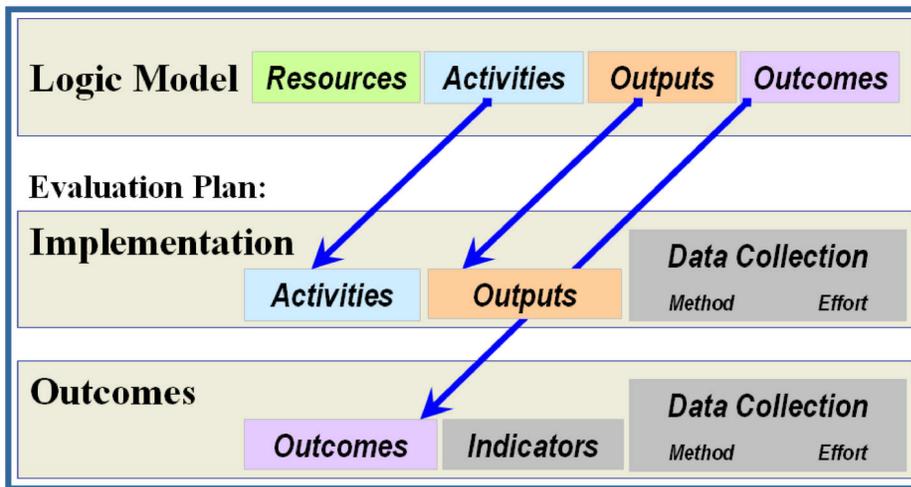


Evaluation Plan Workbook



Evaluation Plan Workbook

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Introduction

How to Use this Workbook

Welcome to Innovation Network's *Evaluation Plan Workbook*, which offers an introduction to the concepts and processes of planning a program evaluation. We hope that after following this workbook, you will understand evaluation as a tool for empowerment. You will learn how evaluation can help your organization be more effective, and you will be able to develop plans to evaluate both the implementation and outcomes of your programs.

This is the second workbook in a series. We recommend that before using this workbook, you go through the **Logic Model Workbook**.

You may use this book in whatever way suits you best:

- As a stand-alone guide to help create an evaluation plan for a program
- As an extra resource for users of the online Evaluation Plan Builder (see the Point K Learning Center at www.innonet.org)
- As a supplement to an in-person training on evaluation planning.



This checklist icon appears at points in the workbook at which you should take an action, or record something – gather information, take action, write something in your template, or enter something into your online Logic Model Builder.

You can create your evaluation plan online using the **Evaluation Plan Builder** in Innovation Network's **Point K Learning Center**, our suite of online planning and evaluation tools and resources at www.innonet.org. This online tool walks you through the evaluation planning process; allows you to use an existing logic model as a framework for your evaluation plan; saves your work so you can come back to it later; and share work with colleagues to review and critique.

For those of you who prefer to work on paper, an **evaluation plan template** is located at the end of this workbook. You may want to make several copies of the template, to allow for adjustments and updates to your evaluation plan over time.

*One of the negative connotations often associated with evaluation is that it is something **done to** people. One is evaluated. Participatory evaluation, in contrast, is a process controlled by the people in the program or community. It is something they undertake as a formal, reflective process for their own development and empowerment.*

M. Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation Methods*¹

What is Evaluation?

Evaluation is the systematic collection of information about a program that enables stakeholders to better understand the program, improve its effectiveness, and/or make decisions about future programming.

Proving vs. Improving: A Brief History of Evaluation

Evaluation has not always been—and still is not always—viewed as a tool to help those involved with a program to better understand and improve it.

Historically, evaluation focused on *proving* whether a program worked, rather than on *improving* it to be more successful. This focus on proof has meant that “objective,” external evaluators conducted the evaluations. Research designs used rigorous scientific standards, using control or comparison groups to assess causation. Evaluations occurred at the end of a project and focused only on whether the program was a success or failure; it did not seek to learn what contributed to or hindered success. Finally, this type of evaluation often disengaged program staff and others from the evaluation process; these stakeholders rarely learned answers to their questions about a program and rarely received information to help them improve the program.

Our Approach

We believe evaluation can be a form of empowerment. Participatory evaluation empowers an organization to define its own success, to pose its own evaluation questions, and to involve stakeholders and constituents in the process. Rather than being imposed from the outside, evaluation can help program stakeholders identify what a program is expected to accomplish (and when), thereby making sure everyone’s expectations for the program are aligned. By looking systematically at what goes into a program, what the program is doing and producing, and what the program is achieving, this evaluation approach enables program stakeholders both to be accountable for results and to learn how to improve the program.

¹ 2nd edition, 1990; p. 129.

Evaluation Principles²

We believe that evaluation is most effective when it:

- **Links to program planning and delivery.** Evaluation should inform planning and implementation. Evaluation shouldn't be done only if you have some extra time or only when you are required to do it. Rather, evaluation is a process integral to a program's effectiveness.
- **Involves the participation of stakeholders.** Those affected by the results of an evaluation have a right to be involved in the process. Participation will help them understand and inform the evaluation's purpose. Participation will also promote stakeholder contribution to, and acceptance of, the evaluation results. This increases the likely use of the evaluation results for program improvement.
- **Supports an organization's capacity to learn and reflect.** Evaluation is not an end in itself; it should be a part of an organization's core management processes, so it can contribute to ongoing learning.
- **Respects the community served by the program.** Evaluation needs to be respectful of constituents and judicious in what is asked of them. Evaluation should not be something that is "done to" program participants and others affected by or associated with the program. Rather, it should draw on their knowledge and experience to produce information that will help improve programs and better meet the needs of the community.
- **Enables the collection of the most information with the least effort.** You can't—and don't need to—evaluate everything! Focus on what you need to know. What are the critical pieces of information you and your stakeholders need to know to remain accountable and to improve your program?

² Some information in this section is drawn from: Earl, Sarah *et al.* *Outcome Mapping: Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs*. International Development Research Centre (Canada), 2002.

Why Evaluate?

Conducting a well-conceived and implemented evaluation will be **in your interest**. It will help you:

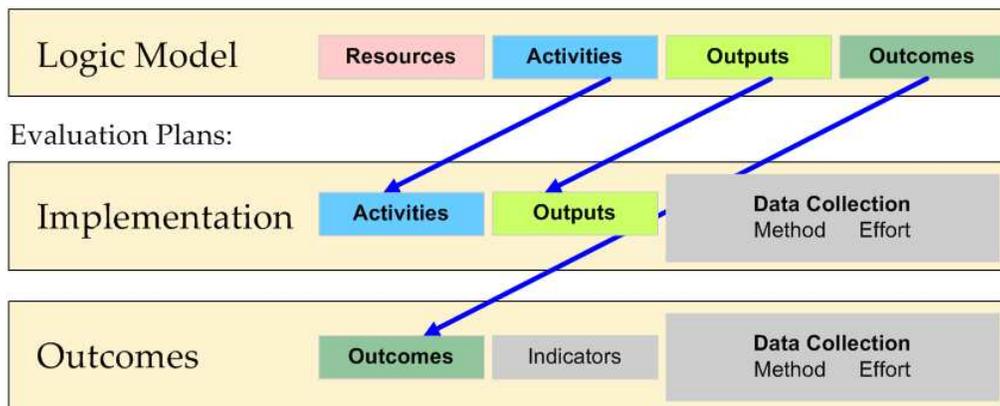
- **Understand and improve your program.** Even the best-run programs are not always complete successes. Every program can improve; the information collected in an evaluation can provide guidance for program improvement. As you incorporate evaluation into your ongoing work, you will gain useful information and become a “learning organization” — one that is constantly gathering information, changing, and improving.
- **Test the theory underlying your program.** The systematic data you collect about your program’s short-, intermediate and long-term achievements as well as its implementation helps you to understand whether (and under what conditions) the hypotheses underlying your program are accurate, or whether they need to be modified.
- **Tell your program’s story.** The data collected through evaluation can provide compelling information to help you describe what your program is doing and achieving. Evaluation results provide a strong framework for making your program’s case before stakeholders, funders, and policy-makers.
- **Be accountable.** Evaluation helps you demonstrate responsible stewardship of funding dollars.
- **Inform the field.** Nonprofits that have evaluated and refined their programs can share credible results with the broader nonprofit community. A community that can share results can be more effective.
- **Support fundraising efforts.** A clear understanding of your program—what you did well, and precisely how you accomplished your outcomes—helps you raise additional funds to continue your work and expand or replicate your efforts.

Developing an Evaluation Plan

Evaluation planning identifies and organizes questions you have about your program and plots a route to get answers. Most questions that organizations probe through evaluation are in three categories:

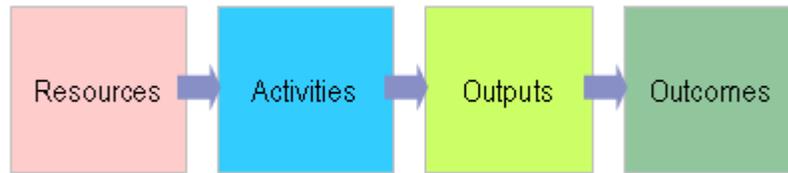
- What did we do?
- How well did we do it?
- What difference did our program make? (What changes occurred because of our program?)

Your program’s logic model will form the foundation of your evaluation plan. As you look at your logic model, you will find questions about your program that you hope to answer. The purpose of evaluation planning is to identify these questions and plan a route to finding the answers.



Two major forms of evaluation help answer these questions.

- 1) **Implementation Evaluation:** Are you performing the services or activities as planned? Are you reaching the intended target population? Are you reaching the intended number of participants? Is it leading to the products you expected? How do the participants perceive these services and activities? These questions are about implementation.
- 2) **Outcomes Evaluation:** Is your target audience experiencing the changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, or awareness that you sought? What are the results of your work? What is it accomplishing among your target audience? These questions are about outcomes.



Implementation and Outcomes: One without the Other?

We believe that an effective evaluation should answer both types of questions. You can do one without the other, but you will not learn as much as if you conduct both types.

In the “old days”, nonprofit evaluation focused on documenting and reporting on program activities. Nonprofits and others then assumed that if it implemented program activities as planned, desired results would occur for the individuals, families, organizations, or communities they served. In general, the nonprofit community focused on reporting on implementation to the exclusion of outcomes. In recent years, the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction: nonprofits are under pressure to measure and report outcomes, with little emphasis on implementation.

The evaluation framework we use incorporates both outcomes and implementation.

Programs are complex. You need to understand the degree to which you accomplished your desired outcomes. You also want to learn what aspects of your program contributed to those achievements and what barriers exist to your program getting its ideal results.

This workbook will:

- Lead you through the development of a plan to evaluate your program’s implementation.
- Help you create a plan to evaluate your program’s outcomes.

It doesn’t matter which you do first – if you would prefer to start with outcomes, please do so.

Evaluating Implementation:
What Did You Do? How Well Did You Do It?

Activities	Outputs & Implementation Questions	Data Collection Method (How to Measure)	Data Collection Effort (have, low, med, high)
Activity Group	Outputs		
	Questions		
Activity Group	Outputs		
	Questions		

The illustration above outlines the components of your implementation evaluation plan.

What You Did: Activities & Outputs

Your implementation evaluation plan starts with identification of the **activities** of your program. The activities are the actions that the program takes to achieve desired outcomes. If your program entails many activities, you may have organized these activities into **activity categories**—closely related groups of activities in your program.

Your **outputs** are the tangible products of your program’s activities. Outputs are also the evidence of your activities. In implementation evaluation, outputs are the items you will actually measure to evaluate your activities. Measuring outputs answers the question: What Did We Do? This is often the easiest and most direct process in evaluation.



Build Your Evaluation Plan: Information from the Logic Model

(Visit the Point K Learning Center at www.innonet.org to download our *Logic Model Workbook* or use the online Logic Model Builder.)

- If you are working on paper:
 - Take your activity categories and individual activities from your logic model and place them in the “Activities” column in your Implementation Plan template.
 - Take your outputs from the logic model, and place them in the “Outputs” boxes in your plan.
 - Review your outputs and determine if you want to track any additional “products” from your activities. Include these in the outputs boxes.
- If you are working online at Point K, this information will pre-fill from your Logic Model into your Evaluation Plan.

How Well You Did It: Additional Evaluation Questions

Documenting activities and associated outputs tells us **what** you did. However, that isn't sufficient for evaluation purposes (after all, you already had your activities and outputs identified in your logic model). The purpose of implementation evaluation is to understand **how well you did it**.

The next step is to identify other questions you have about your activities and their outputs. What information will help you better understand the implementation of your program? The following are examples of the types of questions you might consider:

- **Participation:** Did the targeted audience participate in the activities as expected? Why? Were some individuals over- or under-represented? Why?
- **Quality:** Were the services/materials you provided perceived as valuable by the intended audience? Were they appropriate? How did others in the field view their quality?
- **Satisfaction:** Did those affected by your program's services approve of them? Why? Who was most/least satisfied?
- **Context:** What other factors influenced your ability to implement your program as planned? What political, economic, or leadership issues intervened, changing the expected outcomes in your program?

Choosing Questions

Brainstorm additional questions you may want to answer regarding the implementation of your program. Use “Participation/Quality/Satisfaction/Context” only as a guide; there is no need to have one of each question for all activities, or limit your questions to these categories. Keep your list targeted to those “need-to-know” questions that will have the biggest impact on program improvement.

The answers to these questions can offer rich feedback for program improvement. They move beyond a simple inventory of outputs and activities, often probing the viewpoint of those you are serving. Still, they are related to your program’s *implementation* rather than *outcomes*; they address *what you did*, not *what changes occurred* because of your program.



Build Your Evaluation Plan: Insert your questions into the Questions box in your evaluation plan template, or on the “Implementation Questions” tab of the online Evaluation Plan Builder.

Implementation evaluation offers important information about what you did and how well you did it. The lessons you learn can serve as benchmarks for progress against your original program plan.

- Perhaps you aren’t conducting the activities as planned; or
- You are conducting those activities, but they are not leading to the products/outputs you intended, or
- They did lead to the intended outputs, but the quality or satisfaction levels are not what you had hoped.

This information can help you determine if you need to adjust your plan, change activities, or reconsider your theoretical assumptions. Evaluating your implementation can provide a feedback loop in the midst of your effort, before you may be able to evaluate outcomes.

Evaluating Outcomes: What Difference Did You Make?

These days it's no longer acceptable for nonprofits to assume that good intentions, good-faith effort, or even exemplary program implementation will result in the desired outcomes for those we serve. It is important to spend time developing a plan to measure the achievement of **outcomes**.

In your logic model, you identified your desired **outcomes**—the changes you expect to see as a result of your work. Outcomes are frequently expressed as changes in knowledge, skill, attitudes, behavior, motivation, decisions, policies, and conditions. They occur among individuals, communities, organizations, or systems.

Indicators

In order to evaluate how successfully you have achieved your outcomes, you will need to determine **indicators** for your outcomes.

An **indicator** is the **evidence** or **information** that will tell you whether your program is achieving its intended outcomes. Indicators are **measurable** and **observable** characteristics. They answer the question: "How will we know change occurred?"

We often state outcomes as abstract concepts or ambitions. Indicators are the measurement of outcomes. They are specific characteristics or behaviors that provide tangible information about those concepts or ambitions. Often, one outcome will have more than one indicator. When you develop your indicators, it may be helpful to ask: "What does the outcome look like when it occurs? How will I know if it has happened? What will I be able to see?"

An indicator should be:

- **Meaningful:** The indicator presents information that is important to key stakeholders of the program. Keep in mind that different people can have different perceptions about what defines “success” for a program. Reaching consensus among key stakeholders regarding what success looks like is essential to ensuring buy-in to your evaluation results.
- **Direct:** The indicator or combination of indicators captures enough of the essential components of the outcome to represent the outcome. Several indicators can be necessary to measure an outcome adequately. However, there is no standard for the number of indicators to use. While multiple indicators are often necessary, more than three or four may mean that the outcome is too complex and should be better defined. An indicator must also reflect the same type of change as the outcome. For example, if an outcome is about a change in attitude or opinion, the indicator should not reflect a behavior change.
- **Useful:** The information provided by this indicator can be put to practical use for program improvement.
- **Practical to Collect:** The data for the indicator shouldn’t be a burden to collect. Consider whether you can collect data about your indicator in a timely manner and at reasonable cost. Sometimes an indicator meets the other criteria described above, but the effort to collect it would be too burdensome. Our evaluation template offers you an opportunity to note the level of effort involved.

Elements of a Strong Indicator Statement

To assist in evaluation, a strong indicator statement should include these four elements:

- **How much.** Identify the amount of change among your target population that would indicate a successful level of achievement. This sets the target for your work; base this on an understanding of your baseline and a level of change that is reasonable for your program.
- **Who.** Specify the target population you will measure.
- **What.** Describe the condition, behavior, or characteristic that you will measure.
- **When.** Note the timeframe in which this change should occur.

For example, an outcome of an economic empowerment training program may be that participants institute improved money management practices. One indicator for that outcome would be the statement:

- 75% of participants open a free bank checking account within six months of beginning the program.

Assume that you know, through an intake process, that most of a program's participants manage their money through expensive financial services such as payday loan businesses. If 75% of the participants open a free bank checking account within six months of beginning the program, you might view that as ONE indicator of improved money management practices.

Breaking down the statement into the elements above, you see:

How Much = 75%

Who = program participants

What = open a free bank checking account

When = within six months of starting the program

The following are examples of outcomes and indicators.

<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
New mothers increase their knowledge of child development.	75% of new mothers in the program satisfactorily complete a short survey about child development at the end of the course
Target audiences increase knowledge about the signs of child abuse and neglect	50% of community focus group members can identify the signs of child abuse and neglect six months after education campaign ends
Residents feel neighborhood is a safer place for children	60% of neighborhood residents report in one year that they believe the neighborhood is safer for children than it was one year before.
Diversified program resources	In one year, each of four funding sources (public, private corporation, individual donors, foundations) comprise at least 15% and not more than 55% of program income
Increased cultural competency of legal aid attorneys	80% of legal aid attorneys self-report learning about cultural issues at end of workshop Within 6 months, 60% of clients of trained attorneys indicate attorney was knowledgeable about cultural issues
Increased legislators' awareness of policy options	In six months, 45% of surveyed legislators indicate awareness of different policy options
Students (K-6) demonstrate knowledge about opera	By the end of class: -65% of children can identify the story of the opera being performed. -65% can describe 3 of the characters in the opera. -50% can identify the type of voice (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) of the character singing a part
Youth have increased knowledge about the consequences of long-term ATOD use/abuse.	At end of course -90% of participants report that they gained knowledge about the risks/harms associated with ATOD use -80% report that it is important not to use alcohol or other drugs.

While developing your indicators, you may realize that your outcomes are unclear or ambiguous. This process offers an opportunity to reconsider or further clarify your outcomes.



Build Your Evaluation Plan: Check over your outcomes—are they clear and unambiguous?

Setting Indicator Targets

An indicator *indicates* that your program is achieving its intended outcomes, which are changes you want to see in individuals, groups, communities or systems. To be meaningful, you should identify an amount of change that you believe demonstrates successful achievement of the related outcome.

Setting targets may seem challenging. No one wants to be held accountable for unrealistic expectations. At the same time, we all want programs to lead to real change.

How do you choose a realistic target? Consider these guideposts:

- What is your baseline?
- What does your experience tell you?
- What are standards in the field?
- What do stakeholders expect?

Perhaps your program is new or you have no baseline information because you have never gathered this information before. In that case, your first evaluation may provide baseline information; in future years, you will want to create realistic targets to show progress.

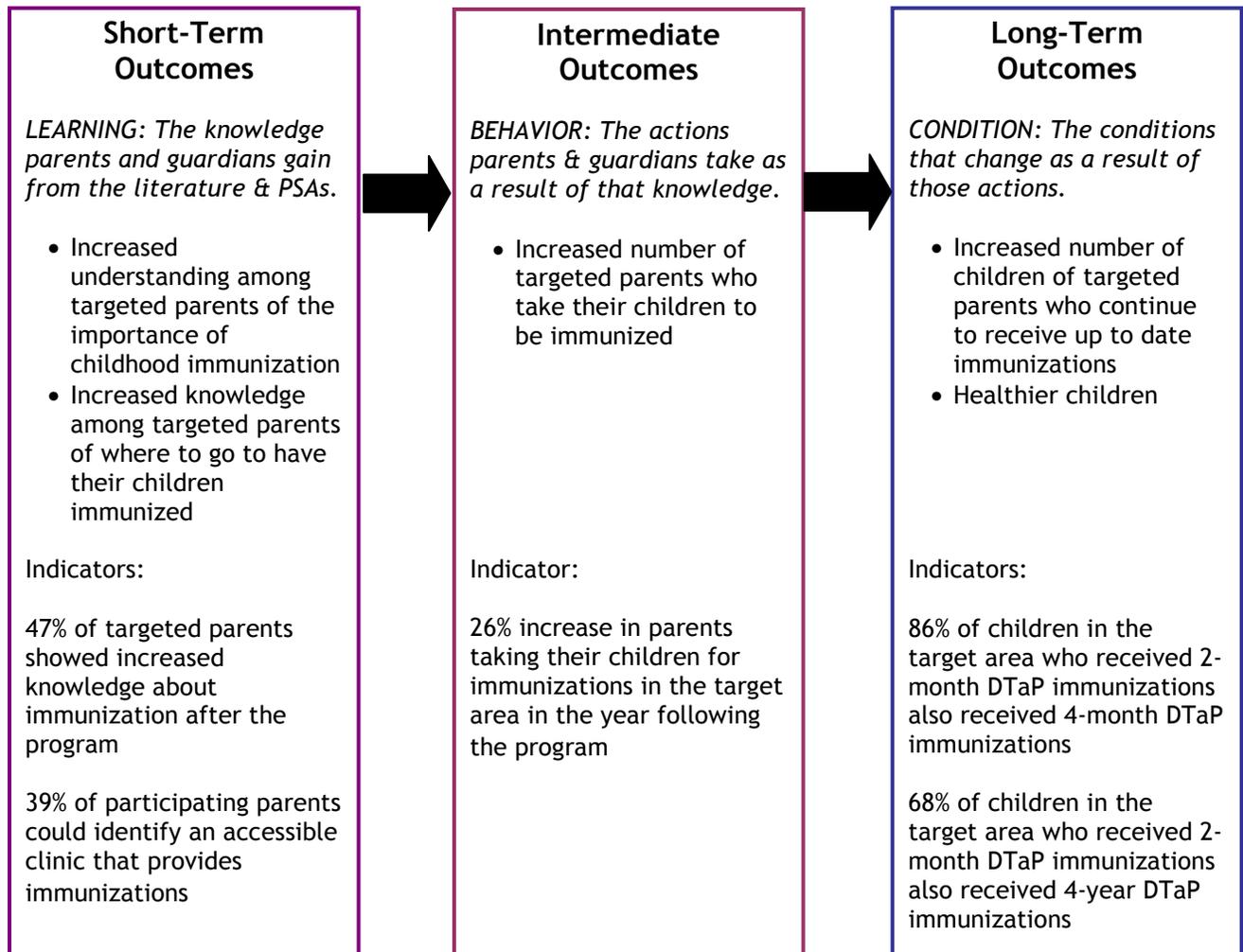
Multiple Indicators

Some outcomes have just one closely related indicator. If an outcome is to increase the awareness among your members of a new service your organization provides, your sole indicator may be that 80% of your members report awareness of new service within six months. A smoking reduction program's outcome is for participants to stop smoking. In this case, the indicator will be a percentage of participants who stop smoking after participating in the program. In that case, only one indicator will be necessary.

Complex outcomes may have multiple indicators: If an outcome of a program is for participants to improve their job-seeking skills, this will require multiple indicators that would likely reflect the skills you emphasize in your program. Indicators might include the following:

- A percentage of participants who meet criteria in mock interviews at end of training course
- A percentage of participants who develop quality resumes within 1 month of completing course
- A percentage of participants who can identify three key sources of job listings by end of the training course

When developing your logic model, you identified a **chain of outcomes**. This chain is useful in both clarifying your theory of change and in setting realistic expectations. The chain is also important from an evaluation standpoint—knowing what you are achieving. Each link in the chain has corresponding indicators.



Direct versus Indirect Indicators

Ensure that your indicators relate directly to the outcome you are evaluating, and are evidence of the same type of change. Below are some examples of direct versus indirect indicators for the sample outcomes.

OUTCOMES	INDICATORS
Participating new mothers have their children immunized (behavior)	<p><u>Indirect</u>: #/% of participating new mothers who are aware of importance of immunization (awareness)</p> <p><u>Direct</u>: #/% of children of participating mothers who are up-to-date in immunizations within 1 year (behavior)</p>
Participating children understand principles of good sportsmanship (knowledge)	<p><u>Indirect</u>: #/% of children who participate on teams after finishing program (unrelated behavior)</p> <p><u>Direct</u>: #/% of participating youth who are able to identify five good sportsmanship behaviors by the end of the season (knowledge); #/% of fights and arguments among student athletes decreases each year of program (behavior, but shows knowledge in action)</p>
Targeted teens increase knowledge of certain environmental health hazards (knowledge)	<p><u>Indirect</u>: #/% of students who receive brochure on topic during first 6 months of program (output)</p> <p><u>Direct</u>: #/% of targeted students who can identify 3 health hazards at end of first year of program (knowledge)</p>



Build Your Evaluation Plan: Insert your Indicators into the Indicators box in your evaluation plan template, or on the “Indicators/Data Collection” tab of the online Evaluation Plan Builder.

Data Collection Preview

Of all the parts of evaluation, data collection can be the most daunting. Many of us believe we need to be statisticians or evaluation professionals to engage in quality data collection, but that simply isn't true.

This workbook will introduce you to the basic concepts of data collection, to help you complete your evaluation plans. [A separate data collection workbook will be available soon at the Point K Learning Center.]

Data Collection Methods:

What's the best way to gather the information you need?

So far, you have identified what you want to evaluate and what you will measure. In implementation evaluation, these are activities and their related outputs and additional questions. In outcome evaluation, these are program outcomes and their related indicators.

Now you will consider methods to collect the data. Outputs, implementation questions, and indicators are **what** you will measure; data collection methods are **how** you will measure these.

The goal in data collection is to **minimize the number** of collection instruments you use and **maximize the amount of information** you collect from each one!

When choosing the best data collection method to obtain the information you need, consider the following:

- Which methods will be least disruptive to your program and to those your serve?
- Which methods can you afford and implement well?
- Which methods are best suited to obtain information from your sources (considering cultural appropriateness and other contextual issues)?

The most common data collection strategies fall into the following broad categories.

1. Review documents
Analysis of printed material including program records, research reports, census data, health records, budgets. Document review is a common method of collecting data about activities and outputs for implementation evaluation.
2. Observe
Observe situations, behaviors and activities in a formalized and systematic way, usually using observational checklists and trained observers. This is a good method to use in settings where experiencing actual events or settings (rather than hearing about them) is an important part of the evaluation.
3. Talk to people
Collect verbal responses from participants and other stakeholders through interviews (in-person or phone) or focus groups. This method is helpful when it is important to hear complex or highly individual thoughts of a certain group of individuals.
4. Collect written responses from people
Collect written responses through surveys (in-person, e-mail, online, mail, phone), tests, or journals/logs. Except in the case of journals, this method is often used when you need a lot of information from a large number of people or when it is important that identical information be available from all respondents.
5. Other methods
Review pictorial/multi-media data in photographs, audiotapes, compact discs, visual artwork. Conduct expert or peer reviews in which professionals in the field with specific expertise assess a set of activities or products. Use a case study, an intensive investigation of one unit to use for learning purposes, often as an exemplar or model to be avoided.



Brainstorm: Consider data collection methods for each item you will measure.

Ease of Data Collection

When you do identify data collection methods, the next step is to identify the level of effort required to collect the data. Consider the cost and time required to create new data collection tools. Also, consider the cost involved in actually collecting and analyzing the data. Some methods are more expensive than others. For example, interviews take more time (and therefore resources) than surveys. For many methods you'll need database software. For each data collection method you identify, consider whether you already have a tool in place that you could use (such as an intake survey). If not, think about the amount of effort required to create and use the new data collection tool. Assess whether it will require a "low," "medium," or "high" level of effort.



Build Your Evaluation Plan: Assess the level of effort required to collect the data using the methods you have identified so far. Use the scale: have (for those methods your organization already has available); low; medium; or high. Enter your data collection methods and their corresponding levels of effort into your evaluation plan template or the online Evaluation Plan Builder.

Review Your Plan

Together, your implementation and outcome templates form one evaluation plan. Take time to review your plan so far to make sure it would lead to a worthwhile evaluation.

Here are some tips for reviewing your plan:

- For implementation evaluation, have you identified additional questions that will help you improve the quality of the activities you are conducting?
- Have you narrowed that list of questions to those few “need-to-know” topics?
- Have you identified indicators for all your outcomes? Has any outcome required more than three indicators? If so, consider whether that outcome needs to be re-defined or separated into several intended changes.
- Do most or all of your indicator statements include the key elements of “who,” “how much,” “what” and by “when”?
- Have you identified reasonable targets for you indicators?

If you have any questions about program planning or evaluation, or are interested in our in-person services, please visit our website, www.innonet.org or contact us at:

Innovation Network, Inc.
1625 K St., NW, 11th Floor
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 728-0727
info@innonet.org
www.innonet.org

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Implementation Evaluation Plan

Activities	Outputs & Implementation Questions	Data Collection Method	Data Collection Effort (Have, Low, Medium, High)
Program Component	Outputs		
	Questions		
Program Component	Outputs		



Implementation Evaluation Plan

Activities	Outputs & Implementation Questions	Data Collection Method	Data Collection Effort (Have, Low, Medium, High)
	Questions		



Outcomes Evaluation Plan

Outcomes	Indicators	Data Collection Method	Data Collection Effort (Have, Low, Medium, High)