LSTA Evaluation & Outcome Measures

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Outline

- Inputs, outputs, and outcomes
- Understanding outcome measures
- How to plan evaluation for an LSTA grant
- Examples of common mistakes
- Using what you've measured to describe impact

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Inputs	What is invested
Outputs	What is done
Outcomes	What results

Inputs	Money spent, time, staff, volunteers, equipment
Outputs	Number of programs offered, number of items digitized, number of attendees
Outcomes	Increased literacy, increased community awareness, staff learn new skills

- We *over rely* on reporting **outputs**
- Outputs are important but not sufficient to determine effectiveness of programs
- We have to use **outcomes** to answer the question:

"So what?"

RFID project

- **Inputs?**
  - $10,000, 500 hours of staff time, 100 hours volunteers
- **Outputs?**
  - There may not be many tangible outputs in this case (benefits relate to saving time and increasing efficiency). Number of items tagged, number of new self check stations, number of training sessions for staff.
- **Outcomes?**
  - Have patrons and/or staff *attitudes* towards the check out process or library improved based on this project?

Questions we want to answer with evaluation

- Has time spent conducting inventory decreased? Has our ability to conduct inventory increased?
- Has the wait time for patrons to check out items decreased?
- Have circulation desk errors decreased?
- Can we demonstrate decreased throughput time on holds processing or return items processing?

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A systemic way of assessing the extent to which a program has achieved its intended result.

- Answers questions like:
  - "What difference did the program make?"
  - "How did the participant benefit from the program?"
- Helps communicate the value and success of a program
- Helps libraries focus limited resources
- Helps objectively identify programs that benefit customers the most


before
after

1. Pre and post testing
2. Pre and post surveying / focus groups
3. Pre and post data collection (manual or automated)

How do you identify outcome measures?

Ask yourself

- What will be different as a result of this project?
- What will be improved?
- What will beneficiaries say is the value of the program?

- What would you want to be able to say to taxpayers or legislators who finance your program about its goals?
- If you could write a press release about the program, what would the headline be about?
- For an existing program, look at major activities and ask yourself "why are we doing that?" Answer = outcome

Indicators


0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
110
120


0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
045

Condition	• Shown a set of alphabet cards
Observable behavior	• Children will be able to identify letters of the alphabet
Standard	• With at least 75% accuracy

Condition	• Given a digital resource
Observable behavior	• Students will be able to find it using the library's website
Standard	• Within a period of three minutes or less

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- **Quantitative:** data in numerical form.
- Can be put in categories, ranked in order, measured in units, etc.
- Quantitative data can be used to construct graphs, charts, and tables of raw data.
- Examples: surveys, transactions, counting anything

- **Qualitative:** information that is not numerical in form
- Qualitative research is by nature descriptive and exploratory
- Often how people think/feel
- Examples: open ended questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, etc.

Evaluation plan

Common evaluation methods

- Transaction data
- Pre- and post testing
- Surveys
- Focus groups

Transaction data

- Helps identify inputs and outputs
  - How many circulations?
  - How many instructional technology sessions?
  - How many website visits?
  - How many of our patrons fall into specific age ranges?
  - How many visitors to the new branch at certain times of day?

- Must plan in advance! If the data is not already recorded, it can be impossible to get after the fact.

Pre- and post testing

- Pre- and post testing measures knowledge gained
- Can also help us understand which concepts or competencies were well taught
- Participants are given similar tests before and after
- Made up of well-written, clear questions
- Issue: some things can't easily be tested (ex. management or communication skills)
- Issue: doesn't tell us whether knowledge is retained over time or comes in useful in life

Surveys

- If the sample isn't good, the data isn't good!
- Clearly state intentions with research on the survey
- Don't ask for personal information unless you need it
- Minimize the number of open ended questions
- Ask only one question at a time (no "double barreled")
- Be sure questions are phrased in an unbiased way
- Test the survey before distributing

Focus groups

- Recruiting the right group is important
- Compensate participants if possible (snacks, etc.)
- Moderator is very important: must be unbiased
- Plan your questions. Create a script and have the moderator follow it
- How will you document (video, audio, notes)?
  - If notes, have an assistant (not the moderator) do this
- Participants should be informed that their responses are neither right nor wrong

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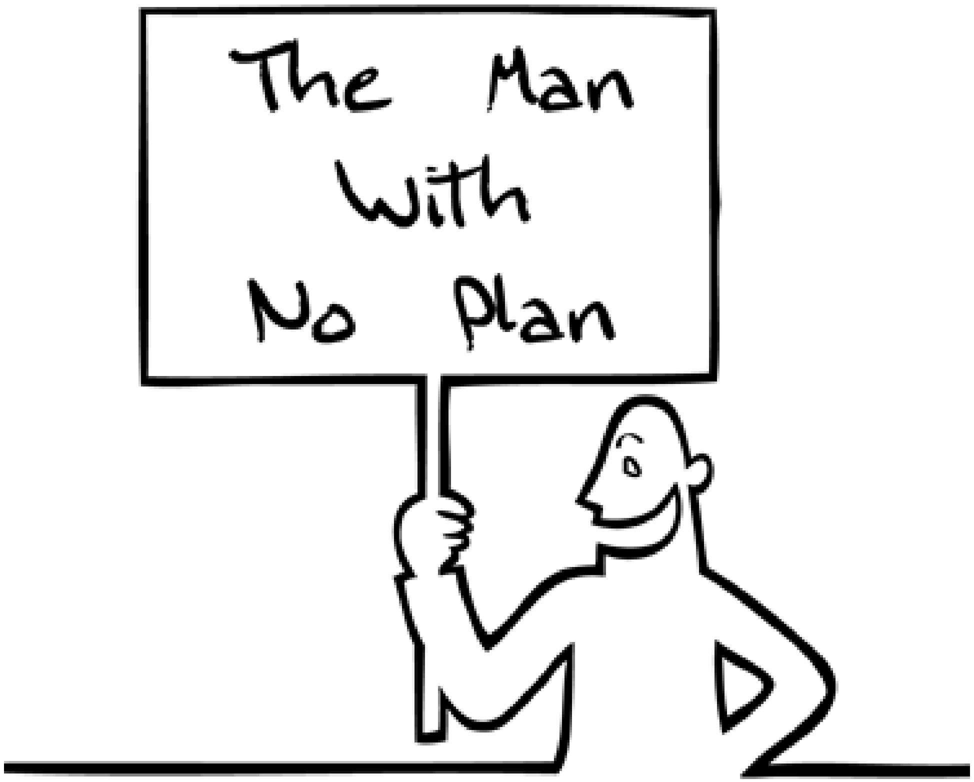
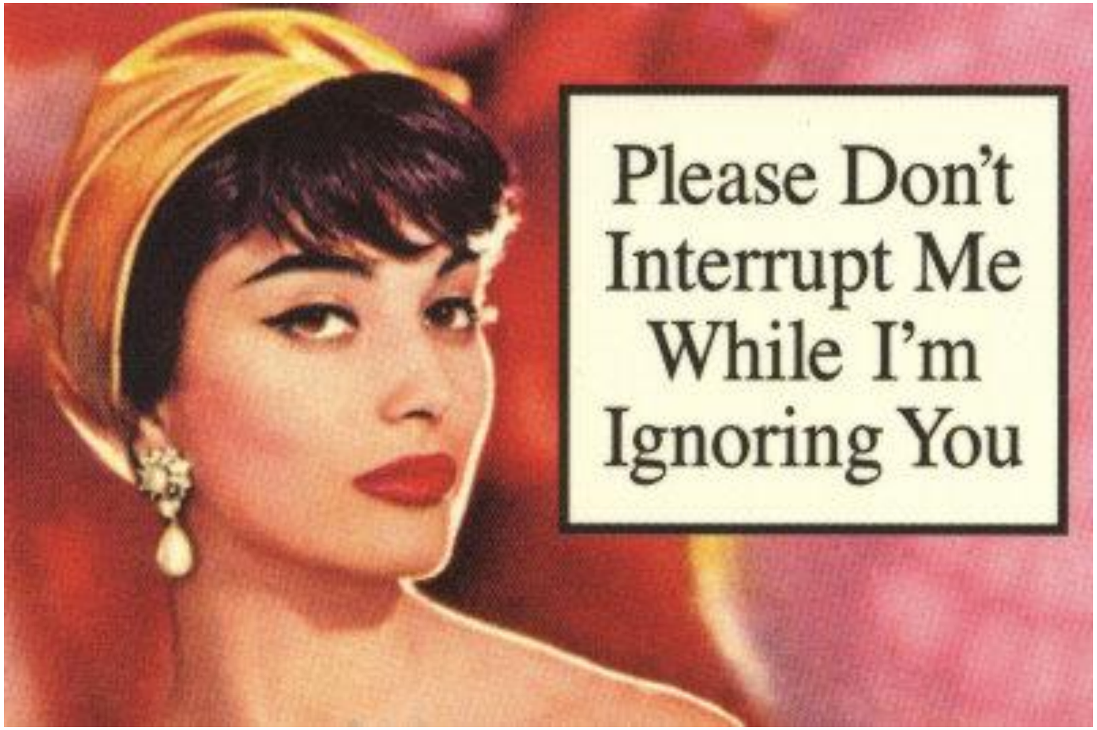
Not turning in an evaluation plan.

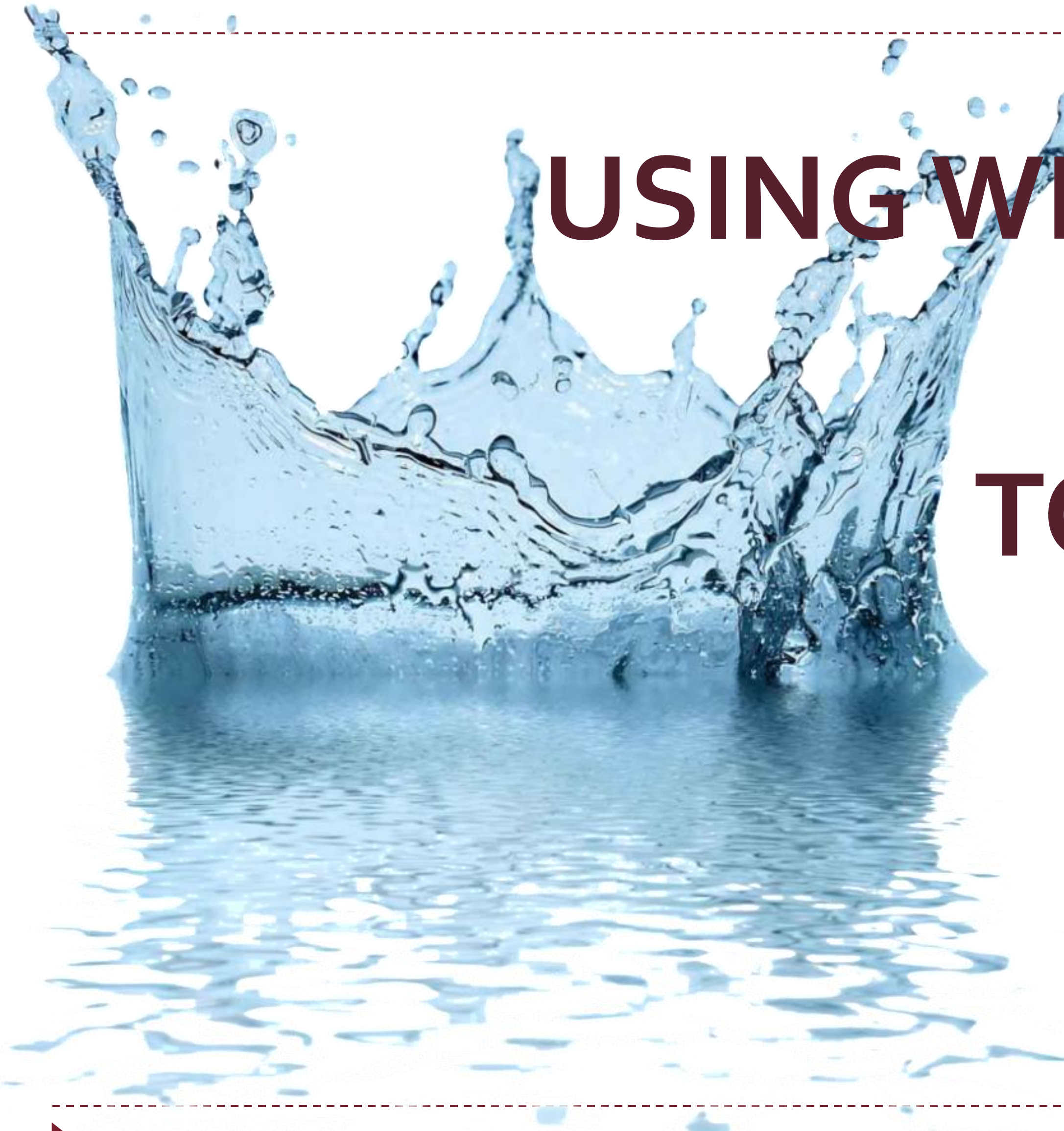


Failing to connect outcomes and activities to goals; failing to connect evaluation to outcomes and activities

Waiting until the end of your project to begin evaluation

Concentrating on transactions, forgetting about people





USING WHAT YOU'VE MEASURED TO DESCRIBE IMPACT

Provide context for your data

Output without context

- 345 people used the new teen service

Missing context

- How many people are in your service area / student population?
- What time frame?
- How does usage compare to goals?
- Is that more or less popular than other services?

Without context

- 345 people used the new teen service

With context

- 12 people used the service per day in the first month of availability. With 3,000 teens in our service area, 11% of all teens have used the service in the first month alone.
- This usage rate is three times as high as comparable teen services X and Y, and more than doubles the project goal of 5 uses per day.

Questions?

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