



Breastfeeding in Ontario

Evaluating Breastfeeding Programs and Initiatives

What is evaluation?

Evaluation means different things to different people. Fundamentally, evaluation means getting feedback about a program or initiative in a deliberate, systematic way in order to help make decisions about the program concerning effectiveness, results and troubleshooting.

It is most common to evaluate programs and other types of initiatives, including resources. In this fact sheet, any program or initiative to be evaluated will be referred to as program.

Why is it important?

Learning about evaluation can give you the knowledge, tools and confidence needed to:

- Determine how your program can be improved (quality improvement).
- Determine if your program is achieving the results it set out to achieve (accountability).
- Interpret the evaluation work of others and the lessons they have learned (shared knowledge).

Can I make an evaluation plan?

Evaluation, in some situations, can be complicated, and you may need specific expertise. However, you and your colleagues can learn to develop and implement a basic evaluation plan. This includes knowing when to get help along the way. For those with no evaluation experience, knowing how to start and keeping evaluation plans realistic are the biggest hurdles to overcome. You will gain confidence by doing it!

When do I start?

As ideas for your program are being formulated, it is wise to start evaluation planning. If you are submitting a proposal for funding, include your evaluation plan. As part of your considerations, imagine the program is operational and begin to brainstorm questions you and other stakeholders will want to have answered. Consider the following questions as you begin planning your evaluation:

- Which questions can you ask to get the feedback you need?
- Who do you need to ask to be sure you have heard from the right people?
- What methods can you use to get answers to your questions?



“I thought I was good to go, but I needed help with the focus groups and the analysis.”

What are the basic steps?

To guide your evaluation plan, use the following Evaluation Planning Steps. You may need to learn other skills or get help from colleagues with relevant experience (e.g., running a focus group, designing a questionnaire, analysing and presenting information in a way to get the maximum benefit for your work).

“I asked around and found great tools to work with in the development of the evaluation plan and collection of data.”

Evaluation Planning Steps

- Step 1** Involve the right people.
- Step 2** Assess your resources.
- Step 3** Describe your program for evaluation purposes.
- Step 4** Undertake a systems or contextual analysis.
- Step 5** Define the evaluation questions.
- Step 6** Determine the evaluation measures and design.
- Step 7** Develop a plan to use the results.
- Step 8** Reevaluate your evaluation plan.

Step 1 – *Involve the right people*

One of the most important steps is to involve other people. The people you include may be current or potential clients, colleagues, supervisors, community partners, opinion leaders, or people with specific expertise. By including others, the evaluation plan will be more relevant, everyone will learn more, and the process will be more enjoyable. Each person you involve will have different experiences with evaluation and different ideas about the most important aspect to evaluate. In addition, the results will be more useful in assessing your program. As a group, allow time to develop a plan for decision-making. Make this early process as participatory as possible. Include people who will have access to the program or who will benefit from the program.

Step 2 – *Assess your resources*

Your evaluation plan needs to be realistic and in proportion to the nature and scope of your program. To achieve this, it is helpful to set aside a percentage of your budget for evaluation and plan accordingly. You also need to take into account other “in-kind” resources and expertise that may be available from colleagues, your organization, or community partners. As your evaluation plan evolves, develop a detailed evaluation budget, just as you will have done for the program itself. Your budget may include:

- Gifts for focus group participants.
- Cost of telephone calls.
- Photocopying or printing of surveys, handouts, or recruitment posters.
- Consulting an evaluation expert.
- Data collection or analysis software.
- Remuneration for someone to complete data collection or data analysis.

Step 3 – Describe your program for evaluation purposes

It is most common to organize your evaluation around the intended objectives of the program. Developing a program logic model is a great way to clarify the logic that links the process objectives to the outcome objectives. In other words, the logic model links what your program will do, or is intending to do, with the intended results in the short, intermediate, and longer term. For this reason, the logic model is also a great tool to include in your program proposal - it then becomes a good stepping stone to your evaluation plan.

There are many online resources and articles about logic models. Some examples are provided in the resources listed on pages 9 and 10. You can pick the format that works for you. A paper by Brian Rush (1991) may be helpful as well as the webinar he conducted for the Best Start Resource Centre breastfeeding community projects (see page 10).

Following the approach suggested by Rush (1991), a practical tip in developing a program logic



model is to use small, repositionable sticky notes.

Give each major component of your program a sticky note and label it (e.g., Volunteer Recruitment and Training, Peer Support, Breastfeeding Café, etc.). Lay these sticky notes out horizontally. Next, put a second row of sticky notes underneath the first row and list what the program is doing, or will do, in each component. For example, under Peer Support, you might include *match peer support volunteer and the mother* or *provide one-on-one telephone support*. These are your process objectives, and they state what should be undertaken in each component of your program – they are action oriented.

Under the row of process objectives, put a third row of sticky notes for short-term outcomes, a fourth row for intermediate outcomes, and a final row for long-term outcomes. For example, under Peer Support, the short-term outcome may be *increased knowledge in handling practical challenges, increased confidence in breastfeeding, or increased knowledge of community supports*. An intermediate outcome might be *extended duration of breastfeeding*. A long-term goal might be *a noticeable trend of extended breastfeeding duration within the community*. Notice these are

all change oriented.

Other types of programs might be more complicated. One purpose of the logic model is to test the logic or underlying rationale of your program. If the underlying logic doesn't make sense, put the evaluation on hold and re-think the design of the program itself.

The following are examples of questions you may uncover when developing your logic model.

- Will physicians allocate time to training sessions?
- Do high-priority mothers within some populations have regular Internet access?

Two more tips on logic models:

1. Create your model in a group process to get a diversity of ideas.
2. Be sure to include your intermediate and long-term objective(s) even if your project funding is short-term. For example, your intentions may include changes in awareness, attitudes, breastfeeding behaviour, breastfeeding rates, healthier children, etc. At this stage, it's important that you use the logic model to clarify your thinking and to communicate the overall design and expectations for your program.

Step 4 – Undertake a systems or contextual analysis

A logic model by its very nature does not consider any outside variables. However, your program exists, or will exist, in a community and organizational context. It is important for your evaluation planning to consider the context in which your program will operate. For example, do you have sufficient resources for the program itself? Are key-opinion leaders within the organization or community aware and supportive? Will your program duplicate other services? Has something similar been tried before with limited success? If needed, will you be able to recruit the right staff to manage the program? These types of questions can be answered through discussions with colleagues and community partners, interviews with key-opinion leaders, or more formal community needs assessment.

Step 5 – Define the evaluation questions

When you travel to an unfamiliar place, it is helpful to have a roadmap in hand and some preliminary ideas about the important places to visit considering your available time and budget. In evaluation, this is the purpose of your evaluation questions. It is a common mistake for an evaluation to be too ambitious at the beginning. If evaluation priorities do not get established and documented from the beginning, you and your collaborators can easily get overwhelmed with more information than is necessary.

Framing evaluation questions can be challenging as it requires those who are involved in project planning and implementation to think past the setup of the project and to focus on results. In evaluation, you ask questions about how something went in the past. When planning the program and its evaluation at the same time, you are imagining the future when the program is operational and looking back.

The following are examples of well-framed evaluation questions:

- Did we reach the people we intended with the community breastfeeding café?
If not, why not?
- Were our peer support volunteers able to resolve breastfeeding challenges? Did their support increase the confidence of breastfeeding mothers? Did their support increase the duration of breastfeeding for some mothers?
- Did we get the expected participation from health service providers in our training program? If not, why not?
- Did we effect changes in the breastfeeding rates in our community?

Step 6 – Determine the evaluation measures and design

There is a close connection between the question(s) to be answered and the evaluation format that will provide the most useful answers, including the indicators and measures to be tracked.

The following table shows how evaluation measures correlate to the evaluation design.

EVALUATION MEASURES	EVALUATION DESIGN
<p>Questions about reach and operations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the breastfeeding café engaging mothers from our target population (e.g., new Canadians)? • Are participants' expectations and expressed needs being met? 	<p>Process Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use registration forms to track demographics. • Use interviews or focus groups to identify challenges accessing the program. • Use an anonymous questionnaire to assess participants' satisfaction.
<p>Questions about results achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did participation in the training workshops increase health care providers' consistent messaging and support for breastfeeding? • Was there an increase in the rate of breastfeeding among new mothers following health care provider training? 	<p>Outcome Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a questionnaire pre- and post-workshop to assess participants' attitudes and practices with respect to breastfeeding. Supplement these with semi-structured interviews. • Conduct retrospective random chart reviews of new mothers involved in the program to ensure their breastfeeding practices were documented.

Using the following table can help organize your thinking as well as identify and prioritize options. It is best used as a brainstorming tool, while working your way through the logic model. Once you have your evaluation plan, go back and prioritize what is most important for future decisions and what is most feasible to accomplish with your allocated resources.

Evaluation measures and design using a peer-support program as an example

PROGRAM COMPONENTS OR OBJECTIVES	EVALUATION QUESTIONS	OUTPUTS, MEASURES, OR INDICATORS	DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES
<i>taken from your logic model</i>	<i>evaluation measures</i>	<i>taken from your logic model</i>	<i>evaluation design</i>
MEASURING PROCESS EFFECTIVENESS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit peer support volunteers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has our recruitment process been successful? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records for volunteers, including demographic information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer support volunteer application form. Tracking of applications.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train peer support volunteers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do volunteers feel adequately trained to handle common questions (e.g., latching, sore nipples, and breastfeeding after caesarian)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer support volunteer documentation shows common questions were discussed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer support volunteer documentation forms.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide one-on-one telephone support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are volunteers actively providing one-on-one telephone support? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of peer volunteers matched with mothers Number of mothers being supported Number of calls completed and recorded between mothers and volunteers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tracking of volunteers in program and peer support matches made. Tracking of mothers matched. Peer support volunteer documentation forms.
MEASURING OUTCOME EFFECTIVENESS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased knowledge in handling practical challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do participating mothers say that information needs were met? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressed satisfaction with program participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief survey questionnaire on entry to and exit from program.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased confidence in breastfeeding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do participants report an increase in breastfeeding confidence? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-reported breastfeeding confidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief survey questionnaire.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased knowledge of community supports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do participants report an increase in knowledge of community supports? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-reported increase in knowledge of community supports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief survey questionnaire.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased duration of breastfeeding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have participants continued breastfeeding beyond their expectations, previous breastfeeding experiences, or community norm? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-reported increase in breastfeeding duration beyond expectations, previous breastfeeding experiences, or community norm. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A follow-up survey that asks about planned and actual breastfeeding duration.

Depending on the data collection strategies proposed, you may need to get some specialized help or learn some additional skills. For example, semi-structured interviews or focus groups will require qualitative analysis. There are specific methods available as well as software for analysing qualitative information. If there is too much information to manually sort through and identifying common themes, you may want to consider using software. If there is not too much, you can organize similar information into themes manually or with a word processing computer program.

Similarly, a pre and post intervention design may require statistical analysis to see if the differences observed are greater than what might be attributable to chance. Analysis and presentation of evaluation data can be handled with a spreadsheet computer program creating frequency counts (e.g., confidence level by age of the mothers) and presentations with bar charts or other types of graphing formats.

Step 7 – Develop a plan to use the results

As you develop your evaluation priorities and plans, it is important to prepare a written evaluation plan that can be referred to and updated from time to time. This can also be useful for documenting why you chose to measure some things and not others, which can be extremely helpful if there is turnover among key stakeholders, partners, or those responsible for the evaluation.

Step 8 – Reevaluate your evaluation plan

Before finalizing your plans and beginning data gathering, it is wise to revisit the budget and ensure that the time and resources are available to complete the work successfully. You may need to reevaluate your evaluation plan more than once as your program unfolds. If during your reevaluation, you recognize problems with your evaluation plan, return to and repeat previously-completed steps. This process can be repeated until you are ready to proceed.

Common lessons learned from others

The following are some common lessons learned that may provide some additional guidance.

“I wish I had prepared my evaluation plans and information collection tools to be ready for the launch. Once I got going it was hard to develop my evaluation plan when the program was already running.”

“I reviewed the demographics of the participants weekly and also where they heard about the peer support and café. Knowing this helped us adjust our promotional efforts.”

“It can be difficult to get real outcomes in a short project. We supplemented our resources to do a longer tracking of actual behavioural change.”

“I didn’t get a good follow-up rate to my online questionnaire, so I found a volunteer student to make some follow-up calls.”

“Our first priority was reach. If we don’t have good participation, then the whole program is at risk. We focused our efforts on tracking use of the online resource and success of promotional efforts.”

“It’s best to rely on interventions that have a proven track record from research and with documented outcomes. This can save time when creating your own outcome evaluation. It is helpful to consider the uniqueness of your community context.”

Resources and References

Practical Tools

Canada

- Quality Improvement and Innovation Partnership's (QIIP) Evaluation, Needs Assessment and Performance Measures Working Group. (2010, January). *Logic model resource guide*. Mississauga, ON: Author. Retrieved from www.hqontario.ca/portals/0/Documents/qi/qi-rg-logic-model-1012-en.pdf
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US

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- Preskill, H., Parkhurst, M., Splansky Juster, J. (2013). *Building a strategic learning and evaluation system for your organization*. Boston: FSG. Retrieved from www.fsg.org/publications/building-strategic-learning-and-evaluation-system-your-organization#download-area
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Organizations

Best Start Resource Centre
www.beststart.org

HC Link
www.hclinkontario.ca

Public Health Ontario Health Promotion Capacity Building Services
www.publichealthontario.ca
www.publichealthontario.ca/en/ServicesAndTools/HealthPromotionServices/Pages/default.aspx

Articles

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Books

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- Wyatt Knowlton, L., & Phillips, C. C. (2013). *The logic model guidebook: Better strategies for great results*, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Webcast

- Rush, B.R. (2014). *Populations with Lower Rates of Breastfeeding: Using a Logic Model to Design an Effective Evaluation Strategy*. Available at <http://healthnexus.adobeconnect.com/p1s7kwifhg6/>