Benchmarking for Better Practices

Description:

This tool provides guidelines on benchmarking, steps to conduct benchmarking, and a checklist to determine organizational readiness for benchmarking.

How it can be used:

Benchmarking helps organizations improve their performance and use resources more efficiently through identifying and implementing best practices that have been modified to suit their local context. Complete the matrix to assess whether your organization is ready to begin a benchmarking process, and then review the guidelines and steps to confirm how your organization could integrate benchmarking to improve your programs and services.

A "benchmark" is a reference or measurement standard used for comparison. "Benchmarking" is an ongoing process of identifying, understanding and adapting best practices within your organization.

To determine if your health organization is ready for benchmarking, complete the following questionnaire. Review the statements and tick the box that best reflects your organization.

	Mostly	Some	A Little	None
Processes are documented and have performance metrics				
Employees understand the processes related to their work				
Client interactions and feedback influence our programs/services				
Problems are solved by teams				
Employees show they understand the vision/mission/values				
Senior leaders actively support quality improvement projects				
Continuous improvement is part of our organizational culture				
Commitment to change is articulated in our strategic plans				
Subtotal each column				
Multiply by:	X 6	X 4	X 2	X1
	=	=	=	=
Total (add all columns)				

32 – 48 Ready for benchmarking
16 – 31 Need some preparation
0 – 15 Need some help

Benefits of Benchmarking:

- builds on the work of others – rather than 'reinventing the wheel'
- facilitates more efficient use of resources
- identifies what needs to be improved and how to improve
- advises organizations to examine what they are doing and why they are doing it
- leads to creative ideas and alternatives
- encourages organizations to measure their services in terms of inputs and outcomes
- focuses on the most important or beneficial aspects of the programs and services
- promotes continued improvement and learning
- encourages networking with other organizations

Challenges of Benchmarking:

- time consuming and labour intensive
- requires considerable skill and knowledge
- possible issues around confidentiality and sharing of information
- an organization must be willing to make changes based on the findings of the process

There are three types of Benchmarking:

Standards benchmarking focuses on a standard of performance which an organization is expected to achieve. An example would be your health centre setting a standard to ensure that clients are seen within a designated period of time.

Results benchmarking focuses on comparing the performance of several organizations that provide similar services. An example of results benchmarking is the comparison of rates of Caesarian births between hospitals.

Process benchmarking involves a detailed examination of a process that produces a specific output to determine the reasons for differences in performance between organizations. For example, your provincial health ministry seeks best practices for immunizations being used within health organizations in the province.

Follow these steps to initiate a benchmarking process:

1. Identify what needs to be benchmarked. Keep it manageable by considering one or a few program components rather than an entire program; focus on the most important aspects.

2. Determine performance measures and indicators. Collect and analyze internal data; use your program logic model to identify indicators, and utilize data collection tools.

3. Select benchmarking partners. Seek organizations that are recognized for their expertise, offer a similar service, serve a similar population, are accessible, and are willing to share information (note: do not ask for information that you would not be willing to share).

4. Access data from benchmarking partners. Identify differences and performance gaps and determine whether practices are suitable/adaptable to other settings; focus on practices that are successful over time, repeatable, transferable, innovative, and which are relevant your local circumstances.

5. Create and implement an action plan. Based on a few core principles, create strategies to form an action plan.

6. Monitor results and adjust benchmarks. Realise that there may be times where you go back to earlier steps. This is normal.