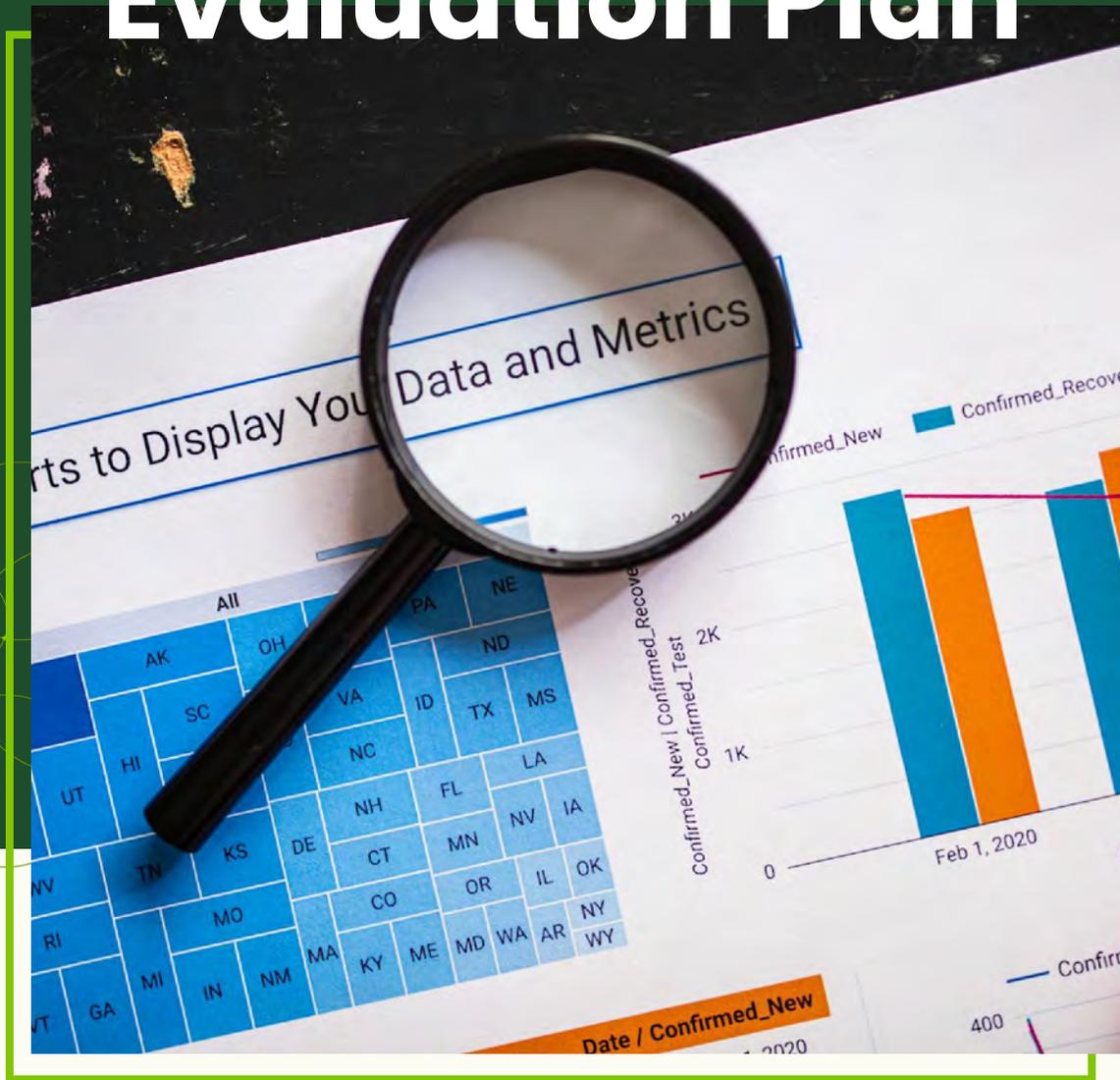


Developing a Program Evaluation Plan



A Tool for Prevention and Intervention Program Teams

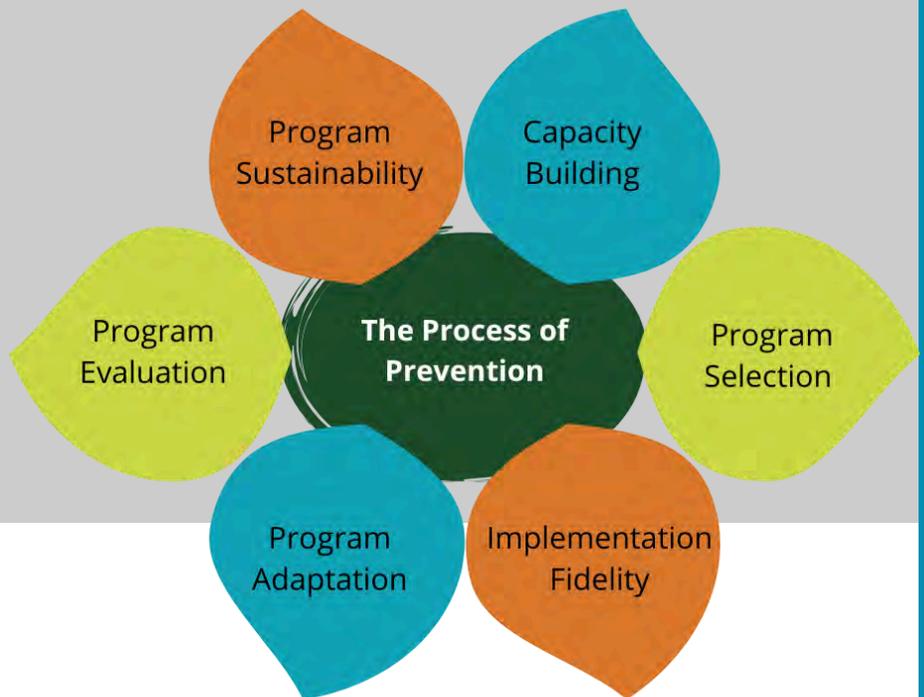


PREVENTION RESEARCH CENTER
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

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First Things First



Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is an important part of the process of prevention in which each "step" affects the next. The structure, complexity, and execution of a program evaluation will depend on the goals of the evaluation, the type of data collected, and available resources. However, the aims are always to understand whether a program is working, how it is working, and for whom it works best.

References are linked throughout this document, and several components were adapted from: [CDC's Program Evaluation Framework](#).

If you want to learn more about the process of prevention or program evaluations, consider our no-cost, [open-access e-courses](#).

Getting Started



With an understanding of local strengths and needs and having selected a program aligned with those needs, it is time to start planning for evaluation! The following are detailed steps to guide your program evaluation planning. Keep in mind that this guide will be most helpful if your program already has well-developed materials, including a [logic model](#) and corresponding surveys (i.e., measures) that are reliable and valid.

If your program is evidence-based, it will likely include the necessary materials to develop a high-quality evaluation. If the program is not evidence-based, this process will be more complex because effective program development requires years of research and testing for one to be reasonably certain that it works and regularly achieves the desired outcomes.

Developing evaluation and other statistical skills can take years. Consider working alongside an external program evaluator to establish an evaluation plan that can then be used by your internal team for several years to come.

Steps to Develop a Program Evaluation

#6. REPORT FINDINGS

What did your evaluation tell you?
Let others know how it went.

#1. ESTABLISH A TEAM

Build a team of diverse internal staff and external partners, including evaluation experts
*This is ongoing

#5. LAUNCH EVALUATION

Time to implement the program evaluation with tools in place!

#2. UNDERSTAND PROGRAM MATERIALS

Is it evidence-based? Is there a logic model?

#4. PLAN OUTCOME EVALS

What tools already exist to collect data and measure program goals and outcomes?

#3. PLAN PROCESS EVALS

What tools already exist to measure the process and program implementation?





Step 1: Establish an Evaluation Team

Potential Team Structures

Evaluation team structures will differ based on internal capacity and available resources. Teams often include an internal or external evaluation lead, internal program staff, and other internal or external members available for support. Including individuals with statistical knowledge and skills will be **very beneficial** to your team.

[See Chapter 3: The Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation](#)



SUGGESTION: Consider having an external partner develop a plan with your internal team during your first year of implementation. This greatly improves the chances that your team will have the necessary resources to conduct future program evaluations on its own.

Considerations

- Start evaluation planning BEFORE program implementation begins.
- Assess your available resources. Consider skills, time, motivation, and competing demands.
- Identify potential external evaluation partners. Consider involving advisory committees, local universities, or existing partners with diverse backgrounds and skills.
- Ensure that program managers and program staff are part of this team.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Revisit this step as often as needed.

Internal Capacity



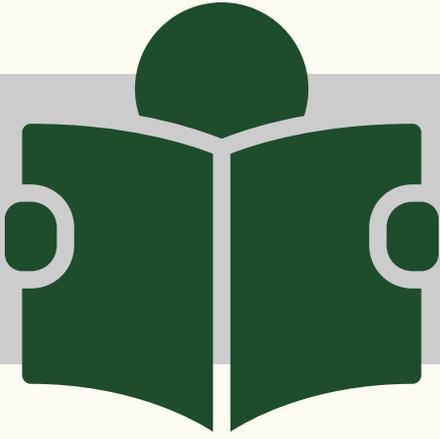
Considering Capacity

Internal Capacity: Time and resources are not limitless, so it is useful to pause and assess or strengthen your internal capacity. Key components of capacity might include:

- Human capital (staff, volunteers, outside partners or consultants) to create a team
- Available time across team members to plan and launch the evaluation
- Existing evaluation skills among team members
- Systems and tools for data management
- Buy-in for program evaluation
- Funding for evaluation processes

Pro Tip: Connecting with outside experts or creating local advisory boards can help build capacity by leveraging resources outside your organization.

As your team plans for evaluation, continue capacity building efforts. Whether accepting your current capacity or striving to build your internal capacity, keeping your evaluation goals realistic will make them more achievable. It is not typical for teams to be 100% ready or have full capacity to launch an evaluation. Determine what is best considering your unique circumstances and resources.



Step 2: Understand Program Materials

Is Your Program Evidence-Based?

Take the time to fully understand the program you intend to implement and where it fits on the [continuum of confidence for evidence-based programs](#).

- Evidence-based programs will likely include all the evaluation tools needed to deliver a high-quality program evaluation plan.
- Programs that are not evidence-based often lack sound (i.e., valid and reliable) evaluation tools.

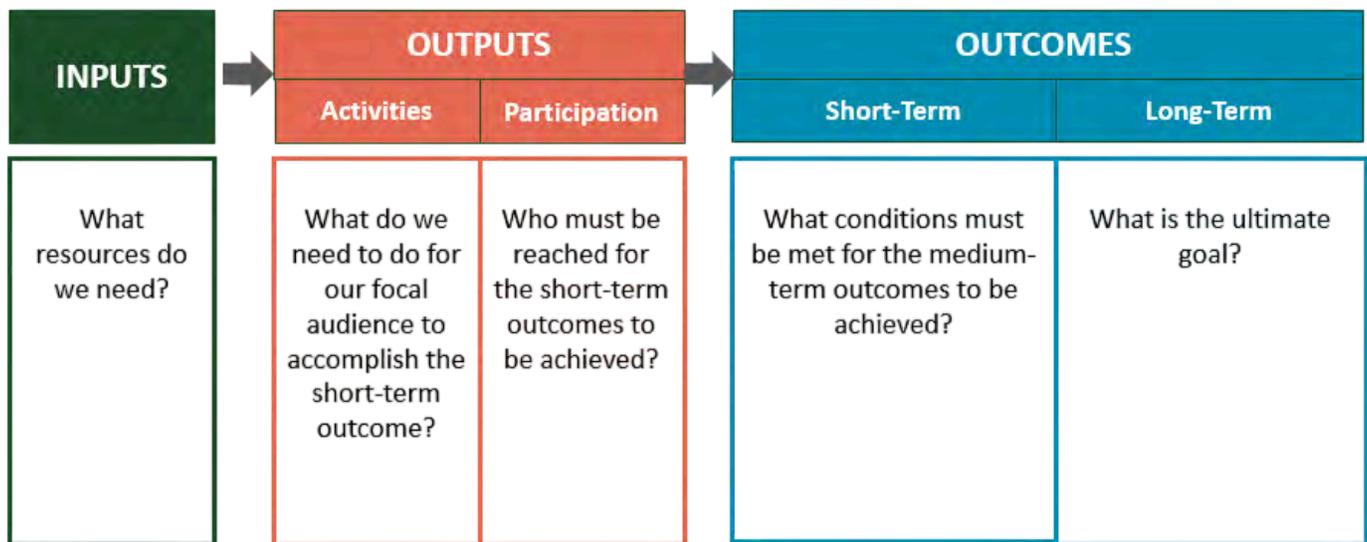
Useful Tools for Program Evaluation

Common evaluation tools include:

- Program Logic Model
- Program-Specific Implementation Fidelity Measures
 - Session Trackers, Fidelity Checklist, Fidelity Monitoring Protocols
- Outcome Measures
 - Valid and reliable surveys to directly measure program outcomes

Evaluation tools might be on the program website, provided with the purchase of the program, or accessed by contacting the program development team.

Checkpoint: What Are We Measuring?

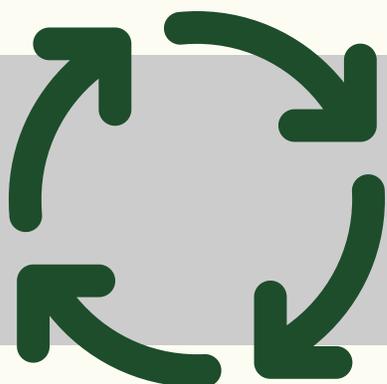


Next, we are going to dive into the two core components of program evaluation using this visual of a program logic model as a guide.

Process evaluations offer insights into how a program is being implemented, how it is working, and what might be missing. They can inform a program team whether activities are being carried out as planned, highlight strengths and challenges, and identify areas for improvement. This involves **measuring inputs and outputs** (see above logic model). Process evaluations should be planned before program implementation and reviewed regularly. Examples include:

- Fit and Feasibility Assessments
- Tracking Recruitment, Reach, and Attendance
- Participant Satisfaction Measures
- Fidelity or Implementation Checklists

Outcome evaluations provide insight into a program's impact. They help determine whether the program's goals are being met, to what extent, and for which participants. This involves **measuring outcomes** (see above logic model). Outcome evaluations should be planned in advance of program implementation. Participant data should ideally be collected before and after the program, with additional data collection when possible.



Step 3: Prepare a Process Evaluation Plan

Tracking Program Inputs

Fit and Feasibility: Assessing fit and feasibility helps determine if your program aligns with your local culture and goals and whether it is practical given your internal capacity. Based on this assessment, decide if your team is ready to move forward or if you need to go back to the program selection or capacity building phase. Few teams are 100% ready or have full capacity before starting program implementation. Use this step to decide what feels right for your team now and revisit it if needed.

[Hexagon Tool for Program Fit, Feasibility, and Selection | NIRN](#)

Tracking Program Outputs

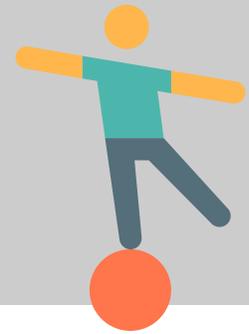
Recruitment and Reach: When considering program [recruitment and reach](#), your team should intentionally consider the preferences and lifestyles of the population your program intends to serve. Get creative with recruitment and be mindful of barriers to participation. Evidence-based and/or manualized programs may include recommended tools for marketing and recruitment, which can be adapted to fit your local culture.

[RE-AIM | Planning Reach Tool](#)

Be sure to follow protocols for permission slips for children under 18.

This tool goes into more detail: [Process Evaluation Planning | CSU PRC](#)

Implementation Fidelity & Adaptations



Tracking Program Outputs (Continued)

Implementation Fidelity: [Implementation Fidelity](#) refers to how closely a program is carried out according to the program developers' original design.

Implementation Fidelity includes the following:



Adherence



Dosage



Quality



Engagement

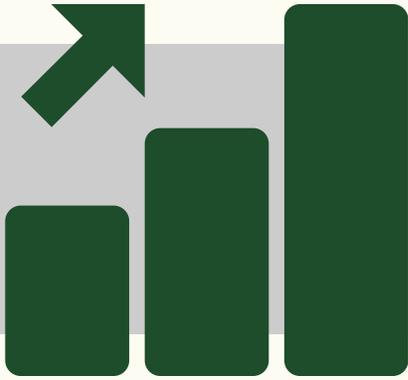
Fidelity is often monitored using a program-specific tool. Consult with your program developer or review program materials for recommended fidelity tracking methods. If your program lacks a specific implementation tracking tool, consider these:

[Fidelity Monitoring Checklists | CSU PRC](#) & [Maintaining Fidelity | PSU Military Families](#)

Try to regularly monitor program sessions and communicate barriers with your team.

Adaptations: [Program Adaptations](#), or changes made to the original program, are likely to occur in response to cultural or contextual strengths, needs, or internal capacity. Being proactive rather than reactive with adaptations can reduce potential negative impacts on the program and sometimes improve quality or engagement. Approach adaptations with caution, and consider using a planning and tracking tool such as:

[Map2Adapt Interactive Adaptation Planning Tool | TCI](#)



Step 4: Prepare an Outcome Evaluation Plan

Program Outcomes

Program outcomes are the changes in behaviors, attitudes, or knowledge that participants are expected to experience due to the program.

Program outcomes should always be:

- Measurable
- Based on the outcomes presented in the program's logic model

Outcome Measures should always be:

- [Valid and reliable](#)
- Optional and anonymous
- Accessible and understandable for all participants

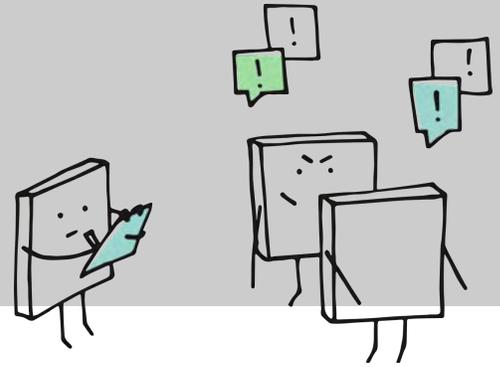
Example

If a program's logic model illustrates that the program is designed to increase students' perceptions of school belonging and decrease feelings of depression, the outcome measures should directly assess those two goals.

1. Measure School Belonging using a valid and reliable measure, such as the School Belonging Scale from [Panorama](#) - Compare student data from pretest to posttest.
2. Measure Depression using a valid, reliable measure, such as the [Mood and Feelings Questionnaire](#) - Compare data from pretest to posttest.

This tool goes into more detail: [Outcome Evaluation Planning | CSU PRC](#)

Data Collection: Survey Example



How to Assemble a Survey for Participants

Program-specific participant surveys will ideally include:

- An introduction with survey directions and intent of data collection
- [Unique identification](#) codes that can be deidentified
- Demographic or background characteristics questions (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, age)
- Valid and reliable outcome measures

Survey Administration Best Practices include providing clear instructions, offering a low-distraction environment for everyone distributing and completing the survey, and safely managing and using the data to ensure confidentiality. When done with care, this can help ensure accurate data, confidentiality of participants, and proof of program impact.

Creating unique IDs is a way to protect the confidentiality of participants while still being able to link the same participant's data across multiple timepoints (pre- and posttest).

See this [Practical Measurement | IEI](#) resource to learn more and download a PDF with several links to find practical measures.

Preparing for Data Analysis: An Example

This is a more advanced topic!

Here are suggested key steps if your team is analyzing pre- and posttest data

Cleaning Data

When manually entering data or exporting from an online survey, it's important to clean the data, ensuring that missing data are handled with care and the spreadsheet is properly formatted to run your preferred analysis. Remember: **Unique IDs** are needed for a **paired samples t-test**, and will need to be matched from pre- to posttests. Be sure to proactively plan your cleaning procedures and remember that this step will be time-consuming.

Coding Data

If coding or rescaling was not performed during survey assembly, it will need to be done at this time. Electronic survey platforms, like Qualtrics, allow you to include automated coding procedures, like reverse scoring and scale construction, that otherwise need to be done by the evaluator during the data entry and coding phases.

Analyzing Data

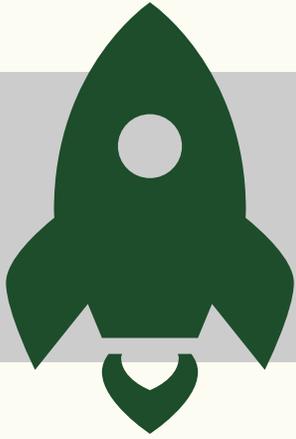
Next, it's time to run a paired samples [t-test](#) to analyze the differences in the participants' mean scores from before the program compared to after the program. [Plan to use Excel](#) or advanced statistical software packages. If needed, consult with an evaluation specialist on more advanced topics, including sample size requirements and subgroup analyses.

Interpreting Data

Plan on testing for [statistically significant](#) differences or [effect sizes](#) between pre- and posttests to determine if your program is having the intended effect on participants. Smaller samples typically call for effect size analyses, whereas tests for statistical significance can be used for larger samples.

Other types of analyses, such as using comparison groups, require advanced skills. Outside Evaluators can be a great addition to your Evaluation Team for all types of program evaluations!





Step 5: Launch the Evaluation

Now for the fun part

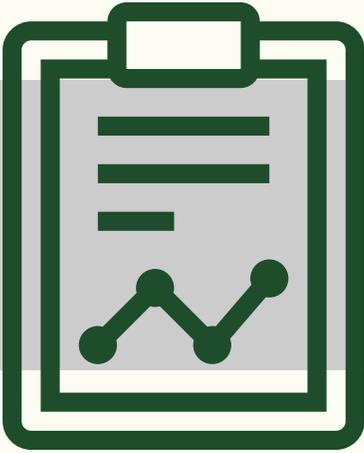
You should now be prepared to evaluate your program. Data should be collected throughout program delivery, according to your pre-established evaluation plans and procedures.

Remember to:

- Ensure that program facilitators are trained on the program and possess all necessary materials for success. This includes access to all surveys, program materials, and clear instructions for survey distribution.
- Meet with your evaluation team as often as needed to clarify roles and responsibilities or to address any barriers during implementation.
- Communicate timelines, expectations, and any barriers that emerge.
- Monitor the process evaluation throughout implementation to ensure clear communication of reach, needs, barriers, adaptations, and to identify what is working well.



Step 6: Report Findings



Brag a Little or Share a Lesson Learned

Don't let your data sit on a shelf - Share your findings! For Example...



Agency Awareness

Share some lessons learned within your organization. Consider hosting a learning community or sharing evaluation reports internally



Community Buy-in

Post about the number of participants served by your program and your program's impact on social media outlets and newsletters. Keep it simple when reporting to community members. Use [helpful charts](#) or graphs when possible.



Partners & Funders

Disseminate your findings to program partners. Sharing findings of wide program reach and positive impact can increase partner buy-in and the likelihood of sustained funding.

This tool goes into more detail: [Communicating Evaluation Results | CSU PRC](#)

Checklist for Program Evaluation Planning

	Establish a Team
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create an evaluation team using internal staff, program facilitators, and external partners with various skills.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Clarify roles and responsibilities, determine thresholds for evaluation success, and consider internal capacity.
	Understand the Program
<input type="checkbox"/>	As a team, identify tools and information about your program, such as a logic model.
	Plan a Process Evaluation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gather tools for measuring inputs and outputs, such as, program fit and feasibility assessments, reach and recruitment tools, fidelity checklists, participant satisfaction measures, and adaptation trackers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine how these process tools will be delivered and evaluated, identifying roles and instructions for each.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Communicate all survey administration and analysis plans and train those who are involved in each step.
	Plan an Outcome Evaluation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gather tools for measuring program outcomes and assemble any needed program-specific surveys.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Be sure that someone on your team understands how the surveys are intended to be coded and used properly to collect accurate data - Set up all tools before implementation begins.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine how your team will collect, manage, analyze, and interpret the outcome data using best practices.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Communicate all survey administration plans and train with who are involved in each step.
	Launch the Evaluation
<input type="checkbox"/>	With all plans communicated and tools in place, begin the program delivery, data collection and analyzing.
	Report Your Findings
<input type="checkbox"/>	You made it! Share your findings with your team, community, and invested partners in ways that make sense for each audience.

In Closing

Our Evaluation e-Courses will provide additional details to support the contents of this research-to-practice tool. We'd love to hear from you. Get in touch if you want to chat or need support.

Get In Touch



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**Our team can serve as your
Outside Evaluation Partner!
Contact us with questions.**

THANK YOU

For being part of the prevention
system in your community



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