Why Evaluate?

What It Can Do (and What It Cannot)

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Purpose

The National Rural Health Resource Center is a nonprofit organization dedicated to sustaining and improving health care in rural communities. As the nation's leading technical assistance and knowledge center in rural health, The Center focuses on five core areas:

- Performance Improvement
- Health Information Technology
- Recruitment & Retention
- Community Health Assessments
- Networking

Today's Discussion

- Workshop overview
- Why evaluate?
- Direction of the Flex program
- What happens if you don't evaluate?
- Understanding goals, objectives, and activities
- Difference between outputs and outcomes
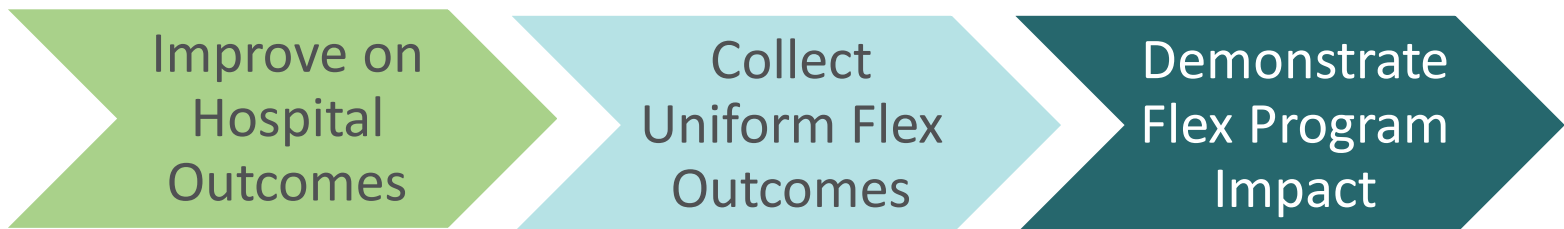- Measure the process and the impact

Why Evaluate?

- Critical to both the success and sustainability of the program
- Critical to assess impact of the activities to demonstrate value
- Evaluation measures demonstrate progress towards overall program goals
- Help to make informed decisions

Direction of the Flex Program

- Minimum standard of reporting on outcomes
- Measurement in grant work plans is key
- The Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (ORHP) is developing a framework of national measures to demonstrate impact of Flex program funding

Improve on Hospital Outcomes	Collect Uniform Flex Outcomes	Demonstrate Flex Program Impact

Direction of the Flex Program

- State level data and stories help tell the national narrative
- The work of the national safety net is not an individual endeavor
- Ultimately, the state-level program is about meeting the need of its rural population
- Good stewards of national and state dollars
- Meaningful impact to rural communities

National Flex Program Strategy

Benefits of Evaluating

- Evaluation findings can be utilized to:
    - Identify areas of strength
    - Determine needed program improvements
    - Illustrate lessons learned
    - Replicate best practices

Benefits of Evaluating

- Reflect on where you are, where you have been, and where you want to go

What If You Don't Evaluate?

HUNCH

YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS MINE
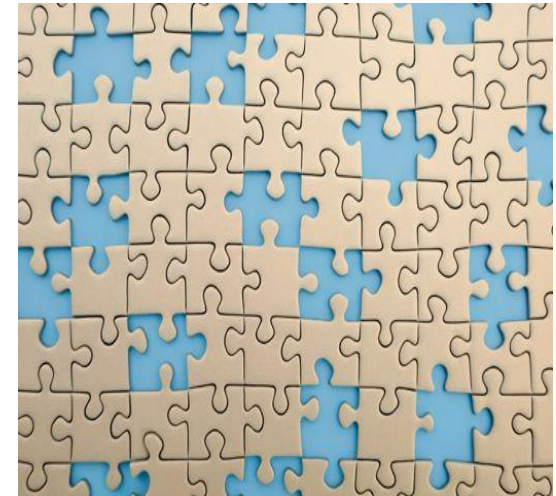
What If You Don't Evaluate?

- What You Will Not Have:
  - Measures to inform progress toward outcomes
  - Time dedicated to review measures and what they mean
  - Demonstration of activities producing outcomes
  - Opportunity to learn or gain insight from feedback

What If You Don't Evaluate?

- What You Will Miss:
    - Important early warning signs of possible failure
    - The chance to tell your program's story and prove the program's impact

Flex Evaluation Requirements

- Evaluative measures must assess both:

  - To what extent the program objectives have been met (Quantitative)

  - To what extent these can be associated to the project (Qualitative)

- Evaluation findings required to inform program improvements and develop lessons learned

Ensure Goals and Objectives are Consistent with Need

- Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes
- Activities

Goals

Objectives

Outcomes

Evaluation should be tied distinctly to each outcome.

The outcomes should be examined at specific program intervals.

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Outputs and Outcomes Required

- A thorough evaluation includes both process measures (outputs) and performance measures (outcomes)

Difference Between Outputs and Outcomes

- Outputs result from successful completion ("product") of program activities.

    – Example: the widget made by the factory

- Outcomes are changes or benefits to individuals, groups, organizations, and/or communities that result from program outputs.

    – Example: what happens as a result of the widget, not the widget itself.

Difference Between Outputs and Outcomes

A bird flaps its wings…

An output of the bird flapping its wings would be:

- How many times does it flap its wings?

An outcome of the bird flapping its wings would be:

- How far does the bird travel as a result of it flapping its wings?

Measure Process AND Impact

- First measurement from an activity is often a process measure or output

- To assess true impact, measures must grow in sophistication from counting what happened (output) to assessing what changed (outcome)

- How do you determine if it is an output/process measure or an outcome measure?

   - *Ask: "Is this just a count or did something change for the participants or stakeholders?"*

What Evaluation Cannot Do

- Not a magic bullet
- Cannot write your grant for you, but can help illustrate quantitative and qualitative information
- Cannot tell your story, but can articulate it
- Cannot tell you the path forward, but it will help guide you

Evaluation Means Planning

- Planning is a fundamental element of program evaluation. A good plan can save you a considerable headache down the line.

- Program evaluation is a systematic, continual, and complicated process.

Step by Step, Bite by Bite

- Takes time but can save an immense amount of guesswork and time in the end
- Time dedicated will be time very well spent
- Remember:

    Take the process

    Step by Step,

    Bite by Bite

one bite at a time

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At the End of the Day...

- Would you rather know that your hospitals:
  - *Liked the training you provided* _OR_
  - *That they did implemented a new falls prevention policy from the template at the training that has reduced falls from 10 per month to 2 with a goal of 0.*

  - *Found the financial assessment informative* _OR_
  - *Implemented recommendations from the assessment that decreased Days in Accounts Receivable by 10%*

At the End of the Day...

- Would you rather be able to say that your work time is well spent because:
  - You receive excellent satisfaction scores from the hospitals   *OR*
  - You receive excellent satisfaction scores with hospitals telling stories of how your work impacts areas of need

- Would you rather be able to say that your program:
  - Impacts the need of rural communities in your state OR
  - Impacts need of rural communities in your state and nationally

Flex Program Evaluation Toolkit

- Provides information, tools and resources to effectively collect data and assess the activities performed by the (Flex) Program.

- The toolkit includes two units:
  - Unit 1 provides an overview of the pre work and planning that must precede a comprehensive evaluation.
  - Unit 2 focuses on evaluation design, assessing and collecting data that can be disseminated and acted upon to enhance the program.

- Available on the TASC website: www.ruralcenter.org/tasc

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Glossary

Activities

Actions developed to achieve objectives for goal attainment.

Assessment

The process of judging impressions/thoughts, progress, achievements, or skills.

Goal

High-level statements that outline the ultimate purpose of a program. This is the end toward which program efforts are directed. Example: Increase overall satisfaction with patient discharge from the hospital.

Impact

The ultimate effect of the program on the problem or condition that the program or activity was supposed to do something about. (Impact can be positive or negative, unexpected or even unintended.)

Measures

Ways to quantify the degree of success a program has had in achieving its stated objectives, goals, and program activities.

Measurement

A method of determining quantity, capacity, or dimension.

Objective

Concrete statements describing what a program's activities must achieve in order to reach the program's ultimate goals. To make an objective concrete it should be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-limited, or **SMART**.

Outcome Measures

A method of determining quantity, capacity, or dimension.

- **short-term** outcomes are likely to be changes in skills, attitudes, and knowledge.
- **intermediate-term** often include changes in behavior and decision making.
- **long-term** outcomes may involve changes at the organization or program level

Outputs

The direct products of program activities. The tangible results from the completion of activities or initiatives that support the project objectives (e.g., project contract deliverables).

Performance Measures

Indicators that assess the success of various aspects of the performance of a program.

Process Measures

Illustrate completion of activities. In other words, indicators of the volume of work or what the program actually did. These are also referred to as output measures. Example: conduct two medical director trainings

Qualitative Data

Information that is difficult to measure, count, or express in numerical terms. Example: how safe a person feels in a hospital is qualitative data.

Quantitative Data

Information that can be expressed in numerical terms, counted, or compared on a scale. Example: The number of people that attended rural trauma team development training.

Work Plan

A visual, representation or model which identifies the objectives and goals of a program, as well as their relationship to program activities intended to achieve these outcomes.