

Welcome to the AmeriCorps PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT Informational Session. This is the fourth in a series of 4 webinars that will orient you to 2016-2017 AmeriCorps\*State grant funding and the basic concepts and frameworks to help you determine how your organization might seek a partnership.

### Housekeeping:

- -I have muted all phone lines to reduce background noise.
- -If you have a question, please use your chat window or hold questions until the Q&A at the end of this session.
- -This presentation will be made available on our website,
- -You'll also find a lot more information regarding this opportunity.

### AMERICORPS GRANTS



Provide funding to high-quality programs that are developed by an applicant who designs a set of activities that demonstrate an evidence-based or evidence-informed approach to creating community impact and solving community problems by engaging individuals in service as AmeriCorps members.

AmeriCorps Grants provide funding to high-quality programs that demonstrate an evidence-based or evidence-informed approach to strengthening communities and solving community problems by engaging individuals in service as AmeriCorps members.

Grants are awarded to nonprofits, Indian tribes, colleges and universities, and state and local public agencies to address unmet needs in education, economic opportunity, veterans services, disaster services, health, the environment, and more.

A grantee might use AmeriCorps resources to make an existing program more effective, to reach previously underserved communities, or to expand their activities beyond what they were able to do without AmeriCorps.

However, it is important to understand that AmeriCorps funds do not duplicate, displace or supplant resources that currently exist in a community. AmeriCorps members cannot be used to take the place of staff, current volunteers, or existing funding.

## **AMERICORPS GRANTS**



- Include an allotment of AmeriCorps member positions and funds that are directly tied to a specific number of members
- Are solely for program expenses and are not for general organizational expenses
- Provide partial funding to support AmeriCorps projects/programs
- Grant recipients must contribute cash or in-kind match funding to support the project

AmeriCorps grants are awarded on a competitive basis to eligible applicants.

AmeriCorps grants include an allotment of AmeriCorps member positions and associated funding. The funds awarded by CNCS are directly tied to the specific number of members awarded.

AmeriCorps grants are solely for program expenses and cannot be used for general organizational operating expenses.

All AmeriCorps Grants provide partial funding to support AmeriCorps projects and programs. Grant recipients must contribute additional resources to support the project.

Performance measures are measurable indicators of a program's performance as it relates to member service activities.

Performance measurement is the process of regularly measuring the services provided by your program and the effect your program has in communities or in the lives of members or community beneficiaries.

### Outputs

 Amount of service provided (people served, products created, or programs developed)



Performance measurement is the ongoing, systematic process of tracking your program or project's outputs and outcomes.

Outputs are the amount of service provided. They measure the completion of activities and document the fact that individuals received services, products were created, or programs were developed. They answer the question, "How much service did we perform?" or "What products did we develop?" They do not answer the question, "What changed as a result of the service provided or product developed?"

### **Outcomes**

- Reflect the changes or benefits that occur
- Can reflect changes in individuals, organizations, communities, or the environment
- Address changes in attitudes/beliefs, knowledge/skills, behavior, or conditions



Outcomes reflect the changes or benefits that occur. Outcomes can reflect changes in individuals, organizations, communities, or the environment. This may include changes in attitudes, knowledge, behavior, or condition. For example, changes within an organization may include an enhanced system to better serve community members. Outcomes answer the question, "What difference did our service make for beneficiaries?" or "How did the new system or product enhance the capacity of the organization to serve the community?"

In general, the most compelling outcomes address changes in behavior or conditions. However, what makes a change compelling is not just the type of change but the *magnitude* or amount of change. And, of course, the change should reflect the activity's intended purpose.

In summary, performance measurement can show whether a change occurred. To find out whether the change occurred because of the intervention, you would use other approaches, such as evaluation methodologies.

Performance measurement is the process of **systematically** and regularly collecting and monitoring data related to the direction of observed **changes** in communities, participants (members), or end beneficiaries receiving your program's services.

In contrast to **evaluation**, it is not intended to establish a causal relationship between your program and a desired (or undesired) program outcome.

Differences: Key Areas	Performance Measurement	Impact Evaluation
Causality	Assumes causality; does <i>not</i> "prove" theory of change	Seeks to show causality and "prove" theory of change
Implementation	Tracks outputs and outcomes on a regular, ongoing basis	May occur from time to time, but not on a regular, ongoing basis
Time Focus	Shorter term focus; what can be measured within one year	Longer term focus
Design	Balances rigor* with practicality; measurement implemented by program staff with limited resources and expertise	Uses most rigorous evaluation design and methods that are right for program (e.g. quasi- experimental design)
*Capable of producing va	alid (accurate) results.	

One way to understand what performance measurement is, is to distinguish it from what it is not. By comparing performance measurement and impact evaluation, we can see that they differ in several key areas.

### Causality:

- Performance measurement does not try to "prove" that an intervention caused an outcome. It does provide snapshots of how a program is functioning and draws from the evidence found in the program theory of change.
- •Impact evaluation, on the other hand, looks for evidence of a causal relationship between the intervention and outcomes. Impact evaluation seeks to "prove" the theory of change.

### Implementation:

- Performance measurement involves regular, ongoing tracking of outputs and outcomes
- •Impact evaluation may occur from time to time, or as needed, but is not a regular, ongoing activity. It also provides a deeper examination of program functioning. Impact evaluation may look at a wider range of outcomes than are likely to be addressed by performance measurement.

### Time Focus:

- Performance measurement usually focuses on shorter term changes, those that can be observed within a year.
- •Impact evaluation may also be concerned with short term outcomes, but it often includes a focus on longer term changes as well. For example, an impact evaluation may involve following service beneficiaries for more than a year to look for evidence of longer term benefits.

When considering design...

- •Performance measurement strives for high-quality data, while striking a balance between rigorous data collection and what is feasible for program staff to measure on an ongoing basis. "Rigorous data collection" uses methods that are appropriate to answer the measurement question, applies collection methods consistently, and pays careful attention to data quality and completeness. Data collection methods for performance measurement tend to be relatively simple, so that program staff can implement them with limited time and resources.
- •Impact evaluation strives for high rigor; with scientifically-based research designs, often using multiple methods. This involves comparing people exposed to an intervention (called the "experimental" group) to people who were not exposed (a "control" or "comparison" group). The impact evaluation is designed to discover any differences between outcomes for the two groups, and determine if the intervention is responsible.

In summary, an important distinction between performance measurement and impact evaluation involves causality. Performance measurement provides a view of how the program is functioning, but does not seek to prove that the program is the specific reason for improvements within the target population for the intervention. Impact evaluation seeks to pinpoint the program as the source of improvements. Since one of the goals of impact evaluation is to prove causality, a higher level of rigor is required than for program evaluation.

There are differences but both performance measurement and impact evaluation strive for systematic data collection to track program success.

It is important to note that Performance Measures are related to the **MEMBERS** service. Not your organization in general. You need to clearly articulate in the narrative and through these measures that because of these members (intervention) you have been able to do \_\_\_\_ (output and outcome).

Measures should capture the most significant activities of your program. Performance Measures should be able to stand alone from the Application Narrative and adequately explain your proposed program.

Measureable Performance Measures relate to the members service to the community. While some Performance Measures allow the program to measure the impact on the member that shouldn't be your only measurable activity.

# Why Measure Performance

The main purpose of performance measurement is to strengthen your AmeriCorps program and foster continuous improvement and to identify best practices and models that merit replication.

So why do we measure performance?

# WHY MEASURE PERFORMANCE

# Accountability to funders and stakeholders

Tell your story, justify funding

Recognizing progress; reflects change

 Reliable information collected in a systematic way



Another reason is accountability. Performance measurement satisfies the need of funders and stakeholders (including CNCS participants, board members, community members, staff and clients) to see that the program or project is getting results. Performance measurement helps you communicate achievements in a way that funders and stakeholders will find meaningful and compelling.

Another reason to measure performance is to determine if the change you thought would happen with your intervention is actually occurring. Performance measurement is a systematic way to collect reliable information about the intervention's implementation and progress toward outcomes.

# Program improvement Spot and correct problems Strengthen the intervention Determine where to allocate limited resources

You can also use performance measurement data to spot and correct problems. Are you reaching the population you intended? Do some people require more or less intensive service to show a positive outcome? Even when an intervention is implemented exactly as planned, performance measurement can help you find ways to strengthen the intervention to make it more effective.

Performance measurement is a way to get feedback so you know if your intervention is making the expected difference, and helps you decide how to make the most effective use of your limited resources.

# PERFORMANCE MEASURE REQUIREMENTS

- 1. Utilize the CNCS National Performance Measures.
- 2. Have at least one aligned Measure.
  - Output and Outcome
- 3. Include measures that capture the service being performed by ALL of your AmeriCorps members.
  - If you are requesting 30 MSYs, then 30 MSYs should be reflected in the PM activities.

# PERFORMANCE MEASURE REQUIREMENTS

- Disaster Services
- Economic Opportunity
- Education
- · Environmental Stewardship
- Healthy Futures
- Veterans & Military Families
- Capacity Building related to the activities of the 6 Focus Areas.

CNCS has established a set of national performance measures that reflect its Strategic Plan and programming priorities. These include: Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, Veterans and Military Families, and Capacity Building.

National performance measures means that everyone will use common terms, definitions, and approaches to measurement. This will make it possible to combine data from programs and projects with confidence.

# **DISASTER SERVICES**

Grant activities will provide support to increase the preparedness of individuals for disasters, improve individuals' readiness to respond to disasters, help individuals recover from disasters, and/or help individuals mitigate disasters. Grantees also have the ability to respond to national disasters under the CNCS cooperative agreements and FEMA mission assignments.

# **ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

Grants will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to the improved economic well-being and security of economically disadvantaged people; help economically disadvantaged people to have improved access to services that enhance financial literacy; transition into or remain in safe, healthy, affordable housing; and/or have improved employability leading to increased success in becoming employed.

# **EDUCATION**

Grants will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged children; improved school readiness for economically disadvantaged young children; improved educational and behavioral outcomes of students in low-achieving elementary, middle, and high schools; and/or support economically disadvantaged students prepare for success in post-secondary educational institutions.

# **ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**

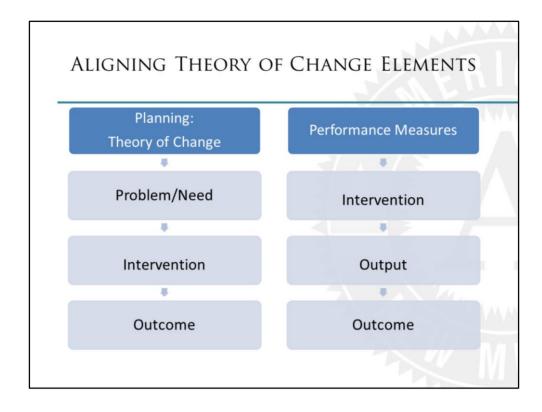
Grants will support responsible stewardship of the environment, while preparing communities for challenging circumstances and helping Americans respond to and recover from disruptive life events: programs that conserve natural habitats; protect clean air and water; maintain public lands; support wildland fire mitigation; cultivate individual and community self-sufficiency; provide reforestation services after floods or fires; and more. AmeriCorps programs support activities, such as conservation and fire corps, which may help veterans and others learn new job skills through conservation service.

# **HEALTHY FUTURES**

Grants will provide support for activities that will improve access to primary and preventive health care for communities served by Corporation-supported programs; increase seniors' ability to remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible; and/or increase physical activity and improve nutrition in youth with the purpose of reducing childhood obesity.

# VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES

Grants will positively impact the quality of life of veterans and improve military family strength; increase the number of veterans, wounded warriors, military service members, and their families served by CNCS-supported programs; and/or increase the number of veterans and military family members engaged in service through CNCS-supported programs.



The theory of change is the foundation for your performance measures and an aligned theory of change is the first step to ensuring quality.

After checking the elements of the theory of change for cause and effect relationships, you next need to look closely at the intended outcome. Is it a high quality outcome?

If the intended outcome identified in your theory of change is broad or you noted more than one outcome, now is the time to focus and specify the outcome more narrowly. If you are planning to select a national performance measure, check the fit with the elements of your theory of change.

This graphic reflects key steps in the program planning process to ensure selection of high quality performance measures.

- Begin by making sure that the elements of your theory of change are aligned,
- Then, review the outcome to make sure it is accurate, meaningful and realistic,
- And finally, make sure the output and outcome performance measures are aligned.

For a full review of the theory of change, see the "Program Design & Management Info Session" module.

### ALIGNMENT

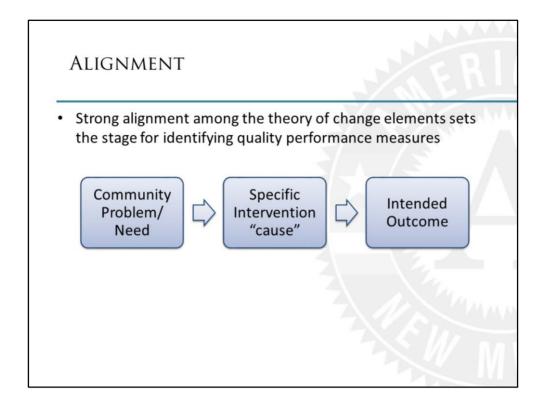
Alignment: Logical flow and connection between the different elements helps you:

- · Strengthen your theory of change
- Articulate your performance measures
- Measure more accurately
- Clearly report changes

"Alignment" is the correct or desirable coordination or relation of components. When considering alignment of the elements within a theory of change or performance measures, make sure that each element is in proper relation to one another. The progression from one element to the next, and the connections between the elements, should be logical.

By precisely defining and connecting all these elements, you will have a clear chain of reasoning that enables you to:

- •strengthen your theory of change,
- •better articulate the performance measures your project is trying to achieve,
- •more accurately measure your performance, and
- •more clearly report progress.



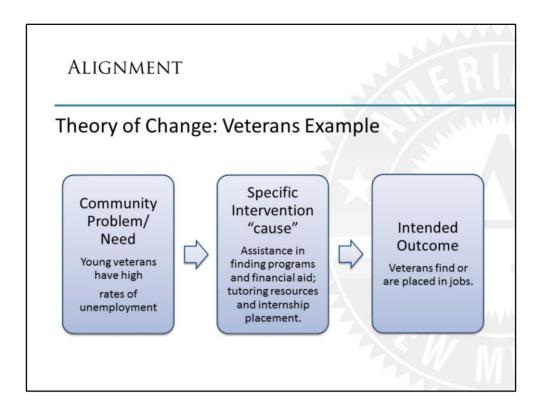
Remember that the arrows in the theory of change diagram depict the logical flow or "if-then" relationship between each element. However, the thought process used to formulate a theory of change starts with the reason for the intervention - the problem or need - then the intended change - the outcome - and then the activity that will bring the outcome about - the intervention.

When we speak of alignment within the theory of change, we are looking for the logical flow and connection between the three main elements;

- the identified community need or problem to be addressed, as documented by available data on the negative conditions that exists;
- · an intended outcome that addresses or resolves the need; and
- The evidence-based intervention with a specific design and dosage that has a clear cause-and-effect relationship with the intended outcome.

The first key alignment issue to confirm is that the intended outcome is based on the identified community need; that the change or intended outcome clearly addresses the community need. Next, check to affirm that the selected intervention can be expected to result in the intended outcome.

If the elements in your theory of change are aligned, you have good reason to believe that if you do an activity in a certain way, it will result in the change you want to see by addressing the problem you identified.

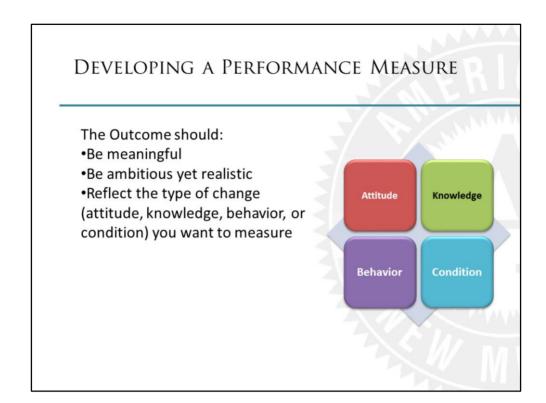


Here is a simplified example of a theory of change for a veterans project.

The problem in the community is identified as the high unemployment rate among young veterans, and it is attributed to a lack of marketable skills, including a lack of education degrees, training credentials and professional experiences.

This outcome - Veterans find or are placed in jobs - directly responds to the identified problem of unemployment. This outcome is closely aligned with the need.

The intervention provides veterans with assistance to find vocational training or educational program opportunities, sources of financial aid, tutoring support, as well as internship opportunities. The evidence shows that the wrap-around education support services identified in the intervention will ensure completion of the credentials and provide professional experience and impact veteran employment, the outcome. This service activity is directly tied to filling the education degree or credential gap identified in the need.



### DEVELOPING A PERFORMANCE MEASURE

### Meaningful

- Community Need/problem:
  - Is the outcome addressing it?
- Compelling/powerful.
  - Is the outcome central or peripheral?
- Beneficiaries.
  - Is the target audience identified in the outcome?
- Scope of the outcome.
  - How many will benefit?
- Magnitude of the outcome.
  - · How much change will occur for beneficiaries?
- Evidence.
  - Is the outcome supported by evidence for the intervention?

At first, trying to ascertain how meaningful an outcome is might seem like a subjective exercise. But let's look at some criteria that can help. When taken together, this list can help determine the merits of competing choices for the most meaningful outcome.

For an outcome to be meaningful, consider:

- Does your intended outcome closely align with your identified Community need or problem? Check and clarify so that the outcome is directly addressing the stated need or problem.
- Is the outcome a compelling and powerful change in the lives of beneficiaries? Is the outcome getting at the key change you want to occur?

Check with other stakeholders in the community and see if they are also convinced that the outcome is important. It is common for projects to want to 'know it all' and most have a long list of interesting outcome measurement questions they would like to pursue. However, the selected performance measure outcome should not only respond directly to the identified need or problem but do so in a substantial and powerful way. The intended outcome should not be peripheral to the theory of change.

### Other criteria to consider include:

 The beneficiaries: Is the target audience receiving the service identified in the outcome? There may be multiple groups benefiting from service, community volunteers, national service participants or others, but make sure the outcome focuses on the target population identified in the need. For example, if a job skills program where National Service participants serve, works with all unemployed community members, but the target population identified in the need is unemployed veterans, the outcome should focus on the veterans.

- The scope of the outcome: How many people will benefit? Consider the number of people you believe will achieve the outcome. Given the need and context, will a sufficient number of beneficiaries experience the intended change?
- The magnitude of the outcome: How much change can you expect among those served? Not only are you looking for a change, but you will also want to consider the level of change. Is the outcome target you identified worth the effort? Are your national service participants spending a great deal of time and effort working for this change? Or, are they doing something else more important?
- Evidence. Does the evidence for the intervention support your choice of outcome? Remember from the theory of change, your choice of intervention should be supported by evidence that shows a cause-and-effect relationship between the intervention and the intended outcome.

While no single outcome may meet all of these criteria, by going through and checking your outcome choice against each item, you will clarify and strengthen the outcome you intend to select.

### DEVELOPING A PERFORMANCE MEASURE

### Ambitious yet Realistic

Is the outcome too modest?

- Outcome should reflect an ambitious change expected from the intervention
- Outcome resulting from full "dosage" of intervention

Your outcomes also must be ambitious but realistic.

First, consider if your selected outcome is too modest.

The outcome should be ambitious enough to address the problem. The outcome should produce a discernible improvement in the problem or condition that gave rise to the intervention. Be careful not to choose an outcome because it is easy to measure but does not reflect the important change your program seeks.

The old joke of the woman looking for her keys exemplifies this error. A woman is looking under a street lamp when another woman offers to help with the key search. After spending some time looking without success, the Good Samaritan asks where the woman thinks she lost her keys. She replies, "I think I lost them down the block but it's dark down there so I'm looking under this street lamp". We can all see the absurdity of this strategy. She focuses her attention on where it is easiest to look, not where it is relevant to look.

A common program misstep is to focus on an outcome that appears more convenient but that is not compelling. You might end up trying to "look for" or measure an outcome that is easy but has little relevance to the identified need and planned intervention.

The performance measure outcome should reflect what you hope to see at the end of
the intervention.

### DEVELOPING A PERFORMANCE MEASURE

### Ambitious yet Realistic

- · Program timeframe
- Scope of Intervention
- Severity of the problems being addressed
- Program resources

### Program timeframe

An outcome selection should consider the program timeframe. The outcome needs to be measurable within the annual grant period. For example, a new community health education campaign may not result in measurable health improvements in heart disease within the annual grant period. However the project may be able to select another outcome, increased healthy living practices, which would likely contribute to lowered heart disease in the future and be measureable within one year.

### Scope of Intervention

An outcome should also consider the scope of the intervention and those outcomes directly resulting from it. Look for outcomes directly addressed by the intervention and not beyond its scope. Check your theory of change. For example, a financial literacy education program for high school students should <u>not</u> try to measure improved financial literacy of the students' family members. The program should measure knowledge gained by those directly served, the students, given the focus of the intervention.

### Severity of the problems being addressed

The outcome should keep in mind the severity or intractability of the problems being addressed. For instance, selecting the outcome, "increase the number of students with a GPA of 3.9 or higher" would be overly ambitious if the target population of students are at-risk of dropping out. Such an outcome does not take into account the challenge of the context of the target population.

### **Program Resources**

Program resources must also be taken into account. While programs should strive to have ambitious and compelling outcomes, this must be balanced with the staff time and expertise needed to achieve them. Program resources aren't just about capacity to measure. They are also about capacity to produce certain kinds of outcomes given the resources for the intervention; the design and dosage of the intervention. For example, a program in which mentors engage with their assigned student once a month for two hours for 6 months cannot expect to see the same outcomes as a program in which mentors spend three hour a week with their mentees for 12 months.

# Alignment of Outputs and Outcomes Intervention produces output Output leads to the outcome Output and outcome measure the same intervention and beneficiaries Output Outcome

Let's consider how to ensure strong alignment within a set of performance measures; that is between an output performance measure and an outcome performance measure.

When we talk about an aligned set of performance measures, we are referring to the strong link between the output and outcome; the outcome results from the output. Remember, an output is the amount of service completed, such as the number of students mentored. An outcome reflects the changes or benefits that occur as a result of the service activity, such as improved school attendance.

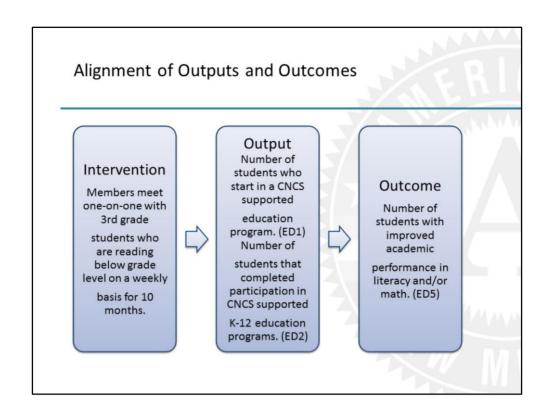
Alignment also means that the output you are measuring is produced by the intervention. For example, if the intervention is that national service participants mentor youth, then the output would track the number of youth who are mentored.

In addition, an aligned output and outcome measure the same intervention and the same beneficiaries.

By measuring outputs along with outcome, programs have the context for reporting; they will know their level of success. Of those served, how many change? For instance, the output is that 100 children complete the early education program and the outcome is 75 of those children improved numeracy skills. The output establishes the pool of beneficiaries we are looking to change. In the example, the level of success is that 75

out of 100 of the children improved numeracy skills.

Let's look at a an example and see if the output and outcome are aligned.



### **Strategy** = Intervention

 The strategy/intervention will be the same for all components of the measure – output, outcome – because all of these should result from the same intervention.

**Result** = Output, Intermediate Outcome, End Outcome

**Indicator** = For outputs, a description of the number of beneficiaries to be counted. For outcomes, a description of the measurable change that will occur.

**Target Statement** = The indicator plus the expected number – 100 beneficiaries will...

**Target** = The number in the target statement − 100

**Instrument** = The specific tool that will be used to collect your data

 School attendance records, AIMSweb letter sounds and letter names pre/post test

Data Collection Methodology = How data will be collected

- Survey, pre/post test

**Result Statement:** Students will demonstrate improved academic performance...

**Indicator:** Number of students with improved academic

performance

**Target Statement:** 100 Students will demonstrate improved academic performance...

Target: 100

### SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Performance measurement is a systematic process of measuring progress (outputs and outcomes)
- Performance measurement does not seek to "prove" a theory of change, but can provide snapshots.
- Impact evaluation can determine if results occurred because of the intervention.
- Strong performance measures align with the theory of change (need, intervention and outcome)
  - The intervention is based on evidence that supports a cause-and-effect relationship between the intervention and an intended outcome.
  - · The theory of change helps identify an appropriate outcome to measure.

Here is a summary of the key points covered in this session:

Performance measurement is a systematic process of measuring progress through outputs and outcomes. Remember, outputs are the amount of service completed (usually the number of people served unless you are doing environmental activities); outcomes are the change that occurred due to the service.

Performance measurement does not seek to "prove" a causal relationship between the intervention and the outcome in the theory of change. Instead, it provides a snapshot of progress and shows that a change happened. Performance measurement data can show you if your intervention is having the intended effect.

Impact evaluation, on the other hand, uses rigorous methodologies that can determine if outcomes occurred because of the intervention. Impact evaluation also can look at longer term outcomes than are possible within a one year timeframe.

Strong performance measures align with the theory of change; that is, your program's identified need, chosen intervention, and intended outcome. The intervention is based on evidence that supports a cause-and-effect relationship between the intervention and the intended outcome. Look to your theory of change to identify appropriate outcomes.

# SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- · Quality outcomes should:
  - Be meaningful
  - · Be ambitious yet realistic
  - Match the type of change you want to see (attitude, knowledge/skills, behavior, condition)
- · Strong performance measures are aligned
  - Output comes from the intervention
  - · Outcome is likely to result from output
  - Output and outcome measure the same intervention and beneficiaries

Strong outcomes are meaningful and ambitious, but also realistic and measurable within the time frame. They should match the type of change you want to achieve and which directly address the need or problem.

Strong performance measures are aligned, in that output come from the intervention, and the outcome is likely to result from output. Both the output and outcome measure the same intervention and beneficiaries.

# RESOURCES

# **CNCS National Service Knowledge Network**

- www.nationalserviceresources.org/npm/ac#.U9Z-8 IdUsI

## eGrants Performance Measures Module for AmeriCorps

http://learning.nationalserviceresources.org/mod/page/view.php
 ?id=30 64

### **CNCS National Service Hotline**

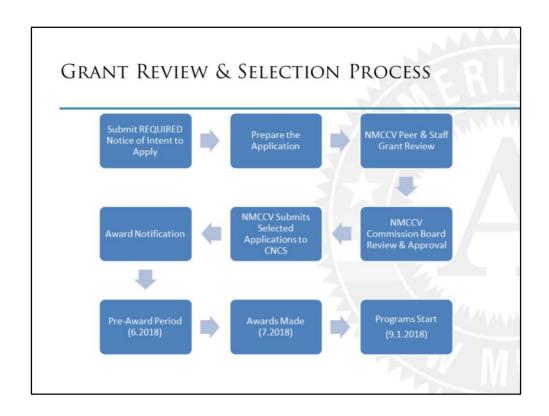
- https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask\_eg

# AMERICORPS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The AmeriCorps program is a Federally funded program. As such, the following requirements apply to the program activities and funds expended as part of the program.

- · Administrative Requirements
  - 2 CFR 200
- Cost Principles
  - 2 CFR 200
- Audits
  - Single Audit
- · National and Community Service Act of 1990 (as amended by the Serve America Act)
  - 42 USC 12501 et seq., and 45 CFR 2510 et seq.
- · Applicable Federal Policies
- · AmeriCorps Regulations
  - 45 CFR 2520-2550
- · AmeriCorps Provisions

Be aware of the following Federal Rules and Regulations...you will need to be familiar with these and how they may affect your program.



# QUESTIONS?

Raul Quintanilla

Procurement Manager

New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions

Raul.Quintanilla@state.nm.us

This concludes the AmeriCorps Basics Informational Session This is the second of four webinars to assist grant applicants in understanding how to apply for AmeriCorps funding. In addition to these webinars, please review the Notice of Funding Opportunity and other materials posted on our website to help you prepare to apply for an AmeriCorps grant.