Evaluation Design

<table>
<tr><th>Step</th><th>How to Proceed</th></tr>
<tr><td>Design your research/evaluation question</td><td>Start with the program objective, and derive your research question, like this:
<table>
<tr><th>Program Objective</th><th>Research Question</th></tr>
<tr><td>X will happen</td><td>Did X happen?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Program intervention Y will produce X</td><td>When Y was there, did X happen?</td></tr>
<tr><td>More of Y will mean more of X</td><td>When we had more of Y, did we get more of X?</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>Identify your comparative strategy (and your general approach to data analysis)</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th>Research Question</th><th>Comparison</th><th>Explanation of Comparative Strategy</th></tr>
<tr><td>Did X happen?</td><td>N.A.</td><td>If all you want to know is whether X happened, you don’t need a comparison.</td></tr>
<tr><td>When Y was there, did X happen?</td><td>• Pre-post, within group
• Between groups
• Pre-post, between groups</td><td>If you want to answer the question: “when Y was there, did X happen?” you also need to answer the question: “when Y was not there, did X not happen?”</td></tr>
<tr><td>When we had more of Y, did we get more of X?</td><td>• Between less and more, low to high</td><td>This is also referred to as “dosage.” If you have more of something, do you get more of the intended result? (e.g. Do more days in an after school program mean better grades?)</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Develop indicators and survey instruments</td><td>Do some survey pre-planning by figuring out the answers to these questions:
• How do we know X happened?
• How do we know when we see more of X?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Design a survey from scratch and/or by using existing measures:
• There are many publicly available survey items out there that you can start with (e.g. Ansell-Casey life skills; California Healthy Kids Survey; National Survey of Families and Households - another good resource is the Annie E. Casey website, which has links to a large variety of surveys and measures)
• What you want to investigate may be relatively unique, and at least some questions usually need to be tailored to the individual program outcomes. In these cases, you will need to design survey questions from scratch.
• If you design a survey from scratch, pilot-testing will be very useful.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Administer instruments</td><td>Consider the feasibility and cost of using/administering your instruments:
• Are there any reasons that your clients would not want to fill out a survey?
• As a way of making it more attractive to fill out a survey, are incentives affordable?
• Are there some other ways to make filling out a survey more doable or attractive?
• Is it hard to find your clients when it’s time to fill out a survey?
• Are there other sources of data you can use aside from surveys (test scores, administrative records)?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Methods of survey administration
• Online surveys (easy and cheap, although not always feasible/appropriate)
• Paper surveys with SASEs or collected in a way to make respondents comfortable about confidentiality
• Administered in person or by phone (appropriate when you have the resources available, and when confidentiality is not an issue: this will boost accuracy of data and/or boost response rate)</td></tr>
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Evaluation Terms and Usage

Evaluation Term	Outcome	Objective	Indicator	Measurement Instrument
Terms used as synonyms	Construct, underlying construct Concept Objective*	Program objective Goal, program goal Outcome objective Outcome*	Outcome indicator Objective indicator Outcome* Measure*	Instrument Tool Scale* Measure* Indicator*
Definition	The underlying reality about the world that you want to understand – what you are really trying to "get at." Often this is not directly accessible to observation and measurement (not "measurable").	What a program wants to achieve. Unlike outcome, which is value neutral, the objective posits something specific to reach.	The measurable proxy of the underlying construct or outcome. Something observable that *indicates* that the underlying outcome is there or not, or the *extent* to which it is there.	The thing that is used to measure the indicator.
Examples	Health (implied "degree of health," or sickness/health spectrum)	A patient is well	Body temperature / body temperature at 98.6	Thermometer
	Happiness (implied "degree of happiness," or sadness/happiness spectrum)	A client is happy	Facial expression / smile	Observation protocol for description of facial expression
			Self-report of mood / self-report of happiness	Survey item asking a respondent how happy s/he is
Some confusing things about usage	• Outcome and objective are often used interchangeably, even though the outcome is just "what happens" (e.g. someone is sick or unhappy), and so value-neutral, the term outcome is often used as the *objective* for that particular outcome (we want someone to be well or happy). • *Construct* and *concept* are rarely used as evaluation terms, but they are cleaner and less confusing.	• Again, outcome and objective are often used interchangeably.	• Indicator is the intermediate step between outcome and measurement instrument, but usage is not always so precise. • Sometimes *indicator* is used to denote the value-neutral *outcome* (e.g. body temperature tells us whether a patient is well or ill) – other times it is used to *indicate that an objective has been met* (e.g. the patient's temperature is not above 98.6). • Sometimes indicator is used as shorthand for outcome; other times as shorthand for measurement instrument.	• It makes sense that *indicator* would be a synonym for *measurement instrument* – something "indicates" or "measures" whether an outcome is present, or the degree to which an outcome is present.

***Denotes slipperiness of usage.**

Quantitative Data Analysis Plan for [Program Name]

Objective/ Program Goal	Research Question	Measurement Instrument / Data Source	Data Analysis	
			Indicators	Comparison / Model