

Evaluating Your Activities

The core nutrition messages and content have been developed as tools to help change certain behaviors among the target audiences. The developmental process involved **formative evaluation** procedures designed to capture information about the audience and input from them to formulate messages that resonate and motivate them to take action. As you implement these messages, it may be useful to get feedback from participating moms on the messages and your approach. If you develop new or adapt current activities to include the messages, conduct additional formative research with your target audiences. Likewise, evaluation is essential during subsequent stages (i.e., during implementation and at the end of the intervention) to document the effect and provide information to improve future efforts.

Process Evaluation is a useful tool for monitoring and can identify areas that require a mid-point adjustment. It includes such measures as tracking the number of people reached, number of times messages and materials reach the target audience(s), locations or places that moms and kids were exposed to the messages, the service provider involved, resources and training needed by educators, barriers and facilitators, etc. Process evaluation provides valuable information about

key elements of the projects that may help to explain the results of an impact evaluation.

Outcome Evaluation demonstrates changes that occur in the presence of an intervention but do not establish a cause-and-effect conclusion. It shows how well the program has met its communication objectives and potential ways to make it more effective.

Impact Evaluation indicates how effective the intervention was in changing the target population's attitudes, awareness, and/or behaviors. Although impact evaluation is highly valued, conducting this type of evaluation may be complex, time-consuming, and resource-intensive.

The type of evaluation will depend on funding, staff time and expertise, time available for the evaluation phase, etc. It is important to evaluate since the results can provide you with solid evidence to share with your colleagues and managers. Evaluation also helps quantify how your work affects low-income mothers and children and can help justify continued intervention.

When planning your intervention consider the following:

- What are your objectives?
- What evaluation approach/method should you use?

- What do you want to measure and what questions do you want to address? (Note: when deciding what to measure, think about what will be important to your organization's leaders and your overall program objectives. Consider asking partners, for instance, what they would consider as successful).
- What approach do you want to use to conduct the evaluation? How will you collect the data you are measuring? What is the scope and design? Will you build in a comparison group?
- What timeframe have you set for completing the evaluation? What plans do you have for using and disseminating the results?
- What resources do you have for the evaluation?

The following resources provide additional guidance for developing evaluation plans:

- Nutrition Education: Principles of Sound Impact Evaluation www.fns.usda.gov/oane/menu/Published/NutritionEducation/Files/EvaluationPrinciples.pdf
- Evaluating Social Marketing in Nutrition: A Resource Manual www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/NutritionEducation/Files/evalman-2.PDF
- The National Cancer Institute's *Pink Book—Making Health Communication Programs Work* provides examples of evaluations and related tools. To learn more visit www.cancer.gov/pinkbook/page8.

