ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS SERIES

# Program Evaluation

NATIONAL MINORITY AIDS COUNCIL

Dear Colleague,

On behalf of the National Minority AIDS Council, thank you for picking up this manual and taking a step toward increasing your capacity in this struggle. As we enter the third decade of HIV/AIDS, it is more important than ever to develop our skills and knowledge to better serve our communities and our constituents.

NMAC, established in 1987 as the premier national organization dedicated to developing leadership within communities of color to address the challenge of HIV/AIDS, recognizes the challenge before all of us and works to proactively produce and provide skills-building tools to our community. One such tool is the manual that you hold in y our hands.

The Technical Assistance and Training Division's mission to build the capacity and strength of community-based organizations, community planning groups for HIV prevention and health departments throughout the United States and its territories is supported though a multi-faceted approach. This approach includes individualized capacity building assistance, written information (manuals, publications, and information provided through NMAC's website and broadcast e-mail messages) and interactive learning experiences (trainings). All components are integral to providing a comprehensive capacity building experience, as opposed to offering isolated instances or random episodes of assistance.

After undergoing a revision of existing curricula and publications, and an expansion of our current catalog of subject areas to include more organization infrastructure topics, NMAC is proud to present you with this new manual, Program Evaluation. One of 15 topic areas in which we provide capacity building assistance in, this manual will provide you with detailed information, resources and the knowledge to enhance your capacity to provide much needed services in your community.

Our hope is that this revised manual will give you the skills and knowledge to increase your capacity and serve your community at a greater level than ever before. Please feel free to contact us if you would like further information on what other services we can provide to you and your community.

Yours in the struggle,

Paul Akio Kawata
Executive Director

# Contents

Preface .....5

Introduction .....7

UNIT 1: Program Evaluation Introduction .....11

I. Myths .....13
II. Concerns .....13
III. Facts .....14

Unit 2: Types of Program Evaluation .....17

I. Two Classifications of Evaluations Required by Typical Government Funders .....19
II. Three Motivations for Conducting an Evaluation .....19

UNIT 3: Logic Models .....23

UNIT 4: The Planning-Evaluation Cycle .....27

UNIT 5: Assembling an Evaluation Team .....31

I. Guidelines for Compiling a Collaborative Group .....33
II. Members of the Evaluation Team .....34
III. Internal vs. External Evaluation .....35

UNIT 6: Developing an Evaluation Plan .....37

I. Purpose .....39
II. Timeline .....39
III. Developing the Plan .....41
IV. Evaluation and Empowerment .....42

UNIT 7: Conducting the Evaluation .....43

I. Steps in Program Evaluation .....45

UNIT 8: Program Surveillance and Documentation .....49

I. Credible Evidence .....51
II. Methods Of Data Collection .....52
III. Justifiable Conclusions .....55

UNIT 9: Ensuring Evaluation Capacity Building .....59

UNIT 10: Standards for Effective Evaluation .....63

I. Utility Standards .....65
II. Feasibility Standards .....66
III. Propriety Standards .....66
IV. Accuracy Standards .....67

UNIT 11: Challenges to Program Evaluation .....71

I. Abuses of Program Evaluations .....73
II. Cultural Sensitivity .....74
III. Long-Term Impact .....74
IV. Learning From Program Failures .....74
V. Time and Resources .....75

Appendix A: Glossary .....77

Appendix B: Frequently Asked Questions .....79

Appendix C: Bibliography and Additional Resources .....83

# Preface

## Organizational Effectiveness

Successful community-based organizations (CBOs) can attribute their success to employing 15 key components that support organizational effectiveness. See the model below.

Ongoing learning and training in each of these areas will allow your organization to meet the needs of your constituents.

For information regarding training in any of these areas, contact the National Minority AIDS Council's Technical Assistance, Training and Treatment Division by telephone at (202) 234-5120 or by e-mail at ta_info@nmac.org.

### ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS MODEL

# Introduction

A current challenge facing HIV/AIDS service providers is to document, validate, coordinate and integrate their programmatic activities. All of these components can be addressed with the implementation of a comprehensive evaluation program. Evaluation is the system used to assess the worth or merit of a program. This general definition, however, does not take into account descriptive studies, implementation analyses, and formative evaluations. A better-suited definition would incorporate the information processing and feedback role of evaluation. An alternative definition of evaluation is the systematic acquisition and assessment of information to provide useful feedback about a program.

## Purpose

The purpose of this manual is to demonstrate the importance of program evaluation with regard to the development of HIV/AIDS interventions. The training will present the fundamentals of a successful evaluation to improve the quality of the services. This manual is a guide to assist program planners in building an effective evaluation component within the program to ensure ongoing capacity building and success.

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this manual, learners will be able to:

- ✓ Explain the role of program evaluation and the facts that support it.
- ✓ Define and give examples of formative and summative evaluation.
- ✓ Define the three types of program evaluation.
- ✓ Explain what a logic model is intended to do.
- ✓ Examine the stages of an evaluation phase.
- ✓ Identify the components of an evaluation team.
- ✓ Describe the timeline for evaluation.
- ✓ Identify the steps in program evaluation.
- ✓ Identify what method of data collection is appropriate for the various types of information needed for the evaluation and documentation.
- ✓ Recognize that the cycle of feedback, follow-up and information dissemination develops a standardized protocol for ensuring evaluation capacity-building.
- ✓ Explain how much of the total budget should be allotted for program evaluation and what factors should determine this cost.
- ✓ Assess whether the information needs of the evaluation are met in relation to all stakeholders involved.
- ✓ Demonstrate the importance and role of cultural sensitivity and how it may strengthen or weaken the overall program evaluation and results.

**CAPACITY-BUILDING**

Skill development or enhancement produced by working with communities or groups through program or organization processes so that participants increase their ability to sustain initiatives over time.

**STAKEHOLDERS**

Those who are interested, involved and invested in a project.

## Pre-training Assessment

The Pre-training Assessment is an opportunity for you to check your knowledge against the information that will be addressed in this manual. Take this test now and again when you have completed the manual. Answers are found on page 76.

# Pre-training Assessment

Please circle the following statements either True or False.

1. **True** **False** Program evaluation is essential to a good program.
2. **True** **False** All program evaluations should be done at the end of the program.
3. **True** **False** Summative evaluation has been described as any combination of measurements obtained and judgments made before or during the implementation of programmatic activities to control, assure or improve the quality of performance or delivery.
4. **True** **False** Outcome-based evaluation focuses on the ultimate goal of a program or treatment, generally measured in the health field by morbidity or mortality statistics in a population, vital measures, symptoms, signs or physiological indicators on individuals.
5. **True** **False** Logic models will serve to map out what the program is expected to achieve and how it is expected to work based on an expected chain of events.
6. **True** **False** There is a single way to create a logic model and your program may not be successful unless proper attention is paid to this component.
7. **True** **False** The evaluation phase involves a sequence of stages that typically includes the formulation of the objectives, goals and hypotheses of the program.
8. **True** **False** Stakeholders cannot be characterized by the following groups: community groups, grant makers or funders, and university researchers.
9. **True** **False** An evaluator who is connected with the program is an external evaluator or an evaluation consultant.
10. **True** **False** Developing an evaluation plan is the worst way to ensure that you have the most productive evaluation addressing simple questions that are important to your community, your staff and your funding partners.
11. **True** **False** The earlier you develop the plan and begin to implement it, the better off your initiative will be and the greater the outcomes will be at the end.
12. **True** **False** The four main steps to developing an evaluation plan are to: clarify the program objectives and goals, develop evaluation questions, develop evaluation methods, and set up a timeline for evaluation activities.

Check answers on page 76, after reading the manual thoroughly.

## Check the Pulse

This manual was developed based on feedback from other community-based organizations (CBOs). To customize it for the particular needs of your organization, complete the following exercise

### Directions:

- ✓ Review the learning objectives for each unit
- ✓ List your learning objectives for each unit. Think about what knowledge and skills you would like to acquire in this unit.
- ✓ Then list what you have to offer to others on the unit topic. What experiences and lessons could you share with others?
- ✓ Repeat the process for each unit in this manual.
- ✓ Now, go back and review your learning objectives for each unit. Identify the most important learning objective. Write the objective below:

### My most important learning objective:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

# UNIT 1:

## Program Evaluation Introduction

### Purpose:

The purpose of this unit is to introduce common myths, concerns and facts about program.

### Learning Objectives:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ✓ Explain common myths about program evaluation, including why they are myths.
- ✓ Write your own concerns of program evaluation and compare your concerns with those presented in this unit.
- ✓ Explain the role of program evaluation and the facts that support it.

The purpose of this document is to help you further understand evaluation and build on your skill set. It has been written for experienced or inexperienced staff, advisory boards, collaborators and clients of community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and public or private health and human service organizations. While our principal targets are HIV/AIDS service providers, this document is applicable for anyone who conducts project evaluations.

**COLLABORATORS**

Individuals, agencies, businesses or government organizations that are working jointly and actively on a program or evaluation.

# I. Myths

Program evaluation is essential to a well-performing program and has often been misunderstood One myth is that evaluation is a costly activity that generates tedious data with limited conclusions. While that may have been true in the past, it is not the case any longer. Today's methods are much more concerned with utility, relevance and practicality.

Another myth is that evaluation is a one-time tool used to determine the success or failure of a program. Many people may believe that a program, once started, will operate without having to hear from its employees or clients again. In fact, success depends on continuous feedback and adjustment.

A final myth is that evaluations must be done at a specific time, be conducted a certain way and include outside experts. However, there is actually no one absolute way to conduct an evaluation.

# II. Concerns

According to the Management Assistance Program for Non-Profits, a St. Paul, Minn.-based nonprofit consultant, organization members typically have three major concerns when considering evaluations:

✓ **Evaluations will divert resources away from the program and therefore harm participants.** Many organizations feel compelled to use all of their HIV/AIDS dollars

only for programmatic activities. While officially a program evaluation is an administrative cost, consider that it is actually essential to making the organization's mission work and therefore should not be overlooked.

- ✓ **Evaluations will increase the burden on the program staff.** Although the work may be greater, staff will ultimately benefit from an evaluation because it validates their successes and provides information on how to improve their work. Some also fear the evaluation process may be just too complicated. Although these technical aspects of program evaluation may be difficult, it will provide a solid organized structure for other aspects of a supervisor's job.
- ✓ **If an evaluation is negative, the program or individuals may look bad.** Although an evaluation may reveal problems within a program, this disclosure provides an important opportunity to learn and improve the program and ultimately supports your HIV/AIDS initiatives.

# III. Facts

Bear in mind the following facts[1] when considering program evaluations:

- ✓ Program evaluation can verify or increase the impact of services on clients. Too often, providers rely on their own instincts and passions to conclude what their clients really need or whether the services being provided are really necessary.
- ✓ Program evaluation improves delivery mechanisms by increasing efficiency and decreasing cost. It serves to identify program strengths and weaknesses in order to improve the program.
- ✓ Program evaluation verifies that the program is running as originally planned, and it allows a program to fully examine and describe effective initiatives for duplication elsewhere, thus creating sustainability.
- ✓ Program evaluation is an essential organizational practice in public health, but it is neither practiced consistently across program areas nor sufficiently integrated enough into the day-to-day management of most programs. Evaluation is critical for all health promotion programs because it is an important means to distinguish successful programs from those that are unsuccessful.

1. US Department of Health and Human Services, *Evaluation Guidance Handbook: Strategies for Implementing the Evaluation Guidance for CDC-Funded HIV Prevention Programs*, 2002.

- ✓ Evaluation can help a program planner determine whether an HIV risk-reduction program actually decreased risk factors among participants, whether a smoking cessation workshop actually changed smoking behavior, or whether an exercise program should be continued.
- ✓ To generate useful and meaningful data about a program, the evaluation must be designed early in the process of program planning.

The main goal of an evaluation is to provide useful feedback to various audiences, including sponsors, donors, client groups, administrators, staff, and other constituencies. The feedback gained from the evaluation should influence decision-making and policy formulation. In addition, evaluation helps you (Center for Social Research Method, 2002):

- ✓ Identify what is and is not working in a program.
- ✓ Demonstrate to funders and the community what a program does and how it benefits participants.
- ✓ Support fund-raising by providing evidence of a program's effectiveness.
- ✓ Improve productivity by identifying weaknesses as well as strengths.
- ✓ Add to the existing knowledge in the human services field about what does and does not work for a specific program and its target participants.

**GOAL**

What a program is supposed to produce. A goal statement describes the intended consequences of the program being developed.

# UNIT 2:

## Types of Program Evaluation

### Purpose:

The purpose of this unit is to discuss the major types of program evaluation.

### Learning Objectives:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ✓ Define, compare and give examples of the two types of required government funder evaluations: formative and summative evaluations.
- ✓ Define, compare and contrast the three reasons for conducting an evaluation: goal-based, process-based and outcome-based.

# I. Two Classifications of Evaluations Required by Typical Government Funders

There are two major classifications for program evaluation: formative and summative. Many current HIV/AIDS-related governmental funding agencies require both types for any programs they fund. The formative evaluations usually take place within the first 18 months of the project, and summative evaluations are conducted during the last year of funding.

## A Formative Evaluation

A formative evaluation is primarily prospective. It serves to identify strengths in order to amplify them, or weaknesses that need improvement (Green & Lewis, 1986). A formative evaluation provides an opportunity to reinforce good habits and shape professional development by reflecting on the meaning of achievements. A formative evaluation might include: performing needs assessment, pre-testing a target population or pilot-testing a program.

## B. Summative Evaluation

This evaluation is primarily retrospective and involves assessing concrete achievements, perhaps as part of a process of acknowledgement or for giving awards. Summative evaluations document concrete evidence of achievement. Such evaluations are often seen as the final report or score.

**FORMATIVE EVALUATION**

Analysis of a program's strengths and weaknesses to gain improvement.

**SUMMATIVE EVALUATION**

Measurements and/or judgments that allow conclusions to be drawn about the impact, outcome or benefit of a program.

# II. Three Motivations for Conducting an Evaluation

There are basically three motivators or drivers for evaluations. Aspects of each driving methodology are essential to the documentation, coordination and integration of HIV/AIDS services.

| Driver of Evaluation | Measures | Example |
|---|---|---|
| Goal-based | The extent to which a program is meeting predetermined goals or objectives. | Competency testing |
| Process-based | How a program really works, along with its strengths and weaknesses. | Used in a long-standing program to determine if it is sustainable. |
| Outcome-based | Assesses whether the program being offered is essential to the program. | Focus on morbidity and mortality statistics in a population. |

## A. Goal-Based Evaluation

A goal-based evaluation determines if and to what extent the overall program goals are being met. This method relies on data collection and competency testing, for example when a student has to pass an exam to advance to the next grade.

**GOAL-BASED EVALUATION**

Used to determine if the program goal is being met.

**COMPETENCY TESTING**

An example of a goal-based evaluation.

As you are considering whether programs are meeting predetermined goals, the following questions should be addressed:[2]

- ✓ How were the program goals established? Was the process effective?
- ✓ What is the status of the program's progress toward achieving the goals?
- ✓ Will the goals be achieved according to the timelines specified in the program implementation or operations plan? If not, then why not?
- ✓ Does personnel have adequate resources (money, equipment, facilities, training, etc.) to achieve the goals?
- ✓ How should priorities be changed to put more focus on achieving the goals? (Depending on the context, this question might be viewed as a program management decision rather than an evaluation question.)
- ✓ How should timelines be changed? (Be careful about making these changes. Know why efforts are behind schedule before timelines are changed.)
- ✓ How should goals be changed? (Be careful before making these changes. Understand why current efforts are not achieving the goals before changing the goals.) Should any goals be added or removed? Why?
- ✓ How should goals be established in the future?

2. Management Assistance Program for Non-Profits, A Basic Guide to Program Evaluation, 2002.

## B. Process-Based Evaluation

A process-based evaluation looks at **how** your program works and produces results. Process evaluations are most typically used for long-standing programs, ones that have changed significantly over the years, or ones that have received complaints or logged major deficiencies in their services. This type of evaluation is useful once the program's operations are truly understood and they can be replicated — or avoided — in other places. The following common questions might be addressed in process-based evaluations:[3]

- ✓ On what basis do employees and/or clients decide what services are needed?
- ✓ What is required of employees in order to deliver the services?
- ✓ How are employees trained to deliver the services?
- ✓ How do clients enter into the program?
- ✓ What is required of clients?
- ✓ What do clients consider to be the strengths of the program?
- ✓ What does the staff consider to be the strengths of the program?
- ✓ What typical complaints are received from employees and/or clients?
- ✓ What do employees and/or clients recommend for improvements in the program?
- ✓ On what basis do employees and/or the clients decide that the services are no longer needed?

**OUTCOME-BASED EVALUATION**

Designed to examine the long-term effects of the program in terms of morbidity and mortality rates.

**PROCESS-BASED EVALUATION**

Designed to determine how a program really works and how it produces results.

## C. Outcome-Based Evaluation

An outcome-based evaluation focuses on the ultimate goal of a program or treatment. This evaluation, increasingly required by funders of nonprofits, is meant to determine whether the programs being offered are making a difference and/or achieving their overall mission.

Outcomes are the benefits to clients from participating in the program, usually in terms of improvements in knowledge, perceptions/attitudes or skills, or in conditions such as literacy, self-reliance, etc. They are not program outputs or units of services.

Typical outcomes in the health field are mortality statistics in the key population served, vital measures, symptoms, signs, and physiological indicators. Increasingly, funders for nonprofits are requiring outcome-based evaluations.

Use the following steps to conduct an outcome-based evaluation:[4]

- ✓ Identify the major outcomes that you want to examine or verify for the program under evaluation. How will these impact your clients as you work toward your mission? For example, if you are providing HIV testing to women, then review what benefits this will have on those women if you are effective. What would be

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

the impact if you include other services or resources such as Medicaid enrollment, transportation or employment training?

- ✓ Choose and prioritize the outcomes that you want to examine. Pick at least two but no more than four of the most important outcomes to examine.
- ✓ For each outcome, specify what observable measures will indicate that you are achieving those key outcomes with clients. This is often the most important and enlightening step in outcome-based evaluation as well as the most challenging part. Essentially, you need to transfer an intangible concept to a tangible behavior (e.g., supporting clients to get themselves to and from work, staying off drugs and alcohol, decreasing the number of sex partners, etc. During this indicator identification phase, it helps to have an "outside person," i.e., someone who can question why you can assume that an outcome was reached because certain associated indicators were present.
- ✓ Specify a "target" goal for clients. For example, your target goal might be the number or percentage of clients you commit to achieving specific outcomes, such as "Increased self-reliance (outcome) for 70 percent of adult, African-American women living in the inner city of Minneapolis as evidenced by the following measures (indicators)…"
- ✓ Identify the information needed to show these indicators. You will need to know how many clients in the target group went through the program, how many of them reliably made their own way to work and stayed off drugs, etc. If your program is new, you may need to evaluate the process in the program to verify that the program is indeed carried out according to your original plans.
- ✓ Decide how information can be efficiently and realistically gathered. Consider program documentation, observation of program personnel and clients in the program, questionnaires and interviews about clients' perceived benefits from the program, case studies of program failures and successes, etc.
- ✓ Analyze and report the findings.

# UNIT 3:

## Logic Models

### Purpose:

The purpose of this unit is to identify the reasons logic models are use in program evaluation.

### Learning Objectives:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ✓ Explain what a logic model is intended to do.
- ✓ Develop a logic model for programs.

Logic models communicate the logic or rationale behind a program. The purpose is to communicate the underlying "theory" behind why it is believed the program will work. These models are typically diagrams, flow sheets or other visual schematics that convey relationships between contextual factors and programmatic inputs, processes and outcomes.

**LOGIC MODEL**

A way of illustrating a program with a diagram or picture.

Before you plan your evaluation, it is recommended that you develop a program logic model. It will serve to map out what the program is expected to achieve and how it is expected to work based on an expected chain of events that link together the following elements:

- ✓ **Goals:** The risk and protective factors that your program is addressing.
- ✓ **Strategies:** The procedures and activities that will be implemented.
- ✓ **Target population:** The people who participate in or are influenced by the program.
- ✓ **Theory of change:** The program assumptions about why those changes will occur.
- ✓ **Short-term outcomes:** The immediate changes that are expected in individuals, organization, or communities.
- ✓ **Long-term impact:** The final consequences.

Here is an example of a logic model:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Goal** | ✓ Have two part-time HIV peer advocates for each 150 patients |
| **Strategies** | ✓ Empower client |
| | ✓ Coordinate self-help groups |
| **Target Population** | ✓ Buddy/Friend |
| | ✓ Regular group meetings |
| **Theory of Change** | ✓ Increase support |
| | ✓ Increase AIDS knowledge |
| **Short-Term Outcome** | ✓ Decrease depression |
| | ✓ Increase quality of life (QOL) |
| **Long-term Impact** | ✓ Increase mental health |
| | ✓ Increase QOL |

The chain of events that links inputs to outputs to outcomes in response to a situation is your "logic model." Too often, programs start with what seems like a good idea but lack the concrete measures necessary to document their success. Understanding your community's issues in order to design an appropriate program will involve a needs assessment, prioritization process and resources assessment. All of these components link directly to evaluation activities.

See the next page for a logic model worksheet to help you begin identifying the key components of your evaluation process.

# Worksheet — Logic Model

| (Goals) | (Strategies) | (Target Group) | (Theory of Change) | (Short Term Outcomes) | (Long Term Impacts) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| To address the level of this risk or protective factor: | We will do the following program activities: | For these people and for this amount of time: | We expect that this activity will lead to changes in these factors, _____ which in turn will lead to our program goal. | We will know these changes have occurred if: | We will know we are reaching our goals if: |
| Logic Model: | | | | | |
| Evaluation Questions: | | | | | |
| Measures and Sources: | | | | | |
| Analyses: | | | | | |

# UNIT 4:

## The Planning-Evaluation Cycle

### Purpose:

The purpose of this unit is to understand the planning-evaluation cycle as it relates to organizational impact.

### Learning Objectives:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

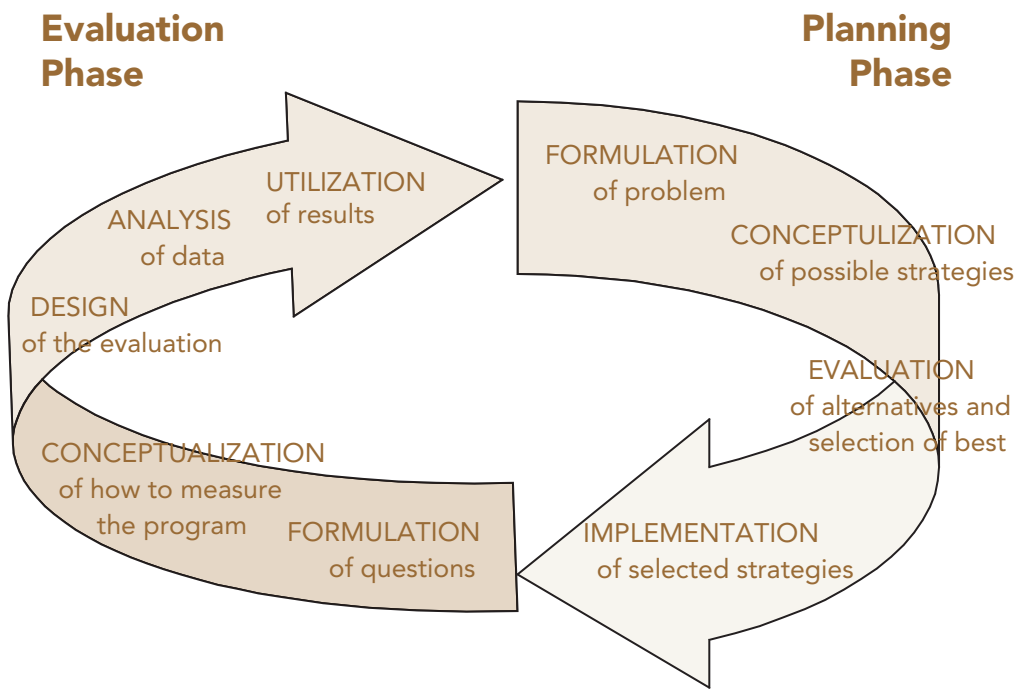
- ✓ Explain the relationship between planning and evaluation.
- ✓ Examine the stages of an evaluation phase.

Collaboration between evaluators and planners (grant writers, program developers, etc.) is critical, but there are inherent conflicts between the two groups. For example, planners may feel that the goal of "decreasing HIV risk" cannot be easily evaluated. When do you know HIV risk has been reduced? It is important for the program personnel to fully understand the evaluation process, feel comfortable with it and become excited about it. As a result, evaluation will provide quality control for future program planning by determining the gaps.

Usually, the first stage of the planning-evaluation cycle is intended to select the best actions, programs or technologies to help the organization achieve its goals. While this is actually the planning stage, this stage includes significant evaluation work as well attention to: the formulation of the problem, detailing available options, evaluating all alternatives and selecting and then implementing the best option.

The evaluation phase also involves a sequence of stages that typically includes the formulation of the objectives, goals and hypotheses of the program; the conceptualization and "operationalization" of the main mechanisms of the evaluation (the program, participants, setting and measures); the design of the evaluation, detailing how these components will be organized; the analysis of the information, both qualitative and quantitative; and the utilization of the evaluation results.

## FIGURE 1: THE PLANNING-EVALUATION CYCLE




Source: Trochim, W., Research *Methods Knowledge Base*, 2002.

# UNIT 5:

## Assembling an Evaluation Team

### Purpose:

The purpose of this unit is to learn how to build an evaluation team so that the components necessary for the purposes of an individual's organization are included.

### Learning Objectives:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ✓ Identify the components of an evaluation team.
- ✓ Describe the role and importance of the lead evaluator.
- ✓ Define key stakeholders for one's organization.
- ✓ Differentiate between internal and external evaluation.

# I. Guidelines for Compiling a Collaborative Group

One approach to conducting an optimal evaluation is by combining the efforts of a collaborative group. The Ryan White Local Governing Body is a good example of such a group, one you could draw from in your own community work. There are several key aspects to making a team effective (Centers for Disease Control, 2002):

- ✓ The group needs to be carefully selected. Stakeholders may have varying levels of team involvement that correlate with their personal perspectives, skills and concerns.
- ✓ The leader must coordinate the team as well as maintain continuity throughout the process. When choosing a lead program evaluator, it is necessary to choose someone who will maintain an objective view and has nothing to gain from the results of the evaluation. Those persons who are diplomatic and have diverse networking skills can engage other stakeholders and uphold involvement.
- ✓ The program's history, purpose and practical operation in the field must be included in the description of the program.
- ✓ The decision-makers and other persons who assist in guiding the program can help focus efforts on the design of the evaluation and questions that address specific areas. They can also put into place logistic parameters for the scope, timeline and delivery of the evaluation.
- ✓ Trustworthy persons who have no particular stake in the evaluation will be of use. They can ensure that the values of those participating are fairly considered when applying standards, interpreting facts and reaching justified conclusions.
- ✓ Advocates, clear communicators, creative thinkers and members of the power structure can help ensure that lessons learned from the evaluation influence future decision-making regarding program strategy.

# II. Members of the Evaluation Team

Every evaluation team needs a balance of different types of members and participants who have different needs, purposes and perspectives. Those people are often called stakeholders because they have a stake in the organization achieving its mission.

| Stakeholders in an Evaluation Team | Description |
|---|---|
| Community Groups | Includes staff and/or volunteers and the target population. |
| Grantmakers and Funders | Want to know how their money is being spent, usually want specific items addressed in an evaluation. |
| University-based Researchers | Includes specialists in public health promotion, epidemiology, behavioral science, evaluation or other academic fields. |

For community organizations, there are three basic groups of stakeholders:

- ✓ **Community groups:** Perhaps this is the most obvious category of stakeholders, because it includes the staff and/or volunteers involved in your initiative or project. It also includes the people directly affected by the program — your target audience.
- ✓ **Grantmakers and funders:** Most grantmakers and funders want to know how their money is being spent. They often have specific requirements about things they want you to evaluate. It is a good idea to find out what sort of information you will need to have for any future grants for which you might apply.
- ✓ **University-based researchers:** This includes researchers and evaluators that your organization may choose to bring in for the project. Such researchers might be specialists in public health promotion, epidemiology, behavioral science, evaluation, or some other academic field. It is important to include them in the evaluation development process if you really want them to help improve your initiative.

Each type of stakeholder will have a different perspective on your organization as well as what they want to learn from the evaluation. Every group is unique, and you may find that there are additional stakeholders to consider with your own organization.

Stakeholders also have different needs. Grantmakers and funders, for example, will usually want to know how many people were reached and served by the initiative, as well as whether the initiative had the community-level impact it intended to have. Community groups may want to use evaluation results to guide them in making decisions about

programs and where to focus their efforts. University-based researchers will most likely be interested in proving whether any improvements in community health were definitely caused by your programs or initiatives; they may also want to study the overall structure of your group or initiative to identify the conditions under which success may be achieved.

# III. Internal vs. External Evaluation

If a trained evaluator is personally involved with the program and performs the evaluation, it is called an internal evaluation. Internal evaluators have the advantage of being closer to the program staff and activities, which make it easier and less expensive to collect relevant data and information. However, internal evaluators can sometimes have trouble remaining objective and free from conflict of interest.

An evaluator who is not connected with the program is an external evaluator or an evaluation consultant. In poorly coordinated situations, this type of evaluator may be isolated, lacking the knowledge of and familiarity of the program that an internal evaluator would possess. This form of evaluation is more expensive but may provide the more objective look that McKenzie, James, & Smelter (2001) say is imperative for large programs. They have devised the following table, which lists characteristics that program planners should look for when selecting external evaluators.

**INTERNAL EVALUATION**

An evaluation conducted by an evaluator who is personally involved in the program.

**EXTERNAL EVALUATION**

An evaluation conducted by an individual who is not personally involved in providing or participating in the program.

## Characteristics of an External Evaluator

- ✓ Not directly involved in the development or implementation of the program.
- ✓ Impartial about evaluation results.
- ✓ Will not give in to pressure by program staff to produce predetermined findings.
- ✓ Experienced in the type of evaluation needed.
- ✓ Communicates well with program personnel.
- ✓ Considers program realities when designing an evaluation (e.g., budget).
- ✓ Delivers reports and protocols in a timely manner.
- ✓ Relates to the program.
- ✓ Sees beyond the evaluation to other program activities.
- ✓ Explains both the benefits and risks of evaluation.
- ✓ Educates personnel about conducting evaluations (for future needs).
- ✓ Explains material clearly and patiently.
- ✓ Respects all levels of personnel.

Whether internal or external, the evaluator must be credible and objective. Evaluators must have an unambiguous role in the evaluation design, truthfully reporting the results regardless of the findings. It is ideal for all organizations, even those that elect to use internal evaluators, to collaborate with partners outside of the agency. This will increase the available resources and enhance the evaluation's credibility. Furthermore, a diverse team of engaged stakeholders has a greater probability of conducting a culturally competent evaluation that is sensitive to the constituency, conditions and contexts connected with the program.

Among benefits of the collaborative approach, according to the CDC:

- ✓ It reduces suspicion and fear.
- ✓ It increases awareness and commitment.
- ✓ It increases the possibility of achieving objectives.
- ✓ It broadens the knowledge base.
- ✓ It teaches evaluation skills.
- ✓ It strengthens partnerships.
- ✓ It increases the possibility that findings will be used.
- ✓ It allows for differing perspectives.

# UNIT 6:

## Developing an Evaluation Plan

### Purpose:

The purpose of this unit is to assist in the formulation of an evaluation plan for any program.

### Learning Objectives:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ✓ Develop their own evaluation plan.
- ✓ Define the reasons for the development of an evaluation plan.
- ✓ Describe the timeline for evaluation.

# I. Purpose

After the planners have become involved, it is time to develop the evaluation plan. Listed below are a few reasons why developing such a plan is important:

- ✓ It acts as a guide through each step of the evaluation process.
- ✓ It helps you determine what type of information you and your stakeholders need.
- ✓ It keeps you from wasting time gathering irrelevant information.
- ✓ It helps you identify the best possible methods and strategies for getting the necessary information.
- ✓ It helps you come up with a reasonable and realistic timeline for evaluation.
- ✓ It helps you improve your program.

# II. Timeline

The best time to develop an evaluation plan is before you implement the program. The earlier you develop the plan and begin to implement it, the better off your initiative will be and the better the outcomes will be at the end. Having a plan in place to conduct an evaluation before the end of a program will make collecting information regarding program outcomes much easier and more accurate. The timeline should follow the following stages:

## Planning:

- ✓ Review the program goals and objectives.
- ✓ Determine if all resources are available to conduct the evaluation.
- ✓ Develop the evaluation design.
- ✓ Determine if evaluation questions reflect the goals and objectives.
- ✓ Develop a formal timeline.
- ✓ Meet with stakeholders to determine what general questions should be answered.

- ✓ Hire an evaluator, if needed.
- ✓ Decide which evaluation instruments will be used.
- ✓ Determine whether the questions of various groups are considered.

## Data Collection:

- ✓ Decide how the information will be collected.
- ✓ Plan and administer a pilot test.
- ✓ Determine who will be included in the evaluation — all participants or just a sample.
- ✓ Determine who will collect the data.
- ✓ Review results of the pilot test and refine the instrument as needed.
- ✓ Conduct the data collection.

## Data Analysis:

- ✓ Determine how the data will be analyzed.
- ✓ Conduct the analysis.
- ✓ Determine who will analyze the data.

## Reporting:

- ✓ Determine who will receive the results.
- ✓ Determine how the results will be disseminated.
- ✓ Decide when the results will be made available.
- ✓ Choose who will report the findings.
- ✓ Discuss how the findings will affect the program.
- ✓ Disseminate findings.

## Application:

- ✓ Determine how the results can be implemented.
- ✓ Modify program and implement changes.

# III. Developing the Plan

**IMPACT EVALUATION**

Assesses the immediate effects of a program.

There are four main steps to developing an evaluation plan:[5]

**1. Clarify the program objectives and goals.**

Clarifying these will help you identify which major program components should be evaluated. One way to do this is to make a table of program components and elements.

**2. Develop evaluation questions.**

There are four key categories of evaluation questions:

- ✓ Planning and implementation issues: How well was the program or initiative planned out. How well was that plan put into practice?
- ✓ Assessing attainment of objectives: How well has the program or initiative met its stated objectives?
- ✓ Impact on participants: How much and what kind of a difference has the program or initiative made for its targets of change?
- ✓ Impact on the community: How much and what kind of a difference has the program or initiative made on the community as a whole?

**3. Develop evaluation methods.**

Once you have come up with the questions that need to be answered in your evaluation, the next step is to decide which methods will best address those questions. Common evaluation methods include:

- ✓ Monitoring and feedback systems
- ✓ Client surveys about the program
- ✓ Goal-attainment reports
- ✓ Key informant interviews
- ✓ Behavioral surveys
- ✓ Community-level indicators of impact

**4. Set up a timeline for evaluation activities.**

Evaluation is not something you should worry about after everything else has been done. To get an accurate, clear picture of what your group has been doing and how well you have been performing, it is important to pay attention to the evaluation from the very start. Set a plan to do this now, as you start your evaluation.

5. Penn State University, *Program Evaluation*, 2002.

# IV. Evaluation and Empowerment

At first glance, evaluation and empowerment may not seem to go together. Consider, however, that a primary objective of almost any program is that the target community increases knowledge, ownership and strength. In other words successful programs almost always empower their members.

Determining how successful a program has been at empowering its members is one of the most difficult aspects of the evaluation process.

# UNIT 7:

## Conducting the Evaluation

### Purpose:

The purpose of this unit is to detail the evaluation process itself.

### Learning Objectives:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

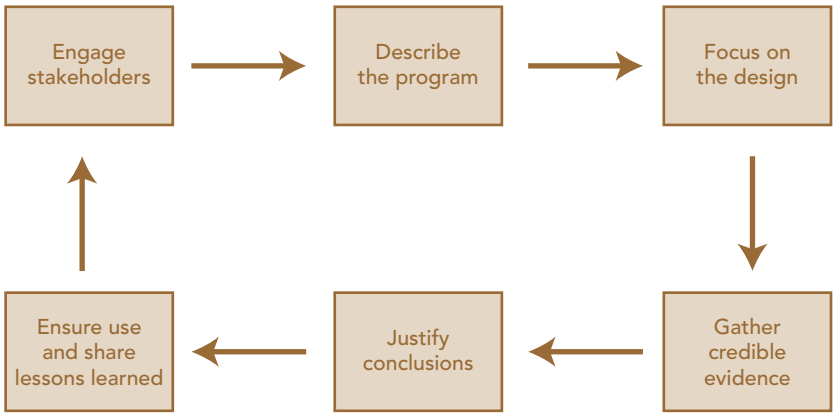
- ✓ Identify the steps in program evaluation.
- ✓ Identify the purpose of the evaluation framework.
- ✓ Conduct program evaluations.

Once evaluation is part of your program plan, you should develop the framework for the evaluation process and conduct the evaluation. The structure identified in this section is a practical tool that summarizes a logical order of the important steps of program evaluation. The framework can be used as the skeleton of a plan that can be used to conduct evaluation. The six related steps, adopted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2002), are actions that should be a part of all evaluations. The steps, however, are meant to be adaptable and flexible. The framework is intended to serve as a starting point around which community organizations can tailor an evaluation that best meets their needs. The early steps provide the foundation, and all steps should be finalized before moving to the next step.[6]

**EVALUATION FRAMEWORK**

A statement of theory about how the program input translates through a series of steps to program output.

# I. Steps in Program Evaluation




## A. Engage Stakeholders

- ✓ People or organizations that have something to gain or lose from what will be learned in the evaluation are identified as stakeholders. The three primary groups of stakeholders are 1) those involved in the program operation, 2) those served or affected by the program, and 3) the primary users of the evaluation results.
- ✓ Stakeholders must be engaged to ensure that their perspectives are understood. When stakeholders are not appropriately involved, evaluation findings are likely to be ignored,

6. Steps adapted from Community Tool Box, a research group at the University of Kansas.

criticized or resisted. On the other hand, if they are part of the process, people are likely to feel ownership for the evaluation process and its results. They will want to develop it, defend it and make sure that the evaluation actually works. Once involved, the stakeholders will help to carry out the rest of the process.

## B. Describe the Program

- ✓ This step sets the frame of reference for all subsequent decisions in the evaluation process. (The worksheet on the next page will assist you in defining your program.) A program description is a summary of the intervention being evaluated. It explains what the program is trying to accomplish and how it tries to bring about those changes. The description will also illustrate:
- ✓ The program's core components and elements.
- ✓ The program's ability to make changes.
- ✓ The program's stage of development.
- ✓ How the program fits into the larger community environment.
- ✓ At a minimum, the program should be described in enough detail that the mission, goals and objectives are understood. The description will also allow members of the group to compare the program to other similar efforts; consequently, it is easier to figure out what parts of the program brought about what effects.

### Specific aspects to include when describing a program are:

- ✓ **Need:** The problem, goal or opportunity that the program addresses.
- ✓ **Expectations:** The program's intended results.
- ✓ **Activities:** Everything the program does to bring about change.
- ✓ **Resources:** The time, talent, equipment, information, money and other assets available to conduct the program.
- ✓ **Stage of development:** The maturity of the program.
- ✓ **Context:** The environment within which the program operates.
- ✓ **Logic model:** A picture of how the program is supposed to work.

## C. Focus on the Evaluation Design

- ✓ This step entails making sure that the interests of the stakeholders are addressed while efficiently using time and resources. Depending on what you want to learn, some types of evaluation will be better suited to your purpose than others. Once data collection begins, it may be difficult to change what you are doing, even if it becomes obvious that another method would work better. A thorough plan anticipates intended uses and creates an appropriate evaluation strategy.
- ✓ Among the items to consider at this stage are articulating the purpose of the evaluation, determining the users and uses of the evaluation results, formulating the questions to be asked, determining which specific design type will be used, and finalizing an agreement about the process.

## D. Gather Credible Evidence

✓ The type of evidence depends on what kind of information the stakeholders want and the situation in which it is gathered. Those involved in an evaluation should strive to collect data that will convey a credible, well-rounded picture of the program.

**CREDIBLE EVIDENCE**

That which makes evident or manifest any mode of proof; the ground of belief or judgment.

## E. Justify Conclusions

✓ This step recognizes that evidence in an evaluation does not always speak for itself. Conclusions become justified when they are linked to the evidence obtained and judged against agreed-upon values set by the stakeholders.

## F. Ensure Use and Share Lessons Learned

✓ Unfortunately, lessons learned in an evaluation do not always lead to decision-making and subsequent action. Preparing for the use of the resulting evaluation requires strategic thinking and dedication in looking for opportunities to communicate the findings. When carrying out this final step, concern must be given to each group of stakeholders.

# Program Description Worksheet

**Use this tool to help you identify a program's specific purpose and functionality.**

**Who:**

1. To whom are you providing prevention services? _____

_____

2. Describe the population in terms of:

❏ Demographics _____

❏ Need _____

❏ Response levels to preexisting prevention efforts _____

Your program: _____

_____

**What:**

'1. What is your prevention program doing? For example, are you trying to increase knowledge regarding behaviors that put individuals at risk for HIV/AIDS? Are you trying to provide condoms and hopefully teaching proper use of condoms to a select population? _____

_____

2. Outline the specific actions you are taking and the reason for using each approach over another. _____

_____

**When:**

Describe when you conduct activities related to your objective and under what conditions. _____

_____

**Where:**

Describe the places in which your prevention activities occur. _____

_____

**Why (this question sets the evaluation in motion):**

What are the particular questions the founders want you to answer about the population in need? _____

_____

# UNIT 8:

## Program Surveillance and Documentation

### Purpose:

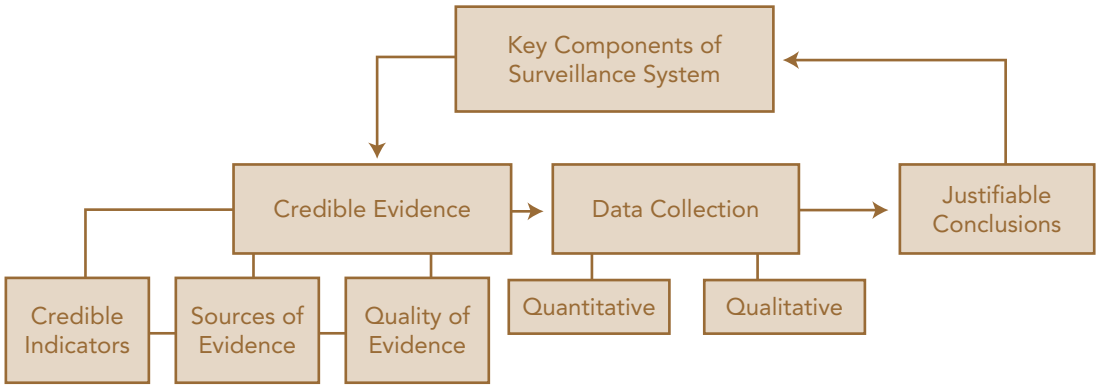
The purpose of this unit is to examine the basic components of program surveillance and the essentials of documentation. The topics covered will give insight on how to assess obtainable objectives, the program effect on learners and the impact on the community as a whole.

### Learning Objectives:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ✓ Understand the process of surveillance through the gathering of credible evidence, collection of data and justification of evaluation conclusions.
- ✓ Cite the relevance of credible indicators, sources of evidence, quality and quantity of evidence, and the role of logistics in regards to the establishment of credible evidence supporting your evaluation results.
- ✓ Identify what method of data collection is appropriate for the various types of information needed for evaluation and documentation.
- ✓ Explain and outline the five principles that govern the elements leading to justifiable conclusions based on credible evidence.

Program surveillance and documentation together track the effectiveness of program evaluations by assessing the program's effect on participants and on the community as a whole. The assessment of attainable objectives evaluates how well the program followed or met the intended stated objectives of the program. Specifically, the program's effect on participants measures whether the program made a difference and to what degree the change occurred within the intended target population. The program's impact on the community looks not only at the target population's change and level of program intervention, but also at what changes occurred within other groups (i.e., policy makers, community leaders, program personnel and the target group's social affiliations). Surveillance allows the key HIV/AIDS providers to coordinate within the community by gathering credible evidence through the methods of data collection and justifiable conclusions.




# I. Credible Evidence

Evaluations ultimately seek evidence of a program's effectiveness and proven credibility based on relevant indicators, sources of evidence, quality and quantity of evidence, and logistics.

Credible evidence is a specific, measurable example of a program's generally stated expected objectives and goals. Examples of credible indicators include: capacity to deliver services, the participation rate, the level of client satisfaction, the changes in participants' behavior, and the changes in community condition and norms.

Sources of evidence relate to the quality of the sampling target population. Is the target population credible and representative of the intended population of program implementation? Does the target population represent the diversity of the targeted community?

**RELIABILITY**

Refers to the need to establish the internal consistency of the instrument; the ability to yield similar results/ responses from the same respondent (in an unchanging situation) each time the instrument is used.

**VALIDITY**

Refers to the degree to which the instrument actually measures what it purports to measure. Instruments must be both reliable and valid. Reliability does not guarantee validity; however, an instrument that is not reliable cannot be valid.

Quality of evidence refers to the credibility of the information gathered during the evaluation. This refers to the reliability and validity of the instrument design, soundness of data collection procedures, training of interviewers and data collectors, and consistency of error checking.

Quantity of evidence refers to the amount of evidence that is obtained. A criterion has to be established prior to data collection in order to set the proper level of confidence and precision needed to ensure that what was collected is truly representative and statistically significant.

Logistics include the methods, timing and physical infrastructure for gathering and handling evidence. Logistics are strongly influenced by the type of methods used for data collection. This may differ according to organizations' cultural preferences, which dictate acceptable ways of asking questions and collecting information.

# II. Methods Of Data Collection

The methods recommended for nonprofit data collection come from social, behavioral and health sciences research. The most popular methods of data collection for the purpose of evaluation are questionnaires, surveys, checklists, interviews, documentation review, observation, focus groups and case studies. These methods can be broken up into two major categories: quantitative methods (questionnaires, surveys, checklists and documentation reviews) and qualitative methods (interviews, observations and focus groups).

Quantitative methods include collecting data via questionnaires, surveys, and checklists. They are used when there is a need for quick information obtained from people in a non-threatening way. These methods can be done anonymously and inexpensively, and can collect large amounts of data at one time. When using questionnaires and survey tools, the reliability and validity of the instruments must always be considered. Reliability refers to whether or not the instrument will get the same results from the target group, time after time with no variations, if the same tool is repeated within approximate situations. Validity refers to how accurate your questionnaire or survey solicits the information you are requiring from your target audience. Documentation reviews are used when an evaluation of how a program operates is needed without interrupting the program. These reviews are used to gather historical data and are usually done in conjunction with case studies. Case studies include in-depth reviews of the program, as well as the target groups, organization and community.

Qualitative methods include information gathered through interviews, observations and focus groups. Interviews are used when the evaluation requires fully understanding the participants' impressions or experiences, or learning more about the participants' answers to the questionnaire. Observations are conducted to gather accurate information on how the program operates and how it actually carries out its processes for implementation. Focus groups explore specific topics in depth though group discussions about reactions to experiences or suggestions.

## Overview of Methods to Collect Information

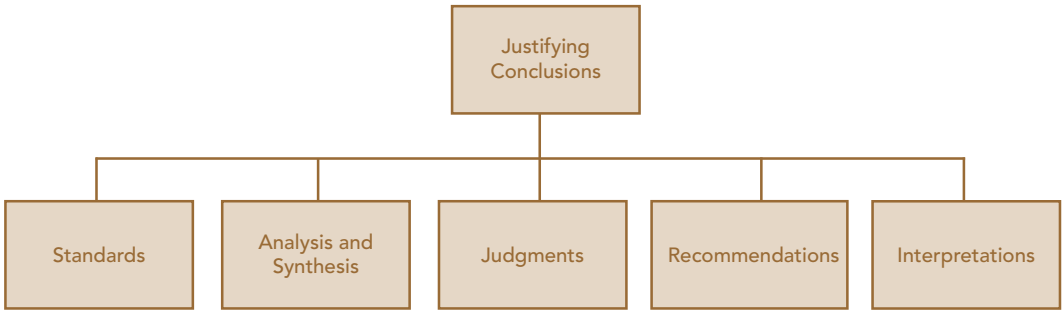
| Method | Summary | Advantages | Challenges |
|---|---|---|---|
| Questionnaires, surveys, checklists | Can quickly and easily get lots of information from people in a non-threatening way. | ✓ Respondants can complete anonymously.<br>✓ Inexpensive to administer.<br>✓ Easy to compare and analyze.<br>✓ Can be administered to many people.<br>✓ Can collect lots of data.<br>✓ Samples already exist. | ✓ Might not get careful feedback.<br>✓ Wording can bias client's responses.<br>✓ Are impersonal.<br>✓ May need sampling expert.<br>✓ Don't get full story. |
| Interviews | Can fully understand someone's impressions or experiences, or learn more about their answers to questionnaires. | ✓ Get full range and depth of information.<br>✓ Develop relationship with client.<br>✓ Can be flexible with client. | ✓ Can take much time.<br>✓ Can be hard to analyze and compare.<br>✓ Can be costly<br>✓ Interviewer can bias client's responses. |
| Documentation review | Obtains impression of how program operates without interrupting the program; is from review of applications, finances, memos, minutes, etc. | ✓ Gets comprehensive and historical information.<br>✓ Doesn't interrupt program or client's routine in program.<br>✓ Information already exists.<br>✓ Few biases about information. | ✓ Often takes much time.<br>✓ Info may be incomplete.<br>✓ Reviewers need to be quite clear about what they are looking for.<br>✓ Not flexible means to get data; data restricted to what already exists. |

| Method | Summary | Advantages | Challenges |
|---|---|---|---|
| Observation | Can gather accurate information about how a program actually operates, particularly with regard to processes. | ✓ Views operations of a program as they are actually occurring.<br>✓ Can adapt to events as they occur. | ✓ Can be difficult to interpret seen behaviors.<br>✓ Can be complex to categorize observations.<br>✓ Can influence behaviors of program participants.<br>✓ Can be expensive. |
| Focus groups | Explore a topic in depth through group discussion, e.g., about reactions to an experience or suggestion, understanding common complaints. Useful in evaluation and marketing. | ✓ Quickly and reliably get common impressions.<br>✓ Can be efficient way to get much range and depth of information in short time.<br>✓ Can convey key information about programs. | ✓ Can be hard to analyze responses.<br>✓ Need good facilitator for safety and closure.<br>✓ Difficult to schedule. |
| Case studies | Depict client's experiences in a program and conduct comprehensive examination through cross-comparison of cases. | ✓ Fully depict client's experience in program input, process and results.<br>✓ Powerful means to portray program to outsiders. | ✓ Usually quite time-consuming to collect, organize and describe.<br>✓ Represent depth of information, rather than breadth. |

(Source: Management Assistance Program for Non-Profits, *Basic Guide to Program Evaluation*, 2002.)

# III. Justifiable Conclusions

Evidence collected through any data collection method must be analyzed and interpreted, and conclusions reached then justified. Five elements are key to this justification process: standards, analysis and synthesis, interpretation, judgment, and recommendations.




Standards are important because they are an extension of the values held by the program's stakeholders. Standards provide the foundation for making program judgments, the bottom line of acceptable performance. The stakeholders negotiate each standard's value in terms of whether that standard helps the program meet its goals.

Analysis and synthesis are the methods used to discover and summarize the findings of the evaluation. Evaluators use these methods to assert direct or indirect relationships among the collected data. An example of a positive or direct relationship is "The more sleep one gets at night, the more productive one is the next day." An example of an indirect or negative relationship is "The more one sleeps during the day, the less productive one is on that particular day." We can detect statistical relationships by isolating important findings or combining different sources of information to form separate relationships. Interpretation is the process of figuring out what the findings mean. The data must be interpreted so that it is understood to have practical significance. It's important to realize that not all correlations are causal. In other words, just because the amount of sleep one gets **correlates** (positively or negatively) with that person's productivity, it doesn't necessarily mean sleep causes greater or lesser productivity.

Judgments are statements regarding merit, worth or significance. They are formed from comparing the findings and their interpretations with selected standards. Because multiple standards may exist in regard to the program, stakeholders must agree on which standards give merit, worth, or significance to the results' successes or failures. Recommendations are formed as a result of the evaluation.

Recommendations are springboards for further steps within a program that are developed based on the positive and negative correlations exposed through the analysis and synthesis. Recommendations are best received when shared with all stakeholders as drafts open for comment, rather than presented as directive facts and advice.

## Worksheet

### Questions to Consider when Justifying Conclusions

(From Commnity-Based Project Evaluation Guide, Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network, 2002.)

- ✓ Has the program been implemented as planned? If not, what happened?
  - Have some components been dropped, modified or added?
  - Have critical activities actually occurred?
  - What meetings occur to help remedy program problems and share successes?
- ✓ Is it clear how current activities will lead to the accomplishment of program goals?
- ✓ Are there any services that need to be modified?
- ✓ Do participants feel that modifications could improve the program? Is there any evidence to support this?
- ✓ Do participants feel that extending the life of these services would be useful? Is there any evidence to support this?
- ✓ Have there been any changes in the people you serve?
  - If there have, could you describe these changes?
  - Why did these changes occur?
  - What differences have you noticed as a result of these changes?
- ✓ Is your program reaching the targeted population? Are any other groups of people being reached by the program?
- ✓ What are the daily experiences of staff, volunteers and participants? Are they consistent with the goals of the program?
- ✓ Does the data suggest that the program is meeting the identified needs of the community?

(continued on page 57)

- ✓ Do participants say that the program is meeting their needs?
- ✓ How is the project building on community strengths/assets?
- ✓ What plans are in place to continually assess changes in community needs and assets?
- ✓ How are resources and leadership tasks shared among collaborators?
- ✓ How will the partnership be sustained if one key player is lost?
- ✓ How is the evaluation being used at the community level?
- ✓ What feedback loops are needed?

# UNIT 9:

## Ensuring Evaluation Capacity Building

### Purpose:

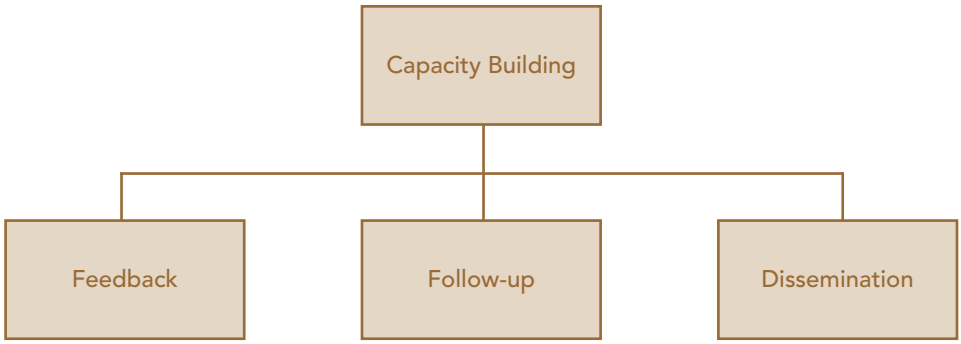
The purpose of this unit is to examine the various components that ensure sustainable evaluation capacity building.

### Learning Objectives:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ✓ Understand the cyclic nature of feedback, follow-up and information dissemination and how it gives birth to ongoing capacity building.
- ✓ Understand that a standardized plan for dissemination has to be agreed upon by all stakeholders involved in the evaluation as well as in the program in general.

Capacity building ensures that the stakeholders understand the evaluation procedures and findings, creating an ever-ready internal evaluation team so evaluation can continue over time. The essential parts of ensuring ongoing capacity building are feedback, follow-up and dissemination.




## Feedback

Feedback is the communication that must occur between all evaluation stakeholders outside and inside the agency. The transferring of information creates a rapport of trust among all stakeholders and develops a standard protocol for continued evaluation capacity building.

## Follow-up

Follow-up is the support that the stakeholders need during and after the evaluation. It's essential in order to ensure that all stakeholders implement required changes and prevent lessons learned from being lost. Follow-up also requires the monitoring of outside distribution and use of the findings to ensure that no misuse occurs

## Dissemination

Dissemination is the process of communicating the lessons learned from an evaluation to outside parties. This needs to be done in a timely, unbiased, and consistent fashion. The process of dissemination should be discussed in advance and agreed upon by all stakeholders involved in the evaluation process. Confidentiality must be maintained and a timeline agreed to and honored. This can be done via workshops, oral presentations, written presentations, press releases and publication in peer-review journals. Remember that the key to future development of your HIV/AIDS program will include "spreading your findings" to identified stakeholders, such as the Ryan White Planning Council and funding entity.

# Worksheet

## Questions to Consider when Ensuring Ongoing Capacity Building

- ✓ What are your plans for the information/data?
- ✓ How will you use the information?
- ✓ Did the results show that your program was successful in achieving its intended short-term outcomes?
- ✓ How will you communicate program successes and failures?
- ✓ What can be learned from the results?
- ✓ How can you integrate program improvement with minimum changes?
- ✓ Will program improvement require more funding?
- ✓ How will you market the program to others?
- ✓ What media will we use to communicate findings to the public — presentations, press conferences, academic journals, etc?
- ✓ Who will have access to the results?
- ✓ Who will be your audience for the evaluation reports?
- ✓ What resources will be needed to distribute your results?

(Source: *Commnity-Based Project Evaluation Guide*, Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network, 2002.)

# UNIT 10:

## Standards for Effective Evaluation

### Purpose:

The purpose of this unit is to examine the overall guidelines and standards for effective evaluation as adopted from the Joint Committee on Education Evaluation. The principles are general rules that are meant to be adapted to individual program evaluations. They are established to aid program evaluation as a general checklist of guiding principles.

### Learning Objectives:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ✓ Understand the various components of an effective evaluation in regards to its utility, feasibility, propriety and accuracy.
- ✓ Assess whether the information needs of the evaluation are met in relation to all stakeholders involved.
- ✓ Understand the procedures utilized to ensure the evaluation makes sense to all stakeholders and interested parties.
- ✓ Explain why propriety standards are essential to ensuring that the evaluation is done ethically.
- ✓ State further how program evaluation capacity can be aided by sound accuracy standards.

The Joint Committee on Educational Evaluation has developed guidelines to assess whether all the parts of an evaluation are well designed and working. (Community Tool Box, 2002.) The Program Evaluation Standards are meant to be guiding principles; rather than rigid rules to be followed, and should be adapted to individual program evaluations. The Program Evaluation Standards contain about thirty or more specific standards that are grouped into four major categories: utility, feasibility, propriety and accuracy.

# I. Utility Standards

The utility standards ensure that the information needs of the evaluation users are satisfied. There are seven utility standards.

- ✓ **Stakeholder identification:** People who are involved in (or will be affected by) the evaluation should be identified so that their needs can be addressed.
- ✓ **Evaluator credibility:** The people conducting the evaluation should be both trustworthy and competent so that the evaluation will be generally accepted as credible or believable.
- ✓ **Information scope and selection:** Information collected should address pertinent questions about the program and it should be responsive to the needs and interests of clients and other specified stakeholders.
- ✓ **Values identification:** The perspectives, procedures and rationale used to interpret the findings should be carefully described so that the bases for judgments about merit and value are clear.
- ✓ **Report clarity:** Evaluation reports should clearly describe the program being evaluated, including its context and the purposes, procedures and findings of the evaluation. This will help ensure that essential information is provided and easily understood.
- ✓ **Report timeliness and dissemination:** Significant midcourse findings and evaluation reports should be shared with intended users so that they can be used in a timely fashion.
- ✓ **Evaluation impact:** Evaluations should be planned, conducted and reported in ways that encourage follow-through by stakeholders so that the evaluation will be used.

# II. Feasibility Standards

Feasibility standards are designed to ensure that the evaluation makes sense and that the planned steps are both viable and pragmatic. There are three feasibility standards.

- ✓ **Practical procedures:** The evaluation procedures should be practical in order to keep disruption of everyday activities to a minimum while needed information is obtained.
- ✓ **Political viability:** The evaluation should be planned and conducted with anticipation of the different positions or interests of various groups. This should help in obtaining their cooperation so that possible attempts by these groups to curtail evaluation operations or to misuse the results can be avoided or counteracted.
- ✓ **Cost effectiveness:** The evaluation should be efficient and produce enough valuable information to jusitfy the resources used..

# III. Propriety Standards

The propriety standards ensure that the evaluation is an ethical one, conducted with regard for the rights and interests of those involved. The eight propriety standards are:

- ✓ **Service orientation:** Evaluations should be designed to help organizations effectively serve the needs of all of the targeted participants.
- ✓ **Formal agreements:** The responsibilities in an evaluation (what is to be done, how, by whom and when) should be agreed upon in writing so that those involved are obligated to follow all conditions of the agreement or to formally renegotiate it.
- ✓ **Rights of human subjects:** Evaluation should be designed and conducted to respect and protect the rights and welfare of all participants in the study.
- ✓ **Human interactions:** Evaluators should respect basic human dignity and worth when working with other people in an evaluation so that participants do not feel threatened or harmed.
- ✓ **Complete and fair assessment:** The evaluation should be complete and fair in its examination, recording both strengths and weaknesses of the program being evaluated. This allows strengths to be built upon and problem areas to be addressed.
- ✓ **Disclosure of findings:** The people working on the evaluation should ensure that all of the evaluation findings, along with the limitations of the evaluation, are accessible to everyone affected by the evaluation and any others with expressed legal rights to receive the results.

- ✓ **Conflict of interest:** Conflict of interest should be dealt with openly and honestly so that it does not compromise the evaluation processes and results.
- ✓ **Fiscal responsibility:** The evaluator's use of resources should reflect sound accountability procedures and be otherwise prudent and ethically responsible so that expenditures are appropriate and accounted for.

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

Responsibility of program staff to provide evidence to sponsors, boards and the community of conformity to program specifications and fiscal requirements.

# IV. Accuracy Standards

The accuracy standards ensure that the evaluation findings are considered correct. There are 12 accuracy standards:

- ✓ **Program documentation:** The program should be described and documented clearly and accurately so that what is being evaluated is clearly identified.
- ✓ **Context analysis:** The context in which the program exists should be thoroughly examined so that likely influences on the program can be identified.
- ✓ **Described purposes and procedures:** The purposes and procedures of the evaluation should be monitored and described in enough detail so that they can be identified and assessed.
- ✓ **Defensible information sources:** The sources of information used in a program evaluation should be described in detail so that the adequacy of the information can be assessed.
- ✓ **Valid information:** The information-gathering procedures should be chosen or developed and then implemented in such a way that they will assure that the interpretation is valid.
- ✓ **Reliable information:** The information-gathering procedures should be chosen or developed and then implemented so that they will assure that the information obtained is sufficiently reliable.
- ✓ **Systematic information:** The information from an evaluation should be systematically reviewed, and any errors should be corrected.
- ✓ **Analysis of quantitative information:** In an evaluation, quantitative information — data from observations or survey: should be appropriately and systematically analyzed so that evaluation questions are effectively answered.
- ✓ **Analysis of qualitative information:** In an evaluation, qualitative information — descriptive information from interviews and other sources — should be appropriately and systematically analyzed so that evaluation questions are effectively answered.
- ✓ **Justified conclusions:** The conclusions reached in an evaluation should be explicitly justified so that stakeholders can understand their worth.

- ✓ **Impartial reporting:** Reporting procedures should guard against the distortion caused by personal feelings and biases of people involved in the evaluation, so that evaluation reports fairly reflect the evaluation findings.
- ✓ **Meta-evaluation:** The evaluation itself should be evaluated against these and other pertinent standards so that the evaluation is appropriately guided. When the evaluation is completed, stakeholders can closely examine its strengths and weaknesses.

## Evaluation Standards Checklist

This page will help determine how well your evaluation met the standards outlined.

| Standard | Did the evaluation meet this standard? (Y/N) | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| **Utility Standards** | | |
| 1. Stakeholder Identification | | |
| 2. Evaluator Credibility | | |
| 3. Information Scope and Selection | | |
| 4. Values Identification | | |
| 5. Report Clarity | | |
| 6. Report Timeliness and Dissemination | | |
| 7. Evaluation Impact | | |
| **Feasibility Standards** | | |
| 1. Practical Procedures | | |
| 2. Political Viability | | |
| 3. Cost Effectiveness | | |
| **Propriety Standards** | | |
| 1. Service Orientation | | |
| 2. Formal Agreements | | |
| 3. Rights of Human Subjects | | |
| 4. Human Interactions | | |

| Standard | Did the evaluation meet this standard? (Y/N) | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| 5. Complete and Fair Assessment | | |
| 6. Disclosure of Findings | | |
| 7. Conflict of Interest | | |
| 8. Fiscal Responsibility | | |
| **Accuracy Standards** | | |
| 1. Program Documentation | | |
| 2. Context Analysis | | |
| 3. Described Purposes and Procedures | | |
| 4. Defensible Information Sources | | |
| 5. Valid Information | | |
| 6. Reliable Information | | |
| 7. Systematic Information | | |
| 8. Analysis of Quantitative Information | | |
| 9. Analysis of Qualitative Information | | |
| 10. Justified Conclusions | | |
| 11. Impartial Reporting | | |
| 12. Meta-evaluation | | |

(Source: Community Tool Box, 2002.)

## Checklist for Ensuring Effective Evaluation Reports

Does the report...

- ✓ Provide interim and final reports to intended users in time for intended uses?
- ✓ Tailor the report content, format and style for the audience(s) by involving audience members?
- ✓ Include an executive summary?
- ✓ Summarize the stakeholders and how they were engaged?
- ✓ Describe essential features of the program (perhaps in appendices)?
- ✓ Explain the focus of the evaluation and its limitations?
- ✓ Include an adequate summary of the evaluation plan and procedures?
- ✓ Provide all necessary technical information (perhaps in appendices)?
- ✓ Specify the standards and criteria for evaluative judgments?
- ✓ Explain the evaluative judgments and how they are supported by the evidence?
- ✓ List both strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation?
- ✓ Discuss recommendations for action along with their advantages and disadvantages?
- ✓ Ensure protections for program clients and other stakeholders?
- ✓ Anticipate how people or organizations may be affected by the findings?
- ✓ Present minority opinions or rejoinders where necessary?
- ✓ Verify that the report is accurate and unbiased?
- ✓ Organize the report logically and include an appropriate level of detail?
- ✓ Remove technical jargon?
- ✓ Use examples, illustrations, graphics and stories?

(Source: Community Tool Box, 2002.)

# UNIT 11:

## Challenges to Program Evaluation

### Purpose:

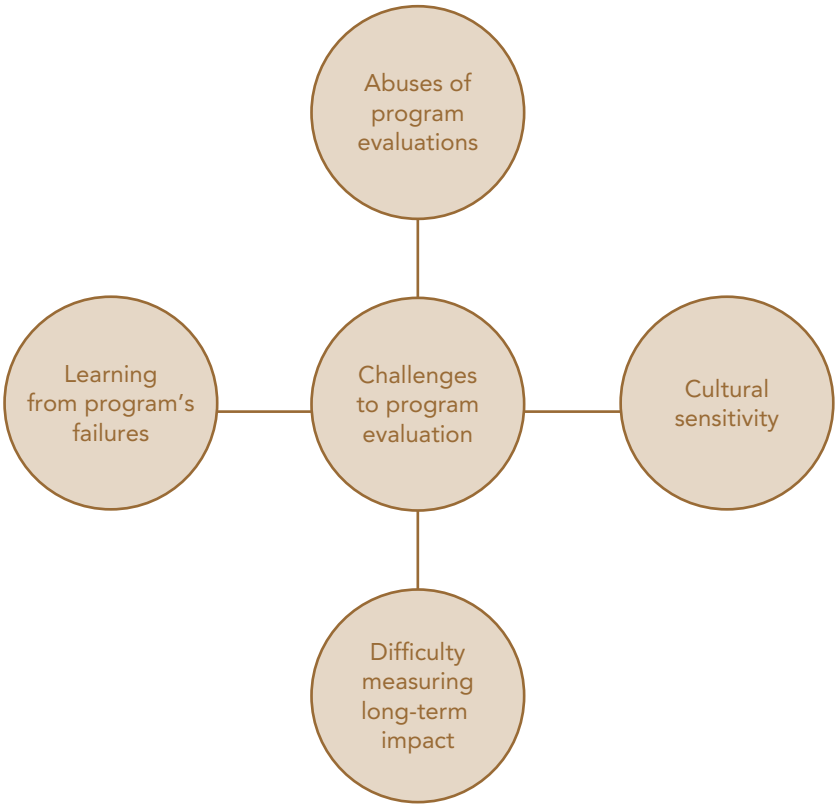
The purpose of this unit is to identify various challenges to program evaluation and control for these challenges in the design and implementation of the program evaluation.

### Learning Objectives:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ✓ Identify various abuses of program evaluations that may occur and present a list of alternatives or solutions.
- ✓ Recognize the importance and role of cultural sensitivity and how it may strengthen or weaken the overall program evaluation and results.
- ✓ Recognize the long-term challenges to the evaluation process and adjust accordingly.
- ✓ Understand the complexity of evaluating the program's failures and weaknesses and how they relate to the overall evaluation conclusions and results.

The field and programs related to HIV/AIDS change on a daily basis. In program evaluation, particular challenges include abuses of evaluations, cultural sensitivity, difficulty measuring long-term impact, and trouble learning from the program's failures and successes.




# I. Abuses of Program Evaluations

Abuses occur in the form of whitewashing (reporting only the strengths of a program), submarining (deliberately exposing the weaknesses of a program), posturing (not actively seeking to reform the program) or postponement (using the evaluation as an excuse to delay major decisions on the program). Evaluations should be conducted without these biases and done for the pure purpose of identifying strengths to maintain and weaknesses to reform in order to make program delivery more efficient and beneficial.

**CULTURAL SENSITIVITY**

Being aware that cultural differences and similarities exist and have an effect on values, learning and behavior.

# II. Cultural Sensitivity

Evaluations also face the challenge of cultural sensitivity. Cultural differences have to be accounted for in various degrees throughout the evaluation process. Evaluation tools must reflect the cultural attributes of the community. Surveys may not be appropriate if there is a low level of literacy in a given population, for example. One way to address cultural sensitivity is the direct involvement of clients in the evaluation process. They are key to the success of any program.

# III. Long-Term Impact

Another challenge to the evaluation process is the difficulty of measuring the long-term impact that the evaluation will have on an existing program. The organization has the continued responsibility to carry out the recommendations and next steps to ensure that the evaluation experience actually strengthens the program. Often, there is no evaluation capacity building or ongoing surveillance; thus, no real changes occur within the program.

Another barrier to measuring long-term impact is the fact that there are no experimental designs for comparison between the programs being evaluated and an identical program elsewhere. Thus, it is not always possible to say that the results of the evaluation were solely credited to the evaluation process instead of to another community initiative that took place shortly after the evaluation.

# IV. Learning From Program Failures

In order for a program to strengthen its results, its failures and weakness have to be transformed into successes and strengths. These recommendations are too often overlooked. Many organizations tend to focus only on those recommendations that will yield greater results with regard to their strengths. Recommendations addressing failures are often ignored, and the areas of the program that were failing eliminated.

Organizations do this by labeling the failures and weaknesses as liabilities and streamlining these areas for reasons of efficiency. Often, this occurs at the expense of the target population benefiting not from a strengthened program, but rather an overall weakened program. The purpose of program evaluation is not merely to expose the strengths and weaknesses of a program for the sole purpose of streamlining. Evaluation is meant to identify the strengths and weakness for the purpose of continuous feedback and the chance to adjust the program accordingly to achieve optimum success.

# V. Time and Resources

Time and financial resources will ultimately determine what type of evaluator is needed, the complexity of the evaluation and the type of information desired.

Preferably, time and financial resources allotted to evaluation should be from 6 percent (for smaller programs) to 10 percent of the total program budget (for larger programs).

Financial resources are major factors in determining what type of evaluator is needed. If funding is available, you should strongly consider hiring a professional evaluator. If there is no money available, community or other volunteer evaluators will have to suffice.

The complexity of the evaluation will also determine the level of resources allocated to the evaluation process. If the evaluation is meant to assess an existing program with simple measurable objectives and goals, then fewer resources are needed. On the other hand, if the evaluation must assess various degrees of objectives and goals that are complex and dynamic, as well as various processes within the program, then more resources and time will be needed.

The type of information needed will also determine the level of time and resources that must be allocated. If only quantitative data is needed, then time is not as big of a factor as are resources. Often, the analysis of quantitative data has to be in-depth and performed by a trained researcher or statistician. Qualitative data requires more time to collect and analyze, yet may require less outside assistance. Staff already involved in the program can serve as evaluators through focus groups, interviews, etc.

## Post-training Assessment

The following answers to the Pre-training Assessment that was given at the beginning of the workshop are designed to provide a brief recapitulation of the material that has been presented in this manual.

# Post-training Assessment

1. **True** **False** Program evaluation is essential to a good program.
2. **True** **False** All program evaluations should be done at the end of the program.
3. **True** **False** Summative evaluation has been described as any combination of measurements obtained and judgments made before or during the implementation of programmatic activities to control, assure or improve the quality of performance or delivery.
4. **True** **False** Outcome-based evaluation focuses on the ultimate goal of a program or treatment, generally measured in the health field by morbidity or mortality statistics in a population, vital measures, symptoms, signs or physiological indicators on individuals.
5. **True** **False** Logic models will serve to map out what the program is expected to achieve and how it is expected to work based on an expected chain of events.
6. **True** **False** There is a single way to create a logic model and your program may not be successful unless proper attention is paid to this component.
7. **True** **False** The evaluation phase involves a sequence of stages that typically includes the formulation of the objectives, goals and hypotheses of the program.
8. **True** **False** Stakeholders cannot be characterized by the following groups: community groups, grant makers or funders, and university researchers.
9. **True** **False** An evaluator who is connected with the program is an external evaluator or an evaluation consultant.
10. **True** **False** Developing an evaluation plan is the worst way to ensure that you have the most productive evaluation addressing simple questions that are important to your community, your staff and your funding partners.
11. **True** **False** The earlier you develop the plan and begin to implement it, the better off your initiative will be and the greater the outcomes will be at the end.
12. **True** **False** The four main steps to developing an evaluation plan are to: clarify the program objectives and goals, develop evaluation questions, develop evaluation methods, and set up a timeline for evaluation activities.

# APPENDIX A

## Glossary

**Accountability:** Responsibility of program staff to provide evidence to sponsors, boards and the community of conformity to program specifications and fiscal requirements.

**Capacity-building:** Skill development or enhancement produced by working with communities or groups through program or organization processes so that participants increase their ability to sustain initiatives over time.

**Collaborators:** Individuals, agencies, businesses or government organizations that are working jointly and actively on a program or evaluation.

**Competency testing:** An example of a goal-based evaluation.

**Credible evidence:** That which makes evident or manifest any mode of proof; the ground of belief or judgment.

**Cultural sensitivity:** Being aware that cultural differences and similarities exist and have an effect on values, learning and behavior.

**Evaluation design:** The plan of action for an evaluation, it outlines the steps to follow.

**Evaluation framework:** A statement of theory about how the program input translates through a series of steps to program output.

**External evaluation:** An evaluation conducted by an individual who is not personally involved in providing or participating in the program

**Formative evaluation:** Analysis of a program's strengths and weaknesses to gain improvement.

**Goal:** What a program is supposed to produce. A goal statement describes the intended consequences of the program being developed.

**Goal-based evaluation:** Used to determine if the program goal is being met.

**Impact evaluation:** Assesses the immediate effects of a program.

**Internal evaluation:** An evaluation conducted by an evaluator who is personally involved in the program.

**Logic model:** A way of illustrating a program with a diagram or picture.

**Outcome-based evaluation:** Designed to examine the long-term effects of the program in terms of morbidity and mortality rates.

**Process-based evaluation:** Designed to determine how a program really works and how it produces results.

**Reliability:** Refers to the need to establish the internal consistency of the instrument; the ability to yield similar results/responses from the same respondent (in an unchanging situation) each time the instrument is used.

**Stakeholders:** Those who are interested, involved and invested in a project.

**Summative evaluation:** Measurements and/or judgments that allow conclusions to be drawn about the impact, outcome or benefit of a program.

**Validity:** Refers to the degree to which the instrument actually measures what it purports to measure. Instruments must be both reliable and valid. Reliability does not guarantee validity; however, an instrument that is not reliable cannot be valid.

# APPENDIX B

## Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Why should I do a program evaluation?**
   Program evaluations improve delivery mechanisms by increasing efficiency and decreasing cost. They serve to identify program strengths and weaknesses in order to improve the program being studied.

2. **What is the better type of evaluation, internal or external?**
   There are benefits and cost trade-offs associated with having internal or external evaluators. However, remember that there is no one absolute way to conduct an evaluation.

3. **When should I conduct a formative or summative evaluation?**
   The formative evaluations usually take place within the first 18 months of the project. Summative evaluations are conducted during the last year of funding.

4. **What are some examples of formative evaluation?**
   Examples of these measurements include performing a needs assessment, pre-testing a target population and pilot-testing a program.

5. **Where does competency testing fit into program evaluation?**
   Competency testing is an example of goal-based evaluation that determines whether a student is able to pass an exam or advance to the next grade. This approach allows emphasis to be placed on how objectives are to be measured for use in future programs.

6. **What are outcomes?**
   Outcomes are the benefits to clients from participating in the program, usually in terms of improvements in knowledge, perceptions/attitudes or skills, or in conditions like literacy, self-reliance, etc. Outcomes are not program outputs or units of services.

7. **Why should I use logic models in program evaluation?**
   Logic models should be used to communicate the underlying "theory" or set of assumptions that program proponents have about why the program will work. These models are typically diagrams, flow sheets or other visual schematics that convey relationships.

8. **Where should I start when using logic models?**
   There is no single way to create a logic model and your starting point often depends on the developmental stage of the program.

**9. What are the steps in the planning part of the cycle?**
The four steps are: formulization of problem, conceptualization of possible strategies, evaluation of alternatives and implementation of selected strategies.

**10. What are the steps in the evaluations part of the cycle?**
The five steps are: formulization of questions, conceptualization of how to measure, design of the evaluation, analysis of data and utilization of results

**11. Who should participate in the evaluation?**
Stakeholders, that is those who are interested, involved and invested in the project. They include community groups, grantmakers or funders, and university researchers.

**12. What is a key characteristic of an external evaluator?**
Evaluators must have an unambiguous role in the evaluation design, truthfully reporting the results regardless of the findings.

**13. Why should I develop an evaluation plan?**
An evaluation plan acts as a guide through each step of the process of evaluation, helps you determine what type of information you and your stakeholders need, keeps you from wasting time gathering irrelevant information, helps you identify the best possible methods and strategies for getting the necessary information, helps you come up with a reasonable and realistic timeline for evaluation, and helps you improve your program.

**14. At what point in time should I start thinking about an evaluation?**
To get an accurate, clear picture of what your group has been doing and how well you have been performing, it is important to pay attention to the evaluation from the very beginning of your program.

**15. How can the framework of program evaluation be used?**
The framework can be used as the skeleton of a plan that can be used to conduct evaluation.

**16. What is the framework supposed to do?**
The framework is intended to serve as a starting point around which community organizations can tailor an evaluation to best meet their needs.

**17. What is the focus of an evaluation of the program's impact on the community?**
The program's impact on the community looks not only at the target population's change and level of program intervention, but also at what changes occurred within other groups (i.e., policy makers, community leaders, program personnel, and the target group's social affiliations).

**18. What factors determine whether a program's evidence can be considered credible?**
A program's evidence is viewed as credible based on relevant indicators, sources of evidence, quality of evidence, quantity of evidence and logistics.

**19. What does feedback have to do with program evaluations?**
Feedback is the communication that has to occur among everyone involved in the evaluation, outside and inside the organization.

**20. Why do I need to follow up?**
This is essential in order to ensure that all stakeholders implement required changes and prevent lessons learned from being lost.

**21. How much time and resources should be dedicated to evaluation?**
Preferably, time and financial resources allotted to evaluation should be from 6 percent for smaller programs) to 10 percent of the total program budget (for larger programs).

**22. Does qualitative data take more time to gather and produce?**
Qualitative data attainment requires more time, yet necessary resources may be acquired with a minimum of outside aid.

**23. Why do we have feasibility standards?**
The feasibility standards are to ensure that the evaluation makes sense and that the planned steps are both viable and pragmatic.

**24. How do we ensure that our evaluation is an ethical one?**
To ensure that your evaluation is an ethical one, you should use propriety standards. These ensure that the evaluation is conducted with regard for the rights and interests of those involved.

**25. What are some examples of abuses of program evaluation?**
Abuses occur in the form of eye-washing, whitewashing, submarining, posture and postponement.

**26. Why do we have to address cultural sensitivity in our evaluation?**
Evaluators and stakeholders involved in the evaluation process must respect the cultures of the communities in which they are working and not violate their norms or mores intentionally or unintentionally. How the evaluation team conducts itself throughout the evaluation process reflects directly on the organization it is representing.

# APPENDIX C

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Funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, grants U22/CCU318121 and U22/CCU318525.