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DIVERSITY

A Message From the President of the ABGCP

WHO WILL TAKE YOUR PLACE?

A Message From the President of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America

WHAT WAS OUR OUTCOME?

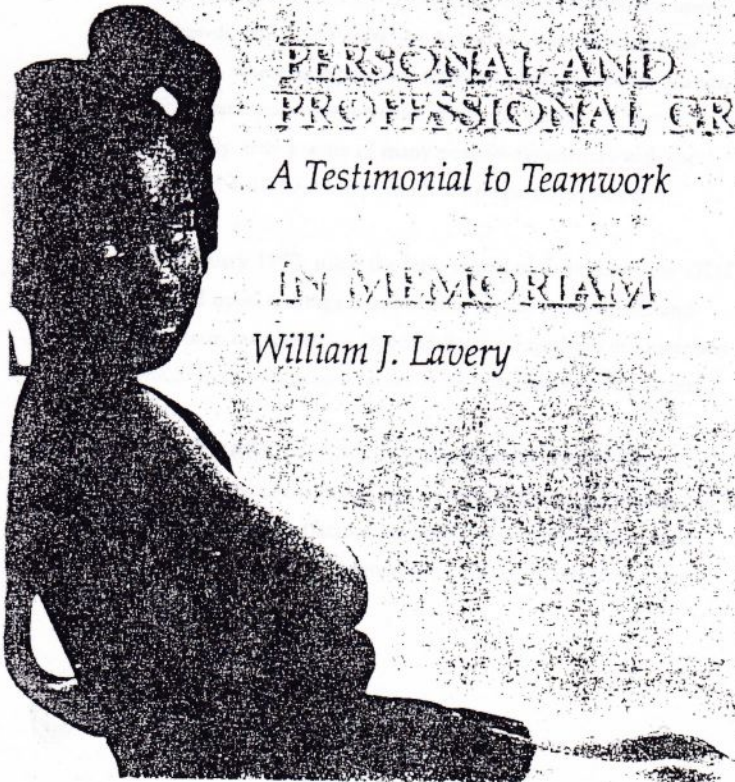
One Organization's Journey with Outcomes Measurement

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

A Testimonial to Teamwork

IN MEMORIAM

William J. Lavery



What Was Our Outcome? : One Organization's

By Laurel Molloy

In 1996, using the United Way's *Measuring Program Outcomes: Eight Steps to Success* as our guide, the Boys & Girls of Metro Atlanta began our journey with Outcomes Measurement. Now, two years later, as Outcomes Measurement continues to grow in popularity, we would like to share our organization's experiences with each one of these steps.

STEP ONE — GET READY:

Several years ago, upon recognizing the fast-emerging trend of outcomes-based funding, B&GCMA began developing our own Outcomes Measurement System. In December 1996, a member of our management team was certified to educate other professionals on Outcomes Measurement. A month later, several other staff members participated in this training. At about the same time, we formed a task force dedicated to Outcomes Measurement. Made up of a wide variety of B&GCMA professionals, this Outcomes Design Team (ODT) worked to develop our organization's Logic Model for Youth Development.

STEP TWO — CHOOSE OUTCOMES TO MEASURE:

In keeping with the position held by the B&GCA Youth Development Commission, the ODT chose to examine and measure the entire Boys & Girls Clubs experience as a whole, rather than attempting to break down the composite and measure each program individually. Recognizing the interdependence that exists among all B&GCMA programs, the ODT decided upon a three-dimensional model — a kind of youth development pyramid, where each program serves as a brick in the foundation. Where each positive experience reinforces the last. Where eventually, after a series of many positive experiences with the Boys and Girls Clubs, our youth are prepared for success.

By February 1997, using the logic model as their guide, the ODT decided upon our organization's short-term, intermediate and long-term outcomes — specifically, those qualities our members would need to possess in order to be truly prepared for success.

STEP THREE — SPECIFY YOUR INDICATORS:

Next, in light of the designated outcomes, the ODT determined WHAT indicators (factors, situations, experiences, etc.) would need to be measured to determine if our members were in fact prepared for success.

STEP FOUR — PREPARE TO COLLECT YOUR DATA:

Then, from March until May, after consulting the available national research, the ODT developed the tools and processes necessary to measure each of their designated indicators. In April, the Boys & Girls Clubs of America designated our organization a national pilot site for Outcomes Measurement. Within a month, we began testing.

STEP FIVE — TRY OUT YOUR MEASUREMENT SYSTEM:

To assess the effectiveness of our new system, members of the ODT piloted various components during their summer programs. After testing the tools and processes on a variety of different children in a variety of different environments, we were able to determine which were best-suited for our needs and interests.

STEP SIX — ANALYZE AND REPORT YOUR FINDINGS:

By July, after having completed the initial round of pilot testing, the ODT reconvened to examine the preliminary findings. At that point, the findings were used as nothing more than a gauge for evaluating the success of our approach.

STEP SEVEN — IMPROVE YOUR MEASUREMENT SYSTEM:

Based upon the results of the first-round of pilot tests, the ODT revamped and revised the methods and instruments used for gathering data; then, they began the pilot tests again. Thanks to the information gained from these summer-long pilots, the ODT was able to develop a relatively simple system to measure the necessary indicators. This comprehensive system, entitled "A Measure of Success," was presented to all of the full-time professional staff at our Annual Retreat in September. The following month, we began the first stage of this new process. By April, 1998, the final stage will be complete. And in May we will begin evaluating the tools and the process all over again.

From the very beginning, we recognized Outcomes Measurement as a dynamic process. We were prepared to grow with the process from its outset. And we have.

STEP EIGHT — USE YOUR FINDINGS:

In the past year, we have utilized our findings in a variety of expected and unexpected ways. When we initially committed to measuring program outcomes, we did so because we knew it would help us more effectively serve our members. We knew

Journey With Outcomes Measurement

that we would be able to use the data we collected to assess our member's needs, and how well as an organization we were meeting those needs. Fortunately, in addition to being able to share the results internally (with our staff, members, parents, board members and volunteers), B&GCMA has been able to provide some external sources (such as the United Way, grant funders, and the community as a whole) with the valuable information. In fact, "A Measure of Success" has helped B&GCMA communicate throughout our entire community our success in serving youth.

Our first year of Outcomes Measurement has also helped us establish new ties to the community. For example, many of the short-term volunteers we recruited to help administer our Outcomes Measurement tools have since expressed an interest in more long-term commitments. In addition, we have invited local research professionals to serve on our Outcomes Advisory Committee and help fine-tune our measurement system. Servings as advocates to the Boys & Girls Clubs in their respective professional communities, these committee members have also helped initiate the development of several new program initiatives and partnerships.

Finally, the proactive stance that B&GCMA chose to take on Outcomes Measurement has allowed us to help other programs. For example, B&GCA has adopted many of our Outcomes Measurement practices as part of their national measurement curriculum; and two of our staff now serve as B&GCA National Training Associates, available to deliver programs on Outcomes Measurement to all Boys & Girls Club professionals. The United Way has also recognized our efforts and asked members of our staff to serve on their national and local Outcomes Measurement committees.

Undoubtedly, your organization's journey with Outcomes Measurement will differ from ours. However, please take what you can from our experiences. And rest assured that an investment in Outcomes Measurement is well worth the effort.

If you have any questions, or would like a copy of the B&GCMA "Measure of Success" Handbook, please call Laurel Molloy at (404) 527-7100, or write to B&GCMA, 100 Edgewood Ave., Suite 700, Atlanta, GA, 30303. ■

