

What counts? Finding Meaningful Metrics

RIPL: 12 Months to Better Library Data

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“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.” - William Bruce Cameron

Guiding Questions for Meaningful Metrics

1. How clearly does this metric align to an articulated outcome or impact?
2. Who cares about this metric?
3. Why do they care?
4. How can they act on it?
5. Whose perspective does this metric reflect or emphasize?
6. How do the people closest to this work feel about it?
 - At a minimum, this is the staff who do the work, ideally consider the community as well
7. How can this information be collected in a way that is ethical, accurate, and manageable for staff and participants?
 - Key elements of ethics are privacy and informed consent
 - Accuracy often involves staff being trained and consistently collecting data

Your context:

Your outcome/impact:

Your metric:

A. Meaningful Metrics Question	B. Quick assessment of metric on this question (+ or ?)	C. Questions about this question	D. Next steps
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Examples of library metrics

Context	Outcome/Impact	Metrics
Immigrant & refugee services weekly recurring drop in events	As a result of their experiences attending, members of immigrant communities will be able to connect with & learn from each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● % of participants that report learning something from a peer ● % of event time that is spent in small groups or one on one
All library events & programs.	As a result of their experience attending library events and programs, participants feel welcome in the library.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● % of participants who would recommend this event to a friend
Library database access	As a result of library databases, library users will have access to relevant resources that support their learning & development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● % of library card holders who know that they have database access through the library ● Average cost per use by database
Library reference	As a result of immediate reference, library users with immediate information needs can efficiently access accurate information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● % of reference users that rank their interaction highly ● % of chat reference interactions that include an explanation of the source being cited and why it's reliable (based on sample)