

11 Evaluating and Measuring Success

Evaluation is a systematic way to improve and account for public health activities. Partnership evaluation is most effective when it is an ongoing process that is well integrated into all aspects of the partnership's work. Involving partners in all aspects of the evaluation process will help you to

- Ensure that the main partnership issues of each stakeholder group are understood and addressed in your evaluations, which will increase acceptance of evaluation findings.
- Conduct culturally competent evaluations that provide accurate and complete data and feedback.
- Ask the tough questions. (Is your chosen approach the best way to accomplish your goals? Do you need to make major changes?)
- Evaluate where your partnership stands on the nine practices associated with high-performance partnerships (see Chapter 3: *What Successful Health-Related Community Partnerships Have in Common*).
- Make major changes or minor modifications that will significantly improve your partnership's outcomes.
- Anticipate, monitor, and improve TB partners' perceptions of the partnership and its work, which will substantially increase their commitment over time.
- Verify the partnership's accomplishments and use this information to increase financial and political support for effective TB prevention and control efforts.

Getting Started with Evaluation

Program evaluation is an essential public health practice; however, it can seem overwhelming. To make it easier to integrate evaluation into your partnership's activities, start by reviewing the CDC's evaluation model, "Framework for program evaluation in public health" (1999).

The model is summarized in this chapter; for details on all steps of the model and how to use them, visit the CDC's evaluation website, www.cdc.gov/eval/index.htm.

Good partnership evaluation systems have both formal and informal components. Calling a partner who has missed a few meetings to get his or her perspective on the partnership and its work is an informal, yet important way to conduct a mini-evaluation. Formal evaluation procedures provide a more complete view of the partnership and its effectiveness.

The CDC's Recommended Evaluation Framework

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has created a practical evaluation model, *Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health* (1999), which

can be adapted for effective use with all public health programs, including partnerships. When adapted to your partnership's individual circumstances, the framework will help you to answer the following essential evaluation questions:

- What will be evaluated? (What is the partnership? What is it trying to accomplish? In what context does it exist?)
- What aspects of the partnership will be considered when judging its performance? (Levels of trust and collaboration among diverse partners? Partners' satisfaction with partnership processes and outcomes? Amount of material resources accessed through the partnership? Levels of awareness of TB symptoms among specific segments of high-risk populations?)
- What standards (e.g., type or level of performance) must be reached for the partnership to be considered successful? (What amount of progress constitutes success?)
- What evidence will be gathered and used to indicate how the partnership has performed? (Knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors?)
- What conclusions regarding partnership performance are justified by comparing the available evidence to the selected standards?

Program evaluation is necessary to fulfill CDC's operating principles for public health, which include:

- Using science as a basis for decisionmaking and action
- Expanding the quest for social equity
- Performing effectively as a service agency
- Making efforts outcome-oriented
- Being accountable

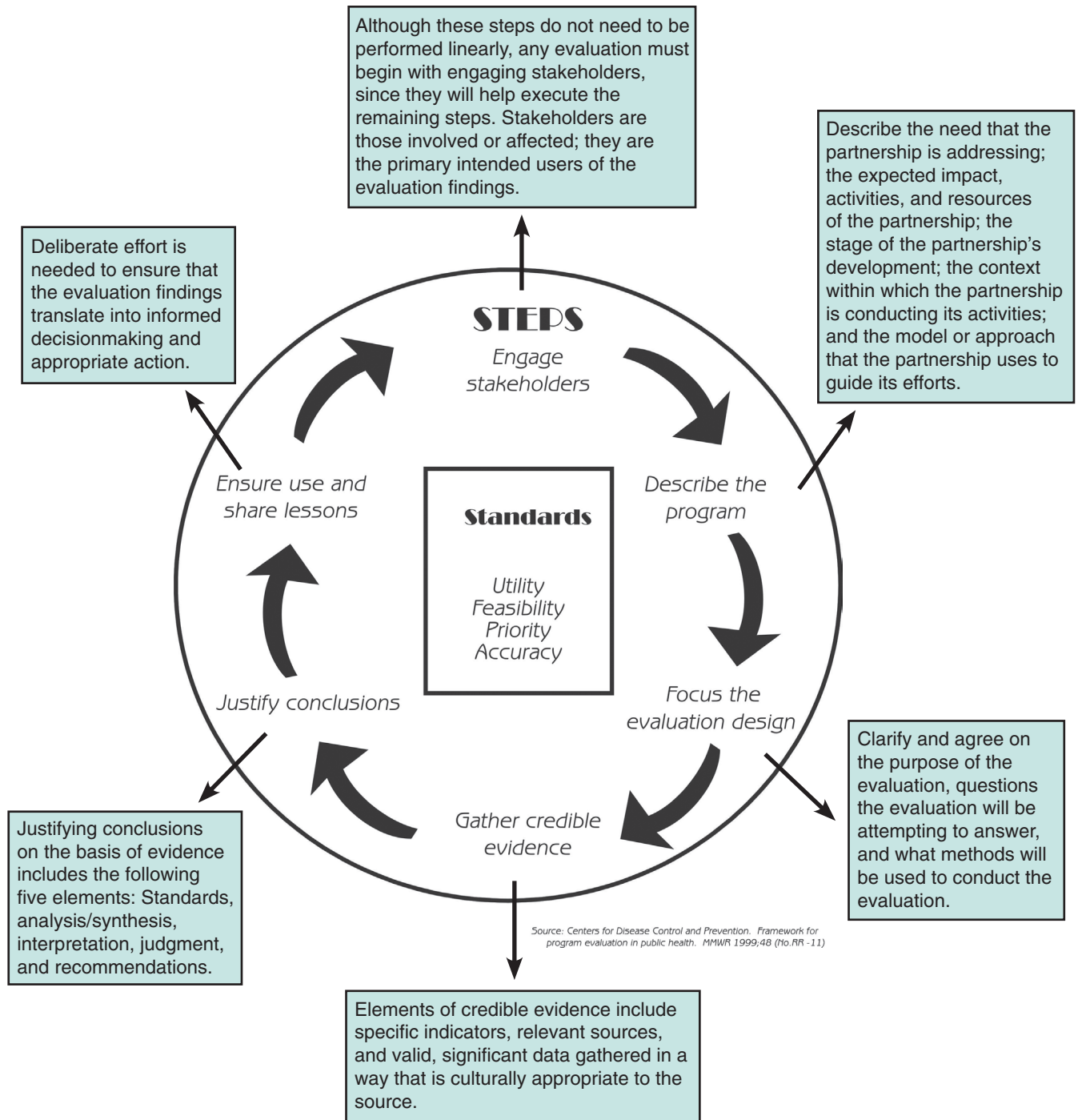
What is the CDC Framework for Program Evaluation?

The CDC framework for program evaluation is a guide that public health professionals and their partners can use to develop and conduct useful, feasible, ethical, and accurate evaluations of their work. The framework:

- Summarizes the essential elements of program evaluation
- Provides a common frame of reference for conducting evaluations
- Clarifies the steps in program evaluation
- Reviews standards for effective and practical program evaluation
- Addresses misconceptions about the purposes and methods of program evaluation

The framework is composed of six steps (see diagram on the next page) that must be taken in any evaluation. These steps are starting points for tailoring an evaluation to a particular public health effort at a particular time. Because the steps are all interdependent, they might be encountered in a nonlinear sequence; however, an order exists for fulfilling each—earlier steps provide the foundation for subsequent progress. Thus, decisions regarding how to execute a step are iterative and should not be finalized until previous steps have been thoroughly addressed.

CDC Framework for Program Evaluation



The second element of the CDC framework for program evaluation is a set of 30 standards for assessing the quality of your partnership's evaluation practices. The standards are organized into these four categories:

Utility—To ensure that evaluation results serve the information needs of intended users

Feasibility—To ensure that evaluation procedures are realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and economical

Propriety—To ensure that the evaluation is conducted legally, ethically, and with regard for the welfare of those involved and those affected

Accuracy—To ensure that the evaluation reveals and conveys technically accurate information

The CDC framework for program evaluation and other evaluation resources are available at www.cdc.gov/eval/index.htm.

A Collaborative Approach to Evaluation

A diverse team of engaged stakeholders has a greater probability of conducting a culturally competent evaluation (i.e., one that understands and is sensitive to the persons, conditions, and contexts associated with the program). Such a collaborative approach helps to reduce suspicion and fear, increases awareness and commitment, increases the possibility of achieving objectives, broadens knowledge base, teaches evaluation skills, increases the possibility that findings will be used, and allows for differing perspectives. All of these will serve to strengthen your partnership. A collaborative approach also provides you with access to community resources when planning and conducting the evaluation.

Partners may have varying levels of involvement in developing and implementing formal evaluations. To ensure that the process runs smoothly, it is important to designate an overall evaluation coordinator. Here are some examples of evaluation roles partners can undertake:

- Leaders of high-risk populations can engage members of their communities in the evaluation process.
- When describing the partnership, those who understand the partnership's history, purpose, operating practices, and projects are needed.
- Those with good group facilitation skills might be asked to help elicit unspoken expectations and concerns that partners may have about evaluations.
- Partnership core leadership can help focus evaluation design on questions that address specific users and uses. They can also help to set logistic parameters for the evaluation's scope, time line, and deliverables.

- Scientists, particularly social and behavioral scientists, can bring expertise to the development of evaluation questions, methods, and evidence-gathering strategies. They can also help evaluate the partnership within its organizational and community context.
- Trusted persons who have no particular stake in evaluation results can ensure that participants' values are treated fairly when applying standards, interpreting facts, and reaching justified conclusions.
- Advocates, clear communicators, creative thinkers, and members of the power structure can help ensure that lessons learned from the evaluation influence future decisionmaking regarding program strategy.

Things to Keep in Mind

- Be sure that your evaluation monitors how well your partnership conducts high-performance partnership practices (see Chapter 3: *What Successful Health-Related Community Partnerships Have in Common*).
- It is important for your partnership's core leadership to consistently support ongoing effective evaluation systems.
- When seeking foundation funds for a partnership project, be sure that appropriate evaluation procedures and their costs are included in your proposal.
- Deliberate effort is needed to ensure that lessons learned in your evaluation are used to make lasting improvements in your partnership and your overall TB prevention and control efforts.

Related Resources

- *Community Toolbox*

The University of Kansas has created a Community Toolbox with a variety of evaluation worksheets and checklists that can be used with the CDC evaluation framework. The toolbox also includes overheads summarizing important evaluation concepts. The Community Toolbox can be accessed at <http://ctb.ku.edu/index.jsp>.

- *Making Health Communication Programs Work*

This 250-page publication contains a chapter entitled *Assessing effectiveness and making refinements*, which addresses designing and using effective outcome evaluations. This publication is available through the National Cancer Institute's Website at www.cancer.gov/pinkbook or by calling 1-800-422-6237.

- *Practical Evaluation of Public Health Programs (Course # VC0017)*

This is a 5-hour distance-learning course that uses the CDC framework. Developed through the CDC's Public Health Training Network (PHTN), the course consists of two videotapes and a workbook that can be used by individuals for self-study or by partnerships. Continuing education credit is available for this course. Additional information about the video is available at www.phppo.cdc.gov/phtn/default.asp. Course materials can be purchased from the Public Health Foundation by calling, toll-free, 877-252-1200, or using the online order form at <http://bookstore.phf.org/prod41.htm>. For informational purposes, the workbook can be viewed over the Internet at www.cdc.gov/eval/workbook.pdf.

- *Partnership Assessment Tool 2.0*

This easy-to-use, web-based Tool gives a partnership a way to assess how well its collaborative process is working and to identify specific areas of focus in order to make the partnership process work better. The Tool is being provided at no charge by the Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health at The New York Academy of Medicine with funding from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. www.cacsh.org/psat.html.