Evaluation Plan FAQ's

Why is a DD Council required to develop an evaluation plan?

Because the people who pay the bills (Congress) want to know how their money is being spent. As such, AIDD provides specific items to be addressed in the DD Council 5-year State plan related to the evaluation plan.

What is the general intent (purpose) of an overall evaluation plan?

The purpose of an overarching evaluation plan is to provide a foundation for the design, methods and uses for an evaluation. Clearly explaining the overall purpose will help a DD Council avoid making uninformed decisions about how the evaluation will be conducted and used.

A clear purpose focused on 'use' will help those charged with carrying out the evaluation know what will be done with the findings.

What are some common ways DD Councils use evaluation information?

1) to gain insight;
2) to improve how things are done;
3) to determine what the effects of the initiatives were;
4) to understand how people who participated in the initiative were affected

Who uses evaluation information?

Users are specific individual(s) or organization who receives evaluation findings. A receiver uses information to focus on things that will inform as well as influence future actions.

What are the intended uses of evaluation information?

Uses describe what will be done with the information learned from an evaluation are connected to the common ways organization's use evaluation information.

To gain insight.   Evaluation uses include assessing needs and wants of citizens; identifying barriers to access; learning how to best describe and measure program activities.

To improve how things get done. This information can be used to describe program processes, to improve how the program operates, and to fine-tune the overall strategy. Evaluations uses include efforts to improve the quality, effectiveness, or efficiency of program activities; improve educational materials; determine the extent to which plans were implemented; enhance cultural competence; make mid-course adjustments; clarify communication; determine if consumer satisfaction can be improved, and; compare costs to benefits.

To determine what the effects of the program are. Evaluations uses include examining the relationship between program activities and observed consequences. Such evaluations should provide evidence about what the program's contribution was to reaching longer-term goals. Uses of the information can help DD Councils decide where to allocate new resources, document the level of success in accomplishing objectives, demonstrate that accountability requirements are fulfilled

To affect those who participate in it. The act of participating in an evaluation can empower program participants and give them a sense of control over the program; can supplement the program by reinforcing the main message of the program; can promote staff development through teaching staff how to collect, analyze and interpret information; contribute to organizational growth through clarification of how the program relates to an organization's mission.

What is the difference between formative and summative evaluation questions?

Formative evaluation questions are designed to help improve the program; information is periodic and reported and can be shared quickly to improve efforts.

Summative evaluation questions are designed to help prove whether the program worked the way you planned; information is usually before and after snapshots reported after a program ends and documents the effectiveness and lessons learned from the experience.

What do we do with evaluation information?

Ultimately, conclusions will be made based on evaluation information. Core elements involved in justifying conclusions include standards, analysis and synthesis, interpretation, judgments, and recommendations.

- ➢ Standards reflect the values held by stakeholders about the program/initiative. Standards provide the basis to make program/initiative judgments about a program's performance and help determine ratings such as adequate, successful, or unsuccessful.
- ➢ Analysis and synthesis are methods to explore and summarize findings. Analysis can show important findings and synthesis allows different sources of information to be combined to reach a larger understanding.
- ➢ Interpretation involves the effort to figure out what the findings mean. Information must be interpreted to understand their practical significance. Interpretations draw on information and perspectives that stakeholders bring to the evaluation.
- ➢ Judgments are statements about merit, worth, or significant of a program/initiative. Judgments are formed by comparing findings and interpretations against one or more standards.
- ➢ Recommendations are actions to consider as a result of the evaluation.

The 5-year State plan Section V: Evaluation Plan [Section 125(c)(3) and (7)] Requested components:

1) Outline how the Council will examine the progress made in achieving the goals of the State Plan.
    a. The extent to which the goals were achieved
    b. The strategies that contributed to achieving the goals
    c. Factors that impeded achievement of the goals
    d. Separate info on the self-advocacy goal
    e. Updates (if appropriate) on results of CRA analysis
    f. Consumer satisfaction (as appropriate)

2) Explain the methodology, which may be qualitative or quantitative, that will be used to determine if the needs identified and discussed are being met and if the Council results are being achieved.
    a. Define the procedures the council will use to monitor progress; specifically how the council will track the progress to address the targeted disparity
    b. Discuss council activities that will measure (or address) Council's effectiveness
    c. Method or measures for determining progress?
    d. Measure the extent to which the intended sub-outcomes for the objective are being met
    e. Logic model

3) Describe the Council's role in reviewing and commenting on progress towards reaching the goals of the Plan.

4) Describe how the annual review will identify emerging trends and needs as a means for updating the Comprehensive Review and Analysis.

The Council's evaluation plan will use multi-method approaches to determine if identified needs are being met and if the ultimate goals and outcomes are being achieved. Council activities will be measured through multiple methods including:

Surveys- will be collected from participants from post trainings and/or technical assistance activities, to provide overall input, as well as assess changes in attitudes, knowledge, and skills gains acquired through participation in Council activities.

Pre & post-tests- pre-tests will be used in some projects to measure the baseline of participants' knowledge, skills, attitudes, prior to participating in Council education and training programs. After their participation, they will complete post-tests, to measure the increase made in the targeted areas

Focus groups- will be conducted to gather information from stakeholders. Results will be analyzed & to the extent possible, incorporated into Council activities.

Face to face & telephone interviews - will be conducted w/ some stakeholders, particularly in projects that work w/ a small targeted group.

Follow –up surveys - will be administered to obtain data from participants on the extent to which they are applying knowledge & skills or applying new practices acquired through Council activities.

 Follow-up interviews - interview questions will be structured to provide in-depth information regarding the outcomes of education, trainings, & technical assistance & the application by participants of such knowledge, skills, & practices acquired through Council activities.

Review of publications & products- products & materials will undergo an in-depth review to ensure completion, quality & relevance on intended outcomes.

On-site observations/monitoring- will be conducted by Council members & staff to ensure such activities are implemented as proposed & planned to meet intended outcomes.

State Agency Data reports- for data being tracked for the purposes of Council demonstration projects at the local level, similar, data if available, will be requested from the appropriate state entity to identify state level, trends, emerging & /or continuing needs & evidence of systems change

After Council funding has ended, data will be collected in order to assess the extent to which progress is being made towards systems change.