

Restorative practices monitoring and evaluation framework

Measuring whether a Restorative Practices program is actually working, and not just running

Where the participant assessment in the programming examples measures what individuals learned, this framework measures whether the program itself is achieving its purpose. The distinction is the heart of the matter. A program can run many circles, train many people, and report a great deal of activity while changing nothing about the conditions that produced the conflict or types of conflicts it was set up to address. An evaluation built on activity counts will report success at precisely that moment. This framework is therefore organized so that activity is tracked but never mistaken for outcome.

The framework follows a simple results chain, inputs to activities to outputs to outcomes, and pairs each level with indicators, a data source, and a collection frequency. A program developer can complete the bracketed targets to fit the specific setting and use the result as both a planning tool and a reporting instrument.

The Results Chain

Level	Sample indicator	Data source	Frequency
Inputs	Faculty time, partner sites, and funding committed to the program.	Program records	Annual
Activities	Courses delivered; trainings held; circles and conferences facilitated.	Activity log	Ongoing
Outputs	Number of people trained; number reaching competent facilitation in programming examples.	Scores in the programming example	Per cohort
Outcomes	Change in how a partner institution handles the disputes it refers; sustained use of restorative processes after training.	Partner data; follow up review	6-12 months

The first three levels are within the program's direct control and are straightforward to count. The fourth, outcomes, is where evaluation does its real work and where most programs fall silent. The indicators at this level should be defined at the design stage, before launch, because an outcome measure invented after the fact tends to be the one the program can already show.

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Choosing Outcome Indicators

Good outcome indicators share three features: they describe a change in the world rather than an activity of the program, they can be observed or measured without excessive cost, and they

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were specified before the program began. The table below offers a starting menu; a program should choose a small number, two to four, rather than attempt all of them.

Outcome area	Sample indicator
Institutional practice	Proportion of eligible disputes a partner refers to a restorative process rather than a punitive one, before vs. after.
Durability of skill	Proportion of trained facilitators still facilitating six months after training (links in the programming examples follow-up).
Reach into the community	Number of facilitators drawn from the served community and processes they lead independently.
Quality of process	Participant-reported sense of fairness and of being heard, by short exit survey.
Structural change	Documented change in a partner's policy, procedure, or data (e.g., referral or repeat incident rates).

Methods and Cadence

The framework is deliberately mixed method, because the most important outcomes are partly numerical and partly not. A workable cadence for a university program:

- **Continuous:** maintain the activity log and collect scores, noting in the programming example document, for each cohort.
- **Per term or per engagement:** a short exit survey of process participants on fairness and voice.
- **Every 6-12 months:** an outcome review with each partner, comparing the agreed indicators against baseline, plus a brief qualitative account of what changed and why.
- **Annually:** a one-page summary that reports outcomes first and activity second, written for partners and funders.

The order of that final summary is itself a discipline. A report that leads with activity invites the reader to mistake motion for progress; a report that leads with outcomes, and uses activity only

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to explain them, keeps the program honest about what it is actually achieving.

A Note on Baselines

None of the outcome indicators mean anything without a baseline, the measurement taken before the program acts. Baselines are easy to skip in the rush to launch and impossible to reconstruct afterward. The single most valuable evaluation task a developer can complete is to record, at the assessment stage, the current state of the few indicators the program will later claim to have changed. The context-and-stakeholder analysis from the program's first phase is the natural place to capture them.