborhood pride. The program outcome model depicts the relationship between inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes.

Note: Outcomes sometimes are confused with outcome indicators, specific items of data that are tracked to measure how well a program is achieving an outcome, and with outcome targets, which are objectives for a program's level achievement.

For example, in a youth development program that creates internship opportunities for high school youth, an outcome might be that participants develop expanded views of their career options. An indicator of how well the program is succeeding on this outcome could be the number and percent of participants who list more careers of interest to them at the end of the program than they did at the beginning of the program. A target might be that 40 percent of participants list at least two more careers after completing the program than they did when they started it. Outcome indicators and targets are discussed in Steps 3 and 8, respectively.

Program

A program is defined as a specific service (or set of services) provided by your organization. It includes all of the work necessary to bring about the service(s). Some organizations have only one program (e.g., an after-school tutoring program), while other organizations may have multiple programs provided by the same organization (e.g., substance abuse treatment, drop-in center, and soup kitchen).

Program Fees

Program fees are the money charged for participation in a program. Fees are established by an organization to cover the costs of the program. Often these fees are subsidized by grants from foundations, corporations, and individuals for some or all of the participants.

Program Plan

A Program Plan contains the key components of your program. It documents how the program is designed to further your agency's mission and make a difference to your clients, constituents, and community. Key elements include

- Agency Vision
- Agency Mission
- Program Goals
- Program Objectives
- Program Activities
- Program Projected Outcomes

Quantitative Data

Quantitative data captures information that is numeric. Quantitative data includes things like personal income, amount of time or a rating of an opinion on a scale from 1-5. Even things that you do not think of as quantitative, like feelings, can be collected using numbers if you create scales to measure them. Quantitative data is used with closed-ended questions, where users are given a limited set of possible answers to a question. They are for responses that fall into a relatively narrow range of possible answers. Also see Qualitative Data

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data records a thought, observation, opinion, or words. Qualitative data typically comes from asking open-ended questions to which the answers are not limited by a set of choices or a scale. Examples of qualitative data include answers to questions like "How can the program be improved?" or "What did you like best about your experience?"- but only if the user is not restricted by a pre-selected set of answers. Qualitative data is best used to gain answers to questions that produce too many possible answers to list them all or for answers that you would like in the participant's own words. Qualitative data is more time-consuming to analyze than quantitative data. Also see Quantitative Data.

Questionnaires

A questionnaire is useful in gathering focused, limited information with a uniform written tool and completed by a group of respondents. Information collected through questionnaires can include participants' self-assessment of attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and activities. Responses are limited to what is asked in the questionnaire, although questions included on a questionnaire can range from being close-ended (for more limited and easier to analyze responses) to open-ended (with more room for a variety and explanation of responses).

Resources

Resources refers to everything of value that is necessary to perform programmatic activities and/or deliver services. Examples of resources are staff time, volunteer time, equipment, space, supplies, etc.

Surveys

A survey is particularly useful for gathering statistical information. They are used to get a general idea of a situation, to generalize about a population or to get a total count of the aspects concerning a group of people. The information gathered is limited and easier to analyze and offers little or no explanation as to the reasons behind the results. Surveys are useful for evaluations that deal with things other than the success of the program (e.g., If an evaluation is in part to identify barriers to participating in the program, questions on a survey may ask about access to transportation, childcare, etc.). A census is an example of a survey.

Tabulated Results

The total number of times that each answer was chosen by respondents for every question or statement on data collection instruments (questionnaires, surveys, etc.). In addition, the number of respondents and percent of program participants who completed these forms is essential information. Reviewers should be able to obtain a clear impression of outcomes achieved by a program by reading through the tabulated results.

Tests

Tests are particularly useful to measure the knowledge or skills gained through a program. Frequently participants are tested at the end or at the beginning and the end to measure the extent of or the change in the participants' knowledge or skills.