# Typical Components of An Assessment Plan and Report

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*(Adapted from Bresciani, Moore-Gardner & Hickmott, 2009)*

The following eleven elements are typical components of an assessment plan and report.

1. Program Name

   The program name helps indicate the scope of the assessment project. Are you planning on assessing a series of workshops within the leadership development center or are you planning on evaluating the entire leadership development center? Often, it is difficult to determine the scope of an assessment plan (Schuh & Associates, 2009). When in doubt, organize your assessment plan around programs that have autonomous outcomes (Bresciani et al 2004; Bresciani et al 2009).

   **List the program name and contact information of person(s) who can answer questions about the plan and report.**

| Program Name | Contact |
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2. Program Mission or Purpose

   **List the program mission or purpose statement.** It may also be helpful to provide a one-two sentence explanation of how this program mission/purpose aligns with the department/college/division/university's mission within which it is organized.

3. Program Goals

   Goals are broad, general statements of [1] what the program wants students to be able to do and to know or [2] what the program will do to ensure what students will be able to do and to know. They are not directly measurable. Rather, they are evaluated directly or indirectly by measuring specific outcomes related to the goal (Bresciani et al, 2004; Bresciani et al, 2009).

   Goals:

   a. Align each goal with department, college/division, or university goals
   b. Align each goal to department, college/division, or university strategic initiatives, which are generated from the strategic plan
   c. Align each goal with professional accreditation standards, if applicable

   Such alignment allows you to determine how this program intends to meet higher level organization goals and strategic planning initiatives. Once data are collected on the outcomes that are aligned to these goals (see number 4 below), you can illustrate how well each program is contributing to meeting higher level organization goals and strategic planning initiatives.

| Goal | How does this goal align with department, college/division, or university goals? | How does this goal align with department, college/division, or university strategic initiatives (from the strategic plan)? | How does this goal align with professional accreditation standards? |
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4. Outcomes

Outcomes are more detailed and specific statements derived from the goals.  Outcomes are specifically about what you want the end result of your efforts to be.  In other words, what do you expect the student to know and do as a result of your one hour workshop, one hour individual meeting, website instructions, or your series of workshops?  Outcomes do not describe what you are going to do to the student, but rather they describe how you want the student to demonstrate what he or she knows or can do (Bresciani et al, 2004; Bresciani et al, 2009).

| List student program learning and development outcomes | Align each outcome with a program goal. * |
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| **List other program outcomes that address student services, program processes, enrollment management, research, fundraising/development, alumni outreach, and other practices** |  |
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**\*** This alignment allows you to link your outcomes to department, college/division, or university goals and strategic initiatives as well as professional accreditation standards. Once data are collected on the outcomes that are aligned to these goals (see number 5 below), you can illustrate how well each program is contributing to meeting higher level organization goals and strategic planning initiatives.

5. Planning for Delivery of Outcomes

   This is where the action planning comes into the process.  Here is were you describe or simply draw a diagram that explains how you plan for the student to learn what you expect the student to learn in order for the outcome to be met.  Do you plan for the students to learn what you expect them to learn in a workshop, one-on-one consultation, or from the website?   Simply indicate all the ways in which you provide students the opportunity to learn what you expect them to learn.

   a. **Include a curriculum alignment matrix or an outcome delivery alignment matrix <mark>(see attached template).</mark>**  When you identify where the opportunity for the outcome to be taught or for the service to be delivered resides, you can better determine whether the outcomes will be met in the opportunity provided.  This also ensure that you have provided an opportunity for the outcome to be learned or met, rather than just expecting it to be met without actually planning for it to be met.

   b. Many institutions may be able to **refer to action planning documents** for more details of the resources required in order for specific outcomes to be met.

   Identifying where outcomes are being taught or delivered also provides reviewers with opportunities to identify where that outcome may be evaluated.

6. Evaluation Methods/Tools

   Often, the evaluation method or tool section of the assessment plan can be very intimidating to practitioners.  This section is not intended to include detailed research methodology.  It is intended to simply describe the tools and methods (e.g., observation with a criteria checklist, survey with specific questions identified, essay with a rubric, role-playing with a criteria checklist) you will use to evaluate the outcomes of participants in specific programs. Since you are using the results for program improvement, you do not need to employ the rigor you would if you wanted the results to be generalizable to other populations (Bresciani et al, 2004; Bresciani et al, 2009).

   a.  **Identify the sample or population you will be evaluating.**

   b.  **Identify an evaluation method or tool for each outcome.**

   c.  **Include the criteria that will be used with the tool to determine whether the outcome has been met.**  For example, if your tool to measure an outcome is a survey, which questions in the survey are measuring the outcome?  If your tool is a test, which questions measure the outcome?  If your tool is an observation, what are the criteria that you apply to the observation in order to identify whether the outcome has been met?

   d.  **Add limitations of the evaluation method or tool, if necessary**. Limitations are reminders to you and the reviewer that while the evaluation process may not have gone extremely well, you recognize the limitations and have documented them to be considered in decision making or for improvements to be made the next time around.

   e.  **Select other institutional, system or national data (e.g., enrollment numbers, faculty-to student ratios, retention rates, graduation rates, utilization statistics, satisfaction ratings, NSSE scores) that will be used to help you interpret how and whether the outcome has been met.**  For example, you may choose to evaluate the effectiveness of an advising process with one tool and also choose to use student satisfaction data about advising to explain how effectiveness of a practice may have influenced an increase in student satisfaction.  Similarly, you may use one tool to evaluate student critical thinking and show that enrollment patterns illustrate that 50% percent of the students matriculated into your program from another program where critical thinking was taught and evaluated differently.  Such an enrollment pattern may explain while your student critical thinking scores are lower than you would like for them to be.

**Outcome Being Evaluated:**

| Sample/population | Evaluation method or tool | Tool criteria | Limitations of tool | Other data to support outcomes |
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7. Implementation of Assessment Process

This section is the planning section for the implementation of the assessment process. Remember that you don't have to evaluate everything you do every year. You can simply evaluate two-three outcomes each year, thus creating a multi-year assessment plan.

    a. **Identify who is responsible for doing each step in the evaluation process** (list all of the people involved in the assessment process at each step of the process)

    b. **Outline the timeline for implementation**; include which years which outcomes will be evaluated (so as not to indicate that everything must be evaluated every year). Also include which year you will be reviewing all prior outcomes data results for a holistic program review discussion.

    c. **Identify other programs who are assisting with the evaluation and when they are assisting.** Include timelines for external reviewers (including professional accreditation reviews, if applicable) and timelines for communication across departments/colleges.

    d. **Identify who will be participating in interpreting the data and making recommendations and decisions and when that will occur**. Outline how lines of communication will flow.

8. Results

    a.  **Summarize the results for each outcome**

    b.  **Summarize the process to verify/validate/authenticate the results**.  This may include how results were discussed with students, alumni, other program faculty and/or administrators, or external reviewers.

    c.  **Link the results generated from the outcomes-based assessment results to any other program, college, or institutional performance indicators**.  (see 6.e. for an example of how results from other data sources can be utilized)

9. Reflection, Interpretation, Decisions and Recommendations

    a. **Summarize** the decisions/recommendations made for each outcome.

    b. **Illustrate** how you determined whether the results were satisfactory.  Who determined that the results were acceptable?  How did you arrive at the decision?

    c. **Illustrate** how decisions and recommendations may be contributing to the improvement of higher level goals and strategic initiatives.

    d. **Identify** the groups who participated in the reflection, interpretation, and discussion of the evidence that led to the recommendations and decisions

e.  **Summarize** the suggestions for improving the assessment process, tools, criteria, and outcomes

f.  **Identify** when each outcome will be evaluated again (if the outcome is to be retained)

g.  **Identify** those responsible for implementing the recommended changes and the resources required to do so

h.  If making a recommendation, identify to whom the recommendation needs to be forwarded and the action required from that person or organization

10. Documentation of Higher Level Feedback

This section is designed to document how results are used and how discussion of results moved through out the organization.  The intention of this section is to document conversations and collaborations that are being implemented in order to systematically and institutional improve student learning and development.

a. **Include the routing of the recommendations or decisions if resources, policy changes, or other information was required outside of the scope of the program**.  For example, if you are the program coordinator and the decisions you and your students recommend requires the approval of the department director, then you need to indicate that the approval of the decision must flow through the departmental director.   If the recommendation you are making requires the approval of another departmental director or division head, then you would indicate that the decision must flow through those constituents.

b. Include responses from those decision makers

c. **Note any changes that needed to be made to the program goals, outcomes, evaluative criteria, planning processes and budgeting processes as a result of higher-level feedback.**

d. **Include any recommendations and/or decisions that resulted from an external review of the content of the plan and report.**

e. **Include any denial or awarding of additional resources.**  Also include any higher-level decisions for re-allocation of resources.

| Routing of recommendations and decisions | Responses from decision-makers | Changes that should be made | Recommendations/decisions from external review | Additional resources (denial or award) |
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11. Appendices

   **Included any appendices that may help further illustrate the manner in which you evaluate your program.** For example, you may want to include the outcome-delivery map or the rubric you use to evaluate the observation of students' ability to resolve conflicts.