



Linked in Friendship, Connected in Service

TRANSFORMING *Communities* FULFILLING OUR *Purpose*

National Programs Toolkit | Spring 2022 Edition

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Table of Contents



National Programs

- Overview | 3
- Services to Youth | 4
- National Trends and Services | 5
- The Arts | 6
- International Trends and Services | 7
- Health and Human Services | 8
- 2018 – 2020 National Programs | 9

National Programs Defined

- A Program | 11
- Signature Programs | 12
- National Initiatives | 13
- Pilot and Supporting Programs | 14
- Umbrella Programming | 15
- Integrated Programming | 16
- Program Alignment | 17

Program Planning

- Service Delivery Model | 20
- SDM Graphical Depiction | 24
- SMART GOALS | 25
- 11 Key Points for Transformational Programming | 26
- Quarterly Program Planning Guide | 28
- Key Programmatic Dates | 29

Program Evaluation

- What is Evaluation | 31
- Evidence Based Evaluation | 33
- Program Evaluation Elements | 35
- Evaluation Worksheet | 38

Program Reports

- Purpose of Program Reports | 40
- Program Report Process | 41
- Program Report Reviewers | 42

National Programs Overview

For nearly 75 years, The Links, Incorporated's core value of service—the time, effort, and resources expended to develop and implement innovative programs designed to meet the ongoing challenges faced by our communities—has remained prominent. In 1946, that first circle of nine friends set a standard of service and today more than 15,000 members commit to promoting and engaging in educational, civic, and intercultural activities in order to enrich the lives of our members and the larger community.

Our goal is to deliver and sustain programs that transform the lives of children, families and communities that we serve. We strive to achieve this goal through our five program facets **Services to Youth, National Trends and Services; The Arts; International Trends and Services, and Health and Human Services.**



Services to Youth

In 1962, The Links, Incorporated created its first program facet, Services to Youth, to equip black youth to use their intellect and spirit of achievement to become successful and productive citizens. Today, The Links, Incorporated continues to implement aligned, integrated and transformational programs that are responsive to the academic, health, cultural, social awareness, career development, and mentoring needs of youth.

The Services to Youth facet uses an integrated approach to prepare young people to succeed as healthy citizens in the global workforce and to promote healthy lifestyles within families and communities.

The primary goals of this facet are to:

- Close the achievement gap from pre-K through college, with the intent of preparing our youth for the global workforce as healthy citizens
- Promote the integration of a health and wellness component focused on youth, families and communities in our Services to Youth programs
- Develop training modules for local pre-K through college mentoring programs, to ascertain a high level of support for youth in our communities
- Expand and support science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education and promote the integration of the arts (STEM to STEAM)
- Promote and support historically black colleges and universities for ensured sustainability



National Trends and Services

The vision of the National Trends and Services facet, established in 1964, is to eliminate disparities by reducing barriers to services through advocacy, education, and service. Our mission is to empower our chapters to effectively empower the communities in which we work.

Our goals include increasing the number of sustainable and measurable programs; increasing collaborative partnerships; and extending our existing initiatives to include communities identified as having the greatest need.



The Arts

The Links support of the arts can be traced to our cultured co-founder Margaret Roselle Hawkins. Her innate artistic talent, discovered at a young age, earned her a four-year scholarship to the Women's School of Design, later known as the Moore Institute of Art. Her passion for creative expression later led to her appointment as an art teacher, and helped give root to the establishment of The Arts facet in 1966 at the 15th National Assembly.

The goal of The Arts facet is to increase and expand art activity throughout our communities. We create and support art-related educational opportunities for minority youth as well as present and support performances by youth and accomplished professional artists in an array of disciplines. In partnership with museums, symphonies, art councils, educational institutions, and corporations we are sowing the seed of deeper creativity.



International Trends and Services

The International Trends and Services facet, established in 1978, provides services and delivers transformational programs to people of African ancestry globally so that they may have a better quality of life. Programs are designed and developed to service educational, health and cultural needs and to help people emerge from poverty. A primary objective of our international work is to enrich the lives of women and their families.

Our “boots on the ground” approach provides for more personalized methods for assisting and improving the lives of women, children and men worldwide through long-term programs committed to empowerment and public policy leadership in advocating for social justice.

Since the International Trends and Services facet was, The Links, Incorporated has demonstrated its commitment to enriching and sustaining the cultural and economic survival of people of African ancestry, through friendship and service.




Health and Human Services

In 2010, The Links, Incorporated established the Health and Human Services facet in response to the chronic health disparities that persist in black communities and result in the decreased life expectancy of African Americans and other people of African ancestry.

The goal of HHS is to promote and facilitate programs that support the maintenance of good health and the elimination of chronic health disparities in communities of color through education, health advocacy, and optimal utilization of health resources. Community education about health risks is crucial and The Links, Incorporated plays a significant role in providing it.



2020-2022 National Programs

 TRANSFORMING <i>Communities</i> FULFILLING OUR <i>Purpose</i>	Signature Programs	National Initiatives	Pilot Programs	Supporting Programs and Areas of Concentration
Services to Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Links to Success• Links STEMReady	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National HBCU Initiative• National Mentoring Initiative		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Young Achievers
National Trends and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project LEAD High Expectations	Dressing Her from the Inside Out (Dress for Success)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PEACE (<i>Police Engagement and Community Education</i>)• L.A.M.B.S.(Links Aiding Moms to the Strong, in partnership with the March of Dimes. This program is under NTS and HHS.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ally Wallet Wise Financial Literacy• AARP Are You Ready?
The Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Classics Through the Ages		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transforming Communities Through Visual Arts• Young Master Writers Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Poster Art Competition
International Trends and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education Across the Miles (<i>Liberia and Jamaica</i>)			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LIFE (<i>Links International Foreign Affairs and Business Empowerment for Youth Program</i>)• Links Help for Humanity Women’s Survival Kits Toilets for Haiti• NGO
Health and Human Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HeartLinks• Linkages to Life• Walk for Healthy Living	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National HIV/AIDS Initiative• National Mental Health Initiative• National Oral Health Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health Equity Ambassador Program (<i>American Cancer Society</i>)• L.A.M.B.S.(Links Aiding Moms to the Strong, in partnership with the March of Dimes. This program is under NTS and HHS).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Childhood Obesity Prevention



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National Programs Defined

What is a Program?

A comprehensive approach to solving a problem or addressing a need or issue within a community.



- A program is **not a one time event or single activity**.
- It includes **a series of related activities** focused on achieving a predetermined set of goals or objectives.

National Programs Defined

Signature Programs

Signature programs are national programs that **epitomize the core values and mission of The Links, Incorporated**. They are designed and implemented to be transformation and address current issues, concerns and needs that impact the lives of a target population within the global black community.



A program must have run successfully and have proven results, measured using the Service Delivery Model, for **at least five years** within all four geographical areas of The Links, Incorporated before being established as a signature program.



Its **distinctive features** are action, collaboration, leadership, excellence, sustainability and authenticity.



Signature programs must be **approved by the Executive Council, and Assembly delegates** must ratify both the initiation and discontinuance.

National Programs Defined

National Initiatives

National initiatives are programs **designed and implemented in response to critical national issues** that affect communities of color. Partnerships and participation opportunities are encouraged in all four geographical areas of The Links, Incorporated.



- National Initiatives are carefully **monitored for one to four years** allowing time for programs to develop and evolve and to assess their impact and sustainability, utilizing the Service Delivery Model.



- The **Executive Council approves the establishment of national initiatives.**

National Programs Defined

Pilot Programs

Pilot programs are newly established **programs created to address an emerging or current nationwide issue** that is in alignment with the goals and priorities of The Links, Incorporated.

A pilot program must be successfully **tested and implemented for at least two years**, utilizing the Service Delivery Model, and still be relevant in all four geographical areas before it can be **voted on to become a national initiative or signature program**.

Supporting Programs

and Areas of Concentration

Program facets have many supporting programs and areas of concentration that uphold mission, vision and goals of each facet.

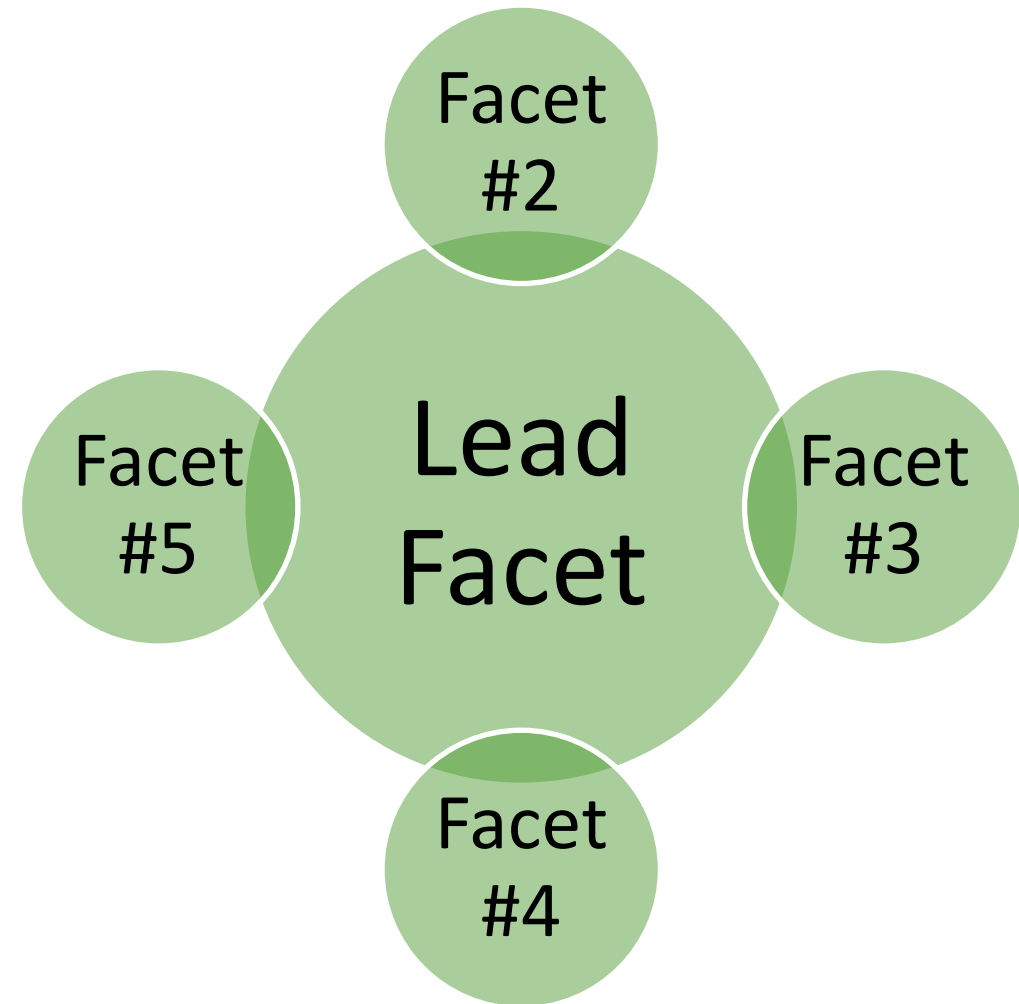
These supporting elements may include **other distinguished programs, national partnerships, committees and areas of focus**.

National Programs Defined

Umbrella Program

Umbrella programming **integrates program elements from all five facets**, with **one facet serving as the lead**. Elements from the supporting facets should align with the thrust and mission of the leading facet.

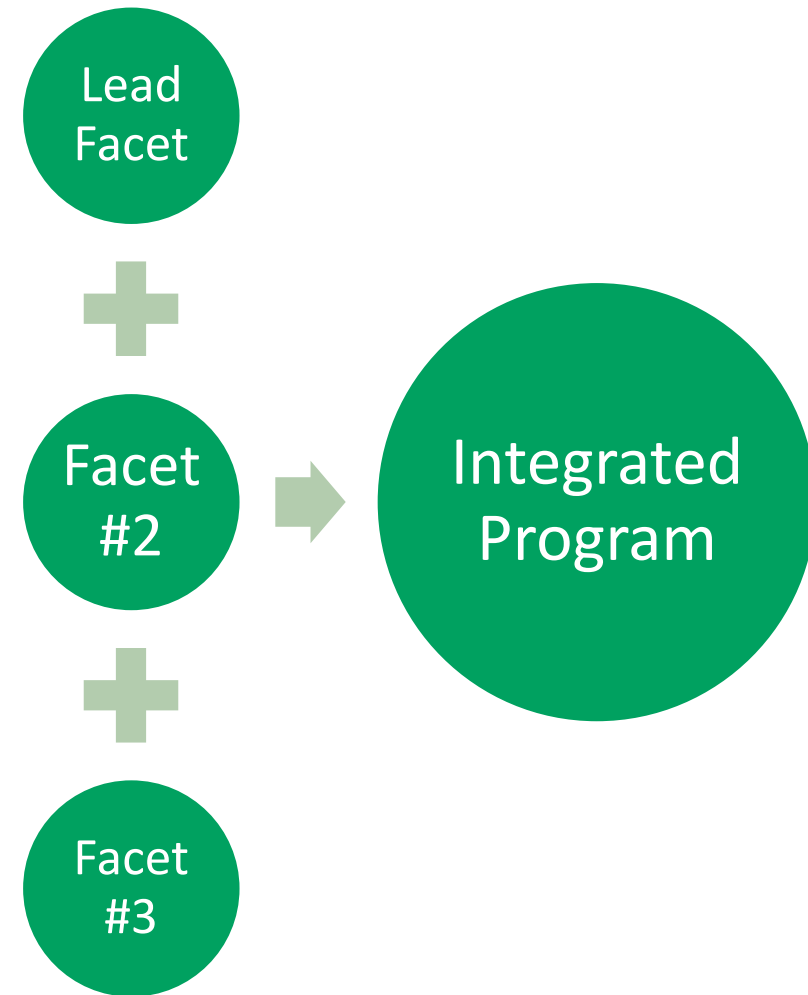
All members of the chapter should be involved in implementing the umbrella program at some point during the program year.



National Programs Defined

Integrated Program

An integrated program is a program formulated on one lead facet and has program elements from **at least two other facets**. Integrated programming is encouraged in order to increase collaboration and efficiency.



National Programs Defined

National Partners

Our national partners are passionate about their involvement with The Links, Incorporated and play a crucial role in helping to support the overall work and mission of our organization. Partnering for the betterment of our communities, our national partners and **collaborators support us in executing, upholding and fulfilling the mission, vision and goals of our five facets.**

These relationships, with **defined objectives and outcomes**, help extend The Links, Incorporated to extend our reach and enhance our service to our community.

National Partners

as of September 2019

- AARP
- Ally Financial
- American Cancer Society
- American Heart Association
- Colgate-Palmolive
- Donate Life
- Dress for Success
- Dove
- Girls Inc.
- NAACP
- National Cares Mentoring Movement
- National Dental Association
- March of Dimes
- NOBLE
- NSBE
- The Sullivan Alliance

National Programs Defined

Program Alignment

Alignment is achieved when a chapter's programming—from planning to evaluation—is consistent with and supportive of the organization's **national priorities**, **programmatic agenda**, and the **national president's thematic area of focus**.

Program alignment improves operational efficiency and minimizes silos. It promotes comprehensive approaches and multifaceted responses to complex problems and issues. And, program alignment provides visible common threads, consistent messages, and viable lines of sight for enhanced branding and improved accountability.

National Strategic Priority #2

Delivering and Sustaining Transformational Programs

This national priority involves designing and conducting programs that are community relevant and have a positive, long-term impact. The community is engaged in the design, implementation, and delivery.



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Program Planning

The Service Delivery Model

What is a Service Model?

The National Programs team adopted a service model in order to **build a common language for accountability and evaluation** across the organization. A service model is a tool that may be useful in planning and evaluating programs, committee work and other collaborative projects.

Our model was adapted from University of Wisconsin-Extension and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model. The Logic Model process is a tool that has been used for more than 20 years by program managers and evaluators to describe the effectiveness of their programs. Logic models represent a **visual way of expressing the rationale or thought behind a program.**

The Service Delivery Model

Planning Process

Our planning process revolves around our basic definition of programming. We define a program as a **comprehensive approach to solving a problem or addressing a need or issue within a community.**



- A program is **not a one time event or single activity.**
- It includes **a series of related activities** focused on achieving a predetermined set of goals or objectives.

The Service Delivery Model

Planning Elements: Our Service Delivery Model contains six components with inputs, outputs and outcomes being central to the common basis of the model.

Situation

Service models are built in response to an existing situation. We identify the problem or priority the program is responding to and the expected benefit to specific audiences.

Inputs

The inputs are the resources available to make your program work. Resources could include the people, the money or the community resources that are necessary to operate the program. Inputs lead to outputs.

Outputs

The activities, products, methods, and services you use represent your outputs. Examples of program activities include research, training, technical assistance and other services. Outputs lead to outcomes.

Outcomes

The results and benefits for groups, individuals or communities represent outcomes. They may include direct products, services or events delivered through planned activities.

External Factors

These are the outside forces that affect the implementation and success of the program.

Assumptions

Assumptions are the beliefs we have about why our program will work.

The Service Delivery Model

Key Questions for Developing Your Service Model



1. What is the community-level impact (change) that our chapter would like to create as a result of our program?
2. What are the long-term outcomes or behaviors we would like our clients to achieve?
3. What are the short-term outcomes we would like our clients to achieve?
4. What programs, strategies, or services do we need to achieve the short and long term outcomes?
5. What are the resources or inputs do we need to support strategy or service implementation?
6. What is going on in our community or in our clients' lives that we have no control over but will affect the quality of the success of our program?

Graphical Depiction: Service Delivery Model

Situation <i>(The Problem)</i>		Priorities		Mission/Vision <i>(What drives the outcome?)</i>	
Inputs	Outputs		Outcomes		
Resources	Activities	Participation	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Impact/Long-Term
<i>In order to accomplish our set of activities we will need the following:</i>	<i>In order to address our problem, we will accomplish the following activities:</i>	<i>We must clearly identify the groups we are serving.</i>	<i>If accomplished, we expect these activities will lead to the following changes in 1-2 years:</i>	<i>If accomplished, we expect these activities will lead to the following changes in 3-4 years:</i>	<i>If accomplished, we expect these activities will lead to long-term societal changes.</i>
1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3. 4.	1. 2. 3 4.	1. 2. 3 4.	1. 2. 3 4.	1. 2. 3 4.
Assumptions 1. 2.			External Factors <i>(Things that might negatively impact your program – i.e. environment, community, public policy)</i> 1. 2.		
Evaluation					
What do you want to know?			How will you know it?		

S.M.A.R.T GOALS

Set **SMART goals** to clarify your ideas, focus your efforts, use your time and resources productively, and achieve what you want.



Specific:

Define the goal in clear language



Measurable:

Track progress to measure outcome



Attainable:

Can the goal be accomplished?



Realistic:

Is the goal practical, visionary and can be applied to the task on hand?



Timely:

Has a time limit been set (for better time management)?

11 Key Points of Transformational Programming

Following these 11 points will ensure that your chapter's programming is transformational.

1. The chapter has a clearly stated **"To Deliver and Sustain Transformational Programming"** as part of its strategic plan.
2. The chapter program planning process and planned activities/implementation **are in line of sight of the organizational strategic priorities.**
3. The chapters have **identified target group(s)** to serve for the chapter year and a target community of focus.
4. **Three to five SMART goals** for each program are established: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound.
5. All chapter **members are assigned to a program facet** and are aware of the programmatic focus.
6. The chapter program planning involved strategies for **engaging all members** in providing service to the specified target groups and target community.



11 Key Points of Transformational Programming (cont.)

7. The chapter program planning process assures that members will **not work in silos**. (i.e. Five (5) facets working on five (5) different service projects/activities).
8. If there is an integrated program, at least two (2) other facets have been identified to work its planning and implementation, so that the **members of at least three facets are engaged in this integrated program**.
9. If there is an **umbrella program**, the lead facet has been identified. The program **must have programmatic elements from each of the five facets**. The planning process engages members of all five facets on how to implement the program for the year. ALL active members must participate.
10. The chapter is aware that members have other assignments and responsibilities and will work to collaborate and **provide sisterly support to each other**. Where possible, chapters will collaborate with other chapters with a common focus.
11. The chapter has a **proposed budget** for implementing planned program(s), and a process in place for evaluating the success of program.



Quarterly Program Planning Guide

1st Quarter

(May, Jun, Jul)

- Review prior year's submitted program reports
- Initiate program planning including the SDM
- Initiate or renew any partnerships or collaborations
- Plan activities, add creative ideas to keep members interested in your primary program(s)

2nd Quarter

(Aug, Sept, Oct)

- Create a chapter programming calendar
- Prepare a budget for the program year, submit to budget committee
- Initiate program activities

3rd Quarter

(Nov, Dec, Jan)

- Review program report process
- Determine which programs and how many reports will be submitted (2 reports max, 3 if one is a signature program)

4th Quarter

(Feb, Mar, Apr)

- Submit program report(s) by Feb 1
- Evaluate current programs
- Deliver program year summary at April chapter meeting

Key Programmatic Dates

May

- Mental Health Awareness Month
- Annual United Nations Student Videoconference

July

- African-American Bone Marrow Awareness Month

August

- Chapter retreats

September

- Annual Links Walk-a-Thon
- National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

October

- Breast Cancer Awareness Month
- Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- National Arts and Humanities Month
- Voter Awareness Month

November

- National Bone Marrow Awareness Month
- Links National Day of Friendship and Service
- National Donor Sabbath Weekend
- Universal/World Children's Day – Nov. 20

December

- World AIDS Day - Dec. 1

February

- Program Reports Submission Deadline - Feb. 1
- National Wear Red Day (First Friday in Feb.)
- Black History Month
- National Heart Month

March

- International Women's Day – Mar. 8

April

- National Donate Life Month



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Program Evaluation

What Is Program Evaluation?

Program evaluation is the systematic process of studying a program or initiative to discover how well it is working or has worked to achieve the intended goals. When we **gather**, we **evaluate** and **analyze** information to serve three purposes:



- **Program Assessment**—verifying, documenting and quantifying program activities and their effects.
- **Program Improvement**—finding out where a program may be failing or need improvement.
- **Strategic Management**—providing information that can help your chapter make decisions about how resources should be applied in the future to better serve its mission or goals.

Evaluation Planning

An evaluation plan to assess a program can be superimposed using the Service Delivery Model format. Developing appropriate and measurable indicators during the planning phase is key to sound evaluation. Link your activities and results in order to ensure success.



Evaluation involves asking key questions:

- Were inputs used as planned?
- Were activities conducted as planned?
- Was the desired level of participation achieved?
- Did participants express or show that they were satisfied with the program?



Outcomes should be measurable and should answer questions such as:

- Did participants show an increased level of knowledge, awareness, or motivation?
- Were behaviors of the participants modified or were policies changed?
- To what extent did the program affect social, economic, political, or environmental conditions?

Evidence Based Evaluation

Program Assessment

- Is the solution sustainable?
- Can it be translated into a functional program?
- Does it have the potential to make a discernible change in the condition being addressed?
- Will it have the support of the affected group?
- Does it allow for collaboration among the facets, with partners, stakeholders and other community groups?



Evidence Based Evaluation

Program Improvement: Assessment of Outcomes Based on Inputs and Outputs

- What are the indicators/evidence used to determine program success?
- What tools/instruments will you use to measure program success?
- What outcomes did the program achieve that cannot be reversed?



Short-Term:
Changes in
knowledge, skills,
attitudes, opinions



Medium-Term: Changes
in behavior or action that
result from participants'
new knowledge



Long-Term: Behavioral
changes, often in their
condition or
status in life

Evidence Based Evaluation

Strategic Management

A Value Added Proposition

- Documents what the program has provided to the target population
- Assesses actual changes in relation to desired changes
- Monitors program implementation and identifies needed changes
- Strengthens the case for funders/collaborators to invest in your program
- Provides continuity and promotes sustainability
- Promotes The Links brand in community and beyond



Program Evaluation Elements

Program evaluation is a **critical part of effective program planning**. It begins when the problem to be addressed is defined. Evaluation should be embedded in the Service Delivery Model. This process helps to determine who will be served, what will be measured and how. Key elements include:



Focus:

What will you evaluate,
which program or aspect
of a programs



Questions:

What do you want to
know?



Indicators-Evidence:

How will you know it?



Timing:

When should you collect
data?

Program Evaluation Elements (cont.)



Data Collection:

Sources, methods,
sample, instruments



Analysis:

How will the data be
analyzed?



Interpretation:

How will the data be
interpreted?



Communication:

How, when, where, and
to whom will results be
communicated?

1. Focus <i>What will we evaluate, which program or aspect of a program?</i>						
2. Questions <i>What do you want to know?</i> 1. 2. 3. 4.	3. Indicators – Evidence <i>How will we know it?</i> 1. 2. 3. 4.	4. Timing <i>When should we collect data?</i>	5. Data Collection			
			Sources <i>Who will have this information?</i>	Methods <i>How will we gather the information?</i>	Sample <i>Who will we question?</i>	Instruments <i>What tools shall we use?</i>
			8. Communication <i>How will the results be communicated?</i>			
6. Analysis <i>How Will the data be analyzed?</i>		7. Interpretation <i>How will the data be interpreted?</i>		<i>To whom?</i>		
				<i>When, Where, How?</i>		



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Program Reports

Purpose of Program Reports

All chapters of The Links, Incorporated are required to complete an annual program report. In even-numbered years, the report is submitted for review and evaluation by the National Programs team. In odd-numbered years, the report is submitted for review and evaluation by the Area Program team. The purpose of program reports is threefold:



To document that The Links, Incorporated and The Links Foundation, Incorporated are fulfilling their constitutional and legal responsibilities as 501(c)(4) and 501(c)(3) organizations respectively



To demonstrate that the organizations are valuable partners in serving communities throughout the global community



To assess our effectiveness in programming

Program Report Process

Deadline

- Each report covers a period of **two fiscal years, May 1 – April 30**. The deadline for submission of program reports is **February 1, 11:59 p.m. EST**.
 - Reports received after February 1 will not be considered for awards.

Submission

- Each chapter must submit **at least one (1) report**
- A **maximum of three (3) reports** may be submitted per chapter. If a chapter chooses to submit three (3) reports, at least one of these must be on a Signature Program or National Initiative.
 - If a chapter submits more than three reports, only the first three submitted reports will be reviewed.

Chapter Data Sheet

- **One (1) chapter data sheet is required** per chapter. The data sheet must be completed before any program report can be submitted.

Helpful Tip



Maintain program documentation throughout the chapter year:

- Program implementation information
 - monthly schedules, activities, and sign-in sheets
 - Community and chapter member participation numbers
- Program budget and expenses
- Awards, grants, or special funding received and/or given by chapter
- Partnerships and/or collaborations forged
- Photographs and publicity

Program Report Reviewers

Program report reviewers are vital to the program report process. They allow us to implement a **peer review system** for the evaluation of program reports. Program report reviewers are **nominated by their chapter presidents**, to their area program coordinators, and have **demonstrated a mastery of the Service Delivery Model** and an expertise of a facet(s).

Program Report Reviewer Criteria:

- Prior training and experience using the Service Delivery Model; and
- Served as a national facet director, national facet sub-committee chair, area program coordinator, chapter vice president of programs, program coordinator, or chapter facet chair for at least two years, since 2017; or
- Previously served as a program report reviewer

Program Report Reviewer Certification Program

Program report reviewers complete a certification program designed to:
Improve and further standardize the program report review process

Provide participants more expansive training and knowledge on our approaching to programming and the Service Delivery Model



Questions?



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