Communicating Results: Sharing Results with Stakeholders

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Communicating Results: Sharing Results with Stakeholders

Purposes

Audiences

Strategies

Why Report Results?

- **No one knows you're engaged in assessment unless you document and report it**.
- Learning takes place when documenting and reporting.
- Documenting gives you evidence of accomplishments and evidence of a plan for improvement.
- Accountability (internal and external) requires documentation.
- Communication promotes **transparency** and demonstrates that assessment efforts were "worth it", especially with communities that might not expect that their involvement with assessment will result in action. Results should be **seen to be shared and acted upon** in a variety of ways:
  - Advocacy, public relations, commitment to communities
  - Managing, changing, and improving services
  - Reallocating resources among services
  - Accountability

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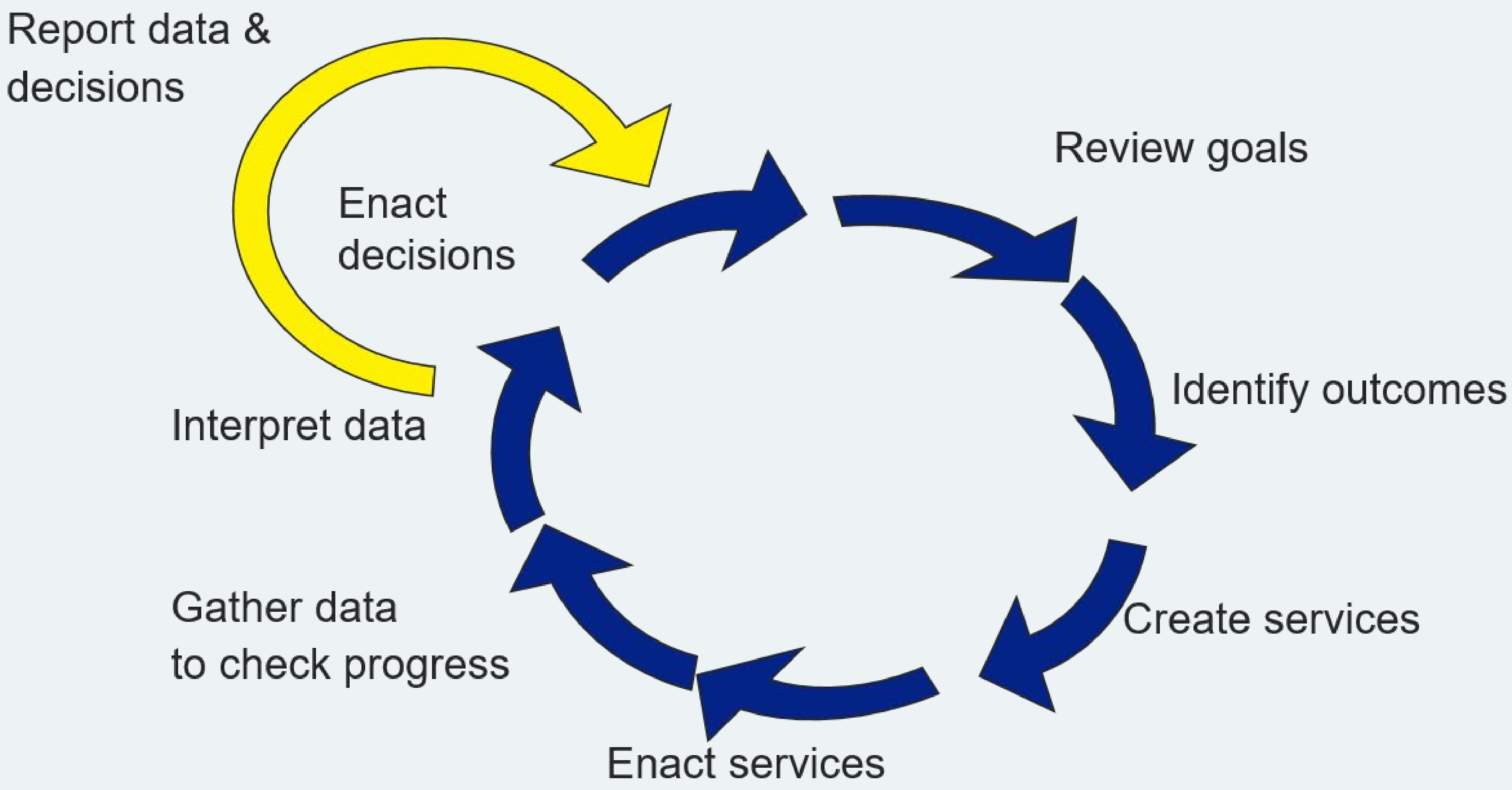

Assessment Cycle

Adapted from Peggy Maki, PhD
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By Megan Oakleaf, PhD

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Sense is Constructed by the Audience

- Information must make sense for the audience
- Consider the audience’s level of understanding, values, perspectives, contexts.
- Check with representatives of the audience to ensure that found information and resources are appropriate for their needs:
  - Goal of use
  - Language level
  - Preferred formats — text based, visual, specific format preferences
  - Extent of information needed
  - Time available — lengthy or brief, time frame for access/use/application of information
  - Mode of communication — in person, in writing, both

Reporting to Administrators

Use a 3-part reporting strategy:

1. Provide background about the assessment effort itself. (Best before assessment results are in.)
   – What was assessed
   – What type of assessment was used
   – Why those types were used
   – How the results will be applied and reported
2. Provide assessment results and answer questions they're likely to have.
3. Provide a follow-up on the status of efforts for improvement and effectiveness of changes.

http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/methods/assment/as600.htm

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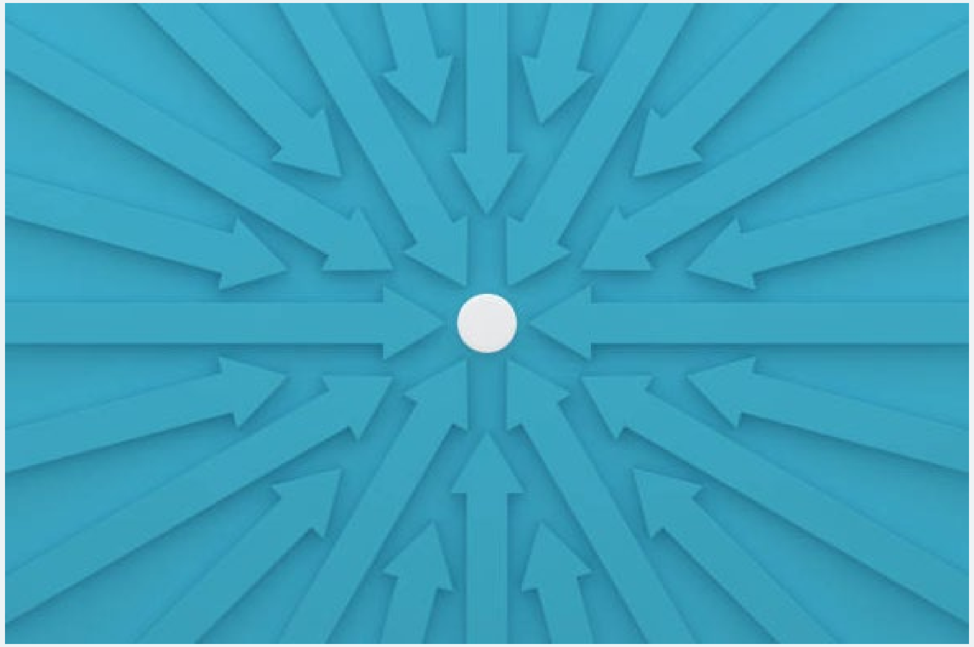
Keep the End in Mind

- At the beginning, articulate your **goals for reporting** results.
  - Why are you reporting them?
  - What do you want to occur as a result?
- Select reporting strategies that fit these goals.
- Be clear and accurate.



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Reporting Strategies & Formats

Choices

- Message
- Audience
- Form of presentation
- Structure

Structure Breakdown

- Title
- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Results
- Conclusions
- Recommendations
- Appendices

Brophy, Appendix 3

Longer Report Outline

1. Title
2. Abstract (summarize problem, methods/procedures, main findings, major conclusions)
3. Acknowledgments (give credit!)
4. Table of Contents
5. Lists of Tables/Figures
6. Introduction
7. Statement of Problem (subproblems, term definitions, need for study)
8. Conceptual Frameworks (research questions, assumptions)
9. Design (population and sample, sources of data, data collection techniques/methods, data analysis techniques)
10. Results (descriptive, analytical, summary)
11. Conclusions (summary, interpretation, limitations, recommendations)
12. References
13. Appendix

Executive Summaries

- Typically one page, formal in tone
- Audience:
  - How familiar is the intended audience with the subject matter?
  - What aspects of the content will the audience care the most about? Be able to act upon?
- What are the key messages of the results?
- From the executive summary, the reader should be able to understand the:
  - Motivation
  - Major aspects of assessment
  - Results and recommendations
  - Limitations

General Outline:

- Information Need—purpose/problem/goal/need
- Assessment Methods—Design, methods, tools used to addressing the problem/information need (brief)
- Results—highlights of analysis, logically arranged, limitations
- Recommendations—recommended decisions or actions, the “ask”

Considerations

Responsible Parties

- Who is involved?
- Assessment librarian
- Administrators
- Support staff
- Representatives from participant community

Timelines

- Deadlines for decision-making, strategic planning, collaborations, budgets
- What, if any, repeating cycle exists?

Costs

- Time
- Effort
- Publications (format, layout, printing, accessibility)
- Marketing/communications materials preparation
- One-time or recurring expenses

Know your Data

- **Understand** your data; **get help** with analysis if you need it. Start with **simple** analysis first.
- Revisit professional literature and experiences.
- Look for **patterns**.
- Identify the **data that tells you the most** about your outcome and is most helpful in making improvements.
- Summarize. What are the **top points** for each outcome, variable, or concept you assessed? Use charts if they make data more understandable.
- **You do not need to use all the data you gather**. Omit data that could be used to identify participants.

Marilee Bresciani

Tell a Story

- Determine which audiences need to know about what information in order to make improvements. What are their needs, perspectives, or priorities?
- **Tell a story** of what you've learned and what you decide or recommend.
  - What was **relevant** for making decisions and taking action?
  - What was particularly **interesting**?
  - What (if anything) was **unexpected**?
  - What differences found are **meaningful**?
- **Provide context and commentary**.
- Avoid jargon.
- **Do not overwhelm** with data points that aren't relevant (hold details in reserve (e.g., appendices, extra slides for "as needed" use).
- Ensure data visualizations communicate clearly and accurately.
- Acknowledge **limitations** and flaws.
- Provide **corroborating** information (e.g., multiple, triangulated methods)
- **Document the assessment strategy** and **plans for future investigation**.

https://www.jmu.edu/assessment/sass/ac-step-seven.shtml

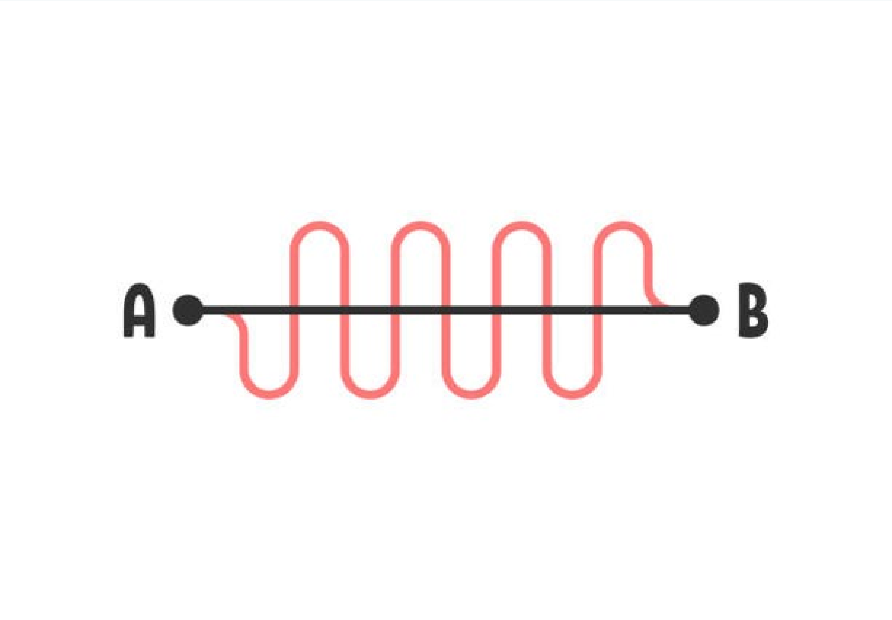
“Closing the Loop”
Reporting & Acting

- Briefly report assessment method for each outcome (or concept, variable, need, etc.).
- Document **where the outcome was met**.
- Document **where the outcome was not met**.
- Document decisions made for improvements.
- **Refine and repeat** assessment after improvements are implemented; set a schedule for rechecks.

Marilee Bresciani

Tips for Reports

- Keep (at least part of it) it short and simple.
- Avoid jargon.
- Use past tense, third person.
- Use active, rather than passive, verbs.
- On documents:
  - Use plenty of white space and relevant graphics .
  - Use clear headers.
  - Use numbers and bullets.
- Test materials on representative members of the audience.
- Keep accessibility at the fore.



Veldof, J., *Creating the One-Shot Library Workshop*, Chapter 15; *RIS*, 6th ed., Chapter 4

What about Bad Data?

- Report that the data is faulty or inconclusive, as appropriate.
- Explain what might have gone wrong and what will be changed in the next iteration.
- Whether results are good or bad, the main idea is to make improvements, so…
- Examine data to see if any improvements can still be made without causing harm by making decisions based on flawed data.

Avoiding Bad Data

- **Consciously choose** your outcome to assess, question to answer, need to fill, etc.
- **Identify what you need to find out** in order to determine whether the outcome/question/need was met.
- **Match** the outcome/question/need to an assessment method.
- Check and recheck to be sure the method will actually measure the outcome/question/need. Examine each element and ask:
  - “Will this help me answer my question?”
  - “Will this supply necessary information for understanding?”
  - “Is this subject to bias? In what ways?”
  - “What can I do with this information? Can I make decisions or take action?”

Avoid Poor Writing

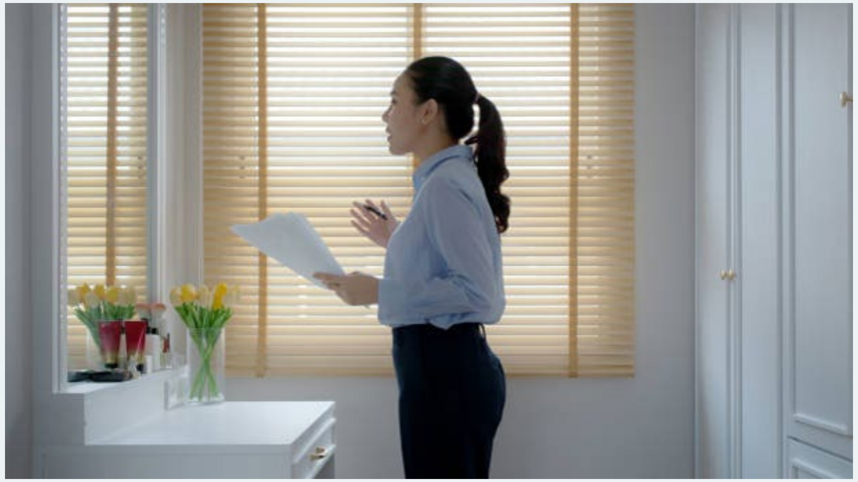
- **Avoid broad sweeping statements** without sufficient evidence to support them.
- Be **precise**, not vague.
- Be **organized** throughout the communication, at the macro- and micro-level.
- Describe your methods and tools fully.
- **Explain connections** between the problem/need/outcome and research question, user story, or hypothesis clearly and in detail.
- Ensure **the findings dictate the conclusions**, not assumptions or preconceived ideas.
- Have **detailed and evidence-supported** conclusions and recommendations.
- **Attribute** and cite sources fully and accurately.

Powell, R. R., & Connaway, L. S. (2004). *Basic research methods for librarians*. Libraries Unlimited.

Be Prepared

Prepare to explain and defend:

- Your outcome/question/need
- Your method
- Your analysis
- Your results
- The decisions you advocate be made based on results
- The actions you advocate be taken based on results



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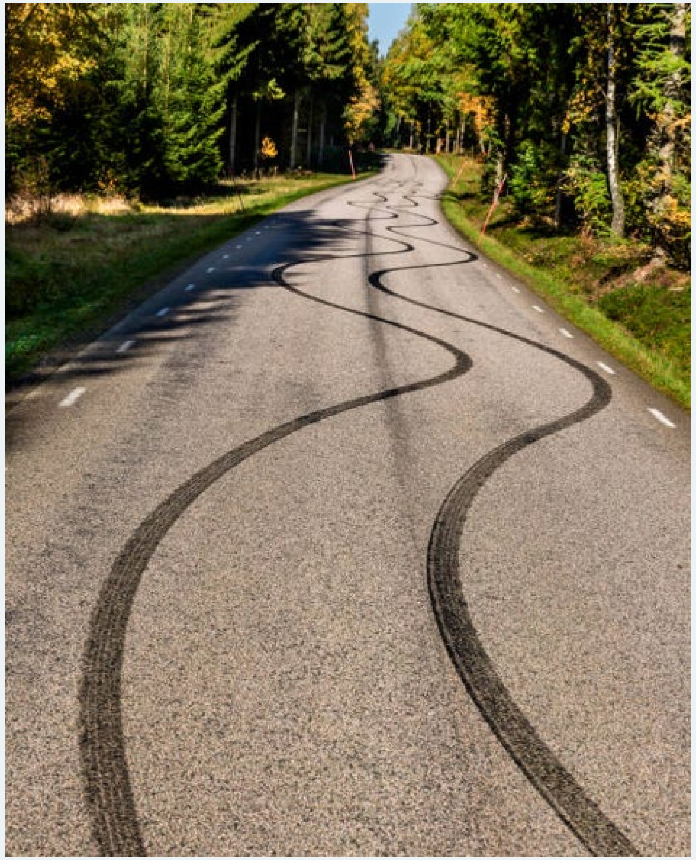
Stay the Course



- The main idea is to **gain understanding, learn more, and make improvements through decisions and actions**.
- Communications should convey this attitude and focus to stakeholders.
- Expect and prepare for resistance; the advocacy for action process may not end with sharing of results.

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Communicating Results: Sharing Results with Stakeholders (end slide)

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