

## PROJECT STAR TUTORIAL FOR AMERICORPS PROGRAMS

### **PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT REQUIREMENTS**

#### **TRANSCRIPT**

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JAMES: Welcome to this tutorial on performance measurement for AmeriCorps programs. In this tutorial, we will explain the performance measurement requirements for AmeriCorps programs from the Code of Federal Regulations.

This tutorial will be helpful to new applicants and program staff who want to make sure they are up to date on the requirements.

We recommend you look over the supplementary materials before viewing this tutorial. These materials can be accessed and downloaded from the web page where you found this tutorial. You can also contact Project STAR at 800-548-3656, or your state commission, with any questions you have.

During this tutorial, you'll get a better understanding of Performance Measurement results, or outputs and outcomes. You'll learn the minimum requirements for performance measurement, which include one set of aligned performance measures. We'll show you some examples of aligned measures and explain what we mean by that term, and we'll give you a list of recommended readings and a practice worksheet.

First, let's review the three types of Performance Measurement results that you will need to measure annually: outputs, intermediate outcomes, and end outcomes.

CLAUDIA: I know this one. Outputs are counts of services – the work we do. Outcomes are the changes people experience, the impact of the work we do.

JAMES: Good, let's expand on that a little... Outputs are defined as the amount or units of service that members or community volunteers have completed. Often this means the number of beneficiaries served. Outputs could also include products created as a result of members' or volunteers' efforts. Can you think of some examples of outputs?

CLAUDIA: Well, you mentioned services delivered. What about "new hiking trails cleared"? Could that be considered an output?

JAMES: Yes, you could count miles of hiking trails cleared. What else?

CLAUDIA: Presentations conducted at schools.

JAMES: Good. You could count the number of presentations, or you could count the number of students who attend the presentations. Both are outputs, although the counting the number of students who attend the presentations might give people a better idea of the scope of your service—the number of people you reach.

What about the mentoring activity? What could we count as outputs for that?

CLAUDIA: How about students who receive mentoring once a week?

JAMES: Absolutely. Counting the people a program serves is a typical output. You could also count the number of community volunteers recruited as an output, or AmeriCorps members who complete a training course in community outreach skills, for example.

Let's continue with our review of the result types. If you remember, intermediate outcomes answer the question "So what difference did our service activity make?" Intermediate outcomes are a change that has occurred in the lives of beneficiaries or communities, but not the final result you hope to achieve. Remember the term 'Intermediate' doesn't refer to when the outcome is measured. Think of intermediate outcomes as probable pre-conditions to a more substantial result. What kinds of intermediate outcomes might we expect from some of the output examples we listed a minute ago? The hiking trails...What kinds of changes might we expect after hiking trails are cleared?

CLAUDIA: Well, the trails are now safe and accessible. The trail work meets some kind of quality and safety standard, according to the Parks Department or whoever decides these things, so the public can use them.

JAMES: Okay, good. How about the kids who attended the presentations at their school? Let's say the presentations were about fire safety and prevention.

CLAUDIA: Easy. They learn about the dangers of playing with matches and all that.

JAMES: Let's say they increase awareness of fire hazards. How about the mentoring program? Our output was that youth receive mentoring. Let's say these youth were selected because they're getting into trouble. What kind of change do we want?

CLAUDIA: They stay out of trouble.

JAMES: Yes, but that's more of an end outcome in this case.

CLAUDIA: How about they're motivated to stay out of trouble? They change or improve their attitudes.

JAMES: “Increased motivation to avoid risky behaviors” sounds like a good intermediate outcome for this example.

Let’s quickly review end outcomes now. End outcomes also answer the question “So what difference did our service activity make?” But unlike intermediate outcomes, they represent a more significant change in the lives of the beneficiaries. End outcomes address community conditions or needed changes in the attitudes, knowledge or behavior of beneficiaries.

Using our previous examples, let’s think up some end outcomes. If hiking trails are cleared and now open to the public, what kind of end outcome might we expect?

CLAUDIA: Residents take advantage of the new hiking trails and get outside for some exercise.

JAMES: Good. With the fire safety presentations we conducted, the children are now more aware of fire dangers. What is a good end outcome, a more substantial outcome, for this activity?

CLAUDIA: Children know what to do if there’s a fire emergency.

JAMES: Exactly. And with our youth who receive mentoring and now are more motivated to stay out of trouble, what is the real end outcome we want here?

CLAUDIA: That they actually do stay out of trouble. They avoid risky behaviors.

JAMES: Yes. By the way, when you develop your own set of outcomes, you might find it’s easier to decide on the end outcome first, and then think about possible intermediate outcomes. Since the end outcome is the more substantial result, it connects to the need in your community, or the reason you have the service in the first place, If you look at the examples here, why do we clear trails? So that people will use them. Why do we do safety presentations? So that kids know how to respond in an emergency. Sometimes it’s easier for people to identify the end outcome first; it seems more logical.

We’ll talk more about how results and community needs are related in the next tutorial on the Logic Model and Aligned Measures.

Now that we’ve done a quick review of result types, let’s look at what the requirements are for performance measures. All AmeriCorps programs must develop at least one set of aligned performance measures for the program’s primary activity (or area of significant activity), including one output, one

intermediate outcome, and one end outcome. The three measures need to be for the *same* primary activity.

CLAUDIA: And that's it for all AmeriCorps programs?

JAMES: Well, for AmeriCorps State programs...The requirements we've discussed so far are the minimum requirements of the Corporation for National and Community Service, from the Code of Federal Regulations. Your State Commission might have additional requirements. For example, your State Commission may require you to develop a Performance Measure related to volunteer recruitment, member training, or another common activity that AmeriCorps programs are doing all over the state.

CLAUDIA: So what you're saying is...I should check with my State Commission about any additional requirements they might have for us.

JAMES: Yeah, it's a good idea to check the instructions that came with your application or to call your program officer.

Do you remember the three measure categories?

CLAUDIA: Yes, I think so: Needs and Service Activities, participant development, and strengthening communities.

JAMES: Well, you can develop performance measures for any of those categories, but keep in mind you are required to measure and report on three aligned results– output, intermediate outcome, and end outcome– for your program's primary or significant activity. In most cases, this is going to be a needs and service activity, where AmeriCorps members provide direct service to people in the community.

CLAUDIA: So now, what exactly is a primary or significant activity?

JAMES: A primary activity could be:

- An activity where members put most of their time and effort;
- An activity where all or most of the members participate; and/or
- An important activity to the program mission, for example, one of the Corporation's strategic initiatives.

CLAUDIA: But my program is huge! We have a lot of sites and we do a lot of important activities and they're all different. How do I know what's primary?

JAMES: Some programs have different activities in different issue areas. A significant activity can be one in which most or many sites are implementing. If

you're still unsure, you might want to have a talk with your program officer and see what they suggest.

CLAUDIA: Now what's the other requirement? My performance measures need to be in line? Allied? What was it?

JAMES: The performance measures for your primary or significant activity need to be aligned. "Alignment" of your performance measures means that your community need, your service activity, and your results are logically connected, or in alignment with each other. That is, your results (outputs, intermediate outcomes, and end outcomes) are linked to and dealing with the same issue as the community need that you're addressing. All of your results should be attributable to the service activity. For example, if the output you're counting is the number of people you served, look at outcomes for those same beneficiaries.

CLAUDIA: This is what we were doing just now with the examples – the trails and presentations and mentoring.

JAMES: Yes! We were trying to align results earlier. You see, it's not so hard.

So, to recap, a set of aligned performance measures contains one output, one intermediate outcome, and one end-outcome. Each of these results should relate to the same service activity. Each result flows logically, from output to intermediate outcome, and from intermediate outcome to end outcome.

CLAUDIA: How about a few more examples, now that I know what I'm looking for?

JAMES: Sure. In this example, AmeriCorps members serve by constructing new homes.

CLAUDIA: Oh, I see. So the count of services or work completed is the number of houses they finish.

JAMES: Right. That's the output. Now, ultimately the goal of this project is to help people with low incomes have a better life. So what do you think the intermediate outcome could be, given the context of this activity?

CLAUDIA: Well, houses are built so people can move in to them. People should be able to own the homes.

JAMES: Right. Let's say "families move into new homes."

CLAUDIA: So the end outcome is that they have a better life?

JAMES: Well, we would need to define what we mean by that. For this example, let's say the end outcome is that new homeowners have a better quality of life. But to measure that outcome, you would need to decide what the indicators are—what specifically would a better quality of life be for the population served—and then ask them if things have improved in these specific areas. It might be a combination of things, like improved home safety or access to better services.

CLAUDIA: Uh...Indicators?

JAMES: Never mind. That's another tutorial.

So, we're getting a little off track here, but before we go, I want to leave you with a practice exercise for developing aligned performance measures to meet the requirements around this. If you haven't already, download this worksheet, called "Exercise Worksheet: Developing Results," from the webpage where you accessed this tutorial.

CLAUDIA: What's in the worksheet? Will it take a lot of time to do?

JAMES: No, it's really kind of a brainstorming exercise, and of course, it's optional, but we designed this worksheet to help you do something you'll need to do anyway – choose a primary or significant activity and identify aligned performance measures. The worksheet is just two pages, including space to write, with a third page for "extra credit." When you finish, if you like, email it to Project STAR or call us and we can talk about it.

CLAUDIA: Okay, that sounds helpful, but before I do that, can you quickly recap what the performance measurement requirements are again?

JAMES: Of course. Each program must construct one set of aligned performance measures, which includes an output, an intermediate outcome, and an end outcome. This aligned set of performance measures must be for the program's primary activity or an area of significant activity. For AmeriCorps state programs, state commissions may have additional requirements. AmeriCorps programs within a state should contact their state commission to determine if there are additional state performance measurement requirements.

Keep in mind these are the minimum requirements. You are encouraged to measure as many results (outputs, intermediate outcomes, end outcomes) as you feel are reasonable and appropriate to represent your AmeriCorps program's important activities.

Here are some additional resources to help you:

- AmeriCorps Program Applicant Performance Measurement Toolkit, available online at The Resource Center. Go to [www.nationalservice.gov/resources](http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources). Enter the Search term “Performance Measurement Toolkit”.
- The AmeriCorps application instructions, available at [www.americorps.gov](http://www.americorps.gov), under “for organizations” and “how to apply/eligibility”.
- A list of state commissions can be found on the Corporation’s web site, at [www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov), under “about us” and “contact us.”
- And be sure to check out other Project STAR tutorials on performance measurement, available on the webpage where you accessed this tutorial.

CLAUDIA: What if I want to talk to a real person?

JAMES: Well, as always, if you have questions on performance measurement, you can contact your state commission, or contact Project STAR by phone at 800-548-3656, or email us at [star@jbsinternational.com](mailto:star@jbsinternational.com). Well, that’s it for our tutorial on the performance requirements for AmeriCorps programs. Thank you for helping me present this material, and good luck on starting your performance measures.

CLAUDIA: Thank you. I’ll call you if I get stuck.