Flex Program Evaluation Webinar Series: Evaluation Basics

November 1, 2023

National Rural Health Resource Center

The Center's Purpose

The National Rural Health Resource Center (The 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:

- Transition to Value and Population Health
- Collaboration and Partnership
- Performance Improvement
- Health Information Technology
- Workforce

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Purpose of the Flex Program Evaluation Webinar Series

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What to Expect

- **Each 60-minute webinar**
  - Brief presentation on the day's topic by the Flex Monitoring Team and TASC
  - Engaging conversation on Q&A and application of the topic

Understanding Program Evaluation & Basics	Understanding the Theory of Change & Logic Model	Accessing & Analyzing Data for Decision Making	Designing Activities & Describing Output & Outcome Measures	Designing Measurable Outcomes that Demonstrate Program Impact
NOV 1	NOV 30	DEC 12	JAN 9	JAN 31

Core Competencies for State Flex Program Excellence

- Developing Leadership and Workforce
- Managing the Flex Program
- Planning Strategically
- Managing Information and Evaluation
- Building and Sustaining Partnerships
- Understanding Policy and Regulations
- Strengthening Quality Reporting and Improvement
- Improving Financial Stability
- Understanding the Current and Future Health Care Environment
- Addressing Community Needs

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Flex Monitoring Team

A Performance Monitoring Resource for Critical Access Hospitals, States, & Communities

Evaluation Webinar Series: Evaluation Basics

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Flex Monitoring Team

Purpose

- Discuss the context for evaluation planning and the role of evaluation in supporting project reporting activities
- Describe outcome-based evaluation
- Define basic components and key terms
- Review the differences between process and outcome measures

Managing Information and Evaluation

- Utilize a framework for program evaluation
- Tell the story of the state Flex Program's impact and direction to various audiences
- Understand evaluation basics and definitions
- Utilize SMART goals based on needs
- Access and analyze data for decision making
- Ensure data reporting deliverables built into contractual agreements with consultants
- Utilize process measures and short-, interim-, and long-term outcome measures to assess program progress and plan for the future
- Describe measurable outcomes about the state Flex Program's activities that demonstrate impact

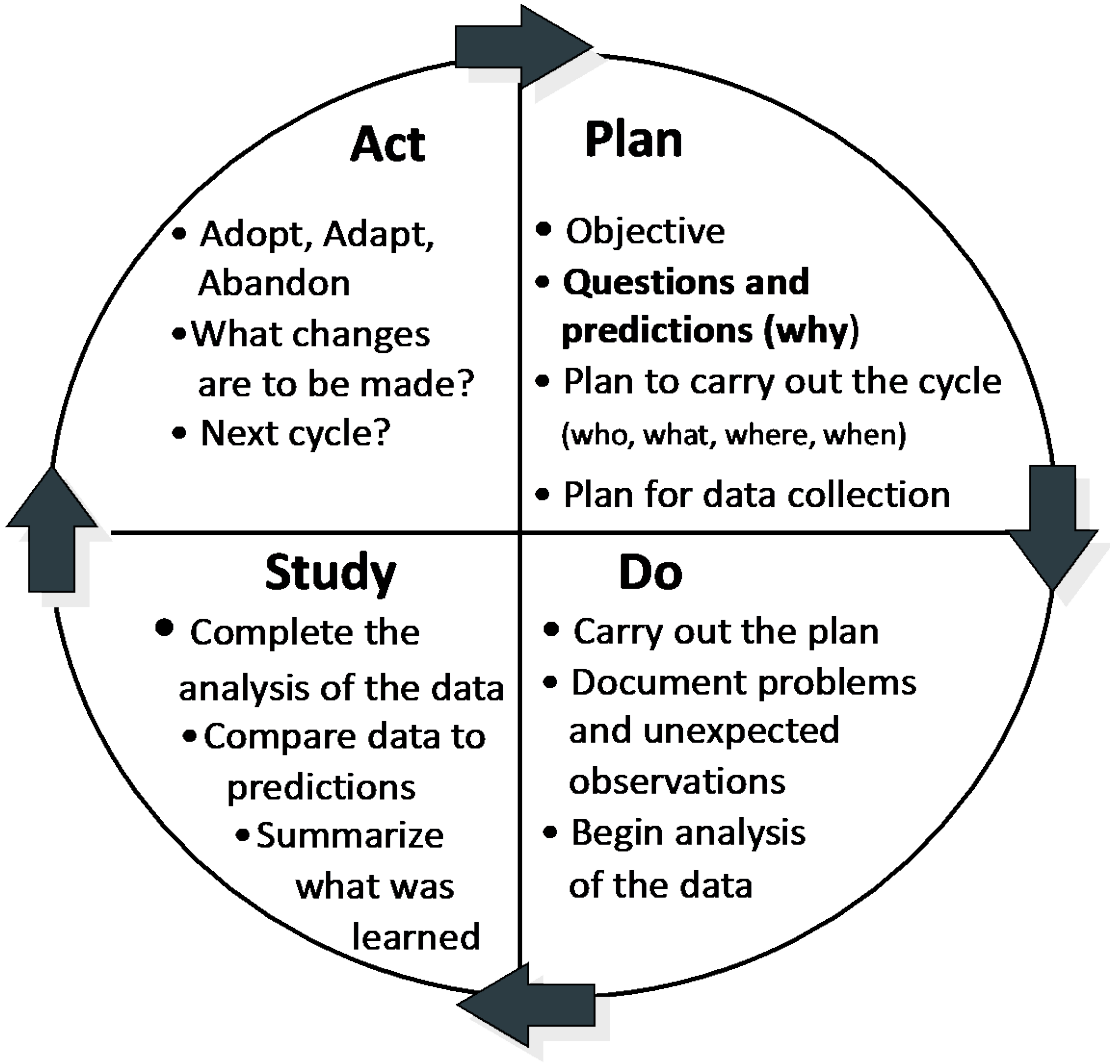
Importance of Evaluation

- Evaluation is critical to being able to track activities and see where an impact is being made
- Evaluation is a Core Competency of the Flex Program
- An integral part of program management and improvement and is a tool to help inform the actions of your organization
- Documents program outcomes and supports annual performance reporting requirement
- Will be an important component of upcoming Flex Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for State Flex Programs

Basics

- Evaluation:
  - A continuous process that begins with identifying needs, challenges, and gaps, and continues through implementing a project
  - Is used to determine impact by measuring where you are, where you have been, and where you want to go.

PDSA Cycle for Learning and Improvement



Outcome-Based Evaluation (cont'd)

- Requires attention to causal logic (underlying theory of change)
  - What is the “ logic” of the overall project, program or policy design?
  - How do each of the components of the program help to establish an If-Then relation
  - Is there a theory behind the change expected or seen? (Does the change follow the logic proposed?)
  - Does this theory or logic hold during implementation?

Outcome-Based Evaluation

- Aligns program strategies with desired outcomes
- Looks at impacts/benefits/changes to program participants during and 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 and impact

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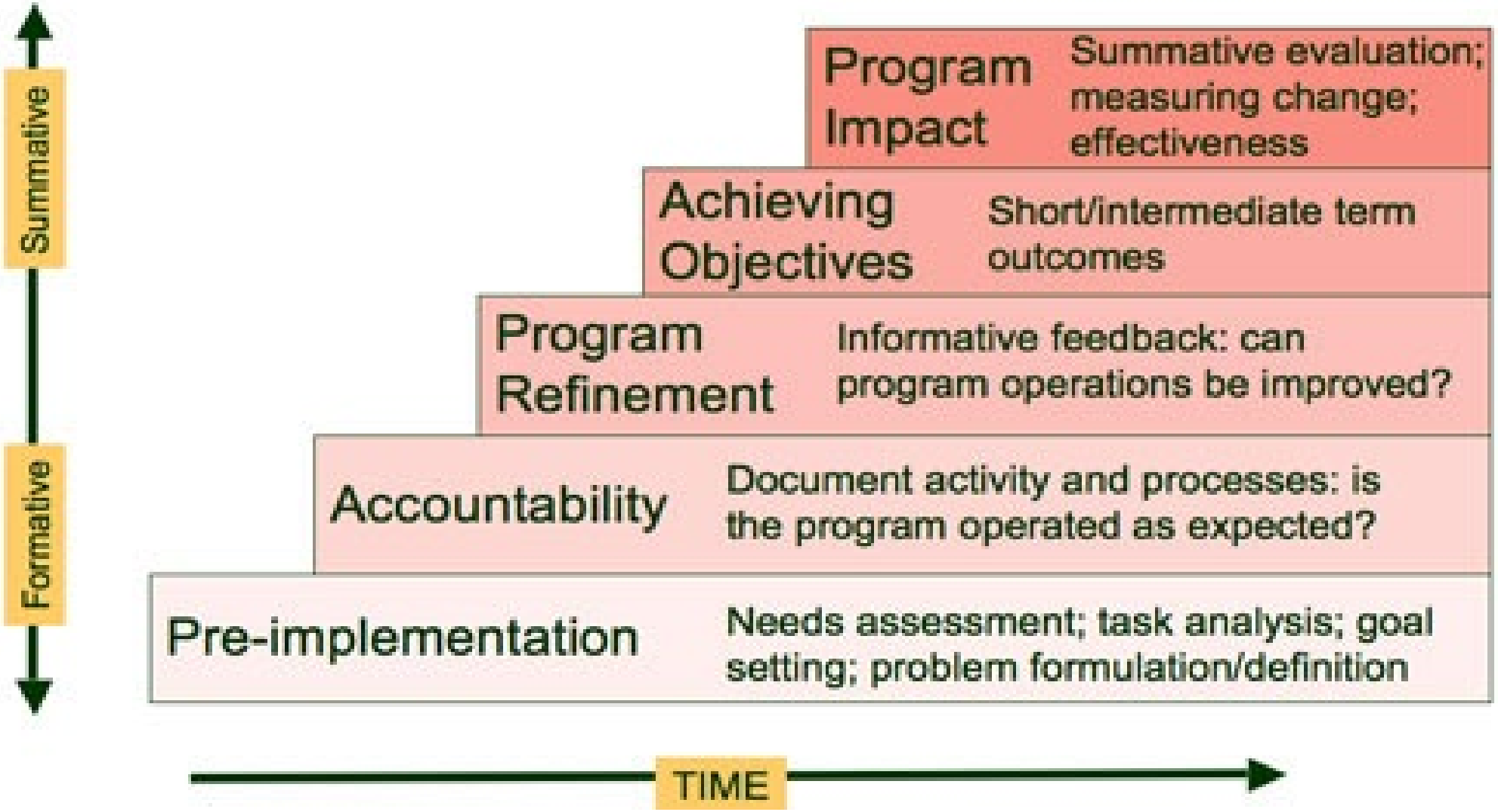
Evaluation Addresses

- “Why” Questions
  - What caused the changes we are monitoring
- “How” Questions
  - What was the sequence or processes that led to successful (or not) outcomes
- “Compliance/Accountability" Questions
  - Did the promised activities actually take place and as they were planned?
- "Process/Implementation" Questions
  - Was the implementation process followed as anticipated, and with what consequences?

Program Evaluation: Ages and Stages



Components and Key Terms

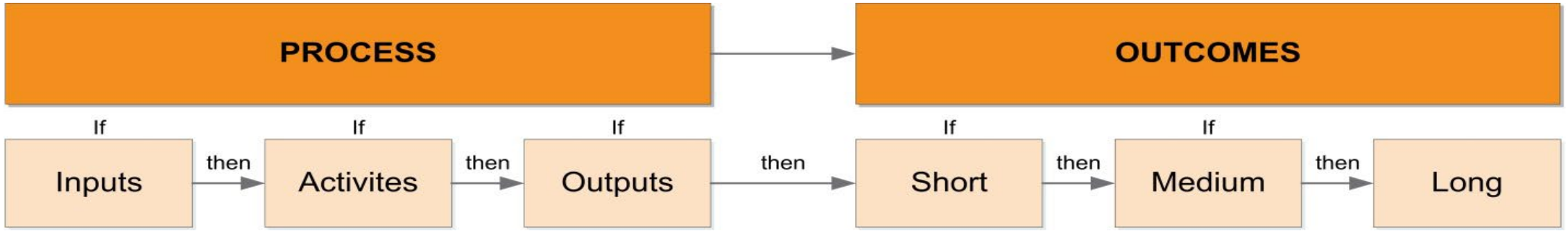
- Problem definition
  - Clear statement of what the problem is, why it exists and who it affects
- Inputs
  - Resources that go into a program
- Strategy
  - Approach adopted by program to address defined problems
- Activity
  - A specific action taken to produce a result
    - May or may not be able to measure an outcome (e.g., networking meetings, one-time webinars, sharing MBQIP reports with your CAHs)

Components and Key Terms (cont'd)

- Outputs
  - Measure that an activity has occurred, stepping-stones used to move forward
- Outcomes
  - Measurable change resulting from an activity or series of activities. Outcomes can be short-term, intermediate, and long-term.
- Outcome targets
  - # and % of participants that are expected to achieve desired outcomes
- Outcome indicators
  - Observable and measurable milestones towards an outcome target

Outputs vs. Outcomes

- Outputs – Used to monitor program activities
  - # of CAH personnel attending financial training
  - # of participants who report improved knowledge from training
- Outcomes – Used to monitor benefits to participants
  - % improvement in CAH margins
  - % reduction in days in accounts receivable



Goals and Objectives

- Goals - What you are trying to achieve through a project
- Objectives - The small, measurable steps you take toward a goal
  - Should be specific, easy to measure, achievable, realistic, and time-bound
- Objectives should always support goals, so it is important to set goals first
  - Objectives should play out daily and easily translate into action

Improvement and Impact

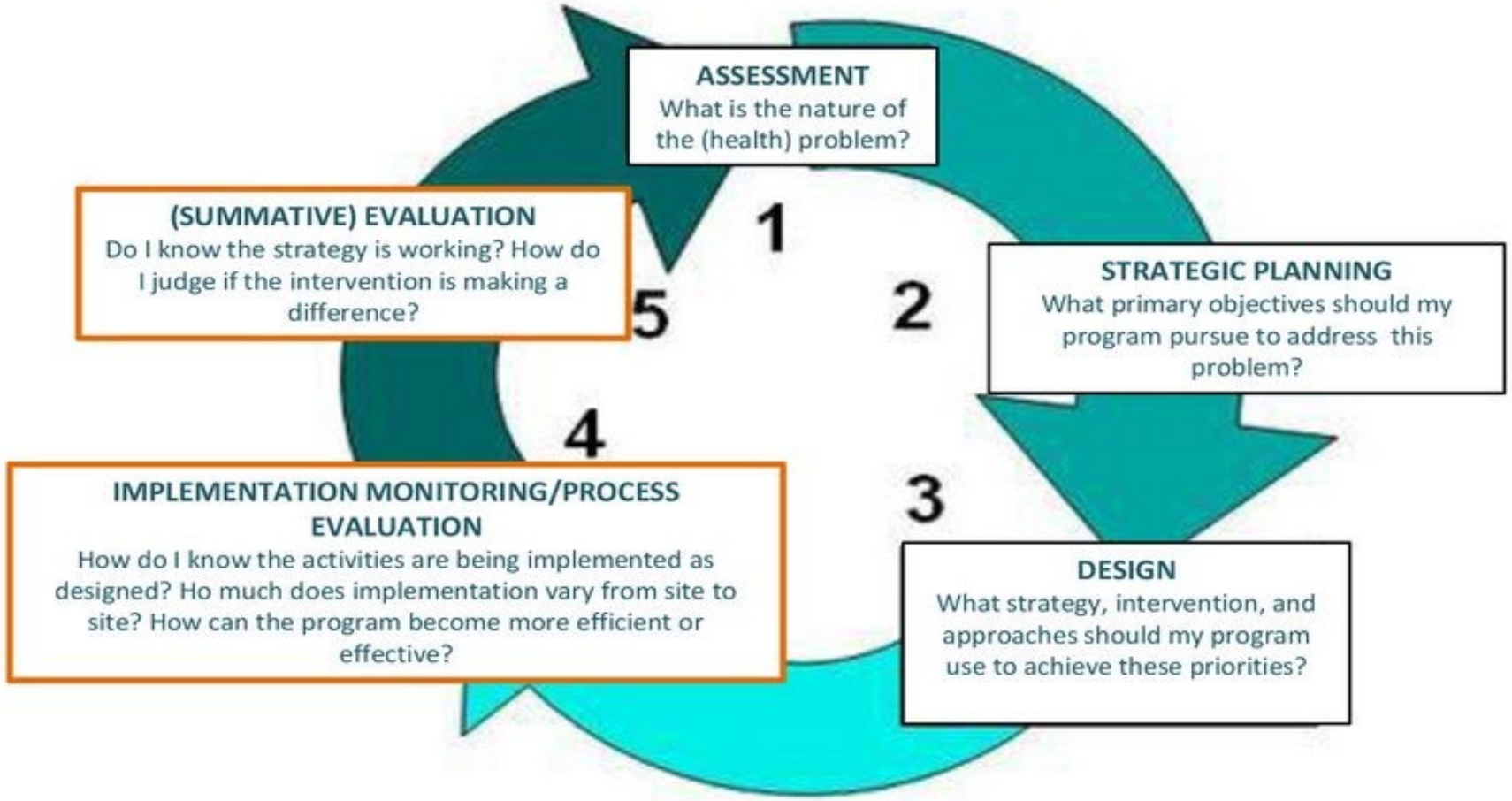
- Improvement – A change in the outcome that was the target of a project in the positive direction. Improvement is not measured by an increase in participation but rather if your current project is performing well, if you are seeing positive changes, or if you have reached your goal.

- Impact - The result or effect that is attributed to a project or program. Impact is often used to refer to higher level effects of a program that occur in the medium or long term and can be intended or unintended, positive or negative.

Evaluation as a Management Tool

- Importance of integrating evaluation starting with the planning phase of a project
- Consistent tracking throughout course of a project
  - Track outputs
  - Track data and outcomes
  - Keep work plan updated
- Using information collected to modify project as needed to achieve desired results

Monitoring and Evaluation Across Program Life Cycle

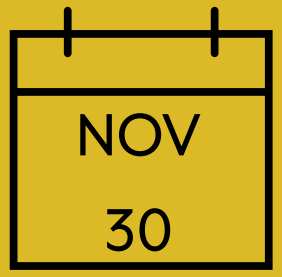


[Caro 2009, Adapted from Measure Evaluation]

Questions?

See you on the next call!

Understanding the Theory of Change & Logic Model



Thursday, November 30, 2023

12:00 p.m. PT | 1:00 p.m. MT | 2:00 p.m. CT | 3:00 p.m. ET

Contact us with questions!

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