Evaluation

A toolkit to support


Colorado NONPROFIT Association
Serving nonprofits. Strengthening communities.
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INTRODUCTION

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES
With the help and guidance from many leaders of Colorado’s nonprofit, government, and private sectors, the Colorado Nonprofit Association has developed Principles and Practices for Nonprofit Excellence in Colorado to assist Colorado’s charitable organizations in building their capacity while enabling them to demonstrate their accountability and transparency.

P&P is designed to promote excellence in management practices, ethical conduct, legal compliance, and public accountability for Colorado’s nonprofit organizations as they perform their crucial community services. Some practices reflect legal requirements and/or steps that all nonprofits should take, while others are aspirational in nature. Although many of the principles and practices detailed herein will be helpful to all nonprofits, they are specifically written for Colorado nonprofit corporations that are tax-exempt under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and that are public charities (not private foundations). Many of the more stringent requirements placed upon private foundations are not addressed here.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE
P&P recognizes that good organizational practices are primarily implemented through education and self-regulation. Thus, this toolkit and all P&P related resources are intended to serve as an educational resource to improve the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of Colorado charitable organizations.

FLEXIBILITY
Colorado is enriched by the great diversity of its many charitable nonprofit organizations and it is recognized that the implementation of these principles and practices will take different forms and occur at different levels given the nature, resources, and life cycle of each nonprofit organization.

P&P is designed to be flexible to allow for differences between large and small organizations. It is important to note that some organizations will have acceptable reasons to deviate from some of the specified practices. Such exceptions need not imply a lack of transparency and accountability, but may warrant conversation among the organization’s leadership.

Many nonprofit organizations already adhere to strict best practices programs, and there are numerous programs in specific nonprofit subsectors. For that reason, P&P should be evaluated as another tool to increase transparency and accountability, to be considered alongside other programs that may already exist for specific types of nonprofits.

BUILDING A PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION
While Colorado has a diverse community of charitable organizations, it is also important to note the great diversity of best practices in the nonprofit sector and to acknowledge that no one set will fit all organizations. Each nonprofit organization should conduct a careful organizational assessment (See Page 24-25), including evaluating its own nonprofit life cycle, to establish where it is, and where it wants to be.

Most charitable organizations will not be able to fully adhere to all of these Principles immediately, nor will every Practice be reflected in their current operations. P&P is intended as a basis for each organization (board, staff, and other constituents) to make a conscious determination of what will best move it forward and ensure that its programs and services are of high quality.


 HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

PURPOSES

- The first is to provide individual charitable organizations striving for excellence with a Colorado-specific tool for evaluating regulatory compliance, enhancing strategic planning, and refining operational evaluation.
- The second is to support the growth and quality of the sector.
- The third is to increase public understanding of the role and contributions of the charitable nonprofit sector in Colorado.

P&P is designed to serve as a guideline for all charitable nonprofits to implement practices that are legal, ethical, and effective. They are not meant to be used by funders or government as a "litmus test" to evaluate charitable organizations, nor are they intended as a substitute for the wisdom of directors, staff, and advisors of individual organizations.

Note that this guidebook is not meant to be construed as legal advice, and is not a substitute for individualized consultation with an attorney.

DEFINITIONS

A "Principle" is a broad statement that defines a suggested ethical or managerial direction for a nonprofit organization.

A "Practice" is a suggested method to achieve the principles.

All key terms will be highlighted in green, bold print and listed in the Key Terminology section at the end of this toolkit. The terminology of evaluation is foreign to many and many terms seem similar, and some words seem to be interchangeable.

Whenever the term "must" is used, federal or Colorado state laws exist that require all 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organizations to conform to that practice. In these circumstances, a reference to the federal or state law is given (e.g., "CRS" for Colorado Revised Statutes, "IRC" for Internal Revenue Code, "LSC" for United States Code, and "CFR" for Code of Federal Regulations), and a citation is made to the specific section of the law. Practices that are required by law are indicated by italic type and the ➤ icon.

The term "should" means that the practice is not required by law, but is generally recommended depending upon the nature, resources, and life cycle of the nonprofit organization.

Practices that are asked about on the Form 990 are indicated by the 990 icon if it is a best practice and by the 990 ➤ icon if Colorado or federal law requires the practice.

In this toolkit, the terms "charitable organization" and "nonprofit organization" are used interchangeably to refer to nonprofit organizations that are tax-exempt under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

LEGAL ACCOUNTABILITY

All Colorado nonprofit organizations must be aware of and in compliance with all legal requirements pertaining to nonprofit management, reporting, and governance. Visit the following websites for summaries of applicable law and links to helpful resources, and to download forms:

- Colorado Secretary of State (www.sos.state.co.us)
- Colorado Attorney General (www.ago.state.co.us)
- Colorado Department of Labor (www.coworkforce.com)
• Colorado Department of Revenue (www.revenue.state.co.us)
• Internal Revenue Service (www.irs.gov/eo)
• Colorado Nonprofit Association (www.ColoradoNonprofits.org/Resources.cfm)

**TIP…**
The *Guide for Colorado Nonprofit Organizations* (© Continuing Legal Education in Colorado, Inc.) is an excellent resource for Colorado nonprofits. It was written by over 20 of Colorado’s top corporate attorneys, many of whom specialize in representing Colorado nonprofit organizations.
Evaluation Basics

Why Evaluate?
Nonprofits offer valuable programs and services to Colorado citizens, and have a responsibility to assess the impact of their programs and to act upon the information they gather. The public has a stake in nonprofit performance and is entitled to information regarding organizational results. To that end, evaluation is an important aspect of nonprofits’ work. Evaluation or assessment of services should occur in comparison to specific objectives and should be used to continually improve goal attainment.

Evaluation — Nonprofit evaluation should be ongoing and in accordance with the strategic and operational plans. An organization’s measurement systems should be practical and useful to improve ongoing processes, activities, and results. These systems should also be used to evaluate organizational effectiveness and inform the planning process in order to maximize impact.

Evaluation is not a single point in time at the conclusion of a project or activity; rather it is part of a cycle to ensure nonprofits are providing the best possible programs and services within their stated mission. The cycle includes:
1. The identification of objectives or outcomes the organization hopes to achieve
2. Assessment of the extent of change that occurred as the result of specific activities, and
3. Refinement of programs and services based on the results

While the task may sound discouraging, it is actually a compilation of a number of easy steps. The key is to determine reasonable and meaningful objectives that will lead the organization to the outcomes you desire, and then checking to see that the processes you have identified to reach the outcomes are appropriate. Evaluation leading to improved outcomes will often be separated into short, intermediate, and long-term objectives.
Why should nonprofits undertake the process to complete evaluation of programs and processes within the organization? There are many relevant reasons, including:

- Nonprofits are typically established to meet a critical need in the community. Evaluation and process improvement will help the nonprofit to fulfill its mission more effectively
- Community needs are growing and the efficient use of programs is vital
- There is more competition for foundation and corporate grants and more of them are requiring evidenced-based programs; evaluation will help to measure outcomes that demonstrate the numbers of people served, success of programs, and extent of improvement accomplished
- Individual donors are more savvy than ever before, they want to know how well their funds were expended, and if their contributions are resulting in true impact
- Interpretation and use of evaluation processes will lead to program improvements
- Evaluation will help quantify the impact the nonprofit is making
- Staff members can document that they are accomplishing what they set out to do and get a better sense of personal satisfaction for the work they do
- Findings may lead to new ways of doing work within the organization

Many nonprofit professionals are wary about evaluation, believing it is too difficult, time consuming, and/or expensive for their organization. While evaluation will require time and money, these resources are investments in the continued success of the organization. Furthermore, nonprofits will often find that, with proper planning, the evaluation process is not as expensive or time consuming as they expected.

**FAQ: Evaluation Myths**

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*Article Excerpt*

Myth: Evaluation is a complex science. I don’t have time to learn it! No! It’s a practical activity…

Myth: Evaluation is a whole new set of activities – we don’t have the resources. No! Most of these activities…are normal management…

Myth: There’s a "right" way to do outcomes evaluation. What if I don’t get it right? No! Each outcomes evaluation process is somewhat different…

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*See page 29 for full article.*
**Approaches to Evaluation**

There are multiple methods of evaluation and numerous processes your organization can utilize to match your desired outcomes. Before beginning evaluation the organization should have a strategic plan in place with explicit goals and objectives for the organization as a whole. Once goals and objectives are defined, it will be helpful to review different types of evaluations to find the system that will work best for your organization.

**Delivery of Services** – A nonprofit should commit to effective and efficient delivery of services, and should always strive to improve processes, programs, and results to increase its impact relative to its mission.

- Outcome evaluations are increasingly required by nonprofit funders as verification that the nonprofits are indeed helping their constituents and meeting stated goals for funding.
- Focusing on outcomes can help organizations and programs make decisions about how best to allocate resources.
- Checking if you are meeting your program’s outcomes can help you keep the leadership aware of your program’s accomplishments.

Consideration of funder and community member’s desires for results is essential for the creation of effective and inclusive programs; however, everyone involved in the evaluation process has an obligation to the organization to ensure that the program(s) stay true to the organizational mission. This can be achieved by viewing the mission as the filter through which all activities must be viewed. When programs or activities are found to be outside the organization’s mission, the program must be adapted to avoid mission drift.

Basic information about two popular approaches to evaluation follows below. Each will be discussed in more detail throughout this toolkit.

**Process-Based Evaluation**

- Measures the implementation of programs
- Enables long-term assessment of efficiency and program delivery
- Examples:
  - Cost-benefit analysis
  - Efficiency of service analysis

**Outcomes-Based Evaluation**

- Measures the impact of programs
- Uses questions about program activities that relate back to the needs of your constituents
- Examples:
  - Changes in client behavior, actions, attitudes
  - Intermediate and long-term changes in community values

**Which Should You Use? Both!**

- Organizations need to be able to measure both effectiveness and impact.
- Using a combination of both methods enables you to understand the degree to which you accomplished your desired outcomes and what aspects of your program contributed to your results or were a barrier to success.
• This will allow your organization to stop guessing about which programs or products are best and why.
• There must be a realistic expectation and measure to determine if the programs utilized resulted in the changes expected.

RESPONSIVENESS

Preparing to be Responsive

Improvement – A nonprofit organization should have a regular system for assessing opportunities for improvement of services, programs, and internal processes in order to best serve its constituents.

Evaluation can identify program strengths and weaknesses, helping to identify where improvements are needed—and for which client groups, which offices, and which staff. Many nonprofits see this as the greatest benefit. Evaluations can also serve to verify that programs are running as originally intended. Without putting monitoring or evaluation tools in place, processes and plans can change as various staff members adapt the program to match their own strengths.

Ways to be Responsive

Feedback from Constituents – Nonprofit programs should take into account and respond to the experience, needs, and satisfaction of the constituents they serve and should have a grievance procedure to address complaints.

Feedback from Stakeholders – Nonprofit programs should actively collect and respond to the experience, needs and satisfaction of stakeholders. They should solicit input and feedback from a variety of sources, such as board, staff, community members, funders, and other stakeholders. This input should be inclusive of a broad range of views and perspectives and should play an integral role in the organization’s decision-making process.

Environmental Assessment/Scan – A nonprofit organization should have thorough understanding of the community in which it operates, including the needs of constituents, services provided by the government and other nonprofits, and applicable trends (i.e. economic, demographic, etc.). While the strategic plan may be reviewed and approved each year, a more comprehensive planning process with an environmental scan should occur every three to five years.

Responding as an Inclusive Organization

Nonprofit organizations should ensure cultural competence by researching and implementing elements of inclusiveness at every level. Inclusive practices will increase effectiveness of programs by addressing the specific needs of each community, increasing community participation, and ensuring open lines of communication.
TIP…

Defining Inclusiveness
Diversity describes one aspect of inclusiveness: the extent to which an organization has people from diverse backgrounds or communities involved as board members, staff, and/or volunteers.

Inclusive organizations, on the other hand, not only have diverse individuals involved but, more importantly, they are learning-centered organizations that value the perspectives and contributions of all people, and they incorporate the needs, assets, and perspectives of communities of color into the design and implementation of universal and inclusive programs. Furthermore, inclusive organizations recruit and retain diverse staff and volunteers to reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the communities they serve.

-From The Denver Foundation’s Inclusiveness Project
For more information visit [www.denverfoundation.org](http://www.denverfoundation.org).

Culturally Sensitive Evaluations – A nonprofit should conduct program evaluations in ways that are appropriate for the community served.

Why is an inclusive approach so important?

- Helps build both internal and external enthusiasm and commitment for the organization and its strategies. Individuals take ownership of the goals and efforts to achieve the stated outcomes.
- Ensures that your informational database reflects the needs and perceptions of internal and external stakeholders.
- Incorporates a level of objectivity into the process. "Outsiders" can identify jargon or ask critical questions where "insiders" might make assumptions.
- Develops uniformity of purpose among all stakeholders.
- Establishes a continual information exchange among staff, management, customers, and other key stakeholders.
Start by asking, what am I trying to accomplish and how will you know when I’ve achieved it? The right evaluation process will provide you with a clear answer!

While all of the elements in the following section are essential, please do not mistake them for a to-do list or step-by-step handbook. Evaluation looks different for every organization, as will the steps taken throughout the process of evaluation. Please refer to the “TIP” boxes, Samples & Resources section, and the Colorado Nonprofit Association FAQ’s page or HelpDesk for information to help you along the way.

**Essential Elements of the Evaluation Process**

*Procedures* – A nonprofit *should* have defined, ongoing, and sustainable procedures in place for evaluating its programs, procedures, and outcomes in relation to its mission.

Start thinking about evaluation procedures during the planning phase of program or project development. Beginning with the end in mind will help you establish the right procedures. Need to know more? Visit the Association’s *P&P Planning Toolkit* and online resources section.

**TIP…**

Colorado Nonprofit Association has created a *P&P Planning Toolkit* that demonstrates the importance of evaluation in the planning process and is written specifically for Colorado nonprofit organizations. Below is an excerpt describing the planning process:

The planning process includes:

- Assessing community issues and current response to those issues.
- Establishing the organization’s mission.
- Defining programs, products and services…as part of the mission.
- Developing specific, measurable objectives that demonstrate success.
- Evaluating program accomplishments or outcomes.
- Communicating results to the staff, board, constituents and community.
- Revising programs and services based on evaluation findings to help the organization reach stated goals and objectives.

Rome wasn’t built in a day and neither was your nonprofit. While it is important to begin implementing evaluation programs, it may be wisest to start with specific programs in a meaningful and manageable way that will not interrupt the normal course of business. This may entail starting small, with one or two programs to evaluate, rather than trying to evaluate every program at once. Ideally, the evaluation process will begin at the commencement of the program being evaluated; however, that doesn’t always happen, and sometimes it is the oldest, most comfortable programs that need the most work!
**TIP…**

*The Innovation Network* provides tools and resources to help nonprofits build their ability to plan and evaluate their own programs. These tools are effective, and best of all, are free and available online.


**TIP…**

*The Urban Institute: Key Steps in Outcome Management* provides the following suggestions with regards to combining measurement approaches for similar programs.

If an organization has more than one group providing the same service, managers can use a common measurement approach for both. For example, if two offices provide adult mental health services, each with its own supervisor, then “adult mental health services” can be treated as one program—and use the same outcome measurement process. Each different program or service will have its own set of ways to measure performance. Thus, each program will need its own outcome indicators and measurement procedures.

Alternatively, the organization can identify a set of general service characteristics applicable to all its programs, such as service timeliness and helpfulness. The organization can then survey the clients of all its programs to obtain ratings of each of these characteristics. However, to be most useful for improving services, more detailed information, specific to individual programs, is needed.

Visit [http://www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org) for more information.

**Deciding Who is Responsible**

Nonprofit evaluation *should* include participation from all of the organization’s stakeholders at some point in the process. For example, when developing outcomes for measurements, considering feedback from constituents will ensure the outcomes accurately reflect the needs of those that the program serves. Implementation and measurement of the services may rely more heavily on staff members, whereas analyzing the results may fall more on the organization’s leadership or outside experts (such as consultants).

While many stakeholders are involved throughout the process, it is important to designate a specific group of staff, board members, and/or volunteers to oversee the process. This group or committee will ensure the evaluation stays on schedule and that important benchmarks are met; in addition, this group will be responsible for updating the Executive Director on the progress and results at specific times throughout the process.
The evaluation committee or group (evaluation team) must decide what specific outcomes will be measured as well as the method for measuring them.

The evaluation team should take great care with this part of the process, as they will be responsible for identifying the most important results the program hopes to achieve. If not already involved as team members, the organization’s leadership should play an active role in this process as each outcome will further the organization’s mission. This is also an excellent time to involve stakeholders (including your constituents) to ensure your outcomes are meeting their real needs. While achieving outcomes can make you feel great, if they are not furthering your mission and fulfilling real needs you will need to reconsider what you are doing programmatically.

Utilizing the Colorado Nonprofit Community
Your fellow nonprofits can serve as a valuable resource. Many organizations include information on their evaluation processes on their website or in their annual reports. Furthermore, it can be useful to review the evaluation tools of programs that are similar to yours. National organizations can also be fruitful sources of evaluation measures. Colorado funders provide expectations or guidelines for evaluations, particularly for grant reports, and this may be useful in determining evaluation methods.

Goals and Objectives, The Building Blocks of Every Program
Evaluation is a fluid and ongoing process occurring throughout the lifespan of your organization and your programs. Starting with goals derived from your mission statement will help you set the direction for your program. Once goals are defined, objectives will help you nail down what must actually be accomplished to achieve these goals. Next, outcomes provide the measurable effects the program will accomplish. When outcomes are reached new goals or objectives may need to be set, but when outcomes are not achieved it may be time to reassess your goals and objectives. Throughout the process, the most important practices are staying true to your mission and ensuring you are meeting real client needs.

Think of goals and objectives as the vehicle for carrying out the organization’s mission. When reviewing and/or writing goals and objectives for your program, remember to make them "SMART"!
Tip…
SMART Tool for Evaluation
Derived from http://www.smartchart.org

SMART is an acronym that can be used to help ensure that effective objectives or goals are set. These criteria may be used both to set and assess objectives, acting as a checklist to assure quality. Other criteria may also be used, including: Clear, Challenging, Customer-focused, etc.

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<td>Measurable</td>
<td>Attainable</td>
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<td>Time bound</td>
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<td>Very unambiguous, explicit targets</td>
<td>Performance can be measured to compare with targets</td>
<td>The capability is there to reach the targets</td>
<td>Relates specifically to stated goals and objectives</td>
<td>Expressed or measured during a specific time period</td>
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Sample: Evaluation Plan Worksheet
By: Colorado Nonprofit Association
See page 38.

Get Results: Define Outcomes
Outcomes come in many different shapes and sizes, and while some are quite common (i.e. number of people served) others are extremely unique. Outcomes can be quantitative or qualitative, and the only limitations on creating outcomes are measurability and imagination. Do not shy away from creative outcomes as long as you can develop a method to measure them, and that the measurements provide relevant, valid, verifiable, and useful information to your organization as well as donors.

Outcome indicators are valuable tools that are set in place to help determine when benchmarks for outcomes are being met. These are specific quantitative measurements such as “number of”, “percent of”, and so on; however, they can be used to represent qualitative outcomes. For example, if you operate an after-school program about bullying and want to measure a percent increase in students’ knowledge about bullying, your outcome indicators could include the percent of students who reach a specific score on a quiz about bullying. Outcome indicators can also be separated out into different demographic units to help your organization better understand if outcomes are being met within different units of your constituency.

Performance measurements – Performance measurements should be realistic, specific, measurable, and appropriate to the size and scope of the organization and to its constituents.

- Measurement should include information on satisfaction, activities, results, and community input.
- Measurements may include both qualitative and quantitative data.
- Measurement should include data on efficiency and effectiveness.
- Measurements should be determined in advance to allow for adequate time and resources to create an environment for successful review.
Qualitative information provides a description about your services, accomplishments, or actions. This can include narratives, interviews, field notes, and summaries of events. Qualitative summaries may highlight distinctions or bring attention to features in performance data.

Quantitative information is data and raw numbers. Generally, it is the most straightforward description of performance measures. Quantitative data portrays the actual scale of operation and the impact the organization makes.

Most organizations use both qualitative and quantitative information to help tell the organization’s whole story.

TIP...
It can be quite a challenge to identify outcomes for some types of programs, including those that are preventative (health programs, etc.), developmental (educational, etc.), or “one-time” or anonymous (food shelves, etc.) in nature. In these cases, it’s fair to give your best shot to outcomes planning and then learn more as you actually apply your outcomes evaluation plan. Also seek help and ideas about outcomes from other nonprofits that provide services similar to yours. Programs that are remedial in nature (that is, that are geared to address current and observable problems, such as teen delinquency, etc.) are often easier to associate with outcomes.

Basic Guide to Outcomes Based Evaluation for Nonprofits with Very Little Resources
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Logic Models
Using a logic model is a very helpful tool in navigating the process of outcome measurement. According to Basic Guide to Outcomes Based Evaluation for Nonprofits with Very Little Resources a logic model helps:

• Develop Programs that meet community/target population needs
• Develop clear goals and measurable objectives
• Develop activities
• Define outcomes (short or long-term outcomes)
• Don’t worry about completing the “perfect” logic model – ultimately, you’re the expert here

Now is an excellent time for your organization to either revisit or create a new logic model for the programs you are measuring. Logic models come in many shapes, sizes, styles, and formats so choose the one that best fits what you are trying to achieve. The level of formality and creativity are less important at this stage than the information listed in the model.
"A theory of change is not a program plan, but it establishes habits of mind that let you create a good program plan."

Developing and applying a Theory of Change can lead to a stronger sense of organizational needs, a greater capacity for analysis and encourage a culture of learning and analysis, and provide a blueprint for evaluation.

**WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE: THEORY OF CHANGE VS. LOGIC MODEL**

Some people use the terms “theory of change” and “logic model” interchangeably. Others say that it is important to maintain a distinction between the two. What do the two terms mean? And what’s the difference between them?

A theory of change takes a wide view of a desired change, carefully probing the assumptions behind each step in what may be a long and complex process. Articulating a theory of change often entails thinking through all the steps along a path toward a desired change, identifying the preconditions that will enable (and possibly inhibit) each step, listing the activities that will produce those conditions, and explaining why those activities are likely to work. It is often, but not always, presented as a flow chart.

A logic model takes a more narrowly practical look at the relationship between inputs and results. It is often presented as a table listing the steps from inputs or resources through the achievement of a desired program goal. Some grant makers use separate logic models to chart the implementation components of theory of change.

“Logic models connect programmatic activities to client or consumer outcomes. But a theory of change also specifies how to create the right kinds of partnerships, hold the right forums, do the right kinds of technical assistance, and help people operate more collaboratively and be more results focused. “Between the two definitions are many “hybrid approaches that are less simplistic than traditional logic models but not as comprehensive as theories of change.” The right model will
depend on many factors, including the complexity of the project, the time line, and the operating style of both grant maker and grantee.

**TIP...**

For more on the two methods and how they can be used singly or together, see Theories of Change and Logic Models: Telling Them Apart, at www.theoryofchange.org. The website, a collaborative project of ActKnowledge and the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, includes many tools and resources for creating theories of change.

**WHEN IS DEVELOPING A THEORY OF CHANGE NOT A GOOD IDEA?**

Creating a theory of change is mainly helpful for articulating and thoroughly probing the assumptions behind an intervention or program model, thereby laying a foundation for more practical implementation planning. Consultant suggestion: “If what you need is an instrumental plan, a logic model is probably more appropriate. Several also mention that developing a theory of change can be hard and time-consuming work, “maybe not what you want to insist on with your grantees” when the grant is relatively small, the proposed work is fairly straightforward, and/or the organization is already stretched thin.

The following model is an example of a completed theory of change template.
A Theory of Change Helps To...

The following content was taken from Mapping Change: Using a Theory of Change to Guide Planning and Evaluation at www.grantcraft.org.

- Establish common principles and vocabulary.

  Without a clearly articulated theory of change, planning is almost inevitably ad hoc, prone to undue influence by key individuals and in danger of leading an organization in directions not necessarily focused on the mission.

  Make implicit assumptions explicit. One grant maker, for example, invited a grantee to develop a theory of change for a project to expand an award-winning recovery program for people with drug addictions. As the conversation unfolded, the grantee’s staff realized that they had always assumed that a 30-day program was the right length of time for every individual’s recovery. Fairly quickly, they began to question their assumptions: How, they wondered, had their program settled on 30 days in the first place? Would being flexible about the number of days enable them to treat more individuals successfully? The grant maker remarked, “They looked at their program through a different lens and said, ‘Our outcomes are good, but why aren’t they better? How can we make them better?’”

- Identify resources and check them for adequacy.
- Design more realistic plans of action. “[It] forces people to question their own assumptions about whether what they’re trying to do will work.”
- Clarify lines of responsibility. Developing it “pushed us to say what outcomes we were willing to hold ourselves accountable for, meaning that we would hold ourselves accountable to meeting them, to tracking them, and all of that.”
- Create more meaningful evaluations. “It facilitates the practice of checking back over time to see if the elements believed to be crucial have actually made their anticipated contributions.”
- A stronger sense of organizational needs.
- A greater capacity for analysis. It encourage a culture of learning and analysis.
- A blueprint for evaluation.
HOW CAN A THEORY OF CHANGE HELP WITH EVALUATION?

A theory of change poses four crucial questions that can lead to an effective evaluation:

1. Is the intervention meaningful?
2. Is it plausible?
3. Is it doable by this particular organization?
4. And is it measurable?

FRAMING EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The theory of change lists three overarching evaluation questions regarding that particular strand of the work:

1. Is strategic research informing and improving policy interventions in regulatory, legalistic, and judicial settings?
2. What progress is being made toward the development of frameworks, indicators of progress, and other knowledge tools?
3. To what extent are professionalized policy organizations and grassroots groups sharing strategic research, and finding it helpful?

The theory of change also lists “milestones” or “indicators” to watch:

- Mechanisms to coordinate, integrate, and aggregate scholarly work in the field
- Evidence of tools to unify and advance the field
- Increase in research that cuts across different policy issues and disciplines
- Evidence of vehicles for transfer and dissemination of new knowledge to policy advocates and grassroots groups
- Evidence of greater reliance among policy advocates and grassroots groups on strategic research
- A nationally recognized and diverse set of public interest scholars begin to emerge and advance the field’s case in a variety of forums, disciplines and institutions

To make sure the theory lends itself to evaluation: First, emphasize the importance of “basic quantitative data collection to capture relevant figures, such as number of beneficiaries, money spent, numbers hired, etc.” Second, identify points of inquiry at which you can reasonably expect to see specific outcomes, focusing on program elements that link most directly to your long-term desired impacts. Some of those points may occur at shorter intervals, while others may apply only after several years. Again, these suggestions are equally relevant to foundation-wide and project-specific theories of change.
METHODS OF EVALUATION

Nonprofit organizations often get overwhelmed by the amount of technical jargon involved in the evaluation process, but the actual evaluation methods are likely tasks your organization has done in the past. Examples include surveys, pre and post-tests, client interviews, and so on. More techniques can be found in the Resources section of this toolkit.

The overall goal in selecting evaluation method(s) is to get the most useful information to key decision makers in the most cost-effective and realistic fashion. Consider these questions from Basic Guide to Program Evaluation.

1. What information is needed to make current decisions about a product or program?
2. Of this information, how much can be collected and analyzed in a low-cost and practical manner, e.g., using questionnaires, surveys and checklists?
3. How accurate will the information be (reference the above table for disadvantages of methods)?
4. Will the methods get all of the needed information?
5. What additional methods should and could be used if additional information is needed?
6. Will the information appear as credible to decision makers?
7. Will the nature of the audience conform to the methods, e.g., will they fill out questionnaires carefully, engage in interviews or focus groups, let you examine their documentations, etc.?
8. Who can administer the methods now or is training required?
9. How can the information be analyzed?

For small organizations, just start small. You can design and implement something that will work for your organization – without using outside evaluators and consultants. Start with the main program, or have staff adapt evaluation tools to meet their current need/capacity. If you are in the position of using consultants to help, know that there are several consultants that can provide templates and training that will allow you to do the work yourself, or do the whole evaluation process for you. Let them know what you need and the budget you have to work with. While there is a chance you could get a grant to help design your program, it is more likely that certain foundations would provide guidance on strategies to evaluate.

The following table from Basic Guide to Program Evaluation provides an example of how a major method used for collecting data during evaluations could or could not work for your organization. For a complete list of major methods, see page 32.
**Pilot Evaluations**

You will want to test your evaluation approach on one or two programs before using it for all programs. See what works and what doesn’t. Be ready to adapt your evaluation approach in order to obtain the information you really need to improve programs and services.

Most organizations do not have the resources to invest in applying your complete outcomes evaluation process to all programs at once. During the testing period, to make sure you do obtain the information you need and can integrate the processes into your normal operations you might want to use to consider this approach:

The more focused you are about the purpose of your evaluation, the more effective and efficient you can be in the design and implementation of evaluation plans, the more useful your evaluation results will be and ultimately the less it will cost you (whether in your own time, the time of your employees and/or the time of a consultant). That kind of focus comes from using a formal approach to evaluation, which requires using a formal approach to designing your plans for evaluation, as well.

**Gathering the Data**

**Use of Appropriate Data Collection Tools** – A nonprofit should employ appropriate data collection and analysis tools in order to produce accurate, timely, and useful evaluation information.

**FAQ: Major Methods for Collecting Data**

Derived from *Basic Guide to Program Evaluation*

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Overall Purpose</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| questionnaires, surveys, checklists | when needed to quickly and/or easily get lots of information from people in a non-threatening way | -can complete anonymously  
- inexpensive to administer  
- easy to compare and analyze  
- administer to many people  
- can get lots of data  
- many samples questionnaires already exist | - might not get careful feedback  
- wording can bias client’s responses  
- are impersonal  
- in surveys, may need sampling expert  
- doesn’t get full story |

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A nonprofit should implement policies to keep client information safe and confidential. There should be a signed consent form for use of data in reports, with an included statement that the name of the individual will not be released.

**SAMPLE: Example of Evaluation Report Contents**
From the *Basic Guide to Outcomes Based Evaluation for Nonprofits with Very Little Resources*
Copyright, Carter McNamara, MBA, PhD, Authenticity Consulting, LLC

See page 39 for more information.

The type of evaluation method chosen by your organization will define how the results are gathered. Ensure that all of the information is gathered in the same manner, and do your best to avoid influencing the results either advertently or inadvertently.

If your organization decides to do interviews and/or focus groups, ensure that the individual administering these sessions is experienced and understands the potential biases they can impose on the individual/group. It is generally not a wise decision to allow the same members of the organization to administer the services and the client interviews/focus groups due to the potential for clients to fear repercussions or simply hurt feelings.

Nonprofits may need to do an internal assessment and use outside expertise in order to clearly define cultural differences in language, communication styles, and traditions. Knowing this information may change the way in which data is collected and interpreted, and perhaps in the way the program is run.

Collecting and storing the data safely and efficiently is just as important as the methods for gathering it. Depending on the format of your information you might consider using database software or recording responses in a spreadsheet. For information on electronic evaluation programs, please visit [http://www.hfrp.org/var/hfrp/storage/fckeditor/File/harris_table.pdf](http://www.hfrp.org/var/hfrp/storage/fckeditor/File/harris_table.pdf)

Creating backups or copies of files and storing them in separate, secure locations will help your organization avoid losing the data if some kind of disaster were to occur at your office. Creating electronic backups is not difficult but must be done frequently.

**Examining The Results**
Evaluation Results – Evaluation results should inform the planning process in order to strengthen the organization and its programs.

The information you gather can be put to numerous different uses throughout your organization. The results can be used to demonstrate the program’s (and therefore the organization’s) ability to reach specific goals and achieve quantitative and qualitative outcomes. This will be valuable information internally and externally for all of the organization’s stakeholders.
Assessment of Evaluation Practices – A nonprofit should assess the usefulness and accuracy of current evaluation practices and modify them as needed in order to establish more successful processes to ensure program effectiveness.

Analyzing the Data

Once the information is gathered from your period of evaluation it becomes time to do analysis. Analysis may consist of a number of activities and processes, but ensure the program’s goals, objectives, and outcomes are the focus of the activity.

Ensure your method of analysis fits your method of evaluation. Please note the differences in analysis techniques between qualitative and quantitative information listed in the Resources section.

FAQ: Interpreting Information: Basic Analysis of Qualitative and Quantitative Information

Derived from Basic Guide to Program Evaluation and Basic Guide to Outcomes Based Evaluation for Nonprofits with Very Little Resources
Copyright, Carter McNamara, MBA, PhD, Authenticity Consulting, LLC

Basic analysis of “quantitative” information:
1. Add up the number of ratings, rankings, yes’s, no’s for each question
2. For ratings and rankings, consider computing a mean, or average for each question. For example, “For question #1, the average ranking was 2.4”.
3. Consider conveying the range of answers, e.g., 20 people ranked “1”, 30 ranked “2”, and 20 people ranked “3”.

Basic analysis of “qualitative” information:
1. Organize comments into similar categories, e.g., concerns, suggestions, strengths, weaknesses, similar experiences, program inputs, recommendations, outputs, outcome indicators, etc.
2. Label the categories or themes, e.g., concerns, suggestions, etc.
3. Attempt to identify patterns, or associations and causal relationships in themes, e.g., all people who attended programs in the evening had similar concerns, most people came from the same geographic area, most people were in the same salary range, what processes or events respondents experience during the program, etc.

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CONTINUING THE PROCESS
The process of evaluation does not end with analysis of the results. The results gathered in relation to the outcomes of the program will help your organization set new goals and objectives for the next phase, program, and period of evaluation.

FAQ: Setting Outcome Targets
From the Basic Guide to Outcomes Based Evaluation for Nonprofits with Very Little Resources
Copyright, Carter McNamara, MBA, PhD, Authenticity Consulting, IL

Communication of Results – Evaluation results should be communicated to a broad range of stakeholders in promotional or informational materials at least annually, including staff, board, clients, foundations, the public, etc. Common methods include posting results on the organization’s website, in annual report and other communications materials, as well as board meetings and meetings with the public, funders and your clients.

Funder and Donor Engagement – A nonprofit should share the impact of the organization’s accomplishments, demonstrate use of funds, and provide reasoning behind program changes developed as a result of relevant findings. A strong evaluation program will ensure funder and donor confidence and help build stronger relationships.

See page 34 for more information.
The following excerpt from the *Common Grant Report* demonstrates the practicality of evaluation results, their correlation with organizational planning, and their necessity when hoping to obtain grants.

**SAMPLE: Common Grant Report Format**

Excerpt from the Narrative Section.

A. RESULTS/OUTCOMES

☐ 1. Please describe the progress made toward the stated goals and objectives related to this specific grant. (Please include those stated goals and objectives in your response.)

☐ 2. What difference did this grant make in your community or neighborhood and for the population you are serving? Please discuss evidence of effect (e.g. numbers served, demographic information, client satisfaction survey results, pre- and post-test results, community indicators, outcomes, etc.). Note: If you have evaluation materials that document outcomes and impacts of your work, feel free to attach in lieu of answering this or other questions.

B. LESSONS LEARNED

☐ 1. Describe what you learned based on the results/outcomes you reported in Section A above and what, if any, programmatic or organizational changes you will make based on your results/outcomes.

☐ 2. Did external or environmental factors (e.g. a flood, an economic downturn, a partner organization stopped providing services, etc.) affect the achievement of your program or organizational goals or the anticipated timeline? If yes, what did you do to address these issues?

C. FUTURE PLANS

☐ 1. If you will be continuing this program, what are the plans for sustaining or expanding the program, including a future-funding plan?

☐ 2. What plans do you have to communicate your outcomes and lessons learned with others?

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Use the organizational Assessment tool on the following page to assess your current evaluation procedures or to get started. Good Luck!
As organizations that serve the public, nonprofits have an obligation to demonstrate their contribution to the public good. An essential responsibility of every nonprofit organization is to assess the impact of its actions and to respond appropriately. A nonprofit also has the responsibility to collect and disseminate data using ethical methodologies. Nonprofits should regularly measure their performance both in terms of effectiveness, such as outcomes and results of services, and efficiency, such as service delivery systems. They should share this information with their constituents and the public and use it to continually inform the planning process and improve the quality of their programs and activities.

**Required by law**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Input &amp; Responsiveness</th>
<th>No/ Not Begun</th>
<th>Somewhat/ In Process</th>
<th>Yes/ Completed</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. We have committed to effective and efficient delivery of services, and always strive to improve processes, programs, and results to increase its impact relative to our mission.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. We have a regular system for assessing opportunities for improvement of our services, programs, and internal processes in order to best serve our constituents.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. We actively collect and respond to the experience, needs, and satisfaction of stakeholders.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We solicit input and feedback from a variety of sources, such as board, staff, community members, funders and other stakeholders. This input is inclusive of a broad range of views and perspectives and plays an integral role in our decision-making process.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Our programs should take into account and respond to the experience, needs, and satisfaction of the constituents they serve.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have a grievance procedure to address complaints.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. We conduct program evaluations in ways that are appropriate for the community served.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. We employ appropriate data collection and analysis tools in order to produce accurate, timely, and useful evaluation information.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Our evaluation efforts are ongoing and in accordance with our strategic and operational plans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required by law</th>
<th>No/ Not Begun</th>
<th>Somewhat/ In Process</th>
<th>Yes/ Completed</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our measurement systems/results are practical and useful to improve ongoing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>processes, activities, and results.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our measurement systems/results are used to evaluate organizational effectiveness and inform the planning process in order to maximize impact.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. We have a thorough understanding of the community in which we operate, including the needs of constituents, services provided by the government and other nonprofits, and applicable trends (i.e. economic, demographic, etc.).

9. We have defined, ongoing, and sustainable procedures in place for evaluating our programs, procedures, and outcomes in relation to our mission.

10. Our performance measurements are determined in advance to allow for adequate time and resources to create an environment for successful review.

   Our systems of evaluation and anticipated outcomes should be realistic, specific, measurable, and appropriate to the size and scope of our organization’s activities. Measurements may include both qualitative and quantitative data.

End Uses

11. We use our evaluation results to inform the planning process in order to strengthen our organization and programs.

12. We communicate our evaluation results to a broad range of stakeholders in promotional or informational materials (i.e. annual report, brochures, etc.) at least annually.

13. We actively share the impact of our accomplishments, demonstrate use of funds, and provide reasoning behind program changes developed as a result of relevant findings to current and prospective funders and donors.

14. We actively assess the usefulness and accuracy of our evaluation practices and modify them as needed.
ONLINE AND TEXT RESOURCES
Basic Guide to Outcomes-Based Evaluation for Nonprofit Organizations with Very Limited Resources
http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluation/outcomes.htm

Basic Guide to Program Evaluation
http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluation/inl_eval.htm

Urban Institute: Key Steps in Outcome Management
http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310776_KeySteps.pdf

Online Aid to Make and Assess Strategic Decisions
www.smartchart.org

Software Applications Nonprofits Can Use for Evaluation

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide
www.wkkf.org

The Denver Foundation’s Inclusiveness Project
http://nonprofitinclusiveness.org/

Innovation Network
www.innonet.org

Colorado Common Grant Report
http://coloradocommongrantforms.org/

HELPFUL BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS


**ONLINE GUIDE BOOKS**

Urban Institute: Key Steps in Outcome Management
http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310776_KeySteps.pdf

Demonstrating Results in youth Development Programs: Demystifying Outcomes

Downloadable guides based on experiences of grant makers and grant users
www.grantcraft.org

Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide
http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf

**TOOLS**

Appropriate Evaluation Methods in Different Circumstances Chart
http://www.evaluationtrust.org/tools/fig1

Evaluation Design Checklists
http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/checklists/

Online aid to make and assess strategic decisions
www.smartchart.org
OTHER RESOURCES

CDC Evaluation Working Group
http://www.cdc.gov/eval/resources.htm#logic_model

Targeting Outcomes of Programs (TOP)
http://citnews.unl.edu/TOP/english/index.html

United Way
http://national.unitedway.org/outcomes/library/pgmomres.cfm

Evaluation and Social Research
http://gsociology.icaap.org/methods/

Online Evaluation Resource Library
http://oerl.sri.com/

University of Kentucky Department of Community and Leadership Development
http://www.ca.uky.edu/agpsd/soregion.htm

UNICEF
http://www.unicef.org/siteguide/resources_development.html

Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health

University of Wisconsin-Extension
http://www.uwex.edu/impacts/evaluation/

Focus Groups Data Collection Strategies
http://buros.uni.edu/buros/jsp/search.jsp
http://www.ets.org/testcoll/index.html

Basics of Developing Questionnaires
http://mapnp.org/library/evaluatn/questnrs.htm

Community Research: The Aspen Institute Roundtable
http://www.aspenroundtable.org
(Click Measures for Community Research)

New York State Teacher Resource and Computer Training Centers: Evaluation Library
http://www.programevaluation.org/libpg.shtml

Evaluation Measures for Hard-to-Reach Audiences
http://ag.arizona.edu/fcr/fs/evaluation/adapeval.htm

Methods of Data Collection
FAQ: Evaluation Myths
Excerpted from Basic Guide to Program Evaluation and Basic Guide to Outcomes Based Evaluation for Nonprofits with Very Little Resources.
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Myth: Evaluation is about proving the success or failure of a program. This myth assumes that success is implementing the perfect program and never having to hear from employees, customers or clients again -- the program will now run itself perfectly. This doesn't happen in real life. Success is remaining open to continuing feedback and adjusting the program accordingly. Evaluation gives you this continuing feedback.

Myth: Evaluation is a complex science. I don't have time to learn it!
No! It's a practical activity. If you can run an organization, you can surely implement an evaluation process! Many believe that evaluation is a highly unique and complex process that occurs at a certain time in a certain way, and almost always includes the use of outside experts. Many people believe they must completely understand terms such as validity and reliability. They don't have to. They do have to consider what information they need in order to make current decisions about program issues or needs. And they have to be willing to commit to understanding what is really going on. Note that many people regularly undertake some nature of program evaluation -- they just don't do it in a formal fashion so they don't get the most out of their efforts or they make conclusions that are inaccurate (some evaluators would disagree that this is program evaluation if not done methodically). Consequently, they miss precious opportunities to make more of difference for their customer and clients, or to get a bigger bang for their buck.

Myth: It's an event to get over with and then move on! No! Outcomes evaluation is an ongoing process. It takes months to develop, test and polish -- however, many of the activities required to carry out outcomes evaluation are activities that you're either already doing or you should be doing.

Myth: Evaluation is a whole new set of activities – we don't have the resources. No! Most of these activities in the outcomes evaluation process are normal management activities that need to be carried out anyway in order to evolve your organization to the next level.

Myth: There's a "right" way to do outcomes evaluation. What if I don't get it right? No! Each outcomes evaluation process is somewhat different, depending on the needs and nature of the nonprofit organization and its programs. Consequently, each nonprofit is the "expert" at their outcomes plan. Therefore, start simple, but start and learn as you go along in your outcomes planning and implementation.

Myth: Funders will accept or reject my outcomes plan. No! Enlightened funders will (at least, should?) work with you, for example, to polish your outcomes, indicators and outcomes targets. Especially if your's is a new nonprofit and/or new program, then you very likely will need some help -- and time -- to develop and polish your outcomes plan.

Myth: I always know what my clients need -- I don't need outcomes evaluation to tell me if I'm really meeting the needs of my clients or not. Outcomes evaluation sets up structures in your organization so that you and your organization are very likely always focused on the current needs of your clients. Also, you won't always be around -- outcomes help ensure that your organization is always focused on the most appropriate, current needs of clients even after you've left your organization.
FAQ: **Deciding who is Involved in Developing the Process and How**

Excerpted from *Key Steps in Outcome Management.*
By: The Urban Institute

A good process is to establish an outcome management working group for each program. The working group members work out the details of the outcome management process and oversee its initial implementation.

### Exhibit 2
**Potential Members of Outcome Management Working Groups**

- Program manager (typically the facilitator, also)
- Members of the program staff
- Representatives of at least one other program in the organization
- A measurement “expert” (in the organization, or a volunteer from outside)
- A representative of upper management to provide overall organizational prospective
- Possibly, one or two former or current clients (another option for obtaining client perspective is to hold focus groups)

Working groups that include representatives from the program and also other parts of the organization can provide a rich variety of perspectives on what outcomes should be measured, how outcome information can be collected, and the ways the outcome information can be used. The working group approach can also reduce the likelihood that program staff will feel that the outcome process was imposed on them by outsiders (the “not-invented-here” problem).

An alternative is to have a small number of managers and consultants develop the outcome measurement process. This puts less burden on the staff and may speed up the process. However, it is not likely to provide sufficient perspective on what should be measured and is not as likely to be accepted by program personnel. Staff support is essential for quality data collection and for use of the resulting outcome information. Exhibit 2 lists the possible composition of the working group. The number of members will vary with the size of the organization, from a few to as many as 12 or more in large nonprofits.
**FAQ: Establishing a Schedule**

Excerpted from *Key Steps in Outcome Management.*
By: The Urban Institute

Exhibit 3 illustrates a schedule for the development of the system from the start to use of the outcome data collected. The schedule must be adapted for each organization based on such factors as the number and complexity of programs included, the experience and knowledge of the working group members, and the time that they are available to work on this process.

**Exhibit 3**
Sample Outcome Management System
Development Schedule (24 months)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Steps</th>
<th>Months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1—3:</strong> Initial Organizational Steps</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 4:</strong> Identify mission and clients</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Steps 5-6:</strong> Identify what is to be measured</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 7:</strong> Identify data sources And data collection procedures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 8:</strong> Determine data breakdowns, Comparison &amp; analysis plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 9:</strong> Pilot test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Steps 10—12:</strong> Analyze the data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 13:</strong> Use the data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**FAQ: Methods for Collecting Data**

Excerpted from the *Basic Guide to Program Evaluation.*

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Overall Purpose</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>questionnaires, surveys,</td>
<td>when need to quickly and/or easily get lots of information from people in a</td>
<td>-can complete anonymously</td>
<td>-might not get careful feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>checklists</td>
<td>non threatening way</td>
<td>-inexpensive to administer</td>
<td>-wording can bias client’s responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-easy to compare and analyze</td>
<td>-are impersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-administer to many people</td>
<td>-in surveys, may need sampling expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-can get lots of data</td>
<td>-doesn’t get full story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-many sample questionnaires already exist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interviews</td>
<td>when want to fully understand someone’s impressions or experiences, or learn</td>
<td>-get full range and depth of information</td>
<td>-can take much time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>more about their answers to questionnaires</td>
<td>-develops relationship with client</td>
<td>-can be hard to analyze and compare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-can be flexible with client</td>
<td>-can be costly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>documentation review</td>
<td>when want impression of how program operates without interrupting the program;</td>
<td>-get comprehensive and historical information</td>
<td>-interviewer can bias client’s responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>is from review of applications, finances, memos, minutes, etc.</td>
<td>-doesn’t interrupt program or client’s routine in program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-information already exists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-few biases about information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>documentation review</td>
<td>when want impression of how program operates without interrupting the</td>
<td>-get comprehensive and historical information</td>
<td>-often takes much time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>program; is from review of applications, finances, memos, minutes, etc.</td>
<td>-doesn’t interrupt program or client’s routine in program</td>
<td>-info may be incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-information already exists</td>
<td>-need to be quite clear about what looking for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-few biases about information</td>
<td>-not flexible means to get data; data restricted to what already exists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>observation</td>
<td>to gather accurate information about how a program actually operates,</td>
<td>-view operations of a program as they are actually occurring</td>
<td>-can be difficult to interpret seen behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>particularly about processes</td>
<td>-can adapt to events as they occur</td>
<td>-can be complex to categorize observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-can influence behaviors of program participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-can be expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focus groups</td>
<td>explore a topic in depth through group discussion, e.g., about reactions to an</td>
<td>-quickly and reliably get common impressions</td>
<td>-can be hard to analyze responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>experience or suggestion, understanding common complaints, etc.; useful in</td>
<td>-can be efficient way to get much range and depth of information in short</td>
<td>-need good facilitator for safety and closure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>evaluation and marketing</td>
<td>time</td>
<td>-difficult to schedule 6-8 people together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>case studies</td>
<td>to fully understand or depict client’s experiences in a program, and conduct</td>
<td>-fully depicts client’s experience in program input, process and results</td>
<td>-usually quite time consuming to collect, organize and describe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>comprehensive examination through cross comparison of cases</td>
<td>-powerful means to portray program to outsiders</td>
<td>-represents depth of information, rather than breadth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FAQ: *Basic Analysis of Qualitative and Quantitative Information*

This chart is derived of content from both the *Basic Guide to Program Evaluation* and *Basic Guide to Outcomes Based Evaluation for Nonprofits with Very Little Resources.*

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic analysis of &quot;quantitative&quot; information (for information other than commentary, e.g., ratings, rankings, yes's, no's, etc.):</th>
<th>Basic analysis of &quot;qualitative&quot; information (respondents' verbal answers in interviews, focus groups, or written commentary on questionnaires):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Make copies of your data and store the master copy away. Use the copy for making edits, cutting and pasting, etc.</td>
<td>1. Read through all the data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tabulate the information, i.e., add up the number of ratings, rankings, yes's, no's for each question.</td>
<td>2. Organize comments into similar categories, e.g., concerns, suggestions, strengths, weaknesses, similar experiences, program inputs, recommendations, outputs, outcome indicators, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. For ratings and rankings, consider computing a mean, or average, for each question. For example, &quot;For question #1, the average ranking was 2.4&quot;. This is more meaningful than indicating, e.g., how many respondents ranked 1, 2, or 3.</td>
<td>3. Label the categories or themes, e.g., concerns, suggestions, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Consider conveying the range of answers, e.g., 20 people ranked &quot;1&quot;, 30 ranked &quot;2&quot;, and 20 people ranked &quot;3&quot;.</td>
<td>4. Attempt to identify patterns, or associations and causal relationships in the themes, e.g., all people who attended programs in the evening had similar concerns, most people came from the same geographic area, most people were in the same salary range, what processes or events respondents experience during the program, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Keep all commentary for several years after completion in case needed for future reference.</td>
<td>5. For dealing with numerical data with numbers, rankings:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tabulate the information, i.e., add up the ratings, rankings, yes's, no's for each question.</td>
<td>• Consider conveying the range of answers, e.g., 20 people ranked &quot;1&quot;, 30 ranked &quot;2&quot;, and 20 people ranked &quot;3&quot;.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To analyze comments, etc. (that is, data that is not numerical in nature):

- Read through all the data
- Organize comments into similar categories, e.g., concerns, suggestions, strengths, etc. -- Label the categories or themes, e.g., concerns, suggestions, etc.
- Attempt to identify patterns, or associations and causal relationships in the themes

This chart is derived of content from both the *Basic Guide to Program Evaluation* and *Basic Guide to Outcomes Based Evaluation for Nonprofits with Very Little Resources.*
FAQ: Setting Outcome Targets

Excerpted from *Key Steps in Outcome Management.*

By: The Urban Institute

Both the collective outcome data and the breakouts by client group and service characteristics should be reviewed. The findings can be compared to benchmarks, such as most recent data to those of previous time period (the traditional comparison) targets established for each outcome indicator for the time period:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes by characteristic of each identified client group</th>
<th>Outcomes by the different offices or facilities, if appropriate</th>
<th>Outcomes by individual caseworkers/clinicians</th>
<th>Outcomes by service delivery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex. Outcomes for males to those for females</td>
<td>For meaningful and fair comparisons, sites should be providing approximately the same services to similar types of clients</td>
<td>For meaningful and fair comparisons, staff should be providing similar services to similar types of clients</td>
<td>If variations in types or amounts of services. Substantial differences between the latest findings and the benchmarks should be identified for later consideration and possible action.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A note on setting targets (the second comparison listed above): For some programs, funders may require such targets as part of the grant application. Even if not required, setting targets is a good management practice. If the outcome indicator is new, for example, one whose data are to be obtained from a new client survey procedure, probably only a reasonable “guesstimate” can be made of what can be achieved. After the program has gained experience, however, more reasonable targets for the outcome indicators can be set.

When setting outcome targets, programs should consider the following:

**Outcome data from previous reporting periods.** This information will likely be the single major factor in establishing targets for the next reporting period. *Expected budget and staffing levels.* Any anticipated changes in funding or staff (including volunteers) that may affect service levels and thus expected outcomes, should be considered;

**The range of recent outcome values reported among the various customer groups, offices, and/or caseworkers/clinicians.** A program pushing for high outcomes might set targets for all groups equal to that achieved for the client group with the best outcomes. A more conservative approach is to use past average values of the indicator; *External factors.* These include anything that might affect the program’s ability to achieve outcomes during the next reporting period, for example, predicted changes to the local or national economy or changes in demographic characteristics of the community served;

**Changes in the program’s procedures or processes.** Planned or recent changes that can be expected to alter future outcome levels should be considered. Most often targets are set for one-year periods. However, nonprofits will likely find it useful to establish targets for each reporting period, such as by quarter or month, to provide more timely information and to reflect expected seasonal variations.
FAQ: Logic Models

Excerpted from Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide

By: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

If you were running the Mytown Free Clinic, how would you show that your desired outcome (a reduction in uninsured emergency care) didn’t result from a mass exodus of uninsured residents from Mytown, USA, or a sudden increase in number of employees offered health insurance coverage by local businesses?

How will you demonstrate that your program contributed to the change you intend? A well-crafted logic model can assert it is reasonable to claim that your program made a substantive contribution to your intended change. When programs operate in real communities where influences and forces are beyond your control, evaluation is generally more about documenting a program’s contribution than about proving something. Community-based initiatives operate in complex environments where the scientific certainty of “proof” is seldom attainable. This is where logic models can be especially helpful.

On the following page, you will see this logic model completed with information from the above example of the Mytown Free Clinic. Try completing this logic model for your program(s).
In order to accomplish our set of activities we will need the following:

In order to address our problem or asset we will conduct the following activities:

We expect that once completed or under way these activities will produce the following evidence of service delivery:

We expect that if completed or ongoing these activities will lead to the following changes in 1-3 then 4-6 years:

We expect that if completed these activities will lead to the following changes in 7-10 years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Short - &amp; Long- Term Outcomes</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### SAMPLE: Logic Model

Excerpted from *Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide*

By: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Short - &amp; Long- Term Outcomes</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In order to accomplish our set of activities we will need the following:</td>
<td>In order to address our problem or asset we will conduct the following activities:</td>
<td>We expect that once completed or under way these activities will produce the following evidence of service delivery:</td>
<td>We expect that if completed or ongoing these activities will lead to the following changes in 1-3 then 4-6 years:</td>
<td>We expect that if completed these activities will lead to the following changes in 7-10 years:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• IRS 501(c)(3) status</td>
<td>• Launch/complete search for executive director</td>
<td>• # of patients referred from ER to the clinic/year</td>
<td>• Memorandum of Agreement for free clinic space</td>
<td>• Patient co-payments supply 20% of clinic operating costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Diverse, dedicated board of directors representing potential partners</td>
<td>• Board &amp; staff conduct Anywhere Free Clinic site visit</td>
<td>• # of qualified patients enrolled in the clinic/year</td>
<td>• Change in patient attitude about need for medical home</td>
<td>• 25% reduction in # of uninsured ER visits/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Endorsement from Memorial Hospital, Mytown Medical Society, and United Way</td>
<td>• Board &amp; staff conduct planning retreat</td>
<td>• # of patient visits/year</td>
<td>• Change in # of scheduled annual physicals/follow-ups</td>
<td>• 300 medical volunteers serving regularly each year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Donated clinic facility</td>
<td>• Design and implement funding strategy</td>
<td>• # of medical volunteers serving/year</td>
<td>• Increased # of ER/physician referrals</td>
<td>• Clinic is a United Way Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Job descriptions for board and staff</td>
<td>• Design and implement volunteer recruitment and training</td>
<td>• # of patient flyers distributed</td>
<td>• Decreased volume of unreimbursed emergencies treated in Memorial ER</td>
<td>• Clinic endowment established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• First year’s funding ($150,000)</td>
<td>• Secure facility for clinic</td>
<td>• # of calls/month seeking info about clinic</td>
<td></td>
<td>• 90% patient satisfaction for 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clinic equipment</td>
<td>• Create an evaluation plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 900 patients served/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Board &amp; staff orientation process</td>
<td>• Design and implement PR campaign</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SAMPLE: *Evaluation Plan Worksheet*
By: Colorado Nonprofit Association

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program:</th>
<th>Indicator/Performance Measures</th>
<th>Who has this information?</th>
<th>What evaluation tool are we using?</th>
<th>When will it be measured?</th>
<th>Who will measure it? / Who will review it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Output</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. ________</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ________</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-Term Outcome</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. ________</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long-Term Outcome</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. ________</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ________</td>
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<td>Impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. ________</td>
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</table>
SAMPLE: Example of Evaluation Report Contents
Colorado Nonprofit Association

1. Introduction / Executive Summary – ½ pg to 1 pg purpose of evaluating this program

2. Program description
   a. Basic description of your organization, including the mission
   b. Description of the program being evaluated along with how it fits within the mission of the organization
   c. Optional: Logic Model
   d. Description of expected outcomes and impact – include the performance measures you are using

3. Evaluation Overview
   a. Evaluation Goals – what you are hoping to accomplish through your evaluation plan
   b. Methodology
      i. What data is being collected and why you chose to collect it
      ii. Who is collecting the data
      iii. What tools are being used to collect the data
         1. Advantages/disadvantages to this approach
         2. Sample of the evaluation tools
      iv. When the data is being collected
      v. How the data is being interpreted
      vi. Methods for maintaining the confidentiality of data (if needed)
      vii. How you are adapting your collection methods for culturally diverse groups
   c. Staff Training – description of how staff will be trained to collect, analyze and report data
   d. Uses for the evaluation data
      i. Evaluation Report – how frequently will you compile evaluation data for review? Who will compile the information and who will review it?
      ii. Use of information for grant and contract reporting – specify which data is asked for by your grants and contracts that fund this program
         1. Who is responsible for grant and contracting reporting and how will they obtain the needed data
      iii. Opportunities to share information – don’t forget to include who is responsible for sharing this information and how you will spread it
         1. Who internally should see this information?
         2. Who externally could this information be shared with?

4. Responsiveness
   a. How your program evaluation will influence your program
      i. The frequency of review of evaluation data
      ii. Procedure for changing program implementation based on evaluation data
The mission of the Colorado Nonprofit Association is to lead, serve, and strengthen Colorado nonprofit organizations.

WHO WE ARE
The Colorado Nonprofit Association is a statewide organization that provides leadership, advocacy and program services to the nonprofit sector. The Association acts as the public voice of the sector, sharing information and facts about nonprofits to the public and representing nonprofits in shaping and responding to policy pertaining to the sector.

Program services available through the Association include education and leadership development, public policy support, research and public information, consultation and group purchasing programs. While representing the entire nonprofit sector for much of its work, the Association is also a membership organization – offering added resources and cost-saving programs to its over 1,300 nonprofit members.

CONTACT US
For more information, or to become a member, please visit:
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Denver, CO 80203
Phone: (303) 832-5710
(800) 333-6554
Fax: (303) 894-0161
info@ColoradoNonprofits.org

This toolkit was updated by Colorado Nonprofit Association staff.
We are very pleased to include excerpts and samples from some of our local partners as well as online sources.
Sources are cited within. For more information, please contact info@ColoradoNonprofits.org.

July 2011