# Making Sense of Measurement and Evaluation

In recent times, measurement and evaluation have become increasingly important concepts in the social policy and human services arenas. Evidence based approaches to designing programs and services, which can have positive client and/or community results attributed to their conduct, are seen as critical and contribute to the alignment and improvement of services.

However, the terms we use in thinking about how to measure the results of our work and how to evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of what we do can be readily misunderstood and misused.

This is a quick guide, prepared by members of the Forum of Non Government Agencies (FONGA) to identify and explain many of the terms used when measurement and evaluation are talked about.

## What is Monitoring & Evaluation?

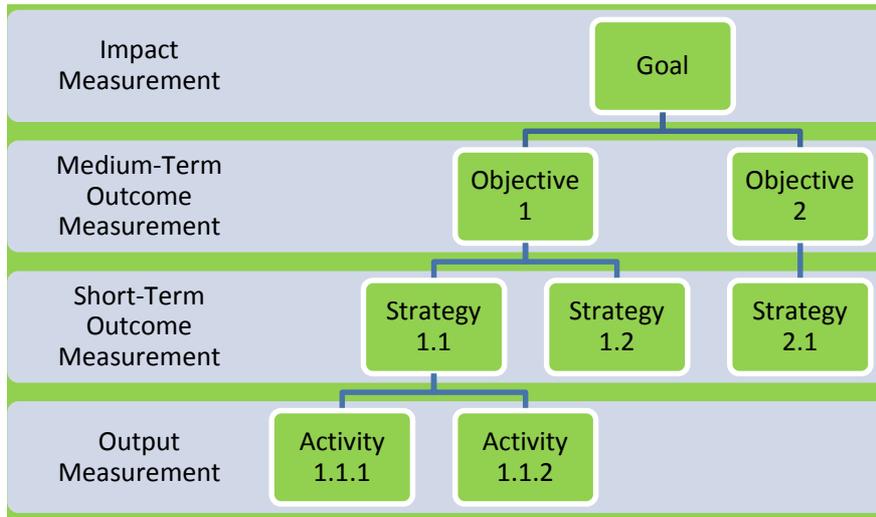| Monitoring | A continuous process of collecting and analysing project information to assist timely decision-making, ensure accountability and provide the basis for evaluation, learning and improvement. |
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| | It is used to provide management and key stakeholders with an indication of progress and achievement of objectives, measured against set indicators and expected or desired results. |
| Evaluation | Evaluation is a systematic assessment – as objective as possible – of a planned, ongoing or completed project. It aims to: |
| | • Answer specific management questions |
| | • Judge the overall value of a project |
| | • Provide lessons learned to improve future actions, planning and decision-making. |
| | Evaluations commonly seek to determine the accessibility, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, relevance, usability and utility of a project to the organisation's objectives. |
| M&E / MER / MERI | 'M&E' is a commonly used way of referring to the combination of 'monitoring (or measurement) and evaluation', which together provide the knowledge and information needed for effective project management, organisational and stakeholder learning, reporting and accountability purposes. |
| | Sometimes now referred to by governments as 'MER' (Monitoring, Evaluation & Reporting), or 'MERI'( Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting & Improvement). |

## What are the different types of evaluation?

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| **Formative Evaluation** | Generally undertaken while a program is forming (prior to implementation) or during early phases, directed at optimising a program, such as a needs assessment, developing a program logic. |
| **Process Evaluation** | Evaluation which investigates how the program is delivered, and can be used to continually improve programs by informing adjustments to delivery. |
| **Summative Evaluation** | Use to determine whether the program caused demonstrable effects on specifically-defined target outcomes. Assesses the positive and negative results of a program, as well as the intended and unintended outcomes delivered.<br><br>Generally reports when the program has been running long enough to produce results, although it should be initiated during the program design phase. |

## What to Assess?

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| **Appropriateness** | The extent to which the program objectives and priorities meet the needs of the intended clients and other stakeholders. | **Are you doing the right job?**<br>*Is the program what is actually needed?* |
| **Efficiency** | The extent to which program outputs and outcomes are achieved at reasonable cost and in reasonable time. | **Are you doing the job right?**<br>*Is it well planned and managed?*<br>*Does it meet good practice?*<br>*Are the resources used the minimum required?* |
| **Effectiveness** | The extent to which program outcomes meet program objectives. | **Is it worth it?**<br>*Is this the best use of time and money? Or is it better than doing nothing?*<br>*Did the right people get the service?*<br>*Do clients achieve the outcomes they're supposed to?* |

## Evaluation Definitions



| Impact Measurement | Goal |
| Medium-Term Outcome Measurement | Objective 1 — Objective 2 |
| Short-Term Outcome Measurement | Strategy 1.1 — Strategy 1.2 — Strategy 2.1 |
| Output Measurement | Activity 1.1.1 — Activity 1.1.2 |

**Indicator**

Information we use to stay on course:
Specific, observable and measurable characteristics, actions or conditions that demonstrate whether a desired change has happened toward the intended outcome.

Objectives drive the Strategy: *Why are we doing something?*

Strategies deliver against the Objectives: *How are we doing to do it?*

Indicators drive the data collection processes.

## Population and Performance Outcomes

Population outcomes are results for whole populations like all children, all elders or all citizens in a geographic area. They represent a condition of wellbeing for a population (or sub-population). Population indicators are measurable information which helps quantify achievement of a population outcome.

Performance measures are results for the customers or clients of a particular program, agency or service system and help inform if it delivers the desired results.

The most important reason for this distinction is the difference in "who is accountable." Performance accountability can be assigned to the managers who run the various programs, agencies or service systems. Population accountability cannot be assigned to any one individual, organisation or level of government. The whole community, public and private sectors, must share responsibility for population results.

The relationship between performance and population is a 'contributory' one, not 'cause and effect'. The work an organisation delivers to clients is its contribution to what it *and its partners* do across the community.

| Theory of Change | How we effect change |
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| | The overarching set of formal relationships presumed to exist for a defined population, the intended outcomes that are the focus of the organisation's work, and the logic model for producing the intended outcomes. A theory of change should be meaningful to stakeholders, plausible in that it conforms to common sense, doable with available resources, and measurable. |

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| Logic Model | What we do and how |
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| | The logically related parts of a program, showing the links between program objectives, program activities (efforts applied coherently and reliably over a sustained time), and expected program outcomes. A logic model makes clear who will be served, what should be accomplished, and specifically how it will be done (i.e., written cause-and-effect statements for a given program design). |

| Impact – What we aim to effect | Goal |
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| Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a program, directly or directly, intended or unintended. | A broad statement of intent. The desired long-term outcome of a program / intervention. |
| Related to the highest level of project objective – the goal – and is often assessed by the use of population-level indicators. | Outlines the need you are trying to meet and for whom. |

| Outcomes – What we wish to achieve | Objective |
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| Likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects or results of our strategies or activities. | The steps we need to take in order to achieve a goal. |
| Changes in attitude, behaviour, or condition the activity aims to, or does, achieve. | They need to be SMART, i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound. |
| | **Strategy** |
| | The particular range of tasks or activities that will be implemented to achieve objectives. |

| Outputs – What we count | Activity |
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| Products, goods and services which are produced by the program in order to achieve the short-term outcomes. | Closely linked to outputs, and generally involve a re-framing of the output into an active task in order for the output to be achieved (e.g. hold workshops, develop brochures, etc). |
| Can include workshops, brochures, meetings, etc. | |
| **Inputs – What resources are committed** | Should be worded with active verbs (e.g. engage target group, develop workshops). |
| Financial, human, and material resources used for a program, e.g. money, people, time, equipment, etc. | |

## References

Centre for Community Welfare Training (2013) *Evaluating Programs, Projects and Services.* Association of Children's Welfare Agencies, Sydney

CTA, KIT, IICD (2009) *Smart Toolkit for Evaluating Information Projects, Products and Services*. 2nd Edition, CTA/KIT/IICD, The Netherlands

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NSW Government (2013) *Evaluation Framework August 2013*. NSW Government, Sydney

RAGuide.com (n.d.) *Implementation Guide*

Venture Philanthropy Partners (2011) *Leap of Reason: Managing to Outcomes in an Era of Scarcity.* Washington D.C.

Management Development Network, United Kingdom, *Choosing and Briefing a Management Consultant or Trainer* (Specialist network in the not-for-profit sector)

The National Learning Institute: *How to select a consultant – the three imperatives*

## Resources

**Grosvenor Management Consulting**

- Program Evaluation

**Community Door**

- Planning and evaluation
    - Measuring organisational performance
    - Program and service evaluation
    - The evaluation team
    - The evaluation process
    - Logic models
    - Performance indicators
    - Collecting data
    - Reporting on evaluation
    - Service agreements
    - Organisational policy
    - Developing policy
    - Putting policy into practice
    - Useful resources

NB: The above websites were accessible on 17 August 2015.  If the links do not work search on the title of the document or go directly to the organisation's website.