

PROJECT STAR TUTORIAL FOR AMERICORPS PROGRAMS

EXAMPLE for Completing Performance Measures in a Worksheet

TRANSCRIPT

JAMES: Welcome to this tutorial on performance measurement for AmeriCorps programs. In this tutorial, we'll explain how to complete performance measures in a worksheet. This tutorial will be helpful to new grantees and those not-so-new grantees who just want a refresher on how to complete the worksheet. This is the second of two tutorials on competing performance measures in the worksheet. This first tutorial introduced the layout and terms in the worksheet. We recommend you view that tutorial first. In this second tutorial, we will complete an example of a set of performance measures.

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.

We have a pretty basic agenda today. In this tutorial, as I said, we will:

- Complete an example of performance measures in a worksheet
- Introduce a practice exercise consisting of a partially completed worksheet that you can complete at your leisure
- And we'll direct you to additional resources.

CLAUDIA: Great! I've watched the tutorial explaining indicators, targets and instruments, and I'm ready to work on an example.

JAMES: Good, let's complete the example together. I'll give you the community need, the activity, and the result statements. You help me with the indicator, target and instrument for each of the results.

CLAUDIA: Okay, I can try that.

JAMES: Here's an outline of the worksheet. The first section consists of the needs and activities. The second section contains the performance measure results – output, intermediate outcome, and end outcome. We'll concentrate mainly on the results section.

So let's put together an activity around disaster preparedness. Let's say our community is located near an earthquake fault line, and we have a high rate of house and apartment fires due to substandard housing, misuse of portable heaters, and other things. Our program is going to teach kids how to prepare for those kinds of emergencies, and how to react should they find themselves in that situation.

CLAUDIA: So the activity is that members go into schools and conduct presentations on disaster preparedness, with a focus on fire and earthquake emergencies.

JAMES: Right. Our output result is that children receive the training – they attend the presentations. Our intermediate outcome is that children learn how to prepare for these kinds of emergencies and what to do in the event of an emergency. And our end outcome is that the kids take this knowledge home with them and develop a Disaster Plan with their families.

CLAUDIA: You mean where to meet if the building is evacuated, having emergency phone numbers, storing extra water, putting together an emergency kit, that kind of thing.

JAMES: Yes. So now that we have our results statements, let's think about how we're going to measure them.

CLAUDIA: Right: the indicator, target, and instrument for each result.

JAMES: First let's look at the output: children receive disaster preparedness training. What is our indicator? What will we look at to see if this result occurs, or evidence?

CLAUDIA: Well, we'll count the number of kids that attended the presentations.

JAMES: Good! And what should we set for a target? How many kids and over what period of time? You can just make up a number for this example, but of course, when you write your own target, you'll be taking into consideration what you know of the program, how many members you have, that kind of thing. If this isn't the first year you've done this kind of activity, you can look at last year's numbers and base your estimation of attendees on that.

CLAUDIA: Okay, let's say 300 kids attend, and this happens during the school year, so over a 6-9 month period.

JAMES: Okay, but let's be specific about the time frame. Let's say "300 children will attend a disaster preparedness presentation from October to April 2008.

CLAUDIA: And our instrument is some kind of attendance log, I would imagine.

JAMES: Right, because for this output result, we're only counting the number of kids who attend. We're not looking at the changes that happen.

Okay, let's go to the next result, the intermediate outcome, which is: "Children learn how to prepare for emergencies and what to do in the event of an

emergency.” This is a little more difficult. What will we measure to see if this change occurred?

CLAUDIA: Well, we can’t hope for an emergency and then observe the kids’ reactions to see if they know what to do.

JAMES: No, that’s not a good option.

CLAUDIA: But since we’re measuring knowledge, we could do what the schools already do and give them a little test.

JAMES: So our indicator would be?

CLAUDIA: The number of kids who pass the test.

JAMES: Well, you are on the right track, but let’s say the “percent of children who demonstrate knowledge” is our indicator. They’ll demonstrate knowledge by passing our test. Which brings us to the target...

CLAUDIA: Wait – why would it be percent rather than number of children? I’m no math wiz, but don’t you need actual numbers to get percents?

JAMES: Yes, of course you’ll need numbers. But percent gives a better context when you’re talking about outcomes, or changes that will happen. When you put together your performance measure worksheet, you want to estimate what portion of the people you serve receive this specific benefit. Let’s look at the target; I think that will make it clearer.

Let’s say we expect 75% of the kids who attend the presentation to pass the test, that is, demonstrate knowledge of the topic. So our target statement is: “75% of the children who attend the presentation will demonstrate knowledge of disaster preparedness by answering at least 6 of 8 questions correctly.” If I had said “225 children who attend the presentation will demonstrate knowledge...”, it is still a target, but it doesn’t convey the program’s impact as well as giving the percent.

CLAUDIA: Yeah. And I guess at the worksheet stage, since we are estimating the number of kids who will attend in the first place, using a percent rather than a number in this target is covering ourselves a bit. I mean, if only 200 kids come, but we said 225 kids would receive this benefit, we won’t meet the target. On the other hand, if 1000 kids come, and we say 225 benefit, the target is set too low– only about 1 in 4 kids expected to benefit.

JAMES: You are a math wiz! Okay let’s finish this up and go to the end outcome. We already talked about this a little. The instrument, we decided, would be a test. Notice how we tied the target statement to the instrument.

CLAUDIA: Yes, we determined how well the kids would have to do on the test to pass, or demonstrate the level of knowledge we want to see.

JAMES: Right.

Okay, so our end outcome is that “Children prepare a Disaster Plan with their families.” What should our indicator be?

CLAUDIA: The number – I mean percent – of children who bring back a completed Disaster Plan, which I assume is some kind of form the kids get during the presentation.

JAMES: Yes, that seems like a good idea. And you are thinking ahead about practical ways to get the data you need to show results. So our indicator is the “Percent of attendees who return a completed Disaster Plan.” What target should we set?

CLAUDIA: Let’s see, we are talking about kids in grades 4-6. Some will inevitably lose the form; some will do it but forget to bring it back, so let’s not say 100%. How about 70%?

JAMES: Good, so our target is “70% of the attendees will return a completed Disaster Plan” – and let’s give it a time frame – “within two weeks of attending the presentation.”

CLAUDIA: And then last, our instrument would be the Disaster Plan Form we give the kids, right?

JAMES: Yes, and let’s add the log we’ll be using to track the number of Disaster Plans we get back. We’ll need some kind of log or check-off sheet with the kids’ names and whether or not they returned the form. We’ll need that information so we can determine what percentage of attendees returned a Disaster Plan Form.

CLAUDIA: Or maybe we could just track how many total kids attended the presentations at each school, and how many Disaster Plan Forms were returned from that school within two weeks.

JAMES: That is a good idea. Tracking all those kids by name isn’t really necessary, and we’re already tracking the number of attendees for our output. We just need to put the pieces of data together.

CLAUDIA: Right!

JAMES: Now, we covered a lot of information, but there is one last thing I want you to keep in mind when you develop your performance measures. It's called internal alignment, or agreement within the performance measure result.

The components of your performance measure-- your result, indicator, target, and instrument—all the things we talked about, must all refer to exactly the same things. The indicator is what you're counting or measuring-- the evidence for the result. The target is the specific level of success you set for that result, based on the indicator. The instrument is the tool to collect and record the evidence, if you want to think of it that way. When you finish writing your performance measures, look them over to be sure there aren't any disconnects.

Okay, it's almost time to go, but we do have some special parting gifts. First, we have an exercise for you to practice writing performance measures. The Worksheet Exercise is the performance measurement worksheet, but only partially completed. The output, intermediate outcome, and end outcome result statements are there, but they are missing indicators, targets, and instruments. Fill in those spaces that are highlighted in the worksheet. Keep in mind that there could be more than one correct answer, but make sure your result statement, indicator, target, and instrument have internal agreement.

CLAUDIA: How will I know if the answers I fill in are correct?

JAMES: Feel free to send your completed worksheet to Project STAR and we can give you some feedback. This particular worksheet exercise was taken from a sample worksheet we already have posted. When you've filled in your answers, you might want to check them against the indicators, targets, and instruments we chose for the sample worksheet.

CLAUDIA: Does the exercise tell me where I can find the completed sample worksheet?

JAMES: Yes. Before you rush off to grab that worksheet, let me quickly point out three other things that we did not go over specifically, but you will see them in the exercise.

- First, the target statement also has a space below where you should enter the target number, for example the "75" in 75%, and then whether it is a percent or number.
- Second, under each result is a space for a performance measure statement, or a summary, in which you simply restate your result with the target-- summarizing your performance measure, but not adding any new information.
- Last, there is a space that asks for data from previous years for the result listed. For the purpose of this exercise, let's pretend there is no

data from previous years, but normally, unless this is your first year as a brand new program you would want to include prior years' data. It gives your target some context.

Last, I want to recommend additional resources to help you develop your performance measures. You can find application instructions, guidance and guidelines from the Corporation at www.americorps.gov. If you haven't already, download "The AmeriCorps Program Applicant Performance Measurement Toolkit." You can find the toolkit at: www.nationalservice.gov/resources. Just enter the search term "performance measurement toolkit", and click on the link that says "AmeriCorps Program Applicant Performance Measurement Toolkit." Also check out Project STAR's other online resources, including sample performance measurement worksheets. Go to www.nationalservice.gov/resources and search: project star.

CLAUDIA: And who should I call if I have questions?

JAMES: 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. Remember: Project STAR's assistance is free to CNCS grantees.

CLAUDIA: Well, thank you for your help.

JAMES: You're welcome!