



Did you identify what you and your stakeholders want to learn from the evaluation?

Sample questions about process (inputs, activities, participation)

- What resources were invested in the program? Did we have the resources we needed?
- To what extent were activities implemented as planned?
- Who have we reached with this program?
- Who does not attend/participate? Are particular demographic groups missing?

Sample questions about outcomes (results, achievements)

- What changes occurred? What is different as a result of the program? For whom?
- What is the overall impact on the community? On the target group?
- What do people/groups/communities learn or gain? What are they able to accomplish?
- To what extent have we reached our goals? Our performance targets? How do results change over time?

Did you prioritize your evaluation questions with a quality check?

No single evaluation will be able to answer all of the questions you may have about your program. That means you will need to determine which are the most important to answer given the resources you have for evaluation. The following quality checks will help you decide if the evaluation question is a high, medium or low priority, or if it should be eliminated.

- ✓ **Useful** — How important is this information? Which stakeholders care about this question? How will the stakeholders use this information?
- ✓ **Feasible** — Can the evaluation question be answered at this stage of the program? For example, if you are planning a new program, you may not want to prioritize an evaluation question about the long term impact of the program. You might instead focus on questions you'd be able to answer that would show you're making progress.

Did you brainstorm possible indicators for each evaluation question and rate them?

Indicators are the pieces of information that you need to answer your evaluation questions—the information you are committing to measure and that will drive your data collection efforts. Indicators need to be specific and measurable. By defining them you will know what information you need and can determine how to best collect it.

A great place to start is by brainstorming the potential indicators you could use for any given question. Try not to be overly critical while you brainstorm!

- Sometimes indicators are **quantitative** – they involve counting things like participation or calculating the percentage of people that changed health behavior.
- Sometimes indicators are **qualitative** – they involve using observation or people's stories to understand changes in how the program works or how it impacted their lives.

Example When the *Health Connect* program wanted to create of an indicator of extent to which clients had established self-management goals and action plans to manage their diabetes, they brainstormed a range of potential indicators and selected these three:

- Number and percent of clients that have established self-management goals
- Number and percent of clients that have established action plans
- Client's own perceptions about whether their self-management goals & action plans are appropriate, useful and achievable



Once you have your list of potential indicators, you can think about your unique program and rate them to determine which indicators will best help you understand if your program is effective. There are several considerations to balance when making your decision.

- ✓ **Useful.** Which indicators provide the most useful information to help you understand and improve your program? It will be helpful to know what type of information will resonate with your stakeholders. Would they like numbers, percentages, comparisons, stories, examples, pictures? What information will most effectively show the progress or impact of your program?
- ✓ **Feasible.** Is the cost of collecting data for an indicator greater than the utility of the information collected?
- ✓ **Accurate.** Are your indicators stated clearly so that anyone can understand exactly what is meant and how the data are to be collected? Are they specific enough? Do they measure as directly as possible what you are wanting to measure? For example, if you were measuring the reduction of teen smoking, the best measure is the number and percent of teens smoking. The number and percent of teens that receive cessation counseling does not directly measure the outcome, but it may be the best you can get given available time and resources.

Take a look at the Case Study Example to see the evaluation questions and indicators that the *Health Connect* program team created with their stakeholders.

Once you have brainstormed and prioritized your evaluation questions and indicators, you are ready to begin filling in your evaluation plan.

Have you selected the final evaluation questions and indicators to be used in your evaluation? Have you vetted your plan with stakeholders?

One last question to ask yourself is whether you have the right number of indicators to provide information on all aspects of what you are measuring. Often more than one indicator is needed to answer each question. Generally, about three or four indicators per evaluation question are sufficient. If you find you have more than four indicators per question, it may mean that your question is too broad or complicated and should be broken down into multiple questions.

As you develop your evaluation questions and indicators, be sure to involve your stakeholders. Stakeholder feedback can provide new ideas for what needs to be asked and how you might answer those questions. Their perspective might provide insight on an indicator that you would not have thought about and will ensure that you have buy-in as to what is most important to measure.

The Cottage Health Evaluation Toolkit was prepared by the Center for Community Health and Evaluation

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Template: Evaluation plan

Evaluation Question	Indicator(s)	Data Source	Data collection method	Person/entity responsible	Timeline/frequency

Complete this section of the evaluation plan in part 2