NCOA/NISC SELF-ASSESSMENT and ACCREDITATION MANUAL

EVALUATION

PRINCIPLE

A senior center shall have appropriate and adequate arrangements to evaluate its programs, services and their delivery. Evaluation is the catalyst for change and growth.

RATIONALE

Evaluation is carefully collecting information in order to make necessary decisions about a program or service. It is an essential component of the planning cycle and should be sufficiently funded in order to accomplish its purposes. The type of evaluation chosen depends upon what one wants to learn about the program/service. An evaluation plan should be developed and reviewed annually. The results of evaluation are extremely useful to a senior center in strengthening its relationship with the community and funding sources.

When evaluation is an ongoing process, built into all phases of the center's operation, it becomes part of the planning process. An evaluation committee can assist with the process. There may be senior center participants, community volunteers or faculty from local colleges who could be part of this committee. An evaluation consultant could be hired. Computer technology can make gathering, compiling and analyzing information much easier and should be used whenever possible. Ultimate responsibility for evaluation rests with the senior center's administrator and governing structure. This ensures evaluations are completed on a regular basis, appropriate individuals are involved, reports are prepared and distributed to the suitable groups, and results are used in planning.

The results of evaluations should be readily available to the senior center's participants, paid and unpaid staff, sponsors, funding sources, boards and committees. The evaluator, staff or an evaluation committee should prepare comprehensive reports that include the evaluation instrument, a summary of findings, compilation of all answers, and recommendations from the information gathered. Evaluation of program use can help decide whether to implement, continue, expand or end a particular service or activity.

Evaluation can improve delivery mechanisms so that they become more efficient and less costly. Over time, programs and their delivery can become a collection of activities. Evaluations can identify activity strength or weakness that will lead to improvement in its delivery and impact.

Program evaluation can serve a variety of purposes. An evaluation can gauge satisfaction with program content or implementation. Measurements would be in terms of whether expectations were met, participants were satisfied, would repeat the experience or tell friends about it. The center may want to explore whether the delivery is appropriate for the audience. They might want to know whether the scheduled time of the activity, quality of instruction, content of information or physical space meets the needs of the participant.

A needs assessment examines the nature of a problem and solutions. It can help determine the need for an activity or service. It can also study the services or activities that address this need and whether they are available and being utilized.

Program evaluation can also look at quantitative measurement. This type of evaluation measures the number of participants, number of unduplicated people or number of service units. It can measure the amount of service in different ways.

A program's impact on participants is a growing concern of funders. They want to know "Are people better off because of your efforts?" and often make funding contingent upon evidence showing how participants are benefiting from senior center programs and services. Today, when public and government funds are decreasing and community needs increasing, funding organizations and individuals want to know that their dollars are being put to good use. Outcome evaluations are used to gather this type of information.

Outcome evaluations are used to document short- or long-term results. Implementing outcome based evaluations should be part of a center's evaluation plans. There are many reasons why there is more emphasis on outcome based evaluation:

- Public and government funds are decreasing.
- Community needs are increasing.
- More emphasis is being placed on whether a program is making a difference.
- Funders (organizations and individuals) want to know the impact of their dollars.

The first step in outcome based evaluation is to identify the outcomes you want to examine. Then for each outcome, specify what observable measures or indicators will suggest that you have achieved it.

EVALUATION STANDARDS CRITERIA

A. Evaluation Process

1. The senior center's administrator and governing structure have ultimate responsibility for carrying out evaluations.
2. Some of the responsibility can be delegated to a committee made up of paid and unpaid staff, which may include participants, interested community members, or staff from institutions of higher learning.
3. Program evaluation enables the senior center to:
   a. Demonstrate program successes;
   b. Discover program weaknesses;
   c. Assess programs for efficiency, effectiveness and customer satisfaction;
   d. Produce valid data to facilitate decisions related to their expansion, retention or elimination;
   e. Examine and describe effective programs for duplication elsewhere;
   f. Discover unmet needs or duplication of services;
   g. Document accomplishments and successes;
   h. Substantiate financial needs to justify budget and grant requests; and
   i. Show willingness to let people voice their assessment of the organization.
4. The center has a plan to evaluate each element of the center's programs and services on a regular basis. These plans are reviewed yearly to ensure that all aspects of program and service are covered.
5. Periodically an individual trained in the evaluation process should review the evaluation plan to see that it is on target.
6. Evaluation summaries should be produced and made available to those completing the evaluation, staff, governing body, funding organizations and the public.
7. Negative evaluations can show ineffective efforts that might be resolved with additional funding. These then can be used for funding requests. Negative results can be the basis for implementing change.
8. Results of the evaluations shall be used in planning and improving operations.
9. Adequate resources for evaluation (including paid and unpaid staff) shall be included as part of a senior center's operating budget.

B. Areas of evaluation

1. The following areas could be included in a senior center's evaluation plan.
   a. Extent to which the senior center's activities are meeting their mission;
   b. Extent to which an activity or service is achieving its stated objectives;
   c. Participant's satisfaction with program and services;
   d. Evaluation of participation rate over time;
   e. Examination of whether there is a need for the program and whether the program is meeting that need;
   f. Analysis of cost/benefit for programs and cost per participant;
   g. Examination of how decisions are made and who is involved;
   h. Evaluation whether the customer is receiving the service that they expect and deserve;

i. Assessment of whether the facility, equipment, parking and furnishings are adequate and appropriate;
j. Effectiveness of internal and external marketing strategies;
k. Adequacy and efficiency of communication within the senior center, with other organizations and with the community; and
l. Assessment of the visibility and image of the senior center in the community.

C. Information collection methods

1. The type of evaluation a center undertakes depends on what information they need to collect and how it is going to be used.
2. The center should investigate the use of computer technology to gather the information or to evaluate the results.
3. There are numerous ways to collect the information one needs for an evaluation. Some can be informal and simple; others may be more scientific and require more skill to implement and analyze. The following are methods of gaining evaluation information:
   a. Satisfaction questionnaires can measure how well a program/service meets the expectation of a participant.
   b. Surveys and checklists are a way to get information quickly from people in a non-threatening way.
   c. Interviews help evaluate more fully a person's impressions or experiences about a subject.
   d. Observation helps gather accurate information about how a program actually operates. Observers would need to be well-trained and have a criteria checklist.

e. Focus groups can explore a topic in-depth through group discussion. This can be useful in evaluating a new service or activity.
f. Case study reviews can help fully understand or depict a client's experience in a program. These usually are time consuming to collect, organize and describe data. However, it can be a powerful way to portray a program and its outcomes to outsiders.

D. Outcome-based evaluations

1. The more skilled a senior center is in developing outcome-based evaluations the better the staff will be able to advocate for the need of their programs and services.
2. Self-reporting is a simple method of outcome based evaluation. Asking clients how they have benefited from a service or activity is a first level outcome-based evaluation.
3. Another way to measure outcomes is through a pre- and post-test to gauge how much a person has changed. These are effective in a learning situation or when physical changes can be measured.
4. A more complex type of outcome based evaluation is the logic model. This model helps determine if your center is really doing the right program activities to bring about the outcomes you want to attain.
5. There are four parts to an outcome-based evaluation using the logic model. The four parts are:
   a. *Inputs* are the various resources needed to run the program/service, e.g. money facilities, program staff, etc.

b. *Process* is how the program is carried out, e.g., clients are served, counseled, provided learning opportunities, educated.
c. *Outputs* are the units of service, e.g., the number of people fed, the miles driven to deliver food, pounds lost, blood pressure reduced.
d. *Outcomes* are the impacts on the participants or how their life has improved, e.g., lower blood pressure, extended social circle, better able to do daily activities.

6. When performing outcome-based evaluations, there needs to be observable measures or indicators that suggest you are achieving your goal. This can be the most challenging step as you think about what actions would demonstrate the success of your program, e.g., one can say they have extended their social circle and then show it by reporting that they call people they met at the center on weekends.

ITEMS FOR ON-SITE REVIEW NOTEBOOK
☐ Senior center's evaluation plan.
☐ Two (2) evaluations that show measuring different areas as identified in **B, Areas of Evaluation, #1,** and include compilation of results and two (2) recommendations drawn from the results**.**
☐ An example of two (2) methods of evaluations from **C, Information Collection Methods, # 3,** with explanation as to why that type was chosen.
☐ Two (2) examples of outcome-based evaluation, an explanation as to why it was done and how the information was used.

REQUIREMENT FOR ACCREDITATION
☐ The senior center has developed and implemented an evaluation plan
☐ Evaluations are completed and the results are used in planning
☐ Outcome-based evaluation is used in at least two program/service areas to document their impact.

These are a few of the web sites that were reviewed at the time of this update. However, be aware that web sites can change. Using Google or another search engine may find additional sites.

http://managementhelp.org/   This website provides resources on many aspects of managing an organization.

http://managementhelp.org/evaluatn/evaluatn.htm   Evaluations Efforts in Organizations

http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide

http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/outcomes.htm Basic guide to Outcomes-based Evaluation for Nonprofit Organizations with very Limited Resources

https://www.ncoa.org/content.cfm?sectionID=44&detail=2548 Publication *Senior Center Evaluation Toolkit* has been developed by Florida Department of Elder Affairs. This access is through NCOA/NISC website. It can also be found on the state of Florida's web site.