Successful Evaluation: Creating SMART Goals & Objectives

What is Evaluation?

The process of evaluating organizational program(s)/project(s) to determine the relevance, importance, and success of a service, product, or group of services provided to a target group, community, or client.

Evaluation is a critical aspect of all successful programs and projects. Benefits of a comprehensive evaluation process include, but are not limited to:

- **Ensure your organization project(s)/program(s) are aligned with mission and objectives**
- **Enable your organization to learn, confirm, and improve the services and products you provide to participants, communities, and customers**
- **Improves program processes and contributes to cost-effectiveness in activities**

> If your organization has staff members dedicated to evaluation, be sure to include them in the development of your application.
>
> When appropriate and financially feasible, organizations may want to consider hiring an external evaluation consultant. Many grant opportunities consider the cost of program/project evaluation as an allowable cost.

There are a variety of free resources available for organizations seeking to improve evaluation of programs and projects. First Nations has compiled an overview of these sources below, along with links to additional information.

Evaluation Terminology

Creating SMART Goals & Objectives

Using Logic Models

Successful Evaluation Statements

Evaluation Terminology

Goal – What you hope to achieve or accomplish

Objective – Specific and measurable steps to accomplishing goals

Output – Measurable result of a program activity

Outcome – What changed or was gained as a result of a program activity

Indicator – Used to monitor progress in achieving outcomes and impact

Benchmark – Standards by which project success will be measured

Target – Threshold for success

Accomplishments – Results related to your targets, project successes

SMART Goals & Objectives

It can sometimes be difficult to delineate between goals and objectives. Below is a helpful table for remembering their differences:

Goals v. Objectives

Goals are broad | Objectives are narrow

Goals are general intentions | Objectives are precise

Goals are intangible | Objectives are tangible

Goals are abstract | Objectives are concrete

Goals are generally difficult to measure | Objectives are measurable

Tulane University, Public Health Department, Tips for Writing Goals & Objectives

Objectives are the stepping stones you pass on the way to reaching your goals.

"SMART" Objectives are a helpful mnemonic device for developing impactful and quantifiable indicators of program/project success.

Specific	in identifying outcomes to be achieved
Measurable	using quantifiable and objective terms
Attainable	given proposed timeframe & capacity
Relevant	to the identified problem/statement of need
Time-bound	within the project period

Specific – A specific goal is more easily accomplished than a general goal. Both the applicant and the donor know what is expected, and the donor can easily monitor and assess performance against proposed metrics.

Measurable – Identify indicators that will help you stay on track to achieving your goals. Progress is regularly monitored according to these indicators. Shows the applicant and donor what work has been accomplished toward proposed metrics.

Attainable – Move the needle. Make sure your objectives will make a measurable effect on the identified problem and targeted community. Make sure your organization has everything in place to meet metrics. If you do not reach your metrics, you will need to be able to explain why.

Realistic – Don't overpromise or overstretch your organization's capacity, objectives should be accomplishable within the specified time period. Consider the types of people, resources, and other support you will need to accomplish the proposed metrics.

Timely – All objectives should be grounded within a specific timeframe, usually the grant period proposed by your organization or identified by the donor. Show what is required and when.

Types of Objectives

Common types of objectives include, but are not limited to:

Behavioral	A human action is anticipated
Performance	A specific timeframe within which a behavior will occur, at an expected proficiency level, is expected
Process	The manner in which something occurs is an end in itself
Product	A tangible item results

Using Logic Models

As stated by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, "The purpose of a logic model is to provide stakeholders with a road map describing the sequence of related events connecting the need for the planned program with the program's desired results. Mapping a proposed program helps you visualize and understand how human and financial investments can contribute to achieving your intended program goals and can lead to program improvements."

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation offers a Handbook with detailed information that may be helpful to organizations without extensive evaluation experience, as well as a Logic Model Development Guide. An example of a basic logic model, detailed in the development guide, is included below:

Resources/ Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
Certain resources are needed to operate your program	If you have access to them, **then** you can use them to accomplish your planned activities	**If** you accomplish your planned activities, **then** you will hopefully deliver the amount of product and/ or service that you intend	**If** you accomplish your planned activities to the extent you intended, **then** your participants will benefit in certain ways	If these benefits to participants are achieved, **then** certain changes in organizations, communities, or systems might be expected to occur

[1]W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Logic Development Guide

Successful Evaluation Statements

Each application format is different. However, there are several key components for successful evaluation statements for your organization to consider including, but not limited to:

- Clearly defined goals and objectives and other requested measurable indicators
- Description of evaluation staff and/or consultant qualifications
- Implementation plan for evaluation activities
- Implementation plan for internal and external reporting and/or dissemination of project findings

Metrics Language

Metrics are a rational, data-driven way to describe the impact of your programs/projects. This type of language is often very familiar to donors who are predominantly representative of businesses, corporations, foundations, and other metric-heavy industries.

The overall goal of metrics language in grant proposals is to measure the effect your organization's work has on actual human lives. Some organizations make the mistake of instead focusing metrics language on the efforts expended in grant activities, rather than the effect they are making. Goals and objectives representing efforts expended can be incorporated, but should not be the focus of your metrics language.

Metrics are typically expressed in quantifiable, measurable data and numbers. Qualitative metrics are also allowable, but should not be the entire focus of your program(s)/project(s) goals and objectives.

Examples of SMART Objectives for First Nations Applications

Pay close attention to how each donor identifies measurable goals, objectives, outcomes, outputs, and impacts. For all applications to First Nations, organizations will be required to identify measurable objectives as identified below.

Objectives should include the measurable intended outcome criteria for success, when you expect to complete that activity, and how you will measure the impact. Examples of past, successful SMART objectives include:

- By May 31, 2015, 40 youth will increase their self-awareness/knowledge of cultural beliefs, values, and practices vital to the art of *kalai papa hee nalu* (traditional surfboard carving) as evidenced by pre/post-surveys and attendance records.
- By May 31, 2015, 10 youth will develop a leadership group to mentor younger students in the carving of *papa hee nalu* (traditional surfboards) as evidenced by attendance records, video documentation, and a community hike.

Pro Tips

Consider incorporating these pro tips to make your evaluation statement stand out to potential donors:

- Strengthen your evaluation section by including a statement that incorporates past evaluation results, reports, and findings
- Include findings or statistics from evaluation results that demonstrate the impact of your programs/projects for beneficiaries and the targeted community
- Incorporate a powerful quote from your organization's leadership, a constituent, news article, or other source that references findings from past evaluations and describes the human impact of the work

- Long-term funding needs long-term metrics and short-term funding needs short-term metrics

Metrics on a Budget

Think creatively to develop meaningful, easy-to-measure goals and objectives on a budget. Some ideas include, but are not limited to:

- Enlisting partner organizations or fiscal sponsors to assist in designing your metrics or providing feedback
- Assemble "dashboards" of key metrics for key program(s)/project(s) that can be modified for use in different applications
- Explore your organization's current in-house data for information to establish metrics
- Consult outside resources, such as the free guides developed by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, to assist in creating your organization's metrics
- Consider implementation of low-cost activities like surveys, attendance sheets and participant evaluations
- Share transparently regarding your organization's challenges related to evaluation and your plans for improvement
- Conduct prospect research to find donors interested in funding the development of evaluation services within your organization
- Access and/or improve research tools within your organization's existing databases (fundraising, services, etc.) for tracking purposes

Links to External Resources

W.K. Kellogg Foundation

- Evaluation Handbook: https://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2010/w-k-kellogg-foundation-evaluation-handbook
- Logic Model Development Guide: https://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2006/02/wk-kellogg-foundation-logic-model-development-guide

Tulane University

- Tips for Writing Goals & Objectives: http://www2.tulane.edu/publichealth/mchltp/upload/Tips-for-writing-goals-and-objectives.pdf