Using Evaluation to Inform CDC's Policy Process

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
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Introduction

Public health professionals can play an important role in the policy process. They develop partnerships, analyze and evaluate policy, promote and implement evidence-based policies and communicate findings. CDC's Policy Process[1] was developed to foster common language and understanding around policy and the process by which it is conceptualized, developed, adopted, implemented and evaluated.

The CDC Policy Process includes five specific domains (problem identification, policy analysis, strategy and policy development, policy enactment, and policy implementation). The Policy Process also includes two overarching domains that are interwoven with the five specific domains: stakeholder engagement and education, and evaluation (see Figure 1).

The Policy Process is rarely linear; the domains often overlap and can vary in order. An ideal scenario includes identifying a problem, identifying, analyzing, and prioritizing potential policy solutions, and adopting and implementing the policy solution that will have the greatest public health impact, feasibility and economic and budgetary impact.

As an overarching domain, evaluation can inform all domains of the Policy Process. This document is intended to provide information and examples in order to

- Improve our understanding of evaluation as it applies to the five specific domains of the Policy Process.
- Recognize the value of, and opportunities for, policy evaluation.
- Improve our ability to evaluate one or more specific domains of the Policy Process.
- Understand the importance of using evaluation findings to inform the evidence base.

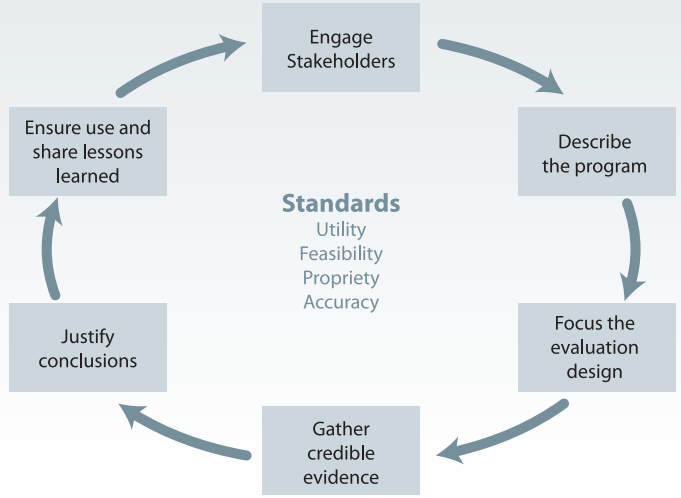
This document then provides examples of how to use evaluation to inform each of the specific domains of the Policy Process.

FIGURE 1: THE POLICY PROCESS

CDC's Framework for Program Evaluation

CDC's Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health[2] provides a practical, step-by-step approach that has been used consistently to evaluate programmatic efforts. This framework comprises six steps: engaging stakeholders, describing the program, focusing the evaluation design, gathering credible evidence, justifying conclusions, and ensuring use and sharing lessons learned (see Figure 2). The steps outlined for program evaluation can also be applied to the evaluation of many policy efforts.[a]

FIGURE 2:
FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION IN PUBLIC HEALTH



a Throughout this document the term "policy effort" is used to refer broadly to policy-related interventions, activities or strategies within any of the domains of the Policy Process.

Definitions

POLICY is a law, regulation, procedure, administrative action, incentive or voluntary practice of governments and other institutions. Within the context of public health, policy development includes advancing and implementing public health law, regulations, or voluntary practices that influence systems development, organizational change, and individual behavior to promote improvements in health.[3]

PROGRAM is the object of evaluation, which could be any organized public health activity, including direct service interventions, research initiatives, surveillance systems, policy development and implementation activities, outbreak investigations, laboratory diagnostics, communication campaigns, infrastructure building projects, training and educational services, and administrative systems.[4]

EVALUATION is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs (which may include interventions, policies, and specific projects) to make judgments about that program, improve program effectiveness, or inform future decisions about program development.[5]

POLICY EVALUATION is the systematic collection and analysis of information to make judgments about contexts, activities, characteristics, or outcomes of one or more domain(s) of the Policy Process. Evaluation may inform and improve policy development, adoption, implementation, and effectiveness, and builds the evidence base for policy interventions.

Framing Your Policy Evaluation

IDENTIFYING WHERE YOU ARE IN THE POLICY PROCESS AND FOCUSING YOUR EVALUATION

The most useful evaluation occurs when there is clarity and consensus from the start regarding activities, intended outcomes, and the focus of the evaluation. A specific evaluation may encompass one, some, or all domains and evaluation efforts may require different considerations and methods in each domain. For example, although the step-by-step evaluation process might be the same for both policy analysis and policy implementation, the information needed or received and how that information will be collected and used may differ.

To identify which domain(s) of the Policy Process will be the focus of the evaluation, determine the **purpose** of the evaluation, **who** is asking for or will use the information (e.g., stakeholders), **why** the information is needed (e.g., congressional mandate), and **how** this information will be used (e.g., to inform future efforts or the next step in the policy process). It is also helpful to understand the **context** of the evaluation, including the timeframe for results, the availability of resources, and the level of rigor that will be expected. Purpose and context may influence decisions at every step of an evaluation.

Having clarity on these issues up front can ensure that the right stakeholders are involved, the most important questions are identified, and the data collection and analysis will produce findings that are relevant and credible. This clarity, in turn, can increase the use of results to inform and improve policy efforts moving forward, enhancing the ability of policies to improve public health.

Policy evaluation requires additional considerations compared to the evaluation of other types of efforts.

- Macro-level policy may lead to different micro-level interventions, making impacts of the macro-level policy harder to identify and measure.
- The nature of policy at the macro-level may mean that there are external factors influencing impacts that are not easily observable.
- Objectives of policies may be very different than objectives of programs.
- Policy evaluation can be the ultimate "natural experiment."

Additionally, note that federal law prohibits the use of appropriated funds by CDC and CDC grantees for advocacy, lobbying, and related activities. Because of federal anti-lobbying regulations, it is essential when evaluating a policy effort or policy activities that the outcomes and measures reflect activities that are permitted using federal funds.

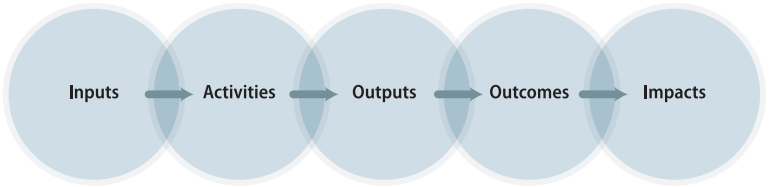
Using Logic Models to Describe Policy Efforts

A Logic Model[b] is one helpful tool to ascertain clarity and consensus on aspects of the policy effort.

A logic model can include some or all of the following components:

- **Inputs:** resources required to develop and implement the policy effort
- **Activities:** actions that comprise the work of the policy effort
- **Outputs:** direct products or deliverables that result from activities
- **Outcomes and Impacts:** changes in people, conditions, behaviors, and health outcomes that result from the activities of the Policy Process domain being evaluated

Logic models generally display these components as a sequence, visually depicting the pathways between the activities of the specific Policy Process domain and specific outcomes, as well as the links between short-term and longer-term outcomes and impacts.



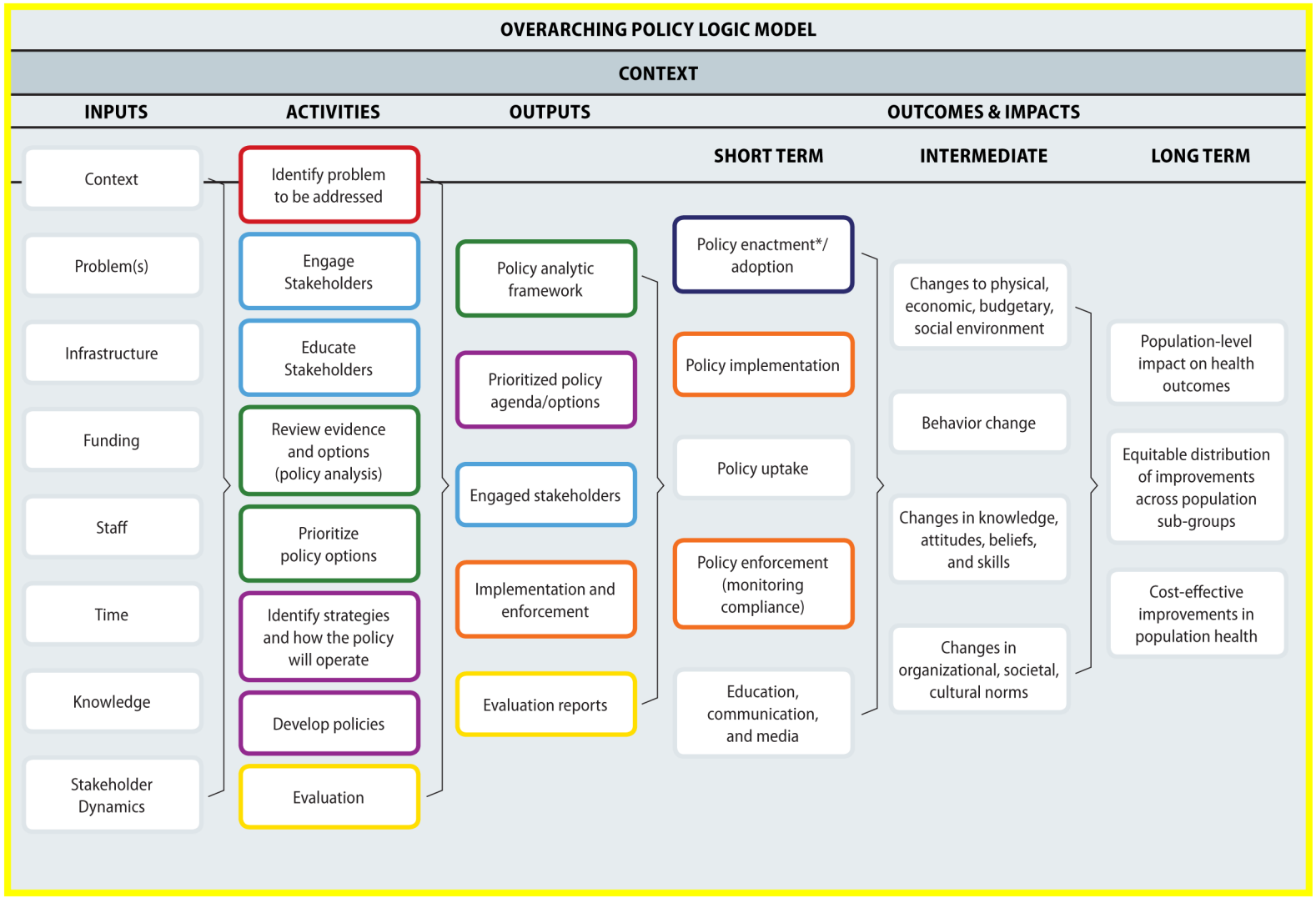
POLICY EVALUATION AND FEDERAL FUNDING

- CDC and CDC-funded grantees may track and evaluate laws that have already passed.
- CDC and CDC-funded grantees may also conduct research regarding policy alternatives and their impact.
- CDC and CDC-funded grantees, on the basis of their findings, may make evidence-based policy recommendations that have been found to impact health outcomes.
- Evaluation activities, outcomes and measures should not involve express calls to engage in grass roots lobbying activities.*
- Additionally, CDC and CDC-funded grantees should not include enactment of a specific law at the federal, state, or local level as an outcome of their work supported by CDC funds.

* Even when operating within what are thought to be legal limits, attention must be paid to appropriateness of policy positions, congressional intent regarding the use of appropriations, and the appropriateness of our grantee activities. Please see "CDC Implementation of Anti-Lobbying Provisions." http://changelabsolutions.org/sites/changelabsolutions.org/files/CDC%20Implementation%20of%20Anti-Lobbying%20Restrictions%20-%20June%202012.pdf

b There are many ways to depict a policy effort. In some cases, a system dynamics model or a flow chart may be more relevant to your evaluation.

All of the components of this generic logic model occur within the larger context of environmental or system influences that might help or hinder the ability of the activities of a Policy Process domain to achieve outcomes/impacts. The following generic logic model displays a typical set of inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes that are generic enough to apply to almost any policy effort and comprehensive enough to encompass all of the domains of the Policy Process. The activities, outcomes and short-term impacts of the sample logic model are color-coded to match the relevant domains of the Policy Process.



* Please note that federal law prohibits the use of appropriated funds by CDC and our grantees for advocacy, lobbying, and related activities.

General Evaluation Guidance

GATHERING CREDIBLE EVIDENCE

When evaluating any domain of the Policy Process, it is important to gather credible evidence; meaning that the methods and sources used must be relevant to the questions being asked and credible to stakeholders and others who will interpret and use the findings. The types of evidence collected will depend on:

- The type of evaluation being conducted (e.g., formative, process, or outcome)
- The available data sources and methods
- The context within which the evaluation is being conducted
- The content of the questions being asked

TYPES OF EVALUATIONS

Clarity on the type(s) of evaluation to be included generally occurs after the discussion of purpose, user, and use. Evaluations can generally be classified into three types:

- **Formative evaluation** *looks at the larger context and environment to determine the main problem and identify solutions that are* feasible, appropriate, and meaningful for the target population.[6] For a policy evaluation, this step would happen before a policy is adopted and implemented. It would also encompass questions related to the content of the policy:
  - Core components and implementation requirements of policy
  - Evidence-base supporting policy strategy
  - Context of policy development and adoption
  - Stakeholder roles and responsibilities
  - Content of similar policies
- **Process evaluation** examines the implementation of policy-related activities. For a policy effort, process evaluation could examine the implementation of a policy, focusing on the degree to which the inputs, activities, and outputs were implemented as planned, barriers to its implementation, and factors that support its implementation.
- **Outcome/impact evaluation** examines whether the intended outcomes and impacts occurred, and may also examine whether or not outcomes and impacts can be attributed to the policy.[7]

DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

Potential data sources and methods can be broadly classified as primary or secondary, on the basis of how the data were obtained, whether the data are quantitative or qualitative, and what are the content and characteristics of the data (see Table 1).

- **Primary Data** include information collected by the researcher or evaluator directly through instruments such as surveys, interviews, focus groups or observation. Primary data may be collected if existing secondary data are not available, or if there is a need for data that are tailored to specific needs.
- **Secondary Data:** When evaluating a policy implemented on a large scale, one option might be to use a surveillance system or administrative data, which are secondary data. Secondary data are primary data collected by someone else for a different purpose. Researchers and evaluators use secondary data because they are available and may be more cost effective than collecting new data. This may save resources; however, there are some unique challenges when working with existing datasets including lack of control over data collection (what is collected, when, by whom, and how frequently) and those data sources may not contain all of the variables of interest.

- **Quantitative data** are numerical data that can be analyzed to measure activities, outcomes and impacts. Quantitative data analysis counts or compares data on a numerical scale. Approaches to analyzing quantitative data depend on the evaluation question and include the following:
  - Using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and means.
  - Demonstrating the magnitude and direction of relationship(s) between multiple indicators or variables.
  - Establishing a causal relationship between a policy and impact(s).
  - Illustrating that a policy is cost beneficial or cost effective through economic and budgetary analyses.
- **Qualitative data** are nonnumerical information that describes attributes or properties of activities, outcomes, or impacts. Qualitative data analysis seeks to organize data to allow for the identification of meaningful patterns. Qualitative analysis includes reviewing and organizing the data, coding the data by identifying and labeling themes, and then interpreting the meaning of the themes, including the relationships between the themes.[8]

TABLE 1: DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

	PRIMARY	SECONDARY
QUANTITATIVE	• Questionnaires/surveys • Measurement through direct observation (e.g., seatbelt use observed at stoplights) • Media tracking (including social media) • Tracking, registry included in policy language (e.g., mandatory reporting requirements included in policies, cooperative agreements, etc.)	• Existing research • Existing surveillance systems (e.g., Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)) • Geographic Information Systems (GIS) research • Budgetary data
QUALITATIVE	• Content analysis of the policy itself, any revisions to the policy, amendments, revised regulations, court rulings, or other formal changes to the policy • Key Informant Interviews • Focus groups • Case studies • Observations (e.g., meetings, community characteristics, walkability) • Media tracking (including social media)	• Secondary analysis of primary qualitative data sets (e.g., secondary analysis of interview transcripts); the use of existing data to find answers to research questions that differ from the questions asked in the original research.[9] • Retrospective review of charts/case notes • Literature review • Environmental scan

Relevant and credible data may need to come from multiple sources, and there may be issues with access or availability. For example, data might not be available at the level needed for the desired analysis (e.g., at the state level vs. at the school district level). Additionally, some sources have delays of up to several years before the data becomes available. The selection of data methods and sources for a given evaluation, along with the content of specific evaluation questions or indicators, may be guided by the context of the evaluation.

The ***context*** of the evaluation:

- How much time is there until results are needed?
- How many resources (monetary and human) can be devoted to the evaluation?
- Are there special ethical considerations that need to be taken into account?
- Who is the audience for the evaluation?
- What is the level of rigor and accuracy demanded of the results?
- Should the outcome be measured at one point in time or at multiple points?

The ***content*** of the evaluation:

- Is the evaluation or question regarding a sensitive topic?
- Can a behavioral/health outcome be observed without influencing the target behavior?
- Are there issues of confidentiality or anonymity to consider?
- Are we seeking a point in time estimate or are we trying to more fully understand the activity or outcome?
- Are there readily available and accurate secondary data?

EXAMPLE

USING MULTIPLE DATA SOURCES TO EVALUATE THE POLICY PROCESS

A state passes a comprehensive smoke-free air law then asks for assistance with evaluating the law. It is important to record that the policy was enacted and implemented, but there is much more to the story.

Analyzing the language of the policy can provide primary, qualitative data to help determine whether the law enacted is consistent with the best available evidence and if provisions support its enforcement.

Focus groups of community members may be used to provide primary, qualitative data to identify contextual differences in implementation of the law (e.g., differences by neighborhood, by type of establishment). Additionally, key informant interviews (of restaurant or bar owners) may provide primary, qualitative data about existing or potential barriers and facilitators to implementing the law.

Questionnaires and surveys may provide primary, quantitative data regarding public awareness of the law and attitudes about the law before and after enactment, and before implementation. This knowledge in turn can be used to better educate the public and address misperceptions.

Surveillance systems such as the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) or the Adult Tobacco Survey (ATS) can provide secondary, quantitative data to help determine intermediate impacts of the law, including changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, and long-term impacts including changes in smoking rates and decreases in smoking-attributable morbidity and mortality.

JUSTIFYING CONCLUSIONS

It is important to interpret findings and draw conclusions based on the evidence and data that has been collected. Stakeholders may be engaged or reengaged to assist in interpreting findings and drawing conclusions, but you should understand that stakeholders may have different opinions regarding a policy effort, its outcomes, and what data are relevant.

Due to the dynamic nature of the policy process, alternative factors that may contribute to or confound findings should be considered, along with the potential influence of external factors such as changes in other policies in the same place at the same time. Additionally, findings and conclusions should be presented clearly to relevant stakeholders, decision makers and the public to encourage their use.

ENSURING USE OF FINDINGS AND SHARING LESSONS LEARNED

Once you analyze and interpret your evaluation findings, you may be asked to make recommendations for action based on those findings. Present the findings of a policy evaluation appropriately, in accordance with federal anti-lobbying provisions. Presenting the evidence of the health impact of a policy is generally the best tactic. The decision whether to adopt a policy that affects health often is based on multiple criteria. These should include the impact on health, but also may include the economic and budgetary impacts, impact on personal choice, and other criteria.

Evaluation findings should be clearly communicated to stakeholders and potential and intended uses of the findings should be well-defined. Stakeholders should be engaged early and often, and continuous feedback should be provided to and solicited from stakeholders (e.g., interim findings and decisions) to facilitate the transfer of evaluation findings into strategic decision making. To report and present the findings of a policy evaluation in a way that will be useful, you need to

- Know your audience
- Identify the objectives of your communication
- Consider the best format for your message to meet determined communication objectives
- Consider the method(s) you will use to deliver your message

One mechanism for sharing results may be an evaluation report tailored to your audience. The evaluation report should be clear, succinct, and impartially communicate all stages of the evaluation. You may also consider oral presentations tailored to various audiences. Additionally, policy briefs and policy impact statements are tools that can demonstrate how to apply findings. Synthesizing and translating findings into easy to use formats that allow for application is key.

EXAMPLE

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Policy makers have competing demands and may have little time to review analysis and an interpretation of evidence on a specific topic or decision. Information to policy makers should be concise, relatable, and easy-to-understand format such as a one-page policy brief, fact sheet, or a short question-and-answer document, that may be provided via email, as a written document, or in-person (briefing). This policy impact brief addresses motor vehicle safety:

http://www.cdc.gov/MotorVehicleSafety/pdf/PolicyImpact-SeatBelts.pdf

Using Evaluation to Inform the Specific Domains of the Policy Process

Evaluation can be applied to any and all of the domains of the Policy Process. The purpose and use of the evaluation will change across the domains, and different evaluation questions will be used. The type of evaluation used will depend on the Policy Process domains and the purpose of the evaluation (See Table 2).

TABLE 2: USING EVALUATION TO INFORM DOMAINS OF THE POLICY PROCESS

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION	
Background Information:	Engaging stakeholders includes educating, fostering participation, and nurturing power-sharing among those individuals who are invested in the evaluation and its findings.[10] Evaluation can assess stakeholders' understanding of the issue, the goals and objectives of policy development to address the issue, and the degree to which they feel their individual needs and concerns are addressed by potential policy solutions. It is important to identify and engage key evaluation stakeholders as early as possible to review and affirm the purpose and uses of the evaluation, key evaluation questions, appropriate evaluation design, and data collection methods. Policy evaluation may require broader or deeper engagement of stakeholders compared to a typical program evaluation. Policy efforts may face additional scrutiny or controversy compared with programmatic efforts, and may often depend on stakeholders for widespread implementation.
Purpose of Evaluation:	To evaluate whether and how relevant stakeholders were engaged in each of the policy domains. Evaluation findings about the engagement and education of stakeholders may be used to inform all other domains of the Policy Process.
Potential Stakeholders	• Policy experts • Evaluation experts • Subject matter experts • Decision makers • Policy makers • Those responsible for adopting, implementing or enforcing the policy • Those impacted *Engaging stakeholders who oppose the policy can provide valuable insight into initial or on-going resistance to the policy and their involvement can lend credibility to evaluation findings.*
Type(s) of Evaluation:	Formative, Process, and Outcome
Potential Evaluation Questions:	• Questions to identify what types of stakeholders were included, how they were selected, and to what degree they participated in each part of the Policy Process. • Identifying and understanding roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. • Were the right stakeholders engaged in the definition of the problem, data collection, and analyses to ensure a comprehensive assessment? • Questions to assess whether stakeholders were engaged so that the identification and prioritization of policy options reflects the economic, budgetary and political realities of the context. • Questions to assess what policy actors (e.g., decision makers) were included, and how these stakeholders were engaged.
Example:	In Richmond, Virginia, residents were concerned about the violence that threatened the safety of their communities, and they wanted real, practical answers to address it. The CDC-funded National Center of Excellence in Youth Violence Prevention (YVPC) at Virginia Commonwealth University partnered with community stakeholders to investigate the link between alcohol and youth violence in Richmond's neighborhoods. The YVPC tracked rates of violent crime and injuries in relation to how close they occurred to alcohol outlets. The data showed higher youth violence and violence-related ambulance pick-ups near retail outlets that sold inexpensive, single-serve alcoholic beverages (known as "40s" or "22s"). Community leaders used the data to inform policies to reduce the sale of single-serve alcoholic beverages. Once the new policies were in place, the YVPC evaluated their impact on rates of violence-related ambulance pick-ups.

TABLE 2 CONTINUED

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION	
Background Information:	Clarifying and framing the problem or issue in terms of the impact or potential impacts on population health is important. Collecting, summarizing, and interpreting information relevant to the issue (e.g., nature of the problem, causes of the problem) enables you to clarify and frame the problem or issue. Consider defining the characteristics (e.g., frequency, severity, scope) of the issue, identifying any gaps in the data, and framing the issue in a way that may lend itself to potential policy solutions.
Purpose of Evaluation:	Identify the context and cause of the issue and the extent that it lends itself to potential policy solution and action. These findings should provide a clear picture of the issue and informing the identification of potential policy options to address the issue.
Type(s) of Evaluation:	Formative
Potential Evaluation Questions:	Was data collection comprehensive enough to provide an accurate picture of the problem and context? Was the problem defined in a way to lend itself to policy solution(s) or actions? Were the right stakeholders engaged in the definition of the problem, data collection, and analyses to ensure a comprehensive assessment?
Example:	During the last decade, emergency department visits for sports and recreation-related traumatic brain injuries among youth, including concussions, increased by 62%.[11] Team and contact sports such as football and ice hockey have the highest incidence of concussion, followed by soccer, wrestling, basketball, field hockey, baseball, softball, and volleyball. However concussions can also occur in individual sports such as gymnastics and diving. The risk of concussion is highest among the 15- to 19-year-old age group nationally, regardless of gender. The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control worked to clarify specific public health issues and identify potential policy options that could address this issue.[12]

TABLE 2 CONTINUED

POLICY ANALYSIS	
Background Information:	Policy analysis involves identifying potential policy options that could address the problem, then using quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate those options to determine the most effective, efficient, and feasible option. This involves describing: A) how the policy will impact morbidity and mortality (health impact), B) the political and operational factors associated with adoption and implementation (feasibility), and C) the prospective costs to implement the policy and how the costs may compare with the prospective benefits (economic and budgetary impact).
Purpose of Evaluation:	To understand how policy options were analyzed, including contextual support or opposition, and potential public health and economic and budgetary impacts. Evaluation findings from the policy analysis domain may be used to inform policy development, enactment, and implementation by providing a clear picture of potential public health impacts, political and operational feasibility, and economic and budgetary impacts. This information can be used to drive decisions about policy content and roles and responsibilities related to enactment and implementation.
Type(s) of Evaluation:	Formative
Potential Evaluation Questions:	Questions to determine how policy options and priorities were identified and assessed. Questions to assess whether and how the analysis looked at: Public health impacts, Political and operational feasibility, Economic and budgetary impacts. Questions to assess whether stakeholders were engaged so that the identification and prioritization of policy options reflects the economic, budgetary and political realities of the context.
Example:	An analysis of local vs. statewide comprehensive smoke-free air laws looks at respective public health impacts, political and operational feasibility, and economic and budgetary impacts. This analysis also depicts how smoke-free air laws operate at the local and state level, the objectives of each, and expected short- and long-term outcomes. The analysis found that statewide smoke-free air laws had higher public health impact, similar operational feasibility and economic impact, but lower political feasibility compared to local smoke-free air laws. This information was used to prioritize the options; and it was determined that although smoke-free air laws may be more feasible to pass at the local level, larger reach, effect size and public health impact will be seen when smoke-free air laws are passed at the state level.

TABLE 2 CONTINUED

STRATEGY AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT	
Background Information:	This step includes identifying how the policy will operate and what is needed for policy enactment and implementation (e.g., understand jurisdictional context and identify information and capacity needs).
Purpose of Evaluation:	To assess the development process; whether the policy met evidence standards, the language was clear and included the components with evidence indicates are essential for effectiveness. Evaluation findings from this domain can inform policy enactment and implementation by providing important information about how the policy can operate and what is needed to enact and implement the policy.
Type(s) of Evaluation:	Formative, Process
Potential Evaluation Questions:	Questions to assess the content of the policy, including how the policy will operate, how it will be enforced, and any mechanisms for monitoring implementation and measuring success. Examination of the content of same/similar laws or policies across a number of different states, localities or organizations may inform content comparisons. Questions to assess what policy actors (e.g., decision makers) were included, and how these stakeholders were engaged. Questions to assess whether jurisdictional and organizational context is reflected in the policy. Identify what resources will be necessary for enactment.
Example:	A brief environmental scan examined the content of Return to Play laws across a number of different states to inform content comparisons. Return to Play laws include a variety of different components that can be complicated to implement, such as removal from play, collection of concussion histories, required training for different stakeholders, etc. Additionally, Return to Play laws do not always provide specific guidance on how each of the components of the laws should be carried out. Some laws identify a specific entity, such as a state agency, to develop regulations and other laws are less specific. As a result, implementers are sometimes required to make decisions after the law has passed that can have an impact on successful implementation. Thoroughly considering the logistics of implementation and engaging in a robust planning process can help increase the consistency and quality of implementation.

TABLE 2 CONTINUED

POLICY ENACTMENT	
Background Information:	This step includes following internal or external procedures for getting a policy (law, regulation, procedure, administrative action, incentive or voluntary practice) enacted or passed. This step also involved monitoring policy enactment.
Purpose of Evaluation:	To assess adoption/enactment (including laws, regulations, procedures, administrative actions, incentives, or voluntary practices) of the policy. Evaluation findings from the policy enactment domain can inform policy implementation by identifying important procedural information for enactment or passage, and identifying any barriers or facilitators to enactment that may also impact implementation.
Type(s) of Evaluation:	Process, Outcome
Potential Evaluation Questions:	Questions to assess whether enactment of the policy is consistent with the best available evidence and findings of the policy analysis. Questions to identify barriers or facilitators to enactment.
Example:	The Office on Smoking and Health (OSH) in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP) developed the State Tobacco Activities Tracking and Evaluation (STATE) System[13]. The STATE System is an electronic data warehouse that contains up-to-date and historical state-level data on tobacco use prevention and control, including legislation on smoke-free indoor air, preemption, and excise tax rates on packs of cigarettes. This system allows the user to look at trends in legislation over time at the state and national level, and compare states to each other and to national data.

TABLE 2 CONTINUED

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION	
Background Information:	Policy implementation may involve translating the enacted policy into operational practice, monitoring uptake of the policy, identifying indicators and metrics to evaluate the implementation and impact of the policy, and coordinating resources and building capacity to implement the policy.
Purpose of Evaluation:	To understand how the policy was translated into operational practice, and to identify the occurrence and variation of intended and unintended outcomes. Evaluation findings from this domain can inform efforts to identify and implement policy solutions by providing information about impacts, knowledge, awareness, support, barriers and facilitators.
Type(s) of Evaluation:	Process, Outcome
Potential Evaluation Questions:	Questions to assess the public health, economic and budgetary impacts of the policy. Questions to assess implementation efforts, including awareness of the policy, level of support for implementation of the policy, compliance with the policy and whether or not the policy is achieving its intended outcomes. Questions to identify barriers and facilitators to implementation. Questions to assess whether stakeholders were engaged in the selection of outcomes measures, including a definition of "success." Questions to assess whether implementation is in line with objectives of the policy. Questions regarding the potential and perceived benefits for the target population.
Example:	To assess the implementation of Return to Play laws, NCIPC conducted a case study evaluation on the Return to Play implementation efforts in Washington and Massachusetts. Those two states were selected because they were both early adopters of Return to Play and because their laws varied on several important dimensions, including the role of the health department and other stakeholder groups. The evaluation was designed to assess implementation efforts, including related challenges and successes in implementation. NCIPC produced a report to present lessons learned and suggestions regarding the implementation of Return to Play laws. NCIPC hoped that by presenting the experiences of early implementers, other states could improve the implementation of their Return to Play laws.

Conclusion

The policy process is complex, dynamic, and rarely linear. Evaluation can inform all domains of the Policy Process; however, evaluation efforts may require different considerations within each domain. This document is intended to provide information and examples to further our understanding of how evaluation can apply to each domain.

Additionally, it is important to note that policy efforts and policy evaluation efforts described in this document apply specifically to CDC, CDC-funded staff, and activities that are permitted using federal funds. Our activities occur in a much broader context that includes activities by advocacy and voluntary organizations, private citizens, public officials, policy makers and many other stakeholders. Broader evaluation efforts (that are not federally funded) can explore the political aspects of policy, including policy success and policy failure.

Evaluation is intended to feed a cycle of continuous improvement, where we examine the implementation of our efforts, determine if those efforts have achieved their intended outcomes, and if not, determine the appropriate actions to take to improve their effectiveness. The information provided in this document can be used to assist those who are evaluating their work within specific domains of the Policy Process to ask the right questions, and use an approach to gathering evidence and performing analysis that will be viewed as credible. Evaluation findings should be tailored to meet the needs of stakeholders and those who are in a position to improve policy efforts moving forward, thus enhancing the ability of policies to improve public health.

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