**Developing an Action Plan**

To gain the maximum benefit from evaluation, it is imperative that the results of your efforts be put to use, whether to support program improvements or to guide other decision making. We know from experience that evaluation results are more likely to be put to use if you, stakeholders, and program personnel take the time to develop an action plan.

**An action plan should outline:**

* Evaluation findings the action is designed to address.
* Who is responsible for completing an action.
* What resources are necessary for carrying out an action.
* How the action plan will be monitored.
* The timeline for completion of an action.

An action plan is an organized list of tasks that, based on the evaluation findings, should lead to program improvement. It differs from a to-do list in that all the tasks focus specifically on achievement of your program improvement objectives. It can and should serve as your program’s roadmap to ensure that evaluation findings are put to use in improving your program.

If you identify more than one program area ready for improvement based on a single evaluation, we recommend creating an action plan for each improvement objective. Your evaluation may also identify program components that should be eliminated or components that are working well and should be sustained. Action plans are appropriate to guide these follow-up activities as well.

Since some stakeholders will be charged with implementing changes based on your evaluation findings, it is of critical importance that you and stakeholders who were involved in designing the evaluation work together to create the action plan and agree upon who is responsible for implementing any appropriate changes. This group is likely to have important insights about how to best respond to evaluation findings. Their involvement can help ensure that planned activities are both desirable and feasible, and they are more likely to participate in implementing changes if they have been involved in identifying actions to be taken. It is very important that program personnel and other stakeholders take part in thinking through and creating the action plan and, even more importantly, that they take responsibility for carrying out activities therein.

We provide an example of an action plan in **Table K.1**. This format directly connects program improvement objectives to evaluation findings by including a brief summary of relevant evaluation findings, evidence upon which findings are based, and proposed changes to respond to findings. The majority of the plan focuses on specific action(s) you and your stakeholders will take to achieve the stated objectives. It identifies the individual responsible for each activity, resources they need to accomplish it, and a timeline for completion. The action plan template also includes an area to list the information you will use to monitor implementation of your action plan. Finally, the plan specifies the data you will use to determine whether the improvement(s) you are seeking actually occur.

Regularly reviewing the results of your action plan with your stakeholders will help you better utilize evaluation findings. If you have evidence that your program has improved, this marks an occasion for joint celebration. If more work needs to be done, your stakeholders can help focus your energies and support necessary changes.

**Table K.1 Evaluation Results Action Plan**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Program Component (e.g., infrastructure, EXHALE strategy):**  **Evaluation Purpose:**  **Programmatic Change Sought:** | | | | | | | | |
| **Evaluation Result** | Describe the key evaluation result that necessitates action. | | | | | | | |
| **Supporting Evidence** | Describe the evidence that supports action. | | | | | | | |
| **Plan of Action to Achieve Change** | | | | | | | **Monitor Change** | |
| **Change Needed** | **Activities to Implement Change** | **Person Responsible** | **Resources Required** | **Due By** | **Indicators that Change is Implemented** | **Data Sources** | **Indicators to Monitor Success of Change** | **Data Sources** |
| *Describe key change(s) you want*  *to achieve based on this finding.* | *List activities that need to be carried out to make the change happen*  *in the program.* | *List the person(s) who will assure each activity occurs.* | *List resources required for the activity.* | *Assign a due date by which the activity will be completed. (The final*  *date should be when the change will be in full effect.)* | *Describe how you will know that*  *the change is implemented as planned.* | *Describe what data you will need to have to know change is implemented.* | *Describe how you will know the change to program is working or not.* | *Describe the data you will need*  *to measure success.* |