



Action Steps



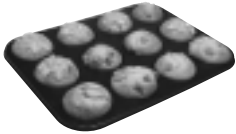
Step 1 – Make room at the table.

- Identify potential partners and designate a leader.



Step 2 – Shop around.

- Assess and identify current policies and/or environments related to the project.



Step 3 – Serve up a plan.

- Identify clear goals and create an evaluation plan with measurable outcomes.



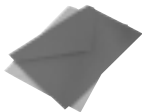
Step 4 – Make provisions.

- Outline key activities, locate resources (\$) and create a timeline.



Step 5 – Get cooking!

- Implement your plan.



Step 6 – R.S.V.P.

- Evaluate and monitor results.



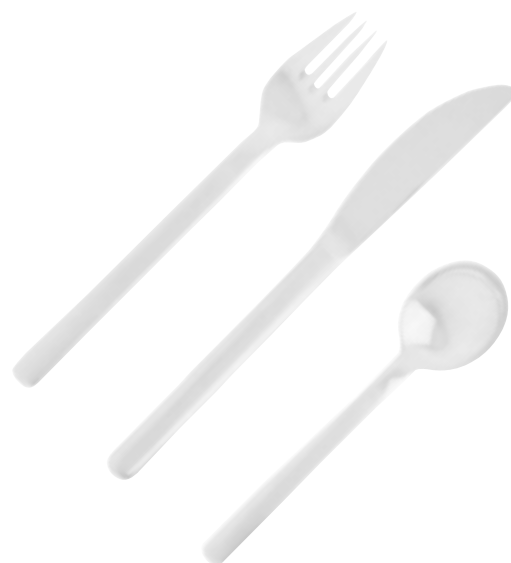
Step 1 — Make room at the table.

Identify potential partners and designate a leader.

These are the questions to ask:

- Who is leading this project?
- Check for existing groups/committees with an interest in this project.
- Who are the supporters? How can they help you?
- Who is opposed to this project? How can you get them interested?
- How can you create a win/win situation for everyone in the community?
- Who are the decision-makers? How can you get them to support the change?
- Is there anyone else you should consider?

Use the sign-up sheet on the next page to develop a list of contacts for the project.





Identify interested partners to work on the project.

Sign-Up Sheet

NAME ORGANIZATION PHONE #

ADDRESS E-MAIL Interested? Yes No

Notes: _____

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Step 2 — Shop around.

Assess and identify current policies and/or environments related to the project.

THIS IS THE MOST CRITICAL STEP. IT WILL DETERMINE THE COURSE OF ACTION FOR THE REST OF YOUR PROJECT.

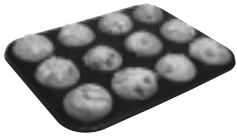
- What changes need to be made in the current environment? Are policies currently in place? Are they monitored and/or enforced? Is it clear what the areas of greatest need are or is a survey or focus group needed?
- Set an assessment timeline for completion of the following steps and assign key people to each task:
 - Seek out the top decision-makers regarding policy and/or environmental changes.
 - Meet with the decision-makers to identify current policies.
 - Scan the current environment to identify potential areas for change.
 - Conduct a focus group including people who will be affected by the changes.

Use assessment timeline form on the next page.



Assessment Timeline Form

Steps and Tasks	Who's Responsible	Deliverables	Jan 0_	Feb 0_	Mar 0_	Apr 0_	May 0_	Jun 0_	Jul 0_	Aug 0_	Sep 0_	Oct 0_	Nov 0_	Dec 0_	Jan 0_
1. Find out who the top-level decision-makers are regarding policy and/or environmental changes.															
a.															
b.															
c.															
2. Meet with the decision-makers to identify potential areas where changes could be made.															
a.															
b.															
c.															
3. Scan the current environment to identify potential areas where changes could be made.															
a.															
b.															
c.															
4. Conduct a focus group discussion including people who will be affected by the change.															
a.															
b.															
c.															



Step 3 — Serve up a plan.

Identify clear goals and create an evaluation plan with measurable outcomes.

Once the area of need is clearly identified, the next step is to establish outcomes and a plan to evaluate them. An outcome is the desired end result, what you eventually want to accomplish with the project.

Use the following questions and the evaluation model to guide you in establishing and measuring outcomes:

- Is there an existing policy that needs modification or enforcement?
- Does a new policy need to be made?
- Is there a need for an environmental change or modification?
- How can you let everyone know why this is so important?
- Do you need to create and conduct a survey to find out who would support your desired outcome?
- How will you evaluate the final outcomes of your project?

**Use the evaluation
model on the
next page.**





Evaluation Model

Introduction

Evaluation is a process of using collected information to understand the effectiveness of an activity, project or program. Project evaluation helps answer questions about how your activities are working. It can help you make informed decisions, clarify options and provide information about projects and policies.

Evaluation findings help you to demonstrate that your efforts are making a difference in many ways. Evaluation can help projects do the following:

- Promote your project to potential participants
- Provide direction for people working on the project
- Identify partners for collaboration
- Guide budget planning
- Retain and increase funding
- Enhance your project's public image
- Recruit talented staff and coworkers
- Support long-range planning

Outcome Measurement

Outcome evaluation helps determine whether your project has met the stated goals or outcomes derived from an action plan. Outcome evaluation, or more specifically, **outcome measurement**, provides a clear method for tracking what happens in your project.

Outcomes are the benefits or changes experienced by individuals or groups during or after participating in project activities. Exhibit 1 provides examples of program outcomes and the programs from which they developed.

Measuring Program Outcomes can be viewed as a step-by-step approach whereby a system is developed for measuring outcomes and using the results. Most outcome measurement plans require that you:

- Choose the outcomes you want to measure
- Specify the indicators that fit your outcomes
- Prepare to collect data on your indicators
- Analyze and report your findings



Evaluation Model (continued)

Choosing Outcomes to Measure

Your project may feature a succession of **initial outcomes**, then progress to a set of **intermediate outcomes**, finally arriving at the ultimate, **long-term outcome(s)**.

For example, a project's desired **long-term outcome** may be the *reduction of smoking-related illness* in an elderly population. In order to reach this outcome, the population may first need to *attend a class* in smoking cessation to *build the knowledge and skills that informs them of the hazards of smoking* (**initial outcome**). Armed with new knowledge and skills, the population may actually be able to *quit smoking* (**intermediate outcome**). Finally, as a result of smoking cessation, the population may indeed *reduce the occurrence of smoking-related illnesses* (**long-term outcome**).

Specifying Indicators that Match Outcomes

An **indicator** is that observable, measurable characteristic or change that will tell you whether an outcome has been achieved. If you take a look at the indicators represented in the examples in Exhibit 2, you will notice that almost all the indicators are expressed in *number or percent* of participants achieving an outcome.

Data Collection Methods

Once an indicator, or a series of indicators, has been chosen, the next step is the design of a data collection method.

Questionnaires are widely used and may provide a good fit for your indicators. Please see **Helpful Hints for Building Good Questionnaires on page 19**, which includes tips for writing workable survey questions.

Interviews with key participants in your program provide rich sources of data. Formal interview formats, or pre-designed questions that identify the topic areas associated with your set of indicators help to guide this method.

Focus groups are pre-designed interviews conducted with small groups around a specific topic. They are relatively easy to arrange and can be an efficient way of gathering specific responses from a small, usually select, targeted, group. It can be helpful to use a professional to conduct these groups.

Archival forms of data already exist and may be useful. The Federal Bureau of Census (www.census.gov), the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (www.cdc.gov/brfss) and the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/index.htm) all provide a wealth of applicable data. Law enforcement, health departments, foundations, universities, media, all at state and local levels, are sources of valuable data. The University of Maine Cooperative Extension system provides both information and, in some instances, tips on the evaluation process.

When to Implement your Data Collection Method

Because outcome measurement emphasizes viewing the *results* of your project activities, it makes sense to present questionnaires or other data collection methods at the end of your program. However, if you



Evaluation Model (continued)

are trying to gauge the success of a particular activity with a particular group or population by administering a simple test, it will be helpful to “test” participants both *before* and *after* program activities or interventions. This method is commonly referred to as the *Pre- and Post-Test* method.

Analyze and Report Your Findings

A straightforward data analysis process is presented here in a step-by-step fashion. If a more complex analysis seems appropriate, help often exists within state government or university communities.

Task 1: Enter Data and Check for Errors

Once questionnaire or other source data have been collected, the information can be transferred to a computer or handwritten spread sheet.

Task 2: Tabulate Data

Most outcome indicators are expressed as the number or percent of a given measurement. To calculate basic data:

- Count the total number of participants for whom you have data.
- Count the number achieving the chosen outcomes (e.g., number who have demonstrated knowledge presented in your program; number who have demonstrated behavioral change, etc.).
- Calculate the percentage of participants achieving each outcome status.
- Calculate other needed statistics, such as averages or medians.

Task 3: Analyze and Compare the Data by Key Characteristics

Comparing program indicator data “broken out” by gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or age may demonstrate that your project activities have been more successful for some types of participants than for others.

Data for participants at different program sites or locations may add perspective and meaning to your data interpretation.

Task 4: Present Data in Clear and Understandable Form

As you prepare reports for various audiences, remember that presenting data in tables and charts will make your data more understandable for many readers. Narrative discussion and description, especially the results of more open-ended interview or focus group results, can balance the presentation of numerical data, or provide more context for understanding your data’s significance. It may also be informative to review the goals you set for your project in narrative form so that your findings can be compared to those original initiatives. You may choose to make recommendations for a continuing project or suggest changes in project direction based upon your outcome findings.



Exhibit 1: Examples of Diverse Programs and Possible Outcomes

(Adapted from "Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach," United Way of America, 1996)

These are illustrative examples only. Programs should identify their own outcomes, matched to and based on their own experiences and missions and input of their staff, volunteers, participants and others.

Program	Possible Outcomes
Comprehensive child care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children exhibit age-appropriate physical, mental and verbal skills. • Children are school-ready for kindergarten.
Outpatient treatment for adolescent substance abusers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adolescents increase knowledge about the effects of substance abuse and about substance abuse addiction. • Adolescents change their attitude towards substance abuse. • Graduates remain free of substance abuse for six months after program completion.
Emergency shelter beds on winter nights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless persons agree to come off the street and use the shelter. • Those sheltered do not suffer from frostbite or die from exposure to cold.
Homework guidance by volunteer tutors to children enrolled in after-school program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youths' attitudes towards schoolwork improves. • Youths complete homework assignments. • Youths perform at or above grade level.
Full-day therapeutic child care for homeless preschoolers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children get respite from family stress. • Children engage in age-appropriate play. • Children exhibit fewer symptoms of stress-related regression. • Parents receive respite from child care.
Overnight camping for 8–12-year-old inner-city boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boys learn outdoor survival skills. • Boys develop enhanced sense of competence. • Boys develop and maintain positive peer relationships.
Congregate meals for senior citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants have social interaction with peers. • Participants are not homebound. • Participants eat nutritious and varied diet. • Seniors experience decrease in social and health problems.



Exhibit 2: Example Outcomes and Outcome Indicators for Various Programs

(Adapted from “Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach,” United Way of America, 1996)

These are illustrative examples only. Programs should identify their own outcomes, matched to and based on their own experiences and missions and input of their staff, volunteers, participants and others.

Type of Program	Outcome	Indicator(s)
Smoking cessation class	Participants stop smoking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and percent of participants who report that they have quit smoking by the end of the course. • Number and percent of participants who have not relapsed six months after program completion.
Information and referral program	Callers access services to which they are referred or about which they are given information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and percent of community agencies that report an increase in new participants who came to their agency as a result of a call to the information and referral hotline. • Number and percent of community agencies that indicate these referrals are appropriate.
Tutorial program for 6th grade students	Students’ academic performance improves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and percent of participants who earn better grades in the grading period following completion of the program than in the grading period immediately preceding enrollment in the program.
English-as-a-second-language instruction	Participants become proficient in English.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and percent of participants who demonstrate increase in ability to read, write, and speak English by the end of the course.
Counseling for parents identified as at risk for child abuse or neglect	Risk factors decrease. No confirmed incidents of child abuse or neglect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and percent of participating families for whom Child Protective Service records report no confirmed child abuse or neglect during 12 months following program completion.



Helpful Hints for Building Good Questionnaires

(Adapted from "The Art of Asking Questions," Support Center for Nonprofit Management, 1995; and "Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach," United Way of America, 1996)

Hints on sound wording

1. Ask questions the person is qualified to answer.
 - Poor: Do students at your school feel pressure to smoke?
 - Better: Do you feel pressure to smoke?
2. Keep each question short. Use simple sentences.
3. Use basic vocabulary.
4. Begin the questionnaire by catching respondents' interest. For example, start with objective, interesting, easy questions. Let respondents know how the survey results will be used. Consider providing respondents with the survey results or other benefit.
5. Be concrete.
 - Poor: Do you think it was a good movie?
 - Better: Do you think the movie reflected good values?
6. Avoid words or phrases that may have double meanings. Watch out for this especially if the writer differs in background from the respondents.
7. Try not to ask leading questions.
 - Poor: Since starting this program, have you had any dreams about cigars?
 - Better: What objects have you seen in your dreams since starting this program?
8. Ask only one question at a time.
 - Poor: Do you plan to get married and have children?
 - Poor: Should this organization focus on teaching abstinence and providing mentors to curb teen pregnancies?
 - Poor: When you discipline your child, do you state the rule clearly and explain the consequences of breaking the rule?
9. Watch out for hidden biases.
 - Poor: Do you think racial conflict will continue to increase?
 - Better: In your opinion, in the next two years, how do you think the relationships between races will change?
 - a) for the better
 - b) for the worse
 - c) stay about the same
 - d) I don't have an opinion



Helpful Hints for Building Good Questionnaires *(continued)*

10. Don't ask questions that are too complicated.

Poor: Please rank the following 40 movies in the order you enjoyed them, with "1" being the movie you enjoyed the most and "40" being the one you enjoyed the least.

11. Be specific about time frames.

Poor: Have you smoked a cigarette recently?

Better: Have you smoked a cigarette in the last week?

12. Read questions aloud as a way to spot wording problems.

13. Translate the questionnaire into other languages if a significant proportion of the target audience is not likely to speak English.

14. Be aware of cultural issues that may affect how people respond (for example, reluctance to offend the interviewer, cultural focus on the collective instead of the individual, reluctance to answer more personal questions until after trust is established).

15. If the questionnaire is administered by interviewers, be sure the interviewer is appropriate for the respondents.

Poor: Having an African-American interviewer ask white subjects about racial tension.

Poor: Having a county social worker ask social workers about their feelings toward social workers.

16. Don't ask questions that are too personal if you can avoid it.

Poor: What was your annual income last year?

17. Be sure there is an appropriate response option for every possible respondent.

Poor: What is your race/ethnicity?

White/European Asian
 African American Puerto Rican

Poor: What is the religion of the people you date?

I only date people from my faith
 I date people from other faiths

18. If the response options are numeric, be sure that the ranges do not overlap.

Poor: How old are you?

Less than 18 years old 18 to 30 years old
 30 to 50 years old Over 50 years old



Helpful Hints for Building Good Questionnaires (continued)

- Resist the urge to include questions just because you are curious what the answers will be. This may lengthen the survey so much that respondents will be less likely to complete it.

Poor: Asking respondent income when you have no reason to think income affects the answers respondents will give.

- If you use a series of rating questions, avoid “response set” (that is, the same response option consistently associated with the “right” answer).

Poor:

Case managers should assess the needs of the client. SA A N D SD

Case managers should be readily available to the client. SA A N D SD

Case managers should know about other services in the community. SA A N D SD

Hints on format/style

- Group related questions together, starting with least personal and most obviously relevant.
- Be sure instructions are short and explicit.
- Minimize skip patterns (for example, “If you answered no to this question, please go to question 17”).
- Avoid having the questionnaire copied on both sides of the paper.
- Make the questionnaire easy to read (for example, plenty of white space, a clean typeface).
- If the survey is on colored paper, be sure that it is a shade that copies well.
- Leave enough space on written surveys so that the answers are clearly readable.
- If you use scales or checklists, make them all run in the same direction.

Poor: I like answering survey forms. ___Yes ___No

I like working in my garden. ___Yes ___No

- Make parallel statements.

Poor: I like answering survey forms. ___Yes ___No

I don't like chocolate. ___Yes ___No

Remember to pre-test the questionnaire!



Step 4 — Make provisions.

Outline key activities, locate resources (\$) and create a timeline.

At this point, it is essential to plan activities and assign tasks with a specific timeline for completion.

CREATING POLICY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES CAN BE A SLOW PROCESS, SO PLAN ACCORDINGLY.

Sample Activities:

- Develop an evaluation plan.
- Schedule regular meetings with partners. Document meeting activity.
- Identify and recruit various audiences for presentations.
- Schedule and give advocacy presentations.
- Identify potential resources including funding and manpower.
- Create short- and long-term timelines for the entire project.

Use the planning worksheet provided to document names and dates assigned to key activities.





Planning Worksheet

Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

Partners Present: _____

Project Name: _____ Next Meeting: _____

Use this worksheet to help you with your planning process.

Activities	Who is assigned activity?	Due Date
1) _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
2) _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____



Activities	Who is assigned activity?	Due Date
3) _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____
4) _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____
5) _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____

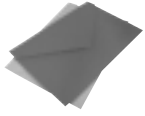


Step 5 — Get cooking!

Implement your plan.

- Use the Planning Worksheet on the previous page to continually guide the work of the group. (Make copies as needed.)
- Make partners accountable for completing key activities and reporting progress.
- Include a progress report from each partner at all regular meetings.
- Modify your plan as needed according to how work proceeds.
- Highlight, celebrate and share successes along the way.
- Share ongoing accomplishments with decision-makers, supporters, interested partners and those affected by changes.





Step 6 — R.S.V.P.

Evaluate and monitor results.

Use the following questions to guide you in evaluating and monitoring the project:

- Has a change occurred in the social or economic environment?
- Has a change occurred in the physical environment?
- Has a policy been developed?
- Has a shift occurred in healthy behaviors because of your work?
- Are policies followed?
- What is not working? Why? Other options?
- Did you reach your outcome(s)?
- What lessons have you learned along the way?
- How have you informed key audiences of progress and changes?
- How have you promoted the project?
- How have you celebrated your success?

**Check back to the
evaluation plan
you've created for
outcome results.**

