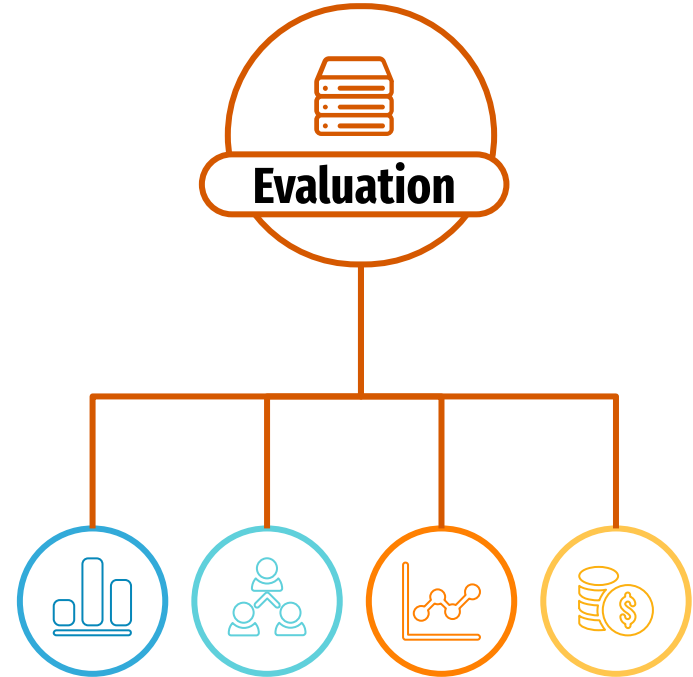


Conducting Evaluations to Build Evidence

Millie Benitez (she, her)
Erin Bunger Johnson (she, her)



After today's session, you will know...



How performance measurement and evaluation are distinct



AmeriCorps expectations of evaluating programs to generate evidence



The steps to take to plan and conduct an evaluation



Examples of how to apply the evaluation process to real world AmeriCorps programs

What is evidence for AmeriCorps programs?

“The available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid” --OMB Circular No. A-11 Section 200 page 13

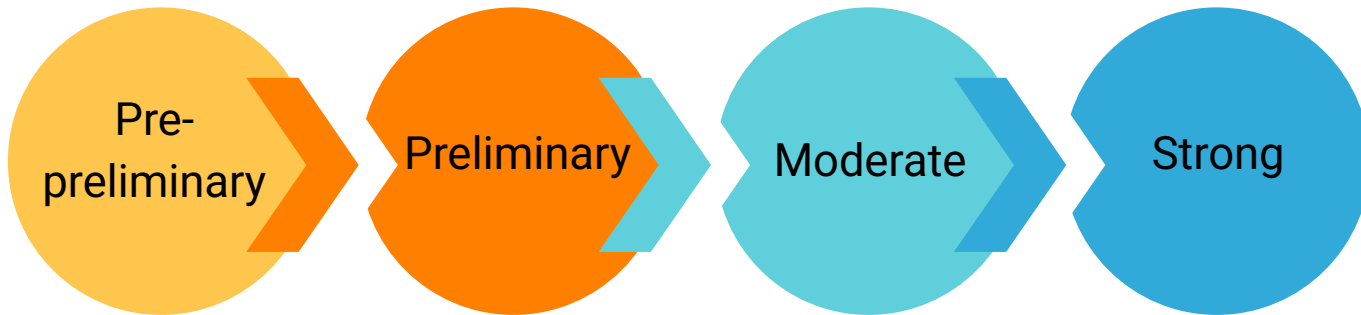
Information or facts that justify that your program is doing what you said it would and that is having the desired outcome (like proposed in the logic model)



Why does evidence building matter?

Funders want to invest in programs that have demonstrated the desired outcomes

The stronger evidence you have (moving from Pre-preliminary to preliminary, moderate, or strong), **the more justification** a program has of its effectiveness (i.e., it works)



Performance measurement and evaluation are distinct approaches taken at different times on the pathway to building evidence of program effectiveness.

Performance measurement versus evaluation

Performance Measurement

Evaluation

What it is

Measures services provided by the program and the effect of your program on beneficiaries

Applies research methods to assess program effectiveness; may compare program outcomes with what would happen without the program

What it indicates

Indicates program operation and performance

Can indicate how change happens, causation

What the purpose is

Program improvement

Program efficacy

What you learn

Documents the what and how much

Documents why, for whom, and how

AmeriCorps Minimum Reporting Requirements



First Cycle (Years 1-3)

Year 1: Report on performance measure outputs

Years 2 and 3: Report on performance measure outputs and intermediate outcomes

Year 3: Submit a summary of your evaluation efforts or plan to date, and a copy of any evaluation that has been completed with your application

Second Cycle (Years 4-6)

Years 4-6: Report on performance measure outputs and outcomes; implement evaluation efforts

Year 6: Submit report from completed evaluation with application for funding

Third Cycle and Beyond (Years 7+)

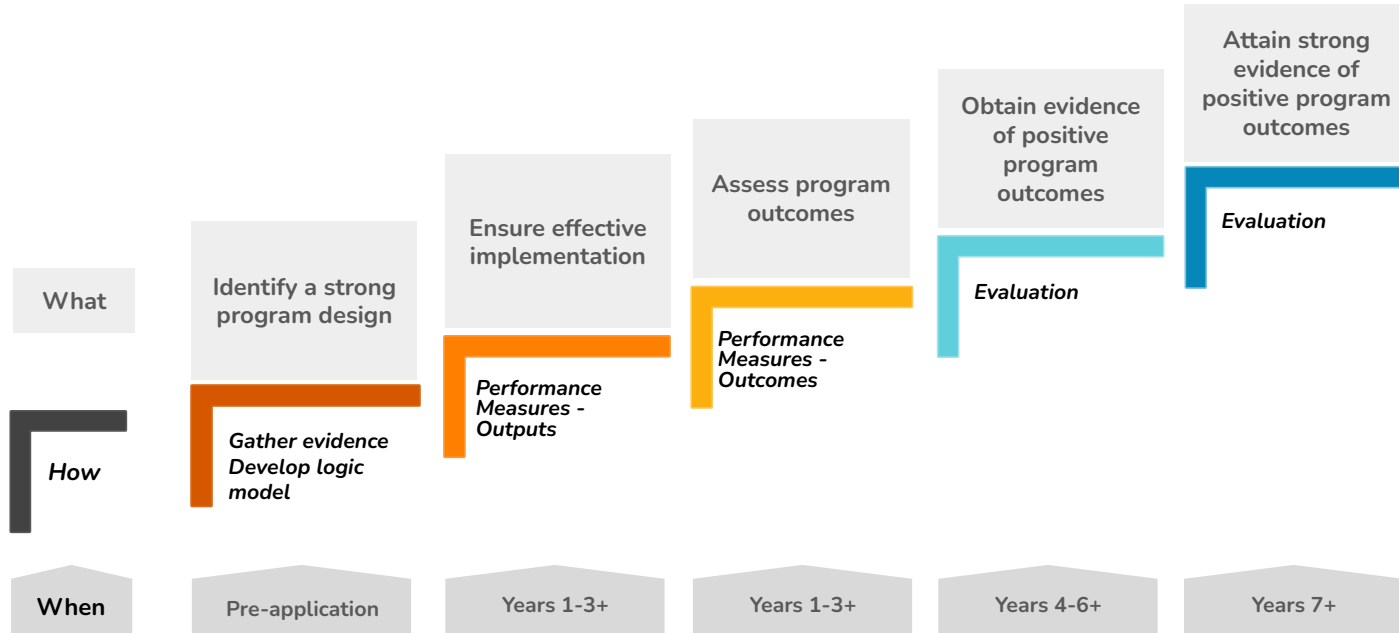
Continue reporting on outputs and outcomes

Use more rigorous evaluation methods to continue to evaluate the program

45 CFR 2522 Subpart E, updated 7/14/25

Grantees are encouraged to exceed these minimum requirements!

AmeriCorps measurement timeline

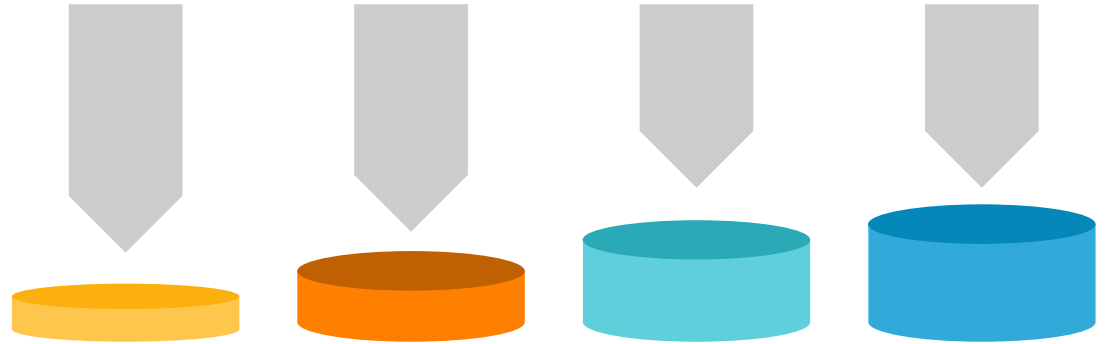


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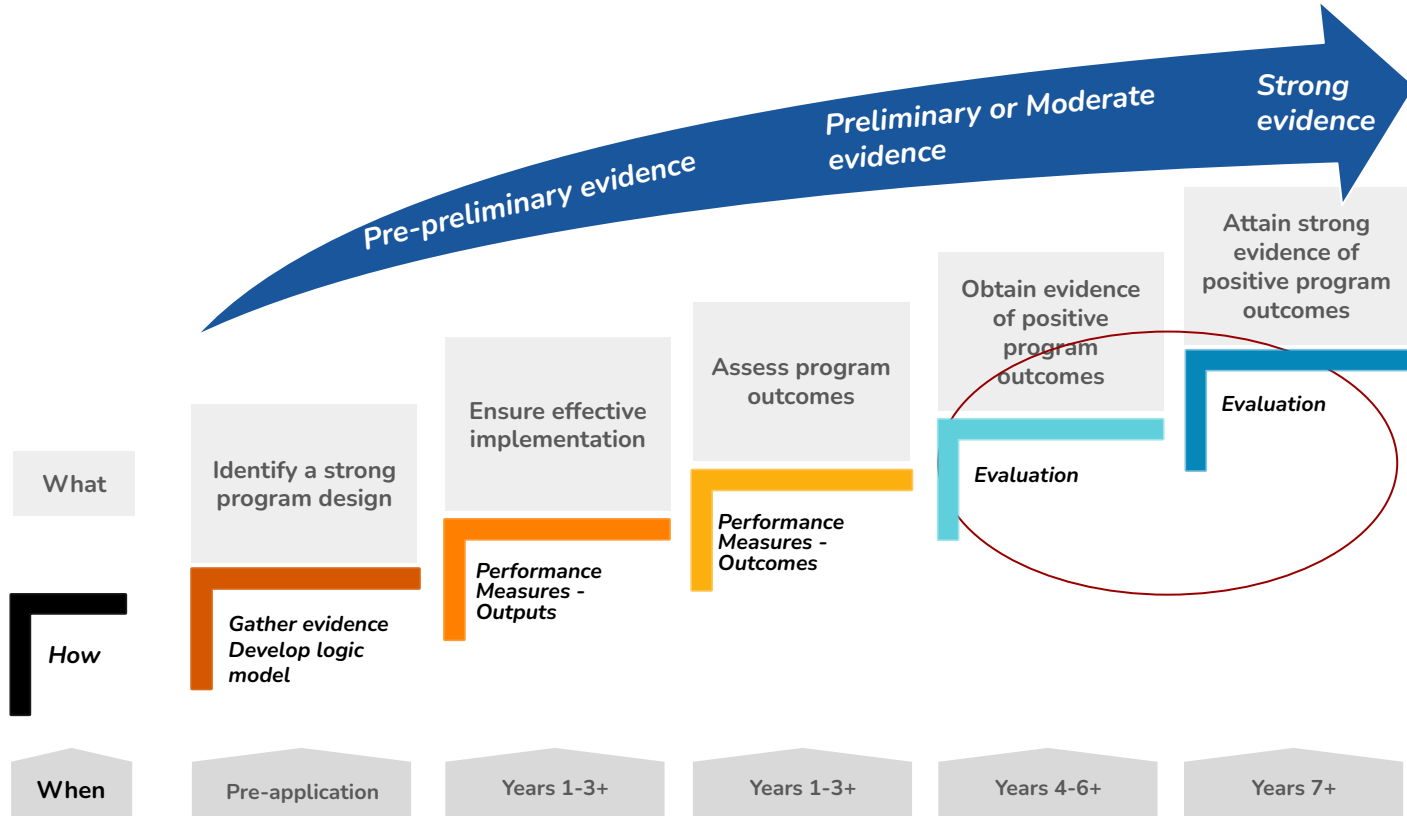
The State Commission

“establishes and enforces
evaluation requirements” for
State formula subgrantees.

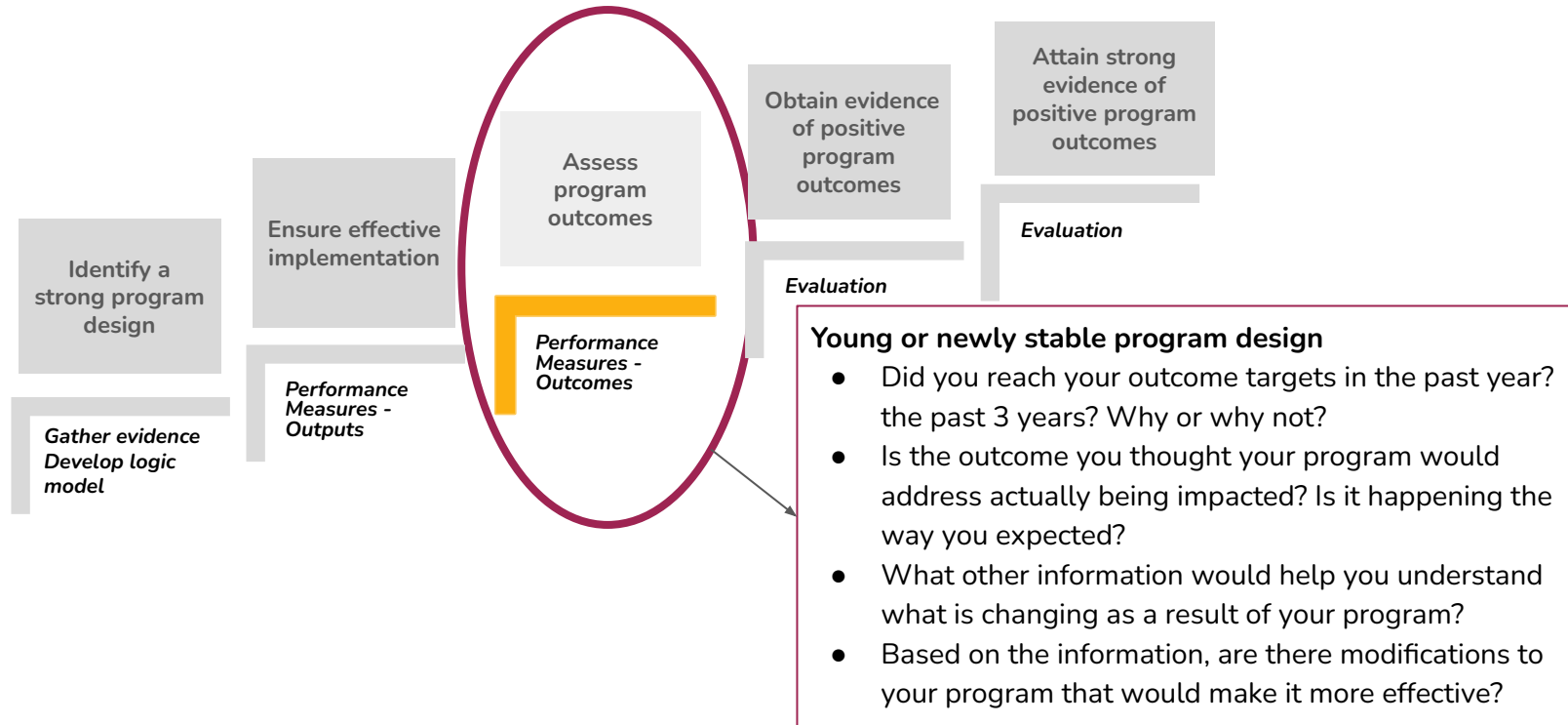
Evidence Stages



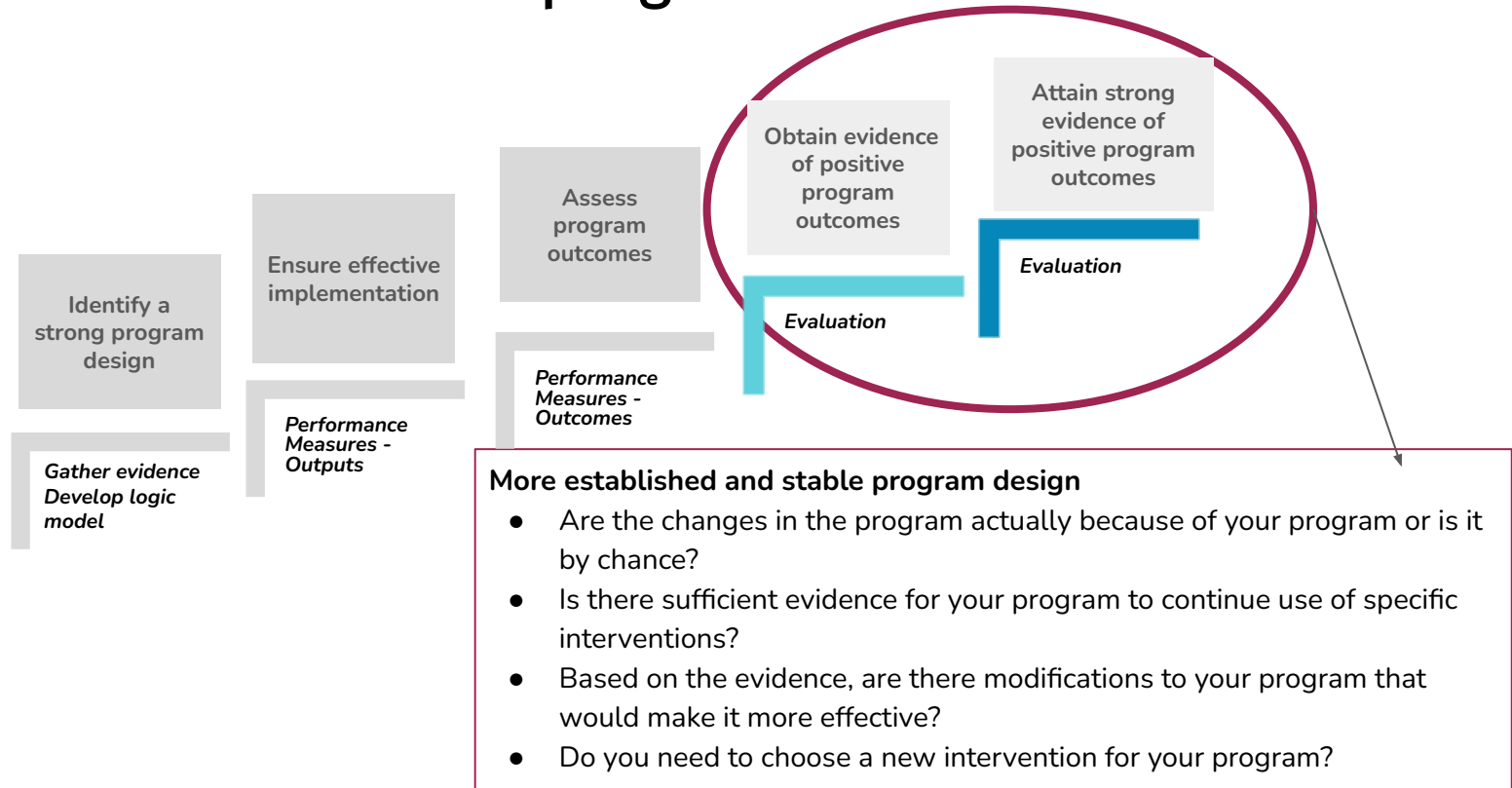
Building evidence of effectiveness



What evidence you build depends on the questions you ask and program timeline



What evidence you build depends on the questions you ask and program timeline



AmeriCorps expects that you will evaluate your program and demonstrate that your program works - that it achieves the outcomes desired (this is evidence).

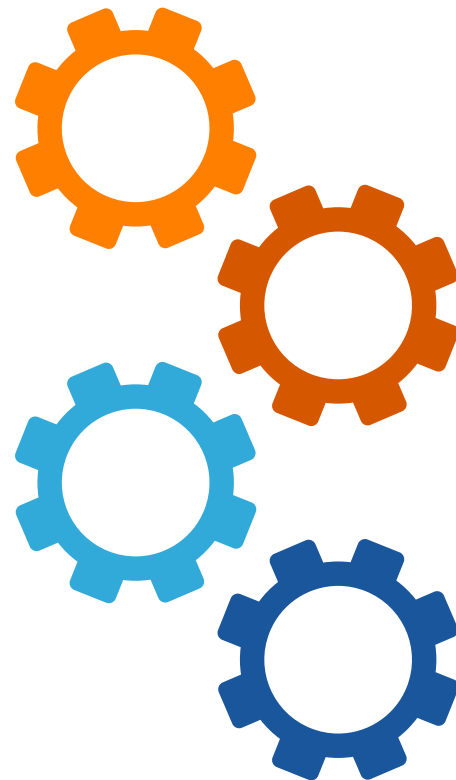
Where to start?



Evaluating for Evidence

Building evidence relies on your existing data collection skills - it starts to expand the focus of the data you collect.

Building evidence takes time, intentionality, and a commitment to learning from your data.



Things To Do



Re-examine
your
program
logic model

1



Get familiar
with the
evaluation
process

2



Conduct a
data audit

3



Assess
capacity for
evaluation

4



Plan the
evaluation

5



Evaluate
your
program

6



Submit
report and
apply your
findings to
program

7



1. Logic Model

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES		
			SHORT TERM	MEDIUM- TERM	LONG- TERM
Staff Funding Existing training	Train AmeriCorps members Provide tutoring to K-12th grade students for 1 hour, 3 x week, each week October - June at elementary school, middle school, high school	900 students in K-12th grade will participate in academic tutoring program (ED1A)	Improvement in academic performance in literacy and/or math (1 year) (ED5A)	Sustained improvement in academic performance in literacy and/or math (5 years)	Increase in high school graduation rates



2. Program Evaluation Cycle

PLANNING

- Plan your evaluation
- Define research questions
- Identify stakeholders

ACTION & IMPROVEMENT

- Identify what to do differently or add to your program
- So what?

01



02



03



04



DATA COLLECTION

- Strengthen/refine your quantitative data
- Compile data from across years
- Collect qualitative data

ANALYSIS & REFLECTION

- Describe your data
- Synthesize data across sources to determine findings
- Report your findings



3. Conduct a data audit

What data do you have for your program?



Are the data stored in one place?



Do you have pre and post-data? Are data matched by participant?

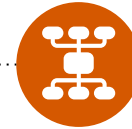


Consider the last 3 years of your program...



Was the same/similar data collected each year?

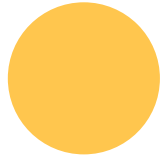
Did the instrument change? Did the questions change?
Did the program change?



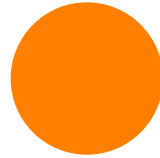
What data, other than performance measure data, were collected? How were the data collected?



3. Conduct a data audit - Examples of data sources



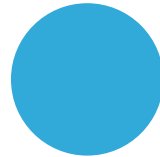
Performance measure data



Program data about how much, how many, what, where, and when



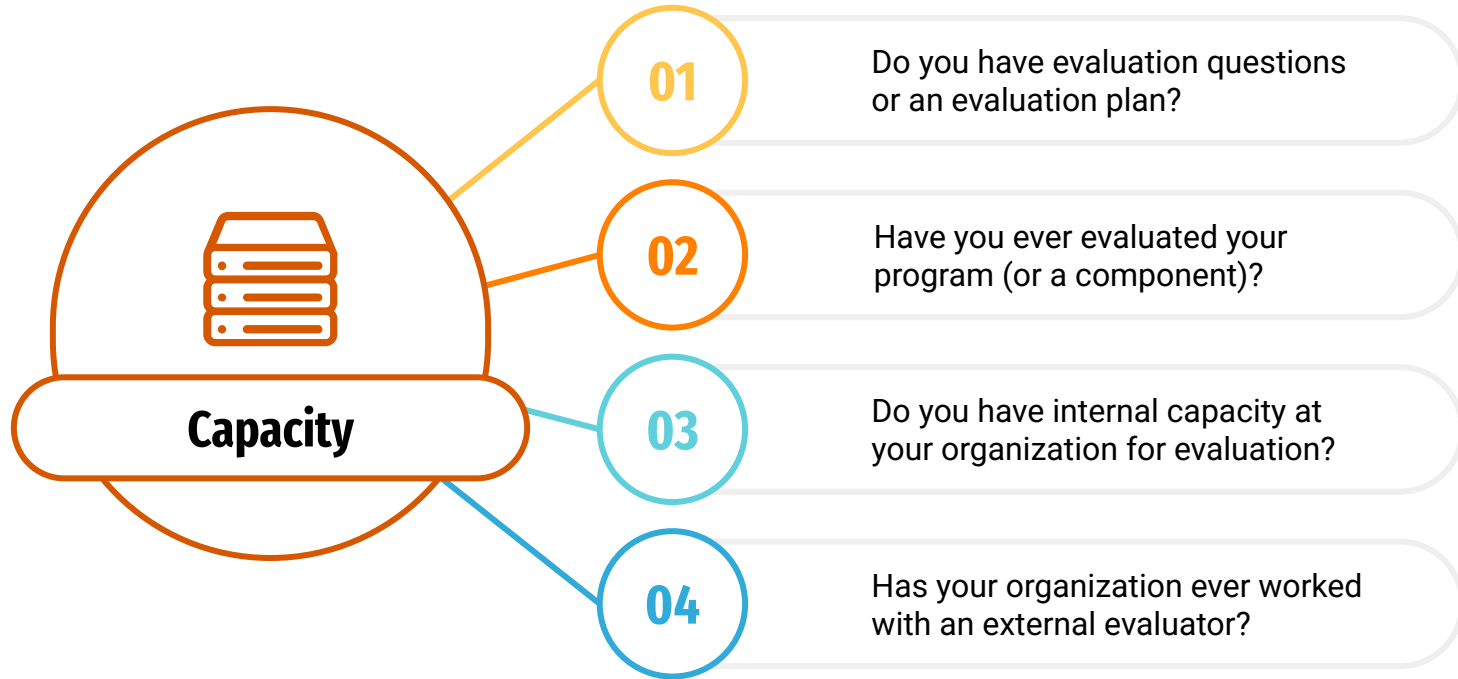
Surveys, interviews, or focus groups of the people implementing the program



Surveys, interviews, or focus groups of the people receiving the program



4. Assess capacity for evaluation





5. Plan your evaluation

- Determine the evaluation purpose and type (process/implementation or outcome)
- Develop an evaluation plan
 - Outlines the evaluation questions, methods and data sources you will use, and the timeline
- Determine who will do the evaluation





Types and uses of evaluation

Evaluation type	When to use it	What it shows	Why it is useful
Process Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As soon as program implementation begins• During operation of an existing program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How well the program is working• The extent to which the program is being implemented as designed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides early warning of potential problems• Allows for monitoring of program and activities
Outcome Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• After the program has started	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The degree to which the program is having an effect on the target population	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tells whether the program is being effective in meeting its objectives
Impact Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• During the operation of an existing program at appropriate intervals• At the end of the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The degree to which the program meets its ultimate goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides evidence for use in policy and funding decisions



5. Plan your evaluation - Plan elements



Goals of the evaluation

What do you want to learn?

Evaluation questions

What are your guiding research questions?

Methods and data sources

What data will you use and how will you obtain or collect it?

Timeline

When will this happen?

Person responsible

Who is the point person responsible for the work?



6. Evaluate your program

Implement your plan to collect and analyze data to inform your evaluation questions

Data Collection

Compile existing performance measure data across years

Collect new survey data

Collect new qualitative data (e.g., interviews, focus groups)

Data Analysis

Summarize data

Describe what is learned from each data source

Combine what you learned from each data source to “answer” your evaluation questions



7. Submit report and apply findings

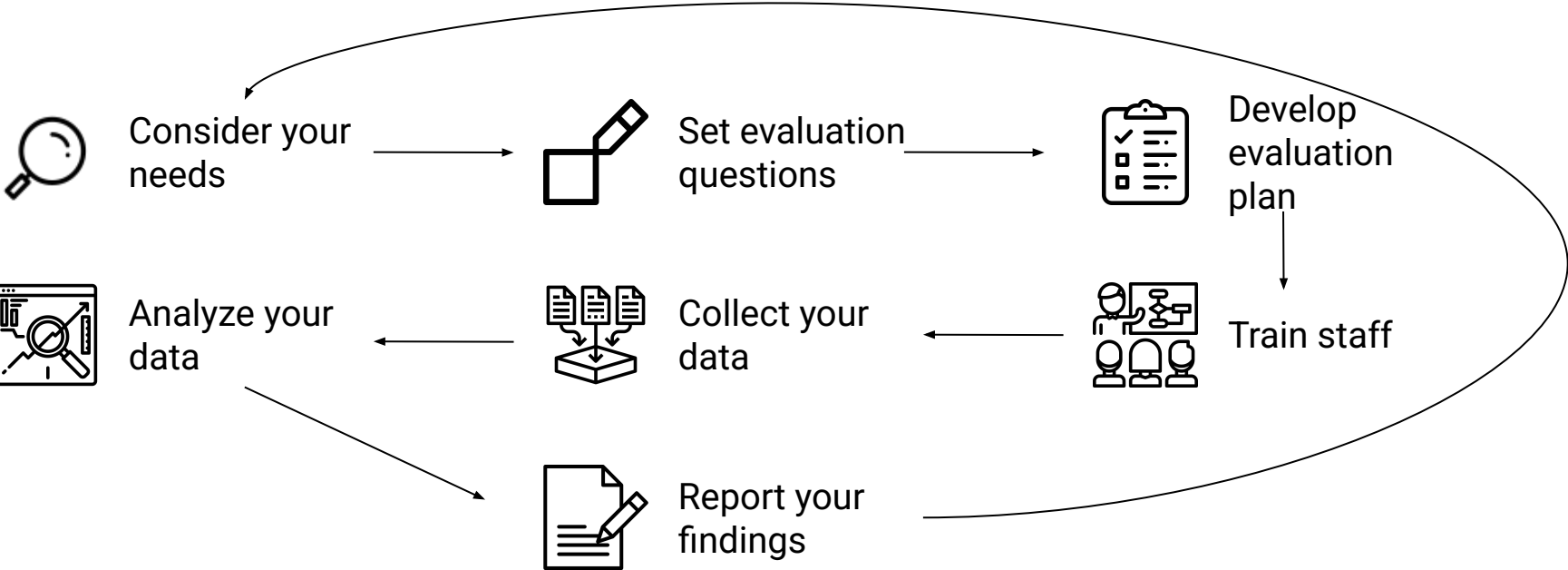
Develop a deliverable that describes:

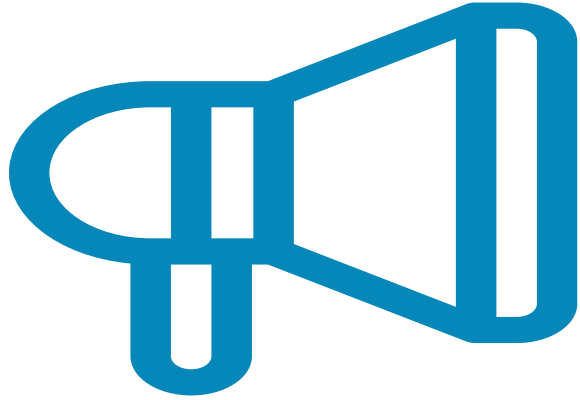
- The program and how it works
- The methods you used to collect and analyze the data
- The findings you gleaned from the data
- Recommendations for continuous program improvement

Determine how to implement the recommendations and act on them



Key milestones for quality evaluation





Voices from the field

Ahmad Watson

Rutgers - Newark

Background

Brief program description

When

When was the evaluation done? Why then?

What

What was done for data collection, analysis, and reporting?

How

How was this done?

Barriers/Facilitators

What were the barriers/challenges? How were they resolved? What facilitated the work?

Jennifer Amaya

Zufall Health Center

Background

Brief program description

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What were the barriers/challenges? How were they resolved? What facilitated the work?



CREEHS CAN HELP!

We are happy to be a thought partner for your projects related to:

Program Design

- developing logic models/program theories
- specifying goals and objectives for projects

Performance Measurement

- operationalizing performance measures

Data Collection and Management and Analysis

- collecting and managing data for performance measures
- designing and implementing evaluations for their programs

Data Analysis and Reporting

- analyzing and interpreting data
- summarizing data and reporting findings

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Peer Exchange

August 6, 2025



MONTCLAIR
STATE UNIVERSITY

Center for Research and Evaluation
on Education and Human Services
College for Education and Engaged Learning

Group Discussion

Assessment

Complete the evaluation readiness assessment form for your AmeriCorps program

Table Discussion

Have you evaluated your program?

If Yes -

What was the process you took?

Who helped?

What were the barriers/challenges?

What facilitated the evaluation?

If No -

What are the barriers/challenges?

Who could help?

What do you need to get started?

Share Out

What did you learn from your colleagues?

What can you commit to do doing this year related to evaluation?

What tools or resources do you need?

Activity 1

Scenario 1: Ready!

Scenario

Program has been implemented and data collected the same way every year.

Data were collected to inform the primary program outcomes. The same data were collected each year for 3 years. Data are stored in 1 place and pre & post data are matched for each participant.

An evaluation plan exists but has not yet been implemented. The agency has a staff member who does evaluation but has not worked with an external evaluator.

Scenario 1: Ready!

Potential Next Steps

1. Review and/or update the evaluation plan
2. Work with your agency to see if the staff member can take on the evaluation or secure an external evaluator (e.g., request for proposals, preliminary conversations, proposal submission, proposal revision, MOU/contracting)
3. Work with your evaluator to explain your program, refine the evaluation plan, and share data
4. Evaluator organizes data by evaluation question, analyzes the data, and summarizes the findings
5. Evaluator writes evaluation report and shares with program for review/feedback

Scenario 2: Not so ready

Scenario

Program has been implemented the same way each year for 6 years.

Data has not been collected the same way each year. Data are missing in some years such that pre or post data are missing (e.g., COVID) resulting in incomplete datasets.

There was an evaluation plan in an application, but it is not relevant and nothing was done with it. The agency does not have resources for evaluation, and has not worked with an external evaluator.

Scenario 2: Not so ready

Potential Next Steps

1. Explore and list the reasons why data were not collected as planned
2. Identify a new and detailed plan to collect program data in ways to address the issues or minimize the likelihood of documented challenges
3. Develop an evaluation plan (keep it simple)
4. Implement your new data collection plan and ensure quality
5. Enter and organize your data in a spreadsheet and add data as it is collected
6. Identify and secure an external evaluator OR build a staff member's capacity for evaluation
7. Work with the evaluator to implement the evaluation plan and submit a report

Scenario 3: Not so ready

Scenario

Program design has changed every year or two (now in year 6) since the first year of implementation.

The data collection process was redesigned in Year 5 to include a new validated outcome measurement pre-post instrument to start in the new program year 6.

There was no evaluation plan that you can find. The agency has evaluation staff but are not available for this program. There are no funds to support an external evaluator.

Scenario 3: Not so ready

Potential Next Steps

1. Train staff and members on new data collection processes
2. Develop an evaluation plan (keep it simple)
 - a. May focus on 2-3 questions that you have about your program implementation or outcome measure (e.g., who was reached, patterns in participant characteristics, patterns in outcomes)
3. Collect data with quality
4. Enter data into well organized spreadsheets
5. Once complete, calculate and summarize your program performance
6. Implement your evaluation plan and write a report to document your findings