Iowa Partnerships for Success Grant: Evaluation Primer and Guide

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Introduction

Over the past year, you and your coalition have steadfastly assessed, planned, prepared, and trained for Iowa Partnerships for Success underage drinking prevention and youth binge drinking prevention in your county. It was a lot of work getting to this point. Congratulations! The next step is to put your efforts into action and implement those strategies in your county. But how will you know if your actions are paying off and really making a difference in your community along the way? This guide will provide instruction on how to create a plan that will hopefully help you and others in your county answer that question.

Purpose of Evaluation

An evaluation is an empirical and systematic study of your initiative. It is intended to help you and your county monitor strengths, weaknesses, and effectiveness of your project so that you may make informed decisions about future prevention efforts.

What can I find out?

What you learn about your strategies by conducting an evaluation depends on how you design your evaluation and what data you collect. These are things you will have to consider as you write your evaluation plan.

Some of the things you can learn from a well-designed evaluation include:

- What progress has been made towards our goals and objectives?
- Were the county's priority issues positively impacted?
- Is the strategy being implemented as intended?
- Does the strategy fit with the population's needs?
- How could the strategy or programming be refined or improved?
- What can we learn from the challenges?

More information will be provided in this manual to help you think about what kinds of information you should collect and what methods you may use to ensure that you have quality data for your evaluation.

"Good" Evaluation Standards

The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation issued evaluation standards in 1994 to regulate evaluations of educational and public health programs. You should consider using these standards when assessing your strategies to ensure that you get good information from your evaluation. The standards are utility, feasibility, propriety, accuracy, and accountability.

1. Utility – standards to ensure evaluation is useful to stakeholders
2. Feasibility – standards to increase evaluation effectiveness and efficiency
3. Propriety – ethical and legal standards
4. Accuracy – ensuring quality, dependability, and truthfulness of the evaluation findings
5. Accountability – standards in explaining methods and design

To learn more about these, please visit: http://www.jcsee.org/program-evaluation-standards-statements

Researchers are also held to basic ethical principles, as set forth in the Belmont Report issued by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research in 1979. Certain protections must be in place for participants:

1. Participants are informed about the purpose of the study, its risks and benefits. Information should be presented in a way that participants can understand.
2. Participation in the research is voluntary.
3. The benefits and risks of participation are balanced. Risks should be justified and minimized when possible.
4. Selection of research participants should be fair and protections should be in place for vulnerable populations.

Evaluation is a Journey

Evaluation is a journey and not a destination. Even though evaluation is the fifth step in the SPF framework, it is something you should be planning as soon as (or even well before) your county implements its prevention strategies. Throughout the journey, you want to be able to assess your initiative to make sure it is reaching goals and positively impacting the target population. No one wants to work for five years only to realize at the end that the project did not make a difference, did not reach the intended population, or worse, was detrimental to participants!

It takes time and consistency to conduct an evaluation, but the work will pay off. You will be able to monitor your strategies every step of the way, recognize things that are working well, identify any problem arising sooner in the process, build greater awareness of your project, and justify additional needs to ensure future sustainability.

Planning for Evaluation

Why plan?

An evaluation plan is a roadmap that should guide you through each step of the evaluation process. A good resource for developing a plan is University of Kansas' Community Tool Box online guide at http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/evaluate/evaluation/evaluation-plan/main. Several reasons for creating an evaluation plan include:

- To decide what information you and your stakeholders need
- To determine what is most important so you don't waste time collecting everything
- To identify the best methods and strategies for getting the needed information
- To develop a reasonable and realistic timeline for evaluation
- To anticipate how you might use the evaluation results to guide the decisions you make about your project

Planning 101

An evaluation is composed of several key parts. This section will provide information on the primary roles that your county will be responsible for in the process of evaluating the Partnerships for Success initiative. The goal is to increase your understanding of quality data, design methods for data collection, and perform basic analysis to measure the results. It is organized into four questions. These are things you should consider any time you plan to collect data or evaluate a program.

Who cares?

Think about the **audience** that will receive the results of your analysis. This should guide the purpose of your evaluation and help you make decisions about what data you need to collect. For example, a group of law enforcement officers might be interested in learning about PFS operations, determining whether proper procedures were followed during a safety checkpoint and how to improve efficiency. A group of politicians, on the other hand, may be more interested in finding out what effect a safety checkpoint had on community members and whether public safety was improved as a result.

A culturally competent evaluation calls attention to the questions and needs of diverse stakeholders and cultures, and includes representatives of the population served every step of the way, from evaluation design to dissemination of the results.

How will I collect data?

- **Secondary data** are data that have been collected for a purpose other than your research project. It can be useful for collecting data on trends over time, demographics, crime, and behavioral patterns. Accessibility is an important consideration. Some secondary data sources, such as the U.S. Census are publically available, while access to others, such as state administrative databases, may be limited or restricted. Understanding the purpose and context in which the data were originally collected is important to ensure data quality, a topic that will be discussed in more depth in the following section.

- A **survey** is a method of collecting data through a series of questions asked of respondents in your target population through a questionnaire or interview. Surveys are often used to collect data on people's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors.
    - A **sample** is a subset of individuals in the target population. Sampling is often used in surveys when the entire population cannot be reached. It is important to identify a sample that is representative of the population and whose characteristics are similar enough to allow estimates to be made about the population.
    - The **method** of soliciting participation and collecting surveys can be online, via phone, through mail, or in-person. Each method has advantages and disadvantages.
        - **Online** surveys can be set up in a way to allow participants more anonymity (e.g. not collecting identifiers). They are typically less time consuming and cheaper to conduct than other methods through free online survey sites like SurveyMonkey. They place little time demand on participants, giving them the ability to take the survey at their convenience.
        - **Phone surveys** usually demand little from participants, but can be time consuming for the survey administrator(s) if the sample is large and follow-up contact has to be made.
        - **Mail** surveys may be a suitable method when trying to reach populations lacking internet or phone (e.g. economically disadvantaged or the elderly). However, postage makes this method more costly to administer than online or phone surveys.
        - **In-person interviews** may be the best method to reach difficult-to-reach populations (e.g. homeless people or prisoners). Face-to-face interaction may also work in situations when it is important to have an understanding of the setting or deeper discussion of survey topics.

When travel is required, administering interviews will involve greater time and resources. This method may only be feasible when the sample is small. Also, more assurances may be needed to protect participant confidentiality, a topic that will be discussed later.

- **Response rate** is the percentage respondents who participate in the survey out of the total eligible to participate. Response rate can affect data quality, a topic discussed in the next section. SAMHSA's goal for surveys used to report data is at least a 70% response rate.

- A **focus group** is a method of collecting data in a group setting. A small group of participants share their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes through face-to-face interaction with the researcher and others in the group. An advantage is that the researcher can gather information in more natural conversation than usually occurs during in-person interviewing. By talking to multiple people at once, the researcher learns how the group members interact with each other. Information gathered from this method is often more detailed and insightful, as the group talks through their thoughts and opinions. This method is lower cost than surveys and can yield results more quickly than one-on-one interviews. However, focus groups may not be appropriate for some settings, such as when the topic is sensitive or confidentiality must be protected. A group setting may encourage participation in more open or outgoing people while inhibiting those who are reserved or want to maintain their privacy.

  It takes planning and a good leader to facilitate group discussion. If you are interested in conducting focus groups, the following links are recommended.
  - A comprehensive checklist for everything from start to finish, including designing questions, recruiting participants, conducting the focus group, and analyzing results can be found using the following link: https://assessment.trinity.duke.edu/documents/How_to_Conduct_a_Focus_Group.pdf
  - The University of Kansas' Community Tool Box is a resource that provides more information about how to use a focus groups, the pros and cons, and helpful tips and considerations to plan and conduct one: http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/conduct-focus-groups/main

- A **pre-post- test** measures participants' knowledge, attitudes, or beliefs at multiple points in time, typically before and after a strategy or intervention has occurred. Change is observed at "snapshots" in time, rather than continual measurement. Asking for information on the current situation is often regarded as a more accurate

measurement than having participants recall situations after the fact. When using this method, pre- and post- measures should be consistent. Also, response rates tend to drop at follow-up, so the researcher should plan how they will contact participants, especially if long periods of time elapse between the tests.

- **Protecting confidentiality:** Information gathered on research participants may be confidential, sensitive, or public.
    - ***Confidential*** information is defined by Iowa Code 715C.1, Iowa Code 22.7, and the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Personal information includes a combination of an individual's first name and last name, social security number, driver's license number, and/or address. Public records that are confidential under law include but are not limited to student records, hospital/medical records, substance abuse treatment records, police reports for ongoing investigations, and personnel records of military members, governmental officials and employees.
    - ***Sensitive*** information is information that may not be confidential by itself, but which may become confidential when found or used in a particular context or when combined with other information.
    - ***Public*** information is not confidential or sensitive or is included in Iowa Open Records Law, as defined in Iowa Code 22.1. Public information includes but is not limited to public meeting agendas, meeting minutes, criminal history data, court records (excluding some juvenile records), inmate locator, obituaries, vital records, and the sex offender registry.

  How you protect confidentiality will depend on what research methods you use. For instance, if you are using an online survey, you can protect confidentiality by not collecting identifiers or names of the respondents. In an interview, you will very likely know the name of your interviewee, but you can secure interview materials and recordings on your computer and restrict the information you release in reports to ensure that their identities are not revealed.

- **Data storage and retention:** All data collected for this project should be securely stored and erased after the project has been completed.
    - Efforts should be made to ensure that all data retained for your project is secure. Interview recordings and electronic data should be stored in a secure folder on your computer that only staff directly involved in the project can access. You can add an additional layer of security by password-protecting files that contain confidential or sensitive information.

- Per the grant, data shall be kept for no more than five years past the contract end date. After the five year timeframe expires, all data should be deleted when it is no longer needed for reporting.

Will my data provide "good" information?

The answer to this question depends on what you know about your data. Context helps, and without it, the data and/or findings may be empirically useless. To illustrate this point, here are a couple examples where data quality and context matter:

> *Two different law enforcement agencies report statistics on alcohol-related crime, but the numbers reported do not match. After investigating the data sources, you learn that both numbers are correct, but are reported using different units of measure (e.g. number of offenders who reported being under the influence of alcohol at the time of the crime vs. number of offenders convicted of alcohol-related offenses).*
>
> *Data collected by the government from 1950-2000 is being used to measure long-term trends in a community. The numbers rose dramatically in the year 1980. The researcher interprets this to support his idea that a new policy in effect that year must have caused the change, without acknowledging the method of collecting the data had also changed that year.*

You are responsible for ensuring the data will provide be a good measure of what you are researching. The following details are important when assessing whether data are suitable for your project.

- **Frequency:** How recent are the data? How often are the data collected? Outdated data or data that is not collected very often may or may not be able to provide the information you need.
- **Response rate:** How many people participated? Is the data representative of the target population? As mentioned earlier, this is an important consideration when using data collected from samples. You may not be able to get accurate estimates if samples sizes are too low or not representative of your population.
- **Timeframe:** During what period of time were the data collected? Choose a timeframe that is appropriate for your evaluation. For example, if you report data monthly, you should specify which month the data cover.
- **Unit of measure:** This is a standard of quantity. Data collected from secondary sources that report data in different units from yours may or may not be useful to your evaluation. When reporting data, you should always state the unit of measure so others know what those numbers mean.

- **Source of Data:** Where did you get the data? If the data is from a secondary source that was collected for a purpose other than your research, you should know why and how the data were collected to ensure they will meet the needs of your project.
- **Reliability:** The measure is consistent and will produce similar results under consistent conditions every time.
- **Validity:** the measure is well-founded. Validity helps determine if the method and types of tests used will truly measures the idea or construct in question.
- **Accurate data entry:** The person responsible for entering and/or reporting the data should practice good recordkeeping practices. You may consider cross-checking data against other sources or building cross-checks into your database to catch data entry errors.
- **Cultural competence**: The data collection process should be culturally appropriate for all members of the target community. For instance, if your survey population includes Latinos, having the survey translated into Spanish is appropriate.

What are the data telling me?

Some of the data you collect will be **quantitative,** quantifiable information that is usually presented by numbers**.** This type of data generally can be analyzed using statistics. Numerical data are commonly gathered from secondary data sources, surveys, or pre-post-test methods.

- **Common Statistics:**
    - Population(N): the total number of people or items with the characteristics the researcher wishes to understand
    - Sample size (n): number of people or items in a subset of the population; the larger the sample size, the more precise the results will be as an estimate of the population
    - Mean ($\bar{x}$): the average, or the sum of all values in a set of numbers divided by the total numbers in the sample; it is affected by outliers
    - Standard deviation (σ): measures the amount of variance (or variability) in a set of numbers; a low value indicates that the set of numbers are close to the mean
    - Median ($\tilde{x}$): the middle value in an ordered set of numbers; it is *not* affected by outliers
    - Range (R): the lowest and highest values in a set of numbers
    - Statistical significance: data reach "significance" when statistical testing has shown the results reach a certain probability that the values observed could not have been caused by chance alone.
    - Correlation ($\rho_{x,y}$): the degree to which a relationship or association exists between an independent and a dependent variable. A value of "0" indicates

no correlation and a value of "1" indicates a perfect correlation. A negative correlation indicates that an *increase* in one variable is associated with a *decrease* in another variable. A positive correlation indicates that an *increase* in one variable is associated with an *increase* in another variable.

You may also collect information that is **qualitative,** data measured through quality rather than quantity. Analysis of qualitative data is more subjective. An evaluator makes assessments through interpretation and identification of themes from the standpoint of their own perspective. Qualitative data are likely to be gathered through interviews and focus groups. This usually involves a systematic approach of identifying themes in the conversations. Recordings and transcriptions of the interviews and focus groups can be used to identify themes and a review by multiple evaluators can cross-corroborate the findings.

Sharing results of your project with your stakeholders and other interested parties is an important part of the evaluation process. As you learn more about your strategies, you may be excited to start sharing information with your coalitions, community leaders, and the general public. Local media, newspapers, events, reports, or scheduled presentations may all be good channels for communicating valuable information about your project.

It is strongly encouraged that you validate your data, before distributing it. This includes double-checking for accuracy and cross-checking the information you have collected with other sources if they are available.

Any information you plan to distribute should protect the confidentiality of individuals and organizations. Findings should be reported in aggregate form, so that individuals cannot be identified. If the numbers of individuals participating on a given measure are low enough that an individual would be identifiable, the data should not be reported. It is always a good idea to notify organizations and ask them if you can identify them by name or provide details that could identify them in your report.

The IPFS State Evaluator, Cheryl Davidson, is a resource if you have any questions about the data you plan to distribute. Her contact information is cheryl.davidson@iowa.gov or 515-281-6929

How to Complete the IPFS Evaluation Plan

The IPFS Evaluation Plan is a required component of your implementation of the SPF process. The following directions are intended to guide your work. However, you are encouraged to develop and add to your plans to ensure that you collect meaningful and useful data for you, your coalition, and your county.

Your evaluation plan will consist of two parts, the Evaluation Summary and the Data Reporting Plan. **An Evaluation Plan Template document that is specific to your county will be posted to the Iowa PFS website Resources folder.** You will use the template to complete the IPFS Evaluation Plan. You may input information directly into the document. Please complete all the questions and submit it. If you have questions about the process or need assistance when completing the Evaluation Plan, please contact Cheryl Davidson at cheryl.davidson@iowa.gov.

Part 1: Evaluation Summary

In Part 1, counties will provide an overview of their plans for evaluation. This should be a brief, clear, and concise description to indicate that you have given consideration to the four components outlined in Planning 101. Please refer to the Planning 101 section earlier in this guide for additional information.

Instructions for Completing the Evaluation Summary

For each of the four components - Audience, Data Sources, Data Quality, and Analysis – please write a paragraph or less to answer each of the questions. The purpose of this is to get you thinking about how your county will collect and use the data. If more explanation is needed, please try to be as brief and concise as possible. If you do not currently have the capacity to answer one of the questions, please indicate what course of action you will take to address this. The Evaluation Plan Template includes each of the questions below and you may input your answers directly into the document.

A. **Audience**
   i. What groups or stakeholders will be sought for input in the evaluation process?
   ii. What, if any, efforts will be in place to ensure that minorities or special populations are represented?
   iii. What kinds of information do you anticipate stakeholders will be interested in knowing about your project?
   iv. How will you share data and reports with your coalition and stakeholders?

B. **Data Methods**

i. List all the methods that you plan to use to collect data on your strategies (e.g. secondary data, survey, focus group, interviews, pre-post- tests, and any other methods).

a. If using secondary data, how will you obtain the data and from what sources?

b. If conducting surveys, how will you solicit participants and approximately how many will be surveyed? What information will you seek from them? How will you store the completed surveys? How do you plan to tabulate the results?

c. If conducting focus groups, what groups will be represented and how many participants will be recruited? What information will you seek from them? Who will conduct the focus group and where will it take place? How do you plan to tabulate the results?

d. If using pre-post-tests, what information will you collect and how? Will data be available to you through the individual strategy curriculum? If not, what process will you use to collect the data? How will you store the completed tests? How do you plan to tabulate the results?

e. If using another method, please explain how the data will be collected.

ii. How do you plan to protect the confidentiality of the people you collect information from?

C. **Data quality**

i. Are the data sources you plan to use reliable (consistent measures over time)? Why or why not?

ii. Are the data sources valid (they measure what you want them to measure)? Why or why not?

iii. How will you ensure that the data you collect are representative of your county's IPFS priority population (12-20 year olds)?

D. **Analysis**

a. How will you use the data to help you find answers about your project?

b. How will you use the data to identify what changes/modifications are needed?

Part 2: Data Reporting Plan

Part 2 is intended to help you plan for the data reporting requirements and identify any areas that may need more development. Your county's Evaluation Plan Template will include only the measures relevant your county's strategies. The instructions provided below are only intended to give you an idea of the layout of the document and some examples of how to complete the information.

Instructions for Completing the Data Reporting Plan

The data reporting plan is organized in a table format. When you receive your county's Evaluation Plan Template document, you may add information directly into the tables. There will be a table with indicators designated for the strategies your county selected. You will fill out each column where information is applicable. You do not need to fill out information if a cell is not applicable on that specific indicator. If you do not have information to complete a given cell, indicate it is unknown. More information about each column is provided below.

- **Indicator Column**– an indicator is a measure for which data is needed. Multiple indicators are listed in the tables; some are intended to help you monitor your PFS process and activities and others to measure the outcomes of the strategies your county has selected. Some indicators listed in the data reporting tables are optional. Only provide information if you plan to collect data for the optional measures. In the row labeled "Other," you can add any additional indicators not listed elsewhere and relevant to the strategy that you plan to include in your evaluation.
- **Column A: Method** – for each indicator (if applicable), indicate the source(s) you will be using to collect the data. This could be surveys, focus groups, administrative data, program data, interviews, etc.
- **Column B: Measurement**—the measure used to collect information for each indicator (if applicable). For instance, if you are using an interview or survey to collect data, indicate the wording of the question asked. If using program data or an administrative database, the unit of measure is appropriate (e.g. the number of ads produced for the campaign will be used as a measure on the media coverage indicator).
- **Column C: Target Population –**the characteristics of the population you will be collecting information about (if applicable). For instance, if you are implementing an individual strategy for ninth graders at Jackson Junior High and you plan to collect pre-post- tests to find out what participants learned during the alcohol prevention class, your target population is the group of ninth graders at Jackson Junior High.
- **Column D: Reporting** –how often the data are available to you. For instance, ongoing (you always have access to the data or will collect it on a continual basis), once a week (data will be updated on a weekly basis), monthly, annually, etc.
- **Column E: Timeframe** – the period of time for which data will be reported. An example is school data that will be collected on all students enrolled during the school year (August 21-June 1).
- **Column F: Data Limitations** – shortcomings of the data source. For instance, if you are conducting surveys to ask 18-20 year olds about their drinking habits, a

limitation might be that the survey will only reach college students in that age group.

- **Column G: Name** – the name of the person who will be responsible for collecting data or reporting the indicator. This could be a IPFS county coordinator, the local evaluator, or another IPFS staff member.

Additional Resources

Berkowitz, B. *Community Tool Box Chapter 3, Section 6: Conducting Focus Groups.* Retrieved from the University of Kansas website: http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/conduct-focus-groups/main

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA). *Evaluation Primer: Setting the Context for a Community Anti-Drug Coalition Evaluation* (2010). Retrieved from CADCA website: http://www.cadca.org/resources/evaluation-primer-setting-context-community-anti-drug-coalition-evaluation

Eliot and Associates (2005). *Guidelines for Conducting a Focus Group.* Retrieved from Duke University Trinity College of Arts and Sciences website: https://assessment.trinity.duke.edu/documents/How_to_Conduct_a_Focus_Group.pdf

Hampton, C. *Community Tool Box Chapter 36, Section 5: Developing an Evaluation Plan.* Retrieved from the University of Kansas website: http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/evaluate/evaluation/evaluation-plan/main

Imm, P., Chinman, M., Wandersman, A., Rosenbloom, D., Guckenburg, S., and Leis, R. *Preventing Underage Drinking: Using Getting to Outcomes with the SAMHSA Strategic Prevention Framework to Achieve Results* (2007). RAND Corporation, p. 1-308. Retrieved from RAND Corporation website: http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR403.html

International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP). *A Guide to Evaluating Prevention Programs* (2010). Retrieved from ICAP website: http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/14474/1/ICAP%2BToolkit%2Bon%2BEvaluation%5B1%5D.pdf

Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE). *Program Evaluation Standards Statement.* Retrieved from JCSEE website: http://www.jcsee.org/program-evaluation-standards-statements

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP). *Developing an Effective Evaluation Plan: Setting the Course for Effective Program Evaluation* (2011). Retrieved from Center for Disease Control website: http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/CDC-Evaluation-Workbook-508.pdf

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). *Steps for Effective Prevention Planning and Evaluation* (2005). Retrieved from the College Drinking Changing the Culture (NIAAA) website: http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/NIAAACollegeMaterials/Handbook/Sect2_EffectiveSteps.aspx