Overview: Inputs Worksheet (VIP)

This tool was created to document the inputs involved in our Volunteer Internship Program (VIP) and to gather data to answer key questions for this program. We document all inputs but choose only to measure those that will provide information about key input questions we are trying to address at any given time. The tool was created in MS Excel to allow the user to sort the spreadsheet in different ways in order to obtain useful information and for sensitivity analyses to be done. Also, since the template is preset with formulae, the user only has to input the estimated and actual data and then the comparisons between variables calculate automatically.

While the general template may remain the same, a tool for assessing inputs needs to be a living document. This will allow for changes from cycle to cycle in the decision of which inputs to measure and assign values to. We note that some items that are documented or measured within the input context may also be measured in a different way as process or outcomes components. In the example of the recruitment activities, the key question for inputs might be "How much are we spending on recruitment (promotional materials, staff time)?" whereas in the process component the key question might become "Which of our recruitment activities results in the most applicants?" Moreover, elements of the recruitment activities might also help facilitate outcomes assessment, especially if information collected during the process is used as baseline data when measuring change at the end of the program.

The following instructions for how to use this worksheet are copied from supporting documentation that we have for our own staff.

How to use the tracking template

- Open the worksheet and enter the name of the program in cell B2 and the cycle being assessed in cell B3.
- Use a new row in the table for each input identified.
    - Resource Category → enter the name of the category that the input fits into (Staff, Facilities & Infrastructure, Materials, Funding, Campus/Community).
    - Resource → name the resource .
    - Details/Notes → enter any information or assumptions that will help other users to understand how the hours, dollars, or units were derived.
- For each input, decide if it is something that should be assigned a value so that it can be measured, and enter 'Yes' or 'No' in the *Measure Required?* column.
    - After all resources are identified, it may be useful to highlight all of the rows that have been filled in and use Excel's *Sort* tool to sort by *Measure Required* with a *Z to A* sort order so that all of the items that are listed as not needing to be measured move to the bottom of the list.
- The three columns under the *Estimate* heading can be used to outline the projected resources necessary for clients to achieve outcomes. This will be especially useful for capacity planning or budgeting activities.
    - Total Hours → to be populated when the input can be expressed in hours required.
    - Total Dollars ($) → to be populated when input has a dollar value associated with it.
    - # Units → to be populated to show how many individual units of the resource are required.
- The three columns under the *Actual* heading can be used to outline the resources that were actually drawn upon in the same time period addressed by the estimates. Once the *Actual* data is entered, the difference (surplus) between the budgeted resources and actual resources used will show in the *Resources Remaining* section. This will be especially useful for identifying areas of shortage and waste.
- When a cell under one of the three columns that appear under *Estimate* or *Actual* is left blank, it will be shaded. As soon as a number is entered, the shading will go away. This will help the user identify what areas have been filled out.
- When the result under the Actual column is negative (i.e. the program drew upon more resources than estimated), it will appear in red.
- If desired, key questions can be recorded (and answered) at the end of the data table.

This tool and overview were submitted by The Centre for Career Education, University of Windsor.

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