

# Developing an Evaluation Plan

## Why develop an evaluation plan?

An evaluation plan is a comprehensive written document that describes all of your intended evaluation activities. An evaluation plan can:

- Help you be more **systematic** and **comprehensive** in your evaluation efforts
- **Synthesize** evaluation efforts across multiple programs
- Ensure a **relevant** and **useful** evaluation
- Increase **staff** and **stakeholder** buy-in
- Help your team **stick** to its plan
- Be **shared** (with funders, community members, etc.) to demonstrate your organization’s commitment to high-quality programs and services

## How do I begin?

Your evaluation plan should describe the WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY and HOW of your intended evaluation activities. **Here are some things that you should include:**

### 1. Engaging Stakeholders: *WHO will be involved in your evaluation?*

- **Identify** all the stakeholders in your program. (A stakeholder is anyone who has an **interest** in your program, such as staff, clients, community members, funders, or board members.)
- Identify what **role** they will play in the evaluation.
- Explain how your program plans to **engage** stakeholders as participants in the evaluation process. (What types of meetings or activities will you include stakeholders in?)

**Case Study:** For each of the following steps, examples will be based on this case study:

*“Healthy Youth is a youth center that focuses on health education programs for youth ages 12–18. They have been in operation for 2 years and are about to conduct their first evaluation.”*

**Tip:** An Evaluation Plan can be in text format or table format. The following are examples in table format.

**Example Step 1: Engaging Stakeholders:** Create a list of all possible stakeholders and their role in the evaluation.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Role in evaluation</i>
<i>Maria F.</i>	<i>Youth Program Director</i>	<i>Evaluation Coordinator</i>
<i>Alex R.</i>	<i>Counselor</i>	<i>Collects data</i>
<i>Ana, Marcus, Lee</i>	<i>Clients</i>	<i>Youth Advisory Board and part of focus group</i>
<i>Don P.</i>	<i>Board Member</i>	<i>Planning and receives results</i>
<i>Ana C.</i>	<i>Funder</i>	<i>Receives results</i>

### 2. Focusing the evaluation: *WHAT specifically are you trying to evaluate, WHAT type of evaluation makes the most sense for you, and WHY?*

- Select the **type** of evaluation (process evaluation, outcome evaluation, cost-benefit analysis, etc.) that will help you answer your evaluation questions. (See the **Evaluation Glossary** for definitions of different types of evaluation.)
- Decide on an evaluation **approach** (participatory, conventional, empowerment), and an evaluation **design** [experimental (with a control group), quasi-experimental (with a comparison group), or non-experimental] that is appropriate to your available resources and the level of **evidence** and rigor needed. (See the **Evaluation Glossary** for definitions of different types of evaluation approaches and designs.)
- Define specific **evaluation questions**.
  - Look at your program’s current **objectives**. Decide if you be evaluating **all** of these objectives, or only **some**. (Look to past grant applications for program objectives and revise if needed).
  - What else do you want to know about your program? Develop new evaluation objectives.

### Example Step 2: Focusing the Evaluation:

<p><b>Type of Evaluation:</b> Because the program is new and this is the first evaluation they have conducted, they chose to use a combination of process and outcomes evaluation.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation Approach:</b> As a youth empowerment program, they chose to use participatory evaluation in order to help their youth participants develop additional skills. Some elements of the evaluation will also be done with a conventional approach (using an outside evaluator).</p>
<p><b>Evaluation Design:</b> As a small, community program, they didn't want (or have the ability) to do an experimental design, like a randomized control trial. Also, because they are implementing evidence-based interventions, the "evidence" about their programs is already very strong. Because of this, they decided to do a quasi-experimental design and use their program wait list as a "comparison group."</p>
<p><b>Evaluation Questions:</b> The program chose to evaluate 4 original objectives and created an additional 3 evaluation questions. Here is how they developed evaluation questions based on both old and new objectives.</p>
<p>Original Objective 1: "During each school year (from September through June), at least 100 youth ages 12–18 will participate in <i>Healthy Youth</i> programs"</p> <p><b>Evaluation Question 1:</b> How many youth have participated in different Healthy Youth programs?</p>
<p>Original Objective 2: "During each school year (from September through June), Healthy Youth staff will outreach to at least 6 schools and will visit at least 4 classrooms in each school."</p> <p><b>Evaluation Question 2:</b> How many schools have staff visited, and how many classrooms within each school?</p>
<p>Original Objective 3: "By the end of the school year (June), youth who attend <i>Healthy Youth</i> will have improved healthy behaviors in the areas of healthy eating, physical activity, conflict management, and communication."</p> <p><b>Evaluation Question 3:</b> What changes in nutrition, physical activity, conflict management, and communication have youth participants experienced?</p>
<p>Original Objective 4: "By the end of the school year (June), youth who attend <i>Healthy Youth</i> will have improved school attendance."</p> <p><b>Evaluation Question 4:</b> What changes in school attendance have youth participants experienced?</p>
<p><b>New Evaluation Question 5:</b> Which parts of the youth community are under and over represented (in terms of geographic area, school, age, gender, ethnicity, and family income level)?</p>
<p><b>New Evaluation Question 6:</b> Which programs/activities are the most popular, and which are the least popular?</p>
<p><b>New Evaluation Question 7:</b> What is the average level of participation (in other words, how many different programs do youth participate in) and what is the level of participation needed to impact school attendance?</p>



### **3. Gathering Credible Evidence: *HOW* will you answer your evaluation questions?**

- Decide on methods for data collection. (**Qualitative** or **quantitative** methods; surveys, focus groups, observation, document review, etc. See the *Evaluation Glossary* for definitions of different types of methods.)
- Select or develop the specific **data sources** or **instruments** you will use (e.g., pre/post tests, standardized forms). (See the *Evaluation Glossary* for definitions of different types of instruments.)
- Develop a **timeline** for data collection.
- **Determine who** will be collecting this data, **when** it will be collected, and **where** it will be collected.

**Example Step 3: Gathering Credible Evidence:** Repeat the section below for each objective to be evaluated.

QUESTION	METHOD	DATA SOURCE/ INSTRUMENT	TIMELINE	WHO
1. How many youth have participated in different <i>Healthy Youth</i> programs?	Document review	Youth fill out sign-in sheets for every program/activity.	Collected every month	Program staff enter into evaluation database
2. How many schools have staff visited, and how many classrooms within each school?	Document review	Staff fill out school visit forms at each visit	Collected every month	Program Manager enters into evaluation database
3. What changes in nutrition, physical activity, conflict management, and communication have youth participants experienced?	Participatory activities in programs  Pre-post interviews with individual youth  Focus groups	Observation forms, posters from activities  Written interview notes  Written focus group notes	Beginning and end of each program  Beginning and end of the school year  Beginning and end of the school year	Evaluation Coordinator enters all into evaluation database

**4. Justifying Conclusions: *HOW* will you make sense of the answers?**

- **Quality Assurance:** Develop a system to ensure data **accuracy**. Who will check the data? How frequently? Assure that the data will be stored **confidentially** and **securely**.
- Decide how you will **analyze** the evidence that was collected. Think about **who** will be involved in analysis, and how **frequently** you will analyze.
- Develop a **timeline** for data analysis, including who will be **responsible** for data analysis.

**Example Step 4: Justify Conclusions:** Repeat the section below for each data source/instrument.

DATA SOURCE/INSTRUMENT: Youth sign-in sheets	
QUALITY ASSURANCE	ANALYSIS/TIMELINE/STAFF RESPONSIBLE
<p><b>Accuracy:</b> Staff will do data entry; Manager will check every 4<sup>th</sup> sheet.</p> <p><b>Confidentiality:</b> Original sign-in sheets will be stored in a locked file cabinet. The Data Coordinator will keep the key to this cabinet. Electronic files will be password protected; only staff can access.</p>	<p>Manager will do monthly analysis and share data with staff at monthly staff meetings.</p> <p>Manager will give data to outside evaluator every quarter.</p>

**5. Ensure Use and Share Lessons Learned: *WHAT* will you do with what you learn?**

- Think about which **stakeholders** you will share results with. (Clients? Community? Funders?)
- Think about what **setting** will be the most appropriate forum in which to share results with each stakeholder group. (Written report, focus group, community presentation, video, etc.)
- Develop a timeline for sharing results. (How often, when, who will be responsible?)

For more information on sharing evaluation results, see the info sheet *“Make it Count: How to Share your Evaluation Results in a Meaningful Way”* at [www.capacity4health.org](http://www.capacity4health.org)

**Example Step 5: Ensure Use:** Make a list of who you will share data with and how.

STAKEHOLDERS	METHOD OF SHARING FINDINGS	TIMELINE	WHO
Clients	Community meeting/party	End of summer	Program staff
Staff	Presentation at staff meeting	Monthly	Manager
Board	Presentation at Board Meeting Written Report	Quarterly End of Year	Director
Funders	Written Report	End of Year	Director

## Documenting your Evaluation Plan

After you have thought through each of the sections above, you are ready to capture it in a written plan. An Evaluation Plan can be written in text format or table format. Write up each of the sections above and **add the following sections:**

### Introduction

Begin your evaluation plan with a short introduction. This provides an overview – think of it as the **“road map”** – to your evaluation plan. Keep this section brief: 1–2 paragraphs! Be sure to include:

- Your evaluation **goal** – *what your program is striving to achieve by evaluating*
- Your evaluation **team** – *names of coordinator and other team members*

### Describe the Program

Briefly describe your **program** and its **background**. Remember, you may be sharing your evaluation plan with people unfamiliar with your program. The program description helps them contextualize your planned evaluation. Include:

- The **history** of your program
- What **problem** or **need** your program addresses
- A description of the program’s **target population**
- The **goals** of your program and **how** your program arrived at these goals, such as through *formative or needs assessments*.
- **SMART objectives** your program has set for itself (SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound)
- What **resources** are available to help the program run (number of staff, sites, etc.)
- What **activities** are being conducted
- What the intended long-term **outcomes** or effects of the program are

You can also attach your program’s **logic model** (include in the appendix), which is a visual representation of how your program works. More information on logic models can be found at [www.capacity4health.org](http://www.capacity4health.org).

**Complete Program Evaluation Plan**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Describe the program**
3. Engage stakeholders
4. Focus the evaluation design
5. Gather credible evidence
6. Justify conclusions
7. Ensure use and share lessons learned
8. **Work plan**
9. **Appendix**

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**Tip:** Use existing materials! Your program may have already created a program description or logic models for past grant applications or presentations. Copy or attach these materials so you don’t have to re-create them.

## Work Plan

A work plan organizes everything into one table: the WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY and HOW of your intended evaluation activities.

Example: <i>Healthy Youth</i> Program Evaluation Timeline (May, 2010 – Jun, 2011)		
Activity	Who is Responsible	Timeline
1. Hire Evaluation Coordinator.	Program Manager	Month 1
2. Train all staff on evaluation.	Program Manager, Evaluation Coordinator	Months 2–3
3. Develop participatory activities, pre-post tests, and observation tools.	Evaluation Coordinator with input from Program Staff and Manager	Months 2–4
4. Administer pre-tests and beginning of year activities to youth. Data enter results.	Program Staff do activities, Evaluation Coordinator does data entry	Month 4 (September)
5. Complete youth sign in sheets and staff school visit sheets. Data enter weekly.	Program Staff	Months 4–13 (September–June) Ongoing
6. Do monthly quality assurance and analysis, and create monthly reports with summary of clients served, demographics, etc. Share monthly reports at monthly staff meetings.	Program Manager	Months 4–14 Ongoing
7. Administer post-tests and end-of-year activities to youth. Data enter results.	Program Staff do activities, Evaluation Coordinator does data entry	Month 13 (June)
8. Create end-of-year (EOY) summary.	Evaluation Coordinator	Month 14
9. Present EOY summary to staff, gain staff feedback.	Evaluation Coordinator	Month 14
10. Incorporate staff feedback, revise EOY summary.	Evaluation Coordinator	Month 15
11. Present EOY information to clients, gain feedback.	Program Staff with Manager, Evaluation Coordinator	Month 15
12. Incorporate client feedback, revise EOY summary.	Evaluation Coordinator	Month 16
13. Present final EOY summary to Board.	Evaluation Coordinator	Month 16
14. Prepare final report and disseminate results to community, funders, partners, and other stakeholders.	Evaluation Coordinator	Month 16

## Appendix

For the very last section, attach copies of actual forms used (if you have them) any **tables**, **diagrams**, and your **logic model**.

### You are done!

Refer to your evaluation plan throughout the evaluation process as a guide, and share with stakeholders!

## Additional Resources

- Capacity 4 Health: [www.capacity4health.org](http://www.capacity4health.org)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Evaluation](http://www.cdc.gov/eval/): <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/>
- [Community Tool Box, University of Kansas](http://ctb.ku.edu/): <http://ctb.ku.edu/>
- [Harvard Family Research Project](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/): <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/>
- [Innovation Network](http://innonet.org): <http://innonet.org>
- University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/>
- [W.K. Kellogg Foundation Programming Overview](http://www.wkkf.org/Programming/Overview.aspx?CID=281): <http://www.wkkf.org/Programming/Overview.aspx?CID=281>