

Getting Started With Outcomes Assessment

Facilitated by:

The Office of University Assessment

Introduction

- What is outcomes assessment?
- This workshop will help you learn:
 - The value of outcomes assessment
 - The language & concepts of assessment
 - How to design an Outcomes Assessment Plan

Overview

- Why assess program outcomes?
 - Improve program services
 - Document program effectiveness
 - Increase staff & student satisfaction

Get Ready

Form an Assessment Work Group

- Faculty & staff involvement is vital to success
- Choose a point-person or leader
- Ensure communication between the work group & other program personnel
- Ensure everyone knows the purpose & task of the group is program assessment

Ask Questions Before Beginning

Before planning assessment, the work group should consider what they are likely to learn as a result.

- Will what we learn enable us to make program improvements?
- Are we willing to act on the information we obtain?
- Would measuring outcomes help identify program strengths & weakness in ways that would allow us to improve the program?
- Would program constituencies accept this as a valid outcome for the program?

Answer the Critical Questions

If the answer to **ANY** of these questions is **NO**, reconsider why you would want to do it!

Designing & Using Outcomes Assessment

1. Set a general time frame
2. Identify program outcomes to measure
 - Identify outcome levels
 - Identify performance indicators
3. Identify assessment methods
 - Create or select data collection instruments
 - Develop data collection plans
4. Plan & monitor a pilot implementation
5. Collect & analyze data
6. Use results to modify the program

Set a General Time Frame (Tentative)

- Considerations
 - Existing needs, deadlines or expectations
 - Program calendar/cycle of events
 - When outcomes can be expected
 - Availability of resources or approval
 - Set a Timeline
 - Assessment is Cyclical
 - Remain flexible

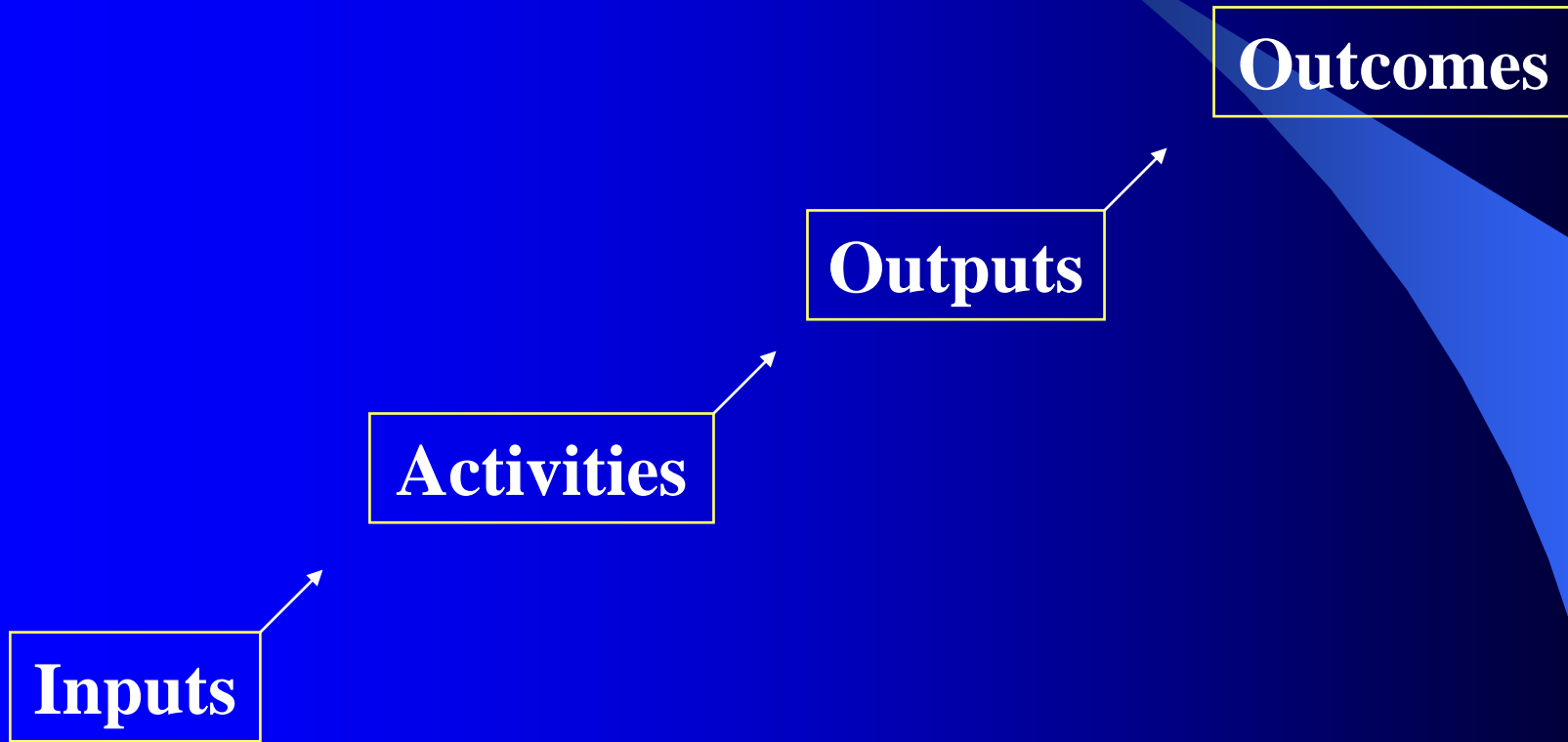
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Choosing Program Outcomes

- Many programs already have mission statements with goals & objectives
- The mission statement, or goals & objectives, should point logically to program outcomes (statements)
- Assessing program outcomes informs you about how well the program's mission is being achieved

Keep It Simple



Inputs Describe:

- What needs to go into a program to make it happen (successful)?
- What factors inhibit the program's success?

Inputs

Program resources or constraints, such as:

- Resources
 - Money
 - Staff
 - Staff time
 - Facilities
- Constraints
 - Regulations
 - Laws

Activities

What the program does with **inputs** (resources & constraints) to achieve intended outcomes

- Such as:
 - Provide advisement or counseling
 - Tutor students
 - Register students for courses
 - Advise student organizations
 - Coordinate students' financial aid
 - Connect students with employers
 - Arrange housing & meals

Outputs

The direct product of program activities

- Such as:
 - Ratio of students seeking/receiving counseling
 - Advising sessions with undeclared students
 - Number & hours students were tutored
 - Participation in student organizations
 - Average number of interviews with employers by industry type
 - Ratio of applicants for campus housing to rooms available

Outcomes

Outcomes describe how students **benefited** as a result of receiving program activities

- Such as:
 - They identify an academic major best suited to them
 - They better manage personal problems
 - They improve academic performance
 - They progress toward their degree
 - They have a successful job search
 - Students' needs are met

Outcomes Suggest

How students will be **better off** as a result of participating in your program's activities?

- Such as:
 - Achieving targeted behavioral changes in students involved in counseling
 - Undeclared students selecting a major with help from the advising process
 - Percent of students interviewed receiving job offers
 - They stop engaging in high-risk behavior

QUIZ!!!



What is it?

Input? Activity? Output? Outcome?

- By 2003, attendance at division meetings & retreats by classified staff will have increased at least 25%
- State-of-the art hardware & software installed for all student services staff
- Higher morale among staff
- Provide extensive advertising campaign including, but not limited to Sagebrush, Nevada News, etc.

Teen Mother Parenting Example

- Southside Children's Agency Example

Some Clarifying Thoughts

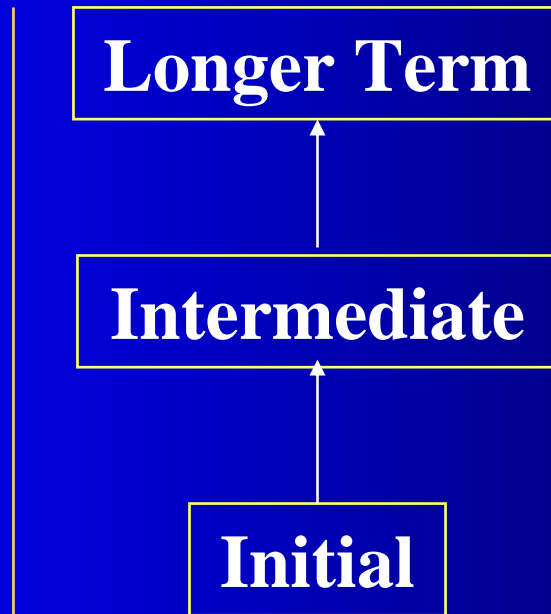
- There is no “**right**” number of outcomes
 - You may want **3** to **5** outcome statements to begin
- For some programs, outputs & outcomes are difficult to distinguish
- Activities are often listed as outcomes
 - Ask **why** you do the activities - who benefits?
- When considering outcomes
 - State **outcomes** in terms of how they benefit students
- Keep asking “**Why is this important?**”
- Keep asking “**Why are we doing this?**” – to a point

What are the key outcomes you want to measure in your program?

- Program Outcome Assessment Framework

Outcome Levels

Outcomes



Initial Outcomes

- Often the initial outcomes are:
 - The first benefits experienced
 - Changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills
 - Closely connected to outputs
 - Not ends in themselves
 - May NOT be an especially meaningful benefit to students' lives
 - Are important as indicators of progress toward program outcome

What Should Be Assess?

IF program staff (**input**) provides interviewing skills workshop (**activity**) help students find jobs (**long term outcome**) in their field includes attending every session (**output**),

THEN students will know the characteristics of effective interviews & perform better in mock job interviews (**initial outcome**) during the training.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Link **initial** outcomes to longer-term outcomes
- **Intermediate outcomes** may be behavior changes resulting from initial outcomes

What Should Be Assess?

IF students know & demonstrate effective job interview skills (**initial outcome**) during training,

THEN they are more likely to apply effective interview skills during actual job interviews (**intermediate outcome**).

Longer-Term Outcomes

- Ultimate program outcomes or benefit
- Meaningful changes in a participant's condition or status

What Should Be Assess?

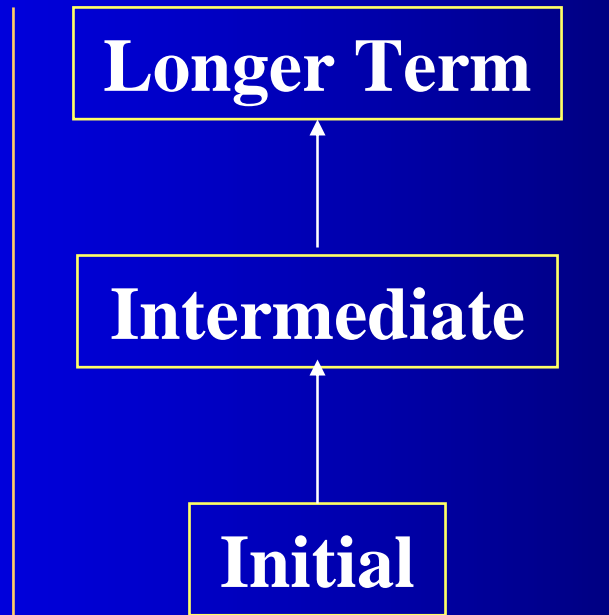
IF students apply effective interview skills (intermediate outcome) during interviews,

THEN they are more likely to find the job they want (longer-term outcome), have successful careers (longer-term outcome), & make positive contributions to society (longer-term outcomes).

*up to a point!!!!

Outcome Levels Worksheet

**Program
Outcomes**



Performance Indicators

- An indicator is a specific, measurable characteristic or change that can be related to a program outcome
- Performance indicators help you know how well the outcome has been achieved
- Performance indicators are easily confused with Assessment Methods.

About Performance Indicators

- They must specifically relate to a significant aspect(s) of the outcome
- More than one indicator per outcome may be useful or necessary
- Standards may be needed, e.g, decrease dropout rate among program participants by 10%
- An indicator should help determine success of program outcome(s)

Standards (a quick word)

- Standards refer to the target (the goal) for each indicator
- Rubrics! What are they?

Examples of Indicators

Indicators are connected to program outcomes

- Increase retention rate (**indicator**) among the program participants by 10% (**standard**)
- 5% (**standard**) decreased in alcohol & drug arrests (**indicator**) among students that participate in substance abuse awareness
- At least 80% (**standard**) of students satisfied (**indicator**) with program services

Identify Performance Indicators

- Outcome Assessment Framework

Assessment Concepts Reviewed

- Outcomes assessment refers to the **benefits** that result from participating in your program
- Program improvement is possible as a result of outcomes assessment
- Outcome assessment can document program success
- Outcomes can occur at different levels with different performance indicators
- Inputs & activities lead to outputs & outcomes

Outputs:

Outputs are the products of a program's activities,

Such as:

- Staff contacts, hours, sessions, activities, etc.
- The number of students served or requests for assistance
- Workshops offered, attendance, follow-up
- Material distributed or Web Site “hits”

Outcomes:

Outcomes are the benefits associated with student participation in program activities that contribute to achievement of your program's mission

Such as:

- Career planning knowledge or skills
- Satisfaction from program services
- Appropriate utilization of services
- Students' receipt of accurate information
- Increased academic performance

Performance Indicators:

- Performance Indicators are **what** you will know, observe or measure, which indicates how well an outcome is achieved

Such as:

- Number or percent of students satisfied with program services
- Number or percent of students receiving services who
 - Are admitted,
 - Receive financial aid, or
 - Graduate, compared to students that did not receive the services
- Number of students
 - Are arrested for substance abuse or
 - Select university food plans
- Number of students who find a job in their field

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Next We Will

- Explore assessment method & options
- Consider data management issues
- Discuss analyzing assessment data
- Examine how results improve your program
- Summarize developing & implementing your program's assessment plan

Assess What?

Student outcomes (& performance indicators) relate to:

- Knowledge & Skill - did students learn what you intended?
- Behaviors - do students demonstrate what they were taught?
- Attitudes & Values – can we determine what motivates students' behavior?

Assessment Methods

- **DIRECT** assessments ask students to **demonstrate** knowledge &/or skill through performance on some measure
- **INDIRECT** assessments ask students to **reflect** on their behavior, skill &/or knowledge, or attitude about their experiences rather than demonstrate it

- **Direct** measures permit the observation of
 - knowledge or skill, or
 - a demonstration of some behavior or competence related to the stated performance indicator

A student designs & prepares a sample resume & letter of application in accordance with templates & instruction provided a workshop.

Direct Assessment Measures

- Exams – locally developed or standardized
- Review student work
 - Portfolios, projects, papers, exhibitions, presentations, performances
- Observed behavior (change)
 - Staff observe in real situation or in simulation
 - Data available on observed student behavior
 - Student reported behavior (factual, not reflective)

- **Indirect** measures enable inferences about what is being assessed:

- students report on their learning or behavior

- students reflect on their knowledge, ability, to do something taught or satisfaction with some service

60% of graduates report that job-search skills acquired from career services helped them obtain a position they wanted.

Indirect Assessment Measures

- Surveys with current students, alumni, employers, etc.
- Focus groups, exit interviews, etc.
- Rates & ratios – dropouts, graduates, arrests, student records, etc.
- Transcripts, academic standing
- Employment placement

Critical Questions Again!

Before engaging in an assessment, consider what you are likely to learn as a result. Then ask:

- Will what we learn enable us to make program improvements?
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Critical Questions

If the answer to **ANY** of these questions is **NO**, reconsider **why** you want to do it!

Choosing an Assessment Method

- How well the method helps you answer:
 - Does it address your outcome statement & performance indicator?
 - Is it valid & reliable? How do I know?
 - Is it free from bias?
 - How informative will the information be for program improvement?

For Each Assessment Method There Are Always:

● Advantages

- Valid &/or Reliable
- Implement quickly
- Inexpensive
- Efficient &/or timely
- Imbedded
- Staff expertise available
- Scoring & reporting available
- Specific to outcome
- Content range

● Disadvantages

- Invalidity/Not reliability
- Staff & student time
- Expensive
- Cross program comparison is difficult
- Local data management issues
- Low response rates
- Relevance to outcome
- Broad content range

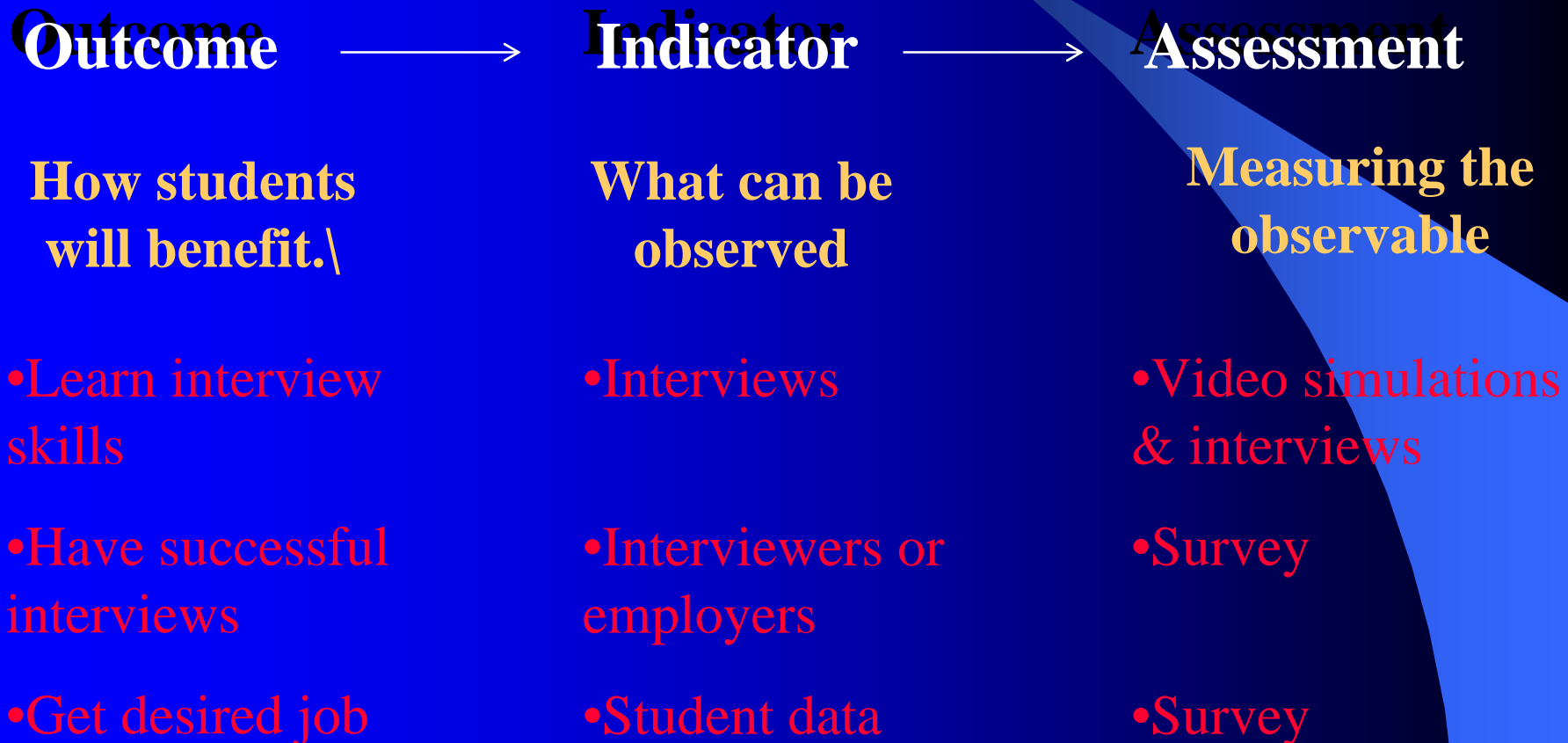
Choose Assessment Methods

- Outcome Assessment Framework

Additional Method Issues

- How well it can be sustained:
 - Resources - Can your program continually afford the time, money, & effort?
 - Implementation - Will those being assessed cooperate?
 - Sustainability - Can it be “institutionalized,” over time?

Outcomes, Indicators & Assessment Methods



Data Collection Considerations

- Identify data sources
 - New or existing data; sample or population; when or where?
- Design collection methods
 - Tapes, tests, surveys; confidentiality!
- Pilot test
 - Collection method, data management, & analysis
- Resources
 - Money; staff expertise & time, space & timeframe

Identifying an Assessment Method

- Based upon the Outcome Statement provided:
 - Evaluate assessment methods to collect data for the outcome statement you or your group developed
 - Identify & list at least 3 methods
 - List the advantages & disadvantages of each method your group selects (cost, staff, time, response, & data value)

Assessment Methods

	<i>Survey</i>		<i>Interview</i>	<i>Records</i>
	<i>Local</i>	<i>Standardized</i>		
<i>Cost</i>	Varies; initial development may be high	Known; per student cost may lead to high total	Moderate to high depending on process & staff	Low
<i>Training</i>	None to some	None to some	None to high	Some
<i>Time</i>	Depends on how administered	Usually quick to administer	Considerable, sample dependent	Depends on data needed & records format
<i>Response</i>	Depends on how administered		Usually good to moderate	High
<i>Information</i>	Connects closely to program outcomes	Usually high technical quality; may offer comparisons	Connects to outcomes, qualitatively rich, bias potential	Depends on the records' quality of information, completeness

Pilot Your Assessment Process

Someone needs to be responsible for monitoring & coordinating a **trial run**

- Develop a (trial) strategy
 - Should reflect the FULL data collection system
- Prepare data collectors
 - Recruit, train, monitor, etc.
- Evaluate both processes & results
 - Cost, time, response, data usefulness & management, analysis, etc.
- Adjust assessment plan if necessary

Analyzing & Interpreting Assessment Information

- Analysis does not necessarily require advanced math training or expert statistical know-how.
- Analysis begin with an a description of the data. Your goal is to synthesize it in a way that can answer your evaluation questions so your results may be communicated.
- Clearly, there are many levels at which data can be analyzed, ranging from extremely simple to very complex & sophisticated analysis methods.

Data Issues

- Enter data into program for analysis
 - Piloted data collection should facilitate this
 - How to enter **narrative** comments depends on nature of the data & computer program used
- Check for errors (staff time)
 - Manually entered data need entry filters, ID #s on the paper form & in any digital files
 - Examine data files for obvious errors, missing, duplicates, logical inconsistencies

Initial Data Exploration

- Tabulate your data (frequencies & descriptives)
 - The total number of responses
 - Numbers that achieved a specific outcome status, e.g., interview resulted in job offer
 - Calculate related percentages (crosstabs)
 - Calculate means, medians, ranges, etc.
 - Compare to target goal (standard)

Data Analysis

- Use key characteristics
 - Look at data according to your perception of key characteristics that could influence the outcomes, such as:
 - Gender, Age, Major, Grade level, length of service

Using a database will help you organize your data in different combinations that expand the ways you can tabulate & evaluate it.

Reporting The Findings

- Explain your findings
 - May need to provide a context to help others understand your program
 - What factors appear to have affected outcomes
 - Those internal to the program
 - Those external to the program
 - How do findings inform the program

Sharing the Findings

- Present findings in a “user-friendly” form
 - Avoid jargon, making too many assumptions about what the reader knows
 - Use clear tables and charts as appropriate
 - Label everything that is pertinent
 - Don’t put TOO MUCH in one table or graph
 - Solicit feedback from key audience members regarding clarity, explanations & conclusions, unanswered questions, etc.

Using Your Findings for Program Improvement

- Staff involvement & direction always
 - What is working well, not working well, ways to improve?
 - Where do we need help or training?
- Program improvement needs, strategies
 - For the overall program
 - For particular services or populations
 - Compared to previous years
 - Change outcomes, indicators, assessment method

Review

**Criteria for Developing
Program
Assessment Plans**

- **Step 1.** Identify goals & objectives-mission
- **Step 2.** Identify/prioritize 3 – 5 important program outcomes that can be measured
- **Step 3.** Identify performance indicators & appropriate assessment methods
- **Step 4.** Evaluate/select assessment methods
- **Step 5.** Pilot assessment processes
- **Step 6.** Develop a plan/timeline to collect, organize, explore, analyze, & report data
- **Step 7.** Interpret results & provide feedback to faculty/staff for program improvement decisions
- **Step 8.** Make suggested program modifications

Assessment Work Plan

- When & where will assessment occur?
- Who will coordinate assessment?
- Establish a system for data collection & management?
 - Who collects
 - Who analyzes
 - Who interprets
 - Who reports
 - Who maintains data
- How will the data used for program improvement?

Summary

- Timelines:
 - Engage staff in development of assessment plan
 - Identify program outcomes (& indicators)
 - Select assessment methods
- Write/submit Assessment Plan
 - Pilot test methods (collection, storage, analysis, etc.)
 - Implement (revised) assessment plan
 - Engage faculty/staff in review of results for program improvement
- Report program improvements/modifications

You Can Do This

Thanks for coming!

(Please complete the workshop evaluation)

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