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TRENDS, TOPICS & TIDBITS

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Part two of our series on Measurement and Evaluation will discuss the different types of data that a company should collect to measure and evaluate the impact of their overall community involvement program or individual initiatives. There are four types of data that should be collected: input, process, output, and outcome.

1. **Input**

Input refers to resources a company invests into the planning of the project, such as staff, funds, equipment, transportation, consultation time, and space. For example, if a company makes a donation to a charity in support of the development of a new program, the inputs would include:

- the actual donation
- the time spent by company employees working with the nonprofit to establish the program
- fees paid to a consultant to help the company identify the nonprofit
- any volunteer hours spent by employees in support of the program

2. **Process**

Process is how company -supported and/or -operated projects are organized, managed, and staffed, and how services are delivered during the duration of the project. Process evaluation typically includes measures or descriptions of services provided, staffing and administrative structure, and policies and procedures. For a Habitat for Humanity build, for example, a process evaluation would answer questions, such as:

- Did the buses arrive and depart on time?
- Was the necessary equipment on site?

- Were meals for volunteers delivered on time?
- Was the agency ready to accommodate the volunteers?

3. **Output**

Outputs capture the quantitative results of the project funded by the company. Outputs usually fall into one of two categories:

- Measures of products delivered (i.e., numbers of classes offered, counseling sessions held, days of care provided, brochures distributed, public awareness messages aired, or number of hours of tutoring); or
- Measures of people served (i.e., the number of people who receive service over a given period of time)

Additionally, in order to better understand the immediate results of community relations activities on program participants, many organizations measure:

- Participant satisfaction - perceptions of service accessibility (physically as well as culturally), timeliness, courteousness, physical condition of facilities, and overall satisfaction with the service provider
- Participant characteristics – demographics, such as age, income level, race/ethnicity, gender, marital status, area of residence, and so on

4. **Outcome**

Outcome is the changes to individuals or populations during or after participating in program activities. Outcome data capture behavior, skills, knowledge, attitudes, values or other attributes. Outcome evaluation records the extent to which a project caused changes in a desired direction in the target population and in the cooperating organizations. For example, if a company sponsored a literacy program, it would want to know if:

- Students' reading scores improved as well as the impact the program had on other academic areas
- The program raised the self esteem of the students (since they were experiencing success in school)
- Attendance at school improved

- Students attitudes towards learning improved

It is important to collect all types of data, whenever possible. Input and process data are usually the easiest to collect. Outputs are a bit more challenging and are important because they reveal what has been accomplished and for how many people. However, to understand if a company's overall CI program, or a specific donation to a program, has made any difference, that is, to understand the true impact, outcome data must be collected.

In our next T^3, we will address how to collect data, methodologies, and which parties should be collecting the data.