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The Pet Rescue Foundation

NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT FOR PET RESCUE ORGANIZATIONS

Part Seven: Program Assessment & Evaluation

For more information on these and other nonprofit management topics, contact:

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In this section:

- Why evaluate your programs?
- A simple evaluation process
- Planning for continuous improvement
- Publicizing your assessment results

Why should you evaluate your pet rescue program?

- Find out what is and is not working in your program
- Show your funders and the community what your rescue does and how it benefits the community
- Raise additional money for your rescue by providing evidence of its effectiveness
- Improve your program by identifying weaknesses as well as strengths
- Add to the existing knowledge in the pet rescue field about what does and doesn’t work in your type of community.

What is program evaluation?

- Program evaluation is a systematic method for collecting, analyzing and using information to answer basic questions about your program, and to assure that those answers are supported by evidence.
- You should conduct both
  - **Output Evaluation** (**how** you implement your services), and
  - **Outcome Evaluation** (**what changes** happen in your community because of your services)
- Your organization's strategic plan provides a good framework for creating your evaluation plan.

For example:

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- **Output Evaluation:**
  - How many adoption events did you hold during the year?
  - How many adoptions did you complete?
  - How many fundraising presentations did you do?
  - How many low cost spay/neuter vouchers did you distribute?
- **Outcome Evaluation:**
  - What was the percentage change in euthanasia rate at your county shelter compared to the previous year?
  - How much additional funding did you raise?
  - What was the percentage change in intake at your county shelter compared to the previous year?

(See how the outcome evaluations are connected to the output evaluations? Outcome evaluations show WHY you're doing your measured activities.)

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Sample Logic Model

Progam Objective

End euthanasia of healthy pets in Jones County by 2015

Output Measurement

Hold 4 adoption events in 2008

Provide low cost sterilizations for 1200 pets in 2008

Outcome Measurement

800 healthy pets transferred from Jones County Animal Control are placed in permanent homes

Intake at Jones County Animal Control decreases by 10% from 2007 rates

Evaluation Steps

- Assemble an evaluation team
- Prepare for the evaluation
- Collect information
- Analyze your information
- Prepare the evaluation report
- Create a program improvement plan

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Assemble the team

- Your evaluation should be a team effort. Board members, staff, volunteers and community members can all help evaluate your operations.
- Assign a Board member to be the evaluation project leader.
- Divide your organization into program areas (for example, adoptions, fundraising, animal care) and assign each program to a team that includes a Board member, a staff member from a different program area, and a volunteer or community partner.
- Each team will be responsible for collecting evaluation data from their assigned program.
- Larger, more established pet rescue organizations might want to consider hiring an independent, outside evaluator.

Prepare for the evaluation

- Decide what to evaluate: identify the program components of your organization.
- Identify the objectives of each program component in measurable terms. For example, "The objective of the animal care component is to meet or exceed industry standards of care for the animals in our program."
- Conduct a training for evaluation team members. Make sure each evaluation team member understands what information they will be collecting.
- Set a specific time period for the information collecting to take place. This phase generally takes one to two weeks.

Prepare for the evaluation

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- Create tools for measuring performance that the evaluation team will use to gather information. For example, the team might create a set of questions to use when interviewing the Fundraising Committee about their activities, or a checklist of industry standards to use when inspecting the animal care facilities.
- Assemble outside statistics, existing program data and performance information to help the evaluation team measure performance and progress.

Collect information

- During the information-collecting phase, the teams will meet with Board and staff responsible for each component to ask questions about activities. The teams may visit some parts of the organization to measure performance using checklists.
- Its important that everyone involved understands that this is a program self-improvement process. The evaluation team should stay positive and supportive, and refrain from criticizing those being evaluated.
- A nice side benefit of this process is that your Board members, staff and community partners will gain an in-depth understanding of all your operations!

Analyze the information

- Once the information-gathering phase has ended, the evaluation project leader should assemble the data and compare it to program objectives, expected outputs and outcomes, and the strategic plan.

- If objectives were achieved or exceeded, what were the reasons? What strategies and activities seem to be especially helpful?

- If objectives were not achieved, can you identify why? What unexpected barriers or challenges were encountered?

Prepare the evaluation report

- The evaluation project leader should work with the evaluation teams to prepare a report on their findings. At a minimum, for each program component area, the report should include:
  - Specific performance data compared to measurable objectives. (For example: "The Fundraising Committee planned four direct mail campaigns for 2008, but only completed three.")
  - Information about barriers and challenges identified. (For example: "Due to an active hurricane season, two of six planned adoption events had to be cancelled in 2008.")
  - Recommendations from the evaluation team on how to address performance issues, as well as recognition for components that are high-performing.

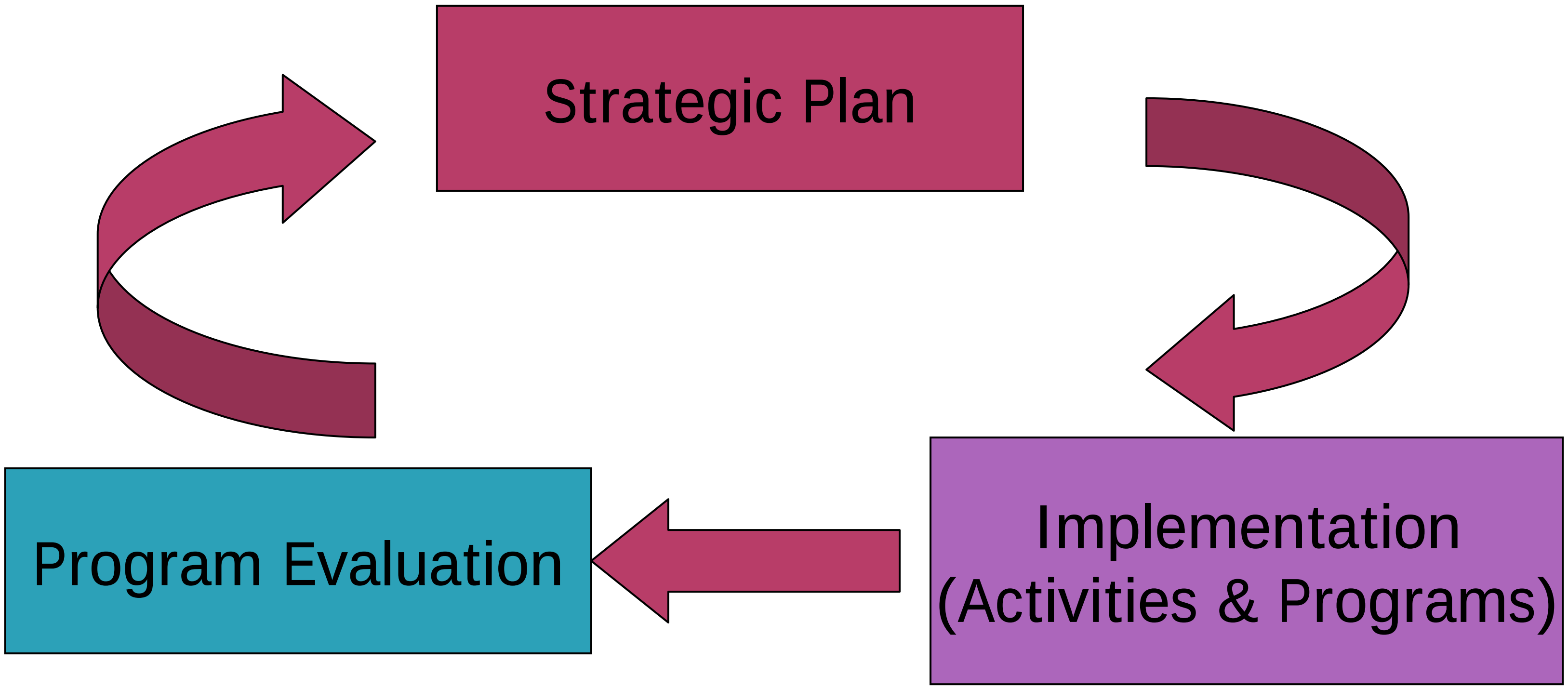
Using the evaluation report to improve your program

- When your evaluation report is ready, it should be presented to the full Board for review and approval.

- If there are performance issues revealed in the report, your organization should create a program improvement plan that shows how each issue will be addressed, when and by whom.

- The Board should use the evaluation report when reviewing and updating the annual strategic plan. The report will help the Board in setting new goals and performance objectives, as well as identifying strategies that work and those that don't.

Annual Planning/Evaluation Cycle



Publicizing your evaluation results

- Once your evaluation report and program improvement plan are approved by your Board of Directors, you should share them with your staff, donors, and community partners.
- Sharing your evaluation results makes your community confident that your organization is truly committed to achieving your goals.
- The evaluation report will document your successes to show that you are making a difference in your community.
- When you identify and acknowledge your program weaknesses and describe your plan to address them, you show your community that your organization is on a path of continuous improvement and that you are realistic and honest about your commitment to saving animals.

Evaluation Resources

There is a large body of research and support material available to help you design your evaluation plan.

- Your local United Way may be willing to share program evaluation procedures and manuals.
- Talk to other nonprofits and pet rescue organizations to find out how they are conducting evaluations and if they are willing to share procedures and tools.
- See if your local college or university has management or social work students who would help with your evaluation as an internship project.
- Try an online search for “program evaluation” to access both basic and advanced information on the topic.

Evaluation Resources

- You can download a complete textbook on the basics of program evaluation from the federal Administration for Children & Families at:
  - www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/other_resrch/pm_guide_eval/reports/pmguide/pmguide_toc.html

Although this guide is designed for social service programs, its principles and strategies can be applied to any nonprofit program.

What's next?

In Part Eight of this Nonprofit Management Series you can learn about:

- **Nonprofit Administrative Tasks**
- **Meeting Management**

Questions or Comments?

For more information about these topics:

Download the complete Nonprofit Management series at www.maddiesfund.org

or contact Mary Ippoliti-Smith at

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