Program Evaluation: Glossary of Key Terms

The following terms are common in program evaluation. You can also visit YouthREX's website to learn more about our Framework for Evaluating Youth Wellbeing and online Evaluation Toolkit.

Activities

These result from the Inputs of the Program and include what participants experience and are involved with during a Program cycle.

Coding

A Data Analysis technique commonly used to process Data into more meaningful information. This could mean transforming numbers into different categories or identifying themes and patterns in written text. Coding can be done with or without the help of software.

Data

The information collected that helps you learn about your Program. This can be Quantitative and include numbers or it can be Qualitative and consist of written text (such as that found in Program documents or interview transcripts) or other forms of information, such as artwork.

Data Analysis

The act of inspecting, cleaning, and organizing the information you have gathered in the Data Collection phase in order to answer the questions developed in your Program Evaluation. The way you conduct Data Analysis will depend on whether you have Qualitative Data or Quantitative Data.

Data Collection

The process of gathering information for your Program Evaluation. It begins with asking, *What do I want to know?* and *How will I find this out?*

Data Collection Tools (also known as Measures)

The resources you use during Data Collection. These can include surveys, interview guides, focus group guides, and others. You will select or design your Data Collection Tools based on your priorities and resources. For example, a survey may reach a greater number of people and is generally easier and faster to administer and analyze, but lacks the richer and more nuanced information that can be gained in an interview.

Evaluation Plan

A document outlining the framework, approach, and methodology to your Program Evaluation.

Inputs

The resources needed to implement your Program, which can include partners, budget, staff, physical space, expertise, and more. This information can be captured in a Logic Model and leads to the Outputs of your Program.

Knowledge Mobilization

The series of activities you undertake in order to share the learnings from your Program Evaluation with others, from funders to the broader community. When considering your Knowledge Mobilization strategy, it is important to ask yourself, *Who would benefit from the findings of this Program Evaluation?*, *What is the best way to reach them?,* and *How would they want the information to be presented to them*?

Logic Model

A visual road map of your Program that includes the broader context it is operating in, the resources needed to make it work, the activities taking place, and the intended Outcomes. A Logic Model can help you in your Program Evaluation by clarifying your Program's most important features and ensuring that everyone involved in your Program is in agreement about its central components. A variety of Logic Model templates are available, including YouthREX's Logic Model template.

Outcome Evaluation

One commonly used type of Program Evaluation. An Outcome Evaluation is concerned with the overarching question, *What are the impacts (both intended and unintended) of the Program?* An Outcome Evaluation focuses on what changes participants experienced that resulted from the implementation of the Program, and could include changes to knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours.

Outcomes

The changes that occur as a result of the Activities of the Program, which could include changes to knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours. Within and beyond a Logic Model, Outcomes are categorized as either short, intermediate, or long-term. It may not be possible to measure every outcome expected to result from involvement with a Program.

Outputs

What happens in your Program as a result of your Inputs. Within and beyond a Logic Model, Outputs constitute the Activities of your Program and describe the level of participation outlined for participants.

Performance Indicators

The statistics you use to 'indicate' or measure the extent of your Program's success. For example, if you are running an after-school tutoring program, you might use high school graduation statistics as a Performance Indicator.

Process Evaluation

One commonly used type of Program Evaluation. A Process Evaluation is concerned with the overarching question, *How did the Program unfold?* To that end, a Process Evaluation focuses on who participated in the Program, how many participated in the Program, what activities they did as part of the Program, any challenges that were encountered and how these were overcome, and stakeholder satisfaction with the Program.

Program

Any sort of intervention provided to make a difference. A Program can be anything from an information session to a course to a therapy group. While every Program is different, there are common practices and principles involved in evaluating programs.

Program Design

The process of conceptualizing your Program, from its philosophical elements (*What impact do we want to make and why?*) to its practical ones (*What resources do we need in order to make this impact and how will we get them?*). Your Program Design provides the framework for your eventual Program Evaluation. A Logic Model can help you in this process, by providing a template for considering these questions.

Program Evaluation

A series of activities carried out to understand how your Program is doing. A Program Evaluation can try to understand different aspects of the Program's success, including whether it is doing what it set out to do, if the Program is reaching its intended participants, and if it is making the intended impact on participants and other stakeholders. Two common types of Program Evaluation are Process Evaluations and Outcome Evaluations.

Qualitative Data

Information collected through the Data Collection process that describe qualities, characteristics, processes or experiences. Interviews or focus groups are Data Collection Tools that commonly produce Qualitative Data, but this can also include Program documents and pictures. Qualitative Data may be more challenging and time-consuming to analyze because it cannot be added together in the way that Quantitative Data can. However, it can also provide a richer and more detailed and nuanced story. Often, Qualitative Data is examined for patterns or themes, through techniques such as Coding.

Quantitative Data

Information collected through the Data Collection process that can be counted or compared on a numeric scale. Multiple-choice surveys are a Data Collection Tool that commonly produce Quantitative Data. This type of data can also come from registration forms and lead to describing the number of participants involved, their ages, and other demographic categories.

Theory of Change

In the context of your Program, this is a description of how and why your intervention should elicit your desired Outcomes. It is important for your Program to be supported by a Theory of Change since you should have a rationale for why you have selected this particular intervention. Your Theory of Change should combine various forms of evidence, such as academic literature, evidence from similar programs, and the experiences of those familiar with the area.

www.youthrex.com | @REXforyouth

An Ontario where shared knowledge is transformed into positive impact for all youth!

YOUTHREX
Research &
Evaluation eXchange