GOING BEYOND THE FEDERAL MEASURES

1. Identify outcomes consistent with objectives (i.e., non-federal measures)
2. Develop outcome indicators
3. Develop data collection procedures
4. Analysis of outcome information
5. Reporting and use of information

Analysis of Outcome Information:

- Examine outcome data for (a) time trends, (b) differences among major categories of clients, such as gender, age, race/ethnicity as appropriate, (c) differences among similar service procedures, (d) differences among similar programs/entities, (e) differences from targeted values.
- Analyze program outcomes by reviewing info from more than one data source. Using multiple measures helps ensure validity of conclusions drawn from the data. (Example: youth development programs can survey youths served, their parents, and their mentors to assess youth progress in a program; data from each source should be analyzed.)

Reporting and Use of Outcome Information:

- Prepare regular written reports on outcome indicators that are clear/user-friendly. Don't crowd too much info on a page especially for external audiences. Present explanatory info to help readers understand why some data may be disappointing and to put unexpectedly good outcomes in perspective. Avoid using technical jargon.
- Distribute outcome data regularly to all personnel in a position to affect services. Provide at least quarterly reports for internal use. Hold "how are we doing?" meetings between managers and staff to discuss the data and identify reasons for indicator values, particularly those especially high or low. Use the meetings to brainstorm possible ways to achieve better outcomes.
- Develop and implement action plans aimed at resolving problems indicated by recent outcome reports. When reviewing later reports, assess whether the actions taken appear to have helped and make modifications as appropriate.
- Promote accountability by reporting outcome info at least annually to customers, the public, funders, and government agencies with responsibility for services the agency provides. In this way, organizations can document their progress.
- Use web sites and other electronic media for inexpensive dissemination of outcome info. Web site reporting also allows entities to use colorful presentations that are often too expensive in printed documents. (This shouldn't be the only method used because not all have equal access to the web.)
- Organizations must exercise caution before making major changes based on outcome info. In some cases, there may be errors in the data, the data may have been collected inappropriately, or data may not accurately reflect the desired outcome. (Example: one youth services entity found that the lack of improvement in scores on its pregnancy prevention post-tests appeared to be related not to the program's effectiveness in providing relevant info but to the low reading skills of many participants.)

From: Outcome Measurement in Non-Profit Organizations–Current Practices & Recommendations (Independent Sector and The Urban Institute), 2001