

# Program Evaluation

## What is program evaluation?

**Program evaluation involves collecting, analyzing, and communicating information about the effectiveness of a program, intervention, or initiative.** Program evaluation can help victim service providers and community partners learn from their experiences to understand what practices are working, which aspects need changing, and why. In these ways, evaluation can help improve the response to crime survivors. Evaluation can be used to assess all aspects of a program – design, planning, implementation, effectiveness – and should be incorporated throughout the program’s evolution.

## What are the different types of program evaluation?

There are multiple [types of program evaluation](#), but the most common include evaluability assessment, process evaluation, and outcome evaluation. Cost-benefit analyses are also often used to provide financial information about a program to guide decision-making. Each type of evaluation has its own advantages to help programs meet objectives and improve. The type of evaluation selected should be based on the program’s developmental stage and what information stakeholders want to learn (see figure and next page).

### PROGRAM EVALUATION

#### Evaluability Assessment

Develop Program Model

Assess Operational Reach

Build Research Capacity



#### Process Evaluation

Identify Program Inputs

Monitor Program Activities

Track Program Outputs



#### Outcome Evaluation

Determine Research Design

Evaluate Quantitative Outcomes

Evaluate Qualitative Outcomes



#### Cost-Benefit Analysis

Measure Program Costs

Measure Program Benefits

Compare Costs &amp; Benefits

1. **Evaluability Assessments** can help newer programs prepare for evaluation and determine the extent to which evaluation will be useful and feasible. Evaluability assessments can clarify a program's goals, resources, and activities; determine who the program reaches; assess or build research capacity; and pinpoint areas for improvement before an evaluation takes place.
2. **Process Evaluations** track the progress or implementation of a program, documenting the program model and measuring milestones along the way. The information about a program's implementation successes and challenges can help providers fix issues efficiently and increase transparency.
3. **Outcome Evaluations** track program successes by measuring the achievement of core program goals. This type of evaluation shows the degree to which a program or service is having an impact on the target population and whether or not it is being effective in meeting its objectives.
4. **Cost-Benefit Analyses** quantify the benefits achieved by a program or service and compare them with the costs incurred to achieve those benefits. This information can inform decisions about program improvements, expansion, and funding moving forward.

## How do I plan a program evaluation?

- **Determine what stage** the victim program or service is operating at, whether design and development, early or advanced implementation, or preparing for replication.
- **Identify key stakeholders** and [build an evaluation team](#). Good evaluations are best achieved by a collaborative team with a range of skills. Stakeholders can include victim researchers, program staff, funders, community members, state agencies, and survivors. Whether directly involved in the evaluation or not, stakeholder buy-in may be needed and they may be interested in learning or sharing findings.
- **Establish measurable goals and objectives for the evaluation.** Goals and objectives should be specific, realistic, and measurable without being too narrow.
- **Identify what questions should or could be answered.** Research questions stem from the goals and objectives, and should be tailored to decisions you want to make about the program. As a result, they will help determine the evaluation design. Questions should be specific and answerable.
- **Develop an evaluation design** matched to the research questions. The information gathered can be quantitative, qualitative, or both ("mixed methods"), each of which offers valuable insight into a program. The design will be informed by what potential data sources are available (e.g., program data from observation or documentation, staff/participant interviews or focus groups, surveys).
- **Draft and disseminate an evaluation plan** to relevant stakeholders. The evaluation plan documents the evaluation goals and methods, and how the results will be used. A good plan will help provide focus, organization, and accountability; ensure the best use of resources; and secure stakeholder buy-in.

## Additional Resources

For more on [program evaluation](#) and a [library](#) of research materials, visit CVR online.

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