

4 ~ 6 Months Program Development & Management



Assess and Report Progress on Performance Measures

What does it mean to Assess and Report Progress on Performance Measures?

Once your program is in full swing, it is time to begin assessing program accomplishments. The idea is to chart progress toward goal accomplishment, determine the success of partnerships, and determine what is working and what needs improvement. Once you have done the assessment, you should report progress to all stakeholders.

Why should you Assess and Report Progress on Performance Measures?

Simple. You want to ensure that everyone is doing what they said they would do, members are experiencing a productive and successful service year, communities being served see value in the service the members are providing, and to ensure everything is on target. Most importantly, progress equates to a better chance of continued funding.

How do you do it?

✓	Identify staff person(s) responsible for collecting and analyzing data.
✓	Work with your host sites and other partners to identify a method for disseminating and collecting the performance measurement tools (surveys, interview protocols, etc.).
✓	Establish a system that collects program data on a monthly basis.
✓	Review any performance measurement data gathered from an external evaluator.
✓	Invite your host site partners, community partners, Corps members, and community members served to participate in completing your Customer Satisfaction Survey.
✓	If a site visit has been conducted, use that data also to assess performance measures.
✓	Implement a variety of performance measurement tools and use the data to evaluate program achievement and identify challenges. (See Resources)
✓	Revisit program goals with partners. Identify next steps and set targets.
✓	Report relevant information on the WBRs progress report.

Resources

Resource	Description	Contact
National Service Resource Center	<p><i>Great sample forms to tailor to your program.</i></p> <p>The NSRC supports and serves the programs of the Corporation for National and Community Service helping to promote volunteerism and community service activities throughout the USA.</p>	<p>http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/sample_forms/</p> <p>XVI.B.2.PDF -> AmeriCorps Community Survey</p> <p>XVI.E.2.PDF -> AmeriCorps Program Director Survey</p> <p>VIC1.PDF -> AmeriCorps member mid-year self-evaluation form</p> <p>VID1.PDF -> Service site evaluation of AmeriCorps program and members</p> <p>VID2.PDF -> Site supervisor check-up for AmeriCorps</p>

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Refine Annual Calendar

What does it mean to refine your annual calendar?

At this point in the program cycle, you may have a better picture of the activities and events that impact program planning and operations. It's a perfect time to review and make adjustments to the calendar based on what you are learning and seeing.

Why should you refine your annual calendar?

By revisiting and updating the program calendar, you are taking into account the lessons learned during the first few months of the program. The result will be a stronger, more on-target program.

How do you do it?

✓	Pull together and review any performance measurement data you have about the program.
✓	Review performance measures and end outputs.
✓	Bring together relevant staff members to participate in the review and revision of the program calendar.
✓	Make sure that stakeholders who have activities that could impact the revised program calendar are invited to participate.
✓	Bring together your service site partners to review and revise the program calendar.
✓	Share the revised program calendar with all members of the organization.

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Staff Retreat

What is a Staff Retreat?

Take a breather, reconnect, reevaluate, chart the next six months—that's what a staff retreat is all about. Sometimes it may serve the dual purpose of a retreat and training workshop. It is primarily an occasion for all the staff to come together, usually away from the office, to review past activities and chart the goals and targets for the future.

Why should you conduct a Staff Retreat?

The process of starting up a program takes an incredible amount of energy. A mid-year staff retreat gives everyone a chance to step back and gain perspective on what has happened in the program. It's also a time to celebrate the successes and make adjustments where needed.

How do you do it?

✓	Conduct a needs assessment using interview and/or surveys to determine staff training needs and to identify key programmatic and management issues that need attention.
✓	Design the retreat using information gathered from the above needs assessment.
✓	Work with senior management and a steering committee that represents a cross-section of staff to create the agenda. Ensure the retreat schedule doesn't compete with other organizational priorities.
✓	Develop and communicate clear goals and objectives of the retreat. See Conducting an Effective Staff Retreat .
✓	Prioritize the issues you want the retreat to address.
✓	Include team building and networking activities so the staff can develop stronger linkages between each other.
✓	Ensure your budget can support the staff retreat.
✓	Identify an off-site space to conduct the retreat. The staff needs to be away from the office to really focus.
✓	Invite outside presenters/trainers to bring new learning to the organization. If you use an outside consultant, clearly communicate what you want to achieve.
✓	Follow through on the suggestions or recommendations that arise in the retreat.

Resources

Resource	Description	Contact
State Commission, Parent Organization, or other AmeriCorps groups.	Training and Technical Assistance Providers and Resource list. Use this to identify potential external trainers.	http://www.nationalservice.org/resources/training/index.html
Starting Strong: A Guide to Pre-Service Training	Good information about training implementation.	http://www.etr.org/nsrc/pdfs/startingstrong/starting.html

Frequently Asked Questions

What benefit is gained from holding a retreat off-site? *The biggest benefit is focus. Without the distraction of the everyday work pressures, staff members are able to focus and fully participate in the workshop.*

TOOLS
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Conducting an Effective Staff Retreat

Retreats are a valuable resource, but much of their potential can be wasted if they are planned ineffectively. Retreats should always be a forum for learning and working together that supports program activities in the field.

Consider the following when implementing a retreat:

- Define the desired outcome of the retreat.
- Determine who needs to attend in order to accomplish the desired outcome.
- Decide whether you will use a facilitator to help plan the agenda and manage the retreat.
- If you use a facilitator, decide whether s/he should be from outside the organization or inside the organization.
- Once you know how many people to invite, the type of space you need, etc., identify a facility that can accommodate your requirements.
- Visit the facility if you are not familiar with it to verify the accommodations.
- Develop an agenda for the meeting and determine whether you want the attendees to do any work prior to the retreat.
- Schedule some "fun" or "down" time for attendees to reflect and just enjoy being together.
- Hold retreats that last longer than a day at the beginning of the week. Participants will be much more focused if they have had the weekend to relax.
- Reconfirm details with the facility a few days before the retreat.
- Arrive early the day of the retreat to set up the room.
- Ask everyone to complete a Retreat Feedback Form at the end of the retreat.

Outcome or impact achieved:

Properly implemented retreats can create a setting that encourages communication and strengthens bonds as well as give you a better understanding of your participant/staff needs.

Source: Corporation for National Service. Handbook for Continuous Improvement, Tools & Practices, Participant/Staff Retreat, pp. 1-12.