



EVALUATION TOOLKIT

How to evaluate activities intended to increase awareness and use of colorectal cancer screening

The National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable (NCCRT) has partnered with Wilder Research to create this evaluation tip sheet. The NCCRT is a national coalition of public, private, and voluntary organizations whose mission is to advance colorectal cancer control efforts by improving communication, coordination, and collaboration among health agencies, medical-professional organizations, and the public. The ultimate goal of the Roundtable is to increase the use of proven colorectal cancer screening tests among the entire population for whom screening is appropriate. This project was supported by CDC Cooperative Agreement Number U50/DP001863. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC. A companion toolkit, training module, and webinar which provide more extensive evaluation instructions, are also available.

What is evaluation?

We know that screening for colorectal cancer helps prevent and detect the disease early, thus increasing the likelihood of survival in these individuals. For these reasons, many organizations focus resources on raising awareness about colorectal cancer and increasing individuals' commitment to undergo screening. **Evaluation**, collecting information about how your program operates and its impact, helps you demonstrate the success of your activities and identify ways to improve. A good evaluation can also help you monitor service delivery, assess participant or community needs, and secure or maintain funding for your program.

The material presented in this tip sheet is intended to provide a brief overview of things to consider when evaluating strategies designed to promote colorectal cancer screening, including client reminders, client incentives, small media, group education, and one-on-one education. For more detailed instructions, samples, and other resources, please see the National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable's Evaluation Toolkit.

What can I learn about my program through evaluation?

Evaluation can help you answer a variety of questions about your program. Many evaluations measure a program's outcomes or impact. This may include **short-term outcomes** (often changes in awareness or knowledge, or an increased willingness or commitment to be screened), **intermediate outcomes** (typically changes in behavior or practice, such as actually getting screened), or **long-term outcomes** (more global changes, such as overall increases in the screening rates for a particular community).

Other evaluation questions explore the program's implementation, to see whether the program is working as expected and to identify and resolve any implementation challenges. Participant satisfaction with services is another common area of exploration. The following list illustrates some of the many questions that can be explored through program evaluation:

- ▶ Is our program/campaign communicating accurate information about colorectal cancer and colorectal cancer screening options?
- ▶ Did our activities increase discussions about colorectal cancer screening among family and friends?
- ▶ How many people did we reach through our colorectal cancer screening awareness program? Are we reaching our intended target groups?
- ▶ Did our program increase participants' knowledge of colorectal cancer and the importance of colorectal cancer screening?
- ▶ Did our activities increase intention, motivation, or pledges to screen for colorectal cancer?
- ▶ Did our activities increase the number of people who talked to their doctor or health care provider about screening?
- ▶ Did risk-appropriate individuals get screened for colorectal cancer as a result of our activities?
- ▶ Did our activities increase screening rates among the age-appropriate population?
- ▶ How satisfied are people with the program activities and materials? What suggestions do people have for improving activities or materials?
- ▶ Did participants find our educational or screening materials useful? If so, how? If not, why not?

Evaluation is a technical process that encourages careful planning of what you want to know and how you are going to gather the data to answer your questions. While requiring some skill to do well, evaluation does not need to be overly complicated, time-consuming, or expensive. In fact, the best evaluations are often those that are kept simple and targeted to key program questions.

How are evaluations conducted?

Evaluation is best thought of as a series of steps, designed to help you identify and prioritize your evaluation needs, collect the right information to answer your questions, interpret your findings, and use the results to enhance your program. Each of these steps is further described in the full evaluation toolkit. Rather than being linear, it is helpful to see evaluation as an ongoing circular process. Once an evaluation cycle is complete, you typically find yourself back at the beginning again. You may want to revise your evaluation to explore additional issues or questions that were not your highest priority the first time around, or which emerged through the course of your evaluation. If you changed your services based on your findings, you may want to continue your evaluation to see if the changes had the desired impact on your program success.

Step 1: Describe and map your program.

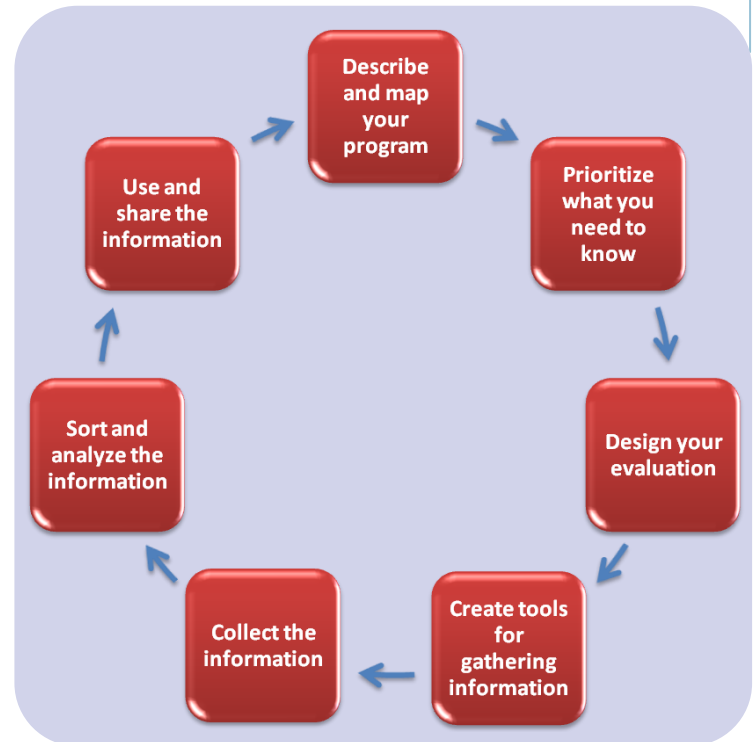
When you design a program to increase colorectal cancer screening awareness or use, you consider a number of factors, such as **who** the intervention should target and **how** the services should be delivered. A necessary part of the evaluation process is being able to clearly articulate **why** you provide each specific intervention and **how** these activities will benefit participants or the community. This description is often referred to as a **program theory**. Concisely describing your theory can help build a shared understanding of the program among stakeholders, identify the right outcomes to measure, and guide program enhancements. In addition to articulating what your program does, it is helpful to “map” your program. Program maps, or **logic models**, present a clear picture of the links between your program activities and what you expect to happen as a result. They represent an easy way to show stakeholders, such as funders, staff, and participants, what should happen in your program.

A sample outline for the program theory for a colorectal cancer program is as follows:

- ▶ **IF** a certain set of resources (such as staff, equipment, materials) are available, **THEN** the program can provide a certain set of activities or services to participants.
- ▶ **IF** participants receive these services, **THEN** they experience specific changes in their knowledge, attitudes, or skills.
- ▶ **IF** individuals change their knowledge, attitudes, or skills, **THEN** they will change their behavior and usual practice.
- ▶ **IF** enough participants change their behavior and practice, **THEN** the program may have a broader impact on screening rates in the community.
- ▶ **IF** screening rates go up, **THEN** colorectal cancer incidence and mortality rates will decrease.

Step 2: Prioritize what you need to know.

Use your logic model and other program materials, as well as feedback from people interested in your program, to decide which evaluation questions are the most important to answer. For example, your colorectal cancer program may be interested in knowing whether your program participants understood the colorectal cancer screening materials provided, whether participants are



satisfied with the services they are receiving through your colorectal cancer program, or whether your activity increased screening rates.

Step 3: Design your evaluation. Before embarking on an evaluation, assess your program’s resources and capacity to conduct the evaluation. By knowing your resources, you can design a process that will answer your evaluation questions and be completed within the budget, staff, and time available. For example, you might want to use a survey to collect data from participants at events, conduct a phone interview with patients, or gather information from program records or community databases. All information gathering strategies have strengths and weaknesses; considering them helps you choose the most appropriate and reasonable options for your situation.

Step 4: Create tools for gathering information.

The tools you use to collect information will vary for each evaluation. You could design your own data collection materials, such as your own survey or interview questions. You could also use existing materials, such as medical records or information from national databases such as

the Health Information National Trends Survey (HINTS). Either way, any data collection instruments you use should align with your prioritized evaluation questions and be tailored to your audience to make it easy for them to understand what you are asking.

Step 5: Collect the information. The next step is to implement the evaluation, by gathering your information. Depending on your evaluation plan, you may need to conduct surveys, interview project partners, document service delivery, or collect information another way. It will be important to keep in mind expectations from funding sources, time and budget considerations, and the appropriateness of the data collection method for your population.

Step 6: Sort and analyze the information. Whether you have collected verbal data such as open-ended comments from a survey or a key informant interview, or numerical data such as responses to a survey question, the next step is to organize the data in a way that can be easily understood and used to identify your key findings.

Step 7: Use and share the information. Once you have gone through the effort of conducting an evaluation, it is important to use the information to help you make decisions about improving your programming, targeting your awareness and screening efforts, soliciting funding, and communicating your successes. It is also important to share the information with those who care about your program such as funders, clients, medical practitioners, county health staff, and program staff. Likewise, sharing evaluation information with a broader professional audience, through journals or presentations, can further the field of colorectal cancer awareness and screening.

Core questions

One of the challenges with comparing evaluation results from one program to the next is that programs often write survey questions in very different ways. The National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable suggests that programs consider including the five “core” questions below in their evaluation instruments. These questions are taken from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey. Including “core” questions will make it easier to compare program results nation or statewide. In addition, you can use the core questions to make the case for program support. Maybe your program is doing much better than the national average? Perhaps you can show steady progress toward national screening rates, despite working in an underserved community with limited funding? If everyone uses these core questions in their evaluation instruments, it will help us improve our overall understanding of effective programming in a wide variety of settings.

Aside from the five core questions, we also recommend including questions to assess knowledge of colorectal cancer screening; intention to screen; discussions with family, friends, or medical providers about colorectal cancer and screening; attitudes toward screening; and satisfaction with the program or program materials. Since these questions have been included in national surveys, you can compare your results to those within your state or region. They can be included in evaluations of program outcomes, implementation, and satisfaction.

Some final tips

- Focus on your most important evaluation questions – it is better to measure a few things well, than to measure lots of things poorly.
- Consider including questions about outcomes, implementation, and satisfaction – looking at these issues together will help you make more informed programming decisions, as you will better understand not only the outcomes that resulted, but where changes should be made to enhance success and increase satisfaction.

CORE QUESTIONS

- 1. A blood stool test is a test that may use a special kit at home to determine whether the stool contains blood. Have you ever had this test using a home kit?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't know / Not sure
 - Refused

- 2. How long has it been since you had your last blood stool test using a home kit?**
 - Within the past year (anytime less than 12 months ago)
 - Within the past 2 years (1 year but less than 2 years ago)
 - Within the past 3 years (2 years but less than 3 years ago)
 - Within the past 5 years (3 years but less than 5 years ago)
 - 5 or more years ago
 - Don't know / Not sure
 - Refused

- 3. Sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy are exams in which a tube is inserted in the rectum to view the colon for signs of cancer or other health problems. Have you ever had either of these exams?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't know / Not sure
 - Refused

- 4. For a sigmoidoscopy, a flexible tube is inserted into the rectum to look for problems. A colonoscopy is similar, but uses a longer tube, and you are usually given medication through a needle in your arm to make you sleepy and told to have someone else drive you home after the test. Was your most recent exam a sigmoidoscopy or a colonoscopy?**
 - Sigmoidoscopy
 - Colonoscopy
 - Don't know / Not sure
 - Refused

- 5. How long has it been since you had your last sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy?**
 - Within the past year (anytime less than 12 months ago)
 - Within the past 2 years (1 year but less than 2 years ago)
 - Within the past 3 years (2 years but less than 3 years ago)
 - Within the past 5 years (3 years but less than 5 years ago)
 - Within the past 10 years (5 years but less than 10 years ago)
 - 10 or more years ago
 - Don't know / Not sure
 - Refused

So often the energy behind an evaluation of a program is to suit the needs and desires of a funding source, or, like a lot of programs, several funding sources. It's easy to think of evaluation as a means to an end, a process that must be endured in order to get the funds you need to get the work done. Evaluation can have a significant impact in other ways, such as program improvement. It is important for evaluation staff and stakeholders to remember that evaluation can be incredibly useful in making your colorectal cancer screening awareness program more effective and will likely increase the likelihood of the program continuing. Evaluation is much more than a final report. The evaluation process teaches many lessons, and the process is most meaningful when different groups of stakeholders are involved from the beginning.

- Involve your core stakeholders, such as program staff, current and potential funders, health care providers, county health workers, patients, community members, advocacy groups, and insurers – these stakeholders are all concerned about what changes occurred because of your efforts and can provide great input throughout the evaluation process.
- Consider a variety of information sources – some evaluation questions can only be answered using first hand perspectives of participants, while others can be explored using existing data found in national databases, program records, or other sources.
- Review materials carefully - cultural differences among people involved (directly and indirectly) in the evaluation, language comprehension, and discomfort with the subject of colorectal cancer must be taken into account.
- Address ethical concerns – take steps to protect the rights of your participants and comply with all local and federal data privacy laws.
- Develop a plan for using results – use the results to create an action plan to build on your program's strengths and address any shortcomings or concerns.
- Share your findings — this can help inform the public, make health information meaningful, build community relations, develop partnerships with funders, and sustain or secure future funding.



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FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about colorectal cancer, please visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at cdc.gov. For questions about evaluation, please contact Mary Doroshenk, Director of the National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable at Mary.Doroshenk@cancer.org

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