National Library of Medicine
Network of the National Library of Medicine

National Evaluation Office (NEO) Small Awards Toolkit

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Introduction

"Evaluation is the process of determining the merit, worth and value of things, and evaluations are the products of that process."

\- Michael Scriven, Evaluation Thesaurus[1]

Evaluation is a process that critically examines a program. It involves collecting and analyzing information about a program's activities, characteristics, and outcomes. Its purpose is to make judgments about a program, to improve its effectiveness, and/or to inform programming decisions (Patton, 1987).

Ultimately, evaluations are to be designed and carried out to:

- Improve program design and implementation.
- Demonstrate program impact.

Through evaluation, program teams can ensure that they are taking time to listen, reflect, discuss, and learn from program participants and partners. Evaluation approaches and tools can be used to amplify the voices of those that may be unheard in program design.

A common misconception is that evaluations require extensive resources and therefore not appropriate for small projects. However, there are simple evaluation activities that can be integrated into small projects and are important tools to ensure that a small project is using its limited resources for the greatest impact. This toolkit provides tools, approaches, and resources to ensure that evaluation can be integrated into programming without requiring great resources.

This toolkit is a guide for the evaluation of small grants provided by the National Libraries of Medicine (NLM) and/or Network of the National Library of Medicine (NNLM). Small grants are classified as those under $10,000.

The toolkit follows the 5 Steps to an Evaluation which were developed by the NNLM Evaluation Office (NEO) but tailors the steps and approaches to ensure appropriateness for small grants.

[1] Scriven, M. (1991). *Evaluation Thesaurus* (4th Ed). Sage Publications, Inc. Page 1.

Why Evaluate?

Evaluation is considered good practice in designing, implementing, and managing a project because it allows you to continuously improve your project, both during and after its implementation. Incorporating an evaluation into project design and implementation is essential for understanding how well the project achieves its goals.

During a project, monitoring activities allow you to track progress while identifying and addressing issues *during* implementation.

End of project evaluations allow you to judge the success of the project and therefore provides accountability to those that fund projects. Moreso, however, it allows you to reflect on the project, identify successes and challenges to design future programs that effectively meet the needs of your community members and/or project participants.

So, why evaluate?

- Data gathered through evaluation ensures that we are creating the best possible programs
    - Learn from mistakes
    - Identify ways to improve
    - Inform changes/modifications
    - Monitor progress toward goals
- Allows program implementers, staff, and partners to reflect upon the success of a program

This toolkit can be used to help you design, implement, and act upon evaluation activities for your small grant. It provides simple tools and resources to embed evaluative thinking and evidence throughout planning and implementation, not only at the completion of the project.

5 Steps to Evaluation

The NNLM Evaluation Office (NEO) has articulated the 5 steps to evaluation below. Note that there is a rule of thumb within the evaluation community that monitoring and evaluation activities should account for approximately 10% of your budget. While this is just a rule of thumb, it does demonstrate the idea that monitoring and evaluation activities should scale with the size of your programming.

It is with this concept in mind that this toolkit walks through each of NEO's 5 Steps to Evaluation and simplifies the approaches to better fit within the scale of a small grant.

Step 1: Do a Community Assessment (Define Focal Issue to be Addressed)

A community assessment helps you determine the health information needs of the community, the community resources that would support your project, and information to guide you in your choice and design of outreach strategies. For a small grant, the community assessment helps you to define the focal issue to be addressed.

Step 2: Make a Logic Model

A logic model is a planning tool to clarify and graphically display how your activities are logically linked to the impact you hope to make with your project.

Step 3: Develop Indicators for Your Logic Model

Outcomes are results you are pursuing with your project. Measurable outcomes (e.g. library staff will use NNLM resources more often after being trained on these resources) communicate the evidence you will collect to show results and your criteria for determining success.

Step 4: Create an Evaluation Plan

An evaluation plan articulates how you will monitor and evaluate your program against your objectives and outcomes.

Step 5: Collect Data, Analyze, and Act

Carry out your evaluation plan by collecting data, analyzing that data, and most importantly, reflecting upon, learning from, and acting upon that data to ensure continuous improvement.

Step 1: Do a Community Assessment (Define Focal Issue to be Addressed)

A community assessment helps you determine the health information needs of the community, the community resources that would support your project, and information to guide you in your choice and design of outreach strategies.

To carry out a community assessment, large projects will carry out data collection by conducting stakeholder analysis of those who are particularly proactive or involved in the community. This may involve interviews, stakeholder mapping, or the positive deviance approach.

For small grants, however, formally collecting additional information is not necessary. Rather, it is suggested that you and the project team answer the following questions (see associated worksheet in Appendix A) based on your experiences, networks, and conversations that you have had in the community. Take time to reflect upon what you have learned during your time working in this community.

Note that the more people that can be brought into this discussion, the better, as it will ensure a variety of experiences and perspectives are incorporated into the design. However, do so within the resources available. The most important thing is that the project design and implementation team has taken the time to learn about the community, key stakeholders, and their needs.

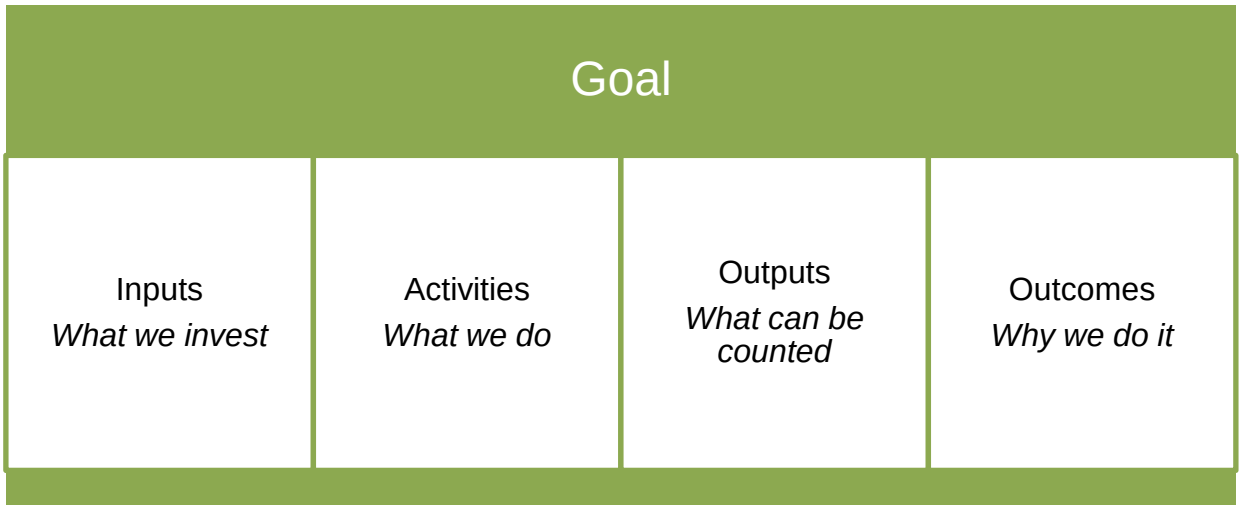
1. Why is this project being proposed?
2. What need is being met?
3. Why do you believe that the community has this need? (Reference secondary data, conversations, findings from previous projects)
4. What strengths does the community have which can be emphasized and utilized during the program? Consider community members' skills, abilities, as well as existing services and resources.
5. Are there specific community members or representatives that we should be bringing into the conversation to make sure their voices and opinions are considered in the design of the project?

Discussing and answering these questions sets an important foundation for the evaluation steps that follow.

Step 2: Make a Logic Model

The second step in designing your evaluation is to make a logic model. The logic model is a helpful tool for planning a program, implementing a program, monitoring the progress of a program, and evaluating the success of a program. Like all aspects of evaluation, logic models can scale with the size of the project or program.

Logic models come in many different formats, but they all present the shared perspective of an "if…then" statement. "If we obtain the necessary resources and conduct certain activities, we will achieve our desired outcomes." A basic logic model template is shown here:



It is possible to create a logic model for your program by answering the following questions, which are questions adapted from the Tearless Logic Model process.[2]

Part 1. Determine the Goal of the Project

First, anticipate the impacts of your project with the 'end in mind'.

What are we ultimately trying to do? What change do we want to see?

Part 2. Determine the Target Population

After establishing the end in mind, the next step is to address the target population of persons served. Ask these questions:

[2] These steps are adapted to fit small grants from the Tearless Logic Model Process: https://www.gjcpp.org/en/tool.php?issue=7&tool=9

Who does the project serve or help?

Who are you ultimately trying to serve?

Use your answers from Step 1 and Step 2 to write a Goal in the Logic Model of Appendix B.

Part 3. Determine the Project Outcome(s)

If the project went really well, what would the outcome be? What changes in knowledge do we expect to see among those we are targeting?

Often the answer to this question lies on the knowledge – attitude – behavior continuum. This continuum accounts for the idea that knowledge positively influences an individual's attitude; and attitude, in turn, influences practice or behavior. Changing attitudes and behavior often takes a long time so for small grants, it is reasonable to expect that the project will result in a change of knowledge.

Enter the outcomes your project is aiming to achieve in the Outcomes box of the Logic Model template in Appendix B.

Part 4. Determine Project Activities

Determine what activities are required to achieve your outcome(s). To determine these activities, ask:

What do we need to do to create the changes we have discussed?

What new or different activities would it take to create change?

What must be undertaken to make this change possible?

Enter the activities your project is planning to carry out in the Activities box of the Logic Model template in Appendix B.

Part 5. Determine the Project Outputs

Most program activities have corresponding outputs or products. After identifying the activities, discuss what the activities will produce by posing the following questions:

What can you count when you successfully do the activities we just talked about?

How many people will we train / reach?

How many attendees do we expect?

For each activity that was input into the Logic Model template, create associated outputs. For example, if a project activity is to hold a training, the output is # of trained people.

Part 6. Determine the Project Inputs

After identifying the activities and outputs, it is important to determine what resources are needed to fund and staff the activities. The following questions will determine the resources the organization already has and what they need:

What do you have and what do you need to make this happen?

What will it cost your program/organization to offer the activities that were discussed (people, materials, facilities, travel expenses,, , etc.)?

Part 7. Create the Logic Model

Once you have identified these major components, examine your logic model and attempt reading it from left to right. It should follow 'if… then' logic, meaning that if the items that happen in one box, then the items in the next box should occur. Make adjustments as necessary to ensure that the boxes within the logic model connect.

Once you have drafted your logic model, revisit the answers to your questions in Appendix A and ensure that the project activities, outputs, and outcomes articulated in the logic model reflect the needs of your target community.

Step 3. Develop Indicators for Your Logic Model

The third step in designing your evaluation is to select measurable indicators for outcomes in your logic model. For a small grant, it is recommended that you articulate indicators for the outputs and outcomes in your logic model. Follow the instructions below to complete the Indicator Table template in Appendix C.

What is an indicator?[3]

An indicator is a marker of accomplishment/progress. It is specific, observable, and measurable accomplishment or change that shows the progress made toward achieving a specific output or outcome in your logic model or work plan.

Specific: provides a clear description of what you want to measure

Observable: focuses on an action or change

Measurable: quantifies change and generally reported in numerical terms, such as counts, percentages, proportions, or ratios.

Common examples of indicators for small grants include:

Inputs

- # of staff days requred for the event
- Cost ($) for travel to event space
- Venue cost ($)

Activities

- # training sessions held
- # health education events organized
- # health information brochures created

Outputs

- # of workshop attendees
- # of health information brochures distributed

Outcomes

- % of workshop attendees that satisfactorily completed an assignment or submitted a session evaluation
- % of attendees that completed all training sessions

[3] https://nnlm.gov/sites/default/files/neo/files/Pathways/Measurable%20Indicators.pdf

Complete the indicator column of the Indicator Table in Appendix C, ensuring that your indicators are specific, observable, and measurable.

Once the indicators are determined, for each indicator enter information on how it will be calculated/defined, a baseline value (if applicable), and the target value. For the target value, set a target that is reasonable within your project scope. Finally, think through the data source for how that indicator will be measured and how often.

Examples of Data Sources are shown in the table below. Note that only some sources will be used, depending on your particular project. For small grant projects, it is recommended to prioritize using existing information as much as possible. Keep in mind that some region will have specific reporting forms. Check with yoru region to see if there are existing evaluation tools to use.

People	Existing Information	Observations
• Participants • Target stakeholders that did not take part / complete the project • Project implementers (e.g., workshop facilitators, help desk staff) • Administrators or agency staff • Volunteers • Experts (for instance, consultants trained to review training materials or websites) • Advisory committees • Key informants (anyone with special knowledge about a project, organization, or community) • Community leaders • Funders	• Project records, such as attendance sheets from workshop sessions • Meeting minutes • Written material kept by people involved in a program, such as journals or notes from a training session • Email or bulletin board discussions • Existing databases, such as demographic information about participants who have received services from an agency • Web traffic reports • Newspaper articles	• Observations of users navigating websites • Videotapes of group discussions or meetings • Products created by participants or stakeholders, such as handouts or items developed by organizational staff to promote consumer health websites • Newsletters • Pictures, such as photos taken of students helping their parents use MedlinePlus

Step 4. Create an Evaluation Plan

The fourth step in designing your evaluation is to create the evaluation plan. An evaluation plan describes how the project will be evaluated. It includes the description of the purpose of the evaluation, evaluation questions, timetable/work plan, as well as a description of the data collection tools to be used, an analysis framework, and a section articulating how data will be used and disseminated. An evaluation plan is often a key component of a grant proposal but will also serve as your guide for implementing the evaluation.

A written evaluation plan can:[4]

- Create a shared understanding of the purpose(s), use, and users of the evaluation results,
- Foster program transparency to stakeholders and decision-makers,
- Increase buy-in and acceptance of methods,
- Connect multiple monitoring and/or evaluation activities,
- Help to identify whether there are sufficient program resources and time to accomplish desired evaluation activities and answer prioritized evaluation questions,
- Facilitate good evaluation practice.

A key component to the evaluation plan is to define your evaluation questions and methods. Evaluation questions and outcome evaluations are two common types of evaluations with different purposes. Consider which makes the most sense for you and the objectives of your evaluation (you do NOT need to do both). Then explore the resources to inform your evaluation plan.

Process evaluation questions address program operations – the who, what, when, and how many related to program inputs, activities, and outputs. Sample process evaluation questions and evaluation methods are presented on the following page.

[4] Adapted from https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/cdc-evaluation-workbook-508.pdf

Process Questions	Information to collect	Methods
To what extent were you able to implement your project as planned?	How well did the librarians and center staff follow procedures in the plan? What factors increased or decreased the quality of delivery?	Focused staff feedback sessions Observations of activities
To what extent were you able to conduct specific activities as they were planned?	How many training sessions were offered?	Counts of training sessions for older adults and family members Checklists for staff to report what resources they demonstrated or taught
How much community interest and activity did your project generate?	How many older adults and family members attended the training sessions? How many older adults requested assistance?	Attendance counts for training sessions Feedback forms from participants asking them to evaluate their experience Activity staff assistance counts
To what extent did you reach your intended community?	What proportion of older adults participated?	Percentage of senior daycare participants
How effective were your recruitment strategies for attracting community members?	What strategies worked well to attract older adults and family members and what barriers impacted recruitment? What strategies helped you maintain participant involvement as needed and what barriers did you face?	Written feedback forms asking users what attracted them to activities Counts of participants who completed all activities (e.g., all sessions of a multi-day training) Feedback sessions with project staff Interviews with participants
What situational factors in the environment, community, or organizations affected project implementation?	What influenced librarians' and center staff members' ability to implement the project? What influenced older adults' reactions to the program or their ability to participate?	Focus groups with senior center staff Focus groups with older adults Interviews with librarians

Outcome evaluation questions address the changes or impact seen as a result of program implementation.

Outcome Questions	Information to collect	Methods
Did adults learn from the health information sessions?	· Number of individuals that can report at least one thing they learned from the information session	· Interview of participants · Knowledge pre-post test
Did adults share what they learned from the sessions with their family/community members?	· Whether participants shared the information	· Survey following the training (1-2 weeks after)

An Evaluation Plan template is available in Appendix D. Note that you will use the work completed in Appendices A-C to complete the Evaluation Plan.

Step 5. Collect Data, Analyze, and Act

The fifth step in designing your evaluation is to implement the evaluation - Collect data, Analyze, and Act! This is the time to reflect upon what you have learned, gather insights, and inform programming improvements. As part of an evaluation, you should:

1. Collect data as outlined in your evaluation plan
2. Complete analysis after the completion of data collection
3. Act upon your analysis by sharing evaluation results with stakeholders, and if needed, adapt future iterations of your program to address gaps identified through the evaluation.

Collect Data

Be sure to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of all participants during data collection. No participant should ever feel forced to reveal information to the evaluator that the participant does not wish to reveal. Furthermore, personal information about the participants that are revealed to the evaluator should not be directly linked to the individual in the dataset or results shared in a way that identifies the participants.

You will also need to consider a sample strategy for your evaluation. In general, the more people that are participating in an evaluation, the more accurate the results.

Analyze

Carry out data analysis using appropriate quantitative or qualitative approaches.

Quantitative measures	Description
Frequencies	Describes how many times something has occurred within a given interval, such as a particular category or period of time. **For example, the number of training events that occurred.**
Percentage	The given number of units divided by the total number of units and multiplied by 100. Percentages are a good way to compare two different groups or time periods. **For example, if 50 of 100 training participants are library staff, 50% of training participants are library staff.**
Ratio	The numerical relationship between two groups. **For example, the ratio of the number of LGBTQIA+ participants at an event (25) to the number of total participants (300) would be 25/300, or 1:12.**
Mean, Median, Mode	Three measures of the most typical values in your dataset (also called measures of central tendency). A mean, or average, is determined by summing all the values and dividing by the total number of units in the sample. A median is the 50th percentile point, with half of the values above the median and half of the values below the median. A mode is the category or value that occurs most frequently within a dataset. **For example, if a list of post-test scores is 65%, 70%, 85%, 90%, 90%, the mean is 80% (400/5), the median is 85%, and the mode is 90%.**

Act

Make sure to share results with stakeholders.

- Sharing information gathered in your evaluation with stakeholders will ensure that they understand your program successes and challenges
- Use creative data communication strategies and techniques to effectively present results and engage stakeholders in discussions

Appendix A. Community Assessment

With a small team of program stakeholders, discuss the following questions. Use your experience in the community to answer these questions. Be sure to ask questions to one another, ensuring that a variety of perspectives are represented.

1. Why is this project being proposed?

2. What need is being met?

3. Why do you believe that the community has this need? (Reference secondary data, conversations, findings from previous projects)

4. What strengths does the community have which can be emphasized and utilized during the program? Consider community members' skills, abilities, as well as existing services and resources.

5. Are there specific community members or representatives that we should be bringing into the conversation to make sure their voices and opinions are considered in the design of the project?

Appendix B. Logic Model

Goal:			
Inputs:	**Activities:**	**Outputs:**	**Outcomes:**

Appendix C. Indicator Table

Transfer your outcome and output statements from your logic model into the table below. Then follow the instructions in Step 3 to write indicators for your goal and your outcome and output statements. Note that you may have more than one indicator per outcome/output statement.

	LOGIC MODEL STATEMENT	**INDICATOR**	**DEFINITION** How is it calculated?	**BASELINE** What is the current value?	**TARGET** What is the target value?	**DATA SOURCE** How will it be measured?	**FREQUENCY** How often will it be measured?
Goal							
Outcome 1							
Outcome 2							
Outcome 3							
Output 1							
Output 2							
Output 3							

Appendix D. Evaluation Plan

Grant proposals often request an evaluation plan. This is a template that can be used to develop an evaluation plan for your grant proposal. Evaluation plans do not have to follow this format, but it can be used if helpful.

Background/Introduction

Provide a brief summary of the initiative that is being evaluated. Include information about the timeline, activities, target population, and goals of the initiative. In this section, describe your logic model (Appendix B) in narrative form.

Evaluation Questions

Use this space to articulate your evaluation questions. As described in Step 4, these evaluation questions should be developed considering the goals and outcomes articulated in your Logic Model.

Methods

Insert the Indicator Table developed in Appendix C. Also include information on the tools, as well as roles and responsibilities for carrying out data collection.

Use, dissemination, and sharing plan

Describe how the results will be shared with program staff, participants, and the donor. This can be done by identifying the audience(s) for your evaluation findings, their want/need, and the best way to engage each audience or stakeholder group. Consider a combination of stakeholder groups that could benefit from knowing about the evaluation findings. Communication products may include the full narrative report, summary reports (1 or 2 pages), presentations/slide decks, or facilitated discussions. Consider developing a dissemination plan as follows:

Audience	Information Needs	Engagement Strategy