Identifying Evaluation Purpose and Questions

This handout will help you identify and prioritize evaluation questions to help you focus the evaluation for the Evaluation Purpose section of the evaluation plan. This handout will also help you implement Step 3 of the evaluation process.

Identify Evaluation Purpose

Program evaluation comes in different shapes, sizes, and scopes and various factors may affect your evaluation approach and decisions. To select the best design for your evaluation, you must determine the purpose for your evaluation including the evaluation questions. These questions are driven by the users and their use of the evaluation findings. The Types of Evaluation tip sheet may also help you identify the purposes and uses of your evaluation.

Engage Stakeholders · **Describe the Program** · **Focus Evaluation Design** · **Gather Credible Evidence** · **Justify Conclusions** · **Use and Share Lessons Learned**

Standards
Utility
Feasibility
Propriety
Accuracy

Examples of common purposes

- Gain better understanding about your program
- Identify what is, isn't working, and where improvements can be made
- Determine whether there are any unintended effects
- Find out if there are additional needs not currently addressed by the program
- Determine whether you're using resources efficiently and appropriately

Examples of common uses

- To make improvements to the program
- To make decisions about how to allocate or use your resources
- To make decisions about which program activities to continue, change, and/or end
- To plan your next evaluation
- To mobilize community support

Identify Evaluation Questions

Having clear evaluation questions will help you focus your evaluation so that you can get the information you need. Different questions (process and/or outcome) can be part of a program evaluation and are informed by:

The components of the program and desired outcome:
Your logic model can help guide the evaluation focus and questions. Look at individual components as well as connections between the components.

How long the program has been in existence:
Where you are in program implementation can help prioritize which evaluation questions to focus on.

Surrounding context and population of focus:
Context can influence both the implementation and the outcomes of a program. Including evaluation questions that examine context can help explain:

- variation in outcomes across contexts, populations, or situations
- intended and unintended consequences of programs
- different mechanisms of change and results for specific contexts, populations, or situations

Stakeholder interests:
Review information about your stakeholders and reconsider and confirm their roles, interests, and priorities. Engaging key stakeholders help focus the evaluation on where stakeholders are most ready and committed to answering through an evaluation process.

As you develop your evaluation questions, keep in mind that the questions should be:

- **Relevant**—reflective of key goals, objectives, and outcomes of the program
- **Reasonable**—logical and practical
- **Answerable**— able to be answered with the resources available
- **Balanced**— selected to inform decisions and make improvements

Use the table on the following page to help you identify your evaluation purpose, users, and uses. To fill out this PDF, you can type directly into the text fields using a PDF editor or print a copy to complete by hand.

Additional Resources for Developing and Prioritizing Evaluation Questions

- https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/program_eval/AssessingEvaluationQuestionChecklist.pdf
- https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/rainbow_framework/frame/specify_key_evaluation_questions
- https://www.cdc.gov/std/Program/pupestd/Developing%20Evaluation%20Questions.pdf
- https://www.cdc.gov/library/researchguides/evaluationquestions.html

These questions	will help...	understand ...	and use the findings to...
What are the questions needing answers?	*Who are the users of the evaluation findings?*	*What is the purpose? Why are you considering an evaluation?*	*How will the stakeholders use the evaluation findings?*