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Mapping Vision and Measuring Success

Typical Evaluation Questions
Adapted from *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach**
By Peter Rossi, Mark W. Lipsey, & Howard E. Freeman

Evaluation questions generally deal with five program-related issues. Some of the more common questions are as follows and may guide your thinking in developing your own questions. The term "services" can apply to your programs – performances, arts education, membership services, etc. The term "clients" can refer to artists, audiences, teaching artists, members, etc.

Need for Program
What are the nature and magnitude of the problem to be addressed?
What are the characteristics of the population(s) in need?
What are the needs of the population?
What services are needed?
How much service is needed, and over what time period?
What service delivery arrangements are needed to provide those services to the population?

Program Design
What clientele should be served?
What services should be provided?
What are the best delivery systems for the services?
How can the program identify, recruit, and sustain the intended clientele?
How should the program be organized?
What resources are necessary and appropriate for the program?

Program Operations and Service Delivery
Are administrative and service objectives being met? How fully are they being met?
To what degree are the intended services being delivered to the intended persons?
Are there needy but un-served persons the program is not reaching? If so, who are they?
Once in service, do sufficient numbers of clients complete service? If no, why not?
How satisfied are clients with the services?
How well are administrative, organizational, and personnel functions handled?

Program Outcomes
Are the outcome goals and objectives being achieved? How fully are they being achieved?
Do the services have beneficial effects on the recipients? If so, what are they?
Do the services have any adverse side effects on the recipients? If so, what are they?
Are some recipients affected more by the services than others?
Is the problem or situation the services are intended to address made better?
Can the results be traced to the program itself? What other factors may have caused the results?

Cost Benefit
Are resources used efficiently? Is the cost reasonable in relation to the magnitude of the benefits?
Would alternative approaches yield equivalent benefits at less cost?

Questions must be: reasonable; appropriate; and answerable. They must involve performance criteria by which identified dimensions of the program can be judged.

*p. 77-78

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Implementation (or Program Process) Evaluation and Monitoring: A Closer Look
Is the program being delivered as intended to the targeted recipients?

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By Peter Rossi, Mark W. Lipsey, and Howard E. Freeman

Program process evaluation generally involves assessments of program performance in the domains of service utilization and program organization. Assessing service utilization consists of examining the extent to which the intended target population receives the intended services. Assessing program organization requires comparing the plan for what the program should be doing with what is actually done, especially with regard to providing services. Usually, program process evaluation is directed at one or both of two key questions: (1) whether a program is reaching the appropriate target population and (2) whether its service delivery and support functions are consistent with program design specifications or other appropriate standards. Process evaluation may also examine what resources are being or have been expended in the conduct of the program.

More specifically, program process evaluation schemes are designed to answer such evaluation questions as these:
- How many persons are receiving services?
- Are those receiving services the intended targets?
- Are they receiving the proper amount, type, and quality of services?
- Are there targets who are not receiving services or subgroups within the target population who are underrepresented among those receiving services?
- Are members of the target population aware of the program?
- Are necessary program functions being performed adequately?
- Is staffing sufficient in numbers and competencies for the functions that must be performed?
- Is the program well organized? Does staff work well with each other?
- Does the program coordinate effectively with other programs and agencies with which it must interact?
- Are resources, facilities, and funding adequate to support important program functions?
- Are resources used effectively and efficiently?
- Do its governing board, funding agencies, and higher-level administration impose the program in compliance with requirements?
- Is the program in compliance with applicable professional and legal standards?
- Is performance at some program sites or locales significantly better or poorer than at others?
- Are participants satisfied with their interactions with program personnel and procedures?
- Are participants satisfied with the services they receive?
- Do participants engage in appropriate follow-up behavior after service?

*p. 171-72.

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Outcome Monitoring: Important Points to Remember
Adapted from *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach**
By Peter Rossi, Mark W. Lipsey, and Howard E. Freeman

- Programs are designed to affect some program or need in positive ways. *Evaluators assess the extent to which a program produces a particular improvement by measuring the outcome*, the state of the target population, or social condition that the program is expected to have changed.

- Because outcomes are affected by events and experiences that are independent of a program, *changes in the levels of outcomes cannot be directly interpreted as program effects*.

- Identifying outcomes relevant to a program requires information from stakeholders, review of program documents, and articulation of the impact theory embodied in the program's logic. Evaluators should also consider relevant prior research and consider possible unintended outcomes.

- *To produce credible results, outcome measures need to be reliable, valid, and sufficiently sensitive to detect changes in outcome level of the order of magnitude that the program might be expected to produce*. In addition, it is often advisable to use multiple measures (or outcome variables to reflect multidimensional outcomes) and to correct for possible weaknesses in one or more of the measures.

- Outcome monitoring can serve program managers and other stakeholders by providing timely and relatively inexpensive findings that can guide the fine-tuning and improvement of programs. *Effective outcome monitoring requires a careful choice of indicators as well as careful interpretation of the resulting data*.

- *The interpretation of outcome measures and changes in such measures is difficult*. Responsible interpretation requires consideration of a program's environment, events taking place during a program, and the natural changes undergone by targets over time. Interpretation generally must rely on expert judgments of what constitutes good performance, though comparisons with other programs (benchmarking) can also be useful.

*p. 231-32