

Basic Steps in Conducting an Evaluation

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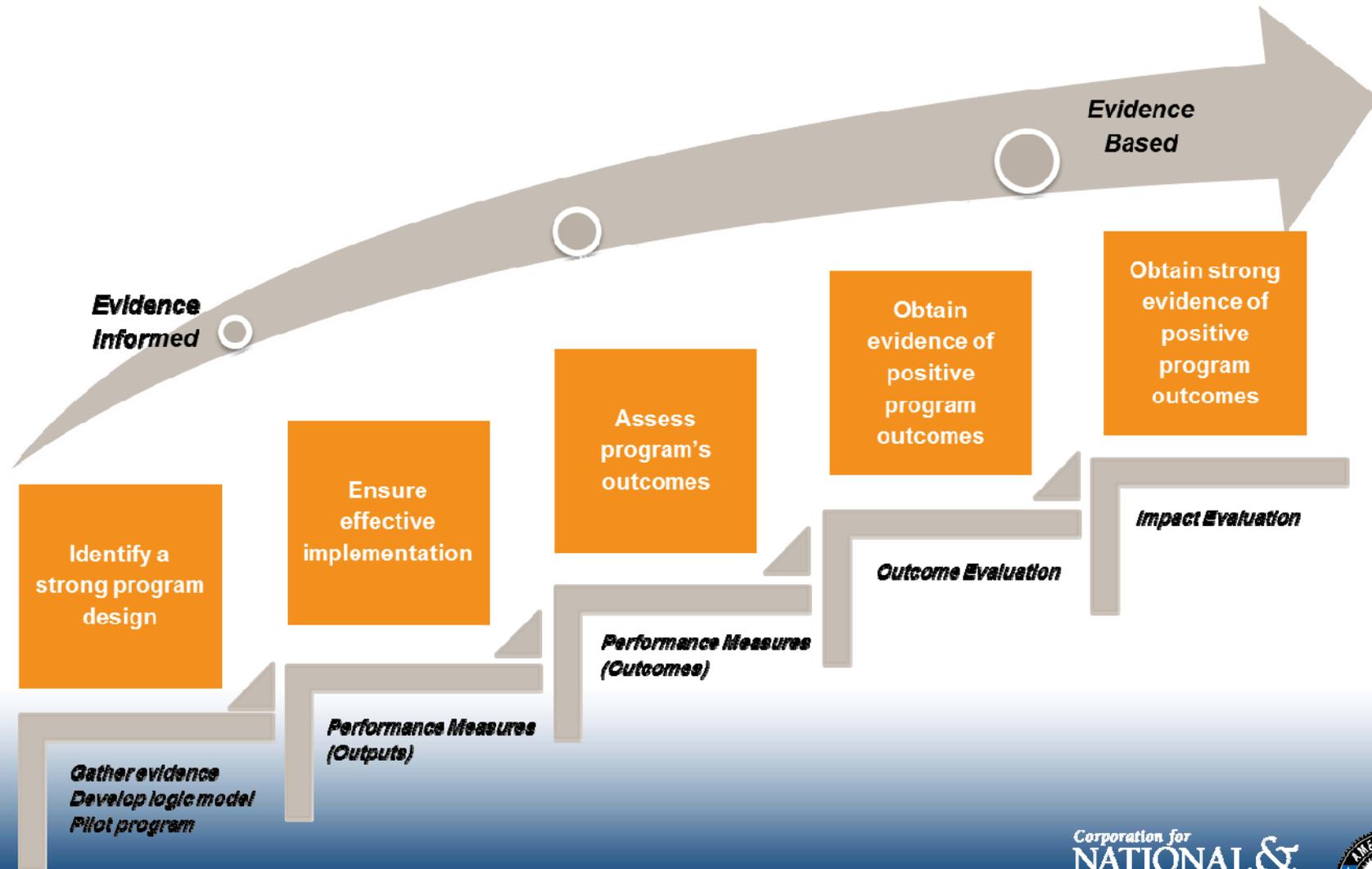
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Learning objectives

By the end of this presentation, you will be able to:

- Describe the basic phases and steps for conducting an evaluation
 - Plan for an evaluation, etc.
- Identify the key components of an evaluation plan
 - Identify evaluation approaches for collecting and analyzing data
- Understand how to communicate and apply findings for program improvement

Building evidence of effectiveness



Evaluation cycle – Four phases

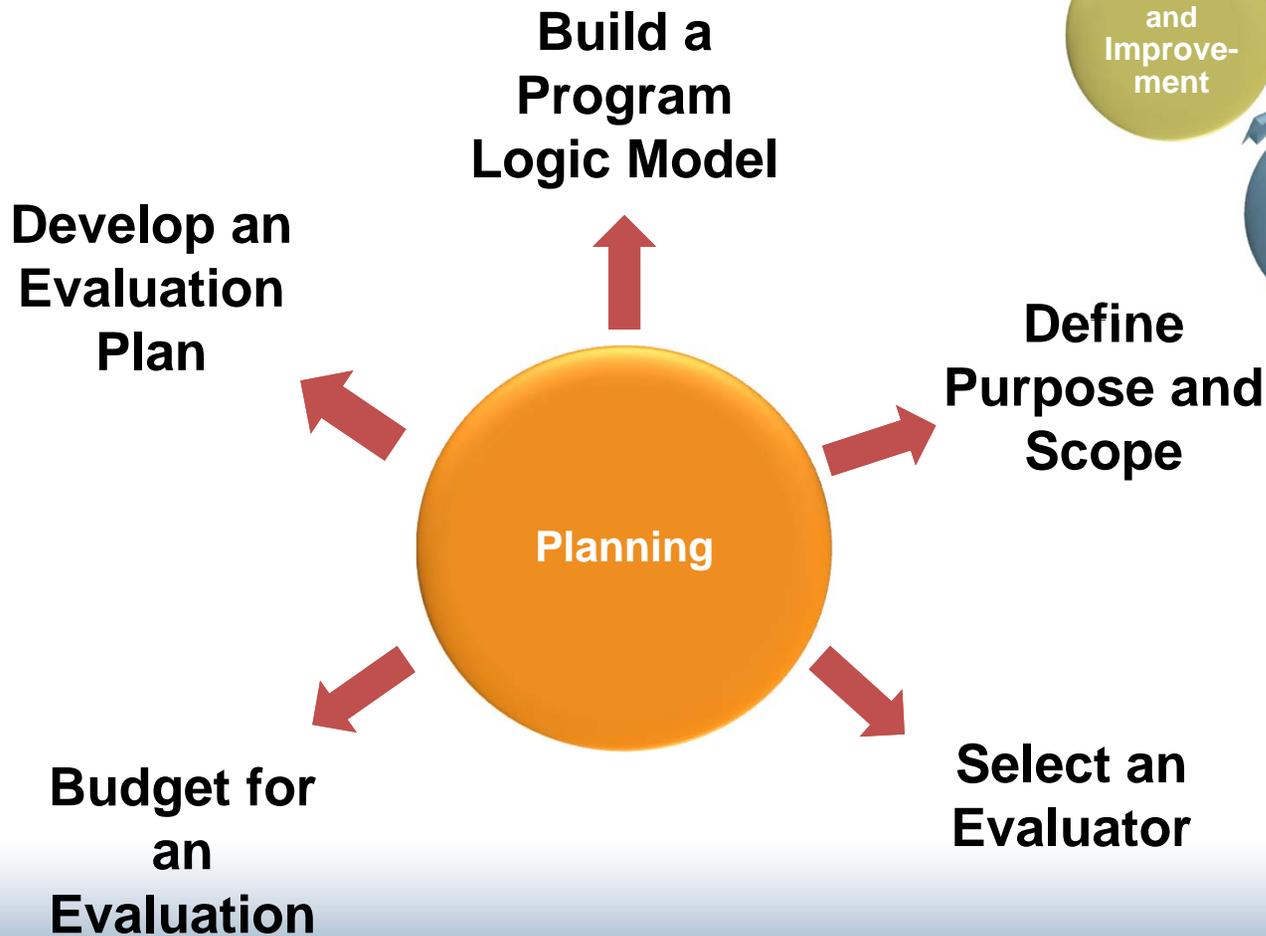


Basic steps for conducting an evaluation

Phase	Step
Planning	<p>Step 1: Build (or Review) a Program Logic Model</p> <p>Step 2: Define Purpose and Scope</p> <p>Step 3: Budget for an Evaluation</p> <p>Step 4: Select an Evaluator</p> <p>Step 5: Develop an Evaluation Plan</p>
Implementation	<p>Step 6: Collect Data</p> <p>Step 7: Manage the Evaluation</p>
Analysis and Reporting	<p>Step 8: Analyze Data</p> <p>Step 9: Communicate Findings</p>
Action and Improvement	<p>Step 10: Apply Findings and Feedback for Program Improvement</p>



Phase I: Planning



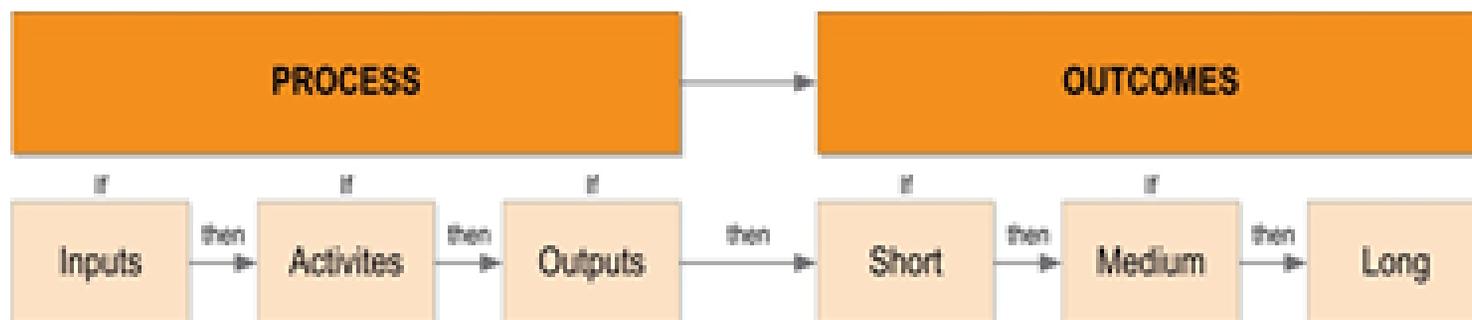
Step 1: Build a program logic model

- A logic model can serve as a framework for your written evaluation plan.
- It can help you focus your evaluation by identifying:
 - Questions want/need answered
 - Aspects of program to evaluate
 - Type of evaluation design
 - Information to collect
 - Measures and data collection methods
 - Evaluation timeframe

For more information on logic models, CNCS grantees can refer to the module, “How to Develop a Program Logic Model” located on the Knowledge Network.

How to read a logic model

- Logic models read from left to right
- There are two “sides” to a logic model - a process side and an outcomes side.



Hypothetical AmeriCorps Veterans Program

Process

Outcomes

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	Outcomes		
			Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
What we invest	What we do	Direct products from program activities	Changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, opinions	Changes in behavior or action that result from participants' new knowledge	Meaningful changes, often in their condition or status in life
Funding Staff 100 AmeriCorps State and National members 50 non-AmeriCorps volunteers Research	Conduct job readiness workshops Provide job search assistance Provide peer counseling services Provide referrals to transitioning services Educate potential employers	# individuals participating in workshops # individuals receiving job search assistance # individuals receiving counseling services # families receiving referrals # employers receiving education	Increased confidence in gaining employment Increase in job readiness skills Increased knowledge of effective job search strategies Increased knowledge of community services Increased employer knowledge of hiring benefits	Increase in job placement Increased capacity of families to manage transition from military to civilian work and family life Increased adoption of military-friendly practices by employers	Individuals maintain stable employment Increased family well-being Employers routinely hire veterans and military spouses

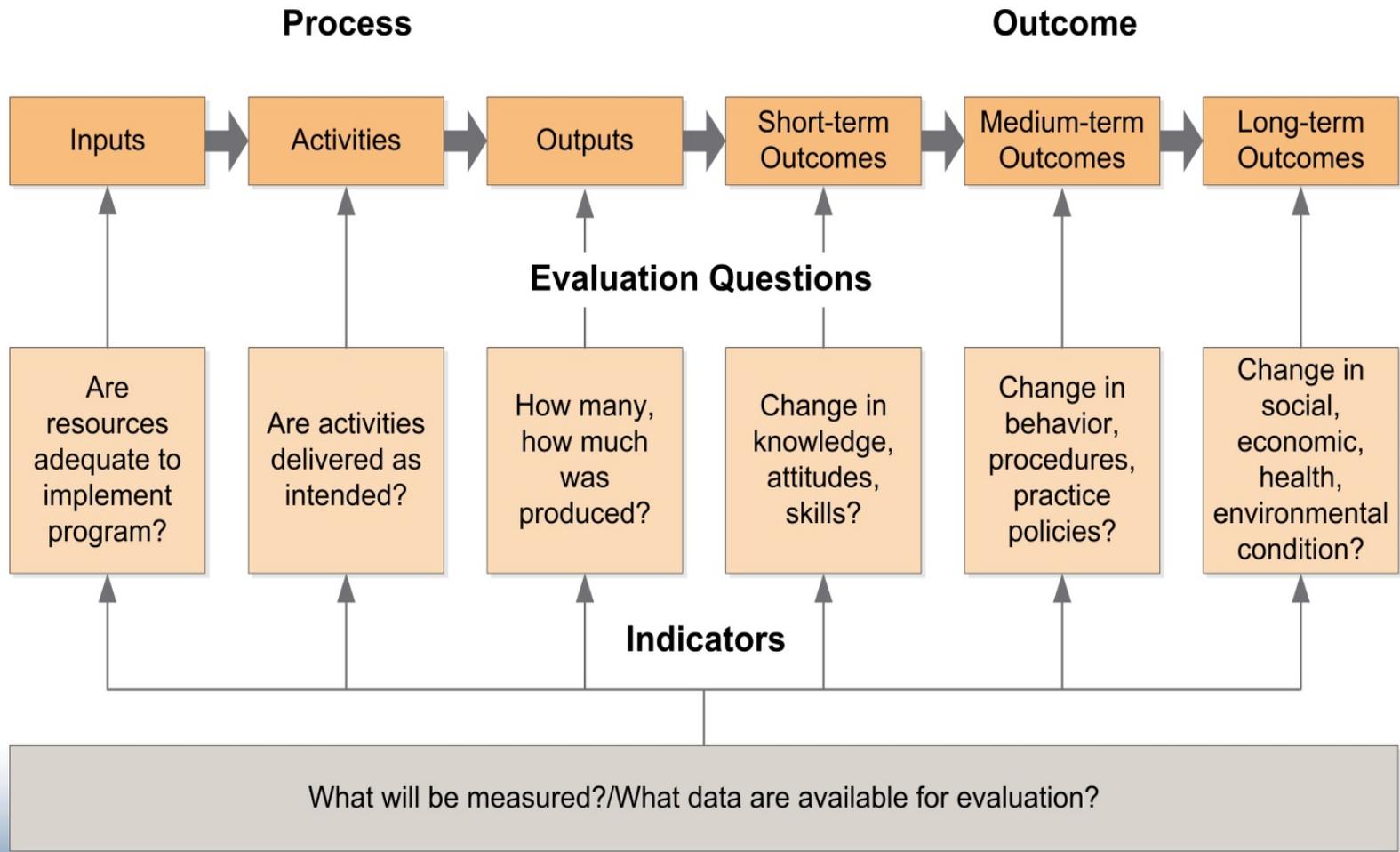


Step 2: Define purpose and scope

Each evaluation should have a *primary* purpose around which it can be designed and planned.

- Why is the evaluation being done? What do you want to learn?
- How will the results be used? By whom?
- Additional things to consider:
 - Specific program requirements
 - Resources available to carry out the evaluation

Step 2: Define purpose and scope



Step 3: Budget for an evaluation

Common cost categories:

- Study Design
 - type of study design
 - the size of the study
 - the level of expertise and experience of the evaluator
 - data collection expenses
- Staff time
- Materials, equipment, and supplies
- Travel
- Data collection

Step 3: Budget for an evaluation

Consider these questions:

- Who will conduct it?
 - If *external evaluator*, consider what services are and are not included in the cost
 - If *own staff*, consider cost of time spent on evaluation relative to programmatic tasks
- What will it include and how will it be conducted?
- Will it involve new data collection?
 - If so, at what time points and where?
- Who will manage it?

Step 4: Select an evaluator

An evaluator is an individual or team of people responsible for leading the evaluation.

- Potential options for an evaluator include:
 - An external source (e.g., consulting firm, college or university personnel, independent consultant)
 - An internal source - program staff member(s)

Step 4: Select an evaluator

A key decision is whether to use an internal staff member or to rely on an external evaluator.

- Factors to consider when making this decision:
 - Purpose of the evaluation
 - Staff workload and expertise
 - Program resources (e.g., financial, necessary computer software, etc.)
 - Specific program requirements (e.g., AmeriCorps grantees \geq \$500,000 are required to conduct an independent evaluation)
 - May consider a hybrid approach

Step 4: Select an evaluator

How do you find an external evaluator?

- Academic settings
 - Contact individuals at your local college or university
- Professional settings
 - American Evaluation Association (AEA) website, click on “Find an Evaluator” tab (www.eval.org)
- Ask others in your network

Step 4: Select an evaluator

Consider whether your potential evaluator has:

- Formal training in evaluation studies
- Experience evaluating similar programs/interventions
- Experience that matches the design, methods, and/or approach of your planned evaluation
- Capacity to handle the scale of your planned evaluation
- Personal style that fits your program staff or organization
- Evaluator's *independence*:
 - No conflicts of interest related to the evaluation
 - Able to provide an unbiased assessment of the program's outcomes/impacts

Step 5: Develop an evaluation plan

An evaluation plan is a written document that describes how you will evaluate your program:

- Explains the program model being evaluated
- Provides detailed instructions for the evaluation
- Describes and justifies the evaluation approach selected

Step 5: Develop an evaluation plan

Why develop an evaluation plan?

- Clarifies what direction the evaluation should take based on priorities, resources, time, and skills
- Creates shared understanding of the purpose and use of evaluation results
- Fosters program transparency to stakeholders and decision makers
- Helps identify whether there are sufficient program resources to carry out the evaluation
- Facilitates smoother transition when there is staff turnover

Step 5: Develop an evaluation plan

What should your evaluation plan include?

I. Introduction

II. Program background

III. Research questions

IV. Evaluation design

V. Sampling methods, measurement tools, and data collection procedures

VI. Analysis plan

VII. Reporting results approach

VIII. Timeline, budget, and evaluator qualifications

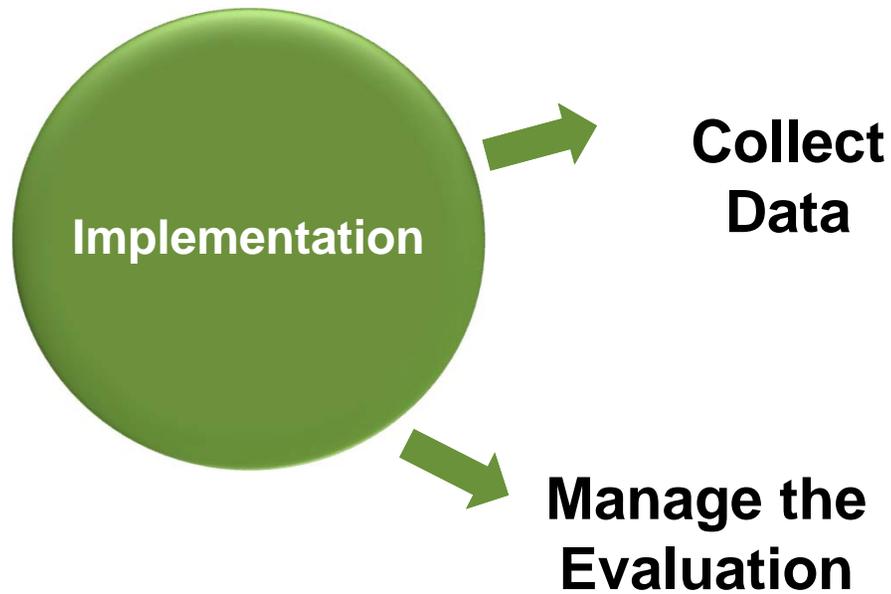
See the *Frequently Asked Questions: Evaluation* document on the Knowledge Network for more details.



See handout



Phase II: Implementation



Step 6: Collect data



Where to find data?

- Existing
- New
- or both

What type of data?

- Quantitative
- Qualitative
- or both



Data collection

What type of data meets your evaluation needs?

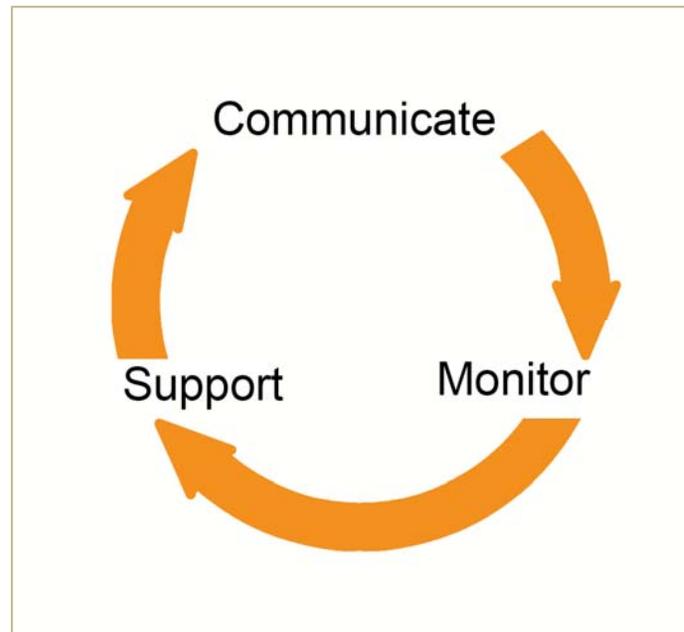
- Existing data (i.e., secondary data)
 - Internal program data (e.g., participant records, program logs, performance measurement data)
 - External datasets / administrative data (e.g., student records, test scores, medical records, test scores, Census data, unemployment insurance claims)
- New data (i.e., primary data)
 - Data from surveys, assessments, interviews, and observations

Data collection

- **Quantitative data**
 - Numerical information that can be counted, quantified, and mathematically analyzed (e.g., test scores, ratings)
 - Quantitative data are systematically collected, recorded, and analyzed
- **Qualitative data**
 - Narrative information that describes the study subject(s) and context (e.g., transcripts of interviews and focus groups, field notes from observation of certain activities)
 - Qualitative data are systematically collected, recorded, and analyzed
 - Individual anecdotes and testimonials are not qualitative data unless systematically collected, recorded, and analyzed

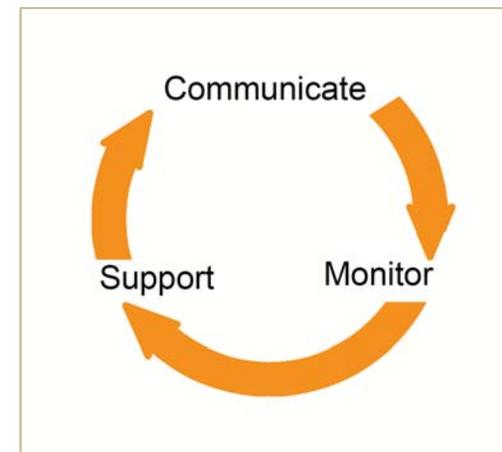
Step 7: Manage the evaluation

- Communicate
- Monitor
- Support



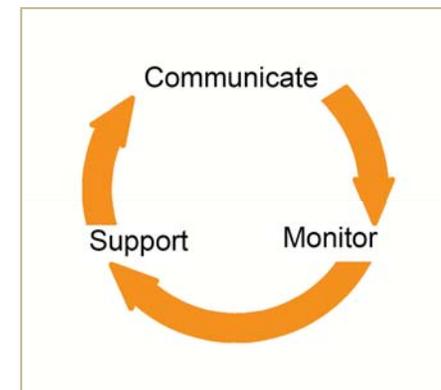
Step 7: Manage the evaluation

- Communication: Maintain communication throughout the project
 - Project kick-off meeting
 - Regular, ongoing meetings to keep the evaluation moving in a timely and efficient manner
 - Ad hoc meetings to discuss specific topics



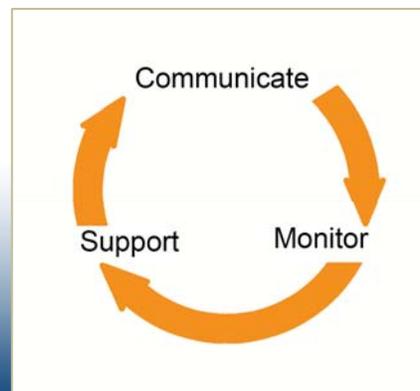
Step 7: Manage the evaluation

- Monitor: Continually monitor progress on the evaluation and the evaluator's work:
 - Review and provide feedback on deliverables (e.g., evaluation plan, design, instruments, reports)
 - Enforce the schedule for completing tasks and make adjustments as needed
 - Assess the evaluator's skills and performance throughout the evaluation
 - Keep up with invoicing/payments



Step 7: Manage the evaluation

- Provide support and feedback as needed
 - Offer advice and guidance to help troubleshoot issues, as needed
 - Ensure the evaluator has access to the information required
 - Provide continuous input and feedback on the evaluator's work



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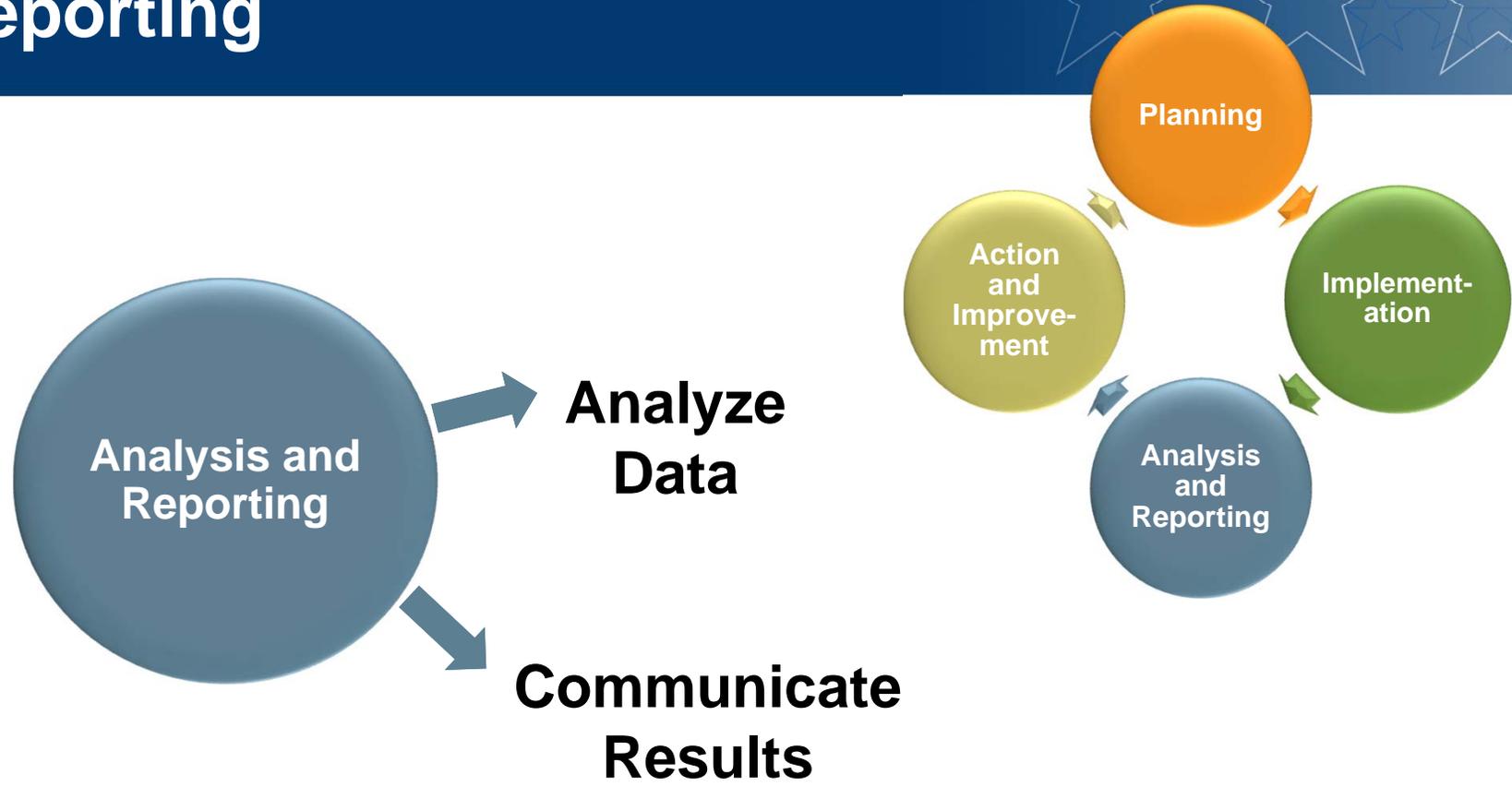




See handout



Phase III: Analysis and reporting



Step 8: Analyze data

- Quantitative data analysis
 - Statistical analysis (mean, median, chi-square, t-test, ANOVA, regression, etc.)
- Qualitative data analysis
 - Content analysis (cross-site analysis, theme identification, case study descriptions)

Step 8: Analyze data

Consider two questions:

- What conclusions about the research questions can be drawn from the data that have been analyzed?
- What does the data suggest about the program's theory of change?

Step 8: Example data collection and analysis crosswalk

Process or Impact Evaluation of Your Program					
Research question	Indicators or Outcome of interest	What is collected and how?	From whom / data sources?	When collected and by whom?	How will you analyze the data?



Step 8: Example data collection and analysis crosswalk

Process Evaluation of a Job Readiness Program for Veterans

Research question	Indicators	What is collected and how?	From whom / data sources?	When collected and by whom?	How will you analyze the data?
Is the job readiness program being implemented as designed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Member use of program curriculum during workshops b) Duration of workshops c) Participant workshop rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a - c) Members report details about workshops in logs with pre-defined categories of reporting a - b) observations of workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a - c) Members a - b) Evaluator observes participants in workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a - c) External evaluator collects the workshop logs quarterly a) Quarterly observations by the evaluator(s) using structured observation protocols 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a - c) Generate frequencies on use of curriculum; average duration of workshops; and average rate of workshop attendance c) Generate frequencies and averages on quantitative data (e.g., ratings scales, frequency scales) and thematically code and analyze open-ended comments/notes



Step 8: Example data collection and analysis crosswalk

Impact Evaluation of a Job Readiness Program for Veterans

Research question	Outcome of interest	What is collected and how?	From whom / data sources?	When collected and by whom?	How will you analyze the data?
What impact does the job readiness intervention have on veterans' ability to secure and maintain employment relative to a comparison group?	Veterans' employment status	Veterans' employment status is measured with a survey			



Step 8: Example data collection and analysis crosswalk

Impact Evaluation of a Job Readiness Program for Veterans

Research question	Outcome of interest	What is collected and how?	From whom / data sources?	When collected and by whom?	How will you analyze the data?
What impact does the job readiness intervention have on veterans' ability to secure and maintain employment relative to a comparison group?	Veterans' employment status	Veterans' employment status is measured with a survey	<p>Veterans participating in the program serves as the intervention group</p> <p>Veterans receiving no job assistance services serve as the comparison group</p>	<p>The evaluator administers the survey at two time points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - before the job readiness program begins - 1 year after the job readiness program is implemented 	Calculate the difference in average outcome in the intervention group minus the difference in average outcome in the comparison group before and after treatment (difference in differences method)



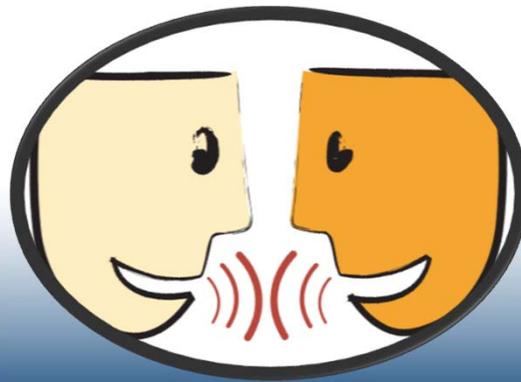
Step 9: Communicate findings

Who are the potential target audiences?

- Program staff, agency personnel, stakeholders, beneficiaries, funders, etc.

What are potential tools for communicating findings?

- Formal report, shorter memos, PowerPoint briefings, etc.



Step 9: Communicate findings

What is an evaluation report?

- Key product resulting from evaluation
- A written document that objectively describes:
 - Program background
 - Evaluation purpose, methods, procedures, and limitations
 - Evaluation results
 - Conclusions and recommendations
 - Lessons learned
 - Questions for future research

Step 9: Communicate findings

When reporting findings, it is important to:

- Report positive, as well as negative findings
- Present results that are not necessarily conclusive, but show promise and warrant further examination
- Be careful not to overstate your findings

Step 9: Communicate findings

Other useful products for communication:

- Executive summary of final report (5-10 pages)
- Short research briefs (2-4 pages)
 - Graphics and pictures
 - Bulleted information
- Non-technical memos

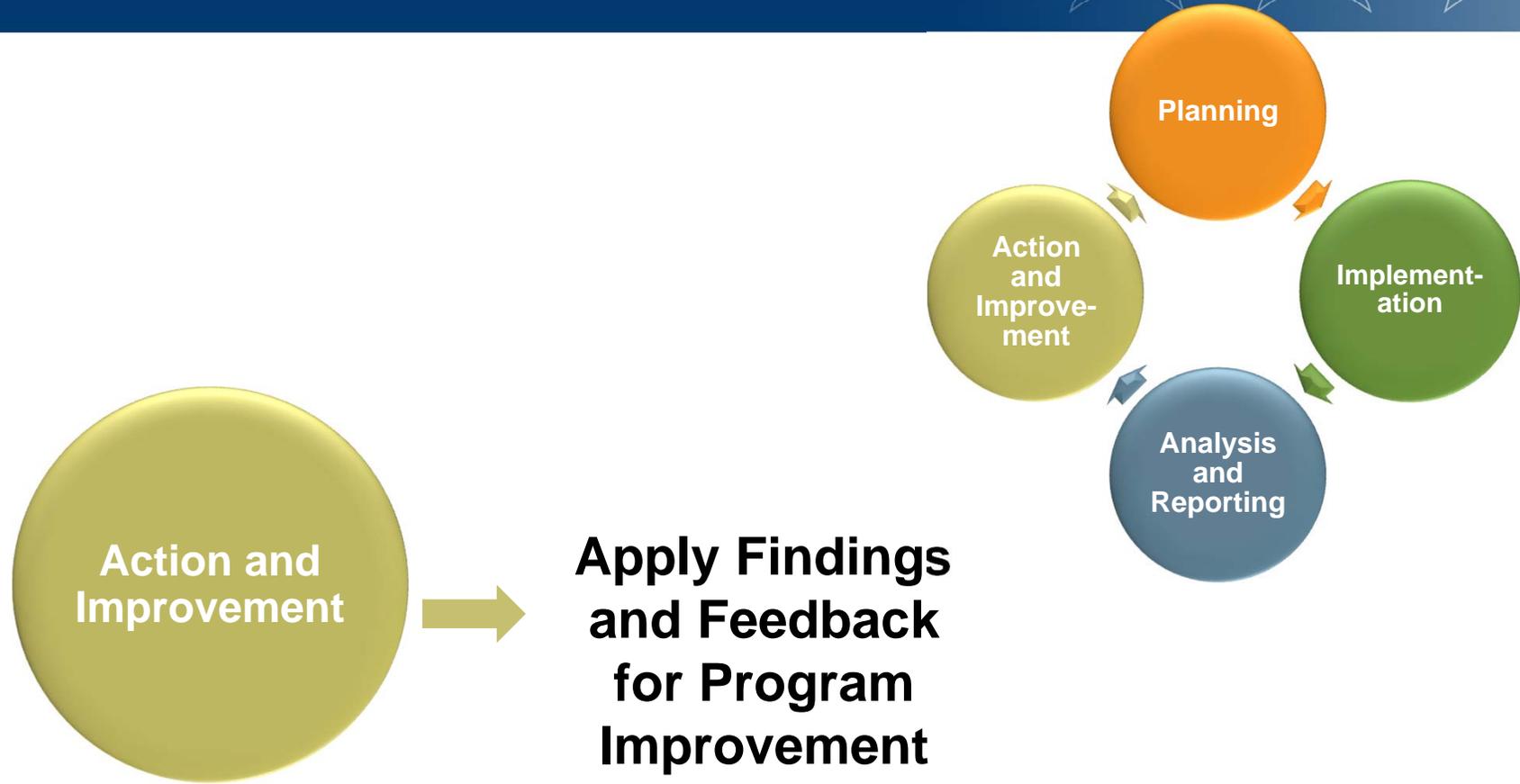




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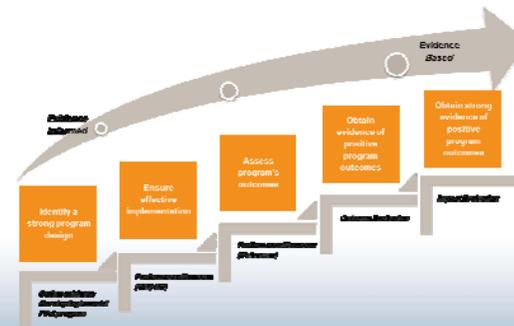
Phase IV: Action and improvement steps



Step 10: Apply findings and feedback for program improvement

Evaluation findings can support these decisions and actions:

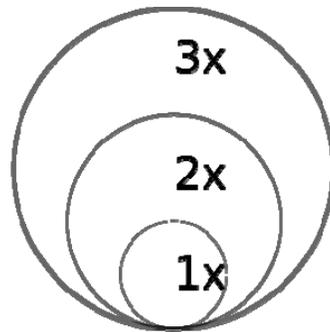
- Program improvement or assessing fit
- Building the evidence base
 - Implementation to impact



Step 10: Apply findings and feedback for program improvement

Evaluation findings can support these decisions and actions:

- Scaling



- Implementing change



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Resources on evaluation

Go to the National Service Knowledge Network evaluation page for more information:

www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation

Other courses available:

- How to Develop a Program Logic Model
- Overview of Evaluation Designs
- How to Write an Evaluation Plan
- Budgeting for Evaluation
- Data Collection for Evaluation
- Managing an External Evaluation
- *And more!*



Thank you!

Any questions?