



Performance Measurement

September 21, 2011

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Session Overview

- ▶ Theories of Change
 - ▶ Performance Measurement
 - ▶ Assessing Performance Measure Quality
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What is a Theory of Change?

- ▶ A theory of change:
 - Looks at cause and effect relationships
 - Identifies specific interventions to achieve the desired result
 - Uses evidence to articulate assumptions
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Theory of Change

- ▶ **PROBLEM:** The identified community need
 - ▶ **INTERVENTION:** The activities of members and community volunteers supported by AmeriCorps members
 - ▶ **OUTCOME:** The change that occurs because of the intervention
 - ▶ **EVIDENCE:** Why you believe a certain set of actions (the intervention) will lead to the intended outcome
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In Other Words

If the INTERVENTION (X) is delivered at a certain dosage, then the expected OUTCOME (Y) will happen.

$$X \rightarrow Y$$

An Example From Science

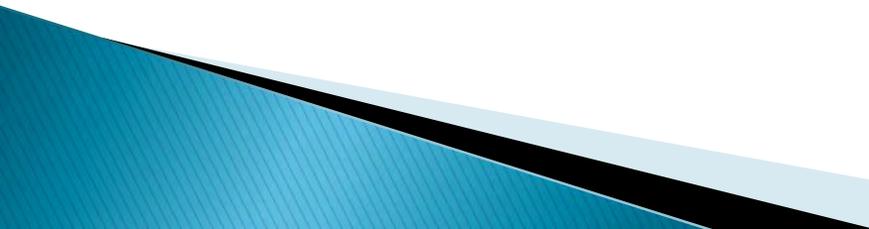
I have strep throat (PROBLEM).
If I take antibiotics (INTERVENTION)...
then I will get better (OUTCOME).

Antibiotics → I get better.
 $X \rightarrow Y$

Is This Always True?

- ▶ If I take penicillin, I will get better.
 - ▶ If I take a different antibiotic, will I get better?
 - ▶ Some interventions (antibiotics) work better than others. Some don't work at all.
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How Do I Know?

- ▶ How do I know which antibiotic is best?
 - ▶ Look at the evidence. There is research that shows which antibiotic is likely to get the best result.
 - ▶ Consider constraints that may preclude the ideal intervention. (Penicillin may be too expensive.)
 - ▶ If I can't have the most promising intervention, I need to understand the tradeoffs.
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What Evidence Do We Need?

Two types of evidence are required:

1. Data that documents the community need
 2. Data that documents why you think your intervention (using AmeriCorps members and community volunteers) will achieve the intended outcome.
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What is “Evidence”?

- ▶ Data that demonstrates that the proposed intervention is likely to solve the identified problem.

For example: Evidence says that x hours of tutoring leads to academic outcomes...so the intervention features x hours of AmeriCorps members tutoring a 3rd grader so that the 3rd grader will meet grade level standards.

Data that documents why

The evidence basis for an intervention may include:

- past performance measurement data;
 - results from a program evaluation;
 - research studies that document the outcomes of similar programs; and
 - Evaluations that document outcomes of similar programs.
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Evidence Continuum

Preliminary → Moderate → Strong



Challenges Linking Evidence to the Intervention

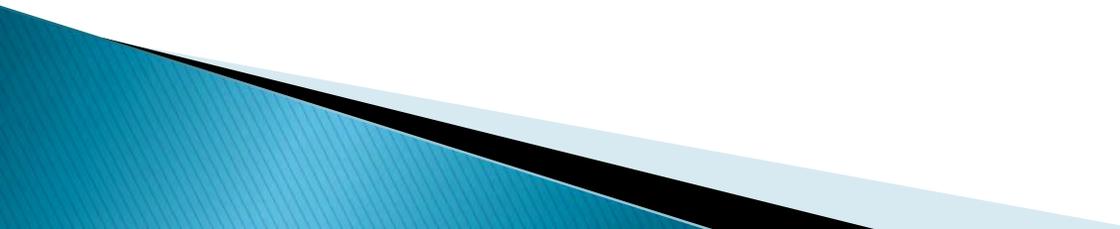
- ▶ Variance in executing the ideal program intervention
 - ▶ Little evidence to support your intervention
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Example: MN Reading Corps

PROBLEM: Children at risk of failing third grade reading exam

INTERVENTION: Individualized tutoring on five “building block” literacy skills

OUTCOMES: Students master skills, pass reading exam



What is Performance Measurement?

Performance measurement:

is the process of regularly measuring the amount of work done by your program and the outcomes of this work on your program beneficiaries.

Measuring Change: Two Ways

1. Performance Measurement

- Captures near term changes

2. Evaluation

- Captures lasting changes and attempts to demonstrate cause and effect between intervention and outcome

Common Elements

Performance Measurement

Evaluation

Systematic collection of data and information about:

- What took place
- What outputs were generated
- What near term outcomes were generated

Differences

Performance Measurement	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tracks outputs and outcomes on a regular, ongoing basis• Does not show causality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seeks to show causality• Longer term focus• Uses the most rigorous methodology that is right for the program (often quasi-experimental design)

Relation to Theory of Change

The most important difference:

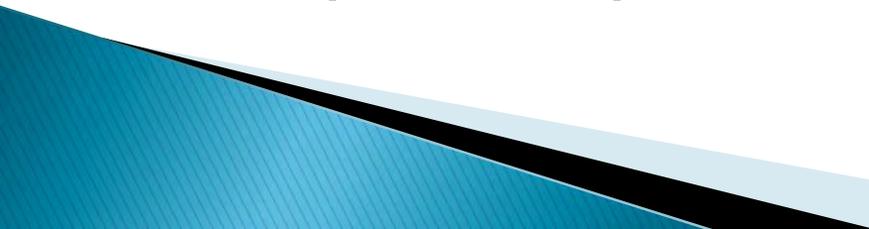
Evaluation seeks to “prove” the theory of change ($X \rightarrow Y$). Performance measurement does not.

Causality vs. Outcomes

- ▶ Performance measurement can show the outcome (a change occurred) but not causality (the change occurred because of the intervention)
 - ▶ Performance measurement does not seek to “prove” a theory of change but can provide evidence that informs your theory
 - ▶ Performance measurement data can inform evaluation efforts
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Example: Minnesota Reading Corps

Performance Measurement:

- ▶ Individual benchmark assessments on Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) three times/year
 - ▶ State Reading Exam – Number of students who graduate from the Minnesota Reading Corps who pass state reading exam
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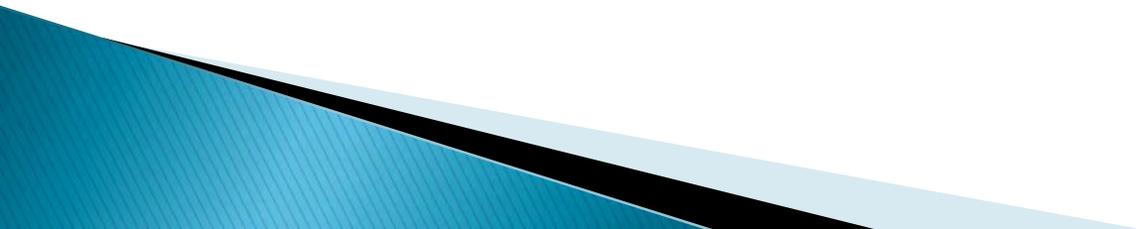
Example: Minnesota Reading Corps

Evaluation:

- ▶ Matched sample research project in Minneapolis School District—Reading Corps pre-school participants scored significantly higher in phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, and total literacy than children in matched comparison group entering kindergarten
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Why Do Performance Measures...?

If performance measurement doesn't prove that my intervention worked, then why do it?



Evidence and Performance Measurement

- ▶ If the evidence for an intervention is **strong**, PM helps show the program is on track.
 - ▶ If the evidence basis is **weak or not well-defined**, PM can provide **evidence** that a change occurred
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Why Performance Measurement?

- ▶ Improve performance
 - ▶ Inform decision making
 - ▶ Demonstrate accountability (internally and externally)
 - ▶ Justify continued funding
 - ▶ Enhance customer service
 - ▶ Improve quality of services
 - ▶ Set targets for future performance
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Challenges of Performance Measurement

- ▶ Measuring prevention or long-term outcomes
 - ▶ Time
 - ▶ Cost
 - ▶ Establishing reasonable targets
 - ▶ Brief service interventions
 - ▶ Attributing impact to the intervention
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Outputs

Counts of the amount of service that members or volunteers have completed.

They **do not** provide information on benefits to or other changes in the lives of members and/or beneficiaries.

Sample Outputs

- ▶ Number of students who complete participation in an AmeriCorps education program
 - ▶ Number of veterans engaged in service opportunities
 - ▶ Number of individuals receiving support, services, education and/or referrals to alleviate long-term hunger
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Outcomes

Outcomes specify changes that have occurred in the lives of members and/or beneficiaries.

They should be:

- ▶ Realistic
 - ▶ Measurable during grant period
 - ▶ Relevant to theory of change
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Outcomes—ABCs

Outcomes measure changes in:

Attitude

Behavior

Condition

Most programs should aim to measure a quantifiable change in behavior or condition

CNCS Expectations

Applicants are required to create at least one aligned performance measure to capture the **output and outcome** of their primary service activity.

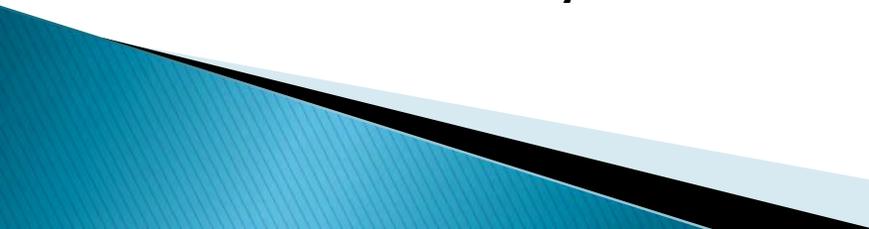
NOTE: Applicants may create additional performance measures provided that they capture significant program outcomes.

Aligned Performance Measures

An aligned performance measure has two components:

- Output
- Outcome

Alignment refers to whether:

- the outcome is logical and reasonable given your intervention and output(s); and
 - the output and outcome measure the same beneficiary.
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Assessing Performance Measures



AmeriCorps Application Criteria

Applicants must describe the following elements:

- (1) The problem(s) identified (Need)
 - (2) The actions that will be carried out by AmeriCorps members and community volunteers (Evidence-Based Intervention)
 - (3) The ways in which AmeriCorps members are particularly well-suited to deliver the solution (Value Added by AmeriCorps)
 - (4) The anticipated outcomes (Outcomes)
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PM Assessment Criteria

- ▶ Measures align with the need, activities and outcomes (theory of change) described in the narrative
 - ▶ Outputs and outcomes are correctly aligned
 - ▶ Measures utilize rigorous data collection methodologies to demonstrate significant outcomes
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Alignment with Theory of Change

- ▶ Choose an intervention that will lead to the specific desired outcomes.
 - ▶ Choose outcomes that can measure the intervention.
 - ▶ **For example:** Many approaches exist to address low academic performance. The intervention you choose may depend on the outcome you want.
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Aligned or Not?

Intervention: After-school enrichment program

Outcome: Improved academic performance in reading

Aligned or Not?

Intervention: Tutoring program focused on helping kindergarten students master the most critical emergent literacy skills

Outcome: Improved academic performance in reading

Aligned or Not?

Intervention: Homework help program focusing on multiple subjects

Outcome: Improved academic performance in reading

Alignment: Intervention & Outcome

- ▶ Need a clear link between:
 - the intervention (design, frequency, and intensity);
and
 - the specific change (outcome) that is likely to occur as a result of the intervention.
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Lack of Alignment

INTERVENTION: AmeriCorps members lead classes to educate smokers about the health risks associated with smoking.

OUTCOME: Individuals stop smoking.

Alignment Issue:

Simply telling people that smoking is bad for them may not help them to quit.

Lack of Alignment

INTERVENTION: Members provide financial literacy trainings to economically disadvantaged adults.

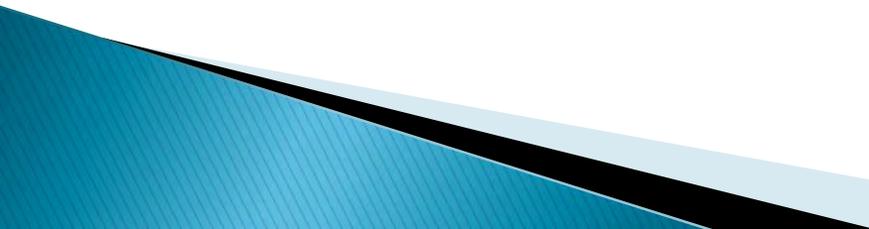
OUTCOME: Economically disadvantaged adults will open savings accounts after receiving financial literacy training.

Alignment Issue:

If beneficiaries do not have enough money to meet their basic needs, a savings account may not be realistic.



Alignment of Outputs / Outcomes

1. National measures must be aligned as directed in CNCS guidance
 2. Aligned measure includes output and outcome for primary service activity
 3. Outcomes likely to result from outputs
 4. Outputs and outcomes measure the same population
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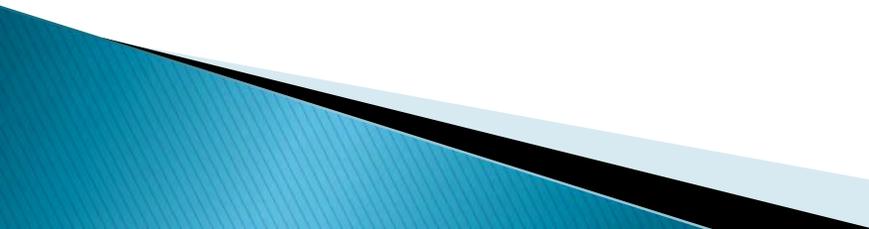
Capturing Change

When assessing whether an outcome captures a significant change, it is helpful to ask:

- So what?
- Is this change worth measuring?

AmeriCorps PM Tool

AmeriCorps State and National Performance Measurement Assessment Checklist:

- Alignment with theory of change
 - Alignment of outputs and outcomes
 - Quality (Rigorous, worth measuring)
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National Performance Measures

- You are strongly encouraged to utilize the national performance measures when they fit your program model
 - Refer to the 2017 AmeriCorps NOFO and the National Performance Measures Instructions for more information
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