Using Data and Metrics to Tell Your Grant Story

The hows, wheres, whys, and considerations for data collection and evaluation in grants

Using "CRAAP" Data in Proposals

"CRAAP" (Current, Relevant, Authoritative, Accurate and Purpose)

Current: Data must be current and as up-to-date as possible
Relevant: The data included within a proposal must support the need for your programmatic focus.
Authoritative: Can the source of the information be used and trusted in a proper manner?
Accurate: Evidence must support the information presented to the audience.
Purpose: The purpose of the information should be to objectively inform (not persuade or entertain).

Questions to Ask before Collecting and Evaluating Programmatic Data

- Do the goals and targets outlined in your grant application(s) align with the goals used to measure programmatic success?
- How do you measure the effectiveness of your program(s)? Does this happen on a continuing basis, and if so, how often?
- Can you align funds with the outcomes in terms of how funds impact the success of your program(s)?
- Do you use an internal review or external evaluation process? Is this only based on organization/grant budget or are other factors a consideration?

Data collection methods

Data Collection Methods
Types and Factors to Consider

- Surveys
- Observation
- Telephone interviews
- Individual interviews
- Focus groups
- Reports
- Historical data

What methods are most common for your organization?

"Making Your Data Count (2015)" - Holly Burkett, hollyburkett.com

Data to Collect:

Typically three types of data are collected and presented in evaluation, and include financial data, compliance information, and project data. We are just going to look at project data for grants.

Data can be qualitative and quantitative, and used to detail how effective the program/project is in reaching desired goals and ways to improve the program/project.

- Developing evaluation criteria to evaluate progress toward project goals and the impact of your project
- Refining project procedures while developing the project
- Determining the extent to which the project goals were met
- Developing criteria for program improvement

Common Measurements

Common Measurement Categories

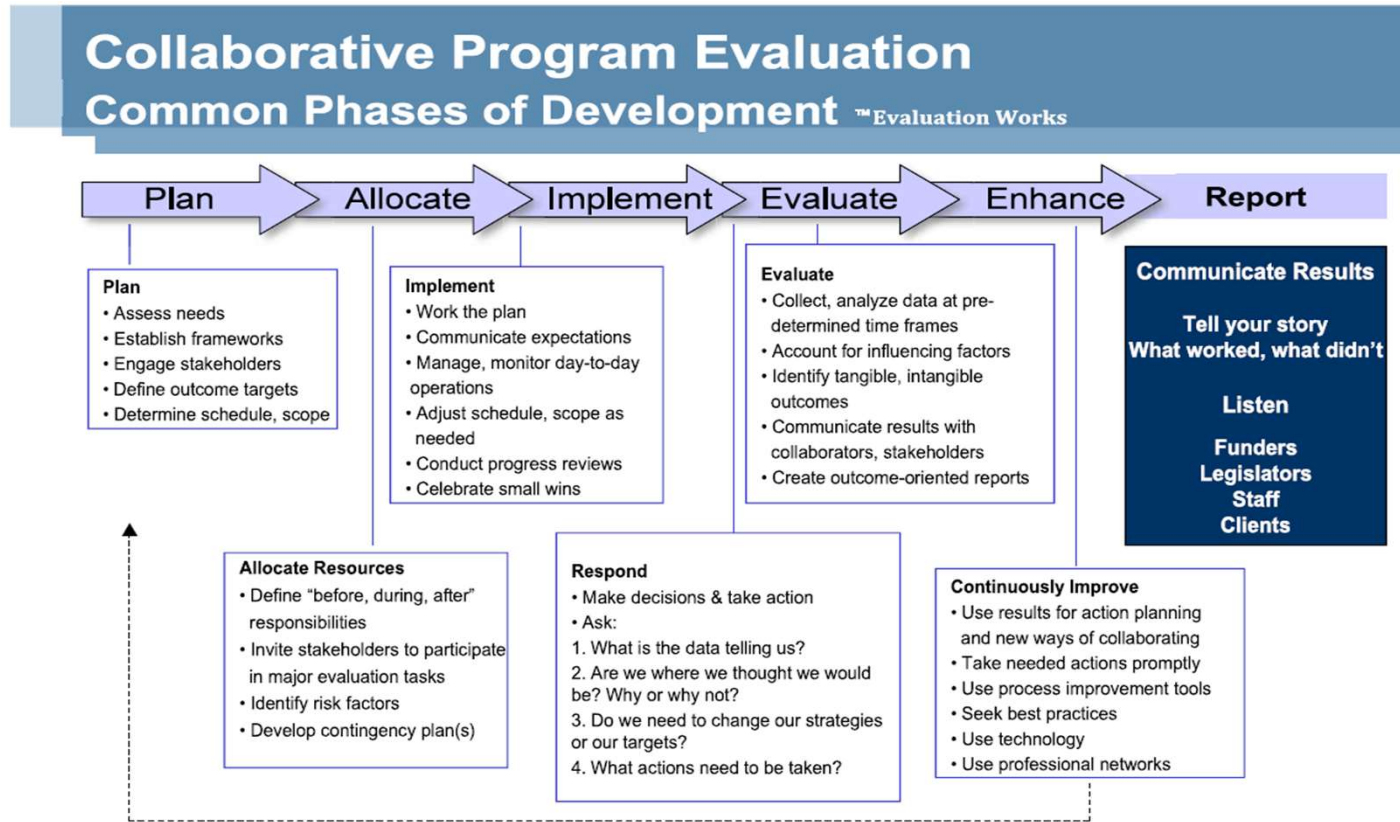| Impact	• **Sample Indicators:** Reduced cost of health care, improved economic development
Behavior	• **Sample Indicators:** Self/other assessments, recidivism rates, truancy rates, academic achievement scores, health care admissions
Knowledge	• **Sample Indicators:** Learning gains (pre/post), self-assessment, in-class exercises, skill practices

Program Evaluation Steps

Collaborative Program Evaluation
Common Phases of Development ™Evaluation Works

Plan → Allocate → Implement → Evaluate → Enhance → **Report**

Plan
- Assess needs
- Establish frameworks
- Engage stakeholders
- Define outcome targets
- Determine schedule, scope

Implement
- Work the plan
- Communicate expectations
- Manage, monitor day-to-day operations
- Adjust schedule, scope as needed
- Conduct progress reviews
- Celebrate small wins

Evaluate
- Collect, analyze data at pre-determined time frames
- Account for influencing factors
- Identify tangible, intangible outcomes
- Communicate results with collaborators, stakeholders
- Create outcome-oriented reports

Communicate Results

Tell your story
What worked, what didn't

Listen

Funders
Legislators
Staff
Clients

Allocate Resources
- Define "before, during, after" responsibilities
- Invite stakeholders to participate in major evaluation tasks
- Identify risk factors
- Develop contingency plan(s)

Respond
- Make decisions & take action
- Ask:
1. What is the data telling us?
2. Are we where we thought we would be? Why or why not?
3. Do we need to change our strategies or our targets?
4. What actions need to be taken?

Continuously Improve
- Use results for action planning and new ways of collaborating
- Take needed actions promptly
- Use process improvement tools
- Seek best practices
- Use technology
- Use professional networks

"Moving from Outputs to Outcomes (2012)" - Holly Burkett, hollyburkett.com

What we present to Funders

Quantitative Data (measure or count data). This data can be used to help answer:

- Understanding quantities or frequency.
- Determining cause-and-effect.
- Comparing different things.
- Establishing numerical baselines.

Qualitative Data (studying processes and meanings through direct or indirect contact with people). Data can help answer:

- Understanding the feelings or opinions of people.
- To gain insight into relationships or patterns.
- To gather multiple perspectives on a particular subject or problem.
- To identify approximate, rather than exact, information.

Is the data we collect and present inclusive?

Challenges with Data:
***The illusion of objectivity**: Data is supposed to be objective; however, humans are subjective, and they collect and interpret data; therefore, there's no such thing as objective data.
***The delusion of validity**: Since many nonprofits just don't have the resources to gather robust, scientifically accurate data, and yet all of us are forced to gather it somehow, a lot of the information we gather is not really useable.
***The assumption of generalizability:** People are so varied, and yet we have a tendency to assume that findings in studies can be generalized to everyone, and we make decisions based on those assumptions.
***The focus on the technical versus the adaptive:** Data usually just reveal short periods in history, as longitudinal studies are time consuming and expensive. The risk of that is that sometimes we fail to see whole systems and ecosystems and how different elements affect one another. Solutions based on these data, then, may tend to focus on the short-term gains vs. systems change.

https://nonprofitaf.com/2015/05/weaponized-data-how-the-obsession-with-data-has-been-hurting-marginalized-communities/

Is the data we collect and present inclusive?

Gathering Inclusive Data/De-Weaponizing Data

*__Consider contexts and who is driving the data:__ Who created the data? Was the right mix of people involved? Who interpreted the data? The rallying cry among marginalized communities is "Stop talking about us without us," and this applies to data collection and interpretation.

*__Disaggregate data:__ It is easy to lump myriad different communities into fewer categories, but the loss in accuracy is not only frustrating, it is extremely damaging and inequitable. Where you can, be thoughtful about the categories you use to organizing groups of people.

*__Redefine what constitutes good data:__ Oftentimes, it is not that marginalized communities don't have the data, it is just that the data they do have does not conform to this mainstream definition of what data is or how it should be presented. So a study with t-tests and Pearson r's and stuff is considered "good" data, but testimonials from dozens of people directly affected by issues is considered less desirable qualitative data?

*__Re-examine comparison groups:__ Are they really necessary? Why is one group held up as the standards for all other groups? Instead, focus on individual groups' intrinsic strengths and challenges and growth.

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Data and Metrics Resources

Dialogues in Action

Chari Smith/Evaluation in Action

Vu Le's Weaponized Data blog post

Systems Change: Why Our Best Idea Is So Hard to Explain

Equitable Evaluation Initiative

Questions, Takeaways,etc