



A New Model for Growing Impact

Measure4Change and Nonprofit Performance Management

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The United States is unique among other high-income countries in its reliance on the “third sector”—nongovernmental organizations—to deliver the mix of services and supports its citizens need. From the beginning, the United States has been a society that has emphasized themes of limited government, reserving a large role for independent organizations. But with this important role, comes responsibility. Nonprofits deliver essential services in every city and community in the United States, from housing those who lack shelter to feeding those who lack food to training those who lack work or education.

Essential to improving the services nonprofits provide is *performance management*—a series of monitoring and learning activities that use information about an organization’s environment, activities, and clients to shape programming. How well, then, do nonprofits understand the work they do and the effects they have on the clients they serve? And how well are they supported in this important task by philanthropic and government funders? Motivated by our personal experience running and supporting nonprofits and finding the answer to these questions is frequently not very well, the World Bank Group and Urban Institute set out to create a catalytic capacity-building resource for nonprofits, an initiative we named Measure4Change.

We created Measure4Change to help DC-area nonprofits navigate this terrain and, we hope, provide a national example that others can draw from. This brief describes the Measure4Change model—a mixture of deep-dive coaching, grant support, peer learning, and practice-oriented briefs. This brief also summarizes lessons learned from the first 2014–15 cohort and looks ahead at what is to come for Measure4Change.

BOX 1

Measure4Change

Measure4Change is a program of the World Bank Group and the Urban Institute to build performance measurement capacity among local nonprofits in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. Nonprofits recognize the importance of measuring program effectiveness, but their abilities vary, and resources for improvement are scarce. Measure4Change aims to fill this long-standing gap between what nonprofits in the DC metropolitan area want and what they are able to do. The effort intends to deliver performance measurement training in a way that is practical and accessible for nonprofits and over an extended period of time to help it take hold. The ultimate goal of this effort is to help the DC region's nonprofits better understand how they are helping their constituencies and how they can do better. Measure4Change, sponsored by the World Bank Group, has three components: grant support and one-on-one technical assistance for grantees, a regional community of practice, and knowledge briefs.

The Landscape: What's the Need and What's Been Tried Before?

Nonprofit organizations are under increasing pressure not just to deliver services but to document their performance and results (Brock, Buteau, and Herring 2012). Funders have accelerated this trend. Growing accountability pressures may motivate nonprofits to try their hand at measurement, but funder-driven reporting requirements can too easily encourage nonprofits to measure what is easy, rather than what is important, and to use information narrowly for grant reporting, not broadly for program management and decisionmaking.

Communication Problems between Funders and Grantees

It is a typical industry practice for funders to ask grant seekers what may seem like a straightforward question, e.g., What is your impact? Often, this "impact" is what funders are seeking to achieve through their philanthropic activities, and it seems reasonable for them to determine "what they are buying" before making an investment in a nonprofit. Although the question seems simple and fair, answering it can be complicated, difficult and expensive. This challenge is especially acute for small nonprofits and their local funders because both lack robust infrastructures.

Funders with a limited understanding of the field of performance measurement can be unaware of the burden they place on nonprofits with requests for data. Two types of miscommunication complicate these issues. First, the different definitions attached to common terms, such as "impact" and "evaluation," vary widely, which can create unclear expectations. Second, there often is a lack of open dialogue between funders and grantees about what data are wanted, what data will be used for, what effort is needed to produce it, whether the indicators are appropriate for that particular nonprofit, and whether the exercise is worth the cost.

As with many of the terms used in measurement, there may be technical definitions, but not everyone applies or interprets these definitions in the same way, which creates confusion. The technical definition of an “impact” measure is an outcome measure that has been demonstrated in a way that allows for causal claims, that is, that allows the program to credibly claim that it was their service that led to the outcome achieved.¹ But establishing a program’s impact entails a robust test of treated and control or comparison individuals, studied over time. So, when local funders require their grantees to report on their “impacts”—as is often the case—they may be unintentionally asking for something that most nonprofits are in no position to provide.

An open dialogue around measurement would help to define impact, but the requisite trust does not always exist. Because of the power dynamic between grantors and grantees, nonprofits are often wary of saying that they do not understand something or that it is hard to provide out of fear that they would place future funding at risk. This is why data requests feel more like unfunded mandates for nonprofits than reasonable requests of information already collected. Candid conversations around measurement can also be inhibited when funders and nonprofits do not feel comfortable with their knowledge of the topic.

Are Funders’ Requests for Data Working?

Funders’ requests for measurement have the potential to be a real incentive for nonprofits, prompting staff to better understand their programs through organizational introspection and healthy internal discussions. Unfortunately, these well-meaning requests do not always produce good results.

Measurement can be surprisingly difficult, and, without support, nonprofits can be reduced to producing data that are only used for grant applications and reports. Numbers collected only for funders and not to drive internal decisionmaking are, at best, inefficient and, at worst, harmful. Nonprofits, especially smaller ones, typically lack staff capacity, and so this exercise can lead to a poor use of organizational resources.

Ideally, nonprofits are encouraged to use measurement to better understand themselves, their work, and how to improve it, so that it serves principally as a management tool that can also be used to share information with stakeholders. It is especially difficult for long-standing nonprofits with established methods to go through the cultural and organizational change necessary to integrate a new performance management process and paradigm.² Helping organizations use measurement to fuel institutional introspection and change rather than simply requiring data on a grant report, though difficult, would be a far more beneficial goal for funders.

Limited Past Efforts to Help Nonprofits with Measurement

Although there are some forms of assistance and information on measurement available to nonprofits, they have not been sufficient to move many small nonprofits to a true culture of measurement. For example, one-day trainings with 30 people in a room can be helpful in exposing leaders to logic models and how they work. But such trainings do not offer enough individualized support to address each

organizations' unique programs, nor do they last long enough to help organizations work through the culture shift that will take months even with dedicated attention.

Much of the available measurement literature was written with an academic lens focusing on sophisticated approaches, such as randomized control trials. Such publications are frequently not accessible or practical for a nonprofit leader whose organization is just beginning to understand and incorporate measurement and data.

Other supports for nonprofits were successful in helping nonprofits with well-established measurement cultures get better at it, but the sector has struggled to systematically help nonprofits who want to get started. Some more recent and notable exceptions include the efforts of DC-based Venture Philanthropy Partners to support portfolios of DC-nonprofits with deep investments in organizational infrastructure and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's PropelNext initiative. The World Bank Group has led philanthropic efforts in its home city of Washington, DC, through the East of the River Initiative (Winkler, Theodos, and Gross 2009) and later Measure4Change. In addition, Mario Morino's (2011) *Leap of Reason* monograph was a rallying cry linking the importance of organizational performance to the viability of the social sector. The Leap of Reason Ambassador Community, a group of more than 100 nonprofit leaders, in 2015, published *The Performance Imperative: A Framework for Social-Sector Excellence* to help guide nonprofits on their journey of continuous learning and improvement.

The Measure4Change Model

In early 2013, the World Bank Group and the Urban Institute brought together perspectives and experiences that would be instrumental in the design of Measure4Change. As a funder, the World Bank Group institutionally valued measurement of social programs and had experienced former nonprofit employees on staff. It believed that measurement demands were an area of great misunderstanding and frustration for nonprofits and that, for the sector to move forward, it was critical to hear and address the unmet needs of nonprofits in this area and to facilitate help between nonprofits. The Urban Institute had been working in the measurement and evaluation space for many years, bringing significant experience from a variety of angles. This experience ranged from direct training of nonprofits around measurement topics to conducting formal evaluations to knowing how data are consumed by a variety of consumers.

As part of designing Measure4Change, we conducted a listening tour in 2013, where we met with stakeholders in philanthropy, measurement, and practice. We next conducted an environmental scan of nonprofit capabilities in the DC region, obtaining insights into the capacities and needs of a selected group of nonprofits in the DC area. As our plans for Measure4Change coalesced, we held vetting discussions with local nonprofits, all of which culminated in a design for the Measure4Change pilot program, which launched in 2014.

In the design of the program, we were motivated to move beyond the traditional framework of using outcome measurement to assess agency accountability, which our experience has shown, rarely yields positive changes in the delivery of services. Indeed, the term “outcome management” reflects the recognition that outcome information has the greatest impact when it is used routinely throughout the local agency hierarchy as a strategic management tool to help program managers and staff continuously analyze their work and improve services.

The goal was to break the inertia holding back many local nonprofits that have struggled to integrate measurement into their management culture. Many different forums lay out the well-known components of measurement, and so this effort would alter how these tools were taught. The intensity and duration would be greater, the messages would be targeted toward the local-nonprofit audience, and we would cultivate and mobilize their peers to further build sustainability. Additionally, and importantly, small grants would be made available to support the measurement and evaluation efforts

Though the broader goal of the Measure4Change is to grow the capacity of local nonprofits to implement every aspect of their performance measurement agenda, we recognize that nonprofits are at different points in their development, and their short- and medium-term objectives can vary widely. Nevertheless, it is our expectation that, through Measure4Change, nonprofits will make progress in understanding their program design and intended effects (e.g., through developing theories of change and logic models), data types and collection methods, data systems and processes, data analysis and reporting, data usage to drive program decisions, and data communication to external audiences. Developing and executing on a performance management agenda is a multiyear commitment, and for many nonprofits requires considerable effort to undo or change organizational norms and practice. Measure4Change is intentionally focused on helping nonprofits move away from a compliance mindset to a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

Through Measure4Change, we are attempting to engage nonprofits at various points in the continuum of development of performance management skills, with certain components a higher priority for certain groups than others. Through exploratory conversations, we found a wide range of nonprofits, some of which were already advanced in their performance measurement capabilities. These organizations were and continued to be local champions, and we have tapped into their experience and expertise in developing the program. As developed, Measure4Change has three strategies, described below.

Community of Practice

From experience working in and with nonprofits, we know that collaboration and best-practice sharing is a well-established and effective tool for the sector. In addition, we also heard specifically from evaluation specialists (those within nonprofit organizations charged with collecting, monitoring, and analyzing data) that they highly value the opportunity to engage with their agency peers through regular meetings (Winkler, Theodos, and Gross 2009). But we are aware that to be of value, network events require considerable coordination and advance preparation to provide content and structure to the meetings and to generate attendance.

Over the first two years of Measure4Change, we organized a series of 12 peer-learning convenings with attendance from 34 different nonprofits. The community had representation from nonprofits based in Washington, DC, Montgomery and Prince George's counties in Maryland, and from multiple jurisdictions in northern Virginia, reflecting intentionality behind building a learning community reflective of the entire DC region.

The community of practice is open to nonprofit staff from a wide range of service providing organizations, with program areas, including early childhood education, youth development, housing and homelessness, economic development, hunger and nutrition, workforce development, and safety net.

We held trainings and shared learning around several topics: getting started Q&A with seasoned evaluation specialists; logic models 101; establishing a culture of performance evaluation; strategies for data reporting; effective data visualization; survey design and implementation; communicating data with clients and the broader community; selecting and effectively using performance management software; reflecting on progress during Measure4Change; using small area data sources; and moving from performance measurement to evaluation.

In addition to these formal sessions, we encouraged more informal peer learning and networking among participating nonprofits, such as staff development exchanges, document/resource sharing, and social activities and meet-ups through a listserv. Members of the community of practice increasingly began to make use of the listserv to share resources, job postings, and reach out to their peers for help.

Deep-Dive Coaching and Grant Support

A second component of Measure4Change is deep-dive coaching and grant support to a select set of nonprofits that were at the point of making catalytic steps forward in their performance measurement work. With the first cohort running from 2014–15, our first task was selecting nonprofits to engage with. Because so many portions of this initiative were about better tailoring the instruction to the needs of the nonprofits, the target audience was foundational. We specifically designed the coaching support for organizations already be engaged in at least some degree in measurement; the nonprofits needed to have enough sophistication and capacity to absorb the training and support or it would be quickly lost. It was not for sophisticated organizations with large infrastructures doing evaluation work, but also not for the very small nonprofits that had little ability to dedicate staff time to measurement and evaluation issues.

Based on our scan of area nonprofits in developing the program, we invited nine organizations to apply for the first pilot year of the Measure4Change program. Though many of the applications had potential, we choose four organizations that best met the criteria set forward in the solicitation letter and would make up the best possible cohort for the success of the pilot program's goals as articulated by the World Bank Group. The selected groups were Cornerstones, DC SCORES, Horton's Kids, and Martha's Table.

BOX 2

2014–15 Measure4Change Grantees

Cornerstones, Inc. provides support and advocacy for those in need of food, shelter, affordable housing, quality child care, and other human services.

DC SCORES provides after-school programming to build self-expression, physical fitness, and a sense of community for students through an innovative combination of soccer, poetry, and service learning.

Horton's Kids provides academic support, enrichment, and basic-needs services to children and has a community resource center in Anacostia.

Martha's Table provides year-round early education, out-of-school-time programs for children, and comprehensive child and family success services, such as healthy meals and groceries, clothing, and referrals.

Urban Institute teams worked directly with each nonprofit. After facilitating half-day kick-off meetings with each of the four selected nonprofits, the coaches working with the nonprofits to create a plan for their goals and objectives for the program and a proposed timeline for the work. In implementing the plans, Urban coaches met with the organizations at least monthly and were in communication with organization regularly via telephone or e-mail.

In recognition of the very real costs of conducting effective performance management, Measure4Change provided \$70,000 over two years in direct funding to each nonprofit. While allowing discretion to the nonprofits in how to best use the funds, we intended that the funds would be used to support staff time, technology (including data systems), or other measurement capacities. Each grantee made a commitment to match these funds with other resources to supplement a portion of the salary of an evaluation specialist and/or to offset costs such as performance management software, and staff training.

Practice Briefs

Recognizing that people learn in multiple ways and that written products can have a longer “shelf life” and reach a broader audience than can attend any given session, we incorporated the development of several practice briefs into the Measure4Change model. We felt that nonprofit leaders trying to develop their capacity in this space would benefit from more literature specifically designed for them as an audience. Rather than ancillary, stand-alone products, we crafted the practice briefs to dovetail with select convenings, and to be resources for the deep-dive coaching work. In this way, the briefs supported the community of practice seminars, outlined core capacity elements of the continuum of performance management practice, and addressed topics relevant for growing nonprofits’ performance measurement work. The Urban team published four knowledge briefs during the first two-year program period:

- “Starting Small and Thinking Long-Term: Q&A with Performance Measurement and Evaluation Professionals” (Gillespie 2014);
- “Expanding Audience and Impact: Nonprofits Communicating Data to External Audiences” (Baum 2015);
- “Navigating Performance Management Software Options” (Zhang and Winkler 2015); and
- “Performance Measurement to Evaluation” (Tatian 2016).

Lessons from the First Two Years

This section reflects on the key lessons from the first two years of implementing Measure4Change. These lessons are relevant for other efforts attempting to build nonprofit capacity for outcome measurement at the community level and have informed the design of Measure4Change as we move beyond the pilot phase.

To capture feedback, we conducted interviews with executive directors, data and evaluation specialists, line staff, program directors, and directors of development from the first cohort of grantees. We asked participants to reflect on any growth in performance measurement and evaluation at their organization, the degree to which participation in Measure4Change benefited the organization, how Measure4Change could be adjusted to better meet their needs, and broader lessons for other nonprofits attempting to build their data capacity. Our reflections on the role and benefit of participation in Measure4Change were also informed by surveys completed by community of practice members after each convening.

Measure4Change has created a unique space for Washington, DC, area nonprofits to be more intentional about their data and evaluation work through learning and networking opportunities. This theme emerged repeatedly from all levels of staff who stressed that Measure4Change provided leeway (i.e., the freedom or permission) for organizations to focus on performance measurement and evaluation activities; it helped organizations to make this work more “intentional” in the organization.

“Measure4Change really gave us the time and directional focus. As opposed to doing evaluation reactively, which many nonprofits do, Measure4Change prompted us to be intentional and do evaluation proactively.” -Executive director

Additionally, participation in Measure4Change and the technical resources presented through the program afforded data specialists more legitimacy to revise or suggest new practices in their

organization to support continuous quality improvement. For example, one data specialist stated, “It’s one thing if we make a recommendation, but it’s another thing if we make a recommendation coming from a meeting with our colleagues at the World Bank and the Urban Institute. For a lot of the staff it makes them feel more comfortable and more at ease when our work is vetted by external agencies.”

For grantees, this legitimacy was used not just internally, but also to clearly communicate to funders and partners that the organization was committed to high-performance and was actively investing in its capacity to track outcomes. Most grantees commented that their grant proposals make much better use of data; one grantee now routinely includes a narrative section in proposals on its performance management efforts.

In several cases, grantees successfully leveraged their participation in Measure4Change for additional funding or partnerships, including pro-bono support from a local technology firm to build a custom data reporting dashboard board approval to access reserve funding for data systems, and a grant from a local funder to hire a case manager to support the increased capacity of the referral network. Additionally, during the grant-period data, specialists from two organizations were accepted as performance measurement fellows and one organization received the Raise DC Data Spotlight Award.

Another theme that emerged from interviews with grantees is that building capacity for performance measurement and evaluation is not a linear process. All of the organizations noted that it is a “two steps forward, one step back” process. As organizations gained additional knowledge and tools, they often found the need to revisit or adapt previously developed ones. Nearly all commented that two years was too short a period to expect a full build-out of a robust organizational performance management capacity, much less achieve changes in outcomes. Staff turnover and challenges in implementing new software and data systems were key limitations.

“I think it has really helped us to check back in and take another look at what we wanted to measure. I thought we knew more. Nonprofits always want to present this great picture, claiming impact. But now we are having some really frank conversations about whether A plus B really equals C.” – Program director

Despite not getting ‘all the way there,’ staff reported they made notable strides in organizational culture and disposition with respect to measurement and data. Important examples of accomplishments included incorporating expectations about data use in employee values statement; structuring internal staff/team meetings around data, making data use part of the evaluation criteria in performance appraisal process, “upgrading” evaluation specialist’s title to “director of measurement and evaluation”

to represent a more senior level position in the organization, and developing and using dashboards in monthly staff meetings.

Though all of the organizations recognize they have room for additional growth in this space, many reflected that the participation in Measure4Change was not only relevant for the data and evaluation specialists who were engaged in the technical assistance, but permeated through the entire organization. According to one program director, “I’m almost embarrassed to say this, but I’ve lived in the program world for 10 years, and only now is data central to that. You can’t really make changes with only anecdotal information. Data to make program changes is really critical.”

Of course, the internal culture of an organization did not change solely based on participation in Measure4Change; rather, it involved focused efforts, both top-down and bottom-up, to integrate data and continuous quality improvement into regular practice. For the grantees, this process was likely accelerated by changes in executive leadership which coincidentally happened shortly before or in the first few months of the grant for three of four organizations. Leaders in these organizations stressed that participation in Measure4Change dovetailed nicely with their approach. However, culture change and a shift to data-driven strategies at an organization is not always a smooth process. One executive director reflected, “There is a negative effect on culture when you say what was good enough before is not good enough in an intentional model. Change of expectations caused tension in culture.” An outstanding task that two organizations mentioned is to bring the board of directors along with the culture change, and one executive director stressed that the board also needs capacity building in this space.

Though internal organizational processes and the external support of Measure4Change were essential, several individuals felt that the broader funding community needs to emphasize performance management for progress to be sustained. Several organizations are developing plans for external evaluations to validate their models, making them candidates for large national grants, but it is not clear that the intermediate steps and focus on outcomes instead of outputs is fully valued by their funders, nor do funders necessarily know what is involved in building this capacity.

As detailed in the previous section, the Measure4Change model is designed to provide financial resources, targeted technical assistance, practical information, tools and peer-learning opportunities with the ultimate goal of helping DC-region nonprofits better understand how they are helping their constituencies and to recommend changes to do even better. Grantees reported that they found value in each of the components of the program. Interview respondents were asked to rank each component based on its value to both individual participants and the overall organization. Responses varied widely. Speaking from their personal and professional growth, most responded that either the technical assistance or community of practice was most valuable. For the organization, respondents recognized the tremendous value of flexible grant funding for performance measurement, ranking that highly alongside technical assistance and community of practice. And several mentioned the value of specific knowledge briefs as tied to the broader engagement.

Lessons from Community of Practice

The community of practice has now grown to provide a group of approximately 40 local nonprofits access to learning opportunities and tools they need to build their performance measurement programs and creates networking opportunities for data and evaluation specialists. Organizations stressed that they benefited from the practice-oriented tools and community building, but that they would appreciate more opportunities to engage with smaller groups of similarly situated organizations.

Several individuals reflected that the data and evaluation specialist position within nonprofits (at best a small team) can often be an isolating position, and the community of practice afforded those in this position a unique space to bounce ideas off other people. This helps nonprofits access new ideas or tools, but it also can be a litmus test to learn where other groups are excelling or facing challenges with regard to performance measurement.

“The grant was a great opportunity to work together with other organizations instead of doing it all in our own silo through a sort of trial and error.” – Data and evaluation specialist

All groups noted that the content of the convenings provided them with relevant, actionable tools to bring back to their work. For example, after one convening, an agency began implementing data walks just one week after they learned. The interest in topics, however, varied organization to organization and convening to convening. For example, a convening on data systems was highly regarded by organizations that were looking to make an investment in a new data system, but was less relevant for organizations that have already purchased a system. Participants were split on their preference for more formal learning settings (e.g., expert panels) or opportunities for more peer work, although there seemed to be a preference for a balance of the two within each session.

Though there were perceived benefits to participating in a broad network of organizations from different service areas, several participants mentioned the desire to segment the groups in some way to give people the opportunity to collaborate with other organizations with similar programs or data capacity for a “deeper dive.” According to one executive director, this is an opportunity to move the ball collectively as many organizations “are all often trying to answer similar questions, yet we are all doing it individually.”

Lessons from Deep-Dive Support

A core component of Measure4Change is grant support and technical assistance from members of the Urban Institute team, who meet regularly with the data and evaluation specialists and others at the organizations to provide feedback and introduce available tools and resources. All of the grantees used

Measure4Change to create new internal tools and revise key documents, such as data dashboards/visual data dashboards, logic models, and theories of change; standard operating procedures for partner agencies; quality standards; new survey instruments; or data walks. The technical assistance team was able to provide guidance on processes for creating such tools, as well as feedback on draft versions the organizations produced. The expectation was that the technical assistance liaisons and nonprofits would meet monthly, though this fell short at some organizations. Some people interviewed suggested more regular one-on-one sessions. All organizations found great value in the individualized attention on their community work and recognized that they gained new perspectives or changed priorities based on conversations with the technical assistance providers.

Though grantees found great value in the technical assistance, they expressed some frustration or confusion about the role of the technical assistance providers; there was uncertainty about what to expect or ask for and in some instances “embarrassment” that the grantee could not figure out some things on its own. Two grantees stated this more broadly in terms of unclear expectations (at the outset) about what Measure4Change was or could do for their organization. Several grantees expressed a desire for more hands-on consulting work, which would have involved the technical assistance providers producing materials or templates for the organization. Additionally, some organizations distinctly wanted to set the technical assistance agenda, but others wished Urban could have been more directive in “pushing” organizations and helping to keep them on track.

All organizations valued the grant funding received to support their data and evaluation capacity building. For several data specialists and program directors, the funding helped make improving measurement and reporting a priority, and gave them “cover” to take time away from other responsibilities. According to one data specialist, “We tried to be very mindful that we have this unusual grant opportunity that gives us staff time and resources to think things through. That is very helpful for us. We are a nonprofit, and so we constantly struggling with keeping overhead low. So it is very important that we have had a little time to think about this.” Though the data specialists were engaged most intensively in the technical assistance process, performance measurement cannot happen effectively in just that silo. Recognizing that, one of the grantees requested an all-staff training to increase buy-in on data collection and use.

Lessons from Briefs

The knowledge briefs are designed to be resources about the early stages of performance measurement programs and provide advice on how to overcome the practical challenges organizations face as they build their program. Data specialists highlighted that they used the briefs to communicate what they were learning with others in their organization. For example, one person recounted that sharing the data systems brief with the board and executive director helped tame expectations about the speed at which they could expect to roll out a new system (Zhang and Winkler 2015). One person felt that the utility of the briefs depend on each individuals’ prior exposure to performance measurement, highlighting that they are more valuable for those with less experience or are more relevant at the point the organization is encountering the issue identified.

Next Steps for Measure4Change

Based on the implementation experience of the pilot cohort, we elected to make several enhancements to the core program model.

1. **Engage with staff and board of directors.** In many nonprofits, the performance management and evaluation function is perceived as a discrete or back-office activity, with little relevance to the day-to-day work of staff engaged in activities in service to clients. Not only can this be isolating to the evaluation staff, it can undermine the value and ultimate use of the data collected in support of learning and program improvement. If staff and board members have a better understanding about the purpose and value of data and their role in data collection, they are more likely to take greater care and interest in these activities and use the information to inform their day-to-day work. Thus, we will plan to offer an introductory session on performance management to key staff for interested nonprofits, along with a second session (middle of the grant period) with the board of directors to facilitate open and honest dialogue and improve understanding and use of performance data for learning and continuous improvement.
2. **Form an advisory group.** To grow and strengthen the community of practice, we would like to cultivate leadership of nonprofit participants from the pilot program, by inviting them to serve on an advisory council. This council would help to steer the content and format of convenings, ensure the nonprofit perspective remains at the center of the initiative, and help expand the reach and impact of Measure4Change across the DC nonprofit sector.
3. **Develop a curriculum.** We plan to develop a more formalized set of materials for core competencies or topic areas we expect nonprofits need to master to effectively assess and manage performance. We will start by designing around the topics covered during the community of practice convenings, to include short topical reading materials, core content of the presentation materials from each convening, and additional resources nonprofits can consult for more in-depth information. We will add other topics based on the common needs we observe as part of our monthly engagement with each of the grantees. Some of the curriculum topics include logic models, data types and sources, survey design, data systems, data analysis, data visualization, human subjects and data security, and data sharing with external audiences.
4. **Evaluate and learn.** During the first cohort we captured feedback from each of the grantees via a series of interviews with executive directors, evaluation staff, line staff, and development staff to capture lessons. In addition, we administered a short survey at the end of each community of practice convening. We will work with participating nonprofits to understand more long-term organizational outcomes, such as increased program and participant results, funding, and policy impact, and to track nonprofit progress on these outcomes. This information will likely be gathered through annual interviews with staff at various organizational levels. This proved to be a useful approach to assessment at the end of the 2014–15 pilot program for sharing lessons learned and guiding program design.

Other program components will remain largely unchanged. We will continue to engage monthly with each grantee, provide grant support, and share information via community of practice convenings and the listserv. In addition to this brief, we will complete one on creating and cultivating a culture of continuous learning—a theme that resonated throughout the pilot effort and reflected as a key area of learning in most of the 2016 applications.

In December 2015, we invited 10 nonprofits to compete for the second cohort of Measure4Change. We hosted a webinar to explain the program model, application procedures, and to more clearly articulate expectations. Eight nonprofits applied and all applications were strong. The grantees selected for the 2016–17 cohort are Academy of Hope, CentroNía, DC Central Kitchen, and Miriam's Kitchen.

BOX 3

2016–17 Measure4Change Grantees

Academy of Hope provides adult education, case management, and career services to low-income adults in Washington, DC.

CentroNía provides affordable bilingual early childhood education and supportive services to low-income children and families in the Washington, DC, region

DC Central Kitchen provides meals to children and families, offers culinary job training services in Washington, DC, and coordinates a national network of food-security programs through high schools and colleges.

Miriam's Kitchen provides meals, case management, advocacy, and permanent supportive housing services to help end chronic homelessness in Washington, DC.

Closing Thoughts

The Measure4Change pilot effort shows great promise in helping to grow the capacity of local nonprofits to learn and grow their knowledge in and practice of performance management and evaluation. Though funders have been a principal agent in motivating many nonprofits to get started in performance measurement and management, many nonprofits now identify board leadership and management staff as key audiences for their measurement and evaluation efforts (Morariu, Athanasiades, and Emery 2012). Nonprofits want to do this work well and often are investing resources, but they struggle with technical complexities of measurement and evaluation and with the difficulties of the organizational changes and cultural shifts that they demand. Furthermore, many nonprofits are hiring evaluation specialists, but these people can feel isolated within their organizations and often lack support networks and opportunities to develop their skills.

The unique blending of financial, technical, and community support—definitive of the Measure4Change model—is designed to address these explicit needs of nonprofits in the greater DC region. As we look to the next phase of our work, we are eager to explore opportunities with other stakeholders in the region to further scale Measure4Change. We also hope to see it expand to other communities, as there is no reason to think the needs of the regional nonprofits in this regard are any different from other communities across the county.

Notes

¹ For the Measure4Change definition of evaluation and performance measurement terms see Tatian 2016.

² See discussion of the challenges of creating an organizational culture that values learning (Winkler 2016).

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