

Sport

in the Neighbourhood

5 EVALUATE THE PROGRAM

Evaluation is an important part of the process because a good evaluation structure will give you valuable feedback on how the project is going and ultimately whether your project is working.

Evaluation of your program doesn't have to be difficult – in fact the simpler the better! But it does need to focus on and measure the program objectives that were established at the beginning of the project.

TIP Take baseline measures at the start of the program and repeat these in the same way for the follow up evaluation(s). Using the same process to gather this information will ensure the results of your evaluation produces useful information that can be used in comparison.

Why do we need to evaluate?

Evaluation is important for a number of reasons:

- To understand whether your project is achieving its goals
- If the program isn't achieving its goals, evaluations allow changes/a new direction to be taken
- Reporting back to the community on progress
- Positive results can help to attract greater support for your project (including funding and other valuable resources)
- Positive reinforcement for the volunteers of the project.

What do we need to evaluate?

Evaluation aims to determine whether the project is meeting its original goals and objectives which were established and measured prior to starting the program (e.g. Increase number of families using the local park, increased level of physical activity of children).

Of course, measuring some of these outcomes can be difficult so the working group needs to carefully establish goals initially and set up an evaluation process that can easily measure these goals.

Lessons from Sport in the Neighbourhood

We based our evaluation on the number of kids and parents who attended each week. To collect these statistics we developed a sign-in template that every participant had to record their name and age on prior to participating. That way we knew who attended and how many and we also collected age demographics throughout the program.

How do we do the evaluation?

There are a number of ways an evaluation can be undertaken but this will depend upon what your objectives are and what you are evaluating. Above all you want your evaluation process to be simple but effective.

You might consider using one of the following methods to undertake your evaluation:

- Participant surveys/questionnaires
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Community forums/public meetings
- Collection of statistical data (websites, research institutions, government).

When do we evaluate?

It is important to keep in mind that evaluation is a process rather than an event. To get the most out of your program evaluation should occur on an on-going basis to ensure the program doesn't stray from its intended objectives.

Things to remember about your evaluation process:

- Evaluation methods should be established prior to starting the program
- Decide on an evaluation schedule that gives sufficient time for "things to change"
- Half yearly and yearly evaluations are commonly used time-frames to conduct an evaluation and review
- You may be required to evaluate at certain times (e.g. annually) due to funding requirements associated with the program.

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TIP Ensure that you report the results of evaluation back to the community and program stakeholders. Keep the community up-to-date and informed about the program and they are more likely to keep supporting!

EVALUATE THE PROGRAM – SUMMARY OF KEY TASKS

- Firmly establish the goals and objectives of the program prior to starting
- Design your evaluation to measure these objectives
- Use a method of evaluation that is simple and effective
- Build evaluation into the program
- Report evaluation results back to the community and stakeholders.