

EVALUATION FOR LEARNING

News for an Evaluating Community

Fall 2002

INTRODUCTION TO MEASURING PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Need help evaluating how a direct service program benefits participants? Sign up for Measuring Program Outcomes, a thorough, hands-on workshop that covers terminology, measurement, analysis and reporting. The next sequence of sessions will meet on Thursdays in May 2003 in the Greater Kalamazoo United Way Board Room (709 S. Westnedge Ave., Kalamazoo). Cost is \$15/person; any community member is welcome. Exact dates to be announced in the Winter 2002 Newsletter.

COMMUNICATING AND REPORTING EVALUATION INFORMATION

Evaluation information is only as good as our ability to communicate and report it meaningfully. When developing an evaluation system, include a plan for why, to whom, how and when you will communicate and report evaluation information.

- ? In answering the question **WHY**, there are several possible reasons why you might need or want to communicate evaluation information. Common reasons include:
- To convey information about the program in order to build awareness and support.
 - To demonstrate results and accountability.
 - To learn, grow and improve the program.

👤 With **WHOM** you will communicate about the evaluation is also important to consider. Listing all the individuals/groups you will need to communicate with can help significantly in planning for communication needs related to an evaluation.

The audience for communication about evaluation may include people who are affected by the results; are interested in the program; have provided information for the evaluation, have funded the program, make decisions based on the evaluation, staff the program and/or who have a right to evaluation information.

- 🌐 Depending on the answers to the questions why and who, you will need to adjust **HOW** you communicate information. There are many different ways to talk about evaluation information in addition to the traditional final written report.

Examples of how you can communicate include: working sessions, meetings with the individual/group, verbal presentations, multimedia presentations, posters, emails, memos/postcards, executive summaries, newsletters, brochures and the news media. Within each of these examples there are also opportunities to make the communication user-friendly for your audience by incorporating elements like graphs, bullet points and other things that help the audience process the information.

In deciding how best to communicate with each individual/group on your list, it is helpful to consider some important characteristics.

- How accessible are they to you?
- What is their education level?

ASKING GOOD
QUESTIONS

COLLECTING AND
SHARING USEFUL
INFORMATION

USING THE
INFORMATION FOR:
➤ IMPROVEMENT
➤ ACCOUNTABILITY

CONTINUING
TO REPEAT
THE CYCLE

EVALUATION FOR LEARNING
NEWSLETTER IS A PRODUCT OF THE
GREATER KALAMAZOO EVALUATION
PROJECT WITH SUPPORT FROM THE
GREATER KALAMAZOO UNITED WAY,
THE IRVING S. GILMORE FOUNDATION,
AND THE KALAMAZOO COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

THE GREATER KALAMAZOO EVALUATION PROJECT PUBLISHES THIS NEWSLETTER TO FOSTER EVALUATION THROUGHOUT THE KALAMAZOO AREA.

Send your ideas and examples to:

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- How familiar are they with the program being evaluated?
- How familiar are they with evaluation?
- What is their role in decision-making about the program?



In many ways, **WHEN** you communicate with your stakeholders is determined by the purpose for communicating evaluation information. Plan to communicate with that individual/group during the evaluation if your purpose is to include them in determining the design or plan for the evaluation, if you need to inform them about upcoming evaluation tasks or events, or if they need to be kept informed as the evaluation progresses. Plan to communicate after the evaluation if you need to build awareness about the program and its results, report on the results of the evaluation, or to learn, grow or improve based on the evaluation.

TIPS & TOOLS

Community AIDS Resource & Education Services (CARES) has added an outcome report section to their traditional annual report. The section includes both qualitative and quantitative data suggesting the changes and benefits experienced by the participants in CARES programs.

NOTEWORTHY RESOURCES

Morris, L.L., Fitz-Gibbon, C.T., & Freeman, M.E. (1987). How to communicate evaluation findings. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Preskill, H.S. & Torres, R.T. (1999). Evaluative inquiry for learning in organizations. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Torres, R.T., Preskill, H.S., & Piontek, M.E. (1997). Communication and reporting: practices and concerns of internal and external evaluators. Evaluation Practice, 18(2), 105-125.

Torres, R.T., Preskill, H.S., & Piontek, M.E. (1996). Evaluation strategies for communicating and reporting: Enhanced learning in organizations. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

EVALUATION FOR LEARNING IS:

- EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY
- CONTINUALLY ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS, GETTING ANSWERS, AND TAKING ACTION BASED ON THOSE ANSWERS
- INTEGRATED INTO THE DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS OF THE ORGANIZATION
- A DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS
- COLLABORATIVE AND DEPENDENT ON INFORMATION SHARING
- TIME WELL SPENT
- GOING TO ENSURE THE ORGANIZATION'S HEALTH AND VIABILITY IN THE LONG RUN IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

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