

Fast 5 Friday

May 2022

Monitoring Muscle Memory

For as long as I can remember, I would tell anyone about my work life “you can pretty much set your watch to Cindy’s and my work schedule”. Literally there are certain times of the year things happen. For example: this time of year we are working continuation reports and wrapping up monitoring. As we all know there have been delays but we have resumed onsite monitoring. Let me say that after a two-year hiatus it has been tough getting back into travel monitoring mode, as I’m sure it’s just as hard for programs.

For anyone new to our monitoring there are two things to keep in mind with our onsite monitoring: 1) we do not assume anything, it’s up to the program to provide documentation that they are meeting the standards of the monitoring tool and grant application, and 2) we are there to help not play gotcha. Why do I bring up muscle memory when it comes to onsite memory? Good question that I can best answer by detailing Cindy’s and my preconference session at last year’s MOSAC2 conference:

Anyone that knows me knows that I exercise a lot at what could be described as an extreme level. Also for the past two years all face to face meetings had been done via Zoom. Now the content did not change but the in-person presenting had not been attempted in two years. The presentation went fine but my feet were killing me during the presentation. I wondered how someone who (at minimum runs two miles outdoors a day) could have sore feet from simply standing and presenting? The answer: I don’t exercise in men’s dress shoes, nor did I wear them during the 1,000 zoom meetings. In pre-Covid years I was used to constantly being in dress shoes for all facets of work. In other words I need to get back in dress shoe shape.

For programs, yes it’s been a while since you’ve been onsite monitored, in some cases for new programs it’s never been done. The best way to get in shape (or tune up) for monitoring is to be prepared and start early. If we are coming on site you have plenty of notice and literally everything you need to know is contained in the monitoring tools located on the Afterschool Portal. There’s no tricks or curveballs but again remember we assume nothing and it’s up to you to prove you are meeting the standards.

You may ask what the standards are. Well each grant has various elements that are requirements: minimum hours/days for example. You outline in your competitive proposal or continuation report how you will meet them. When we arrive onsite the best way (we’ve found) to contain this is putting the evidence in a labeled binder, the finance section may require an additional binder. We spend the day and next morning looking through your evidence, ask questions if needed, and conduct an exit interview. Sounds easy but it can be difficult if you haven’t prepared as it would be impossible to do this overnight.

As always you can always call if you have questions or work with your ARE if you need to get back in monitoring shape. Just like me having to adjust to dress shoes again, it just takes time and muscle memory.

This will be the last Fast 5 for this year. In some ways, it feels like the school year just began as we all continue to do much more with less. Thanks for ALL you do. Have a great summer!