

Outcomes and Performance Measurement for Tutoring Programs

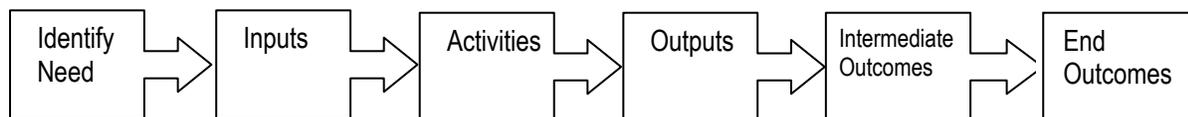
Performance measurement is the process of regularly assessing the results produced by your program. Quality program managers review and measure performance regularly. Performance measures are also a means by which you can communicate clearly and objectively the impacts of your tutoring program to the Corporation and to your stakeholders.

Begin with the End in Mind

To design a successful tutor program, begin with the end in mind. Take a careful look down the road to identify the desired results you hold for the learners who will participate in your program. These should be the learning outcomes that tutors can realistically be expected to help students achieve. Avoid developing your program’s outcomes in a vacuum. Just as national service programs are designed to meet local community needs, engaging stakeholders in helping you hone needs and convert them into program goals is an all-important first step. Convene an advisory committee, hold community focus groups, and by all means, include your education partners in selecting the student achievement goals around which your program will center. Ideally, education partners helping you will include those working most closely with the children/youth targeted for the program.

The Logic Model

The Corporation for National and Community Service proposes that programs consider using a logic model to represent their goals, service activities, and performance measures. This is a recommended approach to use during the planning stage to identify the results (or outcomes) your program intends to achieve. The logic model consists of six components:



Understanding Logic Model Terms through Examples

After you work with your community and education partners to define the need for your project and the student outcomes you want to achieve, use the logic model to detail and organize how your services will achieve these outcomes. The chart on the following page defines logic model steps and gives sample language and examples for each step.

Inputs: The resources used by your program to produce outputs and outcomes	
<i>To carry out our activities, we will use the following resources...</i>	Examples: AmeriCorps members; Senior volunteers, teachers; school reading specialists; Title I teachers; university reading professors, students who are tutored; community volunteer tutors; tutoring curriculum; etc.
Activities: The activities that will combine to achieve the outcomes for your program	
<i>To address needs effectively, we will carry out the following activities...</i>	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AmeriCorps members and other volunteers will provide one-to-one tutoring to underachieving students during the school year (direct service activity). • RSVP/FGP and community volunteers will receive preservice and ongoing training in reading tutoring techniques, delivered by school reading specialist and local university reading professor (member development activity). • AmeriCorps members will organize and host family literacy nights for parents of tutored students (community strengthening activity).
Outputs: Counts of recipients and amounts of services provided	
<i>Our activities will produce the following evidence of service delivery...</i>	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AmeriCorps members and community volunteers will provide reading tutoring to 120 underachieving students in grades 1-3 for one hour, three times weekly, for nine months (direct service output). • Senior volunteers will receive a 5-day preservice orientation in their roles and responsibilities, followed by monthly half-day sessions in reading tutoring techniques and working effectively with students and teachers (member development output). • Fifty parents will attend one of two family literacy nights held during the school year (community strengthening output).
Intermediate Outcomes: Positive changes that occur in the lives of beneficiaries or members that contribute to lasting impacts (end outcomes) over the long term	
<i>Our activities will lead to the following intermediate outcomes...</i>	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eighty percent of tutored students will demonstrate improved attitudes toward reading (direct service intermediate outcome). • Eighty-five percent of AmeriCorps members will develop structured tutoring activities and games that incorporate the five components of reading instruction (member development intermediate outcome). • Seventy-five percent of parents who attend family literacy night indicate they have received new ideas for literacy activities at home (community strengthening intermediate outcome).
End Outcomes: Positive changes that occur in the lives of beneficiaries, and/or members and volunteers that are significant and lasting	
<i>Our activities will lead to the following end results...</i>	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eighty percent of tutored students achieved within stage gains of at least 18 points or advanced to the next stage of reading development as assessed by the LEARNS Literacy Assessment Profile. (direct service end outcome). • Eighty-five percent of Senior volunteers demonstrated “very good to excellent” tutoring skills, as assessed by reading specialist observations of tutoring sessions (member development end outcome). • Sixty percent of family night attendees engage in daily literacy activities with their children at home, as assessed by parent survey (community strengthening end outcome).

Data Sources for Assessing Tutor Program Performance Measures

As you engage in initial program planning, also consider how you will measure the outputs and outcomes your program is achieving. A few tips for planning:

- Avoid identifying outcomes that are impossible for you to measure. For example, many programs do not have access to students' standardized test scores. If this is the case, don't choose standardized test gains as a performance measure.
- Make sure the tools you are using collect the data you think they do, and that the data measures your outputs and outcomes in the most direct, objective way possible.
- Avoid collecting unnecessary data. Program stakeholders, staff, and participants are all busy people. If you ask for only the data you need, you are more likely to get better returns.
- Avoid re-inventing the wheel. There are many examples of good evaluation instruments available on the Internet (see Internet Resources). Customize existing instruments for your own program. Also, query your program partners, particularly schools, to learn if they are already collecting and can share some of the data you need.
- Seek assistance from expert sources or conduct your own research if you plan to design new instruments from scratch. Effective survey design takes experience and training; poorly designed surveys yield poor information.

Examples of data sources for documenting outputs and outcomes

- Tutoring session logs and reflection sheets
- Logs of books read at increased reading levels
- Tutor training agendas
- Tutor-created session activities
- Parent event attendance sign-in sheets
- Stakeholder and beneficiary surveys (student and parent surveys, teacher feedback forms, etc.)
- Report cards
- School attendance records
- LEARNS Literacy Assessment Profile (LLAP)
- Attitude and behavior reports
- Student work samples and documentation of performances
- Reading assessment benchmark data
- Standardized reading test data

Note: For more indepth assistance in developing outcome targets and selecting effective instruments, download Project STAR's AmeriCorps Program Applicant Performance Measurement Toolkit at www.projectstar.org/Americorps

Other Tips for Outcome-Based Program Planning

- **Identify realistic student achievement outcomes.**
Be careful not to overstate the results your program can realistically achieve. This is a common pitfall, especially for the inexperienced program planner. Think carefully about the frequency and duration of tutoring your program can provide—more is better—and the characteristics of the students you will serve. Call on education partners to help you match the amount and kind of services you are providing (outputs) with realistic expectations for student achievement (outcomes). For example, one hour of reading aloud a week for six months cannot be expected to result in significant grade level reading gains.
- **Identify outcome targets over multiple years.**
Significant and lasting impacts take time and do not occur in a vacuum. Your program is one influence among the many success factors students need to make long-term gains. Consider identifying outcome targets for a multi-year program (three years for new AmeriCorps programs). As you do, ask yourself these questions: What Year One outcome targets will lay a good foundation for your program? Is it possible to work with the same children more than one year? How many second year members or community volunteers might offer continuity for a multi-year effort? How will transition among volunteers, staff, and children affect outcomes?
- **Be prepared to adjust your outcomes down the road.**
You will likely refine your logic model over time as you gain more knowledge and experience with your program environment, resources, tutors, and student needs. You may also be asked to renegotiate your outcomes with the Corporation.
- **Avoid re-inventing the wheel.**
Likely, there are tutoring programs very similar to your own. Research these (see Internet Resources), so you can learn how other programs identify outcomes; adapt these to your own context and needs.

Internet Resources for Outcome-Based Program Planning & Assessment

1. AmeriCorps Program Applicant Performance Measurement Toolkit
www.projectstar.org/Americorps
2. Center for Accountability and Performance
www.aspanet.org/cap/index
3. Evaluating Local Out of School Time Projects, The Harvard Family Research Project and The Finance Project
financeproject.org/OSTlocalevaluation.pdf
4. Harvard Family Research Project—After School Resources and Publications
www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/resources

5. LEARNS Literacy Assessment Profile
www.nwrel.org/learns/resources/llap/index
6. Measuring Volunteering: A Practical Toolkit
www.independentsector.org/research/toolkit
7. National Service Resource Center Sample Forms Collection
www.etr.org/nsrc/forms/index
8. United Way of America, Outcome Measurement Resource Toolkit
www.national.unitedway.org/outcomes
9. Urban Institute Report on the Corporation's Performance Measurement
www.nationalservice.org/research/outcome
10. W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook
www.wkkf.org/pubs/Pub770.pdf