Knowing When and How to End a Program
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Ending a program isn’t fun, but it may be necessary
We can’t be all things to all people all the time
NDSU’s first football team: September, 1894 (They won both of their games that year, both against UND)
Some things just aren’t needed anymore!
But it also comes with a big set of challenges
Overview

Part 1: Knowing WHEN to end a program
Part 2: Knowing HOW to end a program
  • Examples from Residence Life and Student Wellness
Part 3: Discussion of challenges and next steps
Part 1: Knowing WHEN to End a Program
Sometimes it is obvious when things don’t go well… but usually deciding to end a program requires gathering and collecting multiple sources of data.
Lifecycle of a program, activity, or service

Where are we?

Where do we want to be?

Are we doing the right things?

Are we doing things right?

What should we do?

Should we do something?
• Needs assessment
• Should have a plan for regular needs assessment (particularly when there is substantial turnover in those you serve)
“Surviving Winter Weather” Program…
...in Miami?
Existing programming may be meeting current needs:
• Can use prior assessment results (although it will likely only focus on *users* of the program)
- Goal setting and strategic planning
- Getting to where we want to go may mean stopping something that we are currently doing
We might already have a great program, doing a great job...but, if it isn’t addressing a priority...should we keep doing it?
The Management/Leadership Matrix

1. Innovative, adaptive, and energetic BUT chaotic
2. Well run AND innovative, adaptive, & energetic
3. Doomed
4. Well run BUT bureaucratic and unable to change quickly

Source: “Accelerate: Building Strategic Ability for a Faster-Moving World” by Kotter
“Management ensures the stability and efficiency necessary to run today’s enterprise reliably. Leadership creates needed change to take advantage of new opportunities, to avoid serious threats, and to create and execute new strategies.”

-Kotter, p. 63, bold added
• Compare the gap between the need (current status) and where we want to be
• Are existing programs getting us where we want to be?
• If we don’t want to be “there,” why are we driving in that direction?
Consider strategic plan and goals: Actions express priorities
Curriculum / program mapping – what are we already doing?
If we didn’t already have programs in this area, what would we propose?
Consider cost-effectiveness
• Cheap and low priority: maybe keep
• Expensive and high priority: try to save $$
• Not doing, key priority, any price: consider how to add
Are we doing things right?

- Implementation fidelity
- Customer or student satisfaction
- Facility usage
If we aren’t doing things right, first consider efforts to improve (instead of ending or replacing a program)
• Are we seeing the desired learning and service outcomes?

• If we are doing things right, but not seeing the desired outcomes, consider replacing the program
Lifecycle of a program, activity, or service

Where are we?

Where do we want to be?

Should we do something?

What should we do?

Are we doing things right?

Are we doing the right things?
Part 2: Knowing HOW to End a Program
Deciding to end a program

Create a plan for the program’s end

Communicate the plan

Implement
Every program should be assumed to have a lifecycle – a beginning, a middle, and an end.

- Charlie Chaplin
You (or someone) did lots of planning to create a program…

…so shouldn’t ending a program also take careful planning?
Deciding to end a program

Use the guidance from part 1

Collaboration with appropriate stakeholders

Create a plan for the program’s end

Transition plan for current users

Resource reallocation
Transition plan:
- What will your current users (if any) do when the program ends? Go to a competitor? Can you point them in a direction?
- Maintenance or follow-through on promised elements (e.g., sun setting period)?

Resource reallocation (if necessary):
- May include staff training or moving staff to other areas, or helping staff to transition to other employment
- Ending a vendor relationship or changing product lines, or selecting a new vendor
Deciding to end a program
- Use the guidance from part 1
- Collaboration with appropriate stakeholders

Create a plan for the program’s end
- Transition plan for current users
- Resource reallocation

Communicate the plan
- Building buy-in
- Changing the direction of the ship – the vision
• Communication approach will vary by type of stakeholder

Building buy-in
• Not everyone will be happy with the change, but no one will be happy if there isn’t clear communication
• Focus on the vision and mission for the department, and how this change will help achieve its goals
Deciding to end a program

Use the guidance from part 1

Collaboration with appropriate stakeholders

Create a plan for the program’s end

Transition plan for current users

Resource reallocation

Communicate the plan

Building buy-in

Changing the direction of the ship – the vision

Implement
• Ending programs is not easy, but it should be viewed as a regular part of the lifecycle of any program
• Here are some real examples from the Division for how programs have been ended
Discussion and Next steps