

Illinois After-school Partnership

Outcomes Work Group Meeting Summary

February 17th, 2005

Attendees: Deyon Dean, IDHS, Heather Barton-Villagrana, ICVP, Mindy Lanum, ICVP, Angela Adan-Farnham, CRPD, Carol Franke I-KAN ROE, Rachel Klein, After School Matters, Kristin Allen, Springfield Boys and Girls Club

Staff: Jennifer Becker Mouhcine

Mott Framework

The group discussed the Mott framework that was distributed to state-wide networks at a national meeting at the beginning of the month. The framework was discussed in some detail, both covering questions about its development and suggestions for additions that would make it most useful to our work. The summary of the feedback from the meeting and from other conversations with Partnership members was drafted and sent to Mott. That document is attached at the end of the meeting summary.

Outcomes/Evaluation Resources for Providers

The group reviewed the areas of tools and supports developed at the last meeting as we continue to determine what we can provide to the afterschool field to support evaluation, in addition to an outcomes menu. The list was refined and the areas in no particular order are:

- **Logic Models/Theory of Change information**
- **Readiness Assessments**
 - An organization's readiness to conduct an evaluation
 - A program's readiness to be evaluated
- **Evaluation Utilization**
 - Examples: communicate results, effective ways to use data, internally and externally, how to use evaluation to solve problems, how to learn from outcomes-expected and unexpected
- **Evaluation Planning and Implementation**
 - Examples: Realistic expectations about evaluation internal and external, Determining appropriate evaluation based on what questions need answers
- **Evaluation Framework**
 - What is evaluation, why evaluate, etc.

For each area, we started to brainstorm the materials and resources that exist for each area. We know there is a lot of information on evaluation capacity building, and we don't want to recreate what already exists, but try to compile the most helpful set of materials for afterschool providers. The group will review the resources that exist, and determine which ones would be good to incorporate into our final product, which areas need more information, and what it would take to make this information most useful to afterschool providers. The following page has a chart that gives an overview of what was suggested in each area.

Next Meeting: March 16th, 2005

We will review materials that have been collected/sent to Jennifer in these areas, as well as review the interview tool about evaluation to see how we may want to revise it to help us shape our work

Logic Models/Theory of Change information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mott Framework Materials ○ United Way written resources/workbook ○ United Way Training ○ Harvard Family Research Project ○ Kellogg ○ University of WI extension-PDF/Powerpoint
Readiness Assessments -A program's readiness to be evaluated (Evaluability Assessments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Angela provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --University of Montreal-EA framework as a participatory tool for planning evaluations --University of Calgary-EA as catalyst for program change --USAF—Evaluability assessment worksheet --“A Tool to Guide Evaluability Assessments” ○ Harvard Family Research Project ○ Beth Welbus-BSAP project
Readiness Assessments -An organization's readiness to conduct an evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --ERI is gathering
Evaluation Utilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Examples in Practice (Springfield Boys & Girls Club) --ERI Training Curriculum
Evaluation Planning and Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -ERI Training --United Way has some info on planning, and cost/benefit
Evaluation Framework	

Illinois After-school Partnership Outcomes Work Group

Feedback/Comments to Mott on the “Framework for Successful After-school Programs”

We want to thank you for extending the deadline to provide feedback, and letting us go outside the format of the survey for our reply. This allowed our Outcomes work group, who has been working on a very similar project, to meet to discuss this framework, pose questions, and to talk about the most effective ways we could make use of this tool.

Background on Outcomes Works

Our Outcomes work group has spent much time gathering a long list of outcomes from a range of sources, including funder requirements, research, and programs, and from a variety of sectors including education, youth development, prevention, etc. We gathered this list into five broad categories, and refined the list to eliminate duplicates and ensure the statements were in fact youth outcomes. We gathered this list in hopes of finding some overarching menu of common outcomes and measures we could say that quality afterschool programs should work to achieve. Using this outcomes menu, we also planned to tie consistent measurements and indicators to the outcomes, both to help programs know how and what to measure for that outcome, but also to try to increase consistency among the public funders and what outcomes measures and methods they are requiring. We also wanted to make sure that when we put our outcomes menu into the hands of providers, we do so along with tools and resources to help programs think about, conduct and/or participate in evaluation activities. Once we had our broad list, it became difficult to know how best to narrow it down to “recommended outcomes” so currently our state agency partners have agreed to see if they can agree on some common priority outcomes to inform our list, but we still hope to maintain a broad range of outcomes for programs to consider. In the meantime, the work group is starting to pull together tools and resources for providers in the area of evaluation.

I had heard very generally about your work on a quality framework, but had not realized until we were finally able to see the draft in New Mexico, how similar it was to what we have been envisioning and starting to put together. While it is too bad we were not able to exchange information as we were doing our concurrent work, we are excited to see the tool that has been developed. Our members think it is a great tool for illustrating the theory of change for programs.

The following is an overview of the feedback and comments raised in our meeting yesterday on how the framework would be even more useful to our work. Individual members of our group may be faxing in more specific comments directly, in addition to my summary below. I tried to capture all of the feedback and comments. I hope it is clear, but welcome any clarification questions.

Questions Raised

- What participant populations were considered in the compilation of this tool, in terms of the example outcomes and measures? Specifically, were programs that targeted older youth represented in the research these were based on?
- What program types were considered? How broad was the range?
- While we realize the outcomes listed are just examples, we also know that if this goes out into the field, many programs will see these as the “best” or “recommended” outcomes. That being said, what was the basis for why certain outcomes are listed and why others aren’t? Our list is very long, because we felt it hard to determine which ones not to list, but at the same time, if there is strong research evidencing which outcomes are more appropriate for afterschool programs to hold themselves to reaching, that would help us in our efforts.

- There was some question about outcomes in the area of cultural and artistic enrichment, which is a separate category in our list due to the focus many programs have on that area. The group was wondering why that came under the area of academics, instead of having more emphasis.
- Why was there not a “needs” assessment piece to the logic model? The questions down the side seem to show the importance of that work, but it doesn’t seem to be highlighted in the model. The group feels that this is key in determining what goals should be important for a program.

Suggestions

- “Moving through the Logic Model” One suggestion that was raised in multiple ways by our group was that more could be done in this document to show providers the connections between the various pieces of information. For example, in the logic model, the pieces are clearly identified, but there is not much information about the “arrows”--how a program actually moves from one place to another, and what needs to be considered to make effective connections between goals, elements, outcomes, measures, etc. Some of the folks in our group train providers on evaluation and say while making those connections is obvious to people familiar with evaluation, for many providers that is where they need the most help. One suggestion is to really flesh out the “How to use this Document” section to talk more about how to appropriately connect the dots.
- “Making Good Connections” In the same vein, in all of the charts, where elements, short and long term outcomes, sources, and measure are listed, there is no guidance or examples to help providers know which measures might be best suited for which outcomes, or the best way to think about which outcomes to consider based on the elements of the program. The group realizes that this framework needs to be flexible, since programs will build unique logic models based on their own unique situations. However, having some examples or listing of the likely connections between some elements, outcomes, and measures in each section, as well as some examples of why those pieces were connected, could go a long way to helping guide providers. This would avoid the case of a provider picking an outcome off the list, picking a measurement that looks easier to collect but doesn’t really measure the outcome they chosen, and in reality, their program activities are event really designed to address that outcome. Again, from those in our group that do evaluation capacity building, they realize that this kind of example may not be far off from how a provider, lacking an evaluator’s expertise and strapped for time, may try to make use of these lists, and end up down the wrong path. We realize there is a danger in trying to map this out too much for providers as well, since so much is dictated by individual programs, maybe a balance can be found that can show enough through examples so a provider asks the right questions to determine which pieces to connect.
- “Measurements”. In some cases, it did seem hard to know which measure would connect to the desired outcomes, and if the measure was appropriate. Some examples were measures like books being checked out, completing homework etc, when the outcomes were more about what was read or learned, and the measures seemed more like process outcomes. While these may be indicators that the outcomes could be reached, they would likely need to be matched up with other measures to tell the whole story, right? Maybe if there is some way of pointing out which measure are more like pre-conditions or indicators, versus measuring if the outcomes are actually reached? One other specific measure that caught attention was that of the crime rate in the community, since many felt that this was an outcome measure that could be very hard to tie to the afterschool program itself and members felt it would be too difficult for a program to base their achieving outcomes on such a “big” outcome. There may be other outcomes like that, where it should be stressed that an outcome like that relies heavily on a community wide intervention or support system of which an afterschool program may be a piece. There are also some measurements such as improved self esteem, gang involvement, self-confidence, where

the measurement doesn't include reporting from the participant, which would seem an important way to gather that information. The section of "improved emotional well-being" is one example of where those measurements occurred. Also, this a good example of where an illustration of how the connections would be made would be important to show how data sources like records of disciplinary actions could actually be used in a way that would be able to show how participants feel, since most of the outcomes are based on that.

- "Highlighting the Research" The group also thought something that could really help providers in linking up to appropriate outcomes would be to tie research and examples to the outcomes listed in each category, perhaps as an attached document. This would help illustrate the research base around those outcomes and help programs in program planning, implementing best practices, and raising funds.
- "More Information on Conditions for Success" The section in the beginning about conditions for program success, while a great overview, the group felt that this is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of helping programs understand the conditions. They recommended that either much more information on this topic be given in this document, or at least other resources are referenced for them to turn to.

We would enjoy the opportunity to talk more about our suggestions with the group that is working on this framework, and we can share the broad outcomes list we had developed (attached). I have not had the chance to do a thorough comparison, but it does seem like the majority of our outcomes are represented in this tool. If upon closer review, we notice some outcome examples from our list that aren't referenced in your framework, the group was wondering if we could suggest they be included as examples in this framework. I think there is great benefit in having one shared tool on a national level for this work, and although we may attach some Illinois specific information or resources to it, working from the same general framework would only benefit the field, given it is broad enough for the full range of programs to makes use of.

We are really excited and thankful for the work that went into this, and hope you see our extensive feedback not as a criticism of what has been produced, but instead a reflection of all the things we are hoping can be developed for providers, which we have been struggling with ourselves over the past year. I hope we can talk in more depth and find ways to support each other's work as the framework is finalized.

Thanks again!
Jennifer Becker Mouhcine