

Evaluation and The Flex Monitoring Team

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**Flex
Monitoring
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Purpose

- Describe the role of evaluation in project planning, implementation, management, and reporting
- Discuss evaluation within the context of program performance improvement
- Review the framework for outcome-based evaluation
- Define basic components and key terms
- Review use of FMT data for evaluation and program performance improvement
- Describe FMT's Flex evaluation framework project

Evaluation context

- One of six required review criteria in 2010 Competing continuation criteria
- Accounts for 15 points (out of 100) among the six review criteria
- An integral part of effective program management and improvement
- Documents program outcomes and supports annual performance reporting requirement
- GPRA/PART

Criterion 3: Evaluative measures

- From the 2010 Competing Continuation guidance
- Effectiveness of the method proposed to monitor and evaluate the project results. Evaluative measures must assess the extent the program objectives have been met and the extent these can be attributed to the project.
- The clarity and strength of the following:
 - Proposed methods to be employed by project staff for ensuring that proposed activities will be successfully documented and completed, based on the overall work plan.
 - Appropriate and quantifiable measures that will demonstrate progress towards program goals.
 - Evidence that the evaluation will inform any program improvements.

Program evaluation and performance improvement

- Move away from traditional view of evaluation as a periodic activity done in latter stages of a program
- View evaluation as an integral day-to-day part of program planning, implementation, and management
- Connect evaluation to ongoing program performance improvement (PPI)

Viewing PPI in the evaluation context

- PPI should be viewed as:
 - A process to make ongoing improvements in program performance
 - A means to use data to assess progress on specific program goals and making mid-course corrections as necessary
 - An ongoing management activity
- PPI is not:
 - Random change to improve things
 - Evaluation by another name
 - A one time activity

What role does PPI play in program management?

- Describes what is being done and how well it is being done
- Tracks progress
- Supports informed decision making about what is and what is not working
- Supports action planning and allocation of resources where they are needed
- Provides data to managed and revise programs on a real time basis

Why focus on PPI in program management?

- Ensures forward program towards desired program goals and desired outcomes
- Is a data-driven resources to manage programs
- Ensures quality of program outputs and outcomes

Five phases of evaluation

- Context evaluation
- Program design evaluation
- Program implementation or process evaluation
- Program outcome evaluation
- Program impact evaluation

Questions for context evaluation

- Why is this program needed?
- Does this program duplicate other programs?
- Does this program conflict with other programs?
- How might public policy affect this program?
- Does this program fit our funder's criteria?

Questions for program design evaluation

- What is our program theory?
- Who is our target population?
- What are the needs of our target population?
- What outcomes will we help our target population achieve?
- What services will we provide?
- How many people will we serve?
- What resources will we need to run the program?

Questions for program implementation evaluation

- How many people are we serving?
- What services are they receiving?
- Are they receiving the services they should?
- What activities are we conducting?
- How much are we spending?
- All of the above compared to program design

Questions for program outcome evaluation

- How have our hospitals, providers, and communities changed in terms of:
 - Knowledge
 - Attitudes & beliefs
 - Skills
 - Behaviors
 - Health status
 - Access

Questions for program impact evaluation

- How has our organization or community changed in terms of:
 - Financing
 - Service capacity
 - Organization of services
 - Quality of services
 - Accessibility of services
 - Cost of services
 - Community health status

Outcome-based evaluation

- Aligns program strategies with desired outcomes
- Looks at impacts/benefits/changes to program participants during and/or after participation in the program
- Examines these changes in the short, intermediate, and long term
- Facilitates efforts to improve program operation and performance
- Documents program outcomes

Challenges of outcome-based evaluation

- Identifying appropriate outcomes that are within the influence of program intervention
- Establishing realistic timelines for outcomes
- “Noise in the system” – quantifying the relative impact of Flex Program activities
- Challenge of “proving” impact on desired longer term outcomes
- Building a “chain of evidence” to support conclusions regarding program impact

Basic components and key terms

- Problem definition
 - Clear statement of what the problem is, why it exists and who it affects
- Inputs/resources
 - Investment needed to implement strategies and achieve desired outcomes
- Strategy
 - Approach adopted by program to address defined problems
- Activities
 - Necessary steps to carry out program's strategies

Basic components and key terms

- **Outputs**
 - Units of service stemming from program activities
- **Outcomes**
 - Actual impacts/benefits/changes form participants
- **Outcome targets**
 - Number and percent of participants that are expected to achieve desired outcomes
- **Outcome indicators**
 - Observable and measurable milestones towards an outcome target

Basic questions

- What decisions do you want to be able to make?
- Who are the primary audiences for the results?
- What kind of information/data is needed and when will it be needed?
- How will the information/data be obtained?
- What resources are available to collect, analyze, and report the information/data?
- How will the information be reported?

Step 1 – Getting Ready

- Access resources on evaluation and outcomes measurement:
 - Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach (UW 1996)
 - Creating Program Logic Models: A Toolkit for State Flex Programs (<http://www.flexmonitoring.org/documents/PLMToolkit.pdf>)
 - Outcome Measurement: Showing Results in the Non-Profit Sector (<http://national.unitedway.org/outcomes/library/ndpaper.cfm>)
 - W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook
 - (<http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub770.pdf>)
- Engage outside evaluator, if using one, in the development of the evaluation plan
- Train at least one staff member in outcomes measurement and evaluation techniques

Step 2 - Choosing Outcomes

- Consider the development of a logic model
- Based on your program strategies and activities, choose the outcomes that will logically flow from these efforts
- Start with short-term outcomes rather than process or output measures (0-12 months), then move to intermediate outcomes (13-24 months), and longer term outcomes/impacts (25 or more months)
- “Chain” these outcomes by following the logic/assumptions that will drive these outcomes (e.g., connect the dots)
- Don’t worry about perfection, this process can be refined

Step 3 – Selecting Indicators

- Identify at least one indicator per outcome
- Identify how that indicator measures progress towards the desired outcome
- Include target numbers and percentages (outcomes have to be measurable)
- Consider the time frames for the desired outcomes and how soon progress can be expected

Step 4 – Getting data/ information

- Identify potential data sources for each measure
- Assess practicality of collecting data and cost
- Consider timing of data collection strategies
- Data collection methods
- Assess the need for evaluation consultant or expertise
- Pre-test data collection methods
- Write a data collection procedure to specify what data will be collected, who will collect it, how will it be collected, when will it be collected, how it will be tested, and what will be done with it

Step 5 – Analyzing and reporting

- Preparation (bring in expertise if needed)
- Analyzing data
 - Use appropriate quantitative and qualitative analytic techniques
- Reporting results
 - Remember your audience
 - Review results with staff and key stakeholders during the development of the report
 - Develop and executive summary
 - Outline the framework of the report in advance

Using FMT data and tools for evaluation

- Developing a consolidated hospital-level hospital report to allow benchmarking for financial, quality, and community-population health performance
- Data can be used to highlight high and low performing hospitals in each area but not necessarily pinpoint the causes
- Additional work is needed to identify root causes of performance issues and develop appropriate interventions
- Information on successful interventions used by CAHs and state Flex programs will be collected and disseminated
- Evaluation activities will be a partnership between FMT, TASC, states, and ORHP

Consolidated hospital-level reports

- Using secondary data (including Medicare hospital cost reports, Hospital Compare, MBQIP, AHA Annual Survey of Hospitals, and County Health Rankings), FMT will prepare hospital-level reports for benchmarking purposes and track changes over time
- State and national data will be compiled to allow comparison
- As appropriate, peer groupings will be developed to facilitate benchmarking
- Tools, TA, and resources will be needed to support the development, implementation, and evaluation of interventions

FMT project: Developing an evaluation framework

- Multi-year project
 - 2014-2015 project year – develop an evaluation framework
 - Subsequent years – plans to implement evaluation framework
- Framework development
 - Engage stakeholders from ORHP, TASC, NOSORH, and states
- Goals
 - Inform and align with guidance for next competitive cycle
 - Align the goals and objectives of the national and state Flex Programs
 - Propose a set of consistent indicators and measures
 - Describe a plan for collecting the data and information necessary to support the evaluation

Evaluability assessment

- Clarify program theory of change to link program initiatives to desired outcomes
- Develop clear goals and objectives to support Flex program planning, management, and performance improvement
- Clarify state Flex program reporting requirements
- Identify data to be collected and reported by state programs
- Identify and disseminate successful Flex program practices
- Develop a feedback process to monitor and address program implementation issues

Project tasks

- Examine state Flex programs evaluation processes and reports
- Assess evaluation TA needs of state Flex grantees
- Interview TASC program staff to understand their perspective on the evaluation needs of State grantees
- Examine PIMS data collected and reported by Flex grantees
- Review the application and reporting processes
- Explore potential linkages between Flex and SHIP programs
- Identify key performance metrics
- Recommend a reporting process communicate program outcomes and impact