

Overview: Learning Outcomes Tracking Tools

This set of three tools is used by the Centre for Career Education at the University of Windsor to assess and track client change for one of the established learning outcomes (LO#2: *Volunteer Internship Program students will be able to articulate the importance of community involvement*) for the Volunteer Internship Program.

How the tools were developed:

Once we had established that one of the learning outcomes we wanted to measure was the student's ability to articulate the importance of community involvement and what the interventions were going to be (researching the organization, guided reflection, volunteer placement, etc.), we had to determine how we were going to measure the learning, if any, the program fostered.

It was decided that we wanted to gather some pre-test data to compare our post-test data to, so we decided to incorporate some questions regarding the outcome into the intake survey used in the orientation session and then to mirror those same questions at the end of the program so that we could compare the two sets of data and determine if the learning outcome was met.

There are three tools that are used in assessing this learning outcome:

1. ***Orientation Survey (MS Word) for collecting pre-test data***
2. ***Ongoing Reflection Workbook (PDF) for collecting post-test data***
3. ***Outcomes Tracking (Excel) for tracking data and comparing results***

Of course, these tools don't only address this one learning outcome, we use the same tools to collect and track data regarding additional outcomes, learning and otherwise.

How the tools are used:

In Section C of the Orientation Survey and Journal 6 of the Ongoing Reflection Workbook, the following questions are asked:

- On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not important at all and 10 being extremely important, how important do you think the contributions of volunteers are to the ability of a community organization to meet its goals?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not important at all and 10 being extremely important, how important do you think volunteer experience is to your personal and professional growth?

In both scenarios, students are asked to explain their rating. On the outcomes tracking tool, we record the average rating given by the 25 students in our sample set in the pre- and post- test and compare to see if the learning took place (i.e. did the students ratings/rationales change after taking part in the program?). It should be noted that a sample set is used because there are 100+ students in the program each term and limited staffing resources, therefore it is not realistic to thoroughly assess the outcomes on an individual basis.

The same learning outcome is also addressed throughout the journaling activities in the Ongoing Reflection Workbook. While all workbooks are reviewed for completion, the sample set of 25 is thoroughly assessed by the program staff. Each journal is read and the assessed against a rubric to come up with a score for each learning outcome. In this example, journals #3, #4, #5 and #6 are assessed to determine how well the student is able to articulate the importance of community involvement.

- For example, when reviewing Journal #5, the staff assessor reviews the answers to the following two questions:
 - How much does the organization rely on volunteers to accomplish their goals? How would the organization, its employees, and the people it serves be affected if they did not have volunteers?
 - Have your feelings about the organization (or the work it does) changed as a result of your time with them? If so, how?
 - A score is then assigned using the following scale:

- 3 points – Student clearly states that volunteers are important to the organization and that not as much would get accomplished without them AND student indicates that his/her feelings about the organization have changed due to their clearer understanding about the value it brings to those it serves.
- 2 points – Student clearly states that volunteers are important to the organization and that not as much would get accomplished without them OR student indicates that his/her feelings about the organization have changed due to their clearer understanding about the value it brings to those it serves.
- 1 point – There is no clear indication that the student's feelings about the organization have changed. While they comment on the role of volunteers, there is no evidence that they perceive the role of volunteers to be important to the organization.
- 0 points – Student does not explicitly address the questions OR states that volunteers are not important to the organization.

Once all four related journals are assessed (in the same way as Journal #5 above), if a student receives a score of 8 or more out of a possible 12, then the learning outcome is deemed to have been met. On the outcomes tracking tool, we record the number of students whose journal entries met score requirement, the percentage of the sample set to meet learning outcome, and the average score out of 12.

As you can see, there is also pre-test and post-test data recorded on the tracking tool that pertains to an impact outcome regarding the program's role in students engaging in volunteer activities (before vs. beyond the program). This is not addressed specifically in this documentation, but the data collection is done with the same set of tools. Also, it goes to show that this tracking tool can easily be adapted to capture different types of outcomes.