

# Using Your Outcome Measurement System

## PART 4 OF A SERIES

*What's the best way to use the results of your outcome measurement system? Here are some ideas to get you started.*

BY JEAN VOGT

**B**y now, you've fine-tuned your mission statement, identified your stakeholders, and begun developing your outcome measurement system. (To review these steps, see the first three articles in this series.) Now you're probably wondering how to use the information generated from your system.

Let's start with sharing the results of your efforts. In our previous article, we designed a sample outcome measurement plan. Once you have one of these for each of your programs and results have been entered, it's time to circulate the results.

### With Whom Should You Share Your Results?

First, share each report with the department that developed the program measures and reported the data. Be sure managers communicate with those responsible for accomplishing each of the objectives. Many organizations include a statement in job descriptions: "Achieve objectives specified in Outcome Measurement Report for your department." When you use job duties to assess staff performance, you tie outcome measures to your human resource system. Such an approach helps employees recognize the importance of achieving outcome measures.

Who else should receive the results of your outcome measurement system? Certainly, your management staff and governing body will need the results to maintain oversight, plan, budget, and improve services. For this audience, you may wish to include the outcome measurement

reports from all your programs, as attachments to a summary management report. This summary report needn't repeat the data in your outcome measurement reports, but could look something like that in Figure 1. You may want to complete one of these reports for each of your programs and then a single one for the organization as a whole.

### How Should You Use Your Results?

Here are other ways to use your outcome measurement system:

- Highlight successes in your *annual report*.
- Include positive results in a *newspaper article*.
- Let *those you serve* know about your successful outcomes.
- Tell *your funders* about your services' effectiveness.
- Incorporate outcome measures into your *strategic plan and annual budget*.
- Use your results in an *incentive system* for staff members.

*Your annual report is a perfect place to highlight your successes.*

Figure 1

## Outcome Measurement Management Report

**Program:** \_\_\_\_\_ **For Period:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Analysis of Variance by Objective:** Include only those objectives for which goals weren't met.

**Recommendations:** Explain what you're going to do to achieve desired outcomes, such as change, improve, discontinue, or add services, or change goals.

**Person/Department Responsible:** Identify who will accomplish the recommendations.

**By When:** Set target dates for accomplishment of recommendations.

**How Monitored:** Identify how you will know when the recommendation has been accomplished.

**By Whom:** Specify who will do the monitoring.

### What Have You Accomplished?

You've done it! You've developed and implemented your own outcome measurement system that, with ongoing attention, will serve your organization and stakeholders well. You've used your results to improve services and to interlock your other management systems. You've also drawn conclusions about your system's design: how to simplify and expedite data collection, use software to organize information, and change measures to reflect changing services or new information.

Before we part company on this project, let's review the steps you've accomplished since you first read "Is Outcome Measurement Dead?" in the July-August 1999 issue of *Nonprofit World*:

- **Make a Commitment:** Commit your organization to develop and use an outcome measurement system. Keep it simple, and be sure the staff members who will be involved with the system help design it.
- **Revisit Your Mission:** Using input from all your stakeholders, fine-tune your organization's mission and develop missions for each of your programs.
- **Develop Objectives:** With input from all stakeholders, for each of your programs, develop effectiveness, efficiency, and consumer satisfaction objectives. Incorporate process measures also, if you like. Involve your staff in this process.

- **Develop Goals and Criteria:** Using baseline data, develop goals (expectancies) for each of your objectives. Also establish criteria that you will use to supplement the results of your outcome objectives.
- **Create Management Reports:** Collect and aggregate the results of your outcome measurement system, along with supplemental information, into different reports for your various stakeholders.
- **Analyze Results:** Analyze the results from your outcome measurement system.
- **Make Changes:** Based on your analysis of these results, continually improve by making changes in your organization.

- **Refine Your System:** Based on your experience since implementing your system (or since your last management report), involve staff and other stakeholders to recommend and make changes in the outcome measurement system.

Congratulations and best wishes as you use your outcome measurement system to assure the continual improvement of your organization and the services you provide and the satisfaction of your mission. ■

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\*Available from the Society for Nonprofit Organizations, 608-274-9777.

\*\*Available from United Way of America, 701 N. Fairfax St., Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2045.