Quick Guides

Non-Instructional Units: Data Collection

Data collection for quality management, or assessment, should become a regular activity for the unit. It is important that a systematic, deliberate timeline for data collection be established, as well as the establishment of baseline, or benchmark data, when appropriate. Data should also answer specific assessment questions, be seen as credible to the stakeholders and the intended users of the results, and provide useful information that will lead to improvements.

An example of an effective data collection plan is outlined below:

1. Begin the process of data collection after performance measures or metrics are selected. The measures or metrics selected should align with the outcome or key performance indicator (KPI) being assessed.

2. Identify the information are you already collecting. (Examples of assessment metrics or measures for administrative units include: customer satisfaction, participation or attendance at events, average wait time, average service time, staff training hours, number of applications, processing time, number of users, website hits, financial audit reports, ranking against peer organizations, etc.). Also, inventory the kinds of data that are readily available from other divisions within the University, such as the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, and whether or not that kind of data can be used for baseline or benchmark data (this kind of data includes: graduation rates, retention rates, enrollment data, etc.).

3. Decide if any of these data can be used for baseline or benchmark data. If so, make sure the data has no personal or potentially private information included.

4. If baseline or benchmark data needs to be collected, identify the data source and/or the instrument used to collect that data.

5. Develop a timeline for collection. If baseline data is not needed (for comparison studies between groups, for example), then the assessment data collection process can begin. If baseline or benchmark data is needed, then make sure a reasonable amount of time is built in to collect data before interventions take place.

6. The data collected should be representative of the whole assessment cycle. You may want to collect data continuously or you may want to take "snapshots" at regular intervals. You may want to sample systematically, rather than collect data on every event/person/day.

Use the worksheet below to help with developing a data collection plan.

Worksheet

Do you have baseline data or benchmarks for each outcome or KPI?

1. Yes, we have baseline data and we can use the same instruments to evaluate achievement of our outcome. For each outcome to which this applies:
   a. Identify the metric or quantitative measurement, data source and/or instrument used to collect data.

    b.   Describe the timeline for collection.

2. No, we do not have baseline data or benchmarks. For each outcome to which this applies:
   a. Describe how you intend to develop baseline metrics to demonstrate impact of your project or how you intend to identify benchmarks or standards of achievement. How does this affect your timeline?

   b. Describe the metrics or quantitative measurement you intend to use.

   c. Describe the data source and/or the instrument you intend to use for data collection.

   d. Describe the timeline for data collection.

3. No, we do not need baseline data to measure the impact of this project. We are using a cross-sectional comparison. For each outcome to which this applies:
   a. Describe the populations or subgroups you intend to compare.

   b. Describe the metrics or quantitative measurement you intend to use.

   c. Describe the data source and/or the instrument you intend to use for data collection.

   d. Describe the timeline for data collection