

Outcome Evaluation

What is an outcome evaluation?

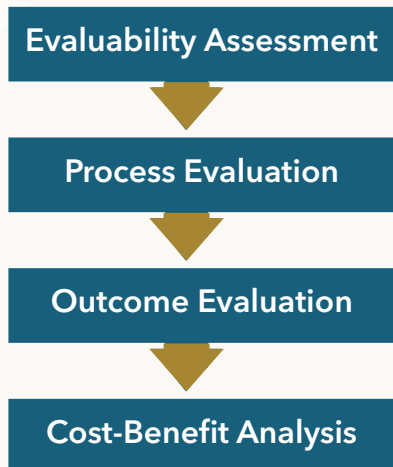
Outcome evaluations¹ track a program's successes by measuring progress toward core program goals. For example, if an agency wants to know whether its vicarious trauma training is actually improving service providers' emotional well-being, it could conduct an outcome evaluation.

Outcome evaluations are useful because they show the degree to which a program is having the intended effects on the target population of clients or providers. While a [process evaluation](#) focuses on *how* a victim service program is operating, an outcome evaluation examines *what* effect the program is having on clients or staff. Completing an outcome evaluation also builds a foundation for a subsequent [cost-benefit analysis](#).

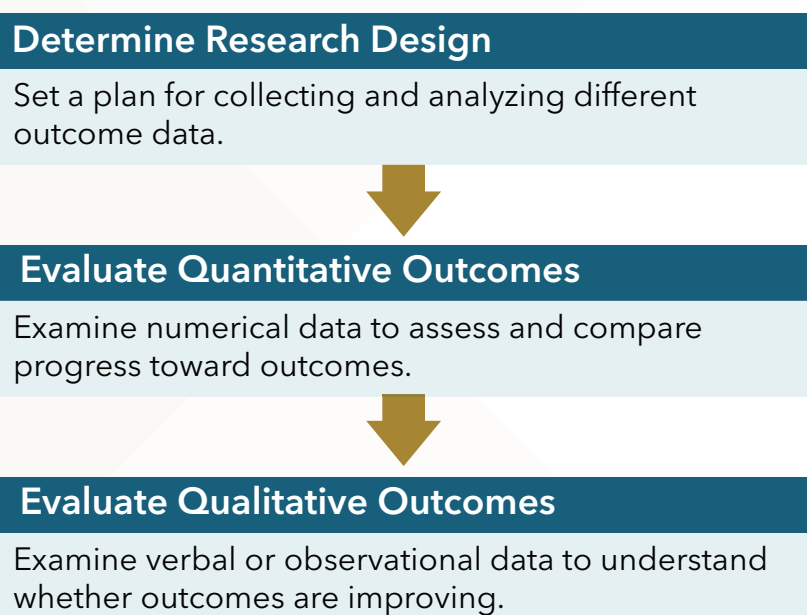
What steps are involved in an outcome evaluation?

The components of an outcome evaluation vary depending on the service program and its context, but common steps include the following (see figure and next page). *Note that outcome evaluations can look at quantitative outcomes, qualitative outcomes, or both.*

PROGRAM EVALUATION



OUTCOME EVALUATION



¹Outcome evaluations are similar to, but distinct from, impact evaluations, though the terms are often used interchangeably. For more information on evaluation types, see this [CDC resource](#).

1. **Determine research design** and assemble a plan that describes when and from whom measurements will be gathered, and how they will be compared to understand the program's successes. For example, a research plan should clearly outline how alternative explanations for a program's successes or failures can be minimized, so that the true effects of a program are detectable. A good plan should outline key procedures and methods to be followed in conducting the evaluation.
2. **Evaluate quantitative outcomes**—which include *numerical* data such as counts, rates, and percentages. For example, quantitative outcomes might include the percentage of clients who obtain housing or employment following program participation, or victims' improvements in scores on a resiliency scale. These data can be collected using surveys, client-data management systems, or other record-keeping.
3. **Evaluate qualitative outcomes**—which focus on *verbal* descriptions of clients' successes or *narrative* observations about experiences after program participation. Analyzing qualitative perspectives can yield detail-rich information on the context surrounding clients' progress toward program outcomes. These data are frequently collected during one-on-one interviews, focus groups, or observational case studies.

How do I conduct an outcome evaluation?

The following activities commonly support an outcome evaluation:

- **Assess program operations and develop a plan**, working collaboratively with providers to identify what outcomes will be examined (those expected to be affected by the program) and how. Make sure this research plan is consistent with the program's logic model, i.e. its conceptual framework of intended goals and objectives, inputs and activities, and expected outcomes.
- **Identify what comparisons will be made to detect a program's effects.** To help rule out alternative explanations for outcomes you observe among a program's clients, establish a comparison/control group or counterfactual. Counterfactuals show what happened over time (or would have happened) to clients who did not receive the program.
- **Design data collection instruments**, such as survey and interview questions, which may be adopted from previous [victim research instruments](#). Once you draft these data collection tools, it is helpful to have them reviewed by other victim research experts, service providers and practitioners, and victims impacted by the program to ensure you use appropriate language and ask the right questions.
- **Collect and analyze data** using the methods you identified in your research plan, which might include conducting surveys or interviews and/or analyzing administrative data collected by the victim services program. Data analysis often includes comparisons across time or between groups who received and did not receive the service or program.
- **Summarize and present your findings**, highlighting the key results most important to your stakeholders. Make sure to capture both program successes and any areas for improvement. Solicit questions and feedback from stakeholders to ensure your findings are useful and clear to understand.

Additional Resources

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

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