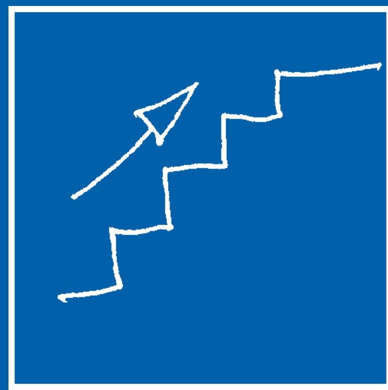
Texas Workforce Commission Youth Program Initiative



# Evaluate It! From Policy to Practice to Performance


Training Packet Produced By School & Main Institute

One of twelve training packets created for Texas Workforce Board regions as part of the Texas Workforce Commission Youth Program Initiative.

1. Powerful Partnerships
2. Getting Your Youth Advisory Group From Here to There
3. You and Youth in the Middle: Effective Case Management
4. Employer Engagement
5. Youth at Work: Making the Most of Work-Based Learning
6. Youth Investment in Rural Areas
7. Windows on the Workplace: Mentoring, Youth, and WIA
8. Community Resource Mapping: Knowing Your Youth Services Landscape
9. Letting Numbers Guide: Labor Market Information and Youth Services
10. Engaging Out-of-School Youth
11. Building Your Year-Round Youth System
12. Evaluate It!: From Policy to Practice to Performance

You may download additional copies of this packet or any in the series from the Board & Network Partners area of the Texas Workforce Commission website: www.twc.state.tx.us/customers/bnp/bnp.html.


Produced by School & Main Institute, Boston, MA
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# Evaluate It!: From Policy to Practice to Performance

## Training Goals

- Understand evaluation methods and how to use them to create a performance management system for your youth services effort.
- Learn how to design a practical formative evaluation strategy.

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# Setting the Scene: Evaluation and WIA Youth Services

No doubt you've noticed – especially if you work in the field of youth services – an exponential increase in the attention paid to results-driven decision-making and evaluation. Words like "standards" and "outcomes" and "performance indicators" weren't part of our day-to-day programmatic language fifteen years ago. They certainly are now. Policymakers and funding sources want their efforts and money to generate results, not more activity for activity's sake. As if communities, programs, and people on the front line didn't care about results...

The truth is that program designers and frontline service staff usually care deeply about results. It is equally true that many programs are designed without a thoughtful evaluation strategy. Why? Perhaps because evaluation seems like such a lofty, scientific pursuit, one best done by professionals – usually at a cost too high for most resource-strapped services to afford. Or perhaps it's because evaluation methods can seem so heavy-handed, intrusive, or time-consuming. More paperwork and surveys, less service – and no committed youth worker wants that.

As part of WIA, you are required to track and report a set of youth educational and workforce outcomes:

## WIA Youth Performance Indicators

- Attainment of basic literacy and math skills
- Attainment of secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent
- Placement and retention in post-secondary or advanced training, military service or a qualified apprenticeship; credential attainment
- Employment placement
- Employment retention
- Earning gains
- Customer – youth and employer – satisfaction

You may sit on a workforce board or youth advisory group. You may be a provider. Or you may be an employer serving as a mentor for youth. No matter where you sit, these indicators represent your bottom line responsibility.

When you see indicators like WIA youth performance indicators, you can almost see the form a case manager might use to keep track of them. However, that's only one part of the evaluation equation. You're not just evaluating youth, you're evaluating programs – and a multi-agency regional effort. And evaluation isn't a one-shot deal: it's an ongoing cycle.

### A good evaluation strategy helps you:

- Build in natural spot-checks
- Review, fine-tune and/or overhaul service strategies; tighten program models
- Develop staff capacity; identify pockets of expertise, as well as additional professional development needs
- Incorporate program (adult!) performance standards, self-assessment, and accountability mechanisms
- Make wiser resource allocation decisions
- Create stronger marketing and public relations messages
- Attract new partners and funding sources

Designing a good evaluation strategy to run parallel with your youth services initiative need not be overly complex, scientific, or expensive. You do need to know a few basic design principles and steps so that you target your energy effectively. Your goal is to get the most information with the least amount of work, questions, and forms!

This packet provides a practical look at evaluation and how, with simple actions, you can incorporate a strong evaluation component across regional and program-level WIA efforts.

# Evaluation Crash Course

## Formative evaluation...the missing link.

Evaluation is the organized collection and analysis of information in order to determine the value, cost, or effectiveness of something or to see if specific properties are present. It's the tool you use to answer a few fundamental questions:

- What do we need to achieve?
- How do we know if we're on track?
- What did we actually achieve?
- How or why did we achieve it (what caused it)?
- Is it valuable?
- How much did it cost us to do it?

Different evaluation models and methods allow you to dig more deeply into each of these questions. Here's a quick look at a few aspects of formal evaluation that you should understand before you start designing.

### Types of Evaluation

While there are many types of evaluation, they generally all fall into one of two categories:

#### Formative evaluation
#### How are we doing?

**Needs/assets or diagnostic assesment**
What gaps or deficiencies do we need to address? What strengths or assets do we have?

**Goals-based evaluation**
What goals or objectives do we currently have on our plate and are we achieving them?

**Process, methods, or implementation evaluation**
What are we doing? How do elements of what we do contribute to overall results? What procedures work or don't and why? Is what we're doing replicable or scalable?

#### Summative evaluation
#### How did we do?

**Outcomes evaluation**
What effect are we having (short-term or long-term)? Are we delivering the results we want and/or that matter to our clients?

**Impact evaluation**
Did we have an impact on larger community processes and/or youth behavior?

**Cost effectiveness evaluation**
What did it cost to produce the results we got? Did we operate efficiently? In a way that is sustainable?

WIA performance indicators are summative measures – outcomes – and in Texas, the TWIST system helps you track them. There is no equivalent system or tool to track formative measures. Yet formative measures are the link between policy, practice and performance. They're the (usually) missing link. With summative measures, what's done is done. With formative measures, you discover timely and manageable adjustments that can have a substantial impact on performance. The classic metaphor is the steamship: one slight adjustment of the tiller and you're steaming off to a new port.

### Levels of Evaluation

When you think evaluation, you also need to think about evaluation measures at multiple levels:

- Person/Role
- Procedure, Project, or Function
- Program
- Organization
- System

Many evaluations target the programmatic level. Ideally, though, you want evaluation methods at multiple levels – and you want them to align up and down the levels. If you expect something at a programmatic level, what measures at the role and project levels might show your programmatic outcomes will be met?

## Types of Measures

No evaluation course or tutorial would be complete without mentioning two important measures:

### Quantitative

**What can we quantify? Can we count a number, amount, or frequency?**

### Qualitative

**What can we observe, describe, or quote?**

Both types have pros and cons. While it's tempting to view quantitative data as more objective and scientific, and qualitative more subjective, dependent on circumstances and interpretation, neither is true. You can collect the wrong number, interpret it incorrectly, or even misrepresent it. And interviews, a primarily qualitative method, can provide very objective information, if you design and do them well.

Good evaluators go after data that best answers the question, "what am I trying to measure?" and use *triangulation* – combining both methods – to balance their respective strengths and weaknesses.

## Evaluation Designs

Evaluation designs can be very sophisticated. Take the field of medical evaluation and testing: double-blind studies, random sampling, control and experimental groups, placebos...

For practical reasons, you need to take a much simpler tack. However, you're still looking for differences and signs of change, and there are two basic designs you use to reveal that information:

### Comparative designs

How does one group compare with another? A comparative evaluation might look at what happens when two similar groups receive different program support. Or, it might look at what happens when two different groups (age, ethnic/racial background, etc.) receive the same support.

### Before and after designs

What did measures look like before the program or services? What did they look like afterwards? Before and after (or pre and post) designs are very common in youth organizations. They're simpler but depend entirely on your ability to get a good baseline view (in other words, you need to plan ahead!).

# Designing Your Evaluation Strategy

USE THESE SIX STEPS TO PLAN AND IMPLEMENT YOUR YOUTH SERVICES EVALUATION STRATEGY:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Step One:* | Assess Your Base |
| *Step Two:* | Strategize and Prioritize |
| *Step Three:* | Design and Schedule |
| *Step Four:* | Collect and Analyze |
| *Step Five:* | Report, React and Act |

## STEP ONE: ASSESS YOUR BASE

In the end, many of the evaluation methods and questions you identify can easily be grafted into tools and procedures you already have in place. Why reinvent the wheel? Put a priority on maximizing opportunities that already exist. So, before you do anything, take a quick inventory:

### What are your current evaluation "assets"?

TOOLS & TOUCHPOINTS
What tools do you and/or providers use to conduct day-to-day business? When and how do you "touch" or communicate with people and/or organizations? An RFP? A customer survey? An end-of-year evaluation process? A job evaluation? Meetings? A monthly newsletter? Regular site visits? Case management systems?

EXISTING EVALUATION PROCESSES – POTENTIAL FOR COLLABORATION
In WIA's multi-agency, multi-service environment, you can bet that you are not the only one chasing data! In fact, some data – like skill attainment or earnings gains – is collected by other organizations. What do provider organization or partners already evaluate, when, and how? Can the data be shared or will you need formal record or information-sharing agreements?

EVALUATION EXPERTISE
Do you have anyone – a partner, students in a local college course – with time and interest to give to youth program evaluation?

## STEP TWO: STRATEGIZE AND PRIORITIZE

With a better sense of your evaluation environment, you can now start outlining your basic strategy. At this stage, you want to answer these three essential questions:

- What are you trying to evaluate and why?
- What, exactly, are you trying to measure?
- To whom will you report? For what purpose?

Go back and look at the types and levels of evaluation (p. 4). Because summative measures are a given for WIA programs, focus on your formative evaluation strategy. Say aloud over and over: "We can't evaluate everything! We don't need to evaluate everything." Your goal is to identify a totally manageable (limited!) set of critical measures – things you most need to know – not every measure possible. Think of this set of measures as your program management dashboard – your fuel gauge, speedometer, and oil light.

Questions 1 and 2 are actually sneaky little test questions. Don't breeze through them! Solid answers depend on whether or not you've articulated program outcomes in an evaluation-friendly way. That is, are you even ready to evaluate? Have you clearly articulated what the results you want really look like – in a concrete and measurable way?

## take action! evaluation assets

Don't start from scratch! Take a quick inventory of procedures and tools already in place that could support your evaluation process or methods. Check for pockets of evaluation expertise in your youth network. For example, case managers are really part manager, part assessor and evaluator (as are mentors, job supervisors, etc.)

## take action! evaluation strategy

Review the types of evaluation. Make sure you know what you want to evaluate and why. Identify a manageable set of measures – primarily formative measures – that will give you the MOST important information you need to know whether or not you're on track to impact WIA youth indicators.

# The most valuable information with the fewest questions...

Example:
You want young people to be "financially literate." With just that to go on, it would be hard to know when or how youth would qualify. A more evaluation-friendly version of this objective might be: financially literate - able to manage a savings and checking account, prepare a budget, manage monthly bill payments, and complete tax forms. Now you have behaviors you can observe and measure.

At times, you may also need to break evaluation needs down, based on particular issues or concerns. For example, are services effective for different groups – younger vs. older youth, males vs. females, by race/ethnicity, in-school vs. out-of-school youth?

Many human service and youth programs, particularly those that receive foundation funding, use a **'program logic model'** approach as the foundation for evaluation. A logic model is a flowchart or diagram that shows the relationships between – the logic that connects – the needs your program hopes to address, the resources you put into your program ("inputs" like staff or money), the activities or components they support and their direct results (outputs), and the overall outcomes and impact you want.

Logic models force you to tie activities to an unambiguous set of results – or if you can't, to be rid of the activities. As an evaluation tool, they help you focus on the most important or most feasible aspects of your effort to track and evaluate.

## Step Three: Design and Schedule

After you've prioritized evaluation needs, you can turn to design. As you detail the specific tools, tactics, and timelines, pay attention to these essential questions:

- **Which methods will be accepted as credible?**
- **When and how will you collect the information you need? Who will be involved?**
- **What tools and procedures – existing or new – will you use?**
- **How realistic are your evaluation plans (can you really pull them off)?**

Most programs rely on a standard set of data collection methods:

- Surveys or questionnaires
- Program or agency records – attendance, participation, scores, grades
- Tests and other assessment
- Interviews
- Testimonials
- Focus groups
- Document, portfolio, or journal reviews
- Observation notes and ratings
- Case studies
- Site visits

You'll likely use a combination of methods and tools. Make selections based on both practical and tactical considerations. For example, face-to-face interviews not only help you gather data, but they can also help you build key relationships and market (more so than a survey might). Make sure key people review important tools and questions – getting buy-in is an important part of your design process.

Of course, the true science of evaluation lies in the specific questions you ask. Most youth program evaluations rely heavily on qualitative, even anecdotal feedback. As you design, give yourself the "quantify it" challenge: list methods you want to use and/or questions you'd like to ask, and then give the list a second pass. For each item, ask:

### What could we count or measure here?

## take action!
### evaluation design

Outline the details of your data collection scheme. Be practical and tactical! What methods will give you good qualitative and quantitative information? Which methods help further other aspects of your work? Where can you graft your methods into existing tools and processes? Who are your best data sources and collection resources?

Example:
You've determined that the "strength of job supervisor-youth relationships" is a key indicator for job retention. You might ask youth and supervisors to rate their satisfaction with the relationship. Satisfaction is a qualitative measure, that is to say, a bit "soft." How else might you measure "strength?" You could look at more quantitative behaviors that indicate strength – i.e., ask them to identify the number of meetings they have together. Add "type" of meetings held and you have a good quantitative-qualitative data combination.

An equally important design question is WHO should collect the data from WHOM? Case managers, youth coaches and youth clients themselves are the obvious data collection points. To count on them solely, however, is to overwhelm them and undermine your strategy.

The practice of 360° evaluation has swept through business settings like a wave in recent years. The idea is that, come employee performance evaluation time, you receive an evaluation from your direct supervisor AND from colleagues who work alongside you, under you, above you, or even outside your organization (suppliers, customers, etc.).

With WIA youth services, you have a wide circle of data sources and resources:

- Job supervisors, worksite colleagues, and mentors
- Youth program staff and administrators
- Volunteers
- Teachers or educational staff
- Youth family members
- Youth peers
- People who benefited from a young person's project or job
- Referral sources; staff from partner organizations

## Step Four: Collect & Analyze

Time to implement. At this stage, pay attention to these essential questions:

- What leadership support do you need?
- What orientation might help people effectively collect or report information?
- Who should review and analyze information and/or endorse findings and conclusions?

Good evaluation doesn't happen in a vacuum. You need leadership support – leaders who vocally and visibly promote the importance of measures you've identified and mechanisms for collecting information. What are practical things organizational leaders can do?

- Formally endorse outcomes and evaluation goals
- Sign letters that accompany surveys
- Participate – lead a focus group or help conduct interviews
- Make sure that staff are evaluated on their evaluation practices
- Schedule an Action Meeting, time for staff to review evaluation results and identify how they will be used to impact service delivery and resource decisions.

At the same time, make sure that your implementers or "evaluators" are prepared – be they formal observers, interviewers, focus group facilitators or regular staff charged with collecting information. Many times, instructions or a short orientation will do the trick. Other times, you may need to do a few dry runs and tests to make sure evaluation tools, staff, and systems are good to go.

## take action!
### collection & analysis

Prepare the ground for "harvesting" data. Identify 2 or 3 concrete things leaders can do to show visible support for your evaluation strategy. Make sure evaluators are oriented and ready to collect information. Make data review and analysis a collaborative affair.

# Reaction, action, and traction.

Be ready with the data management tools and people you need to organize data as it comes in. Young people in your program or from another area program can be incredibly helpful, particularly at this stage – find volunteers, stipend or hire them to help you.

Finally, manage the review and analysis process. Almost every evaluation comes back with mixed results – good news and bad news, great moments and things that need work. Some feedback will be general; some highly personal information that can easily be tied or attributed to a particular person. You can spin findings in many ways. And evaluation can and has been used in very Machiavellian ways (to clear out dead wood or political enemies!).

For all of these reasons, it's vitally important that you identify a team of people who can review and analyze evaluation data collaboratively. Create a small review team that represents different constituents in and associated with your organization. Focus the team on objectively examining and summarizing data **first** – not interpreting findings and drawing conclusions. Ask team members to look for:

- Patterns
- Clear examples of positive, negative, or no change
- Interesting or surprising information
- Results that run counter to expectations
- Good points of comparison
- Missing information

If information is missing, puzzling, or you simply need more information in order to understand it, set a two-person team or small workgroup on it. Ask them to research further – using additional methods if needed (i.e., interviews, if a survey was the original method).

Deliberately put off interpretation and recommendations for a later discussion or final team exercise. If the team makes recommendations, clearly identify them as theirs and theirs alone. The role of this group is to present an initial analysis that key endorsers and leaders can then validate and discuss.

## Step Five: Report, React and Act

Now that you have your data, report it. Put it out there for people to discuss it in meaningful and constructive ways. Essential questions at this stage are:

- Where can you use the results?
- What routines do you have in place for discussing evaluation findings?
- Where, specifically, will you improve or adjust services or strategies?
- How can you improve evaluation methods?

People can only absorb so much – often better visually or in an interactive format than in writing. Be disciplined about the amount of information you provide. Your goal is to find the main storylines, highlight findings that matter, and prompt reaction and action (and celebration).

## take action!
### reaction and action

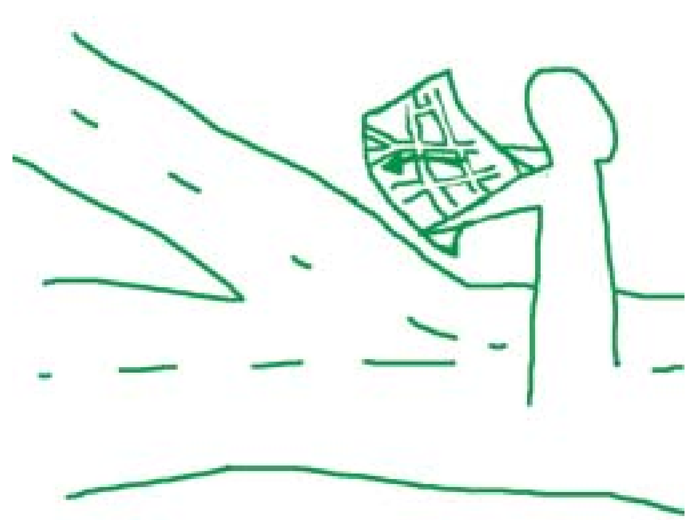
Articulate the main story your results tell about performance – and let people react. Use the data to celebrate great performance and pin down high priority improvements you must make.

You can share information in many ways:

- Reports
- Executive summaries
- Report cards
- Presentations to staff, board members, or a focus group
- Round table discussions
- Staff review/suggestion meetings
- Celebrations – awards
- Newsletters
- Funding proposals or progress reports

Evaluations reveal many different strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations. Don't leave people hanging...they need to know the upshot. End your evaluation cycle with a targeted action plan. What, of all the things discussed, of all possible improvements or changes identified, are top priority?

Finally, reflect on your evaluation strategy as a whole. A good formative evaluation system takes work. You'll have a few kinks to work out. After the first cycle, you should feel more comfortable culling out measures and methods that aren't (highly) valuable or feasible for you.



# Activity One: High Performance Session

## Goal
- Warm up for the session by identifying important session outcomes (and how they could be measured!).

## Time
- 20 minutes

## Instructions

Begin the session with a twist on the classic session opener: "What would you like to get out of this session?" Begin as usual: have participants call out outcomes they want from the session. Record items on a flip chart.

Next, have participants huddle in teams of 2-3 people. Ask them to pick one outcome from the list. Give teams 3-4 minutes to brainstorm two ways that outcome could be measured – one method should be legitimate and doable. The second proposed method should be as wacky and/or absurd as the team's imagination can dream up. Call time and share examples!

# Activity Two: Totally Logical, Totally Measurable

## Goal

- Learn how to create a program logic model and use it to look at the connection between youth service activities and the impact you ultimately want to have.
- Use your logic model to identify and prioritize good evaluation measures.

## Materials

- Logic Model Worksheet
- Flip chart, markers, and masking tape

## Time

- 45-60 minutes

## Instructions

1. Form teams of 3-4 people and pick (or be assigned) one of WIA's Youth Performance Indicators:

   - Attainment of basic literacy and math skills
   - Attainment of secondary school diploma or a recognized equivalent
   - Placement and retention in post-secondary or advanced training, military service or a qualified apprenticeship; credential attainment
   - Employment placement
   - Employment retention
   - Earning gains
   - Customer – youth and employer – satisfaction

2. With your team, use the Logic Model Worksheet to show the relationship between the resources (staff, time, money) you direct to services, the support services you offer, the immediate results or benefits of those services, and the Indicator you chose. If team members represent different programs, give examples from each of your programs. (20 minutes)

3. Analyze your finished model. What is the nature of the relationships in your chart? Do you see direct connections up and down the line? What's the tightest connection you see? The most tenuous? (5-10 minutes)

4. Now look at the Immediate Results box. Which of these immediate results relate most directly to end results you want – and are easily measurable? Put a star ★ next to them. Discuss how you might go about measuring 1-2 of your starred items. What evidence would you look for? (10 minutes)

5. Ask one of your team members to give a quick overview of your model to the full group. Point out at least one example of a really tight connection and one that's a little loose. Give an example of one of your more measurable immediate results. Make note of any interesting discoveries. (2-3 minutes per team)

# Logic Model Worksheet

**Impact or Change You Want (Outcomes)**

WIA Youth Performance Indicator:

↑

**Immediate Results (Outputs)**

↑

**Service Components and Activities (Outputs)**

↑

**Resources Used (Inputs)**

# Activity Three: Methods Madness

## Goal

- Understand different types of measures – formative and summative, qualitative and quantitative – and how you might collect data on them.

## Materials

- Methods Madness Game Card
- Slips of paper or Post Its®
- A bowl, hat, cup or container
- Optional: a small prize (candy, stickers) for the first team to finish

## Time

- 20-30 minutes

## Instructions

1. Form teams of 3-4. With your team, brainstorm examples of "goals" or "outcomes" – from any walk of life. World peace. Losing 25 pounds. A new year's resolution. Earning a million dollars. Think up real goals from your professional or personal life, bizarre or offbeat goals, or outrageous goals. Turn goals upside-down – i.e., what's the opposite of "attainment of life skills"? Anything goes. Ask one of your team members to record your list. You have 3 minutes!

2. Review your list. Pick your FIVE best offerings and jot each on a separate slip of paper or Post It®. Bring your five goals to the front of the room and place them in the container with slips from the other teams.

3. Ask someone to shake the container. Then, ask one of your team members to pick 5 slips for your team and return to your table.

4. At "Go!," (this is a very competitive activity), work with your team to identify – for each goal and each type of measure on your Methods Madness Game Card – an example of a measure you could use to evaluate performance or progress AND the method you would use to collect the information.

5. Stand up when your team finishes. Applaud the first team to finish – and as with Bingo, verify their answers!

# Methods Madness Game Card

| Goal or Outcome | Formative Measure and Method | Qualitative Measure and Collection Method | Quantitative Measure and Method |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

# Activity Four: Evaluation Design Shop

## Goal
- Design a formative evaluation strategy for your youth services initiative or program.

## Materials
- Youth Services Formative Evaluation - Design Sheet

## Time
- 60-75 minutes

## Instructions

1. Form teams of 3-5 people.

2. With your team, list the main components of your program or services in the left column of the Formative Evaluation Design Sheet.

3. For each service component, list the summative measures – or, in your case, WIA Youth Performance Indicators – that most apply to that component. For example, if you offer "training" referral or counseling, you would list these two indicators:

   - Attainment of secondary school diploma or a recognized equivalent
   - Placement and retention in post-secondary or advanced training, military service or a qualified apprenticeship; credential attainment

4. Next, work together to design a formative evaluation strategy you can use to see if components are helping youth and you reach summative measures. Record the specific measures you would use and how you'd collect the data you need. Ask a team member to keep notes for a "master copy" of your evaluation design.

5. At the 30-minute mark, pause. Take a few minutes to "cross pollinate" by getting 3-4 examples of measures and methods teams have identified so far. If your team has a good one, step up and give a short (1 minute) description.

6. After 60 minutes, stop designing. Take five minutes with your team to prepare a brief summary of your strategy, as if you were going to present it to a board or staff. Be sure to highlight particular strengths of your approach and the aspect of your strategy you think will be most challenging.

7. Report to full group. (2-3 minutes per group)

# Youth Services Formative Evaluation - Design Sheet

| Process/Service Components | Summative Measures | Relevant Formative Measures | Data Collection Methods, Tools & Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

# Key Questions for Designing Your Evaluation Strategy

### Strategy and Planning

1. What are your current evaluation "assets"?
2. What are you trying to evaluate and why?
3. What, exactly, are you trying to measure?
4. To whom will you report? For what purpose?

### Design

5. Which methods will be accepted as credible?
6. When and how will you collect the information you need? Who will be involved?
7. What tools and procedures – existing or new – will you use?
8. How realistic are your evaluation plans (can you really pull them off)?

### Collection and Analysis

9. What leadership support do you need?
10. What orientation might help people effectively collect or report information?
11. Who should review and analyze information and/or endorse findings and conclusions?

### Reporting, Reacting and Acting

12. Where can you use the results?
13. What routines do you have in place for discussing evaluation findings?
14. Where, specifically, will you improve or adjust services or strategies?
15. How can you improve evaluation methods?

# Youth Services Evaluation - Sample Workforce Board Strategy

## Older Youth

| Service Component | Summative Measures | Formative Measures |
|---|---|---|
| Enrollment/Assessment | Entered employment<br>Retention<br>Earnings gain<br>Credential rate | 1. Wage history < "X" $/yr.<br>2. Basic skills level<br>3. Work history/skill level<br>4. Transportation capability<br>5. Child care needs/resources |
| Assisted Core<br>• Job referrals<br>• Job development<br>• Seminars/workshops<br>• Job search<br>• Placement/career counseling | Entered employment<br>Retention<br>Earnings gain<br>Credential rate | 6. Completion of job search seminar<br>7. Updated "quality" resume<br>8. Number of appropriate interviews<br>9. Employer feedback to seekers and employees<br>10. UI wage records<br>11. Ongoing employee contact & feedback.<br>12. Participant journal |
| Intensive<br>• Objective assessment<br>• Job search<br>• Individual counseling/career planning<br>• Case management<br>• Individual employment plan<br>• Group counseling | Entered employment<br>Retention<br>Earnings gain<br>Credential rate | 13. Assessment results, e.g. inventories, etc.<br>14. Counseling "data" (develop rubric)<br>15. Existence of an individual plan consistent with the data |
| Training<br>• Occupational skills<br>• Basic skills<br>• Job readiness<br>• Self-employment assistance<br>• Private sector training<br>• Skills upgrade | Entered employment<br>Retention<br>Earnings gain<br>Credential rate | 16. Training progress report<br>17. Training outcome report |

## Younger Youth

| Service Component | Summative Measures | Formative Measures |
|---|---|---|
| Enrollment/assessment | Skills attainment<br>Diploma or equivalent<br>Retention in school | 1. Identification of barrier(s)<br>2. Strategy/element to address barrier<br>3. School status, i.e. in or out, and transcript |
| Services<br>• Education<br>• Career exploration<br>• Work experience<br>• Job shadowing, etc.<br>• Counseling | Skills attainment<br>Diploma or equivalent<br>Retention in school | 4. Existence, completeness, appropriateness, & relevance of career plan<br>• Short-term<br>• Long-term<br>5. Counseling data-qualitative, rubric<br>6. On-going school progress – quantitative, i.e., transcripts<br>7. Participant journal |

## Examples from the Field

The Employer Committee of Worksource Walla Walla, Washington suggested that "mystery shoppers" check on services offered to employers. Shoppers are asked to gather specific feedback on the services they receive, how they were treated. The idea wasn't initially a hit but once staff saw how quickly it helped pinpoint good adjustments, they expanded the shopper strategy to include jobseeker services.

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board, Texas, created a Youth Process Improvement (YPI) team, made up of representatives of the five (normally competitive) contractors who operate the 30-plus One-Stop centers in the Gulf Coast area. The YPI team met monthly, in a different One-Stop or YO! facility each time, to develop a youth policy document to guide their work, make collaborative decisions, and share best practices.

Early in its efforts, the Philadelphia Youth Council adopted a set of 13 priority standards for WIA-funded youth programs. Come to find out, other standards were in the works in agencies across town. So, the Council's Standards subcommittee worked with other programs to align efforts – and the Philadelphia Joint Standards Committee and Core Standards for Philadelphia's Youth Programs were born. But the standards are more than just a piece of paper. With agency partners, the Council rolled out training and tools, including a standards "implementation and observation guide," customer satisfaction surveys for youth and parents, and organizational self-assessments. Youth themselves ("peer administrators") help collect customer feedback via surveys and visits to youth program sites around the city.

When the Delancey Street Foundation in San Francisco started to develop a reform plan for San Francisco's juvenile justice system, a youth-run organization, Rising Youth for Social Equity (RYSE), recommended that young people familiar with the system evaluate the plan and reform proposals. A Youth Evaluation Team – made up of 12 young people trained by Youth in Focus – created a survey, collected data, and worked with University of California-Berkeley professors to analyze the results. They presented their findings to the foundation – and prompted important adjustments to the plan.

Staff members at the award-winning Community Youth Corps (CYC) program, sponsored by the Southeast Los Angeles Workforce Board, meet the last week of every month to assess what's working and what's not. They also have a prominently placed suggestion box where youth make suggestions.

Change incentives and you change performance. That's the notion behind a major shift in how the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services manages its contracts with service providers in the state's foster care system. Under the old system, contractors were reimbursed by case load – a "fee for child" model. Under the new performance-based contracting model, providers are rewarded for successful permanent placements. High performing agencies get a set amount of funding and can take on new cases. Contractors that don't perform risk losing state business. Caseloads are down significantly and providers like the system. It allows them to keep the focus on their mission – placing children back into good family situations.

The Workforce Development Department, Region D Council of Governments, in Boone, North Carolina uses their "We Are Effective" campaign to recognize effective youth-serving organizations. Organizations evaluate themselves against six effectiveness criteria, and then submit an application for peer and Council review. 4 and 5-"star" organizations are recognized annually at a public ceremony and in press releases and receive "starred" listings in service resource directories.

The Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services (CASES), New York, runs the nationally recognized Career Exploration Project (CExP) for youth involved with the juvenile system. Evaluation is a priority – and one of their latest strategies is a peer research model: two program alumni who, along with a research associate, conduct pre- and post-program interviews with youth in order to evaluate changes in achievement and attitude.

YouthNet in Kansas City, Missouri, led a collaborative process that helped area agencies define Quality Performance Standards for youth programs. The standards cover everything from safety to staff/youth ratios, to annual training recommendations. Youth-serving agencies and YouthNet sign a collaborative agreement to integrate and support the implementation of standards into their work.

## Resources

### General Program Evaluation

- Key Steps in Outcome Management (pdf) – Urban Institute http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310776_KeySteps.pdf
- Outcome Measurement: Showing Results in the Nonprofit Sector http://national.unitedway.org/outcomes/resources/What/ndpaper.cfm
- Outcome Measurement Resource Network – United Way http://national.unitedway.org/outcomes/
- Designing Evaluations(pdf) – U.S. General Accounting Office http://www.gao.gov/policy/10_1_4.pdf
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook (pdf) http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub770.pdf
- Innovation Network http://www.innonet.org
- Beyond Data: http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/beyonddata/introduction.htm
- Involving Young People in Community Evaluation Research – Community Youth Development Journal http://www.cyd-journal.org/2003Spring/checkoway.html
- Implementing Results-Based Decision-Making: Advice from the Field (pdf) http://www.nga.org/cda/files/1999WELFARE-BARRIERS.pdf

### Practical Tools

- Basic Guide to Program Evaluation – Free Management Library http://www.mapnp.org/library/evaluatn/fnl_eval.htm
- C.A.R.T. Compendium of Assessment and Research Tools for Measuring Education and Youth Development Outcomes http://cart.rmcdenver.com/
- What's Working?: Tools for Evaluating your Mentoring Program – Search Institute
- Evaluating Your Program: A Beginner's Self-Evaluation Workbook for Mentoring Programs (pdf) http://itiincorporated.com/Assets/pdf files/SEW-Full.pdf
- Research Tools – Cornell Youth and Work Program http://www.human.cornell.edu/youthwork/rtools/
- CSAP's Prevention Pathways: Evaluation Technical Assistance http://preventionpathways.samhsa.gov/eval/default.htm
- Fixing a Flat at 65 MPH: Restructuring Services to Improve Program Performance in Workforce Development (pdf) http://www.ppv.org/pdffiles/changingflat.pdf

### Learning from Others

- Evidence of Success – PEPNet Index to Effective Practices http://www.nyec.org/pepnet/evidence.htm
- Case Studies – Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide http://www.raguide.org/case_studies.htm
- Youth in Focus http://www.youthinfocus.net

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