

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DATA & LEARNING CHAMPIONS

1

We advocate for prioritizing program-level data that can be used to improve service delivery and strengthen our impact.



- Focus on data that can be used to guide program implementation and improvement.
- Get data into the hands of front-line staff and managers sooner, rather than later, to optimize on the ground, real-time learning.
- Consider ways to regularly collect data from clients; ensuring constituent voices are heard is critical to better understanding client outcomes and program benefits.

We acknowledge the challenges inherent in achieving client outcomes and measuring impact, and strive to have transparent conversations about the resources needed to do this work well.

- Openly discuss the challenges of what it will take to truly create change for the clients and community. Dig into the research and industry best practices regarding program models and advocate for resources needed.
- Clarify with organizational leadership what's possible (and what's not) when it comes to evaluation work. Discuss the differences between assessing outcomes versus impact.
- Work to establish open communication with funders and ask questions to clarify what types of data they are looking for. Will client testimonials or self-reports suffice, or are they looking for more in-depth evaluation (and if so, will they consider paying for this work)?

2



3

We are committed to establishing a strong culture of learning through data and gaining buy-in from staff and board.



- Plan regular opportunities to share data across the organization.
- Seek out feedback and ideas related to data efforts from program-level, front-line staff and clients. Think creatively about what it takes to make data fun!
- Encourage “learning,” “reflection” and “iteration.” This may be particularly important when results aren't as anticipated. Use these occasions to explore how programming can be improved, rather than assigning blame or focusing solely on accountability.

We work to establish regular processes and systems for evaluation.

- Learn and share best practices related to data and evaluation with team members, managers, leadership the board, etc.
- Find organizational allies to play roles in building these systems and advocating for change.
- Advocate for gaining clarity regarding roles, responsibility and ownership of data and evaluation systems; everyone in the organization should be clear about the ways they can contribute.

4





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We recognize that as data & learning champions, we don't need to have all the answers, but we have an important responsibility to ask the right questions.



- Program design, implementation and outcomes: What does the research literature say about our program model? What does success look like for our clients?
- Data collection: Are we clear about what data will be collected and when? When and how will data be shared?
- Cultural competence and responsible data use: Have we selected or created data collection tools that are culturally appropriate and vetted to reduce bias language? Have we put in place appropriate policies and procedures to guard client data? Is our organization committed to hiring diverse staff, including data and evaluation?
- Culture of learning: Is there staff buy-in at all levels of the organization? How can we build trust and reduce fear that staff might be experiencing related to data and evaluation work?

We work to strengthen our own skills to more effectively serve as data and learning champions.

6

- Assess your strengths and weaknesses and leadership style to better understand how you can most effectively support the data and evaluation work within your agency.
- Seek out professional development opportunities, including conferences, trainings webinars and print resources.
- Look for opportunities to take on additional responsibilities related to data and evaluation to stretch and grow your skills.



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We recognize we can't do this work alone and seek out allies within our organizations and peers in the nonprofit sector.



- Seek out like-minded staff within our own organizations who also share a commitment to using evidence and data in order to develop and implement effective programming.
- Encourage our peers and allies. We know that the work of creating change within our organizations can take years; it requires patience and an understanding that we are often "planting seeds" that will take time to grow.

For the complete document of guiding principles, visit:
www.goodmeasuregroup.org/resources