

ATTACHMENT 7: IMPROVING YOUR PROGRAMS USING OUTCOME AND PROCESS EVALUATION RESULTS

Results of outcome evaluations and process evaluations can be used together to improve your NPO's programs. Consider the following scenarios:

Scenario 1—Both outcomes and performance targets are met.

If both outcomes and performance targets are met, your program is doing well. Consider whether you want to continue doing what you are doing, or if you want to modify your outcomes and performance targets so that you have an even bigger impact on the community you serve.

Example using the Children's Reading NPO:

- The **outcomes evaluation** finds that 90% of children receiving tutoring passed the reading competency exam. (Outcome goal 80% passing)
- The **process evaluation** has the following results:
 - 50 children received 10 or more tutoring sessions(performance target achieved)
 - 15 volunteer tutors were trained (performance target achieved)
 - 100 books were distributed (performance target achieved)

The program exceeded its outcome, and it met all of its performance targets. It was very successful!

Scenario 2—Neither outcomes and performance targets are met.

If neither outcomes and performance targets are met, your NPO needs to look at how it is carrying out its activities. Why is your NPO failing to carry its activities as planned? The outcome can only be achieved if activities are carried out as planned.

Example using the Children's Reading NPO:

- The **outcomes evaluation** finds that 45% of children receiving tutoring passed the reading competency exam. (Outcome not achieved)
- The **process evaluation** has the following results:
 - 20 children received 10 or more tutoring sessions(performance target not achieved)
 - 10 volunteer tutors were trained (performance target not achieved)
 - No books were distributed (performance target not achieved)

In this situation, the NPO would want to determine the reasons for sub-standard performance:

- Why did so few students complete 10 or more tutoring sessions? Did students cancel or did tutors? Were children and families satisfied with the tutoring they received, or did they stop coming because they considered the tutoring ineffective? What could be done to increase the number of sessions provided to each child?
- Why did only 10 volunteer tutors complete training? Was the problem that it was not possible to recruit more volunteers? Did volunteers drop out during the training? Or did volunteers unable to pass the tests associated with the training? It is important to know why the targeted number of volunteer tutors was not reached, so that tutor recruitment and training can be changed to yield better results.
- Why were no books distributed? Was it impossible to find publishers to donate books? Or were there breakdowns in the book distribution system. Again, knowing the reason is important so that processes can be changed to achieve better success.

Scenario 3—Outcomes are not met even though all performance targets are achieved.

It is possible that your NPO could meet all of its performance targets, but still not meet its outcomes. In this case, the NPO should first consider its outcome. Is it realistic to expect that your NPO could achieve the community impact envisioned by your outcomes?

If the outcome is still considered reasonable, the NPO should consider whether its strategies are appropriate and sufficient for meeting its outcome. Perhaps the NPO's activities are not the right ones for achieving the outcomes it wants to achieve.

Example using the Children's Reading NPO:

- The **outcomes evaluation** finds that 45% of children receiving tutoring passed the reading competency exam. (Outcome not achieved)
- The **process evaluation** has the following results:
 - 50 children received 10 or more tutoring sessions (performance target achieved)
 - 15 volunteer tutors were trained (performance target achieved)
 - 100 books were distributed (performance target achieved)

In this situation, the NPO should consider the following sorts of questions:

- Is it reasonable to expect that tutoring can improve children's reading skills, or would another strategy be better?
- Does giving books to children actually improve their ability to read, or would another strategy be better?
- Do the volunteer tutors have sufficient skills and knowledge to tutor effectively?

Scenario 4—Outcomes are met even though performance targets are not met

It is unlikely that the NPO's outcomes will be met if the NPO has not met its performance targets, however it is possible that this could happen. There could be two possible explanations for this:

- The outcome goal could not be ambitious enough; perhaps it is too easy to achieve.
- The outcome achievement may be influenced by factors other than the NPO's activities.

Example using the Children's Reading NPO:

- The **outcomes evaluation** finds that 85% of children receiving tutoring passed the reading competency exam. (Outcome achieved)
- The **process evaluation** has the following results:
 - 20 children received 10 or more tutoring sessions(performance target not achieved)
 - 12 volunteer tutors were trained (performance target not achieved)
 - 50 books were distributed (performance target not achieved)

In this situation, the NPO should consider the following sorts of questions:

- Do the children being selected for tutoring need reading help, or are proficient readers being chosen for the project? If the tutored students were already good readers, the outcome goal has little meaning.
- Are factors other than tutoring and book distribution influencing childrens' reading outcomes? For example, is the good outcome attributable to good teaching in their school classrooms, rather than the tutoring received? Is it attributable to parental support and involvement in the children's reading?