

Program Evaluation QUESTIONS BANK

Strategies for developing evaluation questions:

- Whose information needs are going to be considered?
- What are the information needs?
- What do you need to know about the program for the purpose of the evaluation?
- What do you need to know in order to make necessary decisions about the program?
- Who will develop the evaluation questions? The evaluator? Program personnel? Other interested parties? Will questions be developed collaboratively?

Program evaluation can help answer a multitude of questions such as:

- Does the program (you can also substitute “policy” or “intervention” here) work?
- Does the program do what we want it to do?
- How well does the program work?
- Does the program work well for the reasons we think it does?
- Why does the program work?
- How much does the program cost with regard to the benefit gained?
- Does the program have side effects or unintended effects?
- Does the program match the values of the stakeholders?
- Does the program match the needs of the people served?
- Does the program as implemented match the intended design?
- Do the outcomes the program has achieved match the goals?

Evaluation can also help develop and improve programs from an early stage. Questions can be developed around program operations, measuring how well activities were implemented, or understanding what a program achieves over time.

Examples of formative evaluation (aka implementation or process evaluation) questions:

- Is the program reaching the intended population?
- Who is being impacted by the program? (this is different from: Who did the program intend to impact?)
- What proportion of the intended population is served by the program?
- What is the intensity of participation in program services by those served? (How much / how often do people participate? Do program participants persist to complete the program? If people leave during the program, why is this?)

- Is the program being delivered (implemented) as intended?
- In what ways (if any) does the implementation of the program differ from the plan?
- What program activities were accomplished?
- What resources were required to implement the program?

Summative evaluations (aka outcome or impact evaluations) generally measure the changes that occur as a result of the program's activities.

Examples of summative evaluation questions:

- Is the program producing the expected outcomes (i.e. achieving its goals)?
- To what extent are the purpose, goals, and objectives of the program achieved?
- How do the effects of the program vary across participants?
- To what extent is there progress toward program objectives?
- What are the outcomes of the program -- whether or not they were intended?
- What is the evidence of the program's effectiveness in meeting its stated goals and objectives?
- Can changes be attributed to the program (or are they the result of other factors)?
- Do program outcomes (or impacts) vary across different (i.e. demographic) groups of participants?
- How can the program be improved?
- How does the program's effectiveness compare with that of similar programs (i.e. alternative interventions)?
- If the program is considered successful, what "facilitates" that success?
- Should the program be scaled up or expanded?
- Should the program be continued or discontinued?
- Is the program worth the resources expended (i.e. the costs)?
- Has the program made a difference in the community?

Note: Many organizations use particular definitions of words such as:

- Program
- Project
- Intervention
- Outcomes
- Results
- Effects
- Impacts
- Implementation
- Process

These terms have overlapping, and often interchangeable definitions. Check with your organization and use their accepted vocabulary.

"Now that you've got the questions straight, how are you going to find the answers?"

-Michael Scriven