

AEA/CDC Summer Evaluation Institute (document 2)

Offering 50: Public Health Evaluation: Getting to the Right Questions

Description: In 1999, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published the provide public health professionals with a common evaluation frame of reference. Beyond this basic framework, however, there are nuances and complexities to planning and implementing evaluations in public health settings. An important skill of the public health evaluator is to work with stakeholders who may have an enormous range of potential evaluation questions to arrive at a focused set of evaluation questions that are most likely to provide useful, actionable results for public health. The workshop will employ real public health examples, a role play demonstration and small group discussion to examine how to explore and then narrow the scope of possible evaluation questions to "get to the right questions" for a variety of evaluation contexts. The class will focus on strategies to work with stakeholders to identify what types of evidence will have credibility while taking into consideration issues such as politics, accountability, and rotating personnel.

Audience: Attendees working in any context and familiar with evaluation planning and implementation frameworks, such as the CDC Evaluation Framework.

Mary V Davis is Director of Evaluation Services at the North Carolina Institute for Public Health and Adjunct Faculty in the University of North Carolina School of Public Health where she teaches several advanced evaluation courses. **Diane Dunet** is Team Lead of the Evaluation and Program Effectiveness Team, Applied Research and Evaluation Branch in CDC's Division of Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention, where she conducts and supervises public health evaluations.

Offered (Two Rotations of the Same Content - Do not register for both):

- Tuesday, June 24, 9:25 – 12:45 (20 minute break within)
- Wednesday, June 25, 9:25 – 12:45 (20 minute break within)

AEA Public Health Evaluation Workshop

CDC Evaluation Framework—Tipsheet

1. Engaging Stakeholders—Determine purpose of the evaluation

- Who wants the evaluation
- What they want
- Why they want it
- How will information be used, disseminated
- Who is your point person

Gather information about

- Stakeholders
- Relationship with stakeholders
- Stage of program development
- Administrative and political context
- Program structure

Resources for Evaluation

- Support for Evaluation
- Monetary
- Staff
- Nature, quality, availability of documents and data
- Time

2. Describing the Program—Gather background information and create a shared understanding of program

Logic Models—A “soup to nuts” picture of the program

Establish Program

- Need—public health problem
- Targets—groups or organizations that need to change to address problem
- Outcomes—how do targets need to change
- Activities—what is program doing
- Outputs—tangible products of program activities
- Resources/Inputs—tangible stuff needed to produce program (\$\$, staff)
- Relationships between all elements to produce outcomes

Description:

- Road map or guide to the program
- Evaluation design quality depends on description
- Often used as a background section in evaluation reports
- Helps you design program and evaluation logic models

3. Focusing the Design

Evaluation happens over the life of a program

A program is always ready for “some” evaluation

Questions and design must match program maturity, e.g. programs in early implementation should focus on process evaluation; mature programs should examine process and outcome

- Evaluation questions establish the scope of the information you will gather
- Each questions should address only one focus area (process or outcome)
- Questions should be phrased to be as specific as possible
- It should be clear how a stakeholder group will use the information for each question

4. Gathering Credible Evidence

Required Information to Identify Data Collection Methods

- Purpose and focus of the evaluation
- Specific evaluation questions
- Indicators, measures, or construct dimensions
- Identified participants in data collection or sources of data

CDC Principles on Data Collection Instruments

- Utility
 - Purpose of data collection: “point in time,” behavior, or tell a story
 - Users of data: what methods are credible to stakeholders
- Feasibility
 - Resources available
 - Time
 - Frequency: how often do you need data
 - Available expertise
- Propriety
 - Respondent characteristic: literacy, language
 - Degree of intrusion perceived by participants
 - Other ethical issues: confidentiality, safety
- Accuracy
 - Nature of measure: observable or self reported
 - Sensitivity of measure: respondent self disclosure
 - Respondent knowledge: something respondent will know

Multiple Methods

- Be clear about how each will be used
- Develop each separately
- Determine order of collection:
 - Sequential: interviews, survey
 - Simultaneous
- Multiple participant groups

5. Justifying Conclusions

Process

- Data analysis and synthesis
- Interpreting significance of results
- Making judgments according to stated values
- Considering alternative ways to compare results
- Generating alternative explanations
- Recommending actions
- Limiting conclusions to situations, context

Some Definitions

- Interpretation—figuring out what findings mean; key to involve stakeholders
- Judgments—statements concerning merit, significance of program; compare findings about programs against stated criteria
- Recommendations—statements about actions for consideration resulting from evaluation; must take context into account

Public Health Evaluation: Role Play Questions

1. Tell me what the program is about?

2. Our program is successful if _____.

3. What stage is the program in?

Planning

1st six months of implementation

1st year of implementation

1-3 years of implementation

3+ years of implementation

Program is ending

4. What do you need/want from evaluation?

(do you need to make a decision about the program, convince stakeholders of the program's worth, measure program value)

5. Who wants the evaluation?

6. Who will use the evaluation results, how will they use the results?

7. Has the program been previously evaluated? How were results from previously evaluations used?

8. This evaluation will be successful if_____.

Logic model and evaluation



Needs/asset assessment:

What are the characteristics, needs, priorities of target population?

What are potential barriers/facilitators?

What is most appropriate?

Process evaluation:

How is program implemented?
Fidelity of implementation?

Are activities delivered as intended?

Are participants being reached as intended?

What are participant reactions?

Outcome evaluation:

To what extent are desired changes occurring? For whom?

Is the program making a difference?

What seems to work? Not work?

What are unintended outcomes?