

Critical Components of Evaluation

From Planning to Progress
and Back Again

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Why Evaluate?



- Evaluation of state Flex programs, as well as the national program, is critical to both the success and sustainability of the program. It is critical to assess impact of the activities to demonstrate value.
- Evaluation measures need to be appropriate and quantifiable in order to demonstrate progress towards overall program **goals**.
- Evaluation findings will also be utilized to identify areas of strength and determine program improvements needed. Findings will be used to replicate best practices.

What Happens If You Don't Evaluate?



If you don't evaluate, hunches will always be hunches.

- The state Flex program won't have measures to inform progress toward outcomes, and it won't dedicate time to review those measures and what they mean.
- The state Flex program will only be able to guess at what activities produced outcomes.
- There will be no opportunity to learn or gain insight from feedback.
- State Flex programs will miss important early warning signs of possible failure.
- The state Flex program will miss the chance to tell its story and prove that the program actually had an impact.

Components of Evaluation

- Overarching Vision and Direction
- Strategic Framework
- Stakeholder Involvement
- Solid Work plan
- Measurable Goals and Objectives
- Good Data Collection
- Thorough Analysis
- The “SO What”

Overarching Vision and Direction

- Where is your Flex Program headed?
- Does that vision align with Federal program goals?
- If you don't know where you are going, how will you know when you get there?

Engaging Stakeholders

- Stakeholders are the ones most likely to be impacted by the Flex program.
- Involving them can create buy-in and help avoid pitfalls that may not be apparent to program staff.
- When stakeholders buy-in they can move a program forward and eliminate barriers to change.
- Stakeholders can help inform the process, understand the information gathered, and assist the program with necessary changes.
- Engaged stakeholders can assist in results dissemination.

Engage Stakeholders

- Engage **stakeholders** early on since they can be significant assets in the evaluation process.
- Stakeholders may include:
 - Those involved in program operations (e.g., state hospital association, advisory committees, quality improvement organizations (QIOs), consultants)
 - Those served or affected by the Flex program (e.g., CAHs, ambulance services, networks)
 - Primary users of the evaluation (e.g., staff, ORHP, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) regional offices, legislators, advisory committees).

What if you Don't Engage Stakeholders?

- Choosing not to engage stakeholders can have serious implications on the integrity of an evaluation.
- Buy-in will be much more difficult, as well as making any changes due to evaluation findings.
- By not engaging stakeholders, programs miss a serious opportunity for stakeholders to be champions and supporters.

Strategic Frameworks

- Many frameworks exist for aligning **goals, objectives, activities** and developing your **theory of change** with **feedback loops**:
- Three frameworks include:
 - [Logic Model](#)
 - [Balanced Scorecard](#)
 - [STAR Model](#)



Utilizing a framework will not do the evaluation for you, but it will make the process much easier and cohesive.

Creating a Solid Work Plan:

- Identify problems to be solved; causes of the problems; hospitals and organizations affected by the problems that have a stake in the problems and their resolutions; and state of knowledge about the problems.
- Clearly and specifically identify desired **short-, intermediate-, and long-term outcomes** (e.g., What accomplishments are expected from the program in each of these time frames? Short and intermediate-term outcomes should “roll up” and support desired **long-term outcomes**.)

Work Plan Elements

Much like logic models, work plans can be divided into two sections:

1. Planned Work

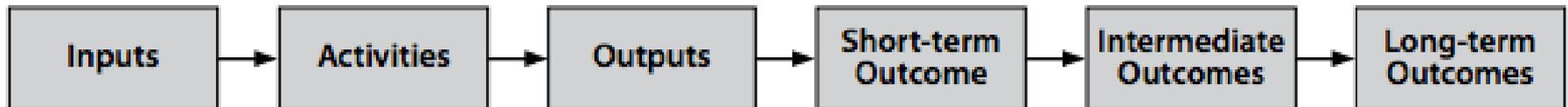
- Resources/Inputs
- Activities

2. Intended Results

- Outputs
- Outcomes
- Impact

Work Plan Flow

A work plan that is prepared with evaluation in mind will follow the flow from what goes into the plan to what actually is intended to be the end result.



Feedback Loops

Feedback loops are an important part of continuous evaluation because the information aids program improvement. These lines of communication between intentions and results allow for ongoing evaluation



- For every portion of the program plan, ask “will this data tell us that the program is on the right track or give us information about what to change?”



- Waiting until the end of the program cycle to evaluate and get feedback is not ideal. Collect and analyze data as appropriate for each outcome that is being measured—this will vary based upon the outcome.

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Creating a Solid Work Plan:

- Tie **outcomes** to Flex program **core areas**.
- Identify specific program **interventions** designed to achieve desired program outcomes and related outputs.
- Identify resources (dollars, staff, consultants, hospital/EMS staff) needed to undertake program interventions.
- Identify **external/environmental factors** that can assist or hinder program accomplishments.

This type of planning is critical because programs can make decisions about the future based on what the expectation was and what really happened.

Pieces of a Program Work Plan

- Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes
- Activities



Measurable Goals and Objectives

A state Flex program could have a **GOAL** to ensure the long-term financial stability/viability of CAHs.



Their **OBJECTIVE** might be to increase the number of CAHs that have a positive operating margin by FY 2013.



Their **ACTIVITY** might be to hold a revenue cycle management workshop, with an intended



OUTCOME that better revenue cycle management in CAHs leads to increased sustainability.



An **INDICATOR** that assesses the outcome may be the number of days in Accounts Receivable reduced by 10%.

Planning for Outcomes



- A good work plan and evaluation of that plan will have a mix of **short-, intermediate-, and long-term program outcomes**. Evaluation should be tied distinctly to each **outcome** and examined at specific program intervals.

Example: Satisfaction with technical assistance could be measured quarterly.

Example Outcome Measures: Financial Performance Improvement

Flex programs are *required to improve CAH financial and operational performance*

Activity	Measure	Outcome
Support efforts to improve CAH business office and billing operations	# of CAHs participating in business office and billing operations # of CAHs have improved the turn around time to bill 3 rd party carriers # of CAHs with improved cash flow # of CAHs with improved financial margins	CAHs exhibit better cash flow and improved viability

Example Outcome Measures: Community Development and Engagement

Flex programs are required to support efforts to assist CAHs in developing collaborative regional or local systems of care, addressing community needs, and integrating EMS in those regional and local systems of care.

Activity	Measure	Outcome
Encourage and support CAHs with identifying options to address local gaps in behavioral health services	# of CAHs that have received TA/support to develop behavioral health services	Improved availability of behavioral health services in rural communities
	# of CAHs engaged in effort to develop local behavioral health services	Increased collaboration between CAHs and behavioral health services providers
	# of CAHs collaborating with behavioral health providers to develop local services	Improved patient care in CAH communities
	# of CAH communities where behavioral health services have been implemented or expanded	

Good Data Collection

1. Focus group
2. Interview
3. Case study
4. Questionnaire/Surveys/Checklist
5. Document review
6. Observation
7. Pre-test/Post-test
8. Recommendation Adoption Process (RAP) report

Thorough Analysis

The evaluation conclusions are justified when they are linked to the evidence gathered and judged against agreed-upon values or standards set by the stakeholders. Your **evaluation team** must agree that conclusions are justified before they will use the evaluation results with confidence.

Example: CAHs experience a 5% decrease in their “time to transfer” quality measure across the board. In order for the program to take credit for that change, evidence gathered must support that program **activities** directly targeted that **activity** with an **objective** to achieve a similar outcome. Otherwise, its cause can not be determined.

Programs must also realistically assess the role of other stakeholders or external influences that may have contribute to the change in performance.

Thorough Analysis

Analysis and synthesis of an evaluation's findings might detect patterns in evidence, either by isolating important findings (analysis) or by combining sources of information to reach a larger understanding (synthesis).

Interpretation is the effort of figuring out what the findings mean and is part of the overall effort to understand the evidence gathered in an evaluation.

Thorough Analysis



Merely uncovering program performance facts is not an evaluation. Instead, the facts must be interpreted to determine the practical significance of the lessons learned.

Judgments are statements concerning the merit, worth or significance of the program. They are formed by comparing the findings and interpretations regarding the program against one or more selected standards.

The “So What”

What are you Going to Do With What You Have ?

Utilize Evaluation to Meet the Stakeholders Needs

- Your **stakeholders** will need different things from your evaluation depending on who they are and what organization they represent.
- Having the results of your evaluation available in different forms, such as only the **measures**, an executive summary, a PowerPoint presentation of recommendations and potential **interventions**, will allow stakeholders to utilize the pieces that are relevant to them. Make certain that the evaluation is quantifiable to demonstrate how the measures relate to stakeholders.
- The most important way to use your evaluation to meet the needs of your stakeholders is to use it to identify and initiate improvements in your program and to continuously tell your story both at the state and national level.



Using Evaluation Results to Improve Program Performance



An evaluation is only as good as what you do with it.

- The evaluation results should be disseminated a number of ways to ensure that stakeholders are able to utilize the information that is most important to them.
- An effective evaluation summary will note several area for improvement or that need help.

Good Evaluations Are No Accident

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