Jewels for Nonprofits

As nonprofit leaders we are often asked the question, "how do you know if what we are doing is effective?". If you are like so many of us, we take a long slow sigh before responding with "because our clients tell us so". Today, we need to be prepared to provide data that include anecdotal evidence, numbers served and much more. This month Katie Kramer of The Bridging Group shares her expert opinion on the topic.

If you have a question or would be interested in sharing your organization's stories in our publication please email Summer N. Jackson at legacyta2016@gmail.com.

Take care,
Carol F. Burton, LMSW

Carol F. Burton

JEWELS OF THE MONTH

Roots Community Health Center

Roots was founded to address the growing need for accessible, culturally appropriate, community-responsive, comprehensive health care in Oakland, California and aims to eliminate wide health disparities and improve health outcomes for uninsured and low-income residents. Roots implements its programs and services while honoring the "roots" of culture, heritage, and tradition; by providing unprecedented access to services; by remaining community-aware and community-responsive; and by establishing partnerships to ensure a more efficient continuum of care in Oakland.

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EFFECTIVE EVALUATION STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION

By Katie Kramer, MSW, MPH, Co-Founder and CEO of Corrections, Communities and Families for The Bridging Group and Affiliated Consultant for the Jeweld Legacy Group CCF TA Consultant Team

Developing a solid evaluation plan can help a community-based organization to document and disseminate its successful work. In turn, this information can help to strengthen the organization's position with funders, community stakeholders and their own clientele. Evaluation processes can also help agencies to gather internal information to better inform how to adapt programs to fit the needs of their clientele. The following is a brief overview of the types of evaluation activities that a community-based organization may wish to engage in within their agency.

Formative Evaluation

Formative evaluation is usually completed before a program is launched. This type of evaluation involves collecting information (or 'data') from a wide range of stakeholders about the needs of a particular client population and aspects of successful programs and services. This information may be collected through community needs assessments, individual interviews or focus groups. Formative evaluation may also include involving stakeholders in the review of program procedures and practices for readability, clarity, or cultural competency. The information collected through formative evaluation helps an agency to design an effective program or service delivery system.

Process Evaluation

Process evaluation is usually completed *throughout* the duration of a program. This type of evaluation involves collecting information (or 'data') that describes the characteristics of the people served, types of services provided, and the resources used

to deliver these services. Examples of information collected may include how many sessions were completed with a program participant, how many people were served, what resources were used, and what additional resources are needed.

Process evaluation may also include collecting information to describe how the program was delivered and if there were differences between the intended population and the actual population served. Process evaluation looks systematically at how the program was delivered overall versus its original design. This type of measurement is called fidelity – that is, was the program delivered according to the original program design or was the program tailored or adapted in anyway? Measuring fidelity can also include examining how the program was implemented from one staff to another or from one client to another. For example, does one staff routinely meet with clients for three 30 minute sessions while another staff meets with clients for one 60 minute session. How does each of these service delivery models compare to the original design of the program? Does there seem to be any difference in outcomes for clients who have

Outcome Evaluation

Outcome evaluation is also usually completed *throughout* the duration of a program but only *after* a full cycle of a program plan has been delivered. This type of evaluation involves collecting information (or 'data') about program participants before and after a program is completed to evaluate if there was any change for the participant. Outcome evaluation answers the question: Did the expected outcome occur? For example, were there any changes in the participants' behaviors, knowledge or skills?

Outcome evaluation is most effective when an agency develops SMART (specific, measurable, appropriate, realistic, time-phased) outcome objectives for its program. With SMART objectives in place, an agency can develop tools and systems to monitor their progress in meeting these objectives throughout the course of program delivery.

Putting together and implementing a solid evaluation plan can take valuable time and resources for a community-based organization. But the benefits are well worth it when an agency has the information it needs to engage in smart and data driven program and agency decision-making. It also provides extremely valuable information to help the agency promote its success that can lead to additional resources for the agency to sustain or expand on this success.