Tools of the Trade

TFA adopts a new client survey system

How do you measure mission? In this age of accountability, it’s not enough for a nonprofit organization to just provide services, altruistic as they may be. It’s necessary to demonstrate that the provided services are:

• effective - accomplish the intended goals
• efficient - have a reasonable cost per unit of service
• impactful – improve the lives of clients and the communities in which they live

The mission of Technology For All (TFA) is to provide educational, economic and personal opportunities for low-income, underserved and vulnerable persons through the tools of technology. We do this by providing computer access and training in low-income and underserved communities so that clients can achieve computer competencies that are essential for the new literacy of the 21st Century - competencies that are required for education and employment and for connecting to resources and to the community. So how do we measure our mission?

As of June 2014, we measure it with the aid of a new online client survey and case management system.
The tool is built upon CommunityOS, a case management and inter-organization collaboration tool from VisionLink. A majority of client data will be input by the client in pre- and post-course surveys. Additional client data can later be added to existing client records. The survey content was designed with the consultation of Dr. Jon Gant, of the Center for Digital Inclusion, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The survey collects demographic data plus client evaluations of TFA services and client outcomes.

The system will collect client demographics such as area of residence, age, race, income level, and highest level of education. This data will be used to verify that we’re reaching our target audience: low-income, underserved and vulnerable populations.

Other data collected includes client evaluations of TFA services and client self-assessments of outcomes. For example, the client is asked to self-assess how much their computer skills have increased as a result of the courses and how the courses have impacted their lives. The client will also have the opportunity to rate the course and the instructor. Together, this data will combine to allow TFA to determine how effective our courses are, and to make adjustments, as necessary. It will help us to determine client outcomes.

Combining the above data with other measures will allow us to estimate service efficiency and breadth of service.
Asked what he envisions for the new tool, President and CEO Will Reed said, "We're pleased to have enhanced tools that will give us more and better data for monitoring and managing our training program. It will go a long way to helping us ensure that we're serving our target population and that we're doing so as efficiently as possible, and moreover that we are effecting positive outcomes in the lives of our clients and in their communities."

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