

# Begin Thinking About Evaluation From The Start

Although many organizations begin thinking about evaluation after the onset of the program, there is considerable literature that suggests the groundwork for the evaluation process should happen in the beginning phases of program development. In the case of a volunteer driver program, those involved could begin thinking about evaluation even before it is launched.

The first step might be to develop a logic model that depicts how the volunteer driver program is expected to function and achieve its goals. The typical logic model generally includes inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. After developing a logic model, you might then want to initiate several planning activities.

## **A LOGIC MODEL FOR EVALUATION PLANNING**

Below are volunteer driver program features (inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes) that will be important in planning for its evaluation.

**Inputs:** financial resources, equipment, facilities, and needed staff etc.

**Activities:** organization of the program, plans and goals for recruitment and training, fundraising goals, and planned activities

**Outputs:** target numbers of passengers and staff to be involved plus rides to be provided

**Outcomes:** volunteer driver services that will be provided, the passengers that will be served, the funding that will be secured, and the volunteers, staff, and community members who will be involved

Once these features have been identified, several activities can be undertaken for planning the evaluation. Below are five activities that can be included in planning the evaluation: 1) goals and purposes of the evaluation, 2) development of evaluation questions, 3) types of information to be developed, 4) participants to be involved, and 5) time frame for the evaluation.

## EVALUATION PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Below are the five activities for planning a volunteer driver program evaluation.

### 1. Identification of Goal and Purpose of the Evaluation

Evaluation goals and purposes might emphasize involvement of volunteer drivers to deliver at least 500 rides to older adults within the first two years of operation.

### 2. Development of Evaluation Questions

Evaluation questions might include people who were recruited as passengers, how they were recruited, how many volunteers were recruited; and the satisfaction of both riders and drivers regarding the volunteer transportation service.

### 3. Selection of Types of Information to Be Gathered

Information regarding usage related to the number of rides, the types and numbers of passengers, the numbers of volunteer drivers could be developed from the program's software, and information related to satisfaction could be gathered from surveys and focus groups.

### 4. Decisions about Program Participants to Be Involved

All program staff and board members could be involved in the evaluation along with a sample of volunteer drivers and passengers.

### 5. Determination of the Time Frame for the Evaluation

Although many programs undertake an evaluation on an annual basis, a new volunteer driver program may decide to complete its planning and initial implementation activities before undertaking an evaluation process. In the event a program undertakes a one-year planning process and a one-year implementation process the evaluation could be undertaken in year three.