Outcomes, Values and Impact: Metrics for Library Success

Summary handout created by Phillippa Brown, Planning Coordinator, GVPL

Introduction:
**Where are we?**

* “Libraries” is an “industry” with no agreed upon success measures
* Libraries do not accept a culture of assessment easily
* Libraries use ‘traditional statistics’ to measure the past (inputs and outputs) eg. # of programs/ attendance
* Libraries make decisions based on staff’s ‘community knowledge’
* Traditional statistics do not measure how the community uses our facilities
* They cannot show how our services and programs impact peoples’ lives
* With increase in self-service, staff are interacting directly with fewer patrons (only 5-10% US Study)

**Do we really know what our patrons want or need? One wonders…**

* Are we aligned with our community’s priorities?
* Can we demonstrate accountability?
* Can we demonstrate our value in a meaningful way?
* Can we demonstrate the return on their investment to our cities, donors or residents?

**Takeaway #1: Where to begin?**

* Begin with the end in mind
* What is the impact you want to make?
* What is your goal?

The Logic Model

* What ARE Inputs, Outputs and Outcomes?
* **Input: resource perspective**
	+ - The resources we invest eg. a librarian, a room and 10 picture books
* **Output: Operational perspective**
	+ - The product/activity eg. modeled 1000 stories before Kindergarten activities to x parents and children
* **Outcome: User perspective**
	+ - What the users perceive they gained eg. x parents enjoyed being read to and gain confidence they could do this with their children
* **And an Impact?**
	+ It is a long term change in the human condition from the stakeholder’s perspective:

**Just a minute!** Before you go shooting for the stars, you want to think about:

* Is this goal/impact part of your strategic plan?
* Is it part of your community’s or shareholder’s priorities?
* Do you know what the stakeholders in the community believe is a priority?
* Ever talked to them about what they are working on?

**To really have impact! Keep in mind you will need to….**

1. Build relationships with stakeholders based on mutual interests
2. Work together to define what success looks like for your community
3. Work together to bring about “community betterment” (impacts)
4. Work together to develop measures that are meaningful
5. **MORE ISN’T ALWAYS BETTER!**

**Takeway # 2: What measurement method to use?**

**In a Balanced and Judicious way…Use impact measurements when you need:**

1. To determine if high value initiatives have contributed to the intended long term change
2. To assess if an existing service is meeting its goal
3. To evaluate if new proposal(s) can contribute to your desired impact

**Use a Broad Comprehensive Approach**

**Use Traditional Statistics to:**

* Measure your inputs and outputs
* Count your attendance
* Count your visits
* All very valuable tracked over time

**Use Big Data**

* Metrics on a global scale increase your understanding at a transactional level if you have the resources to collect, archive and analyze
* Over time provide patterns to interactions/transactions

**Use Surveys and interviews to:**

* Help measure customer satisfaction
* Determine the importance of a service or program
* Extract perceived outcomes
* Gain permission for long term follow up.

**Analytics**

* Help put results into context and provide explanations

**Takeaway #3
How to communicate Value?**

We all know:

* It’s challenging
* It’s expensive
* It needs special expertise
* It needs clarity around shared goals
* It needs a long term commitment
* There are no magic tools but there are lots of options

**Start by**

* Know the context
* Define your goals
* Get very specific how you will demonstrate how you met those goals before you begin
* Identify resources/recommendations/ reviews of tools
* Identify allies who have the specialized knowledge /expertise you need
* Find out if anyone else has already done it and if you can use their work

**Work Toward**

* A new way of thinking about what we do
* A new way of interacting with our community
* A new way of developing services and resources.

**Conclusions**

* Need buy-in from top down
* Need to focus on your community priorities to avoid death by opportunity
* Developing impact measurements is part of a cycle of continuous improvement



