

Describing the program

Definition	Scrutinizing the features of the program being evaluated, including its purpose and place in a larger public health context. Description includes information regarding the way the program was intended to function and the way that it actually was implemented. Also includes features of the program's context that are likely to influence conclusions regarding the program.
Role	Improves evaluation's fairness and accuracy; permits a balanced assessment of strengths and weaknesses and helps stakeholders understand how program features fit together and relate to a larger context.
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Characterizing the need (or set of needs) addressed by the program;• Listing specific expectations as goals, objectives, and criteria for success;• Clarifying why program activities are believed to lead to expected changes;• Drawing an explicit logic model to illustrate relationships between program elements and expected changes;• Assessing the program's maturity or stage of development;• Analyzing the context within which the program operates;• Considering how the program is linked to other ongoing efforts; and• Avoiding creation of an overly precise description for a program that is under development.

Adapted from Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. Program evaluation standards: how to assess evaluations of educational programs. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994.