

ASSESSING CURRENT PRACTICES

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CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN HUMAN SERVICE PROGRAM PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

CHAPTER REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce

- The major governmental and private sector initiatives promoting effectiveness-based program planning
- The relationship between the logic model and effectiveness-based program planning
- How agencies and community-wide networks relate to each other in addressing problems
- The steps involved in effectiveness-based program planning
- The elements of a program that are critical to measuring effectiveness

The following topics are covered in this chapter:

- The Era of Accountability
- Designing for Monitoring, Performance Measurement, and Program Evaluation
- The Logic Model
- Community Focus
- The Issues of Efficiency and Effectiveness
- What Is Effectiveness-Based Program Planning?
- Assessing an Existing Program
- Using Effectiveness Principles to Understand Existing Programs
 - Defining Programs
 - Assessing Diverse Populations
 - Problem Analysis

- Needs Assessment
- Selecting a Strategy and Establishing Objectives
- Program Design
- Data Requirements for Performance Measurement
- Monitoring and Using Information Technology
- Program Evaluation
- Budgeting
- Implementation Considerations
- Summary
- Review Questions

THE ERA OF ACCOUNTABILITY

When it comes to planning, funding, and implementing human service programs at the federal, state, and local levels, times have changed dramatically. Since the concepts of accountability, performance measurement, and outcomes measurement have become the norm, human service programs now undergo a great deal more scrutiny (Metzenbaum, 2021; Schick & Martin, 2020; Suykens et al., 2021). In the past, governments, foundations, and the United Way Worldwide were willing to fund human service programs; today these same organizations are increasingly interested in funding *only* those human service programs that produce results, accomplishments, and impacts.

The *Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993* (Public Law No. 103-62), recently reaffirmed by the federal Office of Management and Budget (Office of Management and Budget [OMB], 2021), is a major driver of performance accountability at the federal, state, and local government levels. GPRA requires federal departments and agencies to annually report their performance to the president and Congress. A second major driver at the federal level is the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Grants.gov, 2021). The “Uniform Guidance” requires that all federal grants now include *performance measures* with a particular emphasis on *outcome measures*. Additionally, some federal grants now tie compensation and payment to the accomplishment of specific performances and outcome measures. A third major driver at the federal level is the performance contracting requirements of the *Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR)*. The FAR establishes contracting policies and procedures of federal departments and agencies. The FAR requires that all federal service contracts (including human service contracts) be *performance based* to the maximum extent possible (FAR, 2015).

At the state and local government levels, two major drivers of performance accountability are the reporting initiative of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) and the performance measurement requirements imposed by states and local governments (cities and counties). GASB establishes financial and accounting standards for state and local governments. GASB (1993) and has long advocated that state and local governments adopt performance accountability systems that track and report on program output, quality, and outcome performance measures.

GASB calls its recommended performance accountability system “service efforts and accomplishments (SEA) reporting.” In response to the pressures created by GPRA and GASB’s SEA reporting, many state and local governments have adopted their own performance accountability systems (Municipal Research and Services Centers [MRSC], 2021).

Private funding organizations, such as foundations and the United Way Worldwide (2009), have also adopted performance accountability systems.

Today, most nonprofit human service agencies receive some government, foundation, or United Way Worldwide funding. Consequently, these agencies have adopted performance accountability systems in order to satisfy the reporting requirements of their funders. The performance accountability requirements of governments and private funders are such that they essentially require human service agencies to adopt as standard operating procedures, the effectiveness-based program planning activities described in this book.

DESIGNING PROGRAMS FOR MONITORING, PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT, AND PROGRAM EVALUATION

The term *program* has a very specific meaning. A program is defined as a prearranged set of activities designed to achieve a stated set of goals and objectives (Netting et al., 2017). This is an important and sometimes elusive concept to grasp. Some agency staff may work a single program; other staff may have responsibilities that require them to work across multiple programs.

Designing programs for effectiveness involves collecting service and client data that satisfy funding source accountability requirements, while at the same time allowing evaluators and auditors to determine whether desired results (outputs and outcomes) are being achieved. This is an important point! If monitoring, performance measurement, and program evaluation data and information are needed at the end of service provision, this information must be identified at the beginning of the planning process and collected and reported on during service delivery.

The Urban Institute (Schmidt et al., 1979) pioneered efforts to establish criteria for determining if a program is capable of being evaluated. The Urban Institute called this effort “Evaluability Assessment.” Essential for a program to be considered “evaluable” are

- Evidence required by management can be reliably produced.
- Evidence required by management is feasible to collect.
- Evidence required by management can realistically be expected to affect performance.

The term *evidence-based practice* (EBP) has come into prominent use in many professions, including social work and the human services (e.g., Royse et al., 2015). EBP is a process by which the “practitioner combines well-researched interventions with clinical experience, ethics, client preferences, and culture to guide and inform the delivery of treatments and services” (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2012). Management use of evidence takes this concept to the next level, defining the parameters of how evidence is collected, aggregated, and used for monitoring, performance measurement, and program evaluation. One point should be made

clear: Designing programs that can be evaluated requires the upfront collection of service provision and performance data, and information that can be recorded and presented in formats that facilitate analysis. Only when data are collected and presented in this way can program planners begin to understand what works and what does not.

THE LOGIC MODEL

The logic model is a useful framework for understanding the basic concepts of effectiveness-based program planning. Introduced in the 1960s and 1970s, the logic model was intended to streamline what was then the cumbersome process of evaluating federally funded programs (Wholey, 1983, 1994). Adoption of the logic model approach was given a significant boost in 1996 when the United Way of America published a report titled *Measuring Program Outcomes*. Today, the logic model has become the federal government's preferred way of thinking about programs (Chief Financial Officers [CFO], 2020).

As discussed above, government programs were focused for so many years on process or provision of services that it has become a long and arduous process to shift the conceptual framework to one that emphasizes outcomes and results. The new focus began with the relationship between **ends** and **means, outcomes** and **interventions**. We discuss efficiency in the next chapter and introduce the efforts of Frederick W. Taylor's contribution to what he labeled "scientific management," an approach to increase profits. It was in the 1940s that efficiency became accepted as a government priority. Former President Herbert Hoover, as chair of a presidential commission, identified how the federal government could become more efficient. In the following decade, Robert McNamara introduced a revolutionary system of planning and management to the Ford Motor Company, a comprehensive system that emphasized **outcomes** or **results**. As U.S. Secretary of Defense, he introduced this system to federal government policies and programs (see W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004 below).

The widespread adoption of the concepts was given a significant boost in 1996 by the United Way of America's publication *Measuring Program Outcomes*. The logic model borrows concepts from system's theory to create and build a foundation in a way which helps us to see the relationship between and among the resources invested, the services provided, and the results achieved.

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation in 2004 suggested that there are multiple types of logic models:

1. The theory approach logic model
2. The outcome approach model
3. The activities approach model

The first emphasizes the theory of how it is to produce change and is based on theoretical assumptions; a theory-based rationale that underscores the relationship between an understanding of the problem and a discussion of how the proposed program will achieve its outcomes. The second model provides a rationale between the program's activities and expected

outcomes. The third model focuses on the specific activities assumed to be critical to the achievement of the program's success.

Our approach, in this book, has aspects of all three logic models. Our logic model allows the planner to see the rational flow of addressing a problem while maintaining an overall focus on the purpose of the entire effort which is **to effect positive changes in the lives of clients**. Definitions and applications of inputs, process, outputs, outcomes, and impacts will be addressed throughout this book to emphasize the importance of understanding the logical conceptual flow of the program planning process. While many examples will be provided, it is important to remember when applied, the principles should be used as guiding concepts and not as a rigid formula (Figure 1.1).

COMMUNITY FOCUS

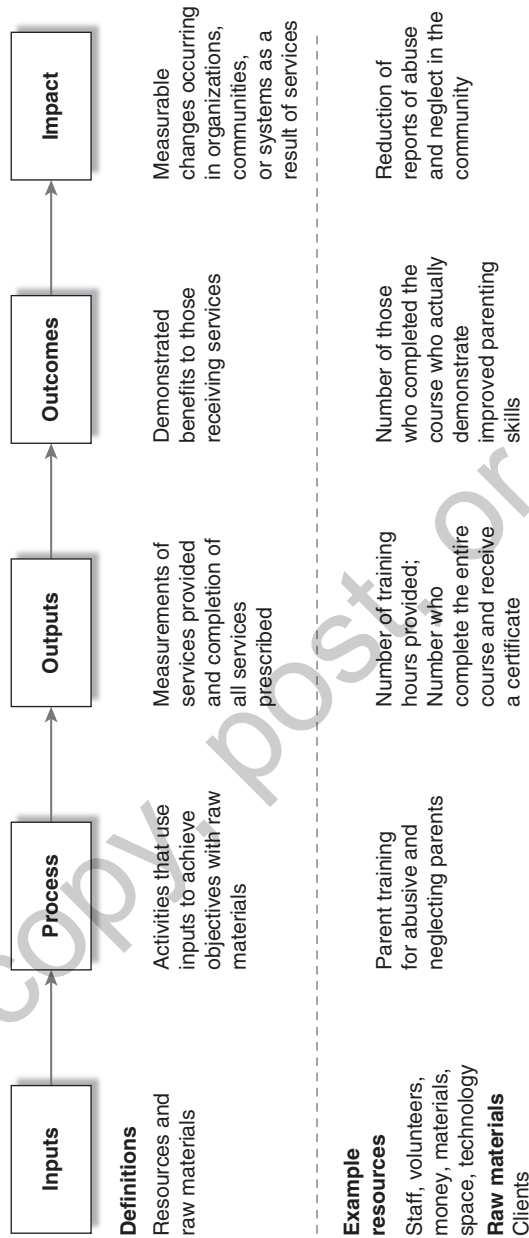
One result of the emphasis on accountability is a shift in focus to what happens to a target population in a community as a result of participating in a program. Most problems addressed by human service programs are community problems, such as children in need of a safe environment, homeless people in need of shelter and rehabilitation, victims of crime and violence in need of protection, family breakdown, addictions, and others. The term *community* refers to more than just a geographical area; it also refers to various ethnic and special populations, including African Americans, Asian Americans, Latino Americans, Native Americans, LGBTQ+, and other low-income and special populations. Addressing these communities may require adaptations to traditional human service programs.

The kinds of problems being experienced in communities today are so complex that a single program provided by a single human agency has little chance of creating a significant and measurable impact on a community. For this reason, funding sources frequently make resources (primarily money) available to multiple human service agencies in a community with the expectation that they will adopt a community perspective in addressing the identified problem. This community focus means that early in the planning process the problem to be addressed and the characteristics of the target population both need to be studied in-depth. The results will, in turn, drive considerations about what data elements need to be collected to answer questions about the efficiency and effectiveness of the program. The following chapters identify the many developmental phases a human service program must go through, and the many data elements that need to be included, if it is to be considered effectiveness based.

THE ISSUES OF EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Efficiency and effectiveness are major considerations for human service programs. *Efficiency* can be defined as the amount or volume of service a program provides (outputs) in relation to its costs (inputs, primarily funding). *Effectiveness* refers to the achievement of quality-of-life changes in clients (outcomes) as the result of receiving program services. Measuring outputs and outcomes requires that human service agencies track such factors as: the amount of service provided, the number of clients served, the number of clients that complete the program or drop out, and how much improvement clients demonstrate between entry into and exit from the program.

FIGURE 1.1 ■ The Logic Model



In evidence-based program planning, all measurement relies on first defining the elements that go into a program's construction. If there is an expectation that stated *objectives* will be met and that monitoring, performance measurement, and evaluation will take place at some point, then an agency must plan to establish goals and objectives for the program and to provide clear definitions of the services to be provided and the results expected to be achieved (all, of course, in writing).

WHAT IS EFFECTIVENESS-BASED PROGRAM PLANNING?

Designing effective programs requires that human service professionals develop a thoroughly researched understanding of social problems, people in need, and service delivery strategies. A commitment to effectiveness requires the collection of data that provides information about client conditions at entry into and exit from a program, thereby facilitating monitoring and evaluation. This approach makes clear what is working and where changes in programs need to be made. The system is designed to be useful for both direct service delivery and management purposes.

Effectiveness-based program planning involves taking a program through a series of steps designed (1) to produce a clear understanding and definition of the problem to be addressed, (2) to measure client problem type and severity at entry, (3) to provide a relevant program, (4) to measure client problem type and severity at exit from the program, and (5) to determine short- and long-range outcomes. The purpose of these activities is to provide a basis for the continual improvement of program services to clients and the creation of a database for making both clinical and administrative decisions. Instead of asking clinicians to fill out forms useful only for completing management reports, clinical staff can record data useful for understanding the progress of their clients while, at the same time, providing data and information necessary for program management.

ASSESSING AN EXISTING PROGRAM

In this opening chapter, the point is stressed that designing effective human service programs requires a careful and detailed thought process that begins with an understanding of the problem to be addressed and ends with the analysis of data on the program's efficiency and effectiveness. Chapters 2 through 6 focus on assessing and understanding needs and social problems. Chapters 7 through 9 present a step-by-step process for designing a program, writing goals and objectives for the program, and collecting and using data for analyzing program efficiency and effectiveness. Chapters 10 through 13 describe alternative budgeting and evaluation approaches.

The tasks and processes of program development can be complex because social, family, and personal problems are complex. The social problem(s) to be addressed and the population(s) to be served require thoughtful study and analysis. The purpose of delving into the complexities of social problems and target populations is to ensure a good fit between need and program. When this happens, human programs can be more precisely focused on getting the kinds of results intended. In short, it is a proactive approach to producing results.

Perhaps in the same way that an understanding of the law is critical for a practicing attorney, or an understanding of the body is important to a physician, so an understanding of social problems and programs is central to the practice of social work and human service planning and administration. This understanding may challenge some old assumptions and result in some new approaches to serving clients. This approach should help ensure that human service programs remain efficient and effective in a changing environment.

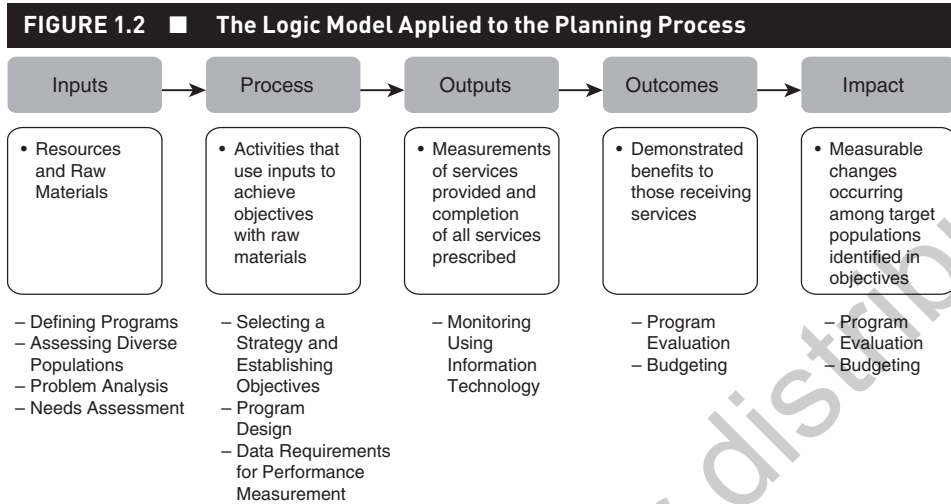
USING EFFECTIVENESS PRINCIPLES TO UNDERSTAND EXISTING PROGRAMS

In the following chapters, a step-by-step process is presented that will enable the reader to begin with a social, family, or personal problem experienced by clients and end with a program designed to achieve and document results. Before beginning these chapters, however, you are asked to take a few minutes to assess the current practices of a human service program with which you are familiar. This activity will help acquaint you with some of the basic concepts of effectiveness-based program planning. This activity may also be helpful in drawing a contrast between the way human service programs are unfortunately all too often designed and the way they *must* be designed for measurement purposes. The exercise will introduce you to the concepts and issues that are critical to understanding effectiveness-based program planning. The planning process can be divided into the following steps:

- Defining programs
- Assessing diverse populations
- Problem analysis
- Needs assessment
- Selecting a strategy and establishing objectives
- Program design
- Data requirements for performance measurement
- Monitoring and using information technology
- Program evaluation
- Budgeting

It should be evident at this point that each step in the planning process corresponds, in a way, to the sequence depicted in the logic model. Figure 1.2 illustrates these relationships. Note how much of the planning process is devoted to understanding and analyzing program inputs. If this part of the process is approached methodically, the rest should flow logically, as will be explained in the following chapters.

A program assessment instrument is provided online at <https://edge.sagepub.com/kettner6e>. This instrument is designed to provide a quick overview of a program's strong and weak



areas. The program planning model discussed is designed for those programs that provide a direct service to clients. It is not applicable for support programs such as fundraising or advocacy.

Defining Programs

An important first step in effectiveness-based program planning is to ensure that the program is clearly defined. A program may involve a specialized set of services (e.g., detox, family counseling, employment services) to a defined target population (e.g., children, adults, the elderly). Others may be designed in such a way that all clients enter through a common intake point and then are assigned to case managers. This is an important distinction and is one of the first elements of design that need to be addressed. The online questions on defining programs are intended to encourage you to think about how an agency defines a program.

Assessing Diverse Populations

Significant disparities have been documented in the provision of human services to minority and other communities and special populations (Urban Institute, 2017). In attempting to address these disparities, program planners need to ensure that human service programs are designed to be inclusive and responsive to diverse communities and populations. The online questions on assessing diverse populations are designed to sensitize planners to diverse populations represented in a community so they are included in assessments and in program planning.

Problem Analysis

Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the need for a thorough understanding of the theoretical underpinnings and the etiology (cause-and-effect relationships) of the problem the program is intended to address. Sound practice requires that a program be based on a thorough analysis

and understanding of the problem. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Programs are sometimes planned and funded for political or other reasons without regard for the facts or the realities of the situation. However, the programs that have the greatest probability of achieving successful results (outcomes) with clients are the ones that develop a clear understanding of the type, size, and scope of the problem as well as its history, theory, research findings, and etiology. For example, if a program is designed to treat drug users, it is important to understand that people use drugs for different reasons, and treatment must be carefully targeted to these reasons. Prescription drug abusers, junior high school kids experimenting with marijuana, and street gang members selling and using methamphetamines, each needs to be understood in their own context. Program planners, therefore, must determine how many of each type are in the community, their reasons for using drugs, where they live, and how severe their problems are. Ethnic minority and other special populations also need to be identified and the etiology examined to determine whether there are different factors that contribute to the problem or need. This approach provides a solid foundation for constructing an effective and precisely targeted program. Online questions on problem analysis are designed to understand the extent to which a program incorporates background information into its understanding of the problem.

Needs Assessment

When someone is experiencing a problem, that individual has a need. Sometimes the need is obvious: Someone who is homeless needs a home; someone who is unemployed needs a job. At other times, the need may be more subtle and more difficult to isolate. For example, the need for a permanent and loving relationship with a nurturing parent substitute, the need for a mentor to help build self-confidence, or the need to learn a work ethic to succeed in employment.

Accuracy and skill in linking needs and programs comes from a thorough study of the problem. Once you are comfortable that you understand need, it is time to turn to techniques of needs assessment. Bradshaw (1972) in his classic work identifies four different ways to view needs: *normative need* (as defined by experts in the field), *perceived need* (as seen by those experiencing the need), *expressed need* (by those who seek out services), and *relative need* (needs and resources in one geographic area compared with needs and resources in another). The online questions on needs assessment will help you understand each of these perspectives on need and think through the extent to which your programs have taken these perspectives into account.

Selecting a Strategy and Establishing Objectives

Once the problem analysis and the needs assessment are completed, it is time to think about a strategy for reducing or eliminating the problem by addressing the identified needs. This process involves several steps. The first step involves proposing one or more program hypotheses—statements about what outcomes are expected to be achieved if a client with an identified problem receives appropriate service(s). Program hypotheses provide the framework for developing precisely stated goals, objectives, and activities. The online questions should help in assessing your understanding of a program's underlying assumptions and expectations, and the fit of need to the proposed services.

Program Design

It is one thing to understand a need; it is quite another matter to design an intervention to address that need. The purpose of the program design phase is to construct the service or combination of services that appear most likely to achieve the program's objectives. Program design involves consideration of the resources needed to address the needs of clients and attention to the ways in which these resources will be utilized. Program design is a critical phase in the planning and management of programs. *Program design is critical to achieving results* (CFO, 2020).

If one simply considers all human services to be "casework," then decisions about client assessment, service provision, service completion, and outcome assessment are left to the individual judgment of each caseworker. When this happens, it becomes difficult to establish precise objectives to examine program effectiveness and to modify program design in the interest of improving services to clients. On the other hand, bringing precision to each element of program design allows for constant examination and constructive changes as data and information about effectiveness become available to guide refinements. The online questions should help you assess the level of precision achieved in specifying the elements of your program design.

Data Requirements for Performance Measurement

Data collection is the *sine qua non* of effectiveness-based program planning. All the effort put into the development of a program hypothesis, goals, objectives, and design accomplish little if the correct data are not collected, aggregated, analyzed, reported, and used to make decisions about program performance. Data systems must be designed to answer questions about (1) identifying diverse populations, (2) meeting community need, (3) documenting the numbers of clients served, (4) measuring the achievement of program outputs and outcomes, and (5) calculating the costs of achieving program outputs and outcomes. Principles associated with performance measurement should be understood before attempting to identify data requirements and designing a management information system (MIS). The online questions should be useful in understanding the data requirements of effectiveness-based program planning.

Monitoring and Using Information Technology

Once program data elements are identified, they can be collected, processed, and aggregated in a manner that informs both clinical program staff and agency administrators. Statements about the success of programs in accomplishing objectives and creating positive change in the lives of clients (outcomes) can only be made if data exist to support these claims.

In contemporary human service program and agency management, the use of an automated management information systems is essential. Traditional narrative case records are useful for individual case analysis, planning, supervision, and documentation, but they are of little use in measuring program efficiency and effectiveness. In effectiveness-based program planning, a MIS system must be capable of producing data and information about the progress of clients from program entry to exit. The online questions are designed to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a human service agency or program's existing monitoring and information technology systems.

Program Evaluation

One of the most exciting features of effectiveness-based program planning is that data and information are produced that informs staff and management about how successful the program is in relation to expectations. How many abusing and neglecting parents completed parent training? How many demonstrated improved parenting skills? How many stopped abusive and neglectful behaviors? How many are progressing toward more effective relationships with their children? How effective is the program in addressing the needs of ethnic and special populations? This information can bring together direct service staff, supervisors, managers, administrators, and other stakeholders around a common set of concerns and interests. It is always more satisfying to be able to say, at the end of a program year, “We helped 75% of our clients master at least 10 techniques of effective parenting” than simply to be able to say, “We provided services to 100 abusing and neglecting families.” The online questionnaire explores whether various methods of evaluating human service programs are currently being used.

Budgeting

All programs depend on funding. No guarantees exist that a program will receive the same level of funding support from year to year. Thus, it is in the interests of program and agency staff to ensure that the best possible results are achieved for clients at the lowest possible cost. Unfortunately, the budgeting systems used by many human service programs and agency programs only provide information on costs. These are called “line-item budgeting systems.” Effectiveness-based program planning requires that three budgeting systems be used: line-item, performance, and program. These three budgeting systems are needed in order to generate data and information on cost per output or unit of service (e.g., an hour of counseling); completion by a client of a full complement of services (e.g., one client completing 10 parent-training sessions); achievement of measurable outcomes by clients (e.g., improved parenting skills); and achievement of program plans, goals, and objectives (e.g., at least a 50% reduction in reports of child abuse or neglect by clients completing the program). For example, by relating costs to programs, one might learn that it costs \$1,500 per trainee to complete a training program. However, because the dropout rate is 50%, the cost is \$3,000 for each client completing the program. These types of calculations help keep staff focused on using resources as efficiently and effectively as possible. The online questions should help in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of your agency or program’s current budgeting system.

The following chapters are intended to explain each of the phases of effectiveness-based program planning in detail. As you proceed through these chapters, you are encouraged to think about and apply the concepts to a specific program. While the most ideal application of these principles is in designing new programs, you may also find that existing programs can be analyzed and perhaps improved by careful attention to the details of each phase of the planning process.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

This book makes the case for performance measurement, monitoring, program evaluation, and multiple forms of budgeting. As the planning process evolves, it will be clear that what is being presented in this book, and the requirements generally associated with this topic, can be time consuming and expensive. Carillo (2005) found that management information is greatly underutilized in human service agencies. Hatry (2012) suggests that “overall, the feasibility of undertaking full, in-depth program evaluations in more than a very small percentage of HSOs [human service organizations] is unlikely” (p. 23). This is not to say, however, that human service programs and agencies should not strive to adopt an effectiveness-based approach to the planning and delivery of human services. Failure to adopt these practices will ultimately lead to unfavorable comparisons with other human service programs and agencies that do.

Of critical importance is the culture and mindset of the agency, including a commitment from the top administrators to entry-level workers to the collection and use of data to help clients resolve problems in the most effective and efficient way. Enough has been said about the need for leadership in developing performance management systems that we feel safe in stating that, without strong direction from the top, there is little chance that the necessary conversions can be successful (see, e.g., Packard & Beinecke, 2012).

Another important issue is the resources (including funding, computer hardware and software, technology consultation) required to implement effectiveness-based program approaches. While it may be feasible for large programs and agencies to undertake a conversion to the kind of performance measurement, monitoring, program evaluation, and budgeting described in this book, many smaller agencies with smaller budgets may find the transition more challenging. Some avoid applying to funding sources because of the requirements associated with performance accountability. If the commitment is there from board, executive, middle management, and staff, many agencies have demonstrated that strategies can be developed using volunteers, interns, existing staff, consultants, and other resources, dividing the process into three phases: preplanning, defining, and implementing. Not all phases require the same resources. Smaller agencies with limited resources may be able to make the necessary changes without a great up-front investment, embarking on a preplanning effort and postponing expenses such as outside consultants until they achieve the staff readiness and have the resources to complete the process.

SUMMARY

Planning programs designed to achieve results is a complex process. Human service professionals who have, for many decades, built their programs around *process* considerations, are now being required to shift their focus to *results and outcomes*. Yet it is completely understandable why various levels of government, the United Way Worldwide, and other grant and contracting organizations today are concerned with accountability and their “return on investment.” Evidence-based program planning is designed to help human service programs and agencies to move from a focus on process to a focus on results and outcomes. The logic model provides a

clear flow of phases in the program development process, so that if carefully followed, program planners will be able to measure results, outcomes, and costs.

This chapter lays out the steps critical to measuring results, outcomes, and costs. An online questionnaire is designed to guide the program planner through the various phases of effectiveness-based program planning as applied to an existing program or agency. This analysis is intended to introduce the phases and the concepts, with the understanding that each step in the process is covered in more detail in later chapters.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why are human service agencies focused on program accountability and performance? Why are government and private funders of human services concerned about program accountability and performance?
2. How does the logic model help in understanding and applying the elements of effectiveness-based program planning to the design of a human service program?
3. Define and give examples of *efficiency* (outputs) and *effectiveness* (outcomes) in relation to a particular program with which you are familiar.
4. Why is it important to identify target populations as part of the planning process?
5. Identify some measurable outcome indicators for a program with which you are familiar.

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