
“Evidence-Based” and “Promising Practices” and Other Important Terms Defined

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A program is successful if it can...¹

- ‘Verify’ that, as a result of its activities, specific individuals or groups are better off than before.
- ‘Document’ that the money funding the program was spent to achieve the goals that were stated (accountability).
- Provide ‘objective proof’ to people outside the program that it was a worthwhile use of resources.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses to allow for ‘quality improvement’.

Programs need to be designed and implemented using the best information available.²

- **Evidenced-Based:** Strategies, activities, or approaches which have been shown through scientific research and evaluation to be effective at preventing and/or delaying an untoward outcome.
- **Promising Practices:** Programs and strategies that have some scientific research or data showing positive outcomes in delaying an untoward outcome, but do not have enough evidence to support generalizable conclusions.

Evaluation: Systematic efforts to collect and use program information for multiple purposes.

- Build a picture of what happened.
- Document what was achieved and whether expectations were met.
- Identify areas where modifications could improve outcomes.
- Show someone outside the program whether it has a future.

Measuring program outcomes:

- Most program outcomes are ‘short-term’ because you need to be able to measure them to see if change occurred over the course of the program.
- Evidence is used to create the link between short-term and long-term outcomes.
- The evidence provides correlation; a program does not need to do this research, but needs to “replicate with fidelity” (e.g. adhere to the model).

What is an Evaluation Plan? It is a written document that:

- Identifies questions to be answered through evaluation.
- Clearly states the anticipated outcome(s).
- Describes the methods and tools to be used to measure change.
- Lists the ways in which evaluation findings will be shared.
- Should be planned as part of program inception.
- Should have resources needed to carry it out.

For more information:

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¹ Demonstrating Success through Evaluation. Thurston County Public Health & Social Services Department.

² Using What Works. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, National Cancer Institute.