

This glossary will be available to registered Point K users online at www.innonet.org/?module=glossary beginning in mid-May, 2005.

A

ACTIVITIES

The actions an organization takes to fulfill its goals, implement a program, and achieve desired outcomes. Activities may also be called "strategies", "action steps", "processes", or "methods".

ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET

A written budget for the fiscal year, estimating and itemizing all income by sources and all expenditures by project or department.

ANNUAL OPERATING WORK PLAN

A detailed framework to help implement a logic model. The annual operating work plan breaks activities down into detailed tasks, assigns responsibilities, defines timeframes, and identifies needed resources.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

An evaluation approach in which data is collected in a positive manner intended to elicit openness in interview and survey subjects.

ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION

The legal document (a trust instrument, corporate charter, articles of association, or other written instrument) by which an organization is created under state law. This document generally include the purpose for which an organization is created; specifies the organization's legal name and representatives; and names founding board members.

ASSUMPTIONS

Facts or conditions you assume to be true, and that contribute to the reasoning behind your program's approach to solving the Problem.

Contextual assumptions refer to facts or special circumstances in your community, region, or field.

Program-level assumptions are thoughts about how your service or program can reach and create change in your audience.

B

BYLAWS

The rules which govern an organization's board and internal operations. Bylaws typically include rules concerning the maximum number of board members; terms and election processes for board members; and the process used to hire an executive director. Depending on state law, bylaws may be a required attachment to Articles of Organization.

C

CHARTER

One variety of legal document that may be needed to incorporate as a nonprofit. See "Articles of Organization".

CORE VALUES

The shared beliefs of staff and board that guide an organization's work. Core values provide the basis for an organization's culture, and clarify the beliefs that give rise to the organization's mission.

D

DATA COLLECTION

Any research procedure, activity, or instrument, that is intended to gather or record the actions, reactions, attitudes, and/or other behaviors of subjects (e.g., program staff, participants, and other stakeholders) in conjunction with a evaluation effort.

DOCUMENT REVIEW

A data collection method in which existing program records or documents (e.g., attendance sheets, curricula, casework notes) are reviewed and analyzed.

E

EVALUATION

The systematic collection of information about a program that enables stakeholders to better understand the program, improve its effectiveness, and/or make decisions about future programming.

Important notes:

- Effective evaluation requires systematic data collection -- not haphazard, once-in-a-while data collection.
- Evaluation results are useful for internal purposes (e.g., helping to set new goals, organizational course correction) and external purposes (e.g., communication with stakeholders, reporting to funders)
- Evaluation is key to becoming a learning organization.

EVALUATION PLAN

A tool that sets out strategies for the systematic collection of information to answer questions about an organization or program -- for example, whether an organization is moving closer to achieving its mission and goals, or whether a program is achieving its intended outcomes or implementation goals.

EVALUATION PLAN BUILDER

Part of Innovation Network's Point K Learning Center, this is Innovation Network's online tool for building evaluation plans.

EVALUATION QUESTION

A question related to a program's outcomes, outputs, indicators, or other definition of success. The goal of an evaluation effort is to answer one or more evaluation questions.

EVALUATION SURVEY BUILDER

Part of Innovation Network's Point K Learning Center, this is Innovation Network's online tool for building surveys as part of an evaluation data collection effort. The Evaluation Survey Builder features the Nonprofit Survey Library: search for existing surveys by programmatic area or type or survey, and use the results as a framework for your own data collection needs.

F

FOCUS GROUP

A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their attitude towards a product, service, concept, or idea. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members.

FUNDRAISING ACTION PLAN

A document that articulates who is responsible for specific fundraising tasks, and the timeframe for each task.

FUNDRAISING PLAN

A document that outlines the fundraising strategy, goals, sources, contacts, and deadlines for a project or organization.

G

GOALS

Goals are clear statements of the overall purpose of your program. They provide an answer to the problem statement and communicate the intended aims or impacts over the life of the program.

H

(We don't have any glossary terms beginning with H.)

I

INDICATORS

Indicators are measurable markers that a certain condition or circumstance exists, or certain outcomes have been achieved. They tell you how much progress you have made toward a particular goal, output, or outcome.

INTERVIEW

A qualitative data collection method in which an interviewer spends time in a one-on-one interview finding out about the subject's particular circumstances and their individual opinions. An interview is a very flexible form of data collection and is the best method for in-depth probing of personal opinions, beliefs, and values. However, a skilled interviewer may be required (which can be expensive), and analyzing data collected through interviews can be time consuming and responses can be difficult to interpret. In contrast with the focus group, one-on-one interview subjects may answer more openly, since they are under fewer social pressures (for example, they may be willing to discuss sensitive information in an interview setting, which they would be uncomfortable revealing in a group setting).

J

JOURNAL, LOG, DIARY

Journals, logs, and diaries can be rich repositories of qualitative and quantitative data.

JUSTIFICATIONS

Also called "theoretical assumptions" or "rationale", justifications are explanations of a set of beliefs, based on a body of knowledge, about how change occurs in your field and with your specific clients (or audience).

K

(We don't have any glossary terms beginning with K.)

L

LEARNING ORGANIZATION

An organization that has the capacity to maintain or improve performance based on experience. Learning organizations deliberately build feedback loops into their everyday processes to maximize their own learning.

LOCAL AREA NETWORK (LAN)

A system that links computers together within an office or building. Computers linked in a network can share files, applications, and equipment such as printers.

LOGIC MODEL

A visual representation of how your program works – a “picture” of your program. A Logic Model includes what you put into your program (resources), what you do (activities), and what you plan to achieve (outputs and outcomes).

LOGIC MODEL BUILDER

Part of Innovation Network's Point K Learning Center, this is Innovation Network's online tool for building a Logic Model.

M

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

A document that outlines the marketing and communications goals, strategies, and outcomes that an organization intends to achieve. The marketing and communication plan should include a definition of target audiences, methods of delivery, and resources required for implementation.

MISSION STATEMENT

A statement that describes how an organization's purpose is aligned with its vision. A mission statement is brief -- "short enough to fit on a t-shirt" is one rule of thumb -- and describes why the organization exists, what it does, for whom it exists, and the value that it creates, without listing specific activities employed to achieve the mission.

An organization should decide how often to revisit the mission statement and who should participate in its review. An annual review is wise, since communities change and program demands shift. Re-examining the mission statement ensures that it continues to reflect an organization's values and offers the appropriate direction for the organization.

MULTI-YEAR OPERATING BUDGET PROJECTION

An estimated budget based on strategic planning goals and considerations, taking growth and change into account.

MULTIMEDIA

Program documents don't all have to be in writing. Some valuable data may reside in multimedia forms such as photographs, video, or MPEGs.

N

(We have no glossary terms beginning with N.)

O

OBJECTIVES

See "Goals".

OBSERVATION

A data collection method in which an observer looks or listens to a situation and records what is happening. Observation can be an extremely powerful part of a data collection effort, since it does not depend on other people's willingness or ability to answer questions, and since it presents information directly rather than filtered through another person's perceptions.

Direct observations involve looking at actual behavior or occurrences, either in real time or by viewing or listening to a recording.

Indirect observation examines results of behavior or occurrences (for example, counting the number of pieces of paper in the recycling bin to determine whether people are recycling.)

Whether direct or indirect, observations should be guided by a checklist to ensure that the observer is getting all the required data.

ORGANIZATION

A group of persons organized for a particular purpose; an association.

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT TOOL

Part of Innovation Network's Point K Learning Center, the Organizational Assessment Tool takes the user through a survey covering seven areas of organizational development and produces a snapshot report on that organization's strengths and challenges. The report is useful for sharing with staff and board as a springboard for discussion of next steps in organizational development planning.

OUTCOMES

The results that your program aims to achieve. Outcomes are the changes that occur because of a program, or the difference that is made by a program. When defining outcomes, consider: how does the program touch the lives of individuals, groups, families, households, organizations, or communities?

OUTCOMES CHAIN

Also called a "Pathway of Outcomes", this term refers to the sequence in which outcomes are achieved. Outcomes cannot all be attained at the same time, and some outcomes rely on the earlier achievement of other outcomes. Your shorter-term, intermediate, and longer-term outcomes should reflect a logical outcomes chain (or pathway of outcomes) in which your longer-term outcomes are supported by, and dependent on, your shorter-term outcomes.

OUTPUTS

The measurable products of your program; the concrete items that are produced as part of your program.

P

PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

A social research method in which program staff, participants, and other stakeholders participate in the evaluation of a program, by helping to define what success means for that program, collaborating in preparation of data collection instruments, and/or conducting data collection and analysis.

"One of the negative connotations often associated with evaluation is that it is something done to people. One is evaluated. Participatory evaluation, in contrast, is a process controlled by the people in the program or community. It is something they undertake as a formal, reflective process for their own development and empowerment."

M. Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation Methods*, (2nd ed.), 1990, p. 129.

PHONE SYSTEM

A system of linked telephone lines that allows a caller to choose between multiple individuals and/or voice mail boxes.

POINT K LEARNING CENTER

The home of innonet.org's online tools and resources for program planning and evaluation.

Coming soon: online courses!

POTENTIAL RISK

The degree to which future events may threaten your organization's ability to accomplish its mission. Considering potential risk is an important first step in protecting an organization's vital assets and resources. (More at <http://www.nonprofitrisk.org/>)

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Also simply "problem", or "issue statement", or "challenge": A concise statement of the problem to be addressed by a program.

PROGRAM EVALUATION PLAN

A document that details strategies for systematic collection of information that will be used to answer critically important questions about a program. A program evaluation plan provides a framework for developing indicators for program outcomes, and determining how evaluation information will be collected.

Q

QUALITATIVE DATA

Data described in terms of quality, as opposed to "quantity" (see "Quantitative data"). Qualitative data is often obtained through asking open-ended questions, to which the answers are not limited to a set of choices or a scale. Qualitative data collection is most useful when you would like information in people's own words, or when the questions you are asking have too many possible answers for you to be able to list them. Qualitative data is more time-consuming to analyze than quantitative data, but can be a worthwhile and important part of a data collection effort.

QUANTITATIVE DATA

Data described in terms of a quantity or number. Quantitative data is collected through closed-ended questions, where users are given a limited number of answer choices, or asked to answer on a scale. While quantitative data collection is suitable for collecting numeric data such as age, income, number of staff, number of children, etc., many types of information can be collected quantitatively if placed on a scale.

QUESTIONNAIRE

A data collection instrument consisting of a printed or online form containing a set of questions, sent to a group of respondents as a way of gathering information for a survey. In some cases, "questionnaire" may specifically mean a list of closed-ended questions (where respondents are limited to a set of answers or an answer scale), in contrast to a "survey" which may contain open-ended or "fill in the blank" questions.

R

RESULTS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY

Often referred to as "RBA", Results-Based Accountability is a planning and evaluation process used by communities and agencies to improve conditions of well-being for a given population. RBA identifies measurable indicators to signify achievement of population-level results, and links these to measurements that track outcomes for individual projects and programs. In its fullest expression, RBA includes a process to:

- Identify successful strategies,
- Illustrate and describe data trends,
- Develop a research agenda, and
- Build partnerships to undertake social change efforts that are beyond the scope of any individual organization or program.

S

SAMPLE SIZE

(See "Sampling") The size of a representative sub-group chosen from a larger group to act as a base for data collection. Different sample sizes result in different "confidence levels" or reliability of the final data.

SAMPLING

A data collection technique in which results are collected from a representative sub-group, or sample, of a larger group.

STRATEGIC PLAN

A document at the organizational level, delineating an organization's mission, goals, and strategies for attaining those goals. A good strategic plan articulates goals and strategies for the organization as a whole, and broad goals and strategies for its programs. A strategic plan typically covers a 3- to 5-year timeframes.

T

TEST

A measurement of performance; can be used as part of a data-collection effort around particular indicators.

THEORY OF CHANGE

As defined by ActKnowledge, "A Theory of Change is an innovative tool to design and evaluate social change initiatives. By creating a blueprint of the building blocks required to achieve a social change initiative's long-term goal, such as improving a neighborhood's literacy levels or academic achievement, a Theory of Change offers a clear roadmap to achieve your results identifying the preconditions, pathways and interventions necessary for an initiative's success."

THEORY OF CHANGE ONLINE

Created in partnership with ActKnowledge, Theory of Change Online is a suite of tools for creating, sharing and using Theories of Change, available at Point K.

U

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V

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W

WYSIWYG

(We have no glossary terms beginning with W. This is a placeholder, from www.jargonfile.net/jargonfile)

/wiz'ee-wig/ adj. Describes a user interface under which "What You See Is What You Get", as opposed to one that uses more-or-less obscure commands that do not result in immediate visual feedback. True WYSIWYG in environments supporting multiple fonts or graphics is a a rarely-attained ideal; there are variants of this term to express real-world manifestations including WYSIAWYG (What You See Is Almost What You Get) and WYSIMOLWYG (What You See Is More or Less What You Get). All these can be mildly derogatory, as they are often used to refer to dumbed-down user-friendly interfaces targeted at non-programmers; a hacker has no fear of obscure commands (compare WYSIAYG). On the other hand, EMACS was one of the very first WYSIWYG editors, replacing (actually, at first overlaying) the extremely obscure, command-based TECO. See also WIMP environment. [Oddly enough, WYSIWYG has already made it into the OED, in lower case yet. --ESR]

X

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Y

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Z

(We have no glossary terms beginning with Z.)