Introduction to Program Evaluation

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4 phases of program evaluation
(based on ACRN training materials and from the Kellogg Foundation)

Evaluation planning
1. Develop/employ reference group
2. Define purpose and scope
3. Specify questions (as per Program Logic)

Development of evaluation
4. What is the design of the evaluation?
5. Create a data collection action plan – time line
4 phases of program evaluation (cont)
(based on ACRN training materials)

Implementation

6. Collect data
7. Analyze data
8. Write up findings

Feedback

9. Disseminate findings
10. Feedback to program improvement
Evaluation planning:
(1) Obtain/create/employ reference group

- Who will support you?
- Be political – but wise.
- Be strategic
- Keep informed/up to date.
- Difficult decisions – rely on group judgement.
- Someone external – independent.
- Consumer representatives.
Evaluation planning: (2) define purpose and scope

• Why are you doing this?
• How large/extensive will be it?
• What resources (time, money personnel) do you have?
Evaluation planning:
(3) What is your evaluation question/s

• What is it that you want to know about your program?
  – operationalize it (make it measurable)

Do not move forward if you cannot answer this question.
Development of evaluation:

4. What is the design of the evaluation?

- Survey versus focus interview/group
- Here and now – a snapshot
- Comparison – group A vs group B
- Change – pre versus post - what happened as a result of the program
- Randomisation
- Longitudinal – what happens over an extended period of time
Step 4 continued:

- Who? (target of evaluation)
- When? (be specific)
- And who is doing it? (responsible for collecting, analysing it, writing it up). Should the person running the program be evaluating it?
- How will the data be analysed?
Development of evaluation

5. Data collection action plan – time line

How will the program evaluation data be collected?

– Analysis of records (e.g. attendance records)
– Surveys (Off the shelf, reliable, valid, self developed)
– Interviewing individuals
– Interviewing groups
– Documentation (e.g. journals, records, statistics)

Triangulation (combining options)
Implementation

6. Collect data

• How much will you need? From all participants? Or just some of them?
• If you evaluate only some participants, how will you ensure that these are representative?
• What will you do about participants who drop out of the program?
Implementation

7. Analyze data

- Compile and analyse (make sense of the data)
- Can be very complex depending on the questions and the tools used
- Simple as frequency counts – through to statistical formulations. Qualitative findings need to be looked at thematically using quotes from participants
8. Write up finding

- Be objective
- Draw conclusions based on data
- Say if the data are limited
- What do the results say about your program?
- Beware of the positive spin
Step 8: documentation continued

1. Describe the program
2. Describe your evaluation question/s
3. Describe your evaluation design and tools
4. Response rate (how many participants filled out the evaluation)
5. How you analysed the evaluation data
6. Conclusions – as per evaluation question
7. General conclusions
8. Outline your next set of action plans
9. Recommendations for future program improvement
Feedback

9. Disseminate findings

• Dissemination methods will differ depending on your stakeholders
  – Those involved in running the program
  – Those that funded the program
  – Program participants
  – Media
  – Researchers
  – Other program facilitators
Step 9: Dissemination techniques

- Reports
- Journal articles
- Conferences
- Newsletters
- Presentations
- Brochures
- Websites
- Media
Feedback

10. Feedback to program improvement

• Consider adjustments to the program
Guiding principles of program evaluation

1. A logic based model – evaluation processes should be a direct extension of the logic model of the program;
2. Needs to consider participant outcomes;
3. Participants need to be clearly informed about the evaluation;
4. Evaluation should target what you say it will target;
5. Evaluation findings need to be practical and useful to help improve your program;
Ethics involved in program evaluation

• Be clear about your role (and stake) in evaluating the program;
• As an evaluator don’t do something you don’t feel competent doing;
• Be clear about how evaluation judgements and conclusions were reached;
• Respectful to participants involved in the evaluation, and be mindful of privacy and confidentiality issues