Improving Institutional Corrections Training Academy:
Steps for Outcomes-based Training Evaluation

December 2024

The purpose of this resource is to provide a description of the steps involved in outcomes-based training evaluation, focusing specifically on those presented in the Outcomes-based Training Evaluation webinar series. Examples provided are Michigan Department of Corrections (DOC) Asbestos Awareness for Staff with Maintenance, Housekeeping, and Janitorial Duties training.[1] This document is a supplement to the material covered in the webinar series and does not serve as standalone training. Please see the series linked here for more information.

What is OBT, and why is it Important?

Outcomes-based Training (OBT) is training or education aligned with the specific outcomes and skills employees or students are expected to master. In OBT, outcomes drive the curriculum's development, instructional materials, teaching methods, and evaluation (Office of Legislative Research, 1994)[2]. By purposefully designing trainings with the end-goal in mind, a unit or an organization can expect trainings to be effective. To ensure trainings are accomplishing desirable outcomes, practitioners can implement OBT evaluations to coincide with OBT trainings.

Keep in mind, if a training is not an OBT and was not designed with specific goals and outcome metrics, there is little usefulness in evaluating its effectiveness. If it's not intentionally designed to work, what is there to evaluate?

While it is critical to develop training using the OBT model, it is equally important to evaluate OBTs to ensure they are working as designed. Evaluating OBT is the systematic collection of information to improve training (CDC, 2023)[3]. This type of measurement allows trainers to determine if, in fact, the training is achieving the

---

[1] Special thanks to the Michigan DOC for sharing their curriculum with us.

[2] Office of Legislative Research, 1994). Outcomes Based Education Research Report. Retrieved August 14, 2023, from https://cga.ct.gov/PS94/rpt%5Colr%5Chtm/94-R-0290.htm.

[3] Center for Disease Control (CDC). 2023. *Training Effectiveness Predictors*. Retrieved August 14, 2023, from https://www.cdc.gov/training/development/pdfs/evaluate/predictors-508.pdf.

intended goals, outcomes, and objectives. If designed and implemented properly, OBT combined with OBT evaluation can produce higher returns on investment, increase morale and staff satisfaction, and enhance overall organizational performance.

To effectively implement OBT and OBT evaluation, organizations and trainers must:

1) identify the need and intended outcomes;
2) design a training according to the identified need and intended outcomes;
3) develop and assess relevant metrics; and
4) collect and analyze data.

Designing Outcomes-based Training Evaluations

Intentionally designed training is critical. If training is designed without consideration of goals, objectives, and outcomes, there is no way to determine if the training is effective. To design an effective OBT, it is important to identify the need and intended outcomes. Ask yourself:

- Who is involved? Who will attend?
- What is the problem?
- What needs to be accomplished?
- What constraints need to be considered?
- Where in the process is the gap?
- Why is it important to address this?
- What constraints need to be considered?

When developing an OBT, keep in mind that "good" outcomes are relevant, reliable, and valid (Behn, 2003)[4]. They are practical - "good" outcomes are doable considering available resources, staffing, and time constraints. On the other hand, impractical outcomes can unnecessarily and ineffectively drain staff and systems. Developing

> **EXAMPLE:** Michigan DOC Asbestos Awareness for Staff with Maintenance, Housekeeping, or Janitorial Duties training incorporates information regarding asbestos and its various uses and forms, as well as information on the health effects associated with asbestos exposure. To effectively design this training, considerations include:
>
> - *Who is involved? Who will attend?*
>   - Staff with maintenance, housekeeping, or janitorial duties
> - *What needs to be accomplished?*
>   - Enhance awareness and education regarding asbestos
> - *What constraints need to be considered?*
>   - *Licensing and regulations*
> - *Why is it important to address this?*
>   - *Ensure health and safety of staff*

---

[4] Behn, R.D. (2003) Why Measure Performance? Different Purposes Request Different Measures. *Public Administration Review.* 63(5) 586-606

"good" outcome metrics during the design phase promotes realistic goal-setting and measurable programs.

Data Collection and Analysis of Outcomes-based Training
Once the intended outcomes are identified, build on the questions noted above by considering the following:

- Does everyone have the same tools?
- Are certain departments making different kinds of mistakes?
- Is the training for new staff or all staff?
- How can you incorporate practice into the learning session?
- Is the information digestible in a single session, or should it be a series?
- What is the most appropriate format - virtual or in-person?
- *Quick Tip: Always pilot it first!*

Another helpful step is to make an outcomes wish list. Talk to other units or agencies about what metrics they track. Talk to other jurisdictions and partners. Use online resources to help determine appropriate metrics for tracking and evaluation. Key questions include: What must be accomplished ("musts")? What would be helpful to accomplish ("maybes")? What is unlikely to accomplish ("limitations")?

Once these questions are addressed, the trainer can define and evaluate the intended outcome of the training. Using surveys, qualitative data (i.e., verbal feedback via interviews, focus groups, observations), quantitative (administrative data, complaints, retention, promotions, assaults, reports) data, and pre-and post-test responses, practitioners can capture reactions, mastery of learning objectives, attitudes and perceptions, and much more. To determine if the training was designed for an intended purpose, consider the following:

- What was the training designed to accomplish?
- Was training to increase knowledge?
- Was training to enhance or teach skills?
- Was training to ensure compliance?
- Was training due to recent changes in legislation, policy, or practice?

Keys to Successful Outcomes-based Training
To ensure effective development, implementation, and evaluation, training must be designed for a specific purpose, have associated SMART goals, and undergo continual evaluation. Specifically, effective training should consider the following.[5]

- *The audience and their backgrounds* - Training should be culturally appropriate, designed for the user experience, and relevant to the participants.

---

[5] https://www.cdc.gov/training-development/php/qts/index.html

- *Perceived utility for the audience engaging materials with clear objectives* - Training should align with relevant learning objectives (e.g., incorporate SMART goals) and be based on identified needs and desired outcomes.
- *Realistic practice and realistic environment* - Training should be accurate and relevant to the participants and program and should incorporate realistic and relevant case scenarios.
- *Support for continued knowledge transfer* - Training should incorporate post-training support such as tip sheets and webcasts to reinforce training material and encourage application.
- *Opportunity to use new skills* - Training should incorporate skill demonstration and testing to ensure participants apply what they have learned.
- *Routine feedback* - Training should incorporate opportunities for participant feedback in order to inform improvement and aid in design of future trainings.

SMART Goals

All outcome metrics should be clearly defined and SMART.
- **Specific** - Goals should be well-defined and consider who is involved, what is being accomplished if the program and training is successful, and why the program and training is needed.
- **Measurable** - Goals should be quantifiable metrics designed to show when a goal is accomplished, providing practitioners with access to the data necessary for tracking progress and measuring outcomes.
- **Achievable** - Goals should be attainable and realistic considering any constraints, requirements, resources, and standard performance expectations.
- **Relevant** - Goals should be worthwhile and consistent with established plans and policies.

EXAMPLE: Using the aforementioned example (Michigan DOC - Asbestos Awareness for Staff with Maintenance, Housekeeping, or Janitorial Duties)
- *What was the training designed to accomplish?*
  - Enhance awareness and education regarding asbestos
- *Was training to increase knowledge?*
  - Yes, to increase knowledge about asbestos, understand where exposure occurs, understand the associated health effects of exposure and present methods for mitigating risk
- *Was training to enhance or teach skills?*
  - One component includes risk mitigation guidance
- *Was training to ensure compliance?*
  - Not necessarily, but it is a component since a reminder about

- **Time-bound** - Goals should be timely and include appropriate timelines and a sense of urgency as defined by management.

EXAMPLE: When considering Michigan's Asbestos Awareness for Staff with Maintenance, Housekeeping, or Janitorial Duties, SMART goals may include:
- *Within the next 12 months, reduce asbestos exposure by 25%.*
- *Within the next 60 days, increase the use of personal protective equipment by 30%.*

Note: In order to meet these goals, Michigan DOC will ensure that staff have appropriately sized products assigned to them and post reminders of the asbestos safety information covered in the training (particularly in areas where maintenance, housekeeping, and janitorial staff are located).

Developing SMART goals leads to the development of effective programs and training, in part because outcomes drive training. When training is designed to align with anticipated knowledge and outcomes necessary to do the job and evaluations are actionable, everyone wins!

Actionable Evaluations

Outcomes-based training (OBT) relies on tracking outcome measures, as indicated in its title. As such, training evaluations should lead to actionable data and information. For OBT to be most effective, trainers should monitor if the skills being taught are useful to participants, incorporated into work practices, and, where appropriate, are catalysts for change.

Specifically, training evaluation results should:
- assess if a new knowledge or skill is being used in a tangible way;
- be shared with colleagues, staff, and management;
- be used to improve future training;
- incorporate feedback and be used to engage staff; and
- be used, as necessary, to change policies, practices, and protocols.