



Step 3: Know what you want to evaluate.

3a. Identify your results and decide what activities will help you achieve them.

You probably have results that your community school strives to achieve. You also have activities in place to reach these common results. Unless these elements are written down and explicit, it's hard to plan an evaluation to determine whether or not you are achieving the desired results. To ensure that the data you collect will be relevant and useful, clearly document your current activities, results, and indicators for the next year.

Consistency in Planning and Evaluation Language:

This toolkit uses the terms: inputs, activities, results, indicators, and activities, and outputs. In other settings you may find these terms defined differently or other words used to talk about the same concepts. (See Table C)

For example, Federal Full-Service Community School grantees must report on objectives and performance measures (referred to as results and indicators in this toolkit). Find out if your stakeholders have a strong preference for certain terms. The most important thing is that everyone involved in your community school and evaluation understands the terms you are using and the concepts they represent.

Table C: Common Language

Tool-Kit Terms...	Can Also Be Called...
Input →	Program Investments, Resources (e.g. staff, capacity, space, funds, etc.)
Activities (i.e. <i>What Can Happen at a Community School?</i>) →	Activity, processes, strategies, methods, action steps
Output →	Deliverables, units of services, products
Result →	Outcomes, goals
Indicator →	Benchmark, proxy measure

Inputs:

Identifying your community school's available inputs will help you determine the extent to which you are able to implement activities and achieve your intended results. You should make a list of all of the inputs that you and your community school partners can bring to the table as well as others you will need to access over time.

Activities: (i.e., What Can Happen at a Community School?)

Activities are the programs, services, and supports the community school provides that will help you achieve your results. They should be linked to the unique characteristics of your community.

Outputs:

Outputs are the measureable, tangible, and direct products of what is taking place at your community school. They lead to your desired results – benefits for students, families, and your community. It is important to note, however, that they themselves are NOT the results you expect your community school to produce.

Result:

A result can be short-term and long-term. Short-term results address knowledge and behavior change or confront a challenge in your school or community. These results eventually lead to the long-term results.

Long-term results focus on the “big picture,” and usually begin to be seen about six months out, but often won’t be seen until a year or more. These results will take time to attain. Closely examining your results will help you answer the question whether anyone is better off. Remember to begin your evaluation by focusing on a few results.

As you write your results, consider these questions:

- How much service do we want to deliver?
- How well can we deliver it?

Indicators:

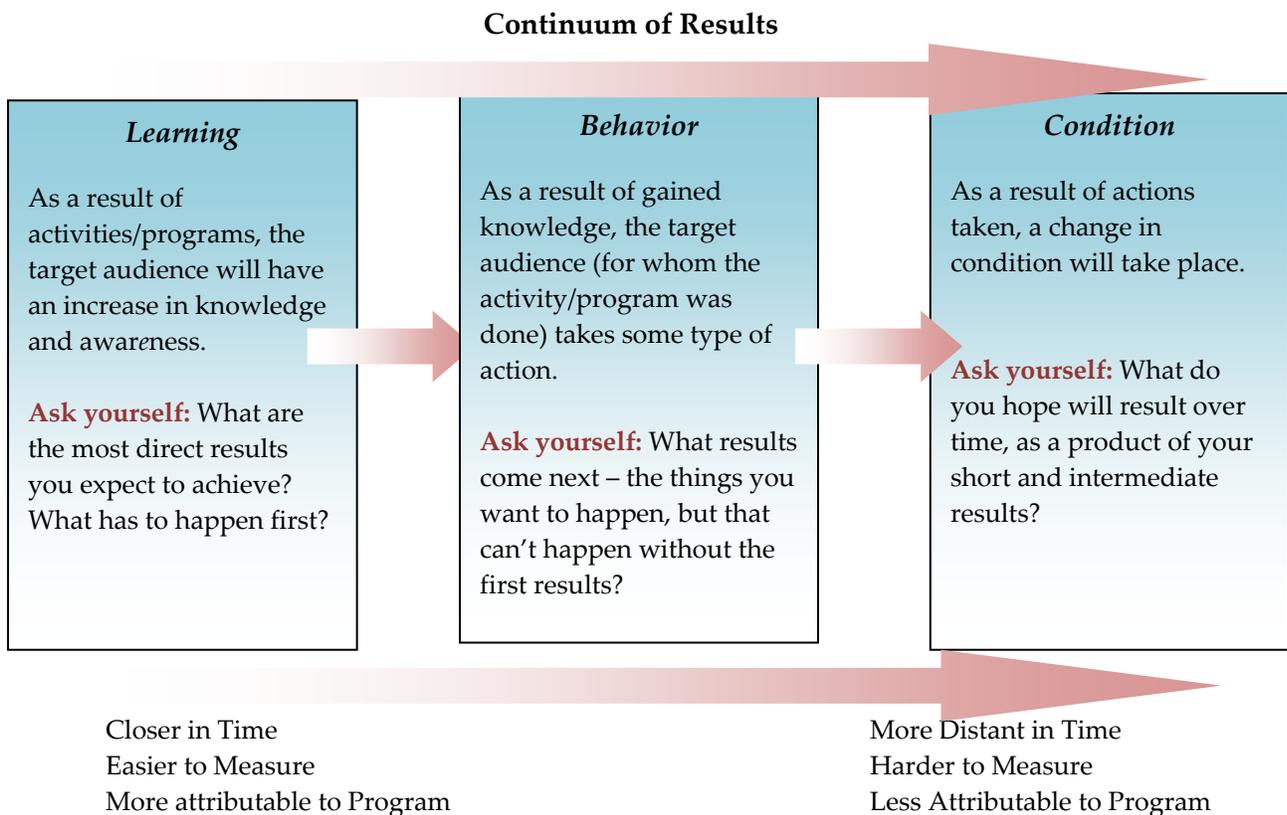
Indicators are evidence or information that will tell you whether your community school is achieving the desired results. Indicators are measurable characteristics. They answer the question: “How will we know change has occurred in respective result area?”

3b. Know *who* you want to evaluate

Your community school strategies may focus on the entire school or select members of the school and community population. For example, if one of your programs is after-school mentoring, then your evaluation should look at this *target population*. Based on your community school’s LM, you would expect the program to have an effect on this target population. If your program is designed to impact *all* students at your school, then you should collect data on all the students. Even when you have a specific target population you may also want to collect data on students who are not meant to be impacted in order to compare students who are part of the program with those who are not. You may want to undertake these comparisons after you have had experience in evaluating your community school and/or with the assistance of an evaluation partner.

3c. Prioritize your Results.

Engage your stakeholders in a results prioritizing process. Limiting the focus of your evaluation will make your job easier and prevent your evaluation from becoming too time consuming or costly. Keep in mind that results are on a continuum: short-term to long-term. The phases below can help determine what is feasible in a set time period.



As you prioritize, you may want to:

- Choose results that can be accomplished in the near future.
- Start with results that are shared by the largest number of stakeholders involved.
- Consider what information your current or future stakeholders want to know.

Table D: SMART – Tips for Choosing Results

It is important to remember that results must be measurable. A common acronym for forming your results is **SMART**:

- Specific – Define exactly what you want to accomplish.
- Measurable – Be able to determine whether you’ve met it.
- Achievable – Make sure you can meet the result.
- Realistic – Just as it sounds, can you really do this?
- Timely –Specify the timeframe for making it happen.

Review the example planning tool found here:

http://www.communityschools.org/resources/community_school_evaluation_toolkit_resources.aspx.