

# Glossary

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## **Assets**

Strengths, opportunities, valuable quality or thing.

## **Assumptions**

The beliefs we have about the program, the participants, and the way we expect the program to operate; the principles that guide our work. Faulty assumptions may be the reason we don't achieve the expected outcomes.

## **Baseline**

Information about the situation or condition prior to a program or intervention.

## **Benchmarks**

Performance data used either as a baseline against which to compare future performance or as a marker of progress toward a goal.

## **Cost-benefit analysis**

Process to estimate the overall cost and benefit of a program or components within a program. Seeks to answer the question "Is this program or product worth its costs?" Or "Which of the options has the highest benefit/cost ratio?" This is only possible when all values can be converted into money terms.

## **Effectiveness**

Degree to which the program yields desired/desirable results.

## **Efficiency**

Comparison of outcomes to costs.

## **Environment (external factors)**

The surrounding environment in which the program exists and which influences the implementation and success of the initiative, including politics, climate, socio-economic factors, market forces, etc.

## **Evaluation**

Systematic inquiry to inform decision making and improve programs. **Systematic** implies that the evaluation is a thoughtful process of asking critical questions, collecting appropriate information, and then analyzing and interpreting the information for a specific use and purpose.

## **Impact**

The social, economic, and/or environmental effects or consequences of the program. Impacts tend to be long-term achievements. They may be positive, negative, or neutral; intended or unintended.

## **Impact indicator**

Expression or indication of impact. Evidence that the impact has/is being achieved.

## **Indicator**

Expression of what is/will be measured or described; evidence that signals achievement. Answers the question "How will I know it?"

## **Inputs**

Resources that go into a program including staff time, materials, money, equipment, facilities, volunteer time.

## **Monitoring**

Ongoing assessment of the extent to which a program is operating consistent with its design. Often means site visits by experts for compliance-focused reviews of program operations.

## **Outcome evaluation**

A type of evaluation to determine what results from a program and its consequences for people.

## **Outcome monitoring**

The regular or periodic reporting of program outcomes in ways that stakeholders can use to understand and judge results. Outcome monitoring exists as part of program design and provides

frequent and public feedback on performance.

**Outcomes**

Results or changes of the program. Outcomes answer the questions "So what?" and "What difference does the program make in people's lives?" Outcomes may be intended and unintended; positive and negative. Outcomes fall along a continuum from short-term/immediate/initial/proximal, to medium-term/intermediate, to long-term/final/distal outcomes, often synonymous with impact.

**Outputs**

Activities, services, events, products, participation generated by a program.

**Performance measure**

A particular value or characteristic used to measure/examine a result or performance criteria; may be expressed in a qualitative or quantitative way.

**Performance measurement**

The regular measurement of results and efficiency of services or programs.

**Performance targets**

The expected result or level of achievement; often set as numeric levels of performance.

**Qualitative analysis**

The use of systematic techniques to understand, reduce, organize, and draw conclusions from usually in narrative format.

**Qualitative methodology**

Methods that examine phenomena in depth and detail without predetermined categories or hypotheses. Emphasis is on understanding the phenomena as they exist. Qualitative methods usually consist of three kinds of data collection: observation, open-ended interviewing, and document review.

**Quantitative analysis**

The use of statistical techniques to understand data in a numerical format and to identify relationships between and among variables.

**Quantitative methodology**

Methods that seek the **facts** or **causes** of phenomena that can be expressed numerically and analyzed statistically. Interest is in generalizability. Quantitative methods consist of standardized, structured data collection including surveys, closed-ended interviews, tests.

**Reliability**

The consistency of a measure over repeated use. A measure is said to be reliable if repeated measurements produce the same result.

**Situation**

The context and need that give rise to a program or initiative; logic models are built in response to an existing situation.

**Situational analysis**

A systematic process for assessing needs (discrepancy or gap between what exists and a desired state) and assets (qualities or strengths) as a foundation for program priority setting.

**Stakeholder**

Person or group of people with a vested interest--a stake--in a program or evaluation, including clients, customers, beneficiaries, elected officials, support groups, program staff, funders, collaborators.

**Validity**

The extent to which a measure actually captures the concept of interest.