

SERVICE PROGRAMS

Missouri Valley College

Service Program Mission, Goals, and Assessment

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Service programs are those which provide student/faculty/staff support services for Valley. Examples include the Registrar, the Learning Center, Financial Aid, and the Counseling Center. The term “program” is used broadly and is not intended to denote a specific structure or function.

What is a service program mission statement?

A mission for a service program describes the overall purpose of the program. It may include a brief history and philosophy of the program, the type of students/faculty/staff/public to be served, the contributions to the community, or other aspects of the program deemed important and/or unique.

How does a mission statement for a service program relate to the Missouri Valley College mission?

A mission statement for a service program should be consistent with and grounded in the Missouri Valley College mission and goals. This ensures that the program supports what the institution values and that the program will foster institutional support.

What is the purpose of a service program mission statement?

A service program mission statement guides planning and operation. A mission statement is also the starting point for an assessment program. Once a meaningful mission statement is developed by a consensus of staff, goals and desirable outcomes can be determined. In turn, once the goals are defined, methods can then be used to assess whether the program is successful in achieving its outcomes. Information from this assessment can be used for modification and improvement of operations and service. A mission statement, in short, is essential in determining key indicators of success in providing services and using these indicators to further improve operations.

Is there a standard format for a mission statement for service program?

Mission statements can take on a wide range of formats and modes of expression to reflect the preferences of the staff and what they intend to convey. The primary goal is to provide the program with a clear statement of purpose. Therefore, a long and detailed mission is not recommended.

What is the process for developing or reviewing a service program mission statement?

One way to start is to look at mission statements in similar programs at other institutions across the country. Bring examples to a meeting of staff for discussion. Identify areas of agreement. If a statement is not formally developed at this meeting, a smaller group can create a working draft to circulate by e-mail with the larger group. Strive to come to a consensus in a week or two.

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What are service program goals?

Service program goals are general purposes of the program and its services. Select goals that most directly reflect what is most important for the program to achieve. Effective goals are broadly stated, meaningful, achievable, and assessable. Service program goals should be consistent with the Missouri Valley College mission. Aim for three to eight service goals. Too many goals become unmanageable and may make the assessment process difficult. If you have more than eight goals, look for ways to group some goals together into one broader goal.

What are service outcomes?

Focus service outcomes on results that are desired. Think of what outcomes would indicate that the program is successful in providing services to students/faculty/staff/public.

Use action words in stating service outcomes, and avoid verbs that are unclear and subject to different interpretations. Keep in mind that your service outcomes should be realistic and measurable in some way.

In general, service goals focus on intentions and what the staff members do while service outcomes focus on results and what the clientele will experience. Most program goals can be easily translated into service outcomes. (Exceptions to this are program goals that focus on staff or the structure of the program.) For example, the program goal: “Provide timely follow-up to all admission inquiries” can be converted to the service outcome: “Ninety percent of admission inquiries will be processed within two weeks.”

How does the program focus on service outcomes?

A service delivery map or matrix can be used to show how functions/operations address different service outcomes. A service delivery map is a table with service outcomes on one axis and functions/operations on the other. The cells of the table indicate the functions/operations that address respective service outcomes.

For example, in the table below, Outcome 1 is addressed by Function 1 and again by Functions 3 and 4. Clientele will likely experience satisfying service outcomes if there are a variety of program functions that address these outcomes or needs.

Service outcomes ↓	Function 1	Function 2	Function 3	Function 4
Outcome 1	X		X	X
Outcome 2		X	X	
Outcome 3		X	X	X

To determine the functions in the table, start with a list of the jobs and/or activities in the program. Aim for no more than fifteen functions. If the number of functions gets large, look for ways to group some functions into one broader function.

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How do the staff know the goals are being met?

After staff deliberation, choose two (or more) service outcomes deemed most important to be assessed. (It is not necessary to assess *everything*.) An assessment tool (or tools) is chosen to assess success for each of these service outcomes. Information from these assessments helps provide the evidence necessary to determine if the program is successfully meeting its goals. Assessment methods should be feasible, manageable, and as simple as possible. Otherwise, the assessment process is difficult to sustain. If possible, several assessment tools are recommended rather than reliance on a single tool. Multiple measures will likely provide a more complete picture of the success of your services.

What assessment tools are best to use?

There is a wide variety of assessment tools, but they can generally be classified into two categories, direct and indirect. Direct measures of assessment are those in which actual results can be evaluated. Examples include trends in needs for service, success rate of placing students, or timeliness in providing information. Indirect measures of assessment are based on *perception* of achievement of goals rather than demonstration. Examples include student satisfaction surveys, exit interviews, or alumni surveys.

Staff should choose assessment methods that are deemed most feasible, efficient, cost effective, and appropriate for the service goals of the program. It will also be necessary to determine when assessment will take place, who is responsible, and how it will be carried out.

What is done with assessment results?

View assessment as an opportunity to improve the quality and effectiveness of services to better serve the clientele. Staff review and discuss assessment results, look for patterns, and determine if results are consistent or inconsistent. Identify areas in operations that are achieving service goals and areas that may warrant change for improvement. Once the assessment findings have been reviewed, staff discuss recommendations for change or improvement and formulate a plan of action. The plan for improving services is then implemented.

What is “closing the loop”?

The process of using assessment information for decision-making and planning for improvement is called “closing the loop.” The “loop” refers to the cyclic nature of the assessment process. Assessment is used in a repeating cycle for the purpose of continuously improving services.

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What documentation is required?

Each service program will submit an annual Assessment and Planning Report with the following components:

- I. Mission
- II. Goals
- III. Service outcomes
- IV. Service delivery map
- V. Assessment tools
- VI. Summary of findings
- VII. Level of achievement of goals
- VIII. Staff/Cientele/Program information
- IX. Analysis/Interpretation
- X. Action plan

Yearly assessment records are used to document and support decisions for changes as well as to provide evidence of program improvement.