

DESIGNING PROGRAMS FOR THE VOLUNTEER SECTOR

BY
NANCY MACDUFF

Part of the Volunteer Management Series of VMSystems

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DESIGNING PROGRAMS FOR THE VOLUNTEER SECTOR

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DEDICATION

This book is lovingly dedicated to David D. Curtis. He has offered a home away from home to me and provided a steady and committed friendship for more than two decades.

NLM 1989

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank her unflagging editor, Janie Millgard for her usual patience and thoughtful contributions to this work. Special thanks go to Ron Jimmerson and Jim Long, professional colleagues and friends, who support my work and can provide resource materials on a moments notice. Thanks also to the hundreds of volunteers who tell me they want “new” programs that more nearly meet their needs. This book is my attempt to influence those designing programs to be innovative, creative, practical, and sensible as they develop new activities, services and programs. No acknowledgement is complete without thanking Floyd Bunt, who relinquishes his computer to support my writing efforts and April Grabast who makes things look like the author is a better typist than is reality.

Introduction

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

"The only way in which one human being can properly attempt to influence another is encouraging him to think for himself, instead of endeavoring to instill ready made opinions into his head."

Sir Leslie Stephen

We've been offering the same program for four years. Maybe it's time to review it!

The children need to study nuclear energy.

*I heard there is a problem with homeless people in our town.
What can we do about it?*

I belong to a volunteer study club. We want to study capital punishment.

*I have been asked to develop a program for the 4th graders at our church.
How do I do that?*

Ideas for programs come from a variety of sources. It often falls to a volunteer or the paid volunteer program manager to turn those ideas into reality. Program development and planning is critical to the success in recruiting the necessary volunteers to implement the program. For many volunteers this is what they want to have: short term, meaningful, and specific tasks in their volunteer involvement.

PROGRAM PLANNING BEGINS WITH FOUR QUESTIONS

1. *What purposes are to be achieved by this activity or program?*
2. *What experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?*
3. *How can these experiences be appropriately organized?*
4. *How can we tell whether the purposes are being attained?*

Ralph W. Tyler

The first question is answered by conducting a needs assessment that identifies what the client, member or recipient wishes from the program or service. It also requires that those planning the activity develop plans that include goals and objectives that are related to outcomes for the people participating.

The second and third questions ask us to look at methods, techniques and how we will organize the activities to be most effective for the recipient, client, or member.

The last question is answered by the formulation of a plan to evaluate the activities and their impact on the people participating.

This monograph outlines the process that addresses all four questions and provides a system for organizing program planning in the volunteer community. It is a simple five step process that can

be used by anyone who is responsible for volunteer program planning, both paid and unpaid personnel.

There are two phases in creating new programs or in revamping current ones.

The first phase is the developmental process. It includes:

- conducting a needs assessment; and
- establishing objectives.

The second phase is planning. It includes:

- selecting and arranging appropriate methods, activities, devices, and techniques;
- administrative planning, involving budgets, promotion; and
- evaluating the outcomes.

At the end of each *step* you will find a box titled *Transition*. This contains information to help assess your progress in moving from one *step* to another. It summarizes the highlights of the *step* just read and prepares you for the next *step*.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

An Overview

Phase I - Development

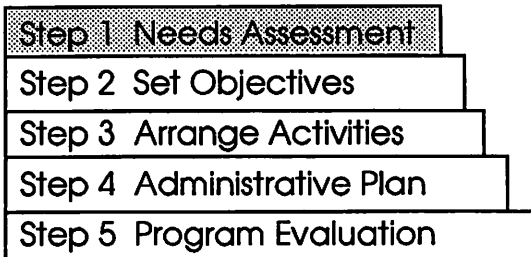
- Step 1 Needs Assessment
- Step 2 Set Objectives

Phase II - Planning

- Step 3 Arrange Activities
 - Step 4 Administrative Plan
 - Step 5 Program Evaluation
-

Phase I Development

CONDUCT NEEDS ASSESSMENT



In developing new volunteer programs or reviewing current ones, those with responsibility for the development, planning, and implementation must have data about potential clients, members and recipients and their expressed and unexpressed needs. It is important to be clear about the needs of people who participate in a program before going to the trouble of setting objectives and planning activities. The needs assessment can tell you what participants want from the program and what they see as the benefits to them.

WHAT IS A NEEDS ASSESSMENT?

It is a way to learn more about the clients, members, or potential recipients of a program. Sometimes it looks at the needs of an entire community. Usually it focuses on one problem or issue. It assesses various opinions by knowledgeable people about the potential programs or the current level of service. It usually provides information that is evaluative in nature and that can be a justification or explanation for a budget request.

It is important to remember there are expressed needs and unexpressed needs. An expressed need is when someone who represents the potential participants shares information about their needs.

Youth members at a YWCA could be on a task force to assess current programs and suggest new ones. The information is useful because it represents what other youth might think about the programs.

WATCHING FOR THE UNEXPRESSED ISSUES

Unexpressed needs require program planners to listen "between the lines." For example, a city turns an open area over to the residents of a local neighborhood to develop a park. The residents are mostly black and Hispanic. The two groups have a long history of poor communication. The Park Department, in developing a volunteer corps to implement the establishment of the park, would hear expressed needs about planting, flower garden maintenance, ball field development, and watering systems. The local residents might never say that they also needed to learn to communicate more effectively with one another. But the park staff and volunteers need to address this need before launching the project. It is a need, even though it is unexpressed.

A good assessment increases understanding of needs among staff, volunteers, potential service recipients, and community members. It usually builds a greater sense of ownership for new programs.

Needs assessments take different forms. A simple assessment can be conducted using the form on page 12.

The following are common needs assessment techniques. Before selecting a particular technique you should review the advantages and disadvantages.

INTERVIEWS

Advantages:

- ✓ Reveals feelings, causes and solutions to problems
- ✓ Draws out facts
- ✓ Affords the opportunity for an expression of opinions and suggestions
- ✓ Follow-up questions are possible

Disadvantages:

- ✗ Very time consuming
- ✗ Sample of people needs to be small
- ✗ Some answers are hard to quantify
- ✗ Requires pre-test and revision of questions
- ✗ Interviewers must be *trained* to listen and avoid judging responses
- ✗ Interviewee can feel "on-the-spot"

SURVEYS

Advantages:

- ✓ Can sample a large number of people
- ✓ Gives an opportunity to express an opinion without embarrassment
- ✓ Data is easy to summarize and quantify

Disadvantages:

- ✗ Not possible to get free expression of opinions
- ✗ Costly
- ✗ Time-consuming to construct
- ✗ Requires a professional to design unbiased questions
- ✗ Must insure anonymity to respondents
- ✗ Pre-testing required to assure eliciting a response only to the questions asked

TESTS

Advantages:

- ✓ Useful as a diagnostic tool
- ✓ Helps to select exactly the target of a program
- ✓ Results very easy to compare and report

Disadvantages:

- ✗ Sometimes hard to get a valid standardized test for the assessed situation
- ✗ Results give clues to a situation, but do not always describe causes or solutions
- ✗ Needs an expert to select and administer

Task Force

Advantages:

- ✓ Reveal causes and solutions
- ✓ Gives ample opportunity to express opinions
- ✓ Permits and encourages the synthesis of different points of view
- ✓ Promotes understanding
- ✓ Builds support for the program
- ✓ Increases a sense of ownership by those involved
- ✓ Is a learning opportunity for the participants

Disadvantages:

- ✗ Can be time consuming
- ✗ Sometimes those with the authority to influence decisions are too busy to attend meetings
- ✗ Results are difficult to quantify
- ✗ Does not lead to quick results
- ✗ Group needs to be given the authority to make decisions and recommendations
- ✗ Sometimes only one opinion is represented.

Content Analysis

Advantages:

- ✓ A study of existing reports and materials can be accomplished by one person
- ✓ Inexpensive, because data has been collected by others
- ✓ Provides objective evidence of the problems
- ✓ Is easily understood by decision-makers
- ✓ Is effective when used in combination with another technique

Disadvantages:

- ✗ May not contain the most current information on the situation
- ✗ May not provide specific enough information on the situation being reviewed

TRANSITIONS*

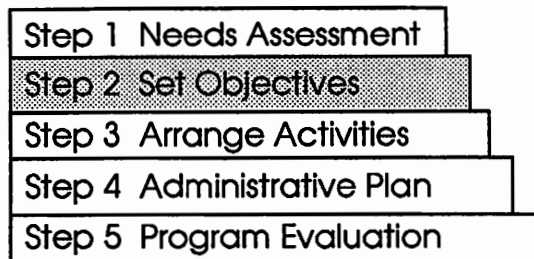
***CHANGE, SHIFT, TURNING POINT**

1. Collect all the information.
2. Write down a report that is factual, with recommendations or conclusions at the end.
3. Share the report with those who can judge its accuracy and help in the decision making process about new programs or revisions in existing programs.
 - a. ask experts who are not connected to the organization
 - b. ask people the program will be aimed at
 - c. ask those who fund programs to review the data
4. After sharing the data, re-read the report. Is your data correct? You are making important decisions based on the needs assessment information.
5. Remind yourself that you are still in the Development Phase. Avoid the urge to race toward designing activities.

Client, Member, Recipient	What do you know about them that affects this program?	What are their expressed needs?	What are their unexpressed needs?

Phase I Development

SET OBJECTIVES



After data about and/or from potential participants has been collected, the information is used to focus on objectives for the program. *An objective is a statement that identifies the goals of a program for the participants.*

Writing objectives helps in two ways: first, in planning activities and second, in planning for evaluations. Clear measurable objectives make the job of selecting the right activities easier. It can also provide the basis for evaluating the program or activities with a degree of precision.

It is important to setting the objectives based on what can realistically be achieved. After objectives are written they should be screened to eliminate any that are unnecessary or contradictory.

Your objectives must:

- always reflect the values implicit in the organization, agency or institution sponsoring the program; and
- clearly distinguish the changes that can be expected to result from the program and its activities.

TIPS FOR WRITING MEANINGFUL PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. Objectives describe what happens to the participant, not the efforts to help him or her do it.
2. Objectives are written in common everyday language.
3. Objectives are measurable, demanding, flexible, achievable, and observable.
4. Objectives are the road map for designing activities.
5. Objectives are stated in a way that allows the participants to easily make a commitment to the activities.
6. Objectives clear-up unrealistic or negative expectations.

WRITING THE PROGRAM OBJECTIVE AN EXAMPLE

Who is your audience?

Example:

40% of the residents, both black and Hispanic, of the Hyde Park neighborhood...

What is the behavior the participants will exhibit?

Example:

...will devote 4 - 10 hours annually to the maintenance of a "pocket park" located in Hyde Park at 5th and Elm...

What is the content of the program related to the behavior?

Example:

...for the purpose of creating a "green belt" in the neighborhood by planting tree, flower gardens, and community vegetable gardens.

What are the time factors for the completion of this objective?

Example:

The plan will be completed by the end of the first year of the Hyde Park Garden Volunteer Corps.

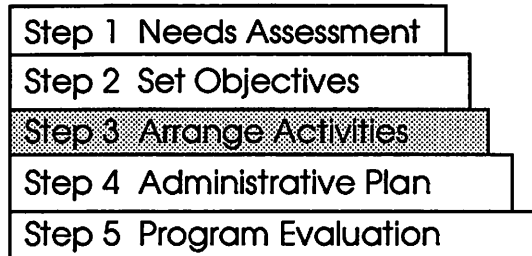
TRANSITIONS*

***CHANGE, SHIFT, TURNING POINT**

1. The needs assessment is complete.
 2. Begin with a first draft of the objectives.
 3. Involve others in the review and the revision of the objectives.
 - a. ask potential participants or their surrogates what they think.
 - b. ask people who would volunteer for this program.
 - c. ask funding sources their opinions
 - d. ask other agencies, both government and private what they think.
 4. Check to be sure the objectives meet the criteria. Are they measurable, demanding, flexible, achievable, observable?
 5. Share your progress with someone who will give honest feedback.
-

Phase II Planning

ARRANGE ACTIVITIES



Program activities should match the objectives and be designed for the benefits of participants or to enhance learning. If this is not done, then the program will lead participants in unintended or undesirable directions. This step is the most creative of the planning process and can result in alternative plans.

There are several factors to consider when preparing to plan a new program or revise an existing one.

1. Activities need to accommodate a variety of learning styles.
2. Planning must include an identification of the availability of necessary resources.
3. Activities should have the potential to effect change.
4. Activities should allow ample opportunity for on-going feedback from participants.
5. Opportunities to practice are essential to good program planning.
6. Activities should be based on the needs expressed by participants, and also incorporate the most current information for effective learning.

7. Activities need to be flexible to meet individual and group needs.

8. Activities should provide variety in experience so participants can differentiate, or integrate information.

MAJOR PROGRAM TYPES

There are three major types of programs conducted by volunteer organizations. The type of program selected is important because it has implications for writing objectives, for the selection of activities, for the necessary resources, and for the role of volunteers in relation to the program. The three types are developmental, institutional, and informational.

Developmental

This type of program identifies the problems for a client group, community, or a segment of society. It assumes that the application of a "program" or set of activities will enhance or improve the condition for the participant. It includes such things as drug abuse treatment programs using volunteer counselors, membership in a community garden club that is primarily educational, and formation of environmental action groups using volunteer workers.

Developmental programs quite often have ambiguous needs assessments. There is the recognition of need, but the problem is hard to define or it is difficult to establish priorities. Offerings of the program often helps to bring the problem and solutions into focus. Developmental programs are thought successful if solutions are found to the problems.

Institutional

Institutional programs are designed to improve growth and ability in a person's basic abilities. Classic examples are programs like Girl Scouts, Camp Fire, professional associations like the American Medical Association. The idea is to expose the participant to the content of a discipline or body of knowledge. There is usually a close connection between the mission of the organization and the type of programs offered.

Identified needs come from knowledge of the field in concert with needs as expressed by surrogates for future participants. This has a significant impact on the establishment of objectives.

Informational

An informational program is an exchange of information between a paid staff or a volunteer and the client, member or recipient of the program. Its primary goal is to deliver information. Examples include such services as Heart Association information on diet, a brochure on AIDS developed by a volunteer organization, volunteer speakers from a domestic violence shelter on ways to prevent child abuse, a TV ad, or an informational program on city parks. Because there is less direct contact with participants, it is more difficult to measure the effectiveness of this type of program. It is usually done in quantitative measures; number of contacts, number of hours, etc.

It is important to note that many programs overlap all three areas. For example, the CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation) program of the Red Cross and the Heart Association fall into all three categories. Many people want to know CPR so they are prepared if someone has a heart attack. The program is meeting developmental needs, but is based on a body of specific knowledge that changes as research continues on its effectiveness. Volunteers often draw people into CPR classes by engaging in public speaking about the importance of this skill.

Each type of program has a set of objectives that are different. The activities planned are also different to satisfy those objectives. It is important to remember that programs can be a type but prac-

tically speaking it is common to combine types. Activity planning is a challenge. The planning should be done simultaneously and consciously. It is done on two levels. On the one level are the activities planned for the client, member or recipient and on the second is the activities carried out by volunteers that make that program possible.

Often the emphasis is placed on planning for the participants and the activities of the volunteer come as an afterthought. It is far more effective to plan the activities in tandem. The following is an example of this type of tandem planning.

PROGRAM PLANNING WORKSHEET CPR EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

I. Activities for Participants

1. Listening to information on deaths in the community from choking or heart attacks.
2. Discussion of steps that could reduce the deaths from chokings or heart attacks.
3. View a slide/tape show on the effectiveness of CPR in reducing deaths.
4. Receive a brochure listing CPR class sites, dates, times, and the sign-up procedure.

II. Activities for Volunteers

1. Attend training sessions to enhance public speaking skills.
2. Practice presentation of information on heart attacks in mini-lecture with overheads display.
3. Practice using synchronized slide-tape presentation.
4. Review printed information on the basics of CPR and film.
5. Practice distribution of CPR class information, and the sign-up procedure.
6. Practice record keeping on the number of participants in the CPR Outreach program.

When designing learning activities there are some principles to keep in mind. In the above example, the activities of the participant are described in terms of what he/she does and also what the volunteer or staff do. This is a clear description of the difference in the two types of activities.

Whoever works with the participants must have an understanding of the interests, background, and attitudes of the individuals in the group. It is that understanding that can help make the best decisions related to the program during the actual implementation.

It is also essential to allow participants to practice the type of behavior desired, in programs designed to enhance or change behavior. If the program is addressing attitudes then participants need the opportunity to discuss their opinions about the issue.

Programs need to be designed to offer satisfaction to the participants. Client, members and recipients will succeed if the activities are set up to elicit the type of behavior implied by the objectives. This means that more than one experience is advisable in delivering the program. But they need to be attainable by the participants. The planner must know that the same activity will bring about more than one outcome.

There are three criteria for the effective organization of program activities; continuity, integration, and sequencing. These building blocks guide the arrangement of program components and activities.

Continuity is the repetition of the major elements of the program over the length of time of the program. It brings skills into continuous operation during the duration of the program.

Integration helps the participant acquire a more unified view of the the experience. It is most often visible when someone integrates theory and practice.

Sequence is when the activities are arranged so they build upon preceding activities. This allows the participants a more thorough and deeper understanding of the elements of the program.

These elements are part of the decisions that must be made by program planners as they arrange activities based on three elements. The planner must consider the group, methods or techniques, and devices.

The group can be one person or an entire community. Planning needs to take into account the number of participants. That decision will influence the selection of methods and devices to deliver the program. An individual is one person doing the activity. A group is usually a moderate size, from 5 to 50 in size. Community is an entire population like the potato farmers of Idaho.

Methods and techniques are how the information is delivered. Size of the group is one variable that determines the method or techniques selected, age is another. Methods and techniques are such things as: role play, group interaction, demonstration, lecture.

Devices are aids useful with the selected technique. Devices include flip charts, handouts, video, or puppets. On the next page you will find a chart to help select methods and techniques.

TRANSITIONS*

*CHANGE, SHIFT, TURNING POINT

1. The objectives are written based on a needs assessment.
2. The type of program most appropriate for the participants has been selected.
3. Volunteers are involved in planning the new program or revision of a current program.
4. Outside "consultants" have reviewed the planned activities.
5. A field test is planned which allows corrections in the program.
6. The evaluation process is in place before the field test is held.
7. The evaluation process is part of a system to regularly review the program to ensure its relevance, if it is to be repeated.

**SELECTING APPROPRIATE
METHODS OR TECHNIQUE STEP**

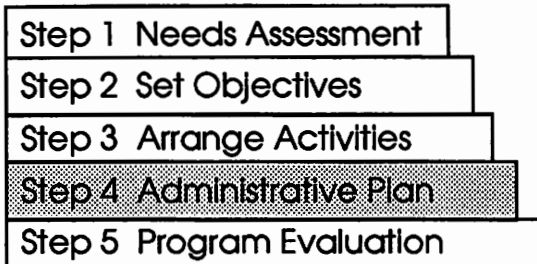
Individual	Group	Community
apprentice	case study	box holder mailer
consult	conference	community forum
counsel	demonstration	magazines
direct mail	discussion	newspaper
interview	field trip	radio broadcast
programmed instruction	lecture	telecourse
intern	panel	store displays
listening library	role playing	brochures
	simulation	television

DEVICES

Individual	Group	Community
cassette tape	handbook	telephone
book	hand-out	television
bulletin/newsletter	movie	posters
cartoons	newspaper	samples
chalk board	overhead projector	kits
chart	phonograph	games
records	puppets	slides
film strip	radio	

Phase II Planning

ADMINISTRATIVE PLAN



The fourth step in program planning is often overlooked. Lack of administrative planning can make a program fail. The administrative plan is budget and “housekeeping” details such as size of room, location, available transportation or parking.

Program planning during this step is critical. For example, adult programs need to be sure to use flexible spaces for teaching. Adults sitting in chairs designed for high school students might be uncomfortable. These details of program planning are so important they need to be part of the program plan and should be in writing, much like the methods, techniques, and devices.

The formulation of the administrative plan includes the following elements:

Staff:

Who will staff the program? If it is volunteers how will they be trained? How will they be recruited? Scheduling? Is it a good idea to use teams of paid staff and volunteers? Are special materials needed to guide the person presenting the program, so it is consistent from one presentation to the next?

Materials:

Do you need to order books, work sheets, films in advance? Is new material pre-

pared by the staff for each session? Must volunteers or participants pay for materials? How is this handled? Are there time lines to ensure material is ready whenever it is needed by the person delivering the program? Is this being done in a time and cost effective manner?

Participants:

If participants are enrolled, do you need a roster? What type of arrangements are made for the participants? Does this information help you to prepare material? Should the enrollment be limited? What will you do if the program has to be cancelled? Is the data collected from participants useful in other ways?

Facilities:

This is very important! What does the room look like? Size? Type of furniture? Ventilation? Built-in equipment? Noise from other activities?

Accommodations:

Must participants be housed? What type of housing is available? Cost? Convenience? How will room assignments be handled? If participants arrive by car, how do they find out about parking? Where do people hang coats and put personal belongings?

Food and Refreshments:

What is provided as part of the program? How will you notify participants of the cost? Is the food conducive to thinking and participating? Snacks of heavy carbohydrates can leave people less energetic.

Aids:

Do you have a list of the aids needed to deliver the program? Guidebooks for 4-H leaders, Cub Scout manual for den coordinator? Flip chart? Black board? Microphone to reach large group? You will need a check list to ensure that nothing is forgotten the next time.

Dates:

Be careful to schedule around the needs of the participants. Avoid holidays. Consider the availability and expense of facilities in selecting dates. Consider weather as a barrier at certain times of year.

Travel:

Is the program providing transportation? If so how can it be done economically and safely? If participants are providing their own transportation what do you provide in the way of information about the most economical means to do that?

Budget:

Do a cost-benefit analysis of the program. Some programs are not designed to break even or make money. You should know whether or not the program is making money. A budget includes income and expense figures. Seek multiple sources of funding for start-up costs of new programs.

This plan can be standardized with checklists for those responsible for delivery of the program. A Girl Scout handbook for leaders could include a check list on preparing for the weekly troop meeting. The person making presentations about CPR should have a checklist to ensure all the necessary arrangements have been made prior to the presentation.

If the program is planned up to this point the next step is to plan the advertising and promotion campaign. Whatever method selected, it should be interesting and targeted to reach those who are most likely to participate in the program.

Promotional and advertising information should include the following:

- Program objectives so participants know the intent of those presenting it.
- Location, time, date
- Program presenters, their training and background.
- Explanations in lay-language of the techniques, methods, and devices to be used to accomplish the objectives. Descriptions of what participants can expect to learn or do.
- General explanation of the size of the group expected.
- Agenda (if appropriate)
- Cost
- How to register
- How to prepare before the program
- Facilities, accommodations, food
- Transportation, maps
- Suggested clothing, if appropriate

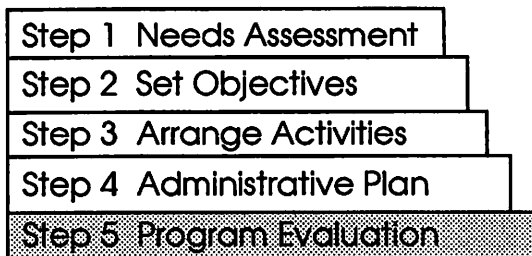
TRANSITIONS*

***CHANGE, SHIFT, TURNING POINT**

1. The program is developed based on objectives and appropriate principles of program planning
 2. Arrangement of activities is effective for the participants.
 3. Consideration is given to administrative elements that will ensure the successful delivery of the program.
 4. The evaluation plan will include attention to the administrative elements that create effective programs.
 5. Advertising and promotion is based on the most important information reaching a targeted client.
 6. No program is launched or field tested before an evaluation plan is in place.
-

Phase II Planning

PROGRAM EVALUATION



Evaluation is a common activity in which we all engage every day. It is a process that determines value. The analysis provides information by which one can understand and appreciate the relative merits or deficiencies in programs, situations, methods, or processes. It provides a measure.

It has been common to conduct evaluations after a program is functioning. In fact the most effective method to plan evaluations is to do it before the program is offered. Using the objectives and the activities, an evaluation process can be selected that will determine the effectiveness of a program.

The evaluation should show whether the plans outlined produced the desired outcomes. It involves identifying strengths and weaknesses. It must appraise behavior of the participant.

TWO BASIC TYPES OF EVALUATIONS

Formative

This is conducted during the program to provide immediate feedback so changes can be made during the developmental stages.

Summative

This is conducted after the program has been offered in order to make comparisons and judge its effectiveness. It provides information so changes can be made before a program is offered again.

There are requirements that must be in place to have an effective evaluation process. These elements must be in place before the program is offered.

Objectives

- ✓ Clear statements of objectives for the program.

Sources

- ✓ Identify people in the program who are the best source of information.

Collection of Data

- ✓ Design the data collection process to be appropriate to the information available. Questions must be written to be unbiased.

Sampling

- ✓ Select individuals who are representative of the total group to respond to questions.

Analysis and Use of Data

- ✓ Decide how the data will be analyzed and used. It provides the foundation to interpret and draw conclusions, compare conclusions with objectives, and make recommendations for change.

The levels of evaluation range from unorganized to very sophisticated. Habitual but unorganized evaluations are often provided informally from verbal reviews by volunteers, paid staff, or participants. It is in effect a habitual evaluation process.

Simple evaluations can be given to participants, volunteers, or paid staff. A checklist of items provides abundant quantifiable data. It also asks the person to respond to specific questions.

The most sophisticated evaluations involve pre-testing and post-testing the participants with a well-constructed test. It evaluates skills, attitudes, or knowledge.

SUGGESTED EVALUATION TECHNIQUES

1. Paper/pencil tests
2. Interviews
3. Questionnaire
4. Products from participants work
5. Records of participation rates
6. Records of participant behavior
7. Field test/video tape
8. Newspaper poll
9. Photographs
10. Forum
11. Focused Group Interview
12. Nominal Group
13. Interview a Partner
14. Show of Hands
15. Document Analysis

TRANSITIONS*

***CHANGE, SHIFT, TURNING POINT**

1. The needs assessment is done
 2. The measurable objectives are written.
 3. The activities for the program are planned and arranged.
 4. Time and money are budgeted
 5. Advertising and promotion are reaching participants.
 6. The evaluation process is planned.
 7. Give yourself a reward.
 8. Reward the volunteers who worked on this project.
 9. Be enthusiastic and enjoy the product of your labors.
-

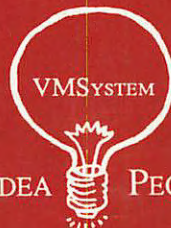
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