# Determining Common Vocabulary for Evaluation of Objectives and Activities in Local Wellness Policies: Pre-meeting Activity for an Expert Panel

## Purpose

Use of a pre-meeting activity to prepare expert panel members for a face-to-face meeting on characteristics of a successful resource to sustain and strengthen Local Wellness Policy/Policies (LWP) objectives/activities.

## Method

A pre-meeting activity on developing and implementing evaluation measures for a sample LWP activity was created to gauge familiarity with the evaluation process and to develop a common vocabulary to describe types of measures: process, outcome, and impact. Participants were asked to consider several components of the evaluation measure:
- what to measure,
- how to make measurements,
- how to analyze what is measured,
- what standards were used, and the type of measurement (process, outcome, and impact).

Activity responses served as the springboard for panel discussions.

## Results

Participants independently outlined 26 different possible measures for the sample activity.
- While they were able to describe how to make the measures, panelists found it more difficult to describe how to analyze the measures or compare them to standards.
- Panelists reported that the activity helped them to orient the evaluation discussion toward development of a resource for measurement of LWP objectives and activities and that the common vocabulary helped to anchor the evaluation process.
- The panel also recognized that strong evaluation requires time.

## Application

Themes from the discussion, including the focus on types of measures that can be used over time and methods for analyzing and reporting data for evaluation of LWP activities by districts and school sites, will be used to develop an evaluation resource.

## Illustration of Activity:
## Excerpted Responses of Expert Panel
## Activity: Before and after school walk around the track

| What to measure | How to make measurements | How to analyze what is measured | What standards, if any, do you measure against | Type of measurement: process, outcome, impact* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Confirm that the activity was implemented according to plan/status of implementation | Monitor details of the activity as implemented | Compare what was actually done to the implementation plan | Degree of completion | Process |
| Resources used for implementation of the activity | Create a list of staff, materials, resources, costs required for implementation and monitoring | Compare to budget for activity | Percentage of resources used | Process |
| Speed walked for all participants | Measure time and distance (pedometers or know distance around track); calculate speed | Determine whether the student is able to complete the walks faster over time | | Outcome/Impact |
| Percentage of participants in the program over time 1. Students 2. Faculty/staff 3. Parents 4. Class groups 5. Club groups 6. Other groups | Record the number of participants time (logs or observation) compared to the number of potential participants | Compare participation levels at various intervals of the program over time   Calculate participation rates and changes over time | Compare participation rates with other before-and after-school programs   Pre-set goals | Impact |

## *Definitions

- Process measure – measurement that evaluates resources that are available to use; examples include personnel time, class sessions, facility use, supplies, etc.
- Outcome measure – measurement that evaluates a result of an activity; examples include number of miles walked by a student or faculty member, change in endurance, number of whole wheat servings selected from a line, opinions (students, teachers, parents, community organizations) on what to include in an afterschool program that includes physical activity and nutrition education; these may be related to a standard (local, state, national)
- Impact measure – measurement that reflects the extent of change in the total student/staff/community population; examples include the total level of participation by students/staff/community, the percentage reached of a target goal

## Quotes

- *There is currently a lot of focus on process, such as strength of policies, and not much movement toward documenting outcomes and impacts.*
- *The focus on process is reflective of the level of maturity of our evaluation. We need to grow into documenting outcomes and impacts.*
- *When you measure change, the transition between outcome and impact is important; you have to be in it for the long haul and be committed.*
- *There is a need for quantitative numbers and not just qualitative statements*

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