Tips for Developing Performance Measures in Proposals

Proposals are expected to have performance measures, which tell us how well a grant, initiative or organization is working.

Three Questions Performance Measures Can Answer

1. **How much did we do (quantity of effort)?**
   This type of performance measure helps quantify the number and type of activities engaged in, the number of people engaged and the amount of effort expended.
   - **People or organizations:** # contacted, engaged, served, who participated, etc.
   - **Activities:** # delivered, completed, held, provided, performed, conducted, etc.
   - **Deliverables/products:** # of plans, interviews, etc.

2. **How well did we do it (quality of effort)?**
   This type of performance measure helps measure the quality and efficiency of strategies, direct services and operations.
   - **Timeliness:** % of activities, response rates, performance on time, etc.
   - **Attendance:** % or rates attending or participating in advocacy efforts, completing a course or curriculum, etc.
   - **Standards:** % of practices met, staff certifications, level of performance including % of target population reached, etc.

3. **Is anyone better off (the difference we made — quantity and quality of effect)?**
   This type of performance measure helps quantify the effect of our efforts on people’s lives. These performance measures quantify demonstrable improvement in skills, knowledge, attitude, opinion, behavior or circumstances for individuals, programs, organizations or clients served.
   - **Behaviors change:** # or % increase/decrease, adopt new, maintain over time, etc.
   - **Attitudes shift:** # or % of shifts in beliefs, values, points of view, etc.
   - **Circumstances change:** # or % gaining, receiving, benefiting from, acquiring, etc.
   - **Knowledge increases:** # or % new or increased knowledge, understanding, etc.
   - **Skills improve:** # or % new skills, improved existing skills, competencies

Avoid performance measures that are:
1. **Unmeasurable** — that is, not quantifiable. These measures are often descriptions of an activity, an extension or a more detailed definition of the scope of work, such as producing a report of a specific length.

2. **Action statements** that begin with these words: convene, provide, deliver, influence, develop, complete, visit, conduct, produce, survey, etc. These are not measures. The measure should quantify “how much” action was taken, e.g., “20 site visits conducted.”

3. **Statements beginning with “to”** essentially are aims, goals or objectives, such as “to increase the knowledge of participants.” The measure would be, “85% of individuals increased their knowledge about avoiding predatory financial products.”