Evaluation & Common Outcomes

Handbook for Edmonton FCSS Funded Agencies

City of Edmonton FCSS
Community Resources, Social Development
Citizen Services

FCSS
Family & Community
Support Services

Edmonton

Contents

Introduction

This manual was created to provide an overview of the evaluation process and the common outcomes reporting process to new Edmonton FCSS funded programs. It is also a helpful resource to share with staff members that are new to the organization that will be working on evaluation or the common outcomes reporting form.

Goals:

- Provide an overview of evaluation, what is involved and where you can get some support
- Dispel some of the frequently believed myths around evaluation
- Provide an overview of the common outcomes partnership, where it all started, where we are today, the expectations of Edmonton FCSS funded programs for reporting and why we collect this data
- Provide a brief introduction to utilizing your participants success stories

"The natural response to evaluation is to feel judged. We have to mature to a place where we respond to it with gratitude, and love feedback." – Henry Cloud [1]

Evaluation Support and Edmonton FCSS
Resources are available online:
Edmonton FCSS Website

Contact your FCSS Liaison for support
Phone: 780-496-4932
Email: grants@edmonton.ca

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[1] Quote Source: http://www.azquotes.com/quote/877885

Why Evaluate?

Evaluation becomes a crucial driving part of the program development cycle. Planning, designing, implementing and evaluating – an ongoing cycle that is essential to continuous program improvement. Edmonton FCSS encourages all of our funded agencies to evaluate their programs and the impact their program is having in the community. This is asked of our funded programs, not just to aid in reporting purposes, but rather we encourage the programs to evaluate to learn more about their program, the strengths and challenges the program is facing and to engage in continuous program planning.

Evaluation is about paying attention to more than just the score, but utilizing all the information that is in the margins:

> *"Evaluation and coaching get tangled together. When this occurs, the noise of evaluation drowns out coaching efforts. Think of this like a term paper. When you get your assignment grade back (evaluation), you tend to tune out the professor notes in the margins (coaching) if the grade is higher or lower than expected." –* Sheila Heen[2]

Evaluative Thinking

The act of evaluation is an activity, but the idea of evaluative thinking is a way of 'being' on a daily basis. It involves intentionally reflecting and critically asking questions about what we do, how we do it, why we do it and what the impact is of the work we do. It is not a behavior that comes naturally; it is a way of thinking that is practiced by frequently challenging yourself and others to think in this way.

Evaluative Thinking [3]	Evaluation as a Compliance Activity
Thinking about what kinds of information are most needed for learning and improvement	*Focusing on evaluation contract requirements and procedures.*
Reflecting together on evaluation findings, learning lessons, and applying them in future decisions	*Checking off that evaluation reports have been submitted and filed*

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[2] Quote [Source](#)
[3] Table is from: Otto Bremer Foundation, "Evaluation Flash Cards: Embedding Evaluative Thinking in Organizations Culture" (2014)

Before You Begin: Plan, Plan, Plan!

Before you get too overwhelmed by all the evaluation work that lies ahead, take a few steps back and look at the overall picture. This is implementing the "Evaluative Thinking" phase! Take some time to figure out what you want to learn, how you want to gather data, what the data means and what you will do with the data.

1. **Goal or Purpose**
   - Determine what your goal of the evaluation will be (beyond what the funder needs!
   - Questions like: What would we like to learn? What area are we excelling? What areas could we improve in? What are some key trends or issues we would like to address or explore?

2. **Ethics**
   - Considering ethics is important at every stage of evaluation
   - Think about the participants experience and empower their participation in evaluation
   - Key concepts: informed & voluntary consent, minimizing risk, anonymity & confidentiality, data storage, understanding purpose

3. **Methodology**
   - Quantitative (Numbers): Statistics and rates about that are informative about your program impact; often measures effort.
   - Qualitative (Themes): Provides more in-depth details or accounts about the experiences of the participants being served.
   - Mixed Methods: Integrating both of these approaches will provide the richest story

4. **Data Collection**
   - Determine a standardized way of collecting data (standard tool, guide or rubric) and make sure all staff are using the tools the same way
   - Ensure you have a standardized way of calculating positive change across those collecting and reporting data
   - Are there any creative data collection tools you can use (art, music, photos) to capture impact?

5. **Success Stories**
   - The success story is about the people and how their lives are impacted by the work you do. This provides an opportunity to showcase the complexity and/or challenges overcome through support of the program.
   - This is also a great opportunity to reflect improvements or changes, new partnerships and the impact of collaboration.

6. Data Analysis

- Once all the data has been gathered, pick a place to start and see what it tells you. Explore the data and see how it all relates to the big picture.
- Important to remember, there's no "bad" results! You don't have to report perfect 100% positive change, or perfect results. If you learn about a gap or a challenge, start a plan for how you will address it!
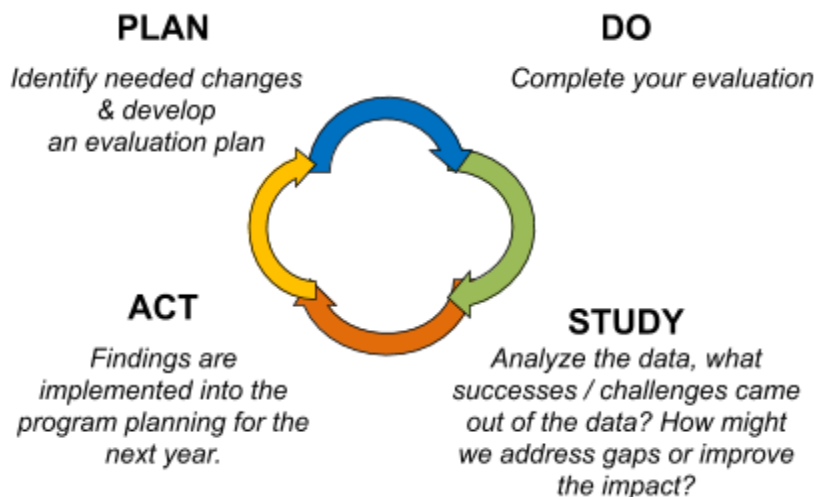
7. So What?

- Summarize it all! What did you learn about the program? What did you learn about the process? Is there a better way to do programming or to do the evaluation?
- Think critically about what you can improve for next year! Capitalize on the unexpected learnings and put a plan in place to repeat this process.

Plan, Do, Study, Act: Continuous Improvement

"In the 1930s, Dr. Walter Shewhart developed an overall model for process improvement" and it has been adapted and used ever since. The Plan Do Study-Act (PDSA) Model of improvement is often illustrated in a circle because often plans do not work perfectly the first time and need continual changes and adaptations[4].

Questions that guide PDSA Cycle Model of Improvement:

- What are we trying to accomplish?
- How will we know that a change is an improvement?
- What changes can we make that will result in improvement?

PLAN
Identify needed changes & develop an evaluation plan

DO
Complete your evaluation

ACT
Findings are implemented into the program planning for the next year.

STUDY
Analyze the data, what successes / challenges came out of the data? How might we address gaps or improve the impact?

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[4] Source: FCSS: a Basic Guide to Outcome Measurement (2014)

Theory of Change

The role of a theory of change or a program theory is to explain how the program contributes to the chain of results that ultimately produce the intended impact.[5]

Often the program theory is developed during the planning stage but it can be developed at any time. It generally goes hand-in-hand with the evaluation process, thus when you are planning your evaluation it is a great time to create (or revise) your theory of change or program theory.

A theory of change is often developed by "first identifying the desired long-term goals and then works back from these to identify all the conditions (outcomes) that must be in place (and how these relate to one another causally) for the goals to occur. "[6] Writing a theory of change statement often involves thinking through all the steps along the path to achieve your desired change. It is important to identify the preconditions that will enable (and even inhibit) each of the steps in the process, carefully examining the activities that will produce those conditions.[7] This process allows us to check our assumptions and think critically about our programs, activities, outcomes and how they will be achieved.

Why is a "theory of change" helpful? [8]

- Establishes common principles and vocabulary
- Makes implicit assumptions explicit
- Identifies resources and checks them for adequacy
- Allows for designing more realistic plans of action
- Clarifies lines of responsibility
- Creates more meaningful evaluations
- Maintains a healthy level of skepticism

Important aspects of a strong theory of change[9]

1. Make sure you are solving the right problem
2. Use a diverse range of sources, including critics and intended beneficiaries
   "*What is it about this program that makes the difference?*"
3. Identify people or sites that do not fit the pattern (outliers/exceptions) and see how the theory of change can be modified to include them
4. Check if there are complicated and complex aspects that need to be addressed

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[5] Source: Betterevaluation.org – "Develop Programme Theory"
[6] Source: Theory of Change.org – "What is Theory of Change?"
[7] Source: Mapping Change – "Using a Theory of Change to Guide Planning & Evaluation"
[8] Source: Mapping Change – "Using a Theory of Change to Guide Planning & Evaluation"
[9] Source: Betterevaluation.org – "52 Weeks of Better Evaluation: Week 12, Having an adequate theory of change."

Program Logic Models

Developing a logic model will become the foundation of your evaluation process. The logic model becomes your guide and is often revised as part of the continuous nature of evaluation. When program planning results in making changes to your activities you can return to your logic model, make the updates and follow the logic through to find out how that new activity fits into your overall program outcomes.

There are multiple different ways you can create a program logic model. There are many templates available online or you can create one that works best for your program. A detailed example of creating a logic model can be found in Innovation Network, Inc.'s Logic Model Workbook[10]. Typically, the components of a logic model include:

- Need
- Strategy/Theory of Change
- Goal
- Resources (Inputs)
- Activities
- Outputs
- Outcomes (Short-term, intermediate & long-term)

Why create a logic model?

- Helps to plan and develop your program
- A tool for program management because you are able to see how all the components are connected and where results come from
- It's a great tool to communicate the work that your program does to others and also allows for consensus around the goals of program to be established with internal and external stakeholders
- It becomes a helpful tool for your ongoing evaluation processes; if kept up to date, it is always a guiding map of what you do, what you want to accomplish and how it will be done.
- It is a tool to support your staff in understanding the link between program activities and outcomes to support intentional practice

Edmonton FCSS often shares resources for logic models and other evaluation support through visits with your FCSS liaison. Edmonton FCSS also has a logic model template available to help get you started!

Did you know?
Logic Models don't have to created in a box format! There are many examples of creative logic models that demonstrate something meaningful to the program, participants, volunteers, board and/or staff members! Some examples include logic models in circles, models that align with the medicine wheel or other cultural teachings, trees or gardens, etc.

[10] Innovation Network, Inc.: Logic Model Workbook:

Developing Outcome Statements, Indicators & Questions

Writing Outcomes: The S.M.A.R.T Model[11]

Edmonton FCSS[12] and Provincial FCSS[13] have plenty of outcomes and measures for you to choose from. However, if they are not quite perfect and you want to capture a different aspect of your work, you can use the S.M.A.R.T model to help you write your outcome statements.

- S – Specific (what exactly is expected from whom?)
- M – Measurable (is it something you can see, hear or count?)
- A – Attainable (is it something that can be realistically achieved?)
- R – Results Oriented/Relevant (is it something that is meaningful and valued?)
- T – Timed (is it something that can be measured within the time frame?)

A complete and specific outcome statement should include:
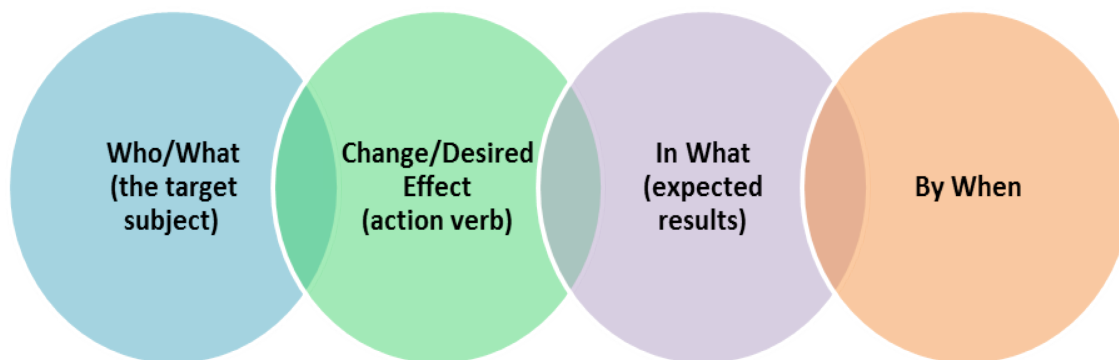
For example:
Low-income families participating in the program, increase their use of community services within three months after the program finishes.

Tool & Question Development

There are a variety of different tools you can use within the evaluation process including but not limited to: surveys, interviews, focus groups, observations, administrative statistics, and review of charts or other documentation such as journaling. There are plenty of resources available to help you decide which method is best for your program and the benefits and drawbacks to each. Some of these resources are available on the Edmonton FCSS website: evaluation websites.

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[11] Source: Outcome Statements and the SMART format
    Expanding Opportunity-Strengthening Community - Otto Bremer Foundation

[12] Edmonton FCSS Common Outcomes Model
[13] Provincial FCSS Outcomes Model

"The most serious mistakes are not being made as a result of wrong answers. The truly dangerous thing is asking the wrong question." - Peter Drucker [14]

Questions should be:

- Meaningful
- Useful
- Aligned with the program goals & outcomes
- Answerable, feasible
- Written in plain language [15]
- Ethical

Ensure that every question you ask has a purpose. If you are not going to use the information or it does not relate to your program planning, you likely do not need to ask it. Spend the time to develop questions up front that measure exactly what you are looking for. Never hesitate topre-test the questions either. Share your evaluation with other staff, board members, partners or even test with a small group of program participants to ensure that the questions make sense and render the answers you have set out to gather.

Timing of Evaluation

There are a variety of different ways you can perform your evaluation and it often is dependent on the program, how often the program runs and when participants generally enter and exit the program. There are a few different times you can evaluate your program:

Pre & Post Programming – if you are lucky enough to have a designated start and end date to a program, you can provide an assessment to your participants when they start their program and then again at the end of the program. This technique often best captures a change from what was, to what is now. Carefully designed questions can help you to determine to what extent that change was due to participation in the program or what other factors may have contributed.

During Programming – this is often common when evaluation is completed at some point during the programming cycle to capture a sample of participants that are participating in your program. This is often utilized by programs of a drop-in nature, where there is no designated start and end.

Post Programming – this type of evaluation occurs when programming is finished and the participant is no longer returning (or isn't planning or expected to return).

Follow up – this type of evaluation occurs after the participant has left programming and the program staff has obtained permission to follow with the participant. This is a great opportunity to learn what the participant has utilized from the program and any behavior changes that have occurred.

It's important to note, that although you should be tracking the participants you are serving – you do not have to have every single participant involved in the evaluation process. Often programs will determine a sample size that is relative to the number of participants they support in a year. Planning when and how to do evaluation is often very program specific.

If you would like help planning when and how to do your evaluation activities, contact your FCSS Liaison.

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[14] **Source**: CDC National Asthma Control Program.

[15] Readability Resources: The Writer & Readability Score websites

Consent & Ethics

It's important to consider how you are going to obtain free and informed consent from your program participants. Consider these important pieces[16] and how you might be able to incorporate them into your program or organization's policies:

- What information do you need to know versus what information is nice to know, if you will not use the information, do you need to collect it?
- Consider everyone's time with regard to how long it takes to create, complete and analyze the evaluation
- Protect your program participants through confidentiality and anonymity procedures
- Ensure participants are clear about what data you are collecting, why you are collecting the data, what will be done with the data, and that they are completing the evaluation *voluntarily* and can withdraw at any time (i.e. they don't have to complete it once they start if they do not feel comfortable doing so).
    - An important aspect of this is that the consent is obtained in a way that the participant clearly understands. For example, ensure the language is at an appropriate reading level and/or use plain language.
- Also consider power relationships when you are conducting an evaluation. For example, if positive feedback will influence their position in the program or relationship with program staff it could alter the responses you receive.

If you have further questions or concerns around ethics and consent, please get in touch with your assigned FCSS liaison and they will be more than happy to help you develop and implement a system that will meet the needs of your program evaluation plan and your program participants. A great ethics resource is the [ARECCI: Ethics Guidelines & Screening Tool.](#)

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[16] **Source**: http://www.aihealthsolutions.ca/outreach-learning/arecci-a-project-ethics-community-consensus-initiative/

History of Common Outcomes

The Partnership

Goal: Measure the impact of funding dollars & the work of the agencies in the Prevention & Early Intervention Sector on positive change in the community through common outcome measurement.

In 1999[17], liaisons from the United Way, the City of Edmonton and Edmonton Region Child and Family Services started working together as they recognized that the aims and outcomes of Early Intervention and Prevention programs across funders were similar. They met regularly and engaged in dialogue and work with community agencies around supporting improved outcomes for children and families.
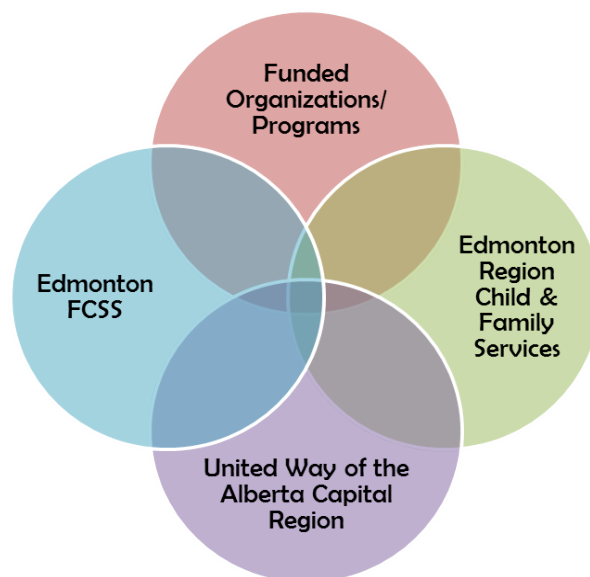
The partnership came together around the following goals: to succeed in our collaborative effort, to simplify data collection, to show the impact of our work, and to evaluate programs and show the difference they make in communities. Agencies and funders worked together to determine information needs; to co-develop a common language and understanding; to focus on the impact of our sector, collectively; and to highlight the excellent work done by agencies in our community.

Together, the group began to address the challenges of incorporating different reporting needs, of rolling up a large amount of collective data, and of finding consistent approaches and tools for collecting the data.

The Common Outcomes Advisory Group

In 2008, the 'Early Intervention Evaluation Advisory Committee' (now called the 'Common Outcomes Advisory Group' COAG[18]) came together for the first time to address the need to develop common ground for evaluating early intervention and prevention initiatives. The Advisory Group was (and still is) made up of agency and funder representatives who work collaboratively to develop an evaluation approach that will be flexible, meaningful, and a good fit for the entire Prevention and Early Intervention Sector.

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[17] This information is taken primarily from meeting notes, emails and shared documents, as well as from speaking with people that were involved from the beginning.

[18] The Common Outcomes Advisory Group (COAG) or Advisory Group, is a group of representatives from the funded agencies

In order to show the impact of the tremendous work done in the sector and in our communities, agencies and funders worked together to determine information needs as well as to try and identify an easier way to gather data. Some work of the Advisory Group over the years has included:

- Collaboratively to come to agreement on common outcomes in late 2010/2011
- Led reviews of the indicators and tools; cleaning up the outcomes and indicators
- Planned presentations back to the sector, at meetings
- Co-creation of impact areas

The energy and excitement from agency and funder members of COAG is always high as we all share a common vision of where we wish to move this work, collectively. The funders are very grateful for all the support that the COAG provides to our partnership and to the Prevention and Early Intervention sector.

Ongoing Feedback Loop

One of the most unique characteristics of this partnership is the ongoing feedback and communication that is provided by the various stakeholders. It speaks volumes that multiple large funding bodies and over 100 funded organizations are frequently coming together to discuss the outcomes and impacts of the work we do in the sector.

The Common Outcomes Working Group is always seeking advice from the Common Outcomes Advisory Group regarding suggestions and ideas for how we move this work forward. Once those ideas have been discussed, as a team, representatives from the funded agencies and the funders propose those ideas to the sector. Generally, this feedback is asked for at the Prevention & Early Intervention Sector Meetings[19] that occur one or two times a year.
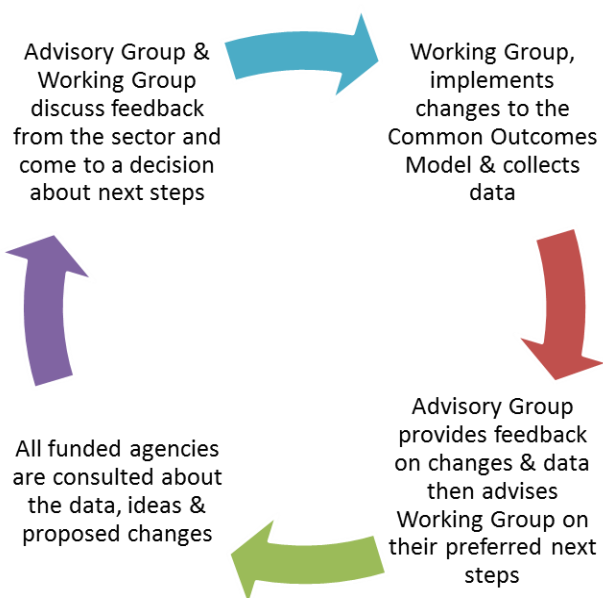
Once feedback is gathered from the funded agencies, the feedback returns to the Working Group and the Advisory Group for discussions on the response we received. This process allows for everyone to be informed as well as take ownership with what is happening with the outcomes and reporting. This partnership and initiative was formed from the agency staff challenging the funders to align reporting as outcomes were becoming increasingly requested as a means of showing impact of funding dollars. Founded on open communication, co-creation and partnership of funded programs and funders, this initiative strives to continue to respond to the needs and include the funded programs as often as possible.

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[19] All funded agencies are invited to the Prevention & Early Intervention (PEI) Sector Meetings that often occur in the Spring (June) and Fall (November).

Common Outcomes Report (COR)

Who:

Edmonton Region Children's Services (CS), Edmonton Family and Community Support Services (Edm FCSS), United Way of the Alberta Capital Region (UWay) and numerous funded community agencies work together to provide a continuum of programs and services to meet the needs of all community members.

What:

In order to provide a summary of some of the social impacts and outcomes the social services sector is achieving, funders and funded agencies continue to work together to implement a common outcomes reporting form aimed at simplifying data collection and highlighting the positive difference programs are making in the community.

How:

Annually, the common reporting tool is used to collect data on these core outcomes and associated indicators. The Common Outcomes Report (COR) is typically sent out in December each year with a due date approximately 2 months later (end of January).

It is important to note that this report is one piece of the evaluation work that our funded agencies are expected to engage in throughout the year. Although this single report does not always tell the entire story of the work funded programs are doing, it is a snapshot into how the funded programs are contributing to the common outcomes.

Breakdown of Outcomes & Indicators

There are currently 14 outcomes (56 indicators) that are distributed over 5 key impact areas. These outcomes and indicators were co-created and then revised with the support of the Common Outcomes Advisory Group.

When these outcomes and indicators were developed, the consultants from WellQuest Consulting also created sample questions that agencies could incorporate into their evaluation tools to measure each of the indicators.

To see the list of outcomes & indicators as well as their corresponding sample tools, please visit the FCSS website and look under the header "Common Outcomes Initiative" and the file is termed "Common Outcomes Initiative Model".

Mandatory Outcomes & Indicators

Beginning in 2015, the Community Services Advisory Board (CSAB) required that all funded agencies report on a specific outcome, indicator and questions for each assigned program area as well as a question regarding social inclusion to increase consistency and our ability to provide year over year comparisons about how we are making changes in particular outcome areas.

Each of the Edmonton FCSS funded agencies receive a Funding Letter with specific actions determined by CSAB. Included in these actions is the Program Area your program should report under, as well as the mandatory outcome(s), indicator(s) and question(s) that will need to be reported on in the following year.

For example:

	Outcome	Indicator	Provincial Measure
Capacity Building	#10: More effective community organizations.	b) Organizations report resources (e.g., research, tools and templates) have strengthened organizational capacity (e.g., board and financial governance, succession planning, evaluation support).	. . .My organization is better able to serve the people in my community.
	#9: Strengthened individual skills within organizations.	d) Organization staff or volunteers report relationships/connections have been enhanced.	. . . I have / My organization has developed better working relationships with other community agencies.

Scale: For both of the above questions, please use the following scale: 1 - Strongly Disagree 2 - Disagree 3 - Somewhat Disagree 4 - Somewhat Agree 5 - Agree 6 - Strongly Agree.

Please consult your funding agreement or speak with your assigned FCSS liaison if you have any questions about the mandatory outcome, indicator and question.

Edmonton FCSS Report to the Province

Edmonton FCSS is required to report on the impacts of the FCSS dollars to the Province of Alberta. Your common outcomes reporting provides Edmonton FCSS with the information we need to meet this Provincial funding requirement.

The Common Outcomes Model 2.0 was developed and aligned to the Provincial FCSS Outcomes Model. Appendix A provides a copy of the Provincial Model[20]. For your reference, the Provincial FCSS Outcomes Model, includes a measures bank where there are lists of different measures for each of the outcomes and indicators in the model.

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[20] A reference for the Provincial FCSS Outcomes Model is available online here & there is a chart of the outcomes in Appendix A

Sections of the Common Outcomes Report

The Common Outcomes Report is filled out for EACH Edmonton FCSS funded program that your agency has. For example, if your agency is ABC123 Agency, and you are funded for Program A, Program B and Program C through Edmonton FCSS, you will fill out three separate reports.

1) **Program Information**
   a. Agency Name & Program Name
   b. Description of the Program
   c. Program Contact Information
   d. Funding Sources
2) **Outputs**
   a. Number of FTEs, Volunteers & Volunteer Hours, Students & Student Hours
   b. Number of Unique Participants (aged 0-5, 6-12, 13-17, 18-24, 25-64 and 65+)
   c. Number of Unique Participants that are Aboriginal or Immigrant & Refugee [21]
3) **Outcomes (Report up to <u>five</u> outcomes)**
   a. Report on two mandatory outcomes & additional outcomes of your choosing
   b. When and how the data was mostly collected
   c. Number of participants you tried to collect, number of participants you collected data from & the number of participants that made a positive change on that indicator
   d. Any key themes that have resulted from the data
4) **Success Story**
   a. Share a success story from your program
5) **Reflection Questions**
   a. Questions reflecting on evaluation & program impact in the last year
   b. Opportunity to share any additional or context

- 📄 2017 Data Summary Report
- 📄 2016 Data Summary Report
- 📄 2015 Data Summary Report
- 📄 2014 Data Summary Report
- 📄 2013 Data Summary Report

The Data Roll Up

Once all the data is submitted by the agencies, it is compiled and the Common Outcomes Summary Report is created. Generally, the data is cleaned and organized to be reported back to all of the funded agencies at a Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) sector meeting. This meeting provides the funded agencies with the opportunity to discuss the data, provide feedback and challenge ourselves on how we can continue to improve the data. The report back is emailed out to the funded agencies as well as posted on the Edmonton FCSS website each year.

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[21] Note: We recognize the challenge in collecting demographic data, but we encourage programs to collect if they can.

Beyond the Numbers: Success Stories

We know how important sharing stories are, not only for the funded agencies but as part of providing a full picture of the impact the programs are having on individuals they serve. Each Common Outcomes Report has a section where you can submit a success story about the funded program. However, you can also submit a success story at any point in time during the year as they happen. At any time of the year, you can use the following link to submit a success story. Details about consent and receiving photo consent are on the website: Success Stories Submission Form.

Tips for Telling a Great Success Story

One of the most effective ways to demonstrate your outcomes and indicators is through a well told success story about your program or organization. This story should be a unique experience of a participant or your organization (not statistics or survey responses) that shows the difference your agency is making in the community, even if it is only a difference in one person at a time!

❖ The success story is about **the people** and how their lives are impacted by the work that you do.
❖ Determine an individual or a situation that stands out from the past year. Envision the story being told to a group of people to **motivate** them and to show them what your agency can do (always remember to respect confidentiality and anonymity).
❖ Give details about the **context** of your story; a story always has a **problem to solve**!
    o For example: How did the participant end up coming to your organization & what support did they receive?
❖ A story always has a **journey**. Demonstrate how their time spent with the agency connected them with the community, taught them skills they needed, helped them attain their basic needs, provided them with educational/financial support etc.
❖ Describe their **transformation** or moment of revelation as seen through the eyes of the agency and how their time spent with the agency made a difference in their life.

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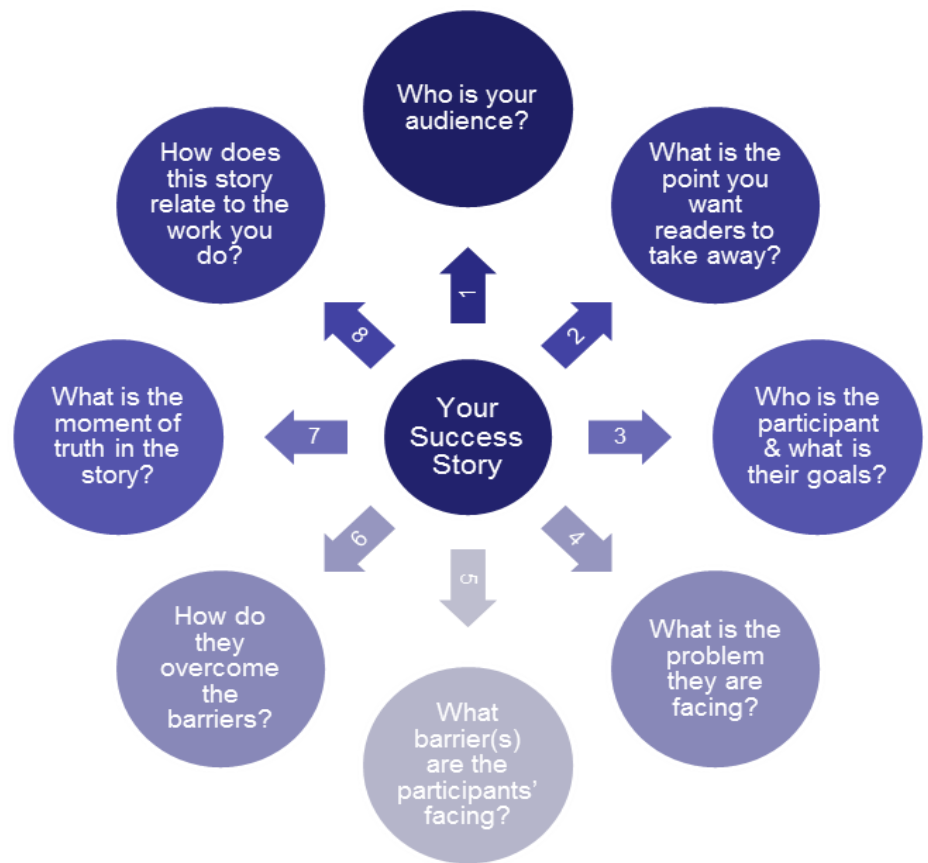
Analyzing Quantitative Data [22]

Often qualitative data has some of the most in-depth and detailed information within in, but can be a bit more time consuming to analyze and summarize. When paired with the quantitative data (i.e. all the numbers) it often provides a more full picture of the impact.

- Organize all of the data (either in Excel or in a database)
- Identify the types of quantitative data you have
- Explore different ways of analyzing the data such as: frequency tables, levels of measurement and correlation
- Look for trends, outliers and anything the data might be telling you
- Look at your qualitative data (if you have any) to see if it helps to answer any questions you may have or completes the story

Analyzing Qualitative Data [23]

Often qualitative data has some of the most in-depth and detailed information within it, but can be more time consuming to analyze and summarize. When paired with the quantitative data (i.e. all the numbers) it provides a more full picture of the impact.

- Read all of the data
- Make notes about first impressions
- Re-read all of the data one by one, this time label key words or phrases that are relevant to the work you do, the goals you have, strengths or challenges the participant is facing, etc.; these are often referred to as codes.
- Once you have completed the coding, go through and group all the codes together in different categories based on their similarities, these will often become your themes.
- Report on themes, particularly the ones that relate to your overarching outcomes or ones that were unexpected findings

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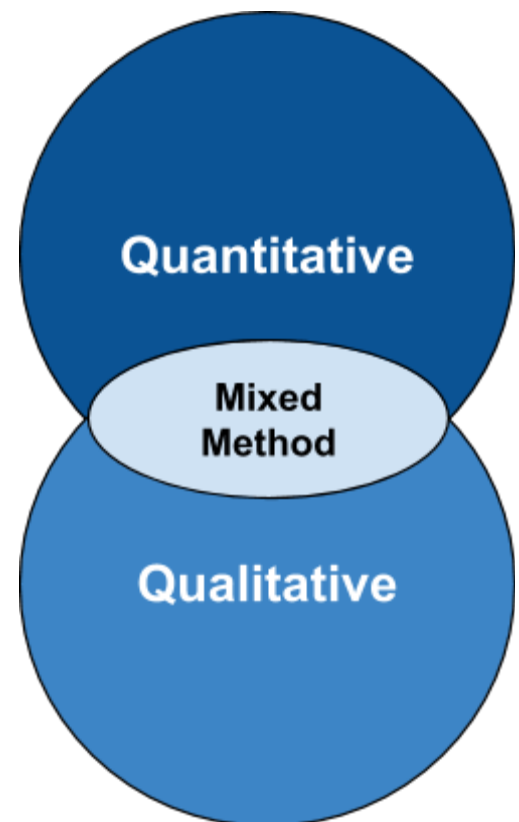
[22] Resources for analyzing qualitative data: Better Evaluation "Analyse Data" or Pell Institute: "Analyze Quantitative Data"

[23] Resources for analyzing qualitative data: Better Evaluation "Doing Qualitative Analysis" and YouTube video: Step-By-Step Qualitative Analysis

MythBusters: Evaluation Edition

Myth: We can't afford an evaluation.[24]
Fact: Including evaluation as a part of your work yields practical benefit of telling you how well your program is working and what needs to be changed. With a little creative thinking, some form of useful evaluation can be included in almost any budget. The more you integrate evaluation into the daily aspects of the work, the easier it is to have evaluation part of day-to-day operations.

Myth: Evaluation is too complicated. No one here knows how to do it.
Fact: Many sources of help are available for designing an evaluation. There are resources available on the Edmonton FCSS website and you always have your FCSS liaison for support. If your organization does not have employees with the necessary skills, find help at a nearby university or from someone related to your program (e.g., a board member, a volunteer, or someone from a partner organization).

Myth: Evaluation takes too long.
Fact: Although large, complicated outcome evaluation studies take time to design and analyze (and may require a sufficient time lapse for changes in attitudes or behavior to become clear), other types of evaluation can be conducted in a few weeks or months, or even as little as a day. A well-planned evaluation can proceed in tandem with program development and implementation activities. Often, evaluation seems excessively time-consuming only because it is left until the end of the program.

Myth: Program evaluation is too risky. What if it shows our funding source (or boss) that we haven't succeeded?
Fact: A greater problem is having no results at all. A well-designed evaluation will help you measure and understand the results (e.g., if an attitude or a perception did not change, why not?). This information can direct future initiatives and help the program plan accordingly. When reporting on evaluation results, you should always include what you learned from completing the program evaluation.

Myth: We affected only 30 percent of our intended audience. Our program is a failure.
Fact: Low numbers are not always bad numbers! Often cases, they are more realistic and if done properly, you will learn *why* there wasn't a change. What other factors are involved? What else needs to be done to support the population you are serving? What challenges are they facing that are preventing success? What can we do differently to serve this population? Affecting even 30% of you intended audience is still an accomplishment. Remember to report your results in the context of what programs can be expected to accomplish and/or program goals.

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[24] Source: [Myths & Misconceptions in Evaluation](#)

Myth: If our program is working, we should see results very soon.
Fact: Results will vary depending on the program, the issue, and the intended audience. Don't expect instant results; creating and sustaining change in attitudes and particularly in behavior or behavioral intentions often takes time and commitment. Your program may show shorter term, activity-related results when you conduct your process evaluation; these changes in knowledge, information seeking, and skills may occur sooner than more complex behavioral changes.

Myth: Quantitative data is better than qualitative data.[25]
Fact: While quantitative data is an important part of evaluation, some types of information are better communicated through qualitative data. Use both to complement one another. The qualitative data (interviews, journaling, focus groups) can help you to capture "the story" aspect of the evaluation, which is often a powerful source of understanding the impact of your service.

Myth: An evaluation plan must be perfect in order to be effective.
Fact: Don't worry about perfection. It's far more important to do something systematically and consistently, than to wait until every last detail has been tested. Also, don't forget to be flexible in your design. Allow for change or expansion in midstream if program objectives change or evaluation data shows a new direction for inquiry.

Myth: Evaluating only success stories ensures positive evaluations.
Fact: An effective evaluation should assess both the positive and negative aspects of the program you are evaluating. You can learn a great deal about a program by understanding its failures, dropouts, and missed opportunities – and that understanding will illuminate and improve future programming. That doesn't mean that you should only focus on negative aspects. Determine what tone will resonate with your audience and focus in on the victories, the challenges, or both.

Myth: Raw data is useless after an evaluation report is written.
Fact: Raw data is the foundation for your evaluation. Hold onto it! It might become useful again as the program continues to develop. Raw data can provide precious information later, and save time and resources when new issues arise.

Myth: Evaluation is about proving the success or failure of a program.[26]
Fact: This myth is based on the assumption that upon implementing a program it will perfectly run itself. However, success involves being open to ongoing feedback and adjusting the program based on need. Evaluation is the component that provides that continuous feedback.

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[25] Innovation Network: Dispelling Evaluation Myths
[26] Source: A Basic Guide to Program Evaluation

Appendix A: FCSS Provincial Outcomes Model Diagram

The FCSS Outcomes Model: Chart of Outcomes and Indicators:

Over-arching Goal:
FCSS enhances the social well-being of individuals, families and community through prevention.

SD1 help people to develop independence, strengthen coping skills and become more resistant to crisis;

SD2 help people to develop an awareness of social needs;

SD3 help people to develop interpersonal and group skills which enhance constructive relationships among people;

SD4 help people and communities to assume responsibility for decisions and actions which affect them; and

SD5 provide supports that help sustain people as active participants in the community.

Strategic Directions (SD)

Improved social well-being of individuals

Outcome 1: Individuals experience personal well-being. (contributes to SD1)

Indicators:
Resilience; self-esteem; optimism; capacity to meet needs; autonomy; competence; personal engagement; meaning and purpose

Outcome 2: Individuals are connected with others. (contributes to SD3)

Indicators:
Quality of social relationships, social supports available, trust and belonging

Outcome 3: Children and youth develop positively. (contributes to SD1 through SD5)

Indicators:
Developmental assets

Improved social well-being of families

Outcome 1: Healthy functioning within families (contributes to SD1 & SD3)

Indicators:
Positive family relationships:
Positive parenting
Positive family communication

Outcome 2: Families have social supports. (contributes to SD3 & SD5)

Indicators:
Extent and quality of social networks
Family accesses resources as needed.

Improved social well-being of community

Outcome 1: The community is connected and engaged. (contributes to SD1 through SD5)

Indicators:
Social engagement
Social support
Awareness of the community
Positive attitudes toward others and the community

Outcome 2: Community social issues are identified and addressed. (contributes to SD1, SD2 & SD3)

Indicators:
Awareness of community social issues.
Understanding of community social issues.
Agencies and/or community members work in partnership to address social issues in the community,

Local FCSS programs and projects address local priorities based on social needs.

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27 Source: [FCSS Basic Guide to Outcome Measurement](#)

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