Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool Kit

Supplement 1: Conducting Evaluations

Evaluating the Sustainability of future HealthWest Partnership Project Actions and Effects

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HealthWest Partnership

Evaluation involves making judgments about the merit, worth or value of the project being evaluated

Why Evaluate?

*Evaluation is designed to **attribute value** to a program by **gathering reliable and valid information** about it in a **systematic way** and make a comparison. The purpose is to enable the evaluation user to decide what to do or to contribute to scientific knowledge"*[1]

Evaluation has multiple purposes including:

- To provide information to assist in the improvement of a program
- To determine if the project is ready for more intensive impact evaluation
- To find out about the implementation processes
- To find out about the effectiveness of a program
- To find out whether this program could be used elsewhere - transferability
- To compare two similar programs to determine best value
- To increase the evidence base about a topic

The recognized Program Cycle approach shown in **Figure 1** (at right) shows how evaluation can occur at the planning (needs assessment), implementation and outcomes phases.

Evaluation Questions

Evaluation questions should identify a distinct aspect of the project under study and do so in a way that the "performance" of that dimension can be credibly assessed. Evaluation questions need to be: Reasonable; Appropriate and Answerable
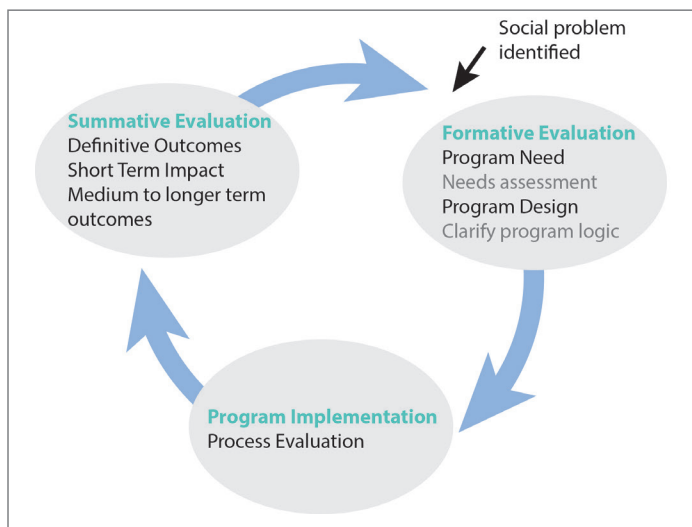

Figure 1: Program Cycle approach

Types of Evaluation Approaches

Three traditional types of evaluation approaches exist:

- **Formative evaluation**-To assist in making decisions about the Project Design.
- **Process evaluation**- To improve the delivery or Project Implementation.
- **Summative evaluation**- To assess what intended or unintended outcomes, differences or changes have resulted from the Project.

The Table 1 present examples of evaluation questions linked to evaluation approaches.

Table 1: Evaluation Approaches and Questions

Evaluation Approaches	Examples of Evaluation Questions
Formative Evaluations	- Is there a need for the Project? - What is the Project intended to achieve? - What are the underlying assumptions about how the Project will work?
Process Evaluations	- Is the Project reaching the intended target group? - Are the Project members satisfied? - Are the Project activities being implemented as intended?
Summative Evaluations	- Has the Project achieved its short-term objectives? - Are there unintended consequences of the Project? - What are the long-term effects of the Project?

There is no one evaluation approach that fits all Projects

[1] Ovretveit, J (2002) Action Evaluation of Health Programmes & Changes

Evaluation Planning Tools

Projects may work (or not work) due to many reasons including: the assumptions upon which they are based; the manner in which the network is implemented; and / or the resources available to run the network.

Program logic models can assist you to better plan and evaluate your network. Logic models are a visual diagram about how your network is supposed to work, the assumptions about the links between the network outcomes, outputs, activities, and context. Logic models are constructed by asking four key questions:

1. What intend to **achieve**? (Outcomes & Outputs)
2. What steps need to **do** to get there? (Activities)
3. What need to **have** to get there? (Inputs)
4. What **contextual factors** need to be considered? (Context)

An example of a Program logic model that has the following elements is provided below:

- **INPUTS:** resources, contributions, investments that go into the program
- **OUTPUTS:** activities, services, events and products that reach people who participate or who are targeted
- **OUTCOMES:** results or changes for individuals, groups, communities, organizations, communities, or systems
- **Assumptions:** the beliefs we have about the program, the people involved, and the context and the way we think the program will work
- **External Factors:** the environment in which the program exists includes a variety of external factors that interact with and influence the program action

Evaluation methods

There are many ways to collect information for evaluation. The evaluation method will depend upon your program, your budget, time constraints and characteristics of the target groups. A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods is recommended. Key Evaluation Methods include:

1. Questionnaires, surveys, checklists – to get lots of information from people in a non-threatening way
2. Interviews to fully understand someone's impressions or experiences
3. Documentation review to find out how the program operates without interrupting the program
4. Observation to gather accurate information about how a program actually operates
5. Focus groups to explore a topic in depth through group discussion
6. Case studies to more fully understand one's experiences of a program.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT
Planning – Implementation – Evaluation

Program Action - Logic Model

Reference: http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicmodel.html