



PROGRAM EVALUATION



Not-for-Profit Organizations (NPO's) exist because they want to solve important problems and bring about significant community change. At the same time, NPO employees work very hard every day, running their programs, seeking funding, managing staff and volunteers, preparing budgets and carrying out multiple other duties.

It is easy to get caught up in the day-to-day process of running your NPO, responding to the crises and demands that come across your desk. When this happens, NPO employees may begin to define success as "just getting through the day". The more difficult question--"Are we having the impact on the community that we seek to create?"—may never get asked or answered.

Sometimes, NPOs may know that they are not achieving their goals—but they do not know why. They are not sure if the activities they're carrying out are contributing to their goals, and they do not know if their activities are being carried out properly.

Through program evaluation, you can answer two important questions:

- *Are our programs resulting in the changes we want to make?* This question is answered through **outcomes** evaluation.
- *Are we carrying out our work as intended?* This question is answered through **process** evaluation.

Evaluation is the process of measuring your NPO’s results and comparing them with goals that you have set. By conducting evaluation, you will know if you are meeting or falling short of your goals.

Why is it important to evaluate your programs?

Many NPOs do not do evaluations, for various reasons. However if you look closely at their stated reasons for not doing evaluation, most of the reasons are not valid.

Stated reasons why some NPOs do not measure their effectiveness	Actual Facts
We do not need to formally evaluate ourselves because we know we are doing a good job.	You may think you are doing a good job, but without evaluation, you will not know for sure. In addition, without evaluation, you will not be able to track changes in your NPO’s effectiveness over time.
Evaluation is too complicated. No one on our staff has the skills to do it.	Evaluation does not need to be complicated. It can involve simple, common-sense measurement, using data you collect every day.
We are too busy to do program evaluation.	An NPO can be busy, but still not accomplishing its goals. It is very important to step back periodically and evaluate your NPO’s effectiveness, to make sure that all the work you are doing is having the desired impact. A good program evaluation helps you work smarter, not harder.
Program evaluation will not make any difference financially to our NPO.	Program evaluation might be able to save you money, or to help you use your existing funds more effectively. You might discover areas where your NPO is spending money without achieving results. That money could potentially be saved or redirected to more promising programs or activities.

Our donors do not expect us to evaluate our programs.	Increasingly, donors expect NPOs to demonstrate their effectiveness and show evaluation results as a condition of getting donations. Grant applications often require an evaluation plan.
Program evaluation will not make any difference programmatically to our NPO.	Program evaluation can point to programs where your NPO is doing well, as well as to programs that are not generating expected results. You can focus your efforts on improving programs that are not working well.

This self-assessment tool describes a process for evaluating your NPO’s programs. If you have a strategic plan and an action plan, you will be able to use those plans as a starting point for evaluation. But even if you do not have a strategic or action plan, you can still conduct program evaluation.

PART I: MAJOR STEPS FOR CONDUCTING PROGRAM EVALUATION

STEP	WHAT IT INCLUDES	SUGGESTIONS FOR CONDUCTING PROGRAM EVALUATION	WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT
GETTING STARTED			
1. Determine what program will be evaluated.	If your NPO has multiple programs, you may want to limit your evaluation to a particular program.	In determining which of your NPO's programs to evaluate, consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of the program to your NPO • The amount of your NPO's staff and budget devoted to the program • Whether there are concerns about the effectiveness of a particular program. • The resources you have available to plan and conduct the evaluation. 	Doing good evaluation requires time and effort. It is important to consider where it can be of most value to your NPO.

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<p>2. Determine if it will be an outcome evaluation or a process evaluation.</p>	<p>An outcome evaluation looks at the impact your program is having on the community you serve.</p> <p>A process evaluation looks at whether the program activities are being carried out as intended.</p>	<p>What question does your NPO want to answer?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you interested in measuring your impact in the community? If so, you will conduct an outcomes evaluation. • Are you interested in knowing if you are carrying out the activities you said we would? If so, you will conduct a process evaluation. <p>For a program that provides reading tutoring to children ages 5-8:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An outcome evaluation would look at whether the children who receive tutoring actually learned to read. • A process evaluation looks at whether the program met goals in terms of the number of students tutored, the number of volunteer tutors trained, etc. <p>For established programs, outcomes evaluation is very important to determine whether desired community change has been achieved.</p> <p>For new programs, outcomes evaluation cannot take place until the program has had a chance to have an impact. However even for new programs there should be an outcomes evaluation plan, describing how outcomes evaluation will be done in the future. Developing an evaluation plan at the start of the program helps assure that you have clear, measurable goals for the program and that you are collecting the data that will be needed to conduct the evaluation in the future.</p> <p>The process for conducting outcomes evaluations is described in Outcomes Steps 1-6.</p> <p>The process for conducting process evaluations is</p>	<p>Outcomes evaluation is very important, since it lets you know if your program is resulting in the changes you want to make in the community you serve.</p> <p>Process evaluation is also important, since it can provide information about how you are carrying out your project plan.</p>

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3. Identify the timeframe for the evaluation	Determine the period of time the evaluation should cover.	<p>Depending on the nature of your program and the questions you have about your program’s performance, your evaluation can cover a relatively short period of a few months, a year, or a multi-year period.</p> <p>For example: If the program is reading tutoring for students ages 5-8, a short-term evaluation might measure the percent of students who pass a reading test after 3 months of instruction.</p> <p>A long-term evaluation might look for more lasting impacts of the program, such as measuring the high school graduation rate of students who received the reading tutoring as children.</p>	<p>Your evaluation should answer the questions that your NPO, donors and the community have about the program being evaluated. Sometimes those questions involve short-term impacts, and sometimes they are seeking information about impact over a longer period of time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New programs, and programs that run for a set period of time (for example, a 1-year program) will generally be evaluated over a short timeframe. • Programs that are ongoing over a large number of years may have a longer timeframe for evaluation.

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OUTCOMES EVALUATION (See Outcomes Evaluation Planning Guide, Attachments 1 and 2)			
<p><u>Outcomes Step 1:</u></p> <p>Identify the outcomes associated with the program</p>	<p>If the program succeeds, what change would you expect to see in the community you serve?</p>	<p>For example: For the reading tutoring program for school age children, the following would be a possible outcome:</p> <p><i>"Children who receive tutoring through this program will learn to read".</i></p> <p>This outcome shows the desired <i>impact</i> of the program on the <i>community being served</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Community being served:</i> Children ages 5-8 who receive reading tutoring • <i>Impact on that community:</i> They learn to read <p>For NPO's with strategic plans:</p> <p>If your NPO has a strategic plan, your mission statement can help you determine the outcomes to measure. For example: The mission statement for the Children's reading NPO is:</p> <p><i>"Our NPO promotes childhood literacy by providing books and tutoring to children age 5-8".</i>The mission statement makes it clear that the NPO seeks to increase childhood literacy. The outcomes you measure should relate to that desired impact.</p>	<p>Being as specific as possible about the impact you are seeking to have will help you determine if that impact is being achieved.</p>

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<p><u>Outcomes Step 2:</u></p> <p>Determine the outcome indicators that you will use to measure the outcome.</p>	<p>The outcome indicator describes how you will measure whether or not you achieved your outcome.</p> <p>The outcome indicator must be very specific:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What data source will be used? • When will it be used? 	<p>For example: For the reading tutoring program for school age children, if the outcome were:</p> <p><i>"Children who receive tutoring through this program will learn to read".</i></p> <p>The outcome indicator could be:</p> <p><i>"The percentage of children who received tutoring who pass a reading competency test 3 months after completing tutoring"</i></p> <p>It is very important that the outcome indicator actually measure the outcome in question. For example: It would not be appropriate for the reading tutoring program to use "the percentage of parents who were satisfied with the tutoring program" as its outcome indicator. Parents might be satisfied or dissatisfied with the tutoring program for reasons that have little to do with whether their children learned to read. (Note that information on parent satisfaction with the tutoring program could be very valuable, as it may provide insight about program strengths and weaknesses that can help the program improve. However, parent satisfaction information is not, in itself, an outcome indicator.)</p>	<p>The outcome indicator is essential for measuring the outcome. Without it, you would have no way of knowing whether the outcome is achieved.</p>

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		<p>For NPO's with strategic plans:</p> <p>If your NPO has a strategic plan, your SMART objectives can help you determine the outcome indicator. For example: One SMART objective for the Children's reading NPO is:</p> <p><i>"By August 2014, 80% of the students who have received tutoring will pass a reading competency test."</i></p> <p>Based on this SMART objective, your outcome indicator would be the percentage of tutored who pass a reading competency test by August 2014.</p>	
<p><u>Outcomes Step 3:</u></p> <p>Use the results of your NPO's annual beneficiary survey as an outcome indicator</p>	<p>A beneficiary survey can be an important source of information on the impact of your program.</p>	<p>NPOs should survey beneficiaries on an annual basis to learn how they are being impacted by the program, and to learn their satisfaction with the program.</p> <p>A properly designed beneficiary survey can provide important information about the impact your program is having in the community it serves. See Attachment 3 for a sample Beneficiary Survey.</p>	<p>Asking beneficiaries directly is often one of the most effective ways you can learn about the impact of your programs in the community.</p>

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<p><u>Outcomes Step 4:</u></p> <p>Develop a plan for carrying out the outcomes evaluation</p>	<p>The plan should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program being evaluated • The outcomes being measured • The timeframe for the evaluation • The outcome indicators to be used • Sources of data for the outcome indicators • Specific data elements you will want to collect. • When the data will be collected, and who is responsible for collecting the data. • When the data will be analyzed, and who is responsible for analyzing the data. • When, in what format, and to whom will the results be reported? 	<p>Completing the template in Attachment 2 will help you prepare your outcomes evaluation plan.</p> <p>Even if the evaluation will not be carried out immediately, it is important to have an evaluation plan in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may need to start collecting data well in advance of actually carrying out the evaluation. • You need to plan for who will be doing the evaluation so you can make sure that the staff involved will have the time available, or so arrangements can be made for an outside evaluation consultant. <p>Make sure you think through what data you will need to collect, so you have all the needed data available when it is time to do the evaluation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example: The reading tutoring program may want to see if girls or boys benefit more from tutoring. If they want to do that, they need to collect data on the gender of the students being tested, as well as test results. • The reading program may want to determine if certain tutors are more or less effective. If they want to do that, they should make sure that they collect the name of the tutors for the students being tested, as well as the test results. <p>Using an outside evaluation consultant</p> <p>Evaluations can often be done using your NPO staff.</p>	<p>A detailed evaluation plan will help assure that your evaluation process is successful.</p>

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		<p>However an outside evaluation consultant may be helpful in some circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New or developing NPOs that have small staffs and limited experience may benefit from an evaluation consultant to help them design and/or carry out their evaluation. It may be possible to find expert volunteers to assist with evaluation planning and implementation. • Experienced NPOs with large, multi-faceted programs may benefit from an evaluation consultant to help them design and carry out their evaluations. This is particularly important if they do not have internal staff capacity to do sophisticated evaluations, and if they need to provide evaluation plans and results as part of grant applications or reports to donors. 	

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<p><u>Outcomes Step 5:</u> Carry out the evaluation</p>	<p>Follow the evaluation plan to collect and analyze the outcome indicator data. By analyzing the outcome indicator data, you will get information on the extent to which the desired outcome was achieved. In other words, you will get information on your NPO's impact on the community you are serving.</p>	<p>For example: For the reading tutoring program, carrying out the evaluation would involve compiling and analyzing reading test results for children who have been tutored during the program. What percentage of children passed the test? How does this compare with the program goal of 85% of children passing the test?</p>	

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<p><u>Outcomes Step 6:</u> Report the results.</p>	<p>Evaluation results should be reported in writing.</p>	<p>The evaluation report should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what your program does • Describe the goal of the program—what change your program is trying to create in the community it serves. • Indicate how you are measuring the change . • Describe the process for measuring your program’s results (For example: If you are interviewing clients about how the program has affected them, describe how and when those interviews take place, and attach a copy of the interview questions.) • Present the results of the measurement. • Indicate whether or not your program is meeting its goals, based on the evaluation results. • Report any insights the evaluation provided about why your program is or is not achieving its desired results. 	<p>The evaluation report is important for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPO staff: So that they know if their programs are having intended results (and they can make changes to improve them if they are not having intended results) • NPO board: To help them set directions and priorities for the NPO. • Current and potential donors: So they understand the effectiveness of NPO programs. • The broader community: So they understand the impact of the NPO on their community.

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PROCESS EVALUATION (See Process Evaluation Planning Guide, Attachment 4 and 5)			
<p><u>Process Step 1:</u></p> <p>Identify the key activities associated with your program.</p>	<p>What are your NPO's major activities in carrying out the program being evaluated?</p>	<p>For the reading tutoring program for school age children, major activities would be :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing tutoring to children age 5-8 • Identifying and training volunteer tutors • Entering into partnerships with schools whose students will be tutored. <p>For NPOs with a Strategic Plan</p> <p>The strategies identified in your Strategic Plan include the major activities you carry out. Determine what strategies apply to the program you are evaluating.</p> <p>For NPOs with an Action Plan</p> <p>The Action Plan lists "action items" for your NPO. Determine which action items apply to the program you are evaluating.</p>	<p>To understand whether your processes are working, you must have a clear picture of the activities you expect to carry out.</p>
<p><u>Process Step 2:</u></p> <p>Set a measurable performance target for each</p>	<p>Determine how much of each activity you need to do, within the evaluation timeframe.</p>	<p>For the reading tutoring program for school age children, targets could be :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide tutoring to 100 children age 5-8 during 2014. 	<p>To be effective in bringing about change in the community serve, your program must achieve at least a certain level of</p>

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activity.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and training 15 volunteer tutors during 2013 Entering into partnerships with 2 schools during 2013. <p>For NPOs with a Strategic Plan</p> <p>The SMART objectives identified in your Strategic Plan include measurable and timed process targets for your major activities. Determine what SMART objectives apply to the program you are evaluating.</p> <p>For NPOs with an Action Plan</p> <p>Your “task list” for each activity should identify specifically what you want to accomplish for each activity</p>	<p>performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example: If the reading tutoring program only tutored 1 student, it would not have much impact on its goal of improving childhood literacy. However, if it tutored 100 students, it could have a much more substantial impact. Performance evaluation enables you to measure whether the desired level of performance is being achieved.
<p><u>Process Step 3:</u></p> <p>Determine the data source for each measurable performance target.</p>	<p>Make sure that there is a way of measuring each target.</p>	<p>Data sources for process evaluation can be very simple. Often they are just counting how much the program produces.</p> <p>For the reading tutoring program for school age children, data sources could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of students who received tutoring Number of volunteer tutors recruited and trained. Number of school partnerships established. 	<p>It is important to plan in advance for the data to be used, so you will have the information you need to measure your program’s performance.</p>

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		Make sure that the data identified is available and that you have good recordkeeping systems for recording it.	
<p><u>Process Step 4:</u></p> <p>Develop the process evaluation plan</p>	<p>The plan should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program being evaluated • The measurable performance targets for the program • Sources of data for the performance targets. • Specific data elements to collect. • When the data will be collected, and who is responsible for collecting the data. • When the data will be analyzed, and who is responsible for analyzing the data. • When, in what format, and to whom will the results be reported? 	<p>Completing the template in Attachment 5 will help you develop the process evaluation plan.</p>	<p>Successful completion of the evaluation requires data gathering and analysis in accordance with the plan.</p>
<p><u>Process Step 5:</u></p> <p>Carry out the process evaluation</p>	<p>Conduct the process evaluation as described in the process evaluation plan.</p>	<p>The process evaluation will show areas where the program met or exceeded its performance targets, and areas where it fell short of its targets.</p>	<p>Meeting your performance targets is essential for your program to have its desired impact in the community.</p>

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			The process evaluation will let you know if you are meeting performance targets.
<p><u>Process Step 6:</u></p> <p>Write the evaluation report</p>	Findings of the process evaluation should be in writing.	<p>The report should :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the program being evaluated • Identify the performance targets associated with that program. • Describe the data and process used to measure the performance targets. • Describe the results. • Provide any insights gained about why the program did or did not meet its performance targets. 	The written evaluation report provides a foundation for your NPOs efforts to improve its effectiveness. It demonstrates transparency and accountability for your board, funders, clients and the community at large.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Enhancements to the evaluation process described above are included in:

- Attachment 6—Using Logic Models As a Guide for Program Evaluation
- Attachment 7—Improving Your Programs Using Outcome and Process Evaluation Results

PART II: LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

TOPIC	ATTACHMENT
Conducting Outcomes Evaluation	Attachment 1: Outcomes Evaluation Planning Guide--Example
Conducting Outcomes Evaluation	Attachment 2: Outcomes Evaluation Planning Guide--Template
Conducting Outcomes Evaluation	Attachment 3: Beneficiary Survey Example
Conducting Process Evaluation	Attachment 4: Process Evaluation Planning Guide--Example
Conducting Process Evaluation	Attachment 5: Process Evaluation Planning Guide--Template
Enhancements to the evaluation process	Attachment 6: Using Logic Models as a Guide for Program Evaluation
Enhancements to the evaluation process	Attachment 7: Improving Your Programs Using Outcome and Process Evaluation Results

PART III: HELPFUL REFERENCES ON PROGRAM EVALUATION

AUTHOR AND TITLE	WHERE IT CAN FOUND	WHAT THIS REFERENCE COVERS
Carter McNamara, MBA, PhD. Basic Guide to Outcomes-Based Evaluation for Nonprofit Organizations with Very Limited Resources.	www.managementhelp.org/evaluation/outcomes	A step-by-step guide to carrying out an outcomes-based evaluation, designed for small NPOs.

PART IV: NPO SELF – ASSESSMENT: PROGRAM EVALUATION

Your NPO can use the following to identify areas where your Program evaluation process works well and areas where it can be improved. For each part of the Program evaluation Process, check the appropriate box to show whether the described standards are fully achieved, partially achieved, or not present in your NPO.

PROGRAM EVALUATION PROGRAM STEP	ACHIEVD	PARTIALLY ACHIEVED	NOT PRESENT	COMMENTS
1. Our NPO understands what program evaluation is and why it is important.				
2. Our NPO understands the difference between outcome evaluation and process evaluation.				
3. Our NPO conducts an annual beneficiary survey and uses the results to help determine its effectiveness.				
4. Our NPO has a process for selecting programs for evaluation.				
5. Our NPO understands the steps involved in carrying out an evaluation.				
6. Our NPO regularly conducts outcome evaluations for its programs.				
7. Our NPO regularly conducts process evaluations for its programs.				
8. Our NPO shares written reports on its evaluation findings with its staff, board, donors, clients, and other community stakeholders.				

PART V. SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS AND NEXT STEPS

<p>Parts of the Program Evaluation process where our NPO's performance is strong</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4.
<p>Parts of the Program Evaluation process where our NPO needs to develop additional capacity.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4.
<p>Next steps—what actions will be taken to strengthen your NPO's Program Evaluation process?</p>	