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The Performance Indicators Monitoring System (PIMS)

Background

The 60-million-dollar Smoke-Free Ontario strategy includes a wide variety of prevention, cessation, and protection programs. These programs involve 36 public health units and 22 transfer payment agencies. Given the large and complex nature of the strategy, a system to monitor performance and increase accountability of strategy-funded programs is a necessity. The Ontario Tobacco Research Unit (OTRU) is committed to developing monitoring and accountability initiatives to support the provincial strategy. Public sector and non-profit organizations involved in tobacco prevention, cessation, and protection programs funded by the Ministry of Health Promotion (MHP) are working to increase their accountability and buttress monitoring activities.

In response to the demand for accountability and performance management information, OTRU is developing a performance reporting system. The Performance Indicators Monitoring system (PIMS) is designed for the ongoing collection, analysis and reporting of data related to Smoke-Free Ontario programs and projects. It enables monitoring of tobacco control programs in a timely and efficient manner for ongoing management and regular reporting. The system also permits continuous communication between MHP, public health units, and transfer payment agencies.

The Collaborative Development Process

Performance measures for each program are derived, as closely as possible, from recognized indicators developed by OTRU and its partners, and from internationally-used tobacco control performance indicators such as those disseminated by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The principle guiding the development of program indicators is collaboration. Relevant stakeholders have been involved in each phase of the indicator development process. OTRU is working collaboratively with program management and staff, as well as with the Ministry of Health Promotion, to identify useful performance measures. Managers and policymakers have identified four types of indicators: resources, activities, outputs, and immediate outcomes. Data collected through PIMS will provide valuable information on the reach and capacity of programs funded through the Smoke-Free Ontario strategy.

Participation and collaboration are integral to the system. The active participation of the intended users of PIMS promotes compliance with ongoing monitoring. By working in tandem with

OTRU and MHP to develop indicators, program staff increase their capacity to effectively plan, design and evaluate programs. Their participation in performance monitoring builds capacity, supports an organizational learning process, and creates opportunities for knowledge exchange. PIMS is part of a formal, reflexive process for program development, as well as an accountability mechanism for program funders.

Features of the PIMS System

The PIMS web-based system currently has approximately 200 users, including all programs and services funded under the Smoke-Free Ontario strategy. Each program has established between 10 and 50 performance indicators, which form the foundation of both the MHP-required work plan and ongoing monitoring. OTRU's evaluation team has aimed to develop a system that minimizes data entry work and error and provides data in a timely and user-friendly fashion. The system includes the following features:

- PIMS can eliminate performance measures that are no longer needed and can add new measures as demands change.
- Users can easily generate indicator-based reports at any time, for any time period.
- The system can aggregate data for semi-annual and annual reporting.
- Each user receives training on data entry, work planning and report generation from the Program Training and Consultation Centre (PTCC).
- PTCC also provides continuous technical and content support.

The Effectiveness of PIMS

PIMS will improve the management and accountability of programs funded under the Smoke-Free Ontario strategy. This monitoring system seamlessly integrates work plans, scopes of service agreements, and the monitoring and reporting elements necessary to meet Ministry of Health Promotion funding requirements.

Both formative and outcome evaluations of the PIMS system will be conducted to increase our understanding of performance monitoring systems, support further development of PIMS, and assess the effectiveness of the system.

More information about OTRU's monitoring and evaluation activities can be found at www.otru.org.