Continuous Improvement– Beyond the Bell Training Agenda

- **Welcome and Introductions**

- ***Beyond the Bell* Overview and Strand Overview**

- **Review of Hypothetical Program**
  - Vision
  - Goals
  - Logic Model
  - Asset Map

- **Planning With a Team**
  - Lego Game

- **Importance of Reflection**
  - Tool 92 – Post-Evaluation Planning Tool
  - Tool 94 – Sharing Evaluation Results
  - Tool 96 – Continuous Improvement Reflection Tool

- **Reflection and Closing**

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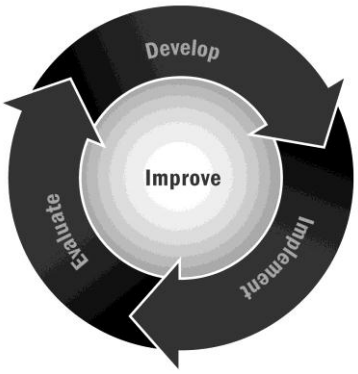
Tool 96

Continuous Improvement Reflection Tool



Directions: This tool is designed take you through a reflection process for the various sections of this Toolkit. You may not need to revisit everything in here all at once. In fact, we recommend you review the whole document as a reminder of what you should constantly reflect on, review, and revise as your program evolves—but take one chunk or section to review at a time so that it doesn't become overwhelming. We also recommend that you bring together your advisory board, staff, families, youth and other key stakeholders in your reflection process as appropriate for each stage. For each step, we've listed a set of questions or issues to consider and have provided space for you to reflect and make notes. At the end, we've included some exercises and planning suggestions for embedding a culture of continuous improvement in your program.

Reflection Questions for Continuous Improvement

Management Practices		Notes
Organizational Structures	Is our management and organizational structure still working? Revisit your advisory board membership: • Are all of our key stakeholders represented? Do we need to add anyone? • Is our meeting schedule allowing us to accomplish what we want? (Too often? Not often enough?)	
Staffing	Are our job descriptions up to date and do they reflect our current program structure? Are we able to recruit highly qualified and effective staff members? If not, why not? What can we change? Is our orientation process for new and returning staff members still preparing our staff adequately? What might we need to change? Are our staffing policies and procedures still appropriate for our organizational structure and our program's developmental stage?	

Management Practices		Notes
Policies and Procedures	Revisit the following policies and procedures. Are they still appropriate? Are they meeting our needs? Do we need to revise any based on changes in your program? • Participant recruitment, enrollment and attendance • Ratios • Background checks and other safety procedures • Behavior guidelines and discipline • Program schedule	
Resource Management	Are there new funders we should be targeting as our program grows and develops? Are there new funding strategies we haven't considered (e.g., program fees, donors, special events)? Are our financial procedures still appropriate as our program has grown? Do we need to revisit our accounting practices?	
Communication	What are our communication goals for the coming year? What key messages do we want to convey about our program at this stage in our development? Are we communicating effectively with families? The community? Key policymakers? Funders? How can we improve our messaging? Are there any audiences we aren't reaching that we should be?	

Program Design		Notes
Vision	Is our vision still appropriate? Does it still reflect what we are trying to accomplish with our program?	
Goals	Is our program adequately working toward accomplishing our goals? Are our goals still appropriate? Are any unrealistic? Do we need to change or add any program goals to reflect the developmental stage of our program?	

Program Design		Notes
Theory of Change	Does our program implementation reflect our theory of change? Are we deviating from our planned activities? Does our theory of change still seem appropriate?	
Logic Model	Does our logic model still reflect our program? Have our goals or intended outcomes changed? If yes, how? Can we add any inputs or outputs to the logic model now that our program has been under way for some time?	

Partnerships		Notes
School	How is our school partnership progressing? What can we do to better connect with school administration? What can we do to better connect with school faculty? What do we need from the school? How can we get it? What data are we sharing with the school, if any? How can we connect those data to our participation data?	
Family	How well are families engaged in our program? What else can we do to engage families appropriately? What roles can family members play now that our program is up and running?	
Community	What partnerships with community organizations are particularly successful? Which aren't going so well? What community organizations should we target for partnerships? What community resources could we be using better?	

Program Delivery		Notes
Program Plan	Does our program plan match our program goals and intended outcomes? Does our program schedule/plan meet the needs of youth and their families? If not, what changes can we make to better meet their needs? Consider things like: • Program schedule—do the hours meet the needs of working parents? If we aren't offering the program five days a week, should we add more days? How many weeks per year are we offering programs? Do we need to adjust that? • Summer program—should we offer one? • Does our session structure work for families? • Transportation—are youth getting home safely? Do we need to revisit our transportation options?	
Activities	Does our mix of program activities still reflect the assets, interests, and needs of youth and their families? In what ways do we need to change or add to our programming to better build on young people's strengths? What activities would we like to offer if we can find staff members or providers to deliver them? Does our mix of program activities still reflect our program goals? Is it helping us work toward our intended outcomes? What changes do we need to make?	

Evaluation		Notes
Evaluation Questions	How can our evaluation questions better match our program goals and intended outcomes? What do we want to know? Are there things we want to explore on a regular basis?	
Data Collection System	Is our data collection system allowing us to capture the data we want? What can be improved? What additional data do we want to track? Will we need to make changes to our data system to allow that?	

Evaluation		Notes
Use of Data	What data are we examining on a regular basis? Are there other data we could examine and discuss regularly to better serve youth in our program? Are there data we could examine regularly in partnership with the school in order to target or serve specific youth? What are our attendance data telling us?	

Improvement Planning		Notes
Quality Improvement Planning	What data about our program quality do we want to capture? Do we want to use a quality assessment tool? Which one? What professional development and training does our staff need? How can we access it? What can we learn from our quality assessment data? What changes to our program do we want to make? How are we doing in implementing youth development practices, including: • Creating a warm and welcoming environment? • Building supportive relationships? • Promoting positive behavior management? • Offering youth choices? • Providing youth with opportunities for decision-making? • Providing youth with opportunities for leadership? • Making time for reflection? What coaching do we need for our staff? How will we get it?	

Improvement Planning		Notes
Continuous Improvement Practices	How can our program leadership better promote and support improvement? Are we sharing evaluation results with all staff members? How can we engage staff members more fully in evaluation planning and reviewing evaluation results? Are we incorporating reflection into our staff meetings? How can we keep stakeholders informed about and engaged in improvement planning? What is working? What could we try next?	

What's Next? *After engaging in conversation with your staff, partners, and other key stakeholders about any of the sections above, identify some key action steps and who is responsible for carrying them out. Use the table below to formalize those action steps and monitor their progress. This table can then become fodder for the next round of reflection and improvement so that reflection, planning for action, acting, and reviewing can become a constant process.*

Planning for Continuous Improvement

Management Practices		
Program Area	Next Steps	Who Is Responsible
Organizational Structures		
Staffing		
Policies and Procedures		
Resource Management		
Communications		
Program Design		
Program Area	Next Steps	Who Is Responsible
Vision		
Goals		
Theory of Change		
Logic Model		

Partnerships		
Program Area	Next Steps	Who Is Responsible
School		
Family		
Community		
Program Delivery		
Program Area	Next Steps	Who Is Responsible
Program Plan		
Activities		

Evaluation		
Program Area	Next Steps	Who Is Responsible
Evaluation Questions		
Data Collection System		
Use of Data		
Improvement Planning		
Program Area	Next Steps	Who Is Responsible
Quality Improvement Planning		
Continuous Improvement Practices		

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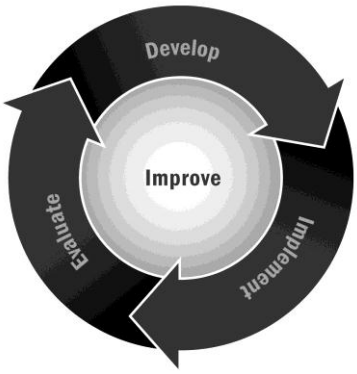
Tool 92

Post-Evaluation Planning Tool



Directions: This tool outlines some of the key steps you may want to take in using your evaluation results to plan and make changes to your program. We suggest you undertake the actions in this tool with a team—this team may include staff members, advisory board members, family members, partners, and youth.

Step 1 – Talk With Your Evaluator (If You Have One)

If you had an evaluator helping to assess your program, don't just have them turn in a report and disappear. Now you need them more than ever. Ask your evaluator to come to a meeting with your planning team or meet with you one on one to go over the results and share key strengths and key areas for growth. Sometimes evaluation results can be confusing and hard to understand. Things like effect sizes and statistical significance don't mean much to those without a research background, so it is important for your evaluator (or someone with expertise if your evaluator can't or won't do this) to translate those findings into lay terms.

Step 2 – Review Evaluation Findings

Again, with your team and ideally your evaluator, review the evaluation findings. Make sure everyone involved in the planning session understands what the findings mean. Pull out key points and highlight them on chart paper or in a PowerPoint slide. Focus on what is working as well as what might need to be improved. Now is the time to look at all the findings. You don't need to prioritize yet—just make sure that everyone understands the findings and is able to focus on the key points.

Step 3 – Prioritize Findings

Evaluations can be overwhelming, especially if they are comprehensive and consider many different factors. If you and your team try to come up with action steps to address every finding, you may end up feeling frustrated and discouraged. Instead, use this time with your planning team to prioritize two or three areas for growth in the short term and two or three for the long term. Start by filling in the chart below.

Target Improvement Areas

Area for Growth	Long Term or Short Term?	Is It Fixable?	Level of Importance
In this column you should list all the areas for growth identified in your evaluation. Try to create a succinct description or target issue.	Note whether this is a long-term or a short-term fix. For example, if your evaluation finds that youth feel unsafe in the program, this may be an urgent, short-term goal you want to address now. If the evaluation finds that families want a new summer program to go with the school year program you currently offer, this may be a longer term issue.	This is a yes/no column. Indicate whether the target area is something you can actually fix or not.	Here you should indicate how important this issue is to you and your team.

Step 4 – Create an Action Plan

Take the time now to discuss the chart with your planning team. You can immediately eliminate the areas or issues you can't fix. It is tempting to get caught up discussing things you really have no control over. Don't! If it isn't something you can change, cross it off and move on. Likewise, you can look at the column related to level of importance and cross off the areas that simply aren't a priority for your program. Perhaps an evaluation finding is related to something tangential to your mission or not of particular importance to your program. Once you have eliminated low-priority and unfixable issues, you should be left with a more reasonable list of target areas. Now look at the short and long term column. You should select only two or three short-term and two or three long-term target areas to keep your action plan realistic. Discuss priorities with your team and enter them into the table below. Discuss your key action steps, deadlines, and assigned staff members. Be sure to revisit this planning grid at least quarterly at staff meetings or other key gatherings to ensure that you are making progress on your goals.

Action Plan

Area for Growth	Action Steps	Timeline	Lead Staff
List your four to six short- and long-term priorities in this column.	Develop specific action steps to address each area. Be concrete.	Indicate short or long term and when you hope to see action steps accomplished.	Identify a staff member to take the lead for each area.

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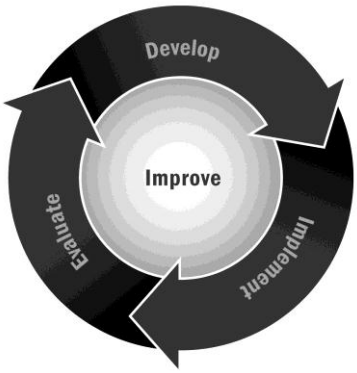
Tool 94

Sharing Evaluation Results



Directions: This tool provides information about the types of people with whom you may want to share evaluation results, the purpose for sharing them, and tips on the best way to share the information with each stakeholder group. You'll have to adapt the tool to your own community and circumstances, but this can get you started thinking about the best way to share your results.

Sharing Evaluation Results

Stakeholder Group	Purpose for Sharing	Tips and Tricks
Staff	• Planning for program improvements • Celebrating success	• Bring evaluator to planning meeting to explain results. • Prioritize using **Tool 92: Post-Evaluation Planning Tool** to prevent frustration.
Program Providers	• Planning for program improvements • Celebrating success	• Share the executive summary and action planning results. • Share results that are relevant to their work with youth in the program.
Funders	• Conveying value of their investment • Identifying concrete plans for improvement • Encouraging new funding	• Share positive evaluation results immediately and give them credit for funding a successful innovation. • Own negative results. Before sharing, be sure you have specific and targeted plans for improvement that you can describe. • If you create a brochure, media release, or other public-relations document to highlight positive evaluation results, be sure to give your funders credit. • Share marketing and outreach materials with potential funders to promote key aspects of your program.
Community Partners	• Celebrating success • Identifying concrete plans for improvement • Encouraging partnership	• If your partners are active in your program's implementation, include them in the planning process. If they are more symbolic partners, treat them more like funders by celebrating their role in success and sharing negative evaluation findings only after you have a concrete plan to address them.

Stakeholder Group	Purpose for Sharing	Tips and Tricks
Families	• Marketing program effectiveness • Sharing plans for improvement • Recruiting new participants	• Families want to know their child is attending a worthwhile program. Use positive evaluation results to underline the value of their child's experience. • Use positive results in marketing materials to attract new families. • Make sure evaluation results are clear and in lay terms. Translate them into other languages as needed and appropriate.
Youth	• Marketing program effectiveness • Sharing plans for improvement • Recruiting new participants	• Keep it simple. Share key points in easy-to-understand language (e.g., "This program is helping young people like you feel more confident.") • If youth were involved in surveys or observations, let them know the results of the evaluation in terms of their role (e.g., "You told us…"). • Let youth know you are going to improve the program to make it better for them, but use general terms. (e.g., "We heard that you don't always feel safe in this program, and we want to fix that by…").
School District	• Sharing program impact on school-related indicators • Encouraging partnership • Highlighting areas for improvement	• Treat school and district staff members as you would funders, even if they are key partners. Schools want to know that programs are benefitting the young people who attend them. Share key points in succinct, easy-to-understand language. • As with funders, share negative evaluation findings after you have developed a plan for improvement. • Focus on how your results will help youth thrive in school.
Local Government (city/town council, mayor's office, local legislators)	• Influencing policy • Encouraging partnership or public funding	• Be brief and clear! Use bullet points and boil evaluation findings down to understandable sound bites. Never use more than one page to explain your findings. • Lead with the positives. • If the program has city or county funding, offer local politicians the opportunity to get their photo taken with youth in the program as part of a press release about positive evaluation findings. • Don't hide negative evaluation findings. Own them but be ready to share how you are already addressing them.