

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW WHETHER YOUR PROGRAM WORKS?



@PREVNet

A Guide to Program Evaluation



PROGRAM EVALUATION: What are we talking about?

Perhaps you have a program, you are using a program designed by someone else, or you are implementing an existing program in a new context; this might be an intervention program you have developed, a best practice guideline, a curriculum, or some other type of program.

- 1 Do you want to know if the program works?
- 2 Is your program successfully reaching its goals?
- 3 Is the program is being implemented effectively?

Program evaluation helps to answer these and other questions. Program evaluation is an active, systematic process to understand whether your program works and what kind of a difference the program is making. Conducting a program evaluation supports a culture of learning; program evaluation provides information about program implementation and effectiveness that you might not otherwise know.

There are different types of evaluations:

Process Evaluation



Focuses on how a program has been implemented

Outcome Evaluation



Focuses on what changes have occurred as a result of the program



FIRST STEPS: What does your program do, and how?

One way of beginning to organize the process of program evaluation is to develop a **logic model**.

- 1 A logic model is a tool that makes your thinking and planning visible as you consider your program.
- 2 A logic model prompts you to consider: (1) the need your program addresses, (2) the goals for the program, (3) the program activities that help to reach these goals.
- 3 A logic model is an on-going road map to guide the program's implementation and evaluation. You can find an example of a comprehensive logic model for the **Child Development Institute's Stop Now and Plan® (SNAP) program** [\[click to access\]](#)

YOU DON'T NEED TO START WITH A LOGIC MODEL AS COMPLEX AS SNAP'S – START SIMPLE.

Ask yourself the following questions and fill out the **Logic Model Tool** [\[LINK\]](#) You may not know all the answers to the questions; however, this can help to guide your reflection and discussion about the program as you develop plan for evaluation.

Overall program goals

- 1 What are the goals of the program?
- 2 What is the need that your program addresses?

NOTE:

Not all programs use a logic model; some programs may use a theory of change to show how and why changes are expected to occur. Here is a paper with worksheets: [\[link\]](#)

Inputs: *What are the resources needed to run your program?*

- 1 Describe your program. What is it about?
- 2 Who is aware of the need or problem (e.g., participants, practitioners, parents, community members)?
- 3 How do you know there is a problem?
- 4 What is needed to run your program? *Consider aspects such as funding, human resources, research, equipment, etc.*
- 5 Describe any existing partnerships you might have.
- 6 Do you have a manual or specific guidelines for how your program works?
- 7 Have you ever done an evaluation of your program that can guide your planning for this evaluation?

OUTCOME

More immediate changes that occur because of your program

IMPACT

Longer-term, indirect effects of your outcomes

Activities: *What does your program do?*

- 1 How does your program work? Describe exactly what your program does.
- 2 Which parts of your program are important? How do these parts help meet the program goals?

Outcomes:

What changes occur and how?

- 1 Who is aware of the need or problem (e.g., participants, practitioners, parents, community members)?
- 2 How do you think it changes?
- 3 What do you want the **outcome** of your program to be?
- 4 How do you assess this change?
- 5 What is the **impact** of your program?

TIMELINE

You may want to consider these questions based on the short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. You might consider the following general timeline:

Short-term during and immediately after the program

Immediate-term 3-6 months after the program is completed

Long-term 1 year plus

REMEMBER:
These timelines are flexible and should be adjusted depending on the nature of your program.



NOW YOU ARE READY TO EVALUATE YOUR PROGRAM. Where do you start?

The logic model is designed to help you understand what your program is doing, and how. Next, you want to think about how to evaluate the program. This will likely involve careful consideration of:

- 1 Who will be involved in the evaluation?
- 2 What you will do in order to evaluate the program?
- 3 How you will accomplish this?
- 4 How do you want to compile and share your evaluation findings?

Who is involved?

Having the right team in place is key to a successful program evaluation. Consider the following questions when planning your team.

1. Who can deliver the program?
2. Who can plan and support the evaluation (internal or external resource)?
3. Who can choose the measurement tools?
4. Who can analyse the data for you?
5. Who can write a report with you and share the findings with stakeholders (anyone related to the program) in an accessible way?



DID YOU KNOW?

The more practice facilitators have in delivering a program, the more effective they are





DO I NEED A RESEARCH PARTNER?



You might find that you are unsure of how to plan or design your program evaluation. Perhaps you don't know how to select measures to best detect the changes you expect from the program. Perhaps you are unsure of how you will analyze the data.



If this is the case, it may be beneficial to find a researcher or an evaluator to partner with. This might be someone at a college or university with research skills, including students who may benefit from working with you on your evaluation.



See: [Ethical Guidelines for Evaluators from the American Evaluation Association \[click\]](#)

WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR IN A PARTNERSHIP?

When working with research partner, it is helpful to find a researcher who is interested in your program and its associated outcomes. The researcher should be:

- Willing to co-create and collaborate with you and share in the process from beginning to end
- Responsive to your organization's needs and the needs of the community you serve
- Transparent about the process (research design, data ownership, sharing the findings, etc.)
- Agreeable to regular and open communication



College and university research teams tend to follow particular protocol when designing an evaluation. It is important to be aware that partnering with a college or university researcher may require ethical approval of the evaluation. This is advantageous to ensure that your evaluation follows ethical guidelines.

NOTE ON LEVELS OF RESEARCH DESIGN

There are different levels of research design. In early stages of evaluation, you may want to measure before and after you deliver the program. You might also include some measures of how the program is working during delivery. Once initial effectiveness has been demonstrated, you might consider a comparison group, and an analysis of who benefits from the program and who does not.

WHAT WILL YOU DO TO EVALUATE THE PROGRAM AND HOW WILL YOU DO IT?

The first place to start is to consider what you think changes as a result of your program. Go back to your logic model and identify what changes. Then consider the following questions:

#1 How will you measure change through your program?

- A What is your research design?
- B What measures will you use to assess change?

DID YOU KNOW?

It is typically better to use established measures that have already been tested than to create your own

#2 How will you collect this information?



- A Will you use surveys, interviews, observations, focus groups, etc.?
- B Consider the benefits of each type of measurement (e.g., standardized measures may be more rigorous, but observations and interviews may provide deeper insight)

#3 Who needs to be asked the questions about change through the program?

- A Will you ask staff, parents, participants in the program?



#4 How much will the evaluation cost and who will pay for it?



#5 Do you need ethics approval from a college or university ethics review board?

- A All research and evaluation must be carried out ethically. For guidance in considering the ethical issues and approach to your evaluation, look at:

CANADA'S TRI-COUNCIL GUIDELINES [CLICK FOR LINK]



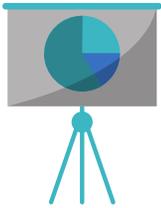
COMPILE AND SHARE YOUR FINDINGS: WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

Once you have finished collecting data and information for your program evaluation, the most important part is to know whether it worked.



1 How will you know if your program works?

- Who will analyze your data?
- Who will interpret the findings?
- How will you evaluate success?



2 How will you compile and share your findings?

- Who will be responsible for this?
- *Who will be interested in the findings?**
- In what format(s) will you share your findings?



*Evaluations are often important to obtain funding



3 What will you do with the findings?

- What changes will you make to the program based on the findings?
- What is the next step in evaluating the program?
- If your program works, are you hoping to share it with others? See:

[PREVNet Program Dissemination Guide \[click link\]](#)



F I N A L T H O U G H T :

Program Evaluation is complex, and there is more than one way to go about evaluating your program. The main goal of a program evaluation is to assess the impact of a program and use the information to further improve and inform the program's practice.



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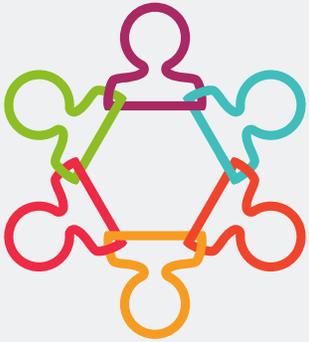
What works in one community or with one group of people may be very different in another community; **there is no one size fits all.**

To this end, it is essential to consider the program evaluation process as an opportunity to learn and develop as an organization.





4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND RESOURCES



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The valuable perspectives of the many partners from our network are greatly appreciated.

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Breaking the Cycle

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OTHER PROGRAM EVALUATION RESOURCES

<https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/evaluation/>

Visit our website and find us on social media:

