

PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK



# Evaluating Public Health Programs

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# Introduction

## WHAT IS PROGRAM EVALUATION?

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The CDC definition for evaluation is as follows:

The systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of the program to:

- Make judgments about the program
- Improve program effectiveness
- Inform decisions about future program development<sup>1</sup>

Program evaluation should be practical, feasible, and ongoing. When you conduct an evaluation you must do so within the confines of resources, time, and political context. You should conduct it in an ethical manner to produce accurate and useful findings.

In this workbook, you will learn the CDC's Framework for Evaluating Programs and have the opportunity to practice each of the six steps of the process.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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At the end of this training, you will be able to evaluate a public health program by:

- Engaging stakeholders
- Describing the program
- Focusing the evaluation design
- Gathering credible evidence
- Justifying conclusions
- Ensuring use and sharing lessons learned.

## ESTIMATED COMPLETION TIME

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The workbook should take between 11 and 12 hours to complete.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

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The workbook is designed for FELTP fellows who have chosen to specialize in noncommunicable diseases. However, participants can also complete the module if they are working in infectious disease.

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Introduction to program evaluation for public health programs: a self-study guide. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005.

## ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK




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The format of this workbook consists of seven sections: Overview of Program Evaluation, Engage Stakeholders, Describe the Program, Focus the Evaluation Design, Gather Credible Evidence, Justify Conclusions, and Ensure Use and Share Lessons Learned. In each section, you will read information and then practice the skills and knowledge learned. There are also instructions for you to meet with a mentor or facilitator throughout the module for discussions about specific topics.

## ICON GLOSSARY

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The following icons are used in this guide:

Image Type	Image Meaning
 Activity Icon	An activity you should complete.
 Stop Icon	A point at which you should consult a mentor or wait for the facilitator for further locally relevant information about the topic.
 Resource Icon	A resource or website that may provide further information on a given topic.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# Overview of Program Evaluation

## WHY EVALUATE PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMS?

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Evaluation provides insights on the merit and worth of public health programs, interventions, and projects. It helps decision-makers address accountability and proper use of limited resources. It also helps programs make changes that can improve processes and outcomes.

Data that you collect during an evaluation can help you:

- Monitor progress toward program goals
- Determine if program components are contributing to intended outcomes
- Make modifications to the program, if needed
- Justify to your stakeholders the need for continued funding and support
- Track changes in behaviors of one or more target groups

In general terms, program evaluation answers these questions:

- **What** was done?
- **How well** was it done?
- **How much** has been done?
- **How effective** has it been?

## TYPES OF EVALUATION

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The two most common types of program evaluation that will be covered in this workbook are process and outcome. **Process evaluation** focuses on the internal operations of a program to understand its strengths and weaknesses. **Outcome evaluation** focuses on the results of the program. It helps you determine if you achieved the goals of the program.

Sometimes you need to do both process and outcome evaluations, i.e., when you want to know what happened and why. In this module, you will also learn how to use a process evaluation when you do not achieve your outcomes to better understand how to improve the program.



## OVERVIEW OF CDC FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION

The evaluation steps taught in this workbook are based from the 1999 CDC-published *Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health* (see resources). The framework was developed to provide an organized frame of reference for conducting evaluations, to clarify the steps in program evaluation, and to provide standards for effective program evaluation.

**Figure 1: Six Steps to Evaluating Programs**



Throughout this workbook, you will learn about and practice each of these six steps to evaluating programs.

The first step in the evaluation framework is to *engage stakeholders*. As you will learn, engaging stakeholders affects the entire evaluation framework. The second step in the evaluation framework is to *describe the program*. The purpose of describing the program is to clarify the program's intended outcomes and activities and its capacity to meet expected outcomes.

The third step is to *focus the evaluation design* to make sure that the questions you ask reflect the purposes, user, and use of the evaluation findings. It helps you determine which parts of the program you need to evaluate.

These first three evaluation steps are *iterative*. Insights you make during any of these three steps can lead you to revisit the other two steps. You may start with any of these three steps, but you must complete all of them before moving on to step 4 – gathering credible evidence.

Notice that step 4 is called *gather credible evidence* rather than *collect data*. Why do you think that is? The previous steps allowed you to identify the needs and values of stakeholders, thus ensuring that the data collection methods are credible. Stakeholders who find evaluation data credible are

more likely to accept the findings and to act on the recommendations. You will learn more about this later in the module.

Similarly, step 5 is called *justify conclusions* rather than *analyze data*. During this step, you will use the evidence you have gathered to make conclusions and judge them against agreed-upon values and standards established by the stakeholders. Those judgments then form the basis for the recommendations you will make to your stakeholders.

And lastly, why do you think Step 6 is called *ensure use and share lessons learned* rather than *report findings*? Again, by engaging stakeholders and coming to consensus and clarity on the meaning of the program and the most important questions, you are ensuring that intended users will put the recommendations and findings into action. If you simply reported your evaluation findings and did not ensure the stakeholders actually used the recommendations, then what was the point of going through this evaluation process? In fact, several measures that you will take throughout the evaluation process will ensure the findings are accepted as accurate and relevant and the recommendations are used.

## Using Standards

### Standards

Utility  
Feasibility  
Propriety  
Accuracy

The CDC Framework contains 30 discrete standards that provide practical guidelines to follow when conducting an evaluation. The standards have been adopted from the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation and are used by many evaluators, not just the CDC. The 30 standards fall into four categories listed in the center of the evaluation framework; they serve as *lenses* through which to view your choices at each step.

In general, standards answer the question: Will this evaluation be useful, feasible, ethical, and accurate? Specifically, they answer these questions:

**Utility:** Who wants the evaluation results? What use will they make of the results? Will the information collected address important issues about the program and be responsive to the needs of the stakeholders?

**Feasibility:** Are the evaluation procedures practical, given the time, resources, and expertise available? Have you considered the political interests and needs of various groups in planning the evaluation?

**Propriety:** Will stakeholders and the population served be respected and their values honored? Is the evaluation complete and fair in assessing all aspects of the program?

**Accuracy:** Have you described the purposes and procedures of the evaluation in enough detail to satisfy the needs of the intended users? Can conclusions be justified and fully understandable to stakeholders?



Resource

For a complete list of the 30 standards, refer to the Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr4811.pdf> or the Program Evaluation Standards from the American Evaluation Association at <http://www.eval.org/EvaluationDocuments/progeval.html>.



Stop

**Let the facilitator or mentor know you are ready for the group discussion.**

# Step 1: Engage Stakeholders

**Figure 2: Engage Stakeholders**



Stakeholders can help or hinder an evaluation before you conduct one, while you are conducting one, and when you are encouraging use of results. Stakeholders are more likely to support the evaluation and use the results if they are included in the evaluation process.

In this section, you will learn how to identify stakeholders and how to use them most effectively throughout the evaluation process.

## WHO ARE STAKEHOLDERS?

For this module, a stakeholder is defined as a person or organization that has an interest, share, or investment in something.

To help you identify which people and organizations to involve in the evaluation process, it is useful to categorize them into three groups:

1. Those involved in implementing the program or *program operations* such as program managers, administrators, sponsors, funding officials, and partners.
2. Those *served or affected* by the program such as patients, family members, community members, advocacy groups, elected and appointed officials, and academic institutions.
3. Those who are *intended users* of the evaluation, such as partners, funding agencies, coalition members, and the general public.

Intended users, also known as primary users, are the individuals or groups that are in a position to decide about and/or do something with the evaluation results. They are often people or organizations from the other two groups (i.e., those involved in implementing the program and those served or affected by the program). Involve primary users early in the evaluation process and maintain frequent interaction with them to ensure the evaluation addresses their values and requirements and meets their needs.

## Examples of Stakeholders

For a school-based physical activity program with the goal of **reducing prevalence of obesity in students**, you may involve these stakeholders:

**Table 1:** Stakeholders for a School-Based Physical Activity Program

Persons involved in program operations	Persons served or affected by the program	Intended users of the evaluation results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School administrators</li> <li>• Classroom teachers</li> <li>• Physical Education teachers</li> <li>• Community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family members</li> <li>• Students</li> <li>• Teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School board</li> <li>• Ministry of Education</li> <li>• Health Office</li> </ul>

## HOW TO IDENTIFY KEY STAKEHOLDERS

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When you think about all the people and organizations to involve in the evaluation, you might have a very long list. To make this step most efficient, it sometimes helps to prioritize the stakeholders. Among the stakeholders you may need most are those who might:

- Enhance credibility of the program or the evaluation
- Implement the program changes
- Advocate for changes
- Fund, authorize, or expand the program

While it is obvious to involve individuals or organizations who will *support* the program, it can be just as important to involve stakeholders who are openly skeptical or antagonistic toward the program. Recognize that this opposition might be due to differing values regarding what change is needed or how to achieve it. Enlisting the help of program opponents in the early stages of evaluation (and throughout the evaluation process) is important because these efforts can strengthen the evaluation's credibility.

## WHAT TO ASK STAKEHOLDERS

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Throughout the evaluation planning process, you will ask some or all stakeholders these questions:

- What do you represent and why are you interested in this program?
- What is important about this program to you?
- What would you like this program to accomplish?

- How much progress would you expect this program to have made at this time?
- What are the critical evaluation questions at this time?
- How will you use these results of the evaluation?
- What resources (i.e., time, funds, evaluation expertise, access to respondents, access to policymakers) might you contribute to this evaluation effort?

## HOW TO ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS?

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The scope and level of involvement for stakeholders will vary for each program evaluation. Some stakeholders will be involved in designing the evaluation; others will help you conduct the evaluation; others may be involved only in reviewing, interpreting, or using the findings. Many of the stakeholders may have already been involved in the program planning phase and you may choose to engage them again during evaluation.

In this module, you will learn how to use the CDC Framework to engage stakeholders in:

- Step 2: Describing the program: understanding the program's components, implementation, and intended effects;
- Step 3: Focusing the evaluation design: identifying the most useful and feasible evaluation questions to ask;
- Step 4: Gathering credible evidence: selecting credible data methods and sources;
- Step 5: Justifying conclusions: conducting the analysis or sharing results with stakeholders to obtain their interpretation; and
- Step 6: Ensuring use and sharing lessons learned: disseminating results or acting on findings.

## APPLYING THE STANDARDS

When you engage stakeholders, think about the following questions that relate to the four main standards:

**Table 2:** Questions to Consider When Engaging Stakeholders


Standards	Questions
Utility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who will use the results?</li> <li>Who can influence the use of the findings?</li> </ul>
Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How much time and budget are available to devote to stakeholder engagement?</li> <li>What is a reasonable time/burden commitment for each stakeholder?</li> </ul>
Propriety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which stakeholders need to be consulted to conduct an ethical evaluation?</li> <li>Has the potential for conflict of interest been addressed?</li> </ul>
Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How broadly do we need to engage stakeholders to accurately describe the program?</li> </ul>



Stop

**Let the facilitator or mentor know you are ready for the group discussion.**

**Table 3:** Exercise #1 - Engaging Stakeholders

Estimated Time	Exercise #1 Instructions
<p>1 hour</p>  <p>Activity</p>	<p>You will complete Step 1 of the Case Study that your mentor or facilitator provides you.</p>





## Step 2: Describe the Program

**Figure 3: Describe the Program**



Why is it necessary to describe the program?

Because planners, implementers, and stakeholders may have different understandings of the program's activities, its intended outcomes, and what outcomes constitute success; a systematic approach to describing the program ensures that all players have the same frame of reference.

The goal of describing the program is to develop a clear and succinct description of your program that will clarify its intended outcomes and activities and its capacity to meet those outcomes.

### COMPONENTS OF A PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Describing the program involves developing clarity and consensus on the following components:

- Need for the program
- Program expectations
- Program activities
- Program inputs or resources
- Program context/environment
- Stage of development

Sometimes this information is presented only in narrative. More often the information is also converted into a simple image such as a logic model. Both ways are shown in this module.

#### Need for the Program

During the planning phase, the need for the program should have been documented based on some or all of the following questions:

- What are the **health problem and its consequences** for the community?
- What is the **size of the problem** overall and in various segments of the population?

- What are the **determinants** of the health problem?
- Who are the **target groups**?
- What **changes or trends** are occurring?

In the program description phase, you will summarize these findings into a “need statement”. Describe the significant public health problem or aspect of the problem the program hopes to change.

## Program Expectations

During the planning phase, *planners* identified program expectations or results. These were probably formatted as goals and objectives. As program *evaluators* you will convert the goals and objectives into a sequence of outcomes: *long-term*, *intermediate*, and *short-term*.

Defining an outcome as long-term, intermediate, or short-term depends on the program objective and the length of the program. What is identified as a long-term outcome for one program could be an intermediate outcome for another program. In general, they are defined as the following:

- **Long-term outcome:** ultimate impact of the program; this is often very close to the “need” statement developed earlier.
- **Intermediate outcome:** medium-term results that help drive the long-term outcomes, such as behavior or policy, social or environmental change.
- **Short-term outcome:** short-term efforts of **a program**, such as knowledge, attitude, skills, and awareness change.

In the school-based physical activity program, where the stated goal is to reduce the prevalence of obesity in students, outcomes might be:

- **Long-term:** *Decreased prevalence of overweight and obesity among program participants*
- **Intermediate:** *Maintain increased physical activity levels*
- **Short-term:** *Increased knowledge and improved attitudes towards physical activity*

## Program Activities

In the planning phase, program planners identified the strategies and actions to take to meet the program objectives. In the program description, clarify the different activities and determine how they relate to each other and to the program’s outcomes.

Examples of activities for the physical activity program are:

- *Train physical education (PE) teachers to implement evidence-based curriculum*
- *Develop culturally appropriate recess activities*
- *Train classroom teachers to conduct recess activities*

### Program Inputs/Resources

Program activities assume a certain level of inputs—the resources needed to implement and sustain the program activities. These inputs may include money, people, organizations, materials, equipment, and time.

For the physical activity program, key inputs may include:

- *Funding (local foundation)*
- *School staff*
- *Community staff*
- *Parents*

### Program Context/Environment

These are the external factors (*moderators*), such as politics, social and environmental issues, history of leadership, competing interests, and competing organizations that can have a positive or negative impact on the program.

For the physical activity program, program context may be: *influence of school administration, teachers' requirements to spend more time teaching subjects and not PA, and previous leaders who had tried unsuccessfully to implement a PA program*

### Stage of Development

Stage of development describes the maturity of a program. There are three stages of development:

1. Planning
2. Implementation
3. Maintenance/outcomes

The stage of your program's development will influence the type of evaluation you want to do and the outcomes you will measure.

In the planning stage, the type of evaluation you conduct might be more of a needs assessment to determine what can be done to address the target audience's needs and how much it will cost. In the implementation phase, you can evaluate whether the program is operating as planned and if the program has all the inputs it needs. You may also be able to evaluate whether short-term outcomes were achieved. You can evaluate a more established program in its maintenance stage to determine whether it has achieved its intermediate and long-term objectives.

### Preparing a Logic Model

While a program can sometimes be described well in narrative, often it is more effective to describe it visually. A logic model visually presents the program theory—why you expect the program to work—by showing the intended relationship among the program's activities and its outcomes. By using the visual representation, you may also be able to identify gaps in the program logic.

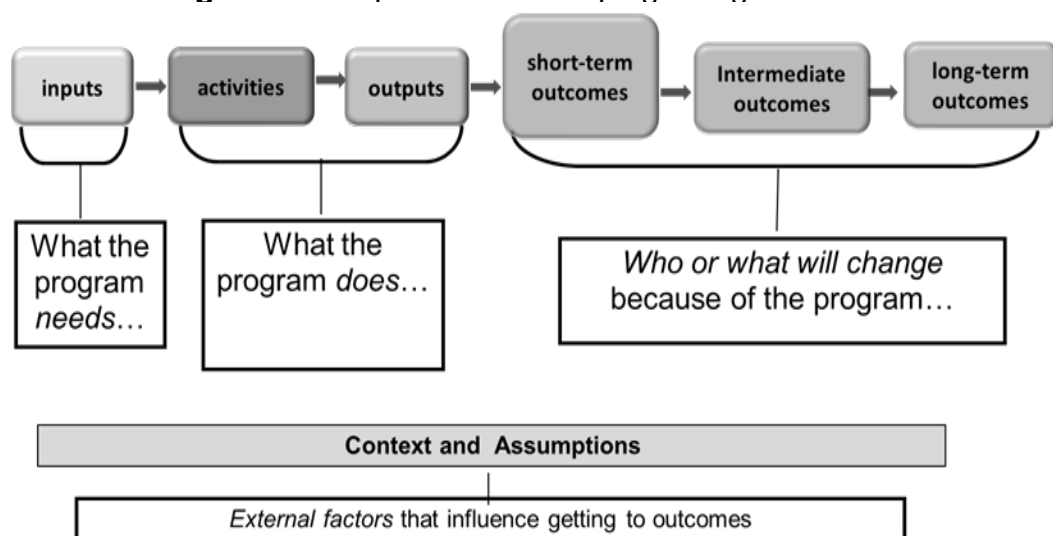
Logic models are *one way* of visually describing the program. Process maps, conceptual maps, causal loop diagrams, and log frames are among the other ways. But regardless of the method used, the intent is to use the visual description to develop clarity and consensus about the program.

**Engage a sufficiently broad range of relevant stakeholders** to validate the program description/logic model. This will ensure that the components are clear to the stakeholders and reflect their knowledge of the program.

## HOW TO DEVELOP A LOGIC MODEL

Take a look at this simple logic model. The model is merely a visual repackaging of the program components identified in the program description.

**Figure 4:** Template for Developing a Logic Model



“**Outputs**” is the only term not previously described. In our logic model, the outputs are the products of the activities, such as the number of training sessions held or the number of people reached. Showing the outputs helps put the activities in more concrete terms.

### Different Approaches to Developing a Logic Model

Logic models link the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. You can develop the logic model by moving forward from inputs to outcomes or moving backwards from the outcomes to the inputs. It does not matter which way you choose to develop a logic model. Sometimes program planners find the backwards logic more useful while evaluators find the forward logic more helpful.

### Arranging in a Time Sequence and Drawing Causal Arrows

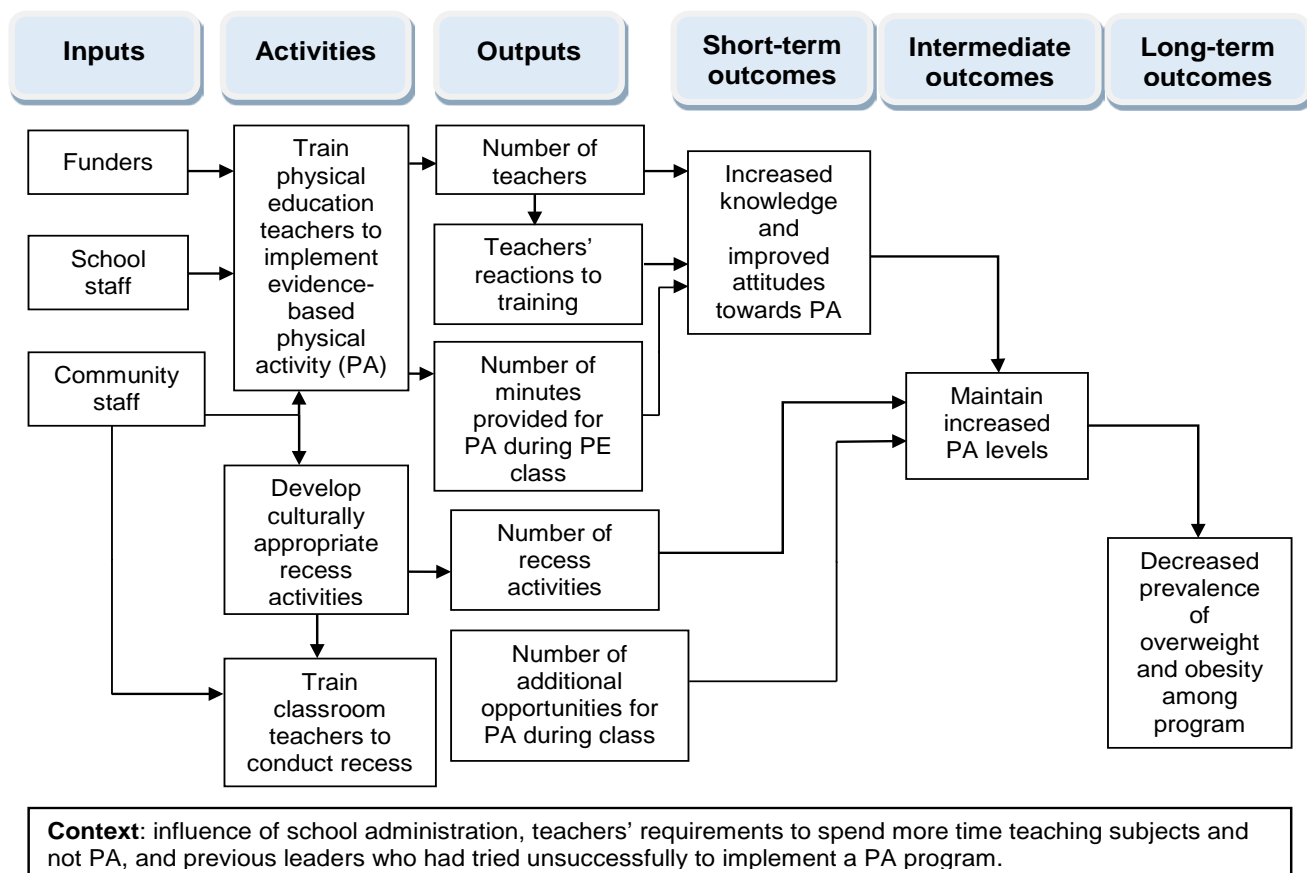
Both approaches noted above arrange outcomes, activities, and outputs in a sequence to show how one is dependent on the other. For example, in the physical activity program, the logic model would show how you need to first develop culturally appropriate recess activities before you can train the classroom teachers to conduct those activities. While some people arrange these components in columns in a table, others find it helpful to draw arrows to show relationships between:

- Inputs to Activities: Which inputs produce which activities?
- Activities to other Activities: Which activities influence which other activities?
- Activities to Outputs: Which activities produce which intended outputs?
- Outputs to Outcomes: Which outputs lead to which outcomes?
- Outcomes to Outcomes: Which early outcomes produce which later outcomes?

Look at the sample logic models below. They both show the sequence of the activities and outputs and outcomes, but the first one uses arrows to show the relationships among these elements.

### Sample Logic Model Components: Physical Activity Program

**Figure 5:** Sample Logic Model for a Physical Activity Program



Another way of showing this logic model using a table format rather than boxes and arrows is as follows:

**Table 4:** Sample Logic Model (Table Format) for a Physical Activity Program

<b>If we get these investments....</b>	<b>To.....</b>	<b>Then we will see...</b>	<b>And....</b>	<b>Then....</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funders</li> <li>• School staff</li> <li>• Community staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train PE teachers to implement PA curriculum</li> <li>• Develop culturally appropriate recess activities</li> <li>• Train classroom teachers to conduct recess activities</li> </ul>	An increase in knowledge and improved attitudes towards PA	An increase in PA levels maintained	A decrease in the prevalence of overweight and obesity among program participants

## APPLYING THE STANDARDS

When you describe the program, think about the following questions in Table 5 that relate to the four main standards:.

**Table 5:** Questions to Consider When Describing a Program


<b>Standards</b>	<b>Questions</b>
Utility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the level of detail appropriate for the intended user(s)?</li> <li>• Is the logic model clear to those who need to use the information to make decisions related to the evaluation?</li> </ul>
Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the program description include at least some activities and outcomes that are in control of the program?</li> </ul>
Propriety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the description include sufficient detail for users to critically assess the content?</li> </ul>
Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would diverse stakeholders consider the logic model a reasonable representation of the program?</li> </ul>



Stop

**Let the facilitator or mentor know you are ready for the group discussion.**

**Table 6: Exercise #2 - Describing the Program**

Estimated Time	Exercise #2 Instructions
<p><b>1 hour</b></p>  <p>Activity</p>	<p><b>You will complete Step 2 of the Case Study.</b></p>

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS**



Activity

After completing this section, answer the following questions. Discuss with other groups or your facilitator.

Complete the following table for the public health program that you will (or would like to) evaluate:

1. Describe the need for the program:

2. Complete the following table:

<b>Inputs</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Short-term outcomes</b>	<b>Intermediate Outcomes</b>	<b>Long-term Outcomes</b>
<i>(list at least 2)</i>	<i>(list at least 2)</i>	<i>(list at least 2)</i>	<i>(list at least 1)</i>	<i>(list at least 1)</i>	<i>(list at least 1)</i>



3. Write any questions or comments regarding this section to discuss with your mentor or facilitator (if you are in a classroom setting).

### CHECKLIST FOR DESCRIBING A PROGRAM

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- Document the need for the program.
- State expected effects.
- Identify program activities.
- Determine program resources.
- Recognize stage of development.
- Describe program context.
- Prepare a logic model (optional).

# Step 3: Focus the Evaluation Design

**Figure 6:** Focus the Evaluation Design



In step 3, you will clarify the purpose, user, and uses for the evaluation to identify the most appropriate questions to ask.

Evaluating every part of the logic model is not practical. This step helps you determine which parts of the program you need to evaluate. It helps you identify the direct *purpose* of the evaluation.

## OVERVIEW OF FOCUSING THE EVALUATION DESIGN

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There are four main questions you will answer when you focus the evaluation design:

- What is the **purpose** of the evaluation? Towards what end is the evaluation being conducted?
- Who is the **user**? Who wants the information and what are they interested in?
- What **use** will they make of the evaluation?
- What **questions** need to be answered?

Each of these questions will be discussed in the sections below.

## DETERMINE PURPOSE

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There can be many purposes for doing an evaluation, such as to:

- Show accountability
- Examine program implementation
- Determine program improvement
- Facilitate judgment about a program's fate

These potential purposes for evaluation are very different from one another. Each one will lead you to a different part of the logic model.

When you need to show accountability, you will focus primarily on inputs, such as money and other resources and how well these are accounted for, traced, monitored and reported.

Examining program implementation is often known as **process evaluation**. You may not look at any outcomes at all and look primarily at *outputs*. You will try to answer the question: Was the program implemented as it was intended?

Determining program improvement helps you answer the question: How do I improve my program to reach objectives? It can help you determine what is wrong with the program if it is not producing the outputs or achieving short-term outcomes.

When you need a determination about a program's fate, you will focus mainly on **outcome evaluation**. It will help you answer the questions: Does the program provide good value for the investment of time, money, and other resources? Should the program be continued, expanded, or ended?

## DETERMINE INTENDED USER

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You identified the users of the evaluation during step 1 – engaging stakeholders. In step 3, you will obtain their input into the evaluation design and evaluation questions. When users are encouraged to clarify intended uses and identify priority evaluation questions, the evaluation is more likely to focus on things that will inform and influence future actions.

## DETERMINE USE

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During step 1, you may have also begun to determine how the users will use the evaluation results. Some examples of uses of evaluation results are to:

- Determine how to allocate resources
- Apply for additional funding
- Mobilize community support
- Solicit additional funds or partners
- Change or expand the locations where the intervention is being implemented
- Improve the content and/or delivery of the program

## DESIGN QUESTIONS

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When you design evaluation questions, ensure they meet stakeholder needs. Because these questions will affect the methods you use to gather data, decide which questions to ask before you choose your methods.

### Examples of Questions

Take a look at the following scenarios and how to focus the evaluation based on each request.

*Scenario 1: After one year of implementing the school-based physical activity program, other communities/organizations are interested in adapting your model/program.*

To focus the evaluation, you will identify the purpose, user, and use as such:

**Purpose:** To examine program implementation

**User:** Other communities / organizations

**Use:** To determine whether to adopt the program

You would conduct a **process evaluation** and focus your questions on the **left side** of the logic model. Example questions are as follows:

- How many teachers have been trained in physical education (PE)?
- What is the number of minutes that are provided for physical activity during PE class?

*Scenario 2: After five years of implementation, you need to demonstrate to the Ministry of Education (i.e., the funders) the importance of your efforts for a physical activity program in order to justify continued funding.*

By contrast, scenario 2 is dealing with a program in its fifth year. Because you may be concerned that the Ministry of Education may not continue to fund your program, you need to show them that the program is producing its intended outcomes.

To focus the evaluation you will identify the purpose, user, and use as such:

**Purpose:** To facilitate judgment about a program's fate

**User:** Ministry of Education

**Use:** To show evidence that proves sufficient effectiveness to warrant funding

In this type of scenario, frequently stakeholders, funders, or authorizers might be expecting to see intermediate or long-term **outcomes**. You would

conduct an **outcome evaluation** and focus your questions on the **right side** of the logic model. Example questions are as follows:

- *Has there been an increase in physical activity levels?*
- *Has there been a decrease in the prevalence of obesity and overweight in program participants?*

## CONSIDER STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

Besides having a specific purpose and use, your evaluation should also reflect the stage of your program's development. For example, decide whether you are conducting an outcome evaluation, a process evaluation, or both. If your program is in the planning stages, you may not be ready to conduct any type of evaluation. (See Appendix A for a brief explanation of how to determine if your program is ready to be evaluated.)

A program in its implementation stage can be evaluated to make sure the program is on track. During the maintenance stage, you should have a well-established, mature program. You may wish to evaluate changes in intermediate or long-term objectives.

## APPLYING THE STANDARDS

As noted in previous steps, you can help ensure the quality of your evaluation by considering evaluation standards throughout the evaluation process. When you focus the evaluation, think about the following questions in Table 7 that relate to the four main standards.

**Table 7:** Questions to Consider for Focusing the Evaluation

Standards	Questions
Utility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the purpose of the evaluation?</li> <li>• Who will use the evaluation results and how will they use them?</li> <li>• What are special needs of any other stakeholders that must be addressed?</li> </ul>
Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the program's stage of development?</li> <li>• How measurable are the components in the proposed focus?</li> </ul>
Propriety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will the focus and design adequately detect any unintended consequences?</li> <li>• Will the focus and design include examination of the experience of those who are affected by the program?</li> </ul>


Standards	Questions
Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the focus broad enough to detect success or failure of the program?</li> <li>• Is the design the right one to respond to the questions that are being asked by the stakeholders?</li> </ul>



Stop

**Let the facilitator or mentor know you are ready for the group discussion.**

**Table 8: Exercise #3 – Focus the Evaluation Design**

Estimated Time	Exercise #3 Instructions
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>30 minutes</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Activity</p>	<p><b>You will complete Step 3 of the Case Study.</b></p>

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS**



Activity

After completing this section, answer the following questions. Discuss with other groups or your facilitator.

1. For the public health program that you will (or would like to) evaluate in your country, describe (in one or two sentences) what is the purpose.
  
2. Who are the intended users of that evaluation?



# Step 4: Gather Credible Evidence

**Figure 7:** Gather Credible Evidence



Having now completed the first three steps, you can begin to gather credible evidence, Step 4. In this step, you will determine *how* to collect the data to answer the questions identified in the previous step. It is important to identify data collection methods that will generate accurate *and* credible information.

Information must be perceived as trustworthy and relevant by the evaluation’s primary users. When stakeholders find evaluation data to be credible, they are more likely to accept the findings and to act on the recommendations. If the information is not considered to be credible to the people who have to make the final decision then they are not going to use it.

## HOW TO GATHER CREDIBLE EVIDENCE

### Develop Indicators

The first step in making good choices of data collection methods is to change the evaluation questions into **indicators**. An indicator is a tangible (often quantitative) **measure of the program’s activities or outcomes**. Indicators must be specific, observable, measurable, and relevant to the activity or outcomes they are measuring.

For example, look at this evaluation question that relates to the activity “training” in the logic model: *What proportion of PE and classroom teachers have been trained?* Some indicators to help you answer this question are:

- *The number of PE teachers trained*
- *The number of classroom teachers trained*

Note that since you have already defined outputs in the logic model for these activities, you have a head start in identifying these indicators.

Refer back to the logic model and note the intermediate outcome: *Maintain increased physical activity levels*. A question your evaluation can ask



about this outcome is: *Have the students maintained an increase in physical activity levels since the program was implemented?* Some indicators to help you answer this question are:

- *The percentage of time spent in moderate to vigorous physical activity in PE class*
- *The percentage of students who meet recommended levels of physical activity per day*

## Select Data Collection Methods and Sources

After you identify the indicators to measure the program performance, select the data collection methods and sources from which to gather information on your indicators. Depending on your evaluation questions and your indicators, you can choose existing data sources, known as *secondary data collection*, or collect new data, known as *primary data collection*.

Examples of **secondary data sources** are:

- Cancer registries
- Hospital discharge records
- Surveillance databases
- Vital Statistics
- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)
- National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)

**Primary data collection** has four main categories:

1. Surveys completed in person, by telephone, mail or e-mail
2. Observations
3. Group discussions or focus groups
4. Document review of medical records, surveillance summaries, minutes of meetings, logs, etc.

## Choosing Data Collection Methods or Sources

How would you choose one data collection method over another? Here are some factors to consider. Note how these correspond to the four evaluation standards:

- ✓ **Time (Feasibility):** How soon are the results needed? Secondary data analysis will take the shortest amount of time and anything

involving an individual review will take the longest amount of time, such as document review, observation, and personal interviews.

- ✓ **Cost (Feasibility):** How much money will the data collection method take and will it fit within your budget? If you are conducting surveys, mailing them might be less expensive than conducting in-person interviews (although it will take a long time to collect the data).
- ✓ **Ethics (Propriety):** Is the data collection method ethical?
- ✓ **Sensitivity of the issue (Accuracy):** Is the issue one to which people would be sensitive? If so, do we need a method that permits anonymity to ensure the respondent will provide accurate responses?
- ✓ **Validity and reliability (Accuracy):** Does the data collection method *consistently* and *reliably* capture what is being measured and therefore would be considered valid and credible to stakeholders?

### Examples of Data Collection Methods or Sources

Refer to the table below which shows examples of data collection methods or sources based on the questions and indicators previously identified.

**Table 9:** Examples of Data Collection Methods or Sources for a Physical Activity Program

Evaluation Question	Indicator	Data Source/Method
What proportion of PE and classroom teachers have been trained?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of teachers trained</li> <li>• The number of PE teachers trained</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training sign-in logs/sheets</li> </ul>
Have the students maintained an increase in physical activity levels since the program was implemented?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The percentage of time spent in moderate to vigorous physical activity in PE class</li> <li>• The percentage of students who meet recommended levels of physical activity per day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations of recess and PE classes</li> <li>• Interviews with students about their physical activity during the past day</li> </ul>

### Using Mixed Data Collection Methods

Some data collection methods you choose will yield *qualitative* data and some will yield *quantitative* data. If the evaluation question involves information that is abstract or not easily measured then you may want to gather both qualitative and quantitative data, which is known as *mixed* data collection methods.

Mixed data collection methods are helpful because they can give you different perspectives about the program and thus a more comprehensive view of the program. In addition, using both qualitative and quantitative methods can result in evidence that is more complete and useful, and meets the needs and expectations of a wider range of stakeholders.

## APPLYING STANDARDS

When selecting data collection methods and sources, choose ones that meet your project's and users' needs. Avoid selecting a data method/source that may be familiar or popular but that may not necessarily answer your evaluation questions. Applying the four main standards can help you reduce the number of data collection options to a more manageable number that best meets your needs.

**Table 10:** Questions to Consider When Selecting Data Collection Methods and Sources

Standards	Questions
Utility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have existing data sources been considered prior to new data collection sources?</li> <li>• Will specific methods or data sources enhance credibility of the data with stakeholders?</li> </ul>
Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can proposed data and analysis be implemented within the timeline and budget?</li> <li>• How often will you need the data?</li> </ul>
Propriety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do issues of safety or confidentiality exist that must be addressed?</li> <li>• Will the data collection method disrupt the program or appear intrusive by participants?</li> </ul>
Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does data collection address how good the findings need to be?</li> <li>• How open and honest will participants be in responding to the questions?</li> </ul>



Stop

**Let the facilitator or mentor know you are ready for the group discussion.**



# Step 5: Justify Conclusions

**Figure 8:** Justify Conclusions

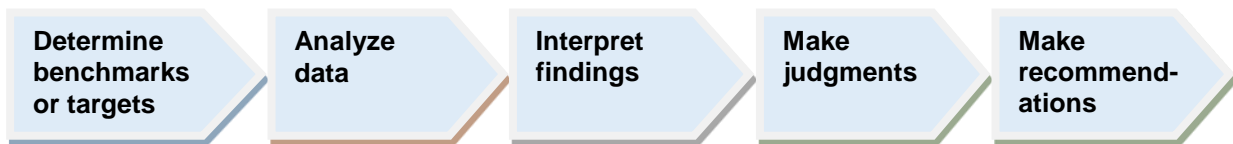


Evaluation conclusions are justified when they are linked to the evidence gathered. They are judged against agreed upon values and benchmarks or targets set by the stakeholders. When you first engage stakeholders in step 1, you should determine what is considered credible evidence. At that time, you should also identify their values and benchmarks for what makes a program “good”.

## HOW TO JUSTIFY CONCLUSIONS

There are five main components to justifying conclusions:

**Figure 9:** Components for Justifying Conclusions



### Determine Benchmarks or Targets

This step involves identifying which stakeholder values provide the basis for forming judgments and what level of performance must be reached for the program to be considered successful. Articulate and negotiate the values that will be used to consider a program “successful”, “adequate”, or “unsuccessful”.

Possible standards that might be used in determining these benchmarks:

- Needs of participants
- Program goals and objectives
- Community values, expectations, and norms
- Performance by similar programs
- Performance by a comparison group

## Analyze Data

Data analysis is the process of organizing and classifying the information you have collected, tabulating and analyzing the data, comparing the results with other appropriate information, and presenting the results in an easily understandable manner. There are five steps in data analysis:

1. Enter the data into a database and check for errors. If you are using a surveillance system such as BRFSS, the data have already been checked, entered, and tabulated by those conducting the survey. If you are collecting data with your own instrument, you will need 1) to select the computer program you will use to enter and analyze the data, and 2) to determine who will enter, check, tabulate, and analyze the data.
2. Tabulate the data. The data need to be tabulated to provide information (such as a number or percentage) for each indicator. Some basic calculations include determining—
  - The number of participants.
  - The number of participants achieving the desired outcome.
  - The percentage of participants achieving the desired outcome.
3. Analyze and stratify your data by various demographic variables of interest, such as participants' sex, age, or geographic location.
4. Make comparisons. Use statistical tests to show differences between comparison and intervention groups, between geographic areas, or between the pre-intervention and post-intervention status of the target population.
5. Present your data in a clear and understandable form. To interpret your findings and make your recommendations, you must ensure that your results are easy to understand and clearly presented. Data can be presented in tables, bar charts, line graphs, and maps.

## Interpret Findings

Translate raw findings (measures of association, results of statistical tests) into words that explain what each result means. When interpreting results, you should consider the program goals.

You should also consider the limitations of the findings, such as:

- Possible biases
- Validity of results
- Reliability of results

## Make Judgments

Determine what claims concerning the program's merit, worth, or significance you can justify based on the available evidence and the selected standards. Determine if the results are similar to what you and the stakeholders expected. Compare results to:

- Program objectives
- A comparison group
- National norms
- Past performance
- Needs

Some stakeholders, such as funders, may judge a program based on whether resources were used efficiently. For example, suppose the evaluation results for the physical activity program showed a decreased percentage of students with obesity but the program was expensive. Funders may judge it differently than stakeholders involved in promoting behavior change such as an increase in the percentage of time spent in moderate to vigorous physical activity.

## Make Recommendations

The recommendations you make will depend on the audience and the purpose of the evaluation. As in the previous example, you may have different stakeholders who want to evaluate different aspects of the program.

Involve your stakeholders throughout the evaluation to ensure that the recommendations you make are relevant and useful to them. You need to know ahead of time the information your stakeholders want and what is important to them. Their feedback early on in the evaluation will make their eventual support of your recommendations more likely.

The purpose of your evaluation (e.g., improve your program, demonstrate its effectiveness, demonstrate accountability) will also influence your recommendations.

When you recommend actions or decisions, ensure they are consistent with your conclusions and are supported by your data.

## APPLYING STANDARDS

When you justify conclusions, think about the following questions in Table 12 that relate to the four main standards:

**Table 12:** Questions to Consider When Justifying Conclusions


Standards	Questions
Utility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you carefully described the perspectives, procedures, and rationale used to interpret the findings?</li> <li>• Have stakeholders considered different approaches for interpreting the findings?</li> </ul>
Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the approach to analysis and interpretation appropriate to the level of expertise and resources?</li> <li>• Are the recommendations realistic for the program to implement?</li> </ul>
Propriety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the conclusions and recommendations reflective and respectful of key stakeholders, including those served by the program?</li> </ul>
Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can the conclusions explicitly be justified?</li> <li>• Are the conclusions understandable to stakeholders?</li> </ul>



Stop

**Let the facilitator or mentor know you are ready for the group discussion.**

**Table 13: Exercise #5 - Justify Conclusions**

Estimated Time	Exercise #5 Instructions
20 minutes  Activity	<b>You will complete Step 5 of the Case Study.</b>





# Step 6: Ensure Use and Share Lessons Learned

**Figure 10:** Ensure Use and Share Lessons Learned



You should think very strategically about helping your stakeholders use evaluation results and disseminating the information. This begins in the earlier stages of the evaluation process when you are engaging the stakeholders. Continue ensuring use throughout the evaluation process, which will lead to use both during and at the end of the evaluation.

## WHAT CONDITIONS INCREASE USE

Research shows that evaluation activities, processes, and findings must be accepted as relevant and accurate in order to be used. As the table below shows, relevancy is associated with steps 1, 2 and 3 of the evaluation process and accuracy correlates to step 4.

**Table 14:** Conditions for Evaluation Steps 1 to 4

Relevant/ Accurate	Evaluation Step
Relevant	Step 1: Engage stakeholders
Relevant	Step 2: Describe the program
Relevant	Step 3: Focus the evaluation design
Accurate	Step 4: Gather credible evidence

## CRITICAL ACTIVITIES TO ENSURE USE

The following activities are critical to ensure use of evaluation findings:

- ✓ **Design the evaluation** to achieve intended use by intended users. Ensure that you design the evaluation from the beginning to achieve intended use by the intended users.

- ✓ **Prepare stakeholders** for eventual use ahead of time. One way to do this is by developing a communication and reporting plan so stakeholders will know what they might learn throughout the course of the evaluation.
- ✓ **Provide continuous feedback** to stakeholders throughout the evaluation process to ensure that they trust you and each other. Giving and receiving feedback from the beginning keeps everyone informed about how the program is being implemented and how the evaluation is proceeding. As the evaluation progresses and preliminary results become available, continuous feedback gives stakeholders a chance to participate in evaluation decisions.
- ✓ **Schedule follow-up meetings** with intended users to transfer evaluation conclusions into appropriate actions or decisions. This can help prevent misuse of results by ensuring that:
  - Evidence is applied to the questions that the evaluation focused on
  - Lessons learned are not ignored while making complex or political decisions
- ✓ **Disseminate the procedures used and the lessons learned** from the evaluation to stakeholders, using tailored communication strategies that meet their particular needs.

## EVALUATION COMMUNICATION PLAN

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When you present stakeholders with a communication plan that explains what you are going to give them and what they might expect to learn, it helps plan for communication throughout the evaluation. It also increases the likelihood that the information will meet the users' needs.

Negotiate the communication plan with stakeholders since they may have other ideas or suggestions on how to disseminate information related to the evaluation.

### Elements of a Communication Plan

When developing a communication plan, remember these things:

- Identify the intended audience
- Tailor format and style of the communication to the stakeholder
- Specify reporting frequency and timing

- Attend to deadlines

### Choosing a Communication Format

The two main types of communication formats you will consider are informal and formal ones. Informal communication formats can be personal discussions, working sessions, or short communications such as memos, faxes and email. Formal communication formats can include verbal presentations, videotape presentations, conferences, public meetings, written reports, executive summaries, chart essays, or poster sessions.

Choose a communication format based on:

- Accessibility
- Reading ability
- Familiarity with the program and/or the evaluation
- Role in decision making
- Experience using evaluation findings

Since most adults learn with some combination of an interactive and a less interactive product, you may want to have a presentation of the evaluation findings in addition to an executive summary or a report. Engaging people and getting them to react to your findings in a group setting can be a very useful strategy.

## APPLYING STANDARDS

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When you ensure using and sharing lessons learned, think about the following questions that relate to the four main standards:

**Table 15:** Questions to Consider When Using and Sharing Lessons Learned

Standards	Questions
Utility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the evaluation been planned, conducted, and reported in a manner that encourages follow through by stakeholders?</li> </ul>
Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the findings communicated in formats that are appropriate with the available resources and the audience?</li> </ul>
Propriety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have the evaluation findings, including limitations, been made accessible to the appropriate stakeholders?</li> </ul>


Standards	Questions
Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do evaluation reports impartially and fairly reflect evaluation findings?</li> </ul>



Stop

**Let the facilitator or mentor know you are ready for the group discussion.**

Table 16: Exercise #6 - Ensure Use

Estimated Time	Exercise #6 Instructions
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>20 minutes</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Activity</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>You will complete Step 6 of the Case Study.</b></p>

APPLICATION QUESTIONS



Activity

After completing this section, answer the following questions. Discuss with other groups or your facilitator.

1. What are some activities you will complete to ensure use of evaluation findings for your program?



# Conclusion

## TAKE HOME POINTS

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- Engage stakeholders to ensure that the focus and the results of the evaluation support the needs of those who will use the recommendations.
- Describing your program helps to ensure that stakeholders share the same level of understanding about the program's components, implementation, and intended effects. A logic model is one way to describe the program and it helps you get a *visual* understanding of how the program components are linked.
- When you focus the evaluation design, consider the *purpose*, *user*, and *use*. To ensure evaluation questions are feasible, consider the program's stage of development, intensity, and resources.
- Gathering credible evidence involves first identifying the data you need (indicators) and where or how you will get the data.
- Evaluation conclusions are justified when they are linked to the evidence gathered.
- Ensuring use occurs at the start of the evaluation and throughout the evaluation, which will lead to use both during and at the conclusion of the evaluation.
- Conducting evaluability assessments (as described in the Appendix) can help you determine whether a program can be meaningfully evaluated. You can also use this process to determine a program's plausibility to achieve its objectives and outcomes, areas for further program improvement, options for further evaluation, and the program's capacity to provide data for an evaluation.

# Resources

For more information on topics found within this workbook:

- MMWR, Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health, September 17, 1999 / Vol. 48 / No. RR-11, <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr4811.pdf>.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Office of the Director, Office of Strategy and Innovation. Introduction to program evaluation for public health programs: A self-study guide. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011.
- MacDonald G, Starr G, Schooley M, Yee SL, Klimowski K, Turner K. Introduction to Program Evaluation for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2001.
- Yarbrough, D. B., Shulha, L. M., Hopson, R. K., and Caruthers, F. A. (2011). *The program evaluation standards: A guide for evaluators and evaluation users* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Program Evaluation Webinar Series Part 1: “*Top Roadblocks on the Path to Good Evaluation— And How to Avoid Them*”, Presented by: Tom Chapel.
- Program Evaluation Webinar Series Part 2: *Getting Started and Engaging Your Stakeholders*, Presented by: Leslie Fierro and Carlyn Orians.
- Program Evaluation Webinar Series Part 3: Describing Your Program and Choosing an Evaluation Focus; Presented by Thomas J. Chapel, MA, MBA, Chief Performance Officer (Acting), CDC/Office of the Director/OCOO.
- Program Evaluation Webinar Series Part 4: *Gathering Data, Developing Conclusions, and Putting Your Findings to Use*, presented by Christina A. Christie, Ph.D., Claremont Graduate University.
- W. K. Kellogg Foundation. Logic model development guide. Available at <http://www.wkcf.org/knowledge-center/resources/2006/02/WK-Kellogg-Foundation-Logic-Model-Development-Guide.aspx>. Accessed April 18, 2012.
- Wholey JS, Hatry PH, Newcomer KE, eds. *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*. 3rd ed. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2010.
- Leviton LC, Collins CB, Laird BL, Kratt PP. Teaching evaluation using evaluability assessment. *Evaluation*. 1998;4(4)389–409.
- Wilson KM, Brady TJ, Lesesne C, on behalf of the NCCDPHP Work Group on Translation. An organizing framework for translation in public health: the Knowledge to Action Framework. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2011;8(2):A46. [http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2011/mar/10\\_0012.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2011/mar/10_0012.htm). Accessed January 21, 2013.



# Appendix

## EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT

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Many programs find it helpful as part of the process of designing an evaluation to conduct an evaluability assessment (EA). This is a systematic step-by-step process to determine if the program is ready for evaluation and whether an evaluation is likely at this point in the program to provide findings that would meet the needs of the users of findings and the stakeholders.

In many ways, an EA is an extension of/elaboration of the types of questions you ask during Step 3: Focus the Evaluation Design. But by being systematic and collating findings into an assessment report, the EA process ensures that evaluations will best serve the needs of the users. While there are many approaches to EA, some common steps are: 1) involve potential evaluation users, 2) determine scope of project, 3) review program documents and consult with stakeholders on the program goals and objectives, 4) create or revise logic model and gain agreement by stakeholders, 5) explore program reality by observing activities and conducting interviews, 6) revise logic model again based on assessment, and 7) prepare an assessment report.

As noted, the first four steps should already have been done as part of any evaluation using the CDC Framework approach. However, the EA process often explores these in more depth and adds the additional examination of program reality—often including site visits or other ways of examining the program in action and preparing a formal report. The report systematically assesses:

- **Plausibility** of a program to achieve its objectives and outcomes,
- Areas for further **program improvement**,
- **Feasibility** of conducting a full evaluation,
- Options for **further evaluation** and questions that can be addressed, and,
- Critique of the **data** that are currently being collected in terms of quality and availability.

If a decision is made to continue with the evaluation, the EA should also inform the development of an evaluation design consistent with the program's capacity, timeline, and resources.