



Behavioral & Social Science Volunteer (BSSV) Program
Translating HIV prevention into culturally relevant practice

For assistance with program evaluation, contact the American Psychological Association (APA) BSSV Program:
Email: bssv@apa.org | Phone: (202) 218-3993

Why Evaluate?

The Role and Importance of Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Program evaluation is essential to a well-performing public health program, yet has often been misunderstood. As a valuable tool for community-based organizations who want to strengthen the quality of existing programs, program evaluation can lead to improved outcomes for the populations served. The type of evaluation you undertake depends on what you want to learn and provide to communities. Start your program evaluation by identifying what you need to know to make necessary program decisions and how you can accurately collect and understand that information.

Common Myths about Program Evaluation

Myth #1: Evaluation is a time-consuming activity that generates lots of boring, useless data.

Fact: More recent evaluations have focused on utility, relevance and practicality at least as much as scientific validity. Focus on data that is meaningful and begin developing your evaluation plan simultaneously with your program plan. Remember that your evaluation plan can be modified as necessary as you move forward with implementation.

Myth #2: Evaluation is a one-time event done only to prove the success or failure of a program.

Fact: It is important to remember that program success is contingent on continuous feedback. Rather than proving that a program was good or bad, program evaluation verifies that the program is running as originally planned, identifies strengths and weaknesses, and allows for continuing feedback in order to adjust the program accordingly.

Myth #3: Evaluation is an overly complicated process that must be done by an outside expert because it will be a burden to program staff.

Fact: The truth is, most people regularly undertake some kind of program evaluation. There is no absolute way to conduct a program evaluation. You do not have to be an evaluation expert, just be willing to commit to understanding what is really going on. Staff will ultimately benefit from an evaluation because it validates their efforts and provides information on how to improve their work and better serve their community.

Top 5 Reasons (Benefits) to Conduct Program Evaluation

1. Showcase the impact and effectiveness of the services offered by your organization in your community
2. Cut costs for your organization and streamline services by showing what works and what does not work
3. Promote staff development by improving skills and performance quality with clients
4. Strengthen and increase your program's capacity to contribute evidence-based knowledge to the field
5. Provide evidence of service use, effectiveness, and demand in order to justify the need for further funding and support.



Resources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2011). *Introduction to Program Evaluation for Public Health Programs: A Self-Study Guide*. Atlanta, GA.
- Child Trends. (2007). Why conduct a program evaluation. *Research to Results*, 31.
- National Minority AIDS Council. (2004). *Program Evaluation*. Washington, D.C.