



Measuring The Difference: An Outcome Evaluation Resource for the Disability Sector

MODULE 7

Getting Ready for CET Standard 43

Prepared for
Alberta Council of Disability Services

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7.1 REQUIREMENTS OF CET STANDARD 43

The Alberta Council of Disability Service's (ACDS) newly introduced *Creating Excellence Together* (CET) Accreditation Standard 43 reviews the service provider's organizational structure on its ability to facilitate continuous quality improvement and outcome evaluation.

Exhibit 7.1 lists the indicators for the accreditation review.

EXHIBIT 7.1 ACDS CET (2008) STANDARD 43: INDICATORS

1. *The service provider has written policy and procedures to address continuous quality improvement and outcome evaluation.*
2. *The service provider establishes and maintains a data collection system that supports its outcome monitoring, evaluation and quality improvement efforts.*
3. *The service provider trains its staff on how to monitor and measure outcomes and how to use the organization's data collection system.*
4. *The service provider implements a quality improvement plan and procedures to achieve its objectives (e.g., support a culture of quality improvement, collect demographic data and feedback, review past critical incident reports).*
5. *The service provider conducts an annual review of its programs, services, and/or work plans to ensure the data it collects is relevant, to measure its success indicators, and to facilitate changes as necessary to effect its outcomes or goals.*
6. *The service provider monitors the individual's goals and ensures that they are supported to reach their goals.*

SOURCE: ACDS (2008).

7.2 SUGGESTED STEPS TO PREPARE FOR CET STANDARD 43

Each organization will be in different stages of readiness for the new Standard 43. Some may already be well-seasoned in the art of quality improvement and being outcome-focused; some may have it articulated in their values but not be quite proficient in their practices; some may have isolated pockets in their organization that do it well while other areas don't do it at all; and some organizations may simply be stunned by the prospect of having to meet this new requirement, not knowing where to start.

The steps suggested below are written for those on the “stunned” part of the above spectrum and may also be useful as a review for those who are more towards the “proficient” end of the spectrum.

The suggestions are based on bringing together the learnings from the field of organizational culture change with the practical guidance provided by outcome measurement experts. The steps are general guidelines, leaving organizations to work out the details in ways that best suit their current situations, cultures and practices, but are comprehensive enough to make sure that the requirements of Standard 43 are covered.

SUMMARY OF STEPS TO PREPARE FOR ACDS CET (2008) STANDARD 43

STEP ONE:	Make outcomes focus and quality improvement a top priority
STEP TWO:	Develop organizational outcome measurement framework
STEP THREE:	Develop program/unit outcome measurement frameworks
STEP FOUR:	Pilot-test program outcome measurement frameworks
STEP FIVE:	Identify and address implications for organizational systems
STEP SIX:	Prepare for implementation
STEP SEVEN:	Implement outcome measurement

Step One: Make outcomes focus and quality improvement a top priority

The steps below would be undertaken by the senior management team, which would include all program/unit directors. An external consultant may be used to facilitate the process. Board approval may be required, depending on the changes made.

1. **Review the organization’s strategic framework (vision, mission, values, strategic goals and theory of change).** Make sure there is internal alignment and consistency across these elements, and that the strategic goals reflect the organization’s mission and environmental context. If the framework has not been changed in a while, this would be a good time to conduct a SWOT Analysis¹ and develop a fresh strategic framework.
2. **Add statement reflecting organization’s commitment to quality improvement and outcomes-focused practices in the organization’s values.** The way you word this will depend on how you frame quality improvement in your organization. Some organizations, for example, may see themselves as “learning organizations”, or as valuing “search for excellence”, etc. It doesn’t matter what you call it, as long as everyone in the organization understands it as referring to the key elements in a quality improvement cycle (Module 1): PLAN - Do - Check - Reflect - Act - PLAN.
3. **Develop written organizational policy that states the organization’s commitment to and support for, outcomes focus and quality improvement.** This would include:
 - o the organization’s definition and understanding of outcomes-based quality improvement, and why the organization values quality improvement;

¹ SWOT Analysis: A strategic planning method to assess the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (internal and external) relative to the organization’s ability to achieve its mission.

- a brief overview of how the organization will support quality improvement (e.g., making sure that data management systems are available, that staff are properly trained in outcome measurement processes and data collection systems, that every program/unit has an outcome plan and that there is a timely process for performance reporting, analysis and making improvements, etc.);
 - a specific position/unit responsible for overseeing the outcomes activities.
4. **Communicate and celebrate progress.**

NOTE: Implementing a written policy as described would likely meet the requirements of CET Standard 43, Indicator 1.

RESULTS:

- Outcome-focused organizational strategic framework complete, and ready to serve as a reference for each of the program/unit areas.
- Organizational policy statement written, stating commitment to and support for outcomes focus and quality improvement culture.
- Requirement for CET Standard 43, Indicator 1 probably met.

Step Two: Develop organizational outcome measurement framework

The steps below would be undertaken by the senior management team, which would include all program/unit directors. An external consultant may be used to facilitate the process. A more extensive stakeholder consultative process may be used depending on the organization's culture, approach and resources available.

5. **In the organizational goals plan, add high-level objectives to capture the activities required to prepare for, implement and review the changes required to become outcomes-ready.** Creating this organizational change will require resources, commitment, delegation of responsibilities and accountability. If these are tied back to the organization's strategic framework, then the activities can be properly resourced and monitored.
6. **Develop an outcomes logic model for the organizational goals plan** (See Modules 3 & 4 for details). For each goal, identify at least one high-level **outcome** to know if that goal has been achieved. For example, if one of the organizational goals is "to enhance community inclusion for persons with disabilities", the outcome could be "more people with disabilities employed in community jobs". Identify the program (**activity**) that helps to achieve the outcome, the **resources** (e.g., overall budget) allocated to it and the **key outputs** (e.g., total number of hours of employment supports provided by the program for the year).
7. **Develop an outcomes measurement framework for the outcomes identified in the organizational goals plan** (See Module 5 for details). For each outcome, identify the **indicator** (e.g., "increase in the percentage of people receiving services who are employed in a job of their choice in the community for at least 6 months; this year data compared to last year"), **data source** (e.g., employment program's annual report), and **data collection method** (e.g., report prepared by program director one month after year-end).
8. **Identify a plan and timeframe to track and record outcomes, and review results.** For example, every quarter, devote one senior management meeting to report and review the results, and decide if any adjustments are required to stay on track.

9. Communicate any changes to the organizational strategic framework (e.g., change in mission statement) to the organization's governance board, and receive formal endorsement if required.
10. Communicate and celebrate progress.

RESULTS:

- Outcome-focused organizational outcome measurement framework complete, and ready to serve as a reference and model for each of the program/unit areas.

Step Three: Develop program/unit² outcome measurement frameworks.

The steps below would be undertaken by program staff, led by the program director or manager. An external consultant may be used to facilitate the process or to provide technical assistance. Senior management approval may be required, depending on the changes made. At this stage, greater involvement of program stakeholders (clients, families, etc.) may be more relevant and feasible to develop the outcomes list.

11. Review the program framework (purpose, mandate, target population, program logic and goals). Make sure there is internal alignment and consistency across these elements, and that the program framework aligns with the organization's strategic framework.
12. Add program goals and objectives to capture the activities required to prepare for, implement and review the changes required to become outcomes-ready.
13. Develop the program logic model (See Modules 3 & 4 for details).
14. Develop the program outcomes measurement framework (See Module 5 for details).
15. Identify a plan and timeframe to track and record outcomes, and review results. Make sure the timeframe aligns with other reporting requirements (e.g., quarterly report from program director to management).
16. Communicate any changes to the senior management team, and receive formal endorsement if required.
17. Communicate and celebrate progress.
18. REPEAT ABOVE STEPS FOR EVERY PROGRAM/UNIT.

RESULTS:

- Program frameworks, program logic models and program outcome measurement frameworks clearly articulated for all programs.

Step Four: Pilot-test program outcome measurement frameworks (start with 1 or 2 programs only first).

The steps below would be undertaken by program staff, led by the program director or manager. An external consultant may be used to facilitate the process or to provide technical assistance.

² The term "program" will be used from now on to include *program* (i.e., a direct service to clients) and *unit* (i.e., a functional unit that supports the agency, e.g., finance, human resources department, etc.).

19. **Pilot-test the outcomes measurement framework** (See Module 5 for details). This will include actually collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting data from a small, representative sample of program participants. It will entail:
 - o developing data collection instruments and procedures or obtaining standardized measurement tools;
 - o developing consent forms and confidentiality procedures;
 - o developing a data management system for tracking data collection activities, entering data collected, analysing the data set and generating findings in a way that can be used to compare performance over time;
 - o clarifying data storage and access procedures;
 - o identifying and training staff responsible for outcome-measurement activities;
 - o developing a reporting system that tracks all outcomes important to the program goals, and reports up on the relevant ones needed for the organizational goals.
20. **Review the results of the pilot-test, finalize instruments, procedures and processes.** Communicate results to senior management and other programs. Discuss potential overlaps with other programs, and identify ways to use systems, procedures and processes created for this program as templates for other programs. The data management and reporting system, for example, may be expanded to accommodate other programs. Use the learnings to identify ways to maximize efficiency.
21. **Provide direct support staff with client outcomes results to track progress relative to client's goals, and to adjust supports to better meet client goals (if required).**
22. **Document all outcomes measurement-related procedures and expectations in program-level policies and procedures manual (or equivalent).** Include a schedule for regular review (usually annually) of outcome-measurement system and processes.
23. **Stand-by for full-scale implementation when signalled by senior management.**
24. **Communicate and celebrate progress.**
25. **REPEAT ABOVE STEPS FOR EVERY PROGRAM/UNIT.**

NOTE: Developing and maintaining a data management system, training staff on outcome measurement and use of data management system, and monitoring individual goals via the outcome measurement processes as described would likely meet the requirements of Standard 43, Indicators 2, 3 and 6, respectively, assuming full implementation occurs for all client-related programs.

RESULTS:

- Data management system developed to support outcome measurement efforts.
- Data collection instruments developed (or standardized instruments obtained) to measure client outcomes.
- Staff trained to measure outcomes and use data management system.
- Individual client outcomes monitoring and tracking in progress.
- Requirements for CET Standard 43, Indicator 2, 3 and 6 probably met.

Step Five: Identify and address implications for organizational systems

The steps below would be led by the senior management team, which would include all program/unit directors. An external consultant may be used to facilitate the process.

26. Assess the issues and learnings from all of the pilot-tests. Discuss challenges, barriers, exemplary practices, solutions, etc., arising from the pilot-test experience.
27. Identify ways to address issues and challenges, and ways to share and use exemplary practices to improve future processes.
28. Identify and address implications for:
 - o human resource system (outcomes-focused staff recruitment and training);
 - o performance assessment and rewards systems (job descriptions and staff performance reviews need to include expectations for outcomes focus);
 - o information management systems (integrating outcomes data management system and back-up processes with organization's main system if possible);
 - o financial and resource allocation decision processes (source of additional funds for outcome measurement-related resource costs);
 - o board and other stakeholder reporting formats and processes (may need to change to be outcomes-focused), etc.
29. Communicate and celebrate progress.

RESULTS:

- Quality improvement practices role-modelled in the pilot-test review process.
- Implications of organizational change identified and addressed for all areas impacted.

Step Six: Prepare for implementation

The steps below would be led by the senior management team, which would include all program/unit directors. An external consultant may be used to facilitate the process.

30. Get all systems and processes ready for full-scale implementation.
31. Review all relevant written policies and procedures for consistency and clarity regarding new processes and expectations, and prepare for full implementation.
32. Develop a schedule for periodic review of outcome results.
33. Develop a schedule for periodic review of outcome measurement process.
34. Communicate and celebrate progress.

RESULTS:

- Organization and all programs and supporting systems ready for implementation of outcome measurement.

Step Seven: Implement outcome measurement

The steps below would be led by the senior management team, and undertaken at all levels of the organization.

35. Implement program outcome measurement as per prescribed policies and procedures.
36. Review client outcome results as per defined schedule.

37. Identify and implement necessary changes to ensure clients are supported to reach their goals based on best practices.
38. Review outcome measurement processes as per defined schedule.
39. Identify and implement necessary changes to ensure outcome measurement process and systems continue to remain efficient and produce valid and reliable outcomes.
40. Communicate and celebrate progress.
41. REPEAT ABOVE STEPS FOLLOWING THE CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT CYCLE.

NOTE: Once full implementation and periodic review occurs as described above, the complete requirements of Standard 43 should be met.

RESULTS:

- Outcome measurement system implemented.
- A culture of quality improvement underway.

REFERENCES

Alberta Council of Disability Services (ACDS). (2008). *The Creating Excellence Together (CET) Accreditation Levels 1 and 2 Standards: Standard 43 and Its Application to Service Providers*. ACDS Standards and Accreditation Department: Calgary, AB.