



A SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR PROGRAM LEADERS

Are You Measuring What Matters?

Most programs track something. Far fewer can answer the question that actually matters.

This is a short self-assessment — no score to pass, nothing to submit. The goal is simply to see clearly where your measurement is strong, and where it can't yet answer the questions you most need answered. For each statement, mark where your program actually is today. The clearer the picture, the more useful the result.

What You Measure — *activity vs. impact*

1. We can clearly distinguish what we *do* from what we *change*.
Outputs are activities — people served, sessions held, items distributed. Outcomes are changes in people's lives — housing retained, stability gained. Many programs count the first and quietly assume the second.
☐ Not really ☐ Somewhat ☐ Mostly ☐ Clearly
2. Our core metrics reflect our mission — not just what's easy to count.
If the mission is to reduce recidivism, house people, or build stability, do the numbers measure that — or do they measure contacts and appointments because those are simpler to track?
☐ Not really ☐ Somewhat ☐ Mostly ☐ Clearly
3. If a funder asked "did your program work?", we could answer with evidence.
There's a real difference between "we served 400 people" and "here's what changed for them, and here's how we know it was us."
☐ Not really ☐ Somewhat ☐ Mostly ☐ Clearly

Whether You Can Trust It — *data integrity*

4. Our data is complete and consistent enough to believe.
Missing records, inconsistent entry, and partial data don't just create gaps — they can quietly bias the very picture leadership relies on.
☐ Not really ☐ Somewhat ☐ Mostly ☐ Clearly
5. We know what our data *doesn't* capture — who's missing, what's left out.
The people a system fails are often the ones least visible in its data. Knowing the blind spots matters as much as knowing the numbers.
☐ Not really ☐ Somewhat ☐ Mostly ☐ Clearly
6. We're careful not to claim more than the data actually supports.
"Associated with" is not "caused by." A program can look effective in a report and still not be the reason for the outcome. Honest framing protects your credibility.
☐ Not really ☐ Somewhat ☐ Mostly ☐ Clearly

7. Our data actually informs decisions — it isn't just collected and filed.
A program learns only when what it measures flows back into what it does. If reports are produced for funders and never revisited, the loop is broken.
- ☐ Not really ☐ Somewhat ☐ Mostly ☐ Clearly
8. If our program were quietly *not* working, we'd find out.
The hardest and most important one. Good measurement doesn't just confirm success — it surfaces trouble early, while there's still time to respond.
- ☐ Not really ☐ Somewhat ☐ Mostly ☐ Clearly

Reading Your Results

Notice where your answers clustered. This isn't a score to pass or fail — it's a map of where to look next.

Mostly left of center — you're likely measuring activity more than impact. Extremely common, and it means your strongest programs may be invisible in your own data while struggling ones stay hidden. The fix isn't more data; it's the right data.

A mix — you measure real things, but there are gaps, often in data trust or in whether measurement actually changes decisions. Worth naming which specific questions you still can't answer.

Mostly right of center — you have a strong foundation. The next frontier is usually rigor: being able to say not just *that* outcomes changed, but how confidently you can attribute the change to your work.

Wherever you landed, name the one question you most need to answer — and currently can't.

That question is where evaluation earns its keep. To talk it through, visit homelessresponselab.com.