



Measuring the performance

of your service activities can be a challenge, especially if you are not sure what steps to take or in what order. Understanding the steps involved in performance measurement can make the task easier and help you get the information you need for program improvement. The steps in performance measurement follow a sequence, with each step supporting one another. These steps include the planning and development of work plans, performance measurement plans, instruments, data collection, data analysis, and reporting results. As you set up your performance measurement system and go through this sequence of steps, you may need to move back and forth between steps to ensure that the steps support one another.

Work Plans

Work plans set performance measurement guidelines for what needs to be measured and set targets to be reached. Work plans should contain measurable results and contain clear criteria for program success. A strong work plan also contains an activity statement that describes who does what, when, and with whom.

Performance Measurement Plans

Performance measurement plans lay out plans for implementation according to your work plans. They describe what performance measurement will look like and what information will be collected.



Performance measurement plans consist of information in the work plans, including program activities, beneficiaries, results (outputs,

intermediate outcomes, end outcomes), instruments to be used, indicators and targets. They also include specific information on when data will be collected, how often, and by whom, as well as who will be responsible for analyzing data and reporting results.

Instruments

Instruments are the documents used to collect data that measure the results of program services. They are the tools used to record information needed to determine your *actual* outputs and outcomes. There is no all-purpose instrument; program-specific instruments are needed for specific types of performance measures. The more specific the instrument is to the service activity you are measuring, the more likely you will obtain relevant data.

Data Collection

Data are the raw material used to measure your performance. Performance measurement data are used to assess whether your program achieved its desired results. Data collection involves administering instruments, gathering responses, and organizing responses for analysis.

Data Analysis



Data analysis is the process of aggregating your data and figuring out what it means. Data analysis involves deciding on the appropriate types of analyses to perform (e.g., frequencies, averages, content analysis), preparing data for analysis, and summarizing results. For output data, the result of analysis should enable you to answer the question, “Did we accomplish what we set out to do?” while outcome data should enable you to answer the question, “What changed for our service recipients during the program year?”

Reporting

Reporting your results lets consumers and funders know what you have accomplished. Reports can range from informal talks on performance measurement results to formal progress reports. In general, reporting your performance measurement results should include a summary of your work plan, an outline of the steps you took in measuring your activities, a brief description of the instruments you used to collect data, the results of your data analysis, and any stories or examples that illustrate your accomplishments.