

DEVELOPING YOUR OUTCOME MEASURES

PART 3 OF A SERIES

Here's a simple form you can copy and use to design your own outcome measurement plan.

BY JEAN A. VOGT

What are outcomes, anyway? As we discussed in an earlier article,¹ there are three basic types of outcomes, plus one more that we touched on lightly in that article:

Four Types of Outcomes

1. Effectiveness Measures gauge the degree to which your organization satisfies its mission. They answer the question: Did *people we served* “get better” because our organization intervened in their lives? Effectiveness measures reflect the sum of individual progress. They assess the degree to which people satisfied their individual objectives as a result of your services.²

2. Efficiency Measures evaluate how well your services minimize effort, expense, and waste while producing the desired results.

3. Consumer Satisfaction Measures assess how satisfied your consumers are with your services and the outcome of those services.

4. Process Measures describe the degree to which your organization achieves its *operating objectives*; they answer the question: Did your *organization* get better because of your continual oversight? Process measures include goals in your strategic plan, corrective actions from your management reports, responses to your staff's suggestions, comparison of income and expense to budget, numbers of people served, number of new intakes, and contractual requirements.

It's likely that your supporters consider process measures to epitomize your success. In reality, however, process measures do little to announce to you and the world whether you've achieved what you set out to achieve—your mission! Don't misunderstand: Process measures are important—but only as a *supplement* to your other three measures.

A Simple Way to Measure Outcomes

Table 1 is a sample outcome measurement plan. The example is based on an employment program for people with disabilities. Clients have told the organization that they want to get jobs, to make more money, to work more hours, and to live more independently in the community. The organization's funding stakeholders have stated that they want services provided at a more reasonable price.

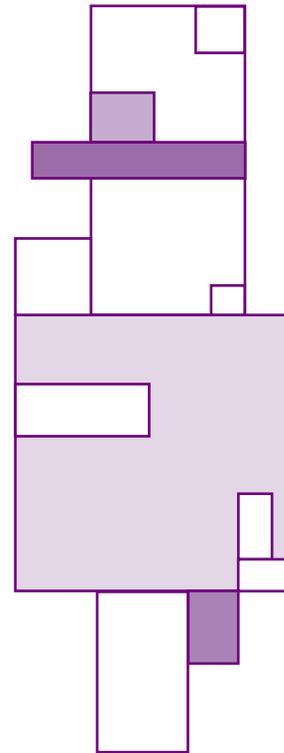
How well did this organization design its measures? As you can see from Table 1, the organization's effectiveness measures address only some of the input received from the people it serves—to get a job and to earn more money. The organization chose to include an effectiveness measure that it felt important—the number of objectives that the individual achieved—even though stakeholders didn't specify this as a desired outcome. In the area of efficiency, the organization addressed funders' primary concern—less costly service—and chose to measure more hours of work by concentrating on consumer attendance. We can only hope that the organization's consumer satisfaction surveys address the questions raised by these stakeholders, along with individual satisfaction both during and after the completion of services.

Design Your Own Outcome Measurement Plan/Report

You're now ready to develop your own outcome measures. Use a form similar to Table 1 to design an outcome measurement plan for each of your programs. You can use this table as the basis for any type of program. Here are questions to ask yourself as you fill out each section of the table:

- **Objectives:** What outcomes do you expect from your program? What is the sum of what your stakeholders want and expect from your organization?
- **Measures:** How will you measure the results of these objectives?
- **Apply to Whom?** Do these objectives apply to everyone you serve in a given program or only those who are part of a particular sub-group or have achieved a certain end?
- **Time of Measure:** Will your organization measure these objectives on a quarterly, semi-annual, or annual basis? Just for that period of time or year to date?
- **Data Source:** Where will you secure the information on individuals served so that it can be aggregated? Who is responsible for inputting and aggregating these data?

Did your organization get better because of your oversight?



- **Goal:** How many or what percentage do you desire to achieve for each objective? Goals (or expectancies) should be established as the result of a study of base-line data.
- **Weight:** How important is each objective to the accomplishment of this programs mission? Note that the sample weights total 100%.
- **Results:** We've added this column so that you can use this form as a report as well as a plan. When it's time

to put your data together for the reporting period, you can insert your results in this column. This information will remind those receiving the report what is being measured.

Remember, you'll also need to use some process measures—number of people served, time from referral to intake, and so on—to supplement your results for each program. These supplemental measures will be especially helpful when you analyze variance from your projected

TABLE 1: SAMPLE OUTCOME MEASUREMENT PLAN/REPORT

PROGRAM: Work Services

PERIOD: First Quarter, 1999

OBJECTIVES	MEASURES	APPLY TO WHOM?	TIME OF MEASURE	DATA SOURCE	GOAL	WEIGHT	RESULTS
EFFECTIVENESS							
1. Maximize % of individual service plan (ISP) objectives achieved	% of objectives achieved	All consumers	Quarterly, for year to date	ISP	80%	10	
2. Maximize average hourly wage	Average hourly wage	All consumers	Quarterly	Payroll	\$3.00	15	
3. Maximize the number of consumers who achieve supported or competitive employment	Number of consumers who are placed in supported or competitive employment	All consumers placed in supported or competitive employment	Quarterly, for year to date	Consumer Change of Status Form	15	20	
EFFICIENCY							
1. Minimize average hourly cost of service	Cost per hour of service for the quarter	All direct and indirect program costs	Quarterly	Book-keeping	\$5.25	10	
2. Maximize consumer attendance	Percent of attendance	All consumers	Quarterly	Time-keeper	90%	5	
SATISFACTION							
1. Maximize consumer satisfaction with services	Percent of consumers who are satisfied with services	All consumers	Semi-annually	Consumer Satisfaction Survey	85%	20	
2. Maximize consumer satisfaction with the outcome of services	Percent of consumers satisfied with outcome of services	All consumers who exit work services	Quarterly	Consumer Satisfaction Survey	80%	20	
TOTAL						100	

Coming Up

In the final article in this series, we'll discuss sample management reports, their use for reporting and change, incorporating the results with other systems within your organization, and keeping your system viable and easy to use.

goals. (More about that in the next article in this series.)

Finally, keep these important points in mind:

- The results of consumer satisfaction do not measure effectiveness.
- Financial data alone or other types of process measures are not necessarily measures of efficiency.
- The results of consumer satisfaction assessments do not measure the total of consumer satisfaction.
- Applying only one type of measure to your results won't tell you if you are satisfying your mission. Only by using all three measures—effectiveness, efficiency, and consumer satisfaction, supplemented by process data—will you have a true picture of your performance in relation to your mission. ■

Footnotes

¹See "Is Outcome Measurement Dead?" in "Selected References."

²Refer to the first two articles in our series (see Vogt in "Selected References") to be sure you have fine-tuned your mission statement and admission criteria, developed a mission and admission criteria for each of your programs, and learned who your stakeholders are and what they want, need, and expect of you. Base your outcome measures on what your stakeholders (clients, funders, and so on) have told you.

Selected References

****Customer-Driven Outcomes Measurement and Management Systems: A Guide to Development and Use.*

***Focusing on Program Outcomes: Summary Guide.*

****Managing Outcomes: Customer-Driven Outcomes Measurement and Management Systems.*

***Measuring Program Outcomes Training Kit.*

****Outcome Management Systems: A Guide to Development and Use.*

****Program Evaluation: A Guide to Utilization.*

*Vogt, Jean A., "Five Steps to Start Measuring Your Outcomes," *Nonprofit World*, September-October 1999.

*Vogt, Jean A., "Is Outcome Measurement Dead?," *Nonprofit World*, July-August 1999.

Williams, Harold S. and Webb, Arthur Y., *Outcome Funding: a New Approach to Public Sector Grantmaking*, Rensselaerville, NY: The Rensselaerville Institute.

*Available through the Society for Nonprofit Organizations' *Resource Center Catalog*, included in this issue, or contact the Society at 800-424-7367.

**Available from United Way of America, 701 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-2045.

***Available from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, Tucson, Arizona.

Jean A. Vogt is president of Jean Vogt Associates(4582 Lochview Road, Hubertus, Wisconsin 53033, 414-628-0501, jvassoc@execpc.com). Vogt has over 35 years of rehabilitation, employment, and human service experience as a trainer, counselor, purchaser, mid manager, executive, and consultant. With a master's degree in rehabilitation administration from the University of Wisconsin, she has mentored many personnel and projects throughout the country. Jean Vogt Associates specializes in interim leadership, training, and management consultation services for the rehabilitation, employment, and human services industry.

How important is each objective to the accomplishment of your mission?

