Aspects to Consider: Program Design and Assessment Building

I encourage you and your team to think about the concrete, measurable changes the proposed program is designed to create and/or contribute to among participants. What are the activities and content intended to achieve? These answers will drive the process of determining what data is needed, and where and how it needs to be collected, to evaluate program outputs[1] and outcomes. Some good questions to ask yourselves are:

- What are the ultimate goals of the project?
- What datapoints best demonstrate "baseline" and "progress" for these measures? How will you know goals were met? What evidence is most compelling (and available)?
- Are there other measures that may reflect 'proxy scores' for the ultimate goals? (perhaps psychosocial aspects proven to correlate with project goals)
- In what period of time are the desired changes expected to manifest? Should data collection be repeated at some level to capture incremental change? Matching scores over time will increase statistical power.

Here are some ways to think about performance measures using a Results Based Accountability framework.[2] This grid represents measures of quantity and quality by effort and effect. Quantity of effort is the easiest to measure, but quality of effect is the most meaningful. All quadrants add value to understanding a program's impact on the problem it was designed to address.

RBA Performance Measures: Template

	Quantity	Quality
Effort	How much did we do? [Counts of events, numbers of participants, etc.] LOGIC MODEL OUTPUTS	How well did we do it? [Evidence of program quality; fidelity with intended activities/resources provided; evidence of how well student needs were met] IMPLEMENTATION FIDELITY
	Is anyone Better Off?	
Effect	How much change? ["Countable" measures of how the program benefited participants and other stakeholders] OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES	What was the quality of change? [Marginal distributions of participants demonstrating improvements, proportions of improved courses, etc.] OUTCOMES

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Three of the four aspects in this grid align with the project theory of change and/or logic model (other worksheet). The fourth is how to assess whether things were implemented as intended based on timing, duration, quality, content, and participants. I encourage projects to go through a logic modeling process (attached worksheet) to visually graph the connections between what you are doing and what you hope/expect will come from those efforts, which then lead to the attainment of the ultimate goals. The literature-based "why" that connects activities to outcomes, timing, and who is responsible for each element can also be incorporated into these models for full transparency.

[1] Outputs are the countable "deliverables" or products of project efforts, while outcomes are the changed behaviors, attitudes, trends, etc.
[2] These are from *Trying hard is not good enough* (Friedman, 2015)