6 Ensure Use of Evaluation Findings and Share Lessons Learned

Making recommendations

Once you analyze and interpret your findings, you will need to make some recommendations for action based on those findings. These recommendations will depend on the audience (Box 4). Therefore, it is critical to involve your stakeholders in the early stages of the evaluation so that the recommendations that you eventually make are relevant and useful to them. You need to know the information your stakeholders want and what is important to them. Their feedback early on in the evaluation will make their eventual support of your recommendations more likely.

The purpose of your evaluation (e.g., to improve your program, demonstrate its effectiveness, or demonstrate accountability to stakeholders) will also shape how you frame your recommendations. Here are some examples of recommendations for different audiences:

Audience: Local counter-marketing program
Purpose of evaluation: Improve program efforts.
Recommendation: Thirty-five percent of African Americans in Region 2 recalled the content of counter-marketing messages. To meet the current objective of a 50% recall rate among this

Potential audiences for recommendations

- Local programs.
- The state health department.
- City councils.
- State legislators.
- Schools.
- Workplace owners.
- Parents.
- Police departments or enforcement agencies.
- Restaurant managers.
- Health care providers.
- Smoking-cessation programs.
- Contractors.
- Health insurance agencies.
- Retailers.
- Youth advocacy groups.

Box 4

population group, we recommend developing culturally appropriate media messages and increasing the number of messages targeted to the African American media market in this region.

Audience: Schools/school boards/school administrations.
Purpose of evaluation: Demonstrate effectiveness; improve program efforts.
Recommendation: Although all schools in School District A have implemented CDC-recommended tobacco-free guidelines, only 10% of these schools actively enforce the guidelines. We recommend increasing the number of enforcement activities in School District A. One way to do this is to have the school boards work with local coalitions to provide incentives and commendations for exemplary schools; another is to designate school enforcement officials.

Audience: Legislators.
Purpose of evaluation: Demonstrate effectiveness.
Recommendation: Last year, a targeted education and media campaign about the dangers of ETS and the benefits of smoke-free homes was conducted across the state. Eighty percent of adults were reached by the campaign and reported having smoke-free home rules—a twofold increase from the year before. We recommend the campaign be continued and expanded to include smoke-free automobiles.

Audience: City council.
Purpose of evaluation: Demonstrate effectiveness.
Recommendation: In June of this past year, City C passed a complete ban on smoking in bars and restaurants. Data from our smoke-free-air hotline indicate that 30% of establishments are still not complying with this new ordinance. We recommend that you incorporate compliance checks for this ordinance into the city's health-inspection site visits, apply penalties for violation, and citations for compliance.

Audience: Funding source.
Purpose of evaluation: Demonstrate fiscal accountability.
Recommendation: For the past year, the tobacco control program has worked through local coalitions, educational campaigns, and media efforts to increase awareness and support for smoke-free indoor air policies. As a result, public support for strong smoke-free indoor air policies has increased to 85%,

up from 70% last year, and there has been a 25% increase in the number of workplaces with voluntary smoke-free policies. We recommend continued support for a comprehensive program that includes efforts to address the dangers of ETS and the need for policy change.

Audience: Legislators.
Purpose of evaluation: Monitor trends.
Recommendation: During the past 5 years, smoking-cessation attempts by young adults have decreased. Only 10% of young adult smokers attempted to quit smoking in the past year. We recommend that the program focus on targeting smoking-cessation messages and making cessation services available to young adults across the state.

Sharing the results and the lessons learned from evaluation

After you have decided on the recommendations, the next step is to share the evaluation results with your stakeholders and others who should be aware of the information (Box 4).

Dissemination is the process of communicating either the procedures or the lessons learned from an evaluation in a timely, unbiased, and consistent manner. Planning effective communication requires considering the timing, style, tone, message source, vehicle, and format of information products.

An evaluation report tailored to your audience is an appropriate method for communicating and disseminating the results of the evaluation. The evaluation report must clearly, succinctly, and impartially communicate all parts of the evaluation (Box 5). The report should be written so that it is easy to understand. It need not be lengthy or technical. You should also consider oral presentations tailored to various audiences. Examples of evaluation reports available on the Internet are listed under "Resources" at the end of this chapter.

Tips for writing and disseminating your evaluation report(s)[3]

- Tailor the report to your audience; you may need a different version of your report for each segment of your audience.
- Describe essential features of the program.
- Summarize the stakeholder roles and involvement.
- Explain the focus of the evaluation and its limitations.
- Summarize the evaluation plan and procedures.
- List the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation.
- Present clear and succinct results and recommendations.
- List the advantages and disadvantages of the recommendations.
- Remove technical jargon.
- Use examples, illustrations, graphics, and stories.
- Verify that the report is unbiased and accurate.
- Provide interim and final reports to intended users in time for use.
- Distribute reports to as many stakeholders as possible.

Box 5

A traditional outline for an evaluation report might look like this:

Executive Summary

Background and Purpose
Program background
Evaluation rationale
Program description

Evaluation Methods
Design
Sampling procedures
Measures or indicators
Data-collection procedures
Data-processing procedures
Analysis
Limitations

Results

Discussion and Recommendations

Appendices

Using the information

The ultimate purpose of program evaluation is to use the information to improve programs. The purpose(s) you identified early in the evaluation process should guide the use of the evaluation results. The evaluation results can be used to demonstrate the effectiveness of your program, identify ways to improve your program, modify program planning, demonstrate accountability, and justify funding.

Additional uses include the following:

■ To demonstrate to legislators or other stakeholders that resources are being well spent and that the program is effective.

■ To aid in forming budgets and justify the allocation of resources.

■ To compare outcomes with those of previous years.

■ To compare actual outcomes with intended outcomes.

■ To suggest realistic intended outcomes.

■ To support annual and long-range planning.

■ To focus attention on issues important to your program.

■ To promote your program.

■ To identify partners for collaborations.

■ To enhance the image of your program.

Activities that promote the use of evaluation findings[23]

■ Design the evaluation from the start to achieve intended uses by intended users.

■ Prepare stakeholders for eventual use by rehearsing how different conclusions could affect program operations.

■ Provide continuous feedback to stakeholders about interim findings and decisions to be made that might affect the likelihood of use.

■ Schedule follow-up meetings with intended users to facilitate the transfer of evaluation findings into strategic decision making.

- To retain or increase funding.

- To provide direction for program staff.

- To identify training and technical assistance needs.

Evaluation is a practical tool that states can use to inform programs' efforts and assess their impact. Program evaluation should be well integrated into the day-to-day planning, implementation, and management of public health programs. Program evaluation complements CDC's operating principles for public health, which include using science as a basis for decision making and action, expanding the quest for social equity, performing effectively as a service agency, and making efforts outcome-oriented. These principles highlight the need for programs to develop clear plans, inclusive partnerships, and feedback systems that support ongoing improvement. CDC is committed to providing additional tools and technical assistance to states and tobacco control partners to build and enhance their capacity for evaluation.

✔ Checklist for ensuring that evaluation findings are used and sharing lessons learned

- Identify strategies to increase the likelihood that evaluation findings will be used.

- Identify strategies to reduce the likelihood that information will be misinterpreted.

- Provide continuous feedback to the program.

- Prepare stakeholders for the eventual use of evaluation findings.

- Identify training and technical assistance needs.

- Use evaluation findings to support annual and long-range planning.

- Use evaluation findings to promote your program.

- Use evaluation findings to enhance the public image of your program.

- Schedule follow-up meetings to facilitate the transfer of evaluation conclusions.

- Disseminate procedures used and lessons learned to stakeholders.

- Consider interim reports to key audiences.

- Tailor evaluation reports to audience(s.)

- Revisit the purpose(s) of the evaluation when preparing recommendations.

- Present clear and succinct findings in a timely manner.

- Avoid jargon when preparing or presenting information to stakeholders.

- Disseminate evaluation findings in several ways.

Resources

1. CDC Evaluation Working Group
   www.cdc.gov/eval

2. Tell Your Story: Guidelines for Preparing an Evaluation Report
   www.dhs.cahwnet.gov/ps/cdic/ccb/TCS/html/
   Evaluation_Resources.htm

3. Criteria for Sound Evaluation Reports
   Online Evaluation Resource Library (OERL)
   www.ctl.sri.com/oerl/reports/reportscrit.html

Sample State Evaluation Reports

- Alaska   www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/tobacco%20report%20final.pdf
- California   www.dhs.ca.gov/tobacco/html/Evaluation_Reports.htm
- Massachusetts   www.state.ma.us/dph/mtcp/report.htm
- Oregon   www.ohd.hr.state.or.us/tobacco/arpt2000/welcome.htm

Sample Youth Tobacco Survey (YTS) Reports

- Arizona   www.tepp.org/evaluation/2000youthsurvey/index.html
- Florida   www.state.fl.us/tobacco (click on research)
- Georgia   www.ph.dhr.state.ga.us
                              www.ph.dhr.state.ga.us/programs/tobacco/pdfs/summaryreport99.pdf
- Iowa   www.idph.state.ia.us/resources.htm
                              www.idph.state.ia.us/sa/Tobacco/iytsfinalreport.pdf
- Kansas   www.kdhe.state.ks.us/tobacco/resources/kyts_99.pdf
- Mississippi   www.msdh.state.ms.us/tobacco
- New Jersey   www.state.nj.us/health/as/smoking.htm
- North Carolina   www.communityhealth.dhhs.state.nc.us/tobacco/Survey/survey.htm
- Oklahoma   www.health.state.ok.us/PROGRAM/tobac/ytsreports.htm
- Tennessee   ftp://170.142.76.180/2000TnYTS.pdf
- Texas   www.tdh.state.tx.us/otpc/stats/statistics.htm
- Wisconsin   www.dhfs.state.wi.us/health/Tobaccocontrol/INDEX.htm

---

The resources listed here include links to some
nongovernmental organizations' Web sites. These sites are
provided solely as examples. Links do not constitute an
endorsement of these organizations' materials or programs
by CDC or the federal government. CDC is not responsible
for the content of any individual organization's Web pages
found at these links.