

The last Data Brief of each month, unlike the previous Briefs released, will not report on data. Rather, these evaluation Briefs will address approaches to collecting and analyzing data with our community agencies. This first Brief introduces the reader to an evaluation process whose aim is to empower communities to solve problems and make decisions on issues that directly affect them. It is through this approach—*resolana*—that we invite participation and examination of issues that concern all stakeholders.

Evaluation is most often viewed as having an outside evaluator come in to assess a program. However, the “empowerment” approach asserts that evaluation can and should be developed and conducted by those directly involved in the program. In this view, the program participants conduct much of their own evaluations and typically act as facilitators; the outside evaluator serves as a coach or technical advisor. Despite its focus on self-determination and collaboration, empowerment evaluation and traditional external evaluation are not mutually exclusive. The current view of “best practices” is a synthesis of these approaches.

PROCESS V. OUTCOME EVALUATION

Evaluations generally are conducted for two reasons:

- to review what you’re doing in implementing your program (*process evaluation*)
- to identify and measure the program’s results (*outcome evaluation*).

Hence, program evaluation measures both your program’s progress and its success. It is part of a problem-solving sequence for identifying a *problem* (meaning the discrepancy between a goal and the status quo); creating and putting to use a *program of activities* designed to reduce the effects of the problem; evaluating these program activities; adopting or modifying program activities the evaluation suggests will reduce the *problem* satisfactorily. See the flowchart below for a visualization of how these steps interact.

These Briefs provide an introduction and an invitation to participate in this process. The ideas for these Briefs on evaluation came primarily from

- a manual for program evaluation entitled *Effective Strategies in Program Evaluation*, authored by Richard Nagasawa and Miguel Montiel, and *Resolana: Emerging Chicano Dialogues on Community and Globalization* (UA Press, 2010)
- collaborations on several evaluation projects with Professor John Hultsman
- ASU classes taught jointly with Cristobal Martinez
- evaluations with various community agencies collaborating with the Bureau of Tobacco and Chronic Disease.

UPCOMING EVALUATION TOPICS

The coming Data Briefs will address critical issues mentioned in our introduction, and include

- Emerging and empowering evaluation design
- Formative and summative evaluations and the difference they make.
- The “logic” of a logic model, why bother?
- Setting up an evaluation plan: identifying goals and objectives
- What exactly are “best practices”?
- What is a *resolana* and where does it “fit” into our notion of evaluation?

