Easy Evaluation for Community Health Programs

7 Steps to Community Health Program Evaluation

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Introduction

Evaluation is easy. You have likely done a number of small evaluations already today. When you try a new recipe and decide how to change it to make it better - you are doing an evaluation. When you look outside and decide what you need to wear for the weather - you are doing an evaluation. This resource will take the evaluation skills that you already have and help you use them to evaluate your health program.

Program evaluation is important. It can help you get **program** funding, it can give the **participants** in your **program** a chance to feel valued and it can show you where your program is strong and where it can be better. Most importantly program evaluation can let you know you that all your hard work is making a positive change in the health of your community.

When should you make an evaluation plan

At the beginning. The best time to start to think about evaluation is when you are starting your **program** planning. You can start to evaluate anytime during the program, but the earlier you make an evaluation plan and begin to follow it, the more complete your evaluation will be and this will make the recommendations stronger.

How to use this document

Easy Evaluation for Community Health Programs gives details about 7 steps you can use to complete an evaluation of your community health program.

Section 1

On pages 3-6 you will find a quick-reference summary of each evaluation step. This section gives you a short description of what to do in each evaluation step.

Section 2

For each of the steps in Section 1 you will find a more detailed explanation on how to do each evaluation step in Section 2.

Section 3

Here you will find **Tips for Writing the Evaluation Report.** This is an outline of what to include in your final evaluation report. There is also a **Glossary** of terms in this section. Any terms that are **bolded** in the body of the text will be in the Glossary. The Glossary will give a definition of the word or term as it is being used in this resource.

Section 1 – Quick Reference Summary

This section gives you a quick-reference summary of each evaluation step. This section gives you a short description of what each evaluation step involves.

Step by Step
Community Health Program Evaluation

STEP 1

Define the objectives of your program

What are the main things you want to do or change?

What work needs to be done to make it happen?

> These questions should be answered in your **objectives**.

To be sure that you are making strong **objectives** that will be easy to evaluate, follow the S.M.A.R.T. principle.

Make process objectives and outcome objectives for your program:

- A **process objective** describes a measurable activity that is usually done out by the people who are planning or delivering the program.
- An **outcome objective** describes a measurable change in a **health outcome** that you want your program to make.
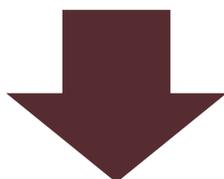
STEP 2

Develop your evaluation questions

Evaluation questions always connect back to the process and outcomes objectives of the program. Ask both **quantitative** and **qualitative** questions about your program.

Quantitative questions will ask about things that can be measured with numbers. For example, *"How many families with children use our program?"*

Qualitative questions ask about things that are measured in categories or descriptions. For example, "*Which day of the week would be most helpful to receive a Good Food Box delivery on?"*

It is a good idea to have all your **stakeholders** help make the evaluation questions. This way you know that everyone is getting the information that is most important to them.

STEP 3

Decide how you are going to do the evaluation

You need to make these decisions:

o **WHAT** do I measure

o **WHEN** do I collect the information (before/during/after/all)

o **HOW** will I collect the information – what tools do you need?

o **WHO** will I collect the information from?

o **WHO** will use the information?

Think about the ethical issues involved in your information collection. For example, consider privacy, **confidentiality** and **informed consent**.
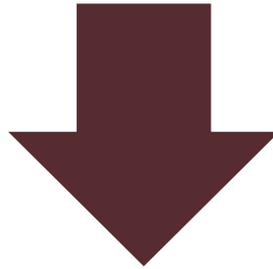
STEP 4

Develop a work plan, timeline and budget for your evaluation

Identify certain tasks, responsibilities, money or other resources needed, and any deadlines for the evaluation or the reporting.

Taking the time to make a **work plan** for your evaluation will help you not miss something. It will also help you to stay on track and on **budget**.

These are the things you should include in your **work plan**:
- A list of the evaluation **deliverables**
- A list of activities needed for meeting each **deliverable**
- The person or group that is responsible for doing each activity
- A list of the resources that are needed and available for each activity
- The date or **timeline** to finish each activity
- How much each activity will cost to complete

STEP 5

Collect your data

Pilot test your **data collection tools** (i.e.; surveys) and activities to make sure that they work. Once you are sure they work, you can collect your data.

- You need to make **data** collection rules for the people that will be involved in the data collection. For example, make a list of steps to follow each time they give a survey or do an interview.

- Make sure that the people collecting the information are trained in the **data** collection rules that you decided on.

- Watch the data as it comes in to check that the rules and tools are being followed and used in the right way.

- If you can, put the **data** in a computer. This will make looking at the data and using it easier.
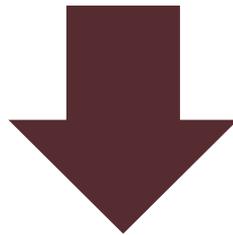
STEP 6

Analyze your data to see the results

Prepare and then analyze the data.

- Go back and re-check at least 10% of the data

- Arrange the data in a way that can be read and understood easily. Enter it into a computer.

- Look for common thoughts or similarities in the **qualitative** data.

STEP 7

Write your evaluation report

Share evaluation results with funders, **stakeholders** and/or other communities to share the successes and challenges of your **program**.

You may need to make this report in different formats that match the **stakeholders'** interest in the evaluation. For example, your funder might want a written report but your community members might want a presentation.

Your **key learnings** and **recommendations** should all link back to the evaluation questions from STEP 2.

When you make your report:
• Keep your audience(s) in mind. What will they want to know? What are they going to be most interested in?
• If you want to use pictures or graphs in the report make sure they are simple and well labelled.
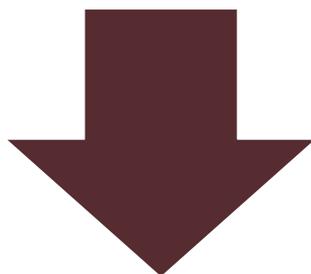
TAKE ACTION!

Use your recommendations to help make your community healthier.

Section 2 – A detailed look at the evaluation process

For each of the steps in Section 1 you will find a more detailed explanation on how to complete each evaluation step in Section 2.

STEP 1 - Define the objectives of your program

What is the program hoping to do or change?

Clearly knowing the answer to this question will help you see which parts of your program should be evaluated.

Although a program's evaluation is typically completed once the program is finished, **the planning for the evaluation needs to happen right at the beginning of the program planning.** It is best to start it at the beginning because some evaluation steps may need to be done at the beginning or during your program.

Objectives are specific statements about the effects that you want your program to have. They should be written at the program planning stage. There are process and outcome objectives.

Process objective – A process objective describes a measurable activity that is carried out by the people who are planning or delivering the program. These objectives measure how the program was run.

The statement below is an example of a process objective written for a Good Food Box program:

>*"Good Food Box deliveries will happen once a month."*

Outcome objective – An outcome objective describes a measurable change in a **health outcome** that you want your program to make.

The statement below is an example of an outcome objective written for a Good Food Box program:

>*"Lower the number of individuals and families that are experiencing food* **insecure**.*"*

To be sure that you are creating strong objectives that will be easy to evaluate, follow the S.M.A.R.T. principle. This will ensure that you have objectives that are **S**pecific, **M**easureable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant and **T**imely.

S	Specific – say exactly what you want to do or change. Answer the "who, what, where and why" questions.
M	Measurable - How will you measure what you said you wanted to do or change? The objective needs to be able to be measured. For example, weight, knowledge or blood sugar are all things that you can measure. This is likely the measurement that will tell you that you had success or not.

	Answer the questions "How much or how many"?
A	Achievable/Attainable – chose a target that is possible
	For example a 5% increase or decrease might be too small and 100% is not likely to happen.
R	Relevant - Does what you are measuring fit with the purpose of the program? If it does not fit then do not include it.
T	Time Specific - Set a date. What is the date that you will have done or changed what you said you would?
	Answer the question "By when"?

The example objectives written on page 9 have now been rewritten to follow the S.M.A.R.T. principle. They are now more exact and this makes them easier to measure.

"Good Food Box deliveries will happen in {name of community} once each month for the 2016 calendar year."

Specific – Deliveries happen once each month in {name of community}."

Measureable – Did a delivery happen each month of the year?

Achievable – Monthly deliveries are possible for the funds and human resources that the program had.

Relevant – This is a relevant goal for a Good Food Box program.

Timely – During 2016

"By December 31, 2016 we will lower the number of individuals and families in {name of community} that are experiencing food insecurity by 25%."

Specific – Lower the number of individuals and families in {name of community} that are experiencing food insecurity"

Measureable – Are the individuals and families food insecure or not?

Achievable – Lower by 25% (100% reduction is not likely possible)

Relevant – This is a relevant goal for a Good Food Box program.

Timely – by December 31, 2016

If you have well written objectives for your program then it will be easy to write the evaluation questions in Step 2.

STEP 2 - Develop your evaluation questions

Take some time to think about what you really want to know about the effect of your program. Your evaluation should ask simple questions that are important to your community, your staff, and your funding partners. Try to think about financial and practical things when asking yourself what sort of questions you want answered.

Make both **quantitative** and **qualitative** evaluation questions. Look at STEP 2 in the quick-reference summary to review the difference between these types of questions.

You need to write **process evaluation** questions and **outcome evaluation** questions to connect to the process and outcome objectives that you wrote in STEP 1.

Process Evaluation Questions:

This kind of evaluation question looks at how well the program activities went as planned. They will ask questions like;

- Did we reach the people we thought we would reach with this program?
- Did we get the number of people that we hoped to get?
- Were the materials that we used culturally appropriate?
- Did we find the right number of volunteers for this program?

These are important questions to know the answers to in case you need to change the way you deliver the program.

Outcome Evaluation Questions:

This kind of evaluation question helps you to know if your **activities** have a positive effect on your target audience. This kind of evaluation question will ask things like:

- Do program **participants** say they are more food secure?
- Did program **participants** try the new food that was in their Good Food Box delivery last month?
- Has the **program** made any change that we had not planned for?
- Were there any other factors that caused the change that we saw in health behaviour?

These are important questions to have answers for in order to show that your program should continue to receive funding, or that people should keep using it or referring people to the program. Answers to these questions will show you if all your hard work is making people in your community healthier.

STEP 3 - Decide how you are doing to do the evaluation

Once you have completed STEP 2, you know the questions that you want your evaluation to answer. The next step is to decide which evaluation methods help you answer those questions in the best way.

When you are planning how you will do your evaluation, you need to make these decisions:

WHAT do I measure?

This one is easy. You are going to measure the things that are outlined in your STEP 1 objectives and STEP 2 evaluation questions.

For example:

> *"By December 31, 2016 we will lower the number of individuals and families in {name of community} that are experiencing food insecurity by 25%."*

In this example you are measuring the number of individuals and families that are food insecure.

WHEN do I collect the information (before/during/after/all)

Right now! Or at least at the beginning of the **program**. Evaluation isn't something you should wait to think about until after everything else has been done. To get a clear picture of what your group has been doing and how well you've been doing it, it's important to start planning for evaluation from the very start. However, if you're already part of the way into your program don't give up on the idea of evaluation -- even if you start late, you can still ask questions that could be very useful to you and your **stakeholders** in improving your program.

The time to collect your data is depends on what you are trying to measure. If you need to know the change in something like weight, knowledge, or food insecurity you will have to ask about this information before your program starts and again after it is over. So in this case your evaluation started before your program did. If you are measuring **participant satisfaction** you might ask about this half-way through the program and again at the end.

HOW will I collect the information

There are lots of methods and tools to use when you are ready to collect data. A **data collection tool** is what you use to gather the information needed to answer your evaluation question from STEP 2.

Common data collection methods and tools include:

- <u>Observation</u> - The activities of program **participants** are watched, recorded and interpreted.

- <u>Focus Group or Talking Circle</u> - **Facilitator** leads a discussion among participants about certain issues or questions.

- <u>Survey</u> - Participants respond to a written list of questions. Surveys can be completed on the phone, on paper or they can be on the computer.

- <u>Interview</u> - Participants respond to questions asked in a conversation. Interviews are usually done one-on-one. This is the best way to have the thoughts and answers of one person not influence the thoughts and answers of others. The **facilitator** should make a script to follow during each interview so that they ask everyone the same questions.

- <u>Document Review</u> - The content of documents are analysed and interpreted. An example might be a health record.

Other things to think about when choosing a data collection method or tool are:

Literacy - If your participants read at a low literacy, then a written or computer survey may be hard to use. Instead this might be the perfect time to use a focus group or an interview as the **facilitator** can ask questions out loud and/or watch the way people respond.

Location, transportation, computer or telephone access are all things that might help decide the kind of evaluation tool that is best for your data collection.

The table below has some examples of the kind of questions and methods that can be used well together.

Evaluation Question	Data Collection method	Collection Tool
Do program participants feel that they are more food secure?	Survey	Paper or computer questionnaire
Do the materials that we used fit culturally?	Focus group Talking circle	Topic list
Has the program resulted in any change that we did not plan for?	Interview	Script

WHO will I collect the information from?

What kind of evaluation question is it? You may be collecting information from program staff or volunteers when answering some **process evaluation** questions or from program participants for some of the **outcome evaluation** questions. You may want to use different methods depending on who you need information from.

WHO will use the information?

Think about the ethical issues involved in your information collection. For example, consider privacy, **confidentiality** and **informed consent**. You may need to create these forms.

Be sure to work with the First Nations Principles of OCAP™ (ownership, control, access, and possession). These principles mean that First Nations control the data collection processes in their communities. They own, protect and control how their information is used. You can see information about OCAP™ by going to this website.
http://fnigc.ca/ocap.html

STEP 4 - Develop a work plan, timeline and budget

The best way to have a strong evaluation is to come up with an evaluation **work plan** and make sure that you think about all the things to do and that there is money and time budgeted to complete them all.

WORK PLAN

An evaluation **work plan** is an organized 'to-do' list. It will help you stay on track and not miss a step. Start right at the beginning and add each activity needed until you get to the writing of the final report.

An evaluation work plan has information about:

- A list of the evaluation **deliverables** (the result of doing the activity)
- A list of activities needed for getting to each **deliverable**
- The person or group that is responsible for doing each activity
- A list of the resources that are needed and available for each activity
- The date or **timeline** to finish each activity
- How much each activity will cost to complete

It is a good idea to review the work plan with all your **stakeholders**. This will give them a chance to add their thoughts and see if there is somewhere that their expertise and help can be used.

Organizing your work plan as a table is an easy way to make sure that you have remembered to include everything. Here is an example of how to lay out a work plan:

Deliverable	Activity	Responsibility	Resources needed	Timeline
Pre-test data collection	- Invite survey participants - Delivery of the **pre-test** survey	Program Coordinator	- Location to do the survey in - Pre-test survey questions	Jan 1-15th

BUDGET

Once you have determined the work that needs to be done to get your evaluation finished, you can begin to figure out what it will cost to do it. You can make a separate table or document for your **budget** planning, or you can add it to your **work plan** in another column. It is good idea to budget at least 10% of your overall program budget

to use for evaluation. However, if you use a detailed work plan and budget process it will help you know for sure how much money you will need to complete it. The evaluation may cost very little if a program coordinator or their staff does the evaluation as part of their normal job. If you make at a detailed work plan budget, you will know for sure.

STEP 5 - Collect your data

At this point you have built the frame of your evaluation by making the evaluation questions (STEP 2) and a plan on how to do the evaluation (STEP 3 and STEP 4). Now it is time to put the plan into action by collecting the **data** and looking at it to see what it can tell you.

There are 2 kinds of data and it is often a good idea to collect both kinds during your evaluation. Using both **quantitative** data and **qualitative** data will give you a balanced picture of your program's effect.

Quantitative Data

This is information that can be measured and written down with numbers. Examples of this kind of data would be the number of people that receive Good Food Boxes, or the cost of the food that is used in the boxes each year.

Qualitative Data

This is information that can't actually be measured with numbers. It often describes something and is measured in categories. Examples of this kind of data would be the participant satisfaction, gender or socio-economic status.

Informed Consent

Participants that you will collect data from have the right to know the following information:

- What is the purpose of the evaluation?
- How long it will take to do the data collection.
- A description of what the evaluation will involve for them.
- How the information that you will collect from them will be stored, who will have access to it and what it will be used for (i.e.; an evaluation report).

This information should be given to program **participants** in a way that is easy to understand. Program or evaluation staff should be trained on how to answer any questions that people might have before giving the **informed consent**.

How will the information be collected?

Make sure that everyone receives the same training on how to do the data collection activities. Do they know how to use the data collection tool or equipment? Can they answer questions about the evaluation process?

Check the data as it starts to come in. Are the rules being followed? Is the information correct? Does there need to be any changes made at this time?

Confidentiality Statement for the people that will have access to information

A **confidentiality** agreement should be signed by everyone that will have access to the evaluation data. It should state that the people that sign the agreement will not share any information with anyone outside of the evaluation team.

Once data collection is completed, store the data in a secure location. Make sure that only those individuals who have signed a **confidentiality** agreement can see it.

Contact OCAP™ if you have any questions about the how the information should be used or kept safe. http://fnigc.ca/ocap.html

STEP 6 - Analyse your data to see the results

This most important rule for any kind of data analysis is to **keep the evaluation questions in mind**. What were the questions asking? These are the answers that you are looking for.

How you analyse data depends on what kind of data you use and what kind of expertise you have in your community. Listed below are some general 'rules of thumb" to consider for this part of your evaluation process:

- Go back and re-check at least 10% of the data that you collect, particularly odd comments or "out of range" numbers to catch any errors. Going back to confirm something is never a bad idea.
- Arrange the data in a way that can be read and understood easily. An example of this is entering data into a computer. It is easy to check for errors and patterns if it is in one place.
- Look for common thoughts or similarities in the **qualitative** data

Anyone can do an evaluation, but if you have a large or complicated program consider paying an evaluation expert to help you. They can also be helpful if the evaluation could be sensitive and an outside view point is needed.

More help …

This link will give some information on how to analysis both kinds of data.

> Evaluation Toolkit – Evaluation Guide – Analysis data
> http://toolkit.pellinstitute.org/evaluation-guide/analyze/

This link will show you have to use Micorsoft Excel to help with analysis and show you how to organize your data and make tables and other visuals:

> Excel Easy – Data analysis tutorial
> http://www.excel-easy.com/data-analysis.html

STEP 7 - Write your Evaluation Report

It doesn't matter how big or small your evaluation was it deserves to be reported on.

Evaluation reports are the end products of evaluations. They show all the evaluation results and processes. This report should be used by your health care team, Community Health Representatives (CHRs) and nursing staff to learn about what went well and what did not. It could also be given to funders, community administration, **stakeholders** or other communities to allow you to share the successes and challenges that your program had. By sharing your report you can show them the effect the program had on the health of the people in your community.

The most important sections of the evaluation report are the **key learnings** and **recommendations**.

What were the key learnings?
Listed below are examples of questions that you can ask yourself to help find out what the key learnings of your program evaluation were:

- How did we meet the process objectives?
  - If we did not meet them, why not?
- How did we meet the outcome objectives?
  - If we did not meet them, why not?
- Were the program activities done as we planned them?
- What is the progress towards making the desired changes in health?
- Where there any outcomes of the program that we did not plan for?

What do you recommend?
The **recommendations** section of the evaluation report is the most important section. It gives a list of suggestions on how to improve your program so that it is better and more efficient the next time it is run. The recommendations are always based on the results of the evaluation. Make your recommendations clear and realistic.

For more details on writing an evaluation report see SECTION 3 - **Tips for Writing the Evaluation Report.**

Section 3 – More Help

Tips for Writing the Evaluation Report

This is an outline of what to include in your final evaluation report.

Glossary

Any terms that were **bolded** in the body of this resource will be in the Glossary. The Glossary will give you a definition of the word or term as it was used in this resource.

Tips for Writing the Evaluation Report

A strong **evaluation** report will help readers understand what happened during your program and its evaluation. It should clearly show the reader how you came up with the **key learnings** and the **recommendations**.

There are lots of ways to prepare an evaluation report. Whichever way you make it, it should have these standard parts:

The Summary

The summary is at the beginning of the **evaluation report** and gives the following information:

- It talks about the **objectives** of the program, and the outcomes that it was trying to reach;
- It gives the most important results and conclusions of the evaluation in two or three sentences. It gives a short description about the way you got the answers to your evaluation questions.

The Introduction

The introduction describes the program briefly. Some of the things that might be covered in this section of the report are;

- why the program was needed
- the objective(s) and length of the program;
- the number of staff and their positions;
- who was the **target audience** that the program was trying to reach.

The Approach

The approach talks about how you measured the evaluation questions for each program or activity. It also adds more details on how you did the activities. The **work plan** that you wrote in STEP 4 will help you complete this section of the report since the steps are already laid out here.

The Key Learnings

This section talks about what you found from the evaluation and what were your conclusions.

Below is an example of how to show key learnings and conclusions in an evaluation report:

> *"The Good Food Box Program is most helpful to families in our community during the third week of the month.*
>
> *A participant survey showed that the third week of the month is the best one to have a Good Food Box delivery in because this is the week they find it is hardest to afford to buy healthy foods. The orders can be made the week before to allow for a delivery during the third week each month. Participants said that this would help to make their household more food secure."*

<u>Recommendations</u>

Make your **recommendations** based on the **key learnings**.

For example, based on the Good Food Box key learning example shown above, you might recommend the following change:

> *"The Good Food Box delivery should be moved from the first week of each month to the third week of each month."*

If you think that pictures, graphs or other visuals will help people to understand your points, make sure that they are simple, clear and well labelled.

Glossary

Budget
: A budget is an estimate of the money coming in to the project and going out of it for the length of your program.

Confidentiality
: A set of rules or a promise that limits access or puts restrictions on sharing certain types of information.

Data
: The observations and information that you collect from program participants and program staff.

Data collection tools
: These are the things that you use to collect your data with. Examples include questionnaires, surveys, scripts, interviews or forms.

Deliverable
: The products created throughout the evaluation process. They are usually outlined in your evaluation work plan.

Evaluation Report
: A summary of the entire evaluation process. It is usually a written report, but can be in another format. It is most valuable if it is shared with funders, stakeholders and other communities.

Facilitator
: A facilitator is someone who helps a group see their common objectives and helps them to plan how to achieve these objectives. The facilitator is "neutral" meaning they do not have a position in the discussion but are there to help and guide the discussion.

Food security
Food insecurity
: Food security refers to the situation when a person/family/community has physical and economic access to food that meets their dietary needs as well as their food and cultural preferences. If these needs are not being met, then the family, community or individual is said to be **food insecure**.

Health behaviour
: An action taken by a person to maintain, attain, or regain good health and to prevent illness. Some common health behaviours are exercising regularly, eating a balanced diet, and obtaining necessary immunizations.

Health outcome
: A health outcome is a change in the health status of an individual, group or population that happened because of a planned program. It does not have to be something that you meant to change with your program.

Informed consent
: This is the process of making sure that people in your program have all the knowledge of the possible consequences and outcomes of a program or the evaluation. They need to know all

the possible risks and benefits.

Key learnings	These are the most important or interesting things that you learned about your program when you did the evaluation.
Objectives	Program objectives are specific, measurable actions to be completed within a specified time frame of your program.
OCAP	First Nations Principles of OCAP™ (ownership, control, access, and possession). These principles mean that First Nations control the data collection processes in their communities.
Outcome evaluation	This kind of evaluation question helps you know if your program activities have a positive effect on your target audience.
Outcome objectives	An outcome objective describes a measurable change in health status that you want your program to make.
Participant	A person who takes part in your program or evaluation.
Participant Satisfaction	This is the degree that participants in your programs find the type or content of the program to be meaningful and useful. This is form of process evaluation.
Pilot test	Pilot testing means finding out if your survey, interview guide or observation form will work in the "real world" by trying it out first on a few people. It happens as a part of program planning and before any part of the program is actually started.
Pre-test and post test	A pre-test is a measure of what your program is hoping to change (for example, weight, knowledge, number of minutes of exercise) that is done before your program starts. The post-test is the same test after your program is over.
Process Evaluation	This kind of evaluation looks at how well the program activities went as planned. This kind of evaluation will help you to know if you need to change the way you offer the program.
Process Objectives	A process objective describes a measurable activity that is carried out by the people who are planning or delivering the program. These objectives measure how the program was run.
Program	A program is a planned and coordinated group of activities. They have a specific goal and objectives.
Qualitative data	This is information that can't actually be measured with numbers. It often describes something and is measured in

categories.

Quantitative data	This is information that can be measured and written down with numbers.
Recommendation	A suggestion about how to improve program delivery or set-up to make it better. A recommendation has to be based on the evaluation data.
Stakeholders	A person or group that has an investment or interest in your program or evaluation. You usually work together with stakeholders when you are developing a program.
Target audience	The individuals, groups, organizations, or communities that your program is trying to reach.
Timeline	A schedule that represents important events in the order in which they did or will occurr.
Work plan	This is a document that gives a full description of what you are doing in the evaluation process. It has information about how you will collect, measure, and interpret the data. It gives a timeline for the rollout of the task.

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