

General Guide for Program Evaluation



PHASE 1: Clarify the Design of the Program

A clear understanding about the intent and design of the program and its implementation is required at the start of any evaluation. Without a clear understanding of those issues, the evaluation might measure outcomes that are not a good fit with what the program is trying to accomplish. One of the best ways to clarify what the program is designed to achieve is to develop measurable goals and objectives for the program.

PHASE 2: Create an Evaluation Plan

The purpose of an evaluation plan is to outline the when, where, who and how of the evaluation. It is an opportunity to determine the type of evaluation that will be most effective for your program and to identify stakeholders who would be invested in the evaluation process and findings.

PHASE 3: Develop (or Identify) Data Collection Tools

There are several different methods for collecting data, so the first step is to determine which one(s) best meet the particular needs. When determining which data collection technique to use, remember that each technique will be most beneficial in only specific situations. Examples of possible data collection tools are: surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

PHASE 4: Collect Your Data

An important part of planning an evaluation is giving conscious attention to the ethics of what information will be collected in your evaluation, how the information will be collected, and from whom. All people who participate in research- from patients participating in a high-risk medical study of an experimental drug protocol to respondents in a seemingly innocuous customer satisfaction survey- have rights that must be respected in order to conduct research, or evaluation, ethically. Making sure your data collection and evaluations meet all necessary ethical standards is the purpose and goal of PHASE 4.

PHASE 5: Analyze Your Data

Data analysis is the process of organizing and interpreting your evaluation information for use in program development and organizational decision-making. Qualitative data analysis is all about getting and explaining the “how’s” and “why’s” of your program.

For example, you may want to know,

- > *How are students using the conflict resolution skills they learned during our workshop in their interactions on the playground?*
- > *Why does our program seem to be more effective when delivered in health clinics instead of when delivered in community based organizations?*

Qualitative data analysis usually involves the use of text or words (in non-numerical terms) and the use of a systematic approach for using these words/texts to understand your program and explain its impact.

PHASE 6: Communicate Your Findings

The sixth phase of the evaluation process is communicating the findings of the evaluation with program stakeholders (e.g., agency administrators, funders, program participants, community members). Sharing the findings with others is a vital phase of the evaluation and is often the primary motivation for having undertaken the evaluation in the first place. Careful consideration must be used when planning the report as well as the main elements that should be included.

PHASE 7: Use What You Have Learned from the Evaluation

Make your evaluation useful by strategically communicating your report to influence learning and decision-making. Evaluation can be used internally or externally in multiple ways such as encouraging further adoption of a program or intervention; informing how to improve program implementation in the future; sustaining and/or maintaining partner/collaborator participation and support; supporting organizational strategic planning; or seeking additional funding for a program or organization.