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FORGING POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS



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Self-Evaluation: Getting the most out of your program

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Why Care?

- Self-evaluation:
 - Gives you insight into where your program currently stands
 - Helps target your activities and make them more efficient
 - Demonstrates the effectiveness of your MRC to others

Outline of discussion

- Project background
- Primer on program evaluation
- Writing goals and objectives
- Key elements of an evaluation
- Applying evaluation to MRCs
- Next steps

Project goals

- Improve awareness among MRCs of the value of self-evaluation
- Train MRCs to conduct self-evaluation by providing user-friendly tools and resources that minimize the burden for MRCs

Answering the call

- Began as a demonstration project in 2002-2003 with 166 community-based units
- Currently, there are more than 600 units with a total volunteer base over 117,000
- Units located in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Guam, Palau, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands

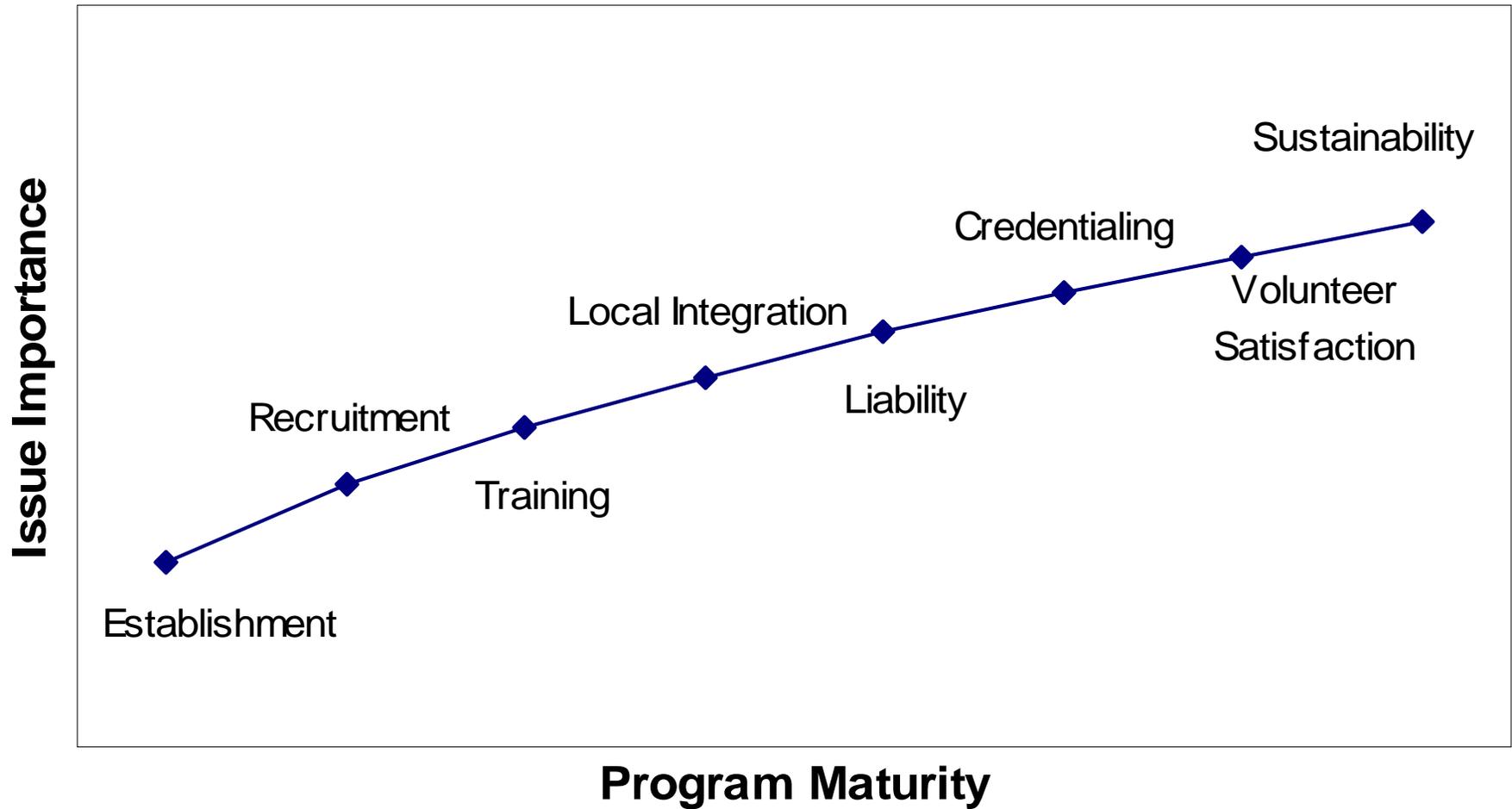
Ready to serve

- Supporting local public health initiatives
 - Diabetes screenings
 - Flu vaccinations
 - Health education and outreach
- Filling resource gaps during emergencies
 - Staff augmentation at shelters and hospitals
 - Over 6,000 MRC personnel deployed in their local jurisdictions in response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita
 - an additional 700 MRC volunteers deployed to the Gulf Coast region

Needs assessment

- To understand your evaluation needs, we:
 - Examined summary of MRC “best practices”
 - Reviewed progress reports for 50 MRCs
 - Conducted detailed interviews with 25 units representing a cross-section of MRCs
 - Conducted interviews with stakeholders

Broad range of issues



Need for self-evaluation

- Diverse, rapidly growing program
- Difficult to assess effectiveness
- Increasing awareness of MRCs both on the local and national levels
- Changing perceptions of the role of MRCs

What is program evaluation?

- A systematic, objective process that can be used to guide program development, assess performance, and inform decision-making
 - Provides an overall assessment of whether a program works and helps identify adjustments to improve outcomes
 - Examines the relationship(s) among internal and external program factors

Purpose of self-evaluation

- Assess program development and capacity
- Assess impact of unit's activities on local community
- Define clear goals and objectives
- Align organizational activities with stated goals and objectives
- Institute a systematic process for ongoing strategic planning and performance measurement

Benefits of self-evaluation

- Assess program goals and performance
- Ensure program goals aligned/integrated with other local response agencies
- Identify strengths and opportunities for improvement
- Guide strategic planning activities
- Inform resource allocation decisions
- Demonstrate program capabilities to others

Example #1: Guiding strategic planning

- Some MRCs do not have a current written strategic plan
- Develop a written strategic plan, which is a necessary first component of self-evaluation
 - “You can’t get to where you are going without a roadmap”
 - As part of the self-evaluation toolkit we are developing a step-by-step strategic planning guide to facilitate easy development of your plan

Example #2: Assessing volunteer satisfaction

- Many MRCs are uncertain as to whether current training and activities meet volunteer expectations
- Assess and track volunteer satisfaction and engagement
 - As part of the self-evaluation toolkit we are developing a volunteer feedback survey
 - Will serve as standardized measure that will let you anonymously compare your MRC to others

Types of evaluation

- **Process:** Assesses the extent to which a program is operating as it was intended
- **Outcome:** Assesses the extent to which a program is achieving its objectives
- **Impact:** Assesses the net effect a program has by comparing outcomes to what would be expected in the program's absence
 - A form of outcome evaluation

Evaluation steps

1. Establish clear program goals and objectives
2. Define the targets or benchmarks by which success can be measured
3. Establish a methodology for collecting and analyzing relevant information or data
4. Involve key stakeholders or constituents
5. Document and share findings for further action

Establishing goals and objectives

- **Goal:** A broad statement of the desired longer-term impact of a program or policy
- **Objective:** A specific, *measurable* statement of the desired immediate or direct outcomes of the program
 - Supports accomplishment of the goal(s).

Writing goals and objectives

- An effective goal statement describes what the program ultimately wants to achieve
- Provides the “big picture” or overall vision for the program
- Focuses on the longer-term
- Serves as the basis for follow-on decisions and priority setting

Take a SMART approach

- Useful objectives are:
 - Specific
 - Measurable
 - Agreed upon
 - Realistic
 - Time framed

Common mistakes

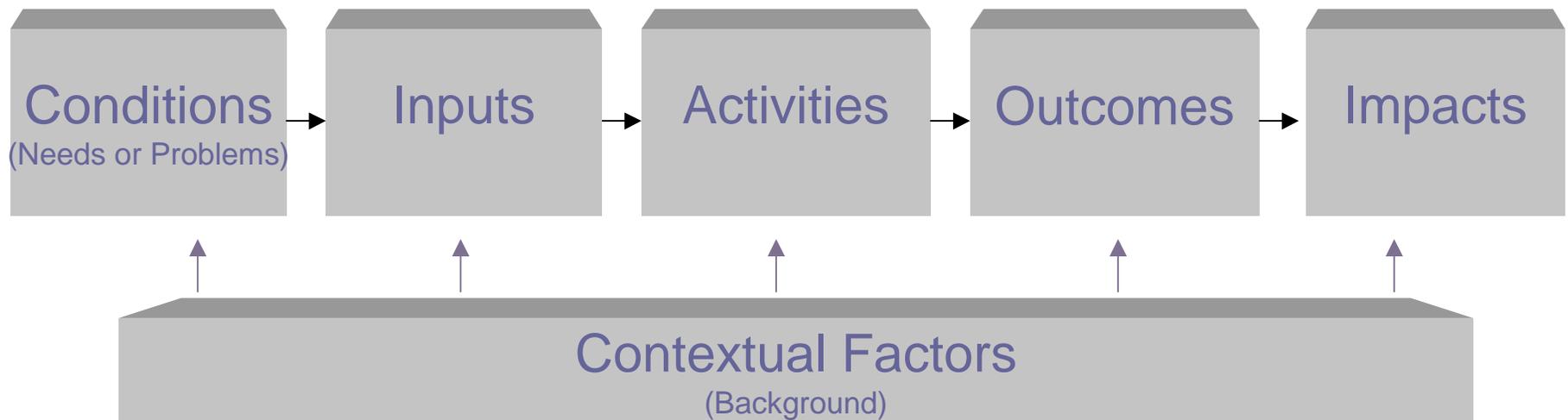
- Stating activities as goals or objectives
- Stating implementation or operational benchmarks (outputs) as goals and objectives
- Identifying too many goals and objectives
- Including multiple objectives into a single statement

Program activities

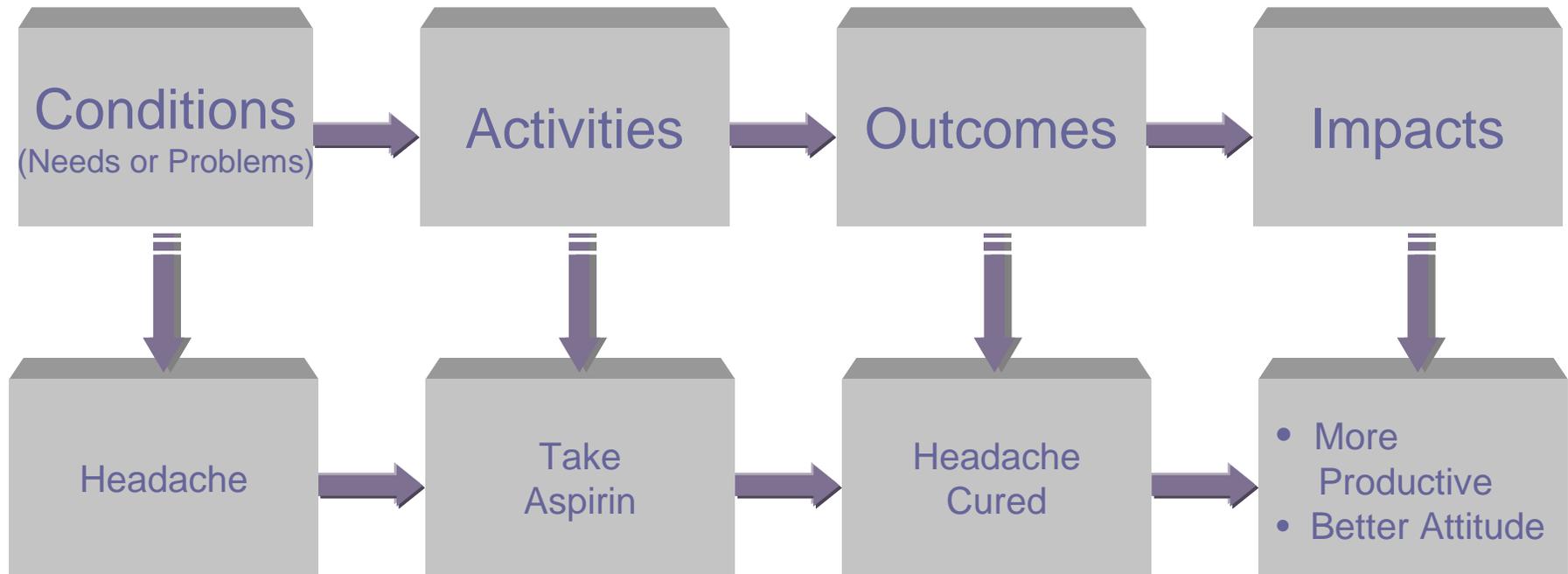
- What the program does or how it uses its inputs or resources in support of meeting objectives
- They are the operational means by which objectives are achieved
- Link objectives to desired outcomes

Key elements of evaluation

- The evaluation process identifies and examines relationships among a range of program factors – both internal and external (or contextual)



Universal example



Application to MRCs

- Applicability of self-evaluation may differ based on the maturity of your program
 - Evaluation efforts should be compatible with program's mission and available resources
- Programs can select from a wide range of tools to fit their situation
 - Not a one-time activity, but an ongoing and incremental process

Our next steps in developing self-evaluation training

- Collect feedback from program leaders
- Develop training content and support materials
 - Step by step guides that will be accessible via the website
 - Supporting tools such as standardized surveys you can use to assess your program
- Deliver training at regional meetings

Things for you to consider

- Review your program goals and objectives
 - Are they clearly defined?
 - Are they supported by the unit's activities?
- Consider the following questions:
 - What do I want to learn about my program?
 - What will be most beneficial moving forward?
 - Should the focus of my self-evaluation be on process, outcomes, or both?