Benchmarking for Improvement and Growth

Description:

This tool provides guidelines on benchmarking and the steps to conduct a benchmarking process.

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. When considering integration activities, benchmarking can provide a rigorous approach to analyzing and improving programs and services. Review the guidelines and steps to confirm how your organization can integrate benchmarking to guide your next steps.

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.

Those who have not engaged in formal benchmarking often think it means to do a simple comparison. While that is true, benchmarking goes beyond just comparing. It supports a culture of continuous improvement where organizations seek to be more effective and efficient. Benchmarking to explore potential integration opportunities can be a powerful way to learn and improve, and ultimately to offer better services to your community.

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 improvements can be made;
- 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 and learning from other organizations.

Challenges of Benchmarking:

- can be time consuming and labour intensive;
- requires some skill and knowledge;
- issues around confidentiality and sharing of information could occur;
- an organization must be willing to make changes based on the findings of the process.

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 given within health organizations in the province.

PHASES OF BENCHMARKING

1. Planning and Organization

- Select and prioritize what is to be benchmarked.
- Establish the benchmarking team.
- Select benchmarking measurements to be used.
- Identify comparative organizations.

2. Information

- Document own work processes to be benchmarked.
- Determine data collection method and collect data.

3. Analysis

- Determine current performance "gaps".
- Identify causes for gaps.
- Project future performance levels.

4. Implementation

- Communicate benchmark findings and gain acceptance.
- Develop action plans based on performance goals and objectives.
- Implement specific actions.

5. Evaluation

- Monitor and assess progress towards goals and objectives.
- Recalibrate benchmarks if necessary.

The benchmarking process helps you to get to know your organization, understand its challenges and opportunities, define best processes from other organizations, and explore how to integrate them into your activities. The above steps provide a systematic framework for your organization to continuously focus on improving performance and ensuring sustainability. It is a process that can be entered into as an operational review when considering integration activities, and can be targeted at analyzing specific service areas to determine required changes and/or adjustments.