



The Center for Creative Community



Building Your Own Evaluation: A 12 Step Process @

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PURPOSE

Some fine standard forms exist for evaluating your volunteer program. But there will be times when you'll want feedback forms tailored exactly to your needs for knowledge and your situation. This process helps you create your own checklist, questionnaire, interview schedule, or meeting agenda, to guide assessment of subject areas you are concerned with. The procedure also helps clarify goals and objectives.

STEPS IN THE PROCEDURE

1. **Focus on Feedback Topic.** Broad areas are difficult to cover adequately. Examples of reasonably specific topics would be: recruiting low-income volunteers or evaluating the performance of individual volunteers.

2. **Convene the Concerned.** Get a committee of 7-10 people, representing the people impacting on or impacted by the problem or issue under consideration. Usually, this includes volunteers, clients, line staff, and administration, with the Coordinator/Director of Volunteers involved either as participant or facilitator. Sometimes, there can be two or more such committees working independently but cross-checking at various points in the process.

3. **Brainstorm the Ideal.** The committee brainstorms what things would look like if everything were going about as perfectly as could be expected in terms of:

(a) Ideal Results or Outcomes: Ex: 80% of our line staff now have at least one volunteer working with them, and also

(b) Ideal Processes or Procedures for achieving good results. Ex: All our staff receive at least two hours orientation to volunteers during their first month on the job.

At first, the brainstorm yield (put up on newsprint) will be only phrases rather than complete statements like the above. But work towards statements which are specific, 'concrete, objective and involve numbers where possible. "Our staff basically likes volunteers" is a bad example; it's too subjective.

4. **Clarify.** The facilitator reads each phrase. If any participant doesn't understand a phrase, we go back to the original contributor for further explanation-until clear to all.

5. **Consolidate Phrases** where they say much the same thing in different words. But the committee shouldn't get too deeply into this, at this point.

6. **Categorize.** Does the committee see any major categories under which the phrases could conveniently be grouped? But don't go into this too deeply now.

7. **Importance Rate.** The committee chooses those phrases which seem most important in deciding whether the area to be evaluated is going well or not. For example, on the topic of recruiting low-income volunteers, the phrase "all work-related expenses are promptly reimbursed" might be rated more important than "recruiting talks given monthly at service clubs". There are various commonsense ways you can gather importance ratings from the committee.

The brainstorm committee adjourns, after taking about a half-day on Steps 3-7. A study committee now takes over with leisure for analysis and further development of the yield thus far. There could easily be as many as 100-150 phrases remaining to work on after Steps 3-7.

8. **Analyze at leisure.** The study committee:

- (a) tries for further clarification and consolidation of phrases (Steps 4 and 5)
- (b) further refines categories (Step 6), and
- (c) may even get into reconsideration of whether the topic was sufficiently focussed in the first place (Step 1)
- (d) expands phrases into statements placed in major, categories.

This produces the first version of the checklist, questionnaire, etc.

9. **Review.** The brainstorm committee now reviews the first version of the form. Does it reflect the results they originally produced? Have they any "second thought" suggestions? Can they fill in some weak categories that don't have enough statements in them? The brainstorm committee now adjourns.

10. **The study committee incorporates** results of Step 9 to produce a second version of the form.

11. **Tryout.** The second version of the form is tried out in real life on a small sample of people for whom the form was intended. Thus, if the form is for evaluating individual volunteers, try it out with them as used by line staff or other supervisors of volunteers. Be sure to ask all those involved in the pretest:

- (a) Were there any questions we should have asked but didn't?
- (b) Were any questions/statements unclear? Irrelevant?

12. **Back to the study committee** to incorporate results of the tryout (Step 11) to produce the third-version of the form.

USE IT. It won't be a technically sophisticated or research-y form but it should get you some feedback you can apply for improvement of your volunteer program. Be sure that at least one person will be vitally interested in the usefulness of this procedure for you. That person is: _____



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