



Effectiveness Policy

Mandatory Policy

The A+ Academic Resources Board adopts this *Effectiveness Policy* which mandates A+ Academic Resources will have a formal assessment completed, no less than every two years, of the organization's performance and effectiveness and of determining future action required for mission accomplishment.

Performance Measurement

Performance measurement allows organizations to demonstrate outcomes that are key to proving effectiveness. Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) must measure their effectiveness by assessing their programs and services. In 2007, the federal government implemented the *Program Assessment Rating Tool*, an outcome-focused survey, to rate the effectiveness of government programs. In 2009, the federal government established the "Social Innovation Fund," a \$200 million public-private partnership, to support results-driven NPOs. ***The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) pressures NPOs to adopt performance measurement.*** In 1992, the GPRA created a template for performance reporting by requiring quantitative versus qualitative data for the effectiveness of programs and services in relation to meeting the NPO's stated mission. Funders mandate that NPOs report on their performance results in increased use of performance measurement for strategic management, thereby, enhancing accountability, performance, and trust (Thomson, 2011).

Performance measurement is fundamental to the strategic management of an NPO. A study by Snibbe (as cited in Lynch-Cerullo & Cooney, 2011) suggests that managers should use knowledge of certain evaluative frameworks to facilitate the development of an organizational culture in which measurement's primary purpose is conceptualized as an opportunity for continuous learning and improvement. ***A+ Academic Resources Leadership will study, evaluate, and suggest changes to better support the organization's mission.*** Leadership will initiate information about potential issues and their possible solutions, management projects needed, and beneficial change to better support the organization's mission. We will use the results of performance measurement to revise programs and services to ensure they align with our mission. NPOs must use performance measurement to track their progress towards achieving strategic goals to ensure that programs and services are aligned with strategic and operational priorities (Mulgan, 2010). Leadership will actively support performance measurement efforts by implementing them into standard operations. ***A+ Academic Resources will use performance measurement results to let the organization know if it is meeting mission requirements and if the organization is on track to achieve its goals and objectives.***

Evidence-Based Management

Evidence-based management is a strategy that facilitates better decision-making which allows NPOs to better achieve their mission and vision. Evidence-based management helps nonprofit managers and boards garner better available evidence for strategic decision-making, so they can make more informed decisions (Kovner, 2014). A+ Academic Resources Leadership recognizes the benefits gained from using evidence-based management. ***Therefore, Leadership will use data-driven strategies to guide decisions.*** A+

Academic Resources will use quality performance metrics to gauge performance assessment. This will ensure the organization allocates resources efficiently and effectively. Prudent managers make informed decisions based on evidence. Leadership will evaluate data to make strategic decisions. Evidence-based management ensures that the best evidence is available. The bottom line is an organization is only as strong as its leaders' decisions.

A+ Academic Resources success cannot be attained without using data-driven strategies to measure achievement. Data-driven strategies are a steadfast commitment to continuous process improvement based on reliable information from surveys, assessments, and evaluations. It is important to monitor stakeholder needs and issues and environmental changes to make ***evidence-based decisions*** instead of guesses when it comes to meeting stakeholder needs and expectations. Prudent organizations use data-driven strategies to measure organizational effectiveness. Therefore, managers must have an unwavering commitment to analysis and feedback; this allows the organization to become stronger and more relevant to stakeholders (ASAE, 2012).

Leadership will analyze the organization's overall objectives carefully while considering immediate needs and opportunities according to Craft and Benson's and Crittenden and Crittenden's studies (as cited in Tucker et al., 2013). According Willis' experiment (as cited in Tucker et al., 2013) organizations that engage in strategic planning must be cognizant of salient changes and innovations, address stakeholder needs and demographic changes, develop a process for the strategic plan, and evaluate the work completed for specific goals. Managers must communicate objectives and results, and successes should be highlighted in the annual report to inform all stakeholders about the organization's achievement of goals and objectives (Vogt, 2000). ***A+ Academic Resources publishes annual performance reports (Yearly Mission Impact Report) and quarterly performance reports (Quarterly Mission Impact Report) which drive us to collect data that informs stakeholders about the impact of our programs and services.***

Data-driven strategies allow A+ Academic Resources to receive essential feedback from stakeholders which channels innovative ideas, solutions, and best practices into the organization for the greatest good of stakeholders. Managers must have a commitment to analysis and feedback, so they can gather relevant data and use that data to become better and better (ASAE, 2012). ***A+ Academic Resources has a strong commitment to using performance measurement to make data-driven decisions.*** This is crucial because an absence of performance measurement in the strategic management of the organization will derail organizational success and cripple the organization as it strides towards achieving strategic goals and objectives and its vision.

Statistical Data

It behooves NPOs to use process improvement tools like performance metrics, benchmarking, best practices, and assessments to ensure organizations are achieving their stated missions and meeting stakeholder expectations. Feedback allows organizations to make continuous improvement. There is room for improvement in every organization. ***Therefore, A+ Academic Resources will request feedback from the organizations with children we serve and the funders who support our mission.*** A+ Academic Resources will administer a yearly *Needs Assessment Survey* to stakeholders to garner an accurate reading on their needs and expectations. This survey will inform stakeholders how well programs and services are doing regarding stakeholder's level of satisfaction and ensure them that A+ Academic Resources values their opinion and feedback to improve programs and services. Assessment equips the organization with ***evidence-based data*** that allows the organization to eliminate programs and services that are not value-added (ASAE, 2012). ***A+ Academic Resources will show results that validate the effectiveness of our programs and services.***

Assessment allows organizations to internally measure their outputs to check if they are on track to produce expected outcomes. Nonprofit managers should use assessment data to make better decisions through problem identification and strategic planning (Lynch-Cerullo & Cooney, 2011). Prudent managers collect and review data to make evidence-based decisions. Environmental scans are necessary. Organizations that research environmental trends are more agile while remaining true to their mission. Evaluators can use *Analytics* to discover, interpret, and communicate meaningful patterns in data that tell the true story about program success and community impact. Additionally, trend analysis can yield results that feed annual initiatives and long-term strategic goals (ASAE, 2012). Statistics can help evaluators with trend analysis which is very beneficial to organizations because it informs leadership what factors are having the greatest influence on mission accomplishment. Statistics play a powerful role when it comes to helping stakeholders see and understand the significance of the data, for statistical data proves effectiveness.

Outcome Measurement

Outcome measurement is the evaluation tool that answers the “so what” question. Measuring outputs does not answer the “so what” question. Measuring outputs will provide data about how many students used a service or participated in a program. Participation numbers provide useful information regarding attendance and deliverables. However, measuring outputs will not inform the evaluator if the program has made a difference in the lives of the participants. Outcome measurement allows the evaluator to measure whether the organization’s objectives have been met and to verify the impact those objectives have made on individuals, families, organizations, or communities. If the program does not yield results or make an impact, should the organization provide the program? Should a grantor fund a weak or dead program? The organization should not offer the program, and the grantor should channel funds into a program that is thriving and making significant mission impact (www.strengtheningnonprofits.org). ***A+ Academic Resources will use outcome measurement as an external assessment to verify if outputs are producing expected outcomes.***

Outcome-based evaluation is measuring how well an organization is achieving its program outcomes. The goal of outcome-based evaluation is program and organization improvement. This requires knowing how well programs are performing and how well the organization is meeting its strategic goals and objectives per the organization’s strategic plan. ***Outcome-based evaluation is used to measure progress towards achieving strategic goals and objectives.*** This evaluation method is what evaluators use to measure the impact that programs and services are making in the lives of people and their communities. NPOs should use outcome-based evaluation as an organizational effectiveness tool because the government and major private funders are using evaluation to ***valid program effectiveness***. Funders are requesting greater accountability. Therefore, it is suggested that NPOs and donors develop an evaluation process. Evaluation is a critical organizational performance activity that can cultivate a trusting and long-term strategic alliance between NPOs and donors because donors can see where their contributions are making an impact (Mayhew, 2012).

More and more organizations are using outcome-based evaluation. Organizations are using process improvement tools like performance metrics, assessment, and evaluations to ensure that they are operating efficiently and effectively to achieve their stated mission and meet stakeholder expectations. Organizations must ***show outcomes based on reliable and valid data***, and organizations should use metrics to track and report outcomes to stakeholders if the organization values its health and sustainability. Organizations can use outcome-based evaluation to ensure programs and services are aligned with strategic and operational priorities (Mulgan, 2010). ***A+ Academic Resources will use outcome measurement to ensure our mission-linked programs and services are achieving expected outcomes.***

Benefits of Evaluations

Evaluations can provide the accountability that donors are demanding as evidence that programs and services are effective. Evaluations can provide proof to stakeholders that programs and services are making a difference (Karlan, 2015). NPOs must provide results that their program and services are improving the lives of individuals and strengthening communities. Additionally, evaluations can be used to ensure an organization is meeting the funding requirements of a grantor, so funding is continued to support programs (Weikart, Chen, & Sermier, 2013). Finally, stakeholders can use evaluation to track an organization's progress towards achieving strategic goals and objectives (Mulgan, 2010).

The increased emphasis on outcome-based evaluation is warranted because it provides data that is crucial for proving impact. This is vital for the viability and long-term health of an organization. Therefore, an organization should use outcome-based evaluation to provide data that vouches for program success and impact. This allows an organization to garner support in order to continue and expand its outreach and impact. In order to receive funding from grantors and donors, NPOs must show that their programs and services are value added by conducting evaluations. NPOs must provide results that the program and services in their portfolios are improving the lives of individuals and strengthening communities. A+ Academic Resources will use outcome-based evaluation for continuous process improvement, so we can leverage the benefits of outcome-based evaluation to strengthen our programs and services and increase mission impact. ***A+ Academic Resources will use outcome measurement to let us know if we are accomplishing our mission and making strides towards our vision.***

Demonstrated Effectiveness

A+ Academic Resources will demonstrate effectiveness by using performance measurement as a strategy for validating impact. A+ Academic Resources will use evaluation as an organizational effectiveness tool since the government and major private funders are using evaluation to valid program effectiveness. A+ Academic Resources embraces evaluation as a critical organizational performance activity that will show that our programs and services are making a remarkable difference. We will provide ***evidence-based results*** that our program and services are improving the lives of children and strengthening communities. A+ Academic Resources recognizes performance measurement, evidenced-based management, and outcome measurement as pillars of excellence that allow the organization to learn, grow, improve, and succeed. We shall regularly request stakeholder feedback to ensure we are fulfilling our mission of educational resources for K - 12 students in San Antonio public schools and making strides towards achieving our vision of educational resources for K - 12 students worldwide who lack the necessities for academic success.

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