

Guidance for Developing a CRCCP Evaluation and Performance Measurement Plan

August 2024

Purpose

The information and resources below will guide you in developing your program's evaluation and performance measurement plan for CDC's Colorectal Cancer Control Program (CRCCP). Your plan is due to your CDC program consultant (PC) by December 31, 2025.

Why an evaluation and performance measurement plan is needed

Evaluation, or the systematic collection of information about how a program operates and its effectiveness, is an important part of program management. A good evaluation enables you to monitor program implementation, demonstrate the success of programmatic activity in achieving outcomes, and identify areas for improvement.¹

Evaluation involves thoughtful planning to decide what questions you want to answer² and how you will gather data to answer those questions.³ An evaluation plan guides your efforts based on partner priorities, time and resource constraints, and skills required to accomplish evaluation goals.⁴ Partners should be involved in writing evaluation plans to encourage transparency and create a shared understanding about the evaluation's purpose and how the results will be used.⁵ Written evaluation plans have additional benefits, including fostering buy-in about evaluation methods, drawing connections between multiple evaluation activities, building capacity for evaluation, and smoothing transitions during staff turnover.⁴

Whether conducted by internal staff or an external contractor, evaluations are significantly enhanced by having a written plan that outlines essential details, including important programmatic context. While evaluation planning is a process, evaluation itself does not have to be expensive, time-consuming, or overly complicated. Well-focused evaluations can be completed with limited resources and supported by internal staff who are not professional evaluators.¹ Evaluation training and resources are widely available; see CDC's Office of Policy, Performance, and Evaluation website at www.cdc.gov/evaluation/php/about/ and the CRCCP's password-protected website for general and program-specific information and resources.

CDC's requirements

Use an evaluation planning process

The evaluation planning process is integrated in the [CDC Program Evaluation Framework](#)³ (Figure 1). In developing evaluation plans, award recipients (recipients) should engage partners, describe the program, and focus the evaluation design (steps 1–3).

Recipients' **program logic models** are an important part of step 2, describing the program. Logic models specify outputs and outcomes for measurement. The last three steps in the CDC Framework also have relevance for planning, as recipients must consider how data will be collected and analyzed and, ultimately, how evaluation findings will be used.

Plan to assess process and outcomes

The evaluation plan should include evaluation questions that address process (how the activity or intervention is being delivered) and anticipated outcomes depicted in the logic model (what is expected to change because of the activity).

For example, evaluation questions about a patient reminder (health systems change) intervention might include:

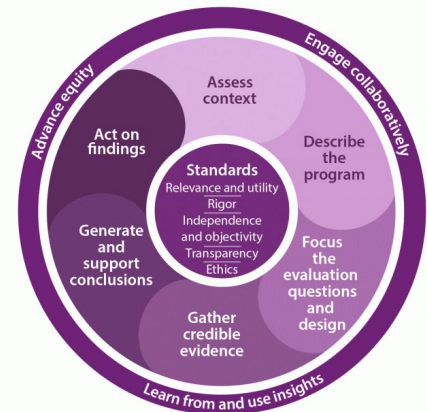
- *Process:* What percentage of patients due for colorectal cancer screening receive a reminder?
- *Outcome:* Did clinic-level screening rates increase after implementation of client reminders?

Include basic elements in the evaluation plan

While the format of written evaluation plans can vary, the elements below are recommended.⁴ Suggested page limits for each section are also provided (excluding appendices). Where applicable, listing items (partners) with bullet points is appropriate and can help to provide a clear picture of your plan.

- **Title page** showing the recipient and program name, program component to be evaluated, and dates (program years) covered (1 page).
- **Plan overview** presenting the general approach to the evaluation and a high-level summary of the evaluation questions (1/2 page).
- **Evaluation purpose**, such as program improvement or accountability (1/2 page).
- **Partners with an interest in evaluation results**, including names, role of partner, and partners' use of evaluation results (1 page).

Figure 1: CDC's Program Evaluation Framework



- **Program description** including a logic model of the program components to be evaluated and a brief narrative describing the activities, populations of focus, and how beneficiaries are affected by programmatic activities (2 pages).
- **Evaluation focus** detailing evaluation questions and a brief description of how evaluation questions were determined and prioritized (based on logic model, stakeholder interests, evaluation purpose, or feasibility) (1/2 page).
- **Plan for collecting data.** The plan includes a summary of methods (qualitative or quantitative) that align with the evaluation questions and specifies relevant indicators, performance measures, data sources, and who has data collection responsibilities. This can be presented in a table format (1 page).
- **Plan for analysis and interpretation** describing the intended process for drawing appropriate, data-based conclusions, and who has data analysis and interpretation responsibilities (including relevant partner involvement) (1 page).
- **Plan for dissemination and use of findings** detailing communication strategies, audience (providers), format (standardized feedback reports), frequency of reporting (regular monthly data reviews), who has dissemination responsibilities, and how audience feedback and action steps will be documented and monitored (2 pages).
- **Evaluation timeline** summarizing dates for data collection, analysis, and dissemination (1 page).

Submit the evaluation plan

Your program will submit your evaluation plan to CDC via the Award Management Platform (AMP) within 6 months of receiving your award. The CDC evaluation team will review your evaluation plan thoroughly and provide feedback and any suggestions for strengthening your plan. If you wish to discuss this feedback in-depth, contact your CDC PC.

Stay engaged. Your program should be substantially involved in developing the evaluation plan regardless of whether your staff or an external consultant conducts evaluation activities. Typically, your program is the best source of information about your program. CRCCP recipients ensure the evaluations provide credible evidence to answer the most important questions about your program. To be meaningful, evaluation results must be interpreted, used, and shared,⁵ which requires partner involvement and a plan of action.

Tips for successful evaluation planning

The following tips are offered as general guidance:

Connect the dots

Evaluation plans connect program planning and evaluation by highlighting program goals, clarifying measurable objectives, and linking program activities with intended outcomes.

Therefore, evaluation plans, work plans, and logic models work together. Work plans should reflect the inputs and activities included in the logic model. And evaluation questions and data collection plans should be linked to outputs and outcomes in your logic model.

Ideally, evaluation planning and program planning should occur at the same time. This helps ensure that program activities lead to expected outcomes and that evaluation efforts are well integrated from the start. Align the work plan and the evaluation plan so that feedback loops are in place to use evaluation information for program monitoring and improvement.⁴

Take context into account

Focus on process and outcome evaluation as programmatic context dictates. At earlier stages of implementing an activity, it is sound practice to focus on process evaluation before progressing to outcome evaluation. For example, if implementing a professional development activity, a program might first plan to assess provider satisfaction with a training (or comprehension of training content) before determining whether the professional development offering made a longer-term difference in provider behavior (adherence to screening recommendations).

Consider strength of evidence

CDC recognizes that recipients have limited evaluation resources and cannot always implement highly rigorous evaluation designs (e.g., matched designs). However, strive to provide the strongest evidence possible within programmatic constraints. Go beyond process evaluation to examine outcomes.

Treat your evaluation plan as a living document

Like logic models, evaluation plans are meant to represent current thinking. As priorities and internal and external factors change, evaluation plans can be updated as appropriate. Although not required by CDC, you can share your updated evaluation plan with CDC for feedback if your program chooses.

Engage your PC

Throughout the development process, talk with your PC. PCs are a great resource for maximizing limited resources, ensuring you are going in the right direction, and sharing practice wisdom from other recipient programs. PCs are also familiar with evaluation plan requirements and work with CDC evaluation team members for the program.

Do not recreate the wheel

Sample templates are available in several toolkits listed below.^{1,4} For example, see pages 88–97 of *Developing an Effective Evaluation Plan*.

How evaluation plans are used

- **By recipients** — Evaluation plans should be implemented! Evaluations should be carried out when planning is completed, and evaluation results should be **used** for program management and improvement.

- **By PCs** — Evaluation plans help CDC PCs tailor technical assistance and provide support for evaluation plan implementation. PCs also use evaluation plans to assess program monitoring and evaluation performance objectives described in DP25-0012.
- **By CDC** — Looking across recipients, CDC uses evaluation plans and resulting evaluation products to assess, summarize, document, and communicate CRCCP's achievements and challenges to partners such as Congress, CDC, and Department of Health and Human Services leadership. Further, evaluation results inform future technical assistance, program development, performance management, and strategic planning efforts.

Where can I find more information?

Several resources are available to help you develop an evaluation plan. Recommended tools follow CDC's Program Evaluation Framework³; include program examples to illustrate concepts; and provide templates, worksheets, or checklists to facilitate the development process and completion of a written evaluation plan.

- *Developing an effective evaluation plan*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health and Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity; 2011. Available at: <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/24531>
- *Comprehensive Cancer Control Branch program evaluation toolkit, second edition*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Cancer Prevention and Control, Comprehensive Cancer Control Branch; 2021. Available at: www.cdc.gov/comprehensive-cancer-control/about/program-evaluation-toolkit.html
- *Learning and growing through evaluation: 2021 updates: modules 1–6*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Environmental Health; 2021. Available at: www.cdc.gov/national-asthma-control-program/php/program_eval/guide.html

Glossary

Evaluation / program evaluation: The systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs (interventions, policies, specific projects) to make judgments about that program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future program development.

Evaluation plan: A document describing the overall approach that will be used to guide an evaluation, including why the evaluation is being conducted; how the findings will likely be used; and the design, data collection sources, and methods. The plan specifies what will be done, how it will be done, who will do it, and when it will be done.

Logic model: A visual representation showing the sequence of related events connecting the program's activities with the program's desired outcomes.

Outcome: The results of program operations or activities, such as increased knowledge, changed attitudes or beliefs, increased screening uptake, or reduced morbidity and mortality.

Performance measurement: The ongoing monitoring and reporting of program accomplishments, particularly progress toward pre-established goals, typically conducted by program or agency management. Performance measurement may address the type or level of program activities conducted (process), the direct products or services delivered by a program (outputs), or the results of those products and services (outcomes).

Program: Any activity, project, function, or policy that has an identifiable purpose or set of objectives.

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Environmental Health. *Learning and Growing Through Evaluation: 2021 Updates*. U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services; 2021. Accessed November 7, 2024. www.cdc.gov/national-asthma-control-program/php/program_eval/guide.html
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Asthma Control Program. *Good Evaluation Questions: A Checklist to Help Focus Your Evaluation*. U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services; 2013. Accessed November 7, 2024. www.cdc.gov/national-asthma-control-program/media/pdfs/2024/05/AssessingEvaluationQuestionChecklist.pdf
3. Kidder DP, Fierro LA, Luna E, et al. [CDC program evaluation framework, 2024](#). *MMWR Recomm Rep*. 2024;73(No. RR-6):1–37.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health and Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity. *Developing an Effective Evaluation Plan*. U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services; 2011. Accessed November 7, 2024. <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/24531>
5. Patton MQ. *Utilization-focused evaluation: The new century text*. 3rd ed. Sage Publications; 1997.