Justifying conclusions

Definition	Making claims regarding the program that are warranted on the basis of data that have been compared against pertinent and defensible ideas of merit, value, or significance (i.e., against standards of values); conclusions are justified when they are linked to the evidence gathered and consistent with the agreed on values or standards of stakeholders.
Role	Reinforces conclusions central to the evaluation's utility and accuracy; involves values clarification, qualitative and quantitative data analysis and synthesis, systematic interpretation, and appropriate comparison against relevant standards for judgment.
Activities	• Using appropriate methods of analysis and synthesis to summarize findings; • Interpreting the significance of results for deciding what the findings mean; • Making judgments according to clearly stated values that classify a result (e.g., as positive or negative and high or low); • Considering alternative ways to compare results (e.g., compared with program objectives, a comparison group, national norms, past performance, or needs); • Generating alternative explanations for findings and indicating why these explanations should be discounted; • Recommending actions or decisions that are consistent with the conclusions; and • Limiting conclusions to situations, time periods, persons, contexts, and purposes for which the findings are applicable.

Adapted from Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. Program evaluation standards: how to assess evaluations of educational programs. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994.