

## Evaluation at a Glance

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### All About Evaluation

For many health promotion professionals, the world of evaluation seems mystical, confusing and daunting. It can be difficult to envision how evaluation can benefit health promotion programs and even more so, to justify in our minds the spending of valuable resources on activities other than direct programming. However, much can be gained from well-planned, well-executed evaluations. In this edition of **@ a glance** we'll try to de-mystify evaluation and in particular, examine how evaluation contributes to better quality health promotion programs. By the end of this issue, you will understand the benefits of evaluation, the various components of it and when and how to evaluate. This is by no means an exhaustive guide to evaluation (see the Resources section on page 4 for comprehensive guides), rather it is a simple resource that you can refer to throughout your planning and evaluation cycle.

### What is evaluation?

Evaluation is 'the process of acquiring, analyzing and using information about a program, project or service, to assess how well it is working' (National Advisory Council on Ageing, 2001). In short, evaluation measures whether or not a program has carried out its activities and met its goals and objectives, and sheds valuable insight into why or why not.

If that sounds a little complicated, think about evaluation in these terms. When was the last time you assessed the value of something? Perhaps you were buying a new car, refrigerator, or even cell phone. Or perhaps you were making a major life choice – where to live, what job to accept. How did you make the decision? Did you gather information about all available options; perhaps make a 'pros and cons' list? Did you consult people whose opinions you trust? And once you made the decision, did you determine if it had in fact been the right one? If so, how?

If you have ever followed the above steps you have already conducted an evaluation! Now let's translate your practical life-based knowledge into evaluating heart health programs.

### Why should we evaluate?

Health promotion practitioners undertake program evaluation for the following reasons:

- To collect evidence on the effectiveness/impact of a program.

- To be accountable to stakeholders: funders, clients, volunteers, staff, or community.
- To identify ways to improve a program:
  - determining what works, what doesn't work and why
  - assessing needs of target population
  - improving the usefulness of program materials
  - to compare programs with other programs.
- To assess the efficiency of a program (cost-benefit analysis).
- To test a hypothesis for research purposes.<sup>2</sup>

### When should we evaluate? The link between program planning and evaluation

Too often in health promotion, we remember to evaluate near the end of the program when we have leftover budget, or if we're looking for justification for continuing or ending the program. In **Program Planning @ a Glance**, we suggested several models that you can use to plan your health promotion program. Interestingly, every good planning model includes a step for evaluation planning. You'll also note that in The Health Communication Unit's (THCU's) 10 step evaluation model (page 3), the first step involves actions very similar to those in program planning. As you'll see on page 2, various levels of evaluation actually correspond to program planning elements such as your program goals, objectives and activities. By taking the time to thoroughly plan your program, establish appropriate and measurable goals and objectives as well as identify program outputs and indicators you will not only improve the quality of your program but ensure that it can be evaluated. Refer to **Program Planning @ a Glance** for tips on establishing goals, objectives and activities. The logic model, a tool often used in program planning, can also be a very helpful evaluation tool. Your program logic mode should illustrate how the activities and outcomes of your program interconnect.<sup>1</sup>

#### Inside this issue:

1. All about Evaluation
2. Evaluation Terms
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## Evaluation Terms

A **program** is any group of related, complementary activities intended to achieve specific outcomes or results.<sup>2</sup>

**Program evaluation** is the systematic gathering, analysis and reporting of data about a program to assist in decision making.<sup>3</sup>

**Formative evaluation** assesses the process of planning/developing a program and helps to ensure that programs are developed in accordance with stakeholder/community needs.<sup>4</sup>

**Summative evaluation** focuses on programs that are already underway or completed. It investigates the effects of the program, both intended and unintended.<sup>1</sup> Process, impact and outcome evaluation are all examples of summative evaluation.

**Process evaluation** assesses the procedures and tasks involved in implementing a program<sup>3</sup> and measures the activities of the program, their quality and reach.<sup>5</sup>

**Impact evaluation** measures the immediate effects of the program: does the program meet its objectives?<sup>5</sup>

**Outcome evaluation** measures the long-term effects of the program: does the program meet its goals?<sup>5</sup>

An **indicator** is a variable that can be measured in some way to assess the extent to which the program objective has been met.<sup>4</sup>

## Impact and Outcome Q's & A's

For many of us, process evaluation (such as tracking the number of participants, number of materials produced and distributed and assessing reach and satisfaction) is second nature. When it comes to measure the effects of our programs though, this can be a bit more confusing! Try this exercise: for each of the scenarios below, identify what the impact and outcome evaluations would measure and how they could be measured. Hint: The difference between process, impact and outcome evaluation isn't necessarily what they measure but how they correspond to your program goals and objectives (see glossary).

*Q: Your Active Transportation Workgroup is encouraging schools to create environments that support active transportation, in the hopes of increasing the number of children who walk and bike to school regularly.*

A: The *impact evaluation* could measure existing policies and supports pre and post intervention. For example, you could conduct key stakeholder surveys or interviews to assess the existence of bicycle racks, safe walking routes and walking school buses at each school. The *outcome evaluation* could measure and compare the number of children actually walking or biking to school pre and post intervention. Volunteers could observe and record the number of children at each school who bike or walk before and after the program is in place.

*Q: Your Good Food Box Workgroup wants to increase the number of low-income households who have access to fresh fruits and vegetables in the hopes of increasing the percentage of low income families who consume vegetables and fruits according to the recommendations in Canada's Food Guide.*

A: The *impact evaluation* would measure the number of low-income households who receive Good Food Boxes. This could be measured by tracking the number of low-income recipients of the boxes pre and post intervention. The *outcome evaluation* would measure the number of fruit and vegetable servings that families consumed per day before they received the boxes and after receiving the boxes. Questionnaires or focus groups with recipients could identify this.

Based on an exercise from 'Impact and outcome evaluation: assessing programme effects' by Hawe et al. <sup>6</sup>

### References

- 1 Towards Evidence Informed Practice, 2008. Evaluation Protocol
- 2 The Health Communication Unit, 2007. Evaluating Health Promotion Programs, Toronto, Ontario
- 3 Ontario Ministry of Health, Public Health Branch, 1996
- 4 Hyndman, B., 2003. Introduction to Evaluating Heart Health Programs
- 5 O'Connor, M.L., Parker, E., 2001. 'Program planning and evaluation', Health Promotion, 2nd ed, Allen & Unwin, NSW
- 6 Hawe, P., Degeling, D., Hall, J., 1998. "Impact and Outcome evaluation: assessing programme effects", Evaluating health promotion: A health worker's guide, MacLennan & Petty, Sydney.

Tip from the  
Towards Evidence-  
Informed Practice  
(TEIP) Project

*A good logic model accurately communicates all program components. It can greatly assist you to break your program into component parts, clarify your objectives and goals and specify the sequential links between the program activities and the intended short and long-term outcomes. It therefore serves as the foundation for the development of a solid evaluation plan.*

## How should we evaluate? THCU's 10 Step Evaluation Model

1. **Clarify your Program**  
**Define your program goals, population of interest, and outcome objectives**
  - Define your programs activities & outputs
  - Establish measurable program indicators
  - Ensure prerequisites for evaluation are in place
2. **Engage Stakeholders**
  - Understand stakeholders' interests and expectations
  - Engage stakeholder participation
  - Develop evaluation questions (based on program goals and objectives and stakeholders' interests/expectations)
3. **Assess Resources for The Evaluation**
  - Determine availability of staff and resources
  - Determine amount of money allocated for evaluation
4. **Design the Evaluation**
  - Select type of evaluation to be conducted
  - Design evaluation framework
  - Consider ethical issues and confidentiality
5. **Determine Appropriate Methods of Measurement and Procedures**
  - Your evaluation toolbox
  - Qualitative versus quantitative methods
  - Select your sampling design
6. **Develop Work Plan, Budget and Timeline for Evaluation**
7. **Collect the Data Using Agreed-upon Methods and Procedures**
  - Pilot test
  - Data collection techniques
  - Tips for data collection
8. **Process and Analyze the Data**
  - Prepare the data for analysis
  - Analyze the data
9. **Interpret and Disseminate the Results**
  - Interpret results
  - Present results
  - Share results
10. **Take Action<sup>2</sup>**

## What should we evaluate?

Use the table below for suggestions on what and how to measure in your programs. Remember, when it comes to process, impact and outcome evaluation it's not necessarily what you are measuring, but how it corresponds to your program goals, objectives and activities that is important.

What to measure	How to measure it	Type of Evaluation
Number of programs/activities	Tracking forms or records	Process
Reach (number of participants or recipients as well as the intended audience)		
Satisfaction	Participant survey, interviews or focus groups Stakeholder/partner surveys, interview or focus group	Process
Changes in knowledge, attitudes and/or beliefs	Pre and post surveys, focus groups or interviews	Impact/ Outcome
Changes in behaviour	Observation (e.g. counting number of children walking to school pre and post intervention) Self-report (e.g. survey, diary, logbook)	Impact/Outcome
Changes in policy and physical environment	Observation Stakeholder surveys conducted pre and post intervention	Impact/Outcome
Changes in health status	Self-report (e.g. survey, diary, logbook) Direct measures of health indicators (e.g. blood pressure, BMI)	Impact/Outcome
Changes in morbidity and mortality rate	Cost/benefit analysis	Impact/Outcome

### Sources

Hyndman, B.:2003. Introduction to Evaluating Heart Health Programs, Toronto, Ontario. <sup>4</sup>

The Health Communications Unit, 2007. Evaluating Health Promotion Programs, Toronto, Ontario <sup>2</sup>

Deakin University, 2007. Health Promotion Planning and Evaluation Study Guide, Melbourne, Australia

### Kim's Tip

*Evaluation establishes clarity around goals and objectives and identifies measurable outcomes. This creates a shared understanding among stakeholders and leads to greater utilization of the evaluation results. Identify and involve stakeholders so that they understand the value in utilizing the results.*

### Tricia's Tip

*While planning your evaluation, determine what you will do with the evaluation results. Use this thinking as a filter to make sure that everything you are collecting during the evaluation is a "need to know" instead of a "nice to know".*

### Diane's Tip

*Always take the time to field test your evaluation questions with your target audience before finalizing your survey. Skipping this step usually results in "poor" data because of erroneous assumptions or misinterpretation of the question.*

### D'Arcy's Tip

*Make sure that your evaluation methods match the questions that you are trying to answer. A combination of methodologies (both qualitative and quantitative) provides more comprehensive results and gives both depth and breadth.*

### Closing Thought

*"Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted".*

Albert Einstein<sup>3</sup>

## Resources

Several useful evaluation resources, including those used in this issue of **@ a glance** can be found on the **HHRC's website** at <http://www.hhrc.net/skills/evaluation.cfm> and **THCU's website** at [http://www.thcu.ca/infoandresources/evaluation\\_resources.htm](http://www.thcu.ca/infoandresources/evaluation_resources.htm)

The **Towards Evidence-Informed Practice (TEIP) Project – Evaluation Protocol** is under development. It will have a full range of methods and tools to assist you in planning and implementing a comprehensive program evaluation. Check the TEIP web site for updates as they emerge <http://teip.hhrc.net>

### Evaluation Resources

**A Basic Guide to Evaluation** by Carter McNamara is an excellent article that describes several myths around evaluation and simply describes various evaluation techniques. The article is available at <http://www.tgci.com/magazine/A%20Basic%20Guide%20to%20Program%20Evaluation.pdf>

**Evaluation Made Very Easy, Accessible and Logical (EVAL)**. This user-friendly guide for community-based organizations was part of a graduate course at Dalhousie University in measurement and evaluation. Basic definitions, frameworks and examples from community, academic and internet resources are included <http://www.acewh.dal.ca/e/info/reports.asp#E>

**The Centre for Community Based Research (CCBR)** is focused on strengthening communities through social research <http://www.communitybasedresearch.ca/>. They have published a very user friendly handbook on evaluation <http://www.communitybasedresearch.ca/Page/View/Publications/Resources> and they also produce a regular e-newsletter.

Valuable information and resources on evaluation can be found at the **Canadian Evaluation Society's** website at <http://www.evaluationcanada.ca/site.cgi?s=1>.

### Evaluation Frameworks and Toolkits

**The Program Evaluation Tool Kit: A blueprint for public health management** (1995 Ottawa-Carleton Health Department & PHRED) is a practical, step-by-step guide to evaluating programs. It is presented in a series of short modules with simple explanations and specific tools for planning, conducting and using evaluation [http://www.ottawa.ca/residents/funding/toolkit/index\\_en.html](http://www.ottawa.ca/residents/funding/toolkit/index_en.html)

**An Evaluation Framework for Community Health Programs**. This framework from the Center for the Advancement of Community Based Public Health emphasizes program evaluation as a practical and ongoing process that involves program staff, community members, as well as evaluation experts. <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/evalcbph.pdf>

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control have posted **Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health**, a step-by-step framework for evaluating health promotion programs at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr4811a1.htm>. A list of program evaluation links and resources, also compiled by the CDC Evaluation Working Group is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/resources.htm>

### Professional Development Opportunities

The Canadian Evaluation Society <http://www.evaluationcanada.ca/site.cgi?s=H&lange=en>

The Health Communication Unit <http://www.thcu.ca/workshopsandevents.htm>

The Wellesley Institute <http://wellesleyinstitute.com/events/all-upcoming-event>

### About the HHRC

The Heart Health Resource (HHRC) anticipates and meets the needs of public health agencies and their communities in chronic disease prevention.

The HHRC was established in 1993 to support five demonstration projects in Ontario. It currently works with 36 community partnerships of the OHHP-Taking Action for Healthy Living.

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