2.3 Creating an Evaluation Report

Description:

This tool outlines steps to be taken when preparing an evaluation report and provides content suggestions.

How it can be used:

Program evaluations are effective methods of measuring whether or not program objectives are met. Many organizations use performance measures to help manage programs and communicate their impact.

An evaluation report is the means by which your program's progress and outcomes are described. A well-prepared evaluation report can be used to justify continued funding, build proposals for further resources, and communicate to your community and leadership the value of your program. Follow the steps below to create a well-planned and effective evaluation report.

1. Start with your PLAN.

Know why you are creating the evaluation report.

There are four main reasons for creating an evaluation report:
- To demonstrate how the program is progressing; this can be done at any stage in the program.
- To show funders what is being accomplished to justify funding.
- To share the impact that the program has had on your community.
- To reinforce the value of the program to staff.

Know the type of evaluation.

Although there are three main types of evaluation, (Formative, Summative or Outcome, and Process) two are completed after the program has begun.

O*utcome evaluation* is done at the conclusion of a program. It answers questions like:
- Have we reached our goals?
- Should we continue the program, modify it or end it?

P*rocess evaluation* is completed during the program to help ongoing decision-making. It focuses mainly on the process and asks questions like:
- What aspects of the program are working well? Why?
- What aspects of the program could be improved? How?

The type of evaluation on which you are reporting will affect the type of information you collect and the style of report you create.

2. Take time to PREPARE.

Compile the information you will need.
Ensure that you have enough and the right type of information to create a useful report. Compile the following to assist you in reporting on your original objectives:

- the program performance measures
- a copy of the evaluation plan
- all evaluation instruments (e.g., surveys and questionnaires)
- the record of accomplishments over the period (e.g., number of individuals served)
- the data and results in an easy-to-reference format (e.g., in a table)
- stories or statements from clients and stakeholders

Create your Table of Contents.

The main elements that are included in an evaluation report are:
- Summary
- Introduction
- Goals and Objectives
- Evaluation Questions and Method
- Results and Conclusions
- Recommendations
- Appendices

Know your audience.

Before creating the report, it is important to know who the primary audience is and how the report will be used. For example, is the report developed mainly for your funders, your Band leaders, or your Board of Directors? This information will help you decide how much detail to include, what level of language to use, and what format will be best. Always make the report easy to understand, avoid jargon and be sure to spell out acronyms.

3. Now you are ready to WRITE.

Develop your content.

The **summary** gives an overview of the report: key facts and information. Write the summary last, after the entire report is prepared.

The **introduction** briefly describes the program and outlines its goals and objectives. Include evaluation objectives, so they can be referenced throughout the report.

Describe the **methodology** used in the evaluation including the procedures and instruments (e.g., surveys) used to gather information. Refer to your evaluation plan to describe how you measured your desired result. Describe (without identifiers) who completed each instrument.

What quantitative information (statistics) did you find? What qualitative information did you find? Are there anecdotes or stories of real life successes you can include? These can be powerful examples of the impact of a program. Present the **results** as objectively as possible. Describe the program activities, the people served and the impact of the activities related to your performance measures. Describe your desired result and indicators used to measure the desired result.

Establish **conclusions** by synthesizing the results and interpreting their meaning. Did the program meet the objectives? How does this program address an existing need? What does this convey about the program's success?

End the report with **recommendations** for the future. Include ideas for program improvements or any next steps. Conclusions may deal with the process (how things are going in the program)

and/or with the outcome (to what extent were the expected results or program objectives achieved).

Any other information may be placed in the **appendices** (e.g., a copy of the questionnaire used to gather information).

4. Make sure to REVIEW.

Confirm that all key questions are answered in the report.

Achieving your performance measures:
- Does the report describe your activities?
- Does the report describe the beneficiaries or clients of your program?
- Does the report describe the number of people served?
- Does the report describe the desired results of the program?
- Does the report describe the indicators you used to measure the desired result?

Evaluation activities:
- Does the report describe how you measured the desired result?
- Does the report describe who completed the instrument(s)? Ensure there are no identifiers.

Relevant evaluation data:
- Does the report describe the results of the analysis of the evaluation data?
- Does the report describe stories that illustrate the statistics or qualitative information?
- Does the report align the results of the evaluation with program performance measures?
- Does the report state ideas for improvement or any next steps?