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Welcome to Nexus News, the newsletter focusing on issues facing the public sector.

In our last [newsletter](#) we talked about how for programs be effectively evaluated, the evaluation must be properly planned. Read on for an overview of Nexus' Five Step Evaluation Framework, as used successfully by NSW Premier's Department and the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. If it's good enough for them, right?

PART TWO: THE SECRETS TO SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM EVALUATION

To give your department or agency's program or activity evaluation the best chance of success, it's recommended you give equal weighting to the evaluation *and* planning sides. Follow this five-step framework for a head start with your planning.

1. Describe what you are trying to achieve with your program or activity through the creation of an *outcomes hierarchy*. Put simply this is a cause and effect chain e.g. (fictional) Program GetFit will encourage people to exercise more → lower their blood pressure → reduce the risk of heart disease → less chance of dying prematurely.

Causal links that demonstrate the positive benefits of your program act as an anchor to the program, plus they help to give a proper focus to your efforts.

This step will enable you answers the question 'why?' with 'because'.

2. Describe how you would like the program to be operating by defining the characteristics of success. What information do you need to collect to assess whether the program has achieved what you'd hoped? This in turn points you in the direction of possible performance indicators.

3. Determine how you will judge if your program has been successful by developing these performance indicators. Ultimately, these can be used as a reliable measure of your program's achievements.

ADDING VALUE

At Nexus Management Consulting, we assist organisations to change for the better through providing a range of services in the following areas:

Strategic & corporate planning, to enable you to create and achieve your organisational aspirations.

Program evaluation, to ensure your goals, strategies and outcomes are on track.

Management review & organisation development, to help you cultivate a self-sustaining, inclusive organisational environment.

Group facilitation, to ensure your meetings and focus groups adhere to a relevant agenda and produce meaningful results.

Strategic management training, to transfer skills so that your organisation develops the internal capacity to create enduring change.

4. Determine what you will compare your results to by establishing bases of comparison. Will you measure program results against a scientific standard? Or will they be self-referential, e.g. a comparison between this year's results to last year?

5. Identify possible sources of data which you can use to make up your performance indicators. Examples include official or published data, surveys, focus groups and interviews. If you have gone through the preceding four steps, this part will follow naturally. A common error is to try to start with step 5 – trying to use existing data simply because it's available!

On the other hand, use the five steps to plan your program evaluation and you're able to take a holistic and integrated approach which is sure to have a positive impact on the overall quality of your evaluation.

HOW NEXUS CAN HELP

The overview of the Five Steps of Evaluation we've provided represents a great start. To help take your evaluation to the next level, Nexus has developed an Evaluation Tool Kit with the 'five steps' at its core. Useful case studies and in-depth explanations of the steps form an indispensable, easy to follow guide to making your evaluation process bullet proof.

Greg Masters of Nexus has also attended introductory and train the trainer workshops on Mark Friedman's Results-based Accountability approach which is being taken up widely across the NSW public sector. Nexus is looking at opportunities to partner with the Institute of Public Administration (NSW) to develop and deliver public and in-house programs on the Friedman approach. Look for more details in upcoming newsletters!

CONTACT US

Please continue to direct your ideas and comments to gmasters@nexusmc.com.au. If you'd like to see an article covering a particular issue, please let us know.

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ABOUT NEXUS MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

Established by Greg Masters in 1996, Nexus is a management consultancy based in Sydney, Australia.

It's our specialist expertise in public sector organisational dynamics that makes us unique. We get to the heart of organisational challenges, and implement actions that succeed in overcoming them.