Section 10: Program Evaluation

Volunteer program evaluation is an ongoing process of collecting data to provide the organization with adequate knowledge on which to base programmatic and organizational decisions.

The purpose of evaluating your volunteer program is to provide:

- Adequate data upon which to make critical decisions about the program;

- The opportunity to continuously improve services to the community as well as the volunteer experience;

- Data for the organization to better communicate its story and accomplishments to stakeholders (e.g., community members, board members, key staff members, partners, funders, etc.).

10.1 Three Common Ways to Evaluate Your Volunteer Program

1. Process-Based Evaluation

Process-based evaluation focuses on the program design and efficiencies. Some examples of process-based questions are as follows:

- Are all volunteers receiving adequate training to deliver services to clients?

- How do volunteers learn about the program?

- What do volunteers see as strengths or weakness of the volunteer program?

2. Goals-Based Evaluation

Goals-based evaluation focuses on the degree to which the program met its predefined goals. Some examples of goals-based questions are as follows:

- Did the program achieve its goals?

- Did the program achieve its goals according to the timeline?

- How were goals originally outlined and should goals be changed in the future?

3. Outcomes-Based Evaluation

Outcomes-based evaluation focuses on answering the following question:

- Did the activities performed lead to the outcome(s) that are believed to be needed by your clients and/or community?

Outcomes refer to a significant change that has occurred due to an activity. For example:

"75 percent of mentored students improved their school attendance rate by 40 percent"

10.2 Questions to Ask

You can count and ask questions about a variety of things. There is skill required in only counting and asking about what is most useful to know. The sort of questions you may want answers to include

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- How diverse are our volunteers?

- How successful are our recruitment methods?

- How well do we retain volunteers?

- Are volunteers properly supported?

- Are our policies and procedures relevant?

- How does the training we provide enhance the volunteer experience?

- How much do volunteers contribute towards the organization?

- How has volunteer involvement benefited our service users?

Once you have identified the information you need, the next step is to work out the best method of obtaining it.