



We have all been there. We researched and designed what we thought we would be the ideal program. We completed community assessments, we studied the data, and we asked for participant feedback. The pilot launched smoothly and then with little to no notice everything came crashing down. What should have been a success is now a failure.

The most important thing to remember is that nothing is ever a failure. If you can review what happened and learn from it, then you are farther ahead than most. Designing programs is a science, and as with any science experiment, there will be unforeseen occurrences.

The first step is to clearly assess the data from the program. Was this truly a failure, or did things just not go as expected? Could slight changes overcome the identified challenges? If the program was truly a failure, the next step is to write a detailed after-action report, highlighting what did not work, the lessons learned, and how these challenges could be overcome in the future. The second step is to share this report with your board of directors and all funders.

Committing to open and honest communication, to truthfully stating the facts, what you learned and how the agency and your staff can grow from this experience should be met with respect. It would be unfair to not expect some reaction, but an honest report sent in a timely manner, should help soften the blow.

Once all key players have been notified, it is time to decide if you can redesign the program and try again, or if the program is just not a good fit for your organization. Remember, not every problem must be handled by your organization, remaining true to your vision is the most important thing.