Evaluation Process Guidelines

The way that you evaluate your mentoring program will depend on a wide range of factors: funding available for evaluation purposes; reporting requirements of funders; nature and length of the program; type of programming. Regardless, including evaluative thinking and processes from the outset will strengthen your activities and your capacity to credibly communicate the difference your program is making. Below are a set of high level guidelines to help you begin to create an evaluation plan. The other Step 13 tool - Sample Logic Model and Data Collection Framework will help you to put this plan into action.

Create a logic model

Bring your partners together to discuss what it is you are trying to achieve in your program (short-term **outputs** and medium to long-term **outcomes**); how you hope to achieves these (**activities**); what resources are required (**inputs**); and the **need** you are trying to address.

Need – the community need should have been identified as part of your needs assessment. Summarize this need on the left hand side of the logic model.

Inputs – list all of the human, financial, in-kind and infrastructure resources that are being put into the program. These would be the resources that are actually available. This list can be amended as additional resources come into the program. For example, when you are awarded a funding grant or provided with additional space or staff to run the program.

Activities – list all of the things that go on in the program – both supports and activities. This includes recruitment, screening, training and program activities and events.

Outputs – these are the things that happen as a direct result of program activities. These changes take place during the program timeframe and are usually things like training program completed, mentor and mentee are meeting regularly, and mentor is providing appropriate support to mentee(s). Output level indicators (see below) would be attendance levels at training, number of times mentor and mentee meet, level of satisfaction with matches, level of satisfaction with activities.

Outcomes – these are the longer term benefits for participants and the community as a result of being part of the mentoring relationship. These changes may be experienced within the life of the program or the match but may also take longer to occur and are expected to be sustained beyond the program or match. Outcomes include such things as youth succeeds academically; youth makes healthier choices; and, youth has an improved sense of self. Outcome level indicators could include grades and attendance levels at school, change in drug or alcohol use, change in family and/or peer relationships.

These are the basic elements of a program logic model. Use the Sample Logic Model attached to step 13 to help you and your partners work through this process. You may also want to consider bringing in a consultant with evaluation experience to help facilitate the development of the logic model. Depending on the size and complexity of your program, a good evaluator should be able to help you build a logic model in a half day session with your partners.

Build a data collection framework

Once you have identified your output and outcomes, you need to identify those things that tell you that you are making progress. These are called indicators. The Sample Data Collection Framework attached in Step 13 provides examples of indicators of changes that may occur as a result of participation in a mentoring program. You and your team will have to identify indicators that are specific to your program and that you have the resources to gather information about. Choose one, maybe two, indicators per outcome. Create a schedule for how often you will collect indicator information and identify who is responsible to gather this information.

Identify developmental or process questions that you need to pay attention to

In new and innovative programs it is important to not only pay attention to your outcomes but also to program processes as these unfold. Program partners should identify the key processes that support the program that they need to monitor so they can identify challenges/issues/bottlenecks as these emerge. This is why evaluation work needs to start at the beginning of the program rather than at the end. The evaluation needs to support accountability and learning. By identifying and monitoring key processes (such as recruitment, training, supervision, collaboration, and community engagement, etc.) partners can problem solve and strengthen the program as it unfolds.

Create an evaluation plan

The logic model, the data collection framework and the developmental/process questions can be rolled up into a simple evaluation plan that explains the purpose of your evaluation efforts, the methods and some sort of reporting framework that aligns with funding requirements or reporting to an advisory or steering committee.