Communicating Results: Sharing Results with Stakeholders

This project is made possible by a grant from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services.
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

Marilee Bresciani
Assessment Cycle

Adapted from Peggy Maki, PhD & Marilee Bresciani, PhD
By Megan Oakleaf, PhD
Communicating Results: Sharing Results with Stakeholders

- Purposes
- Audiences
- Strategies
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/assessment/as600.htm
Communicating Results: Sharing Results with Stakeholders

Purposes
Audiences
Strategies
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.

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

“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?”

Marilee Bresciani
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.

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

Marilee Bresciani
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.

http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/methods/assessment/as600.htm
Communicating Results: Sharing Results with Stakeholders

Was this content useful?
Please provide your feedback at: https://forms.gle/zHk9ePD8MNL0xHcV8