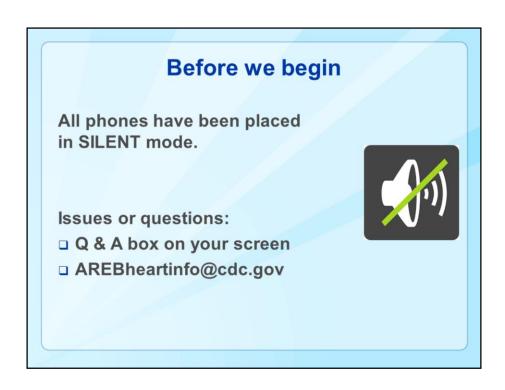MODERATOR:
Welcome to today's Coffee Break presented by the Applied Research and Evaluation Branch in the Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

We are fortunate to have **Kincaid Lowe Beasley** as today's presenter, she is a **Health Scientist** on the **Evaluation and Program Effectiveness Team in the Applied Research and Evaluation Branch**.

My name is **Ashley Marshall** and I am today's moderator. I am an **ORISE Fellow** on the **Evaluation and Program Effectiveness Team in the Applied Research and Evaluation Branch**.

Before we begin

All phones have been placed in SILENT mode.

Issues or questions:
- ❑ Q & A box on your screen
- ❑ AREBheartinfo@cdc.gov

MODERATOR:
Before we begin, we have a few housekeeping items.

All participants have been muted. However, to improve audio quality please mute your phones and microphones.

If you are having issues with audio or seeing the presentation, please message us using the chat box or email us at AREBheartinfo@cdc.gov

If you have questions during the presentation, please enter it on the chat box on your screen. We will address your questions at the end of the session.
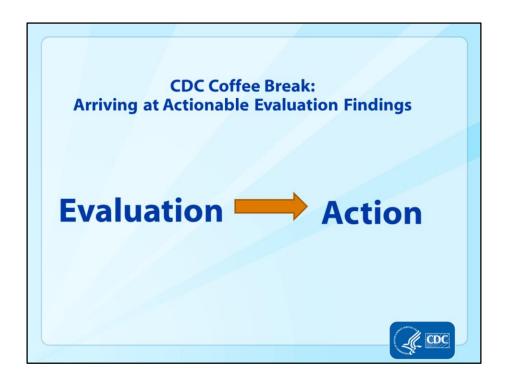
Since this is a training series on applied research and evaluation, we do hope you will complete the poll and provide us with your feedback.

Disclaimer: The information presented here is for training purposes and reflects the views of the presenters. It does not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

MODERATOR:

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So, without further delay. Let's get started. **Kincaid** the floor is yours.

Good afternoon and thank you for joining.

Evaluators have many tools to be able to describe programs goals and activities, plan for evaluating a program, gather credible evidence, and develop evaluation reports that effectively communicate findings to funders and program stakeholders. For many DHDSP programs, evaluations are planned across the program year or for the duration of a cooperative agreement. These evaluations typically occur on a longer timeline which allows grantees to systematically and comprehensively assess their program's progress toward implementing intended activities and progress towards achieving short-intermediate- and long term outcomes. In addition to these comprehensive evaluations, there is often a need for program stakeholders to assess specific components of a program or build program evidence through evaluation on a shorter timeline to inform program decision making.

The ultimate goal for many evaluations is to inform program improvement and these traditional evaluation approaches can help us build a comprehensive set of evidence to inform a program's approach. However, sometimes these traditional evaluations may not serve some specific evaluation needs for a program. For example, a longer evaluation timeline may not align with program's more urgent need for specific data. Or perhaps, an evaluation that yields a lot of data and evaluation findings may have no clear strategies for

turning these findings into actions.

Learning Objectives

❑ **Describe how traditional evaluation tools can be used to meet pressing or short term evaluation needs**

❑ **Implement strategies to arrive at actionable evaluation findings**

❑ **Prioritize recommendations for effective evaluation use**

The strategies we share today will help you use your existing evaluation toolkit to tackle an evaluation that will yield actionable evaluation findings. By the end of this presentation, you will be able to: 1) describe how traditional evaluation tools can be used to meet pressing or short term evaluation needs, 2) implement strategies to arrive at actionable evaluation findings, 3) prioritize recommendations for effective evaluation use.

**Strategies for Arriving at
Actionable Evaluation Findings**

❑ **Design evaluations to yield actionable findings**
- Establish a scope for your evaluation
- Consider using rapid evaluation cycles

❑ **Link findings with recommendations**
- Prioritize recommendations
- Identify action steps

❑ **Create effective dissemination products**
- Consider the audience
- Choose an effective communication tool

During today's Coffee Break, I will focus on three main strategies that will help you plan your evaluation so that you arrive at actionable evaluation findings.

You can start by designing an evaluation so that it yields findings that allow you to take action. For this strategy, we'll also discuss establishing a scope for your evaluation and considering the use of rapid evolution cycles. Once you use your traditional evaluation tools – like evaluation plans and data collection instruments – you will have a litany of results. Clearly linking these findings with program recommendations is where your evaluation findings really become actionable. This will include prioritizing recommendations and identifying action steps that a stakeholder may take to encourage evaluation use. Finally, creating effective dissemination products is critical for communicating your evaluation findings, recommendations, priorities, and action steps to key audiences.

Keeping these things in mind as you plan your evaluations will help ensure that your evaluations support program decision making.

DESIGN EVALUATIONS TO YIELD ACTIONABLE FINDINGS

The first strategy is to design evaluations to yield actionable findings. Think about what kind of information you will want as a result of your evaluation when you begin the planning process. Think about some of the decisions you may want to inform, or critical time points where stakeholders hold keen interest in your evaluation work.

Establish a scope for your evaluation

❏ **End User**
- Who is using the findings of the evaluation?
- In what ways will the evaluation findings be used?
- On what timeline do you need to arrive at your findings?

❏ **Evaluation Focus**
- What program components or pathways along your logic model are most important for this evaluation?
- Are you taking a comprehensive or targeted evaluation approach?

One strategy is to ensure you're establishing the right scope for the evaluation.

First, you will need to consider the end user of your evaluation. Who is using the evaluation findings? In what ways will the evaluation findings be used? And on what timeline do you need to arrive at your findings?

Once you have figured out who is using your evaluation, consider focusing the evaluation to meet these needs. Some guiding questions may be: What program components or pathways along your logic model are most important for this evaluation? Are you taking a comprehensive or a targeted evaluation approach?

When establishing a scope for your evaluation, consider using a rapid cycle evaluation instead of a longer term evaluation. You can use all the traditional tools of evaluation, but tailor them to serve your purpose at hand. Rapid evaluation cycles can help guide your evaluation to deliver findings on a short timeline, including all the components of a traditional evaluation but serving a specific evaluation need.

This is an example of a rapid cycle evaluation timeline where the first stakeholder meeting happens during month 1 and the final evaluation results are delivered by month 6. During this time, you may hold stakeholder meetings, plan the evaluation, write a program description, develop data collection tools, collect and analyze data, and develop reporting tools. The goal is to go from evaluation question to actionable evaluation finding on a short timeline to inform program improvement.

Just as you would establish a reasonable scope for your evaluation questions, develop your evaluation plan, data collection plan, and report with an achievable scope as well. Instead of writing a multi-phase in-depth evaluation plan, pull together a succinct plan that highlights a few key questions and methods that align with your intended objectives and goals.

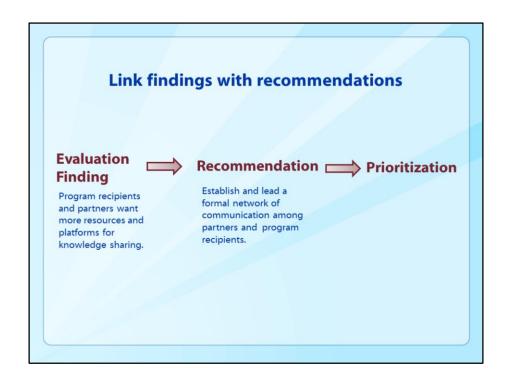Keep in mind that you can embed these rapid evaluation cycles within your traditional

longer term evaluation approach. Perhaps your program evaluation could be constructed of several rapid evaluation cycles that help you put data into action throughout the life of your program.
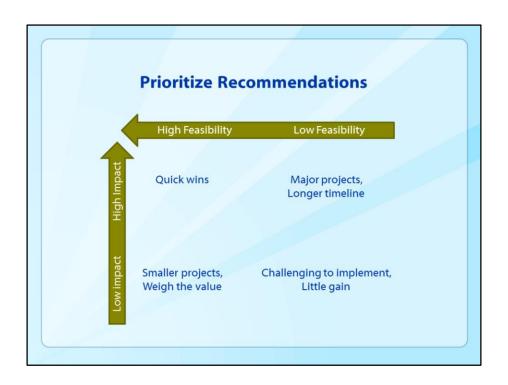
LINK FINDINGS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

Once you conduct your data analysis and have a list of evaluation findings, develop recommendations that align with those findings so that program stakeholders know exactly how to use the information to improve the program.

Link findings with recommendations

❑ Stakeholders and participants may offer program recommendations during key informant interviews and focus groups.

❑ Evaluators may identify additional recommendations and map recommendations to actionable evaluation findings.

During data analysis, stakeholders and program participants may offer program recommendations during data collection – like key informant interviews and focus groups – that you can consider when identifying recommendations. Evaluators can identify additional recommendations based on a triangulation of data collection methods and map these recommendations to actionable evaluation findings.

Here, I show an example of how data from an evaluation finding can be transformed into a recommendation which is then prioritized.

Prioritize Recommendations

High Feasibility — Low Feasibility

High Impact

Quick wins — Major projects, Longer timeline

Low impact

Smaller projects, Weigh the value — Challenging to implement, Little gain

There are a number ways to prioritize recommendations. Here, I rank recommendations across a matrix based on their potential program impact and feasibility to implement.
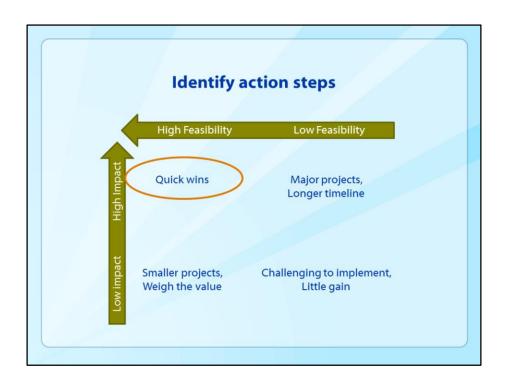
High impact high feasibility recommendations can be thought of as quick wins, while low impact low feasibility recommendations may be too challenging to implement for little gain in exchange. The high impact low feasibility recommendations can be thought of as major projects that require a longer timeline to implement. Alternatively, addressing the low impact high feasibility recommendations would yield smaller projects but need their value weighed against other important projects. Program leaders and stakeholders can work with the evaluators to implement recommendations based on their own prioritization of findings and the availability of resources.

This prioritization matrix compares potential impact versus feasibility to implement. However, you can pair other kinds of assessment tools to help you decide how to prioritize recommendations.
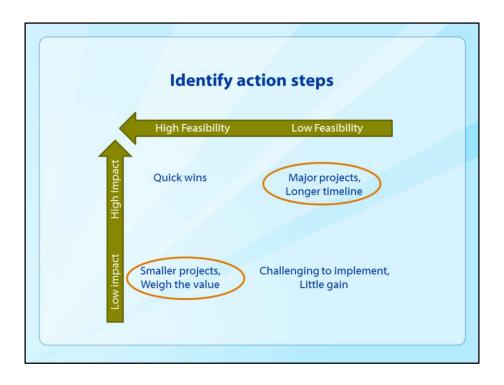
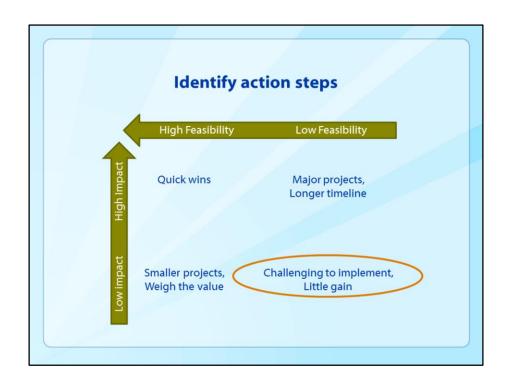Some of these prioritization domains may include:

Importance vs Urgency
Risk vs Reward
Impact vs Cost

Once you have prioritized recommendations, you can identify action steps. Depending on how you build your prioritization matrix, you may want to start with the highest priority items. In this case, we would look toward the highest feasibility, highest impact recommendations and consider addressing these "Quick Wins" first.

From there, we may consider the bigger projects and low hanging fruit.

The lowest feasibility, lowest impact recommendations may be informative but stakeholders may choose to take less action on these steps. Based on your evaluation efforts and development and prioritization of those recommendations, stakeholders will be making an evidence-informed decisions.

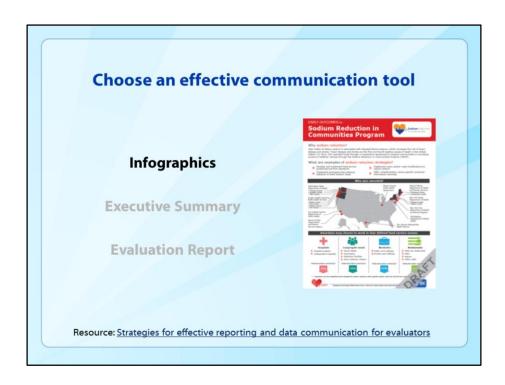**CREATE EFFECTIVE DISSEMINATION TOOLS FOR DECISION MAKERS**

Finally, you should consider how you will you communicate these actionable evaluation findings to your program stakeholders. Creating effective dissemination products is an important focus in the field of evaluation. I'll outline just a couple of strategies for creating effective dissemination products but consider referencing other resources available through DHDSP and the evaluation community on this topic.

Consider the audience

- Is your target audience internal or external to your organization?

- How much time do they have to read your reports?

- How will evaluation findings be used?
  - Inform program managers and decision makers
  - Program improvement

In general, it's important to format your evaluation findings strategically. As you anticipate the unique needs of various audiences when designing communication tools, consider that multiple reporting types may be required to address the unique needs of various audiences and stakeholders.

Consider the audience – is your target audience internal or external to your organization? How much time might they have to read your report and recommendations? And how will evaluation findings be used to inform decision making and program improvement?

A few key communication tools include infographics which convey abbreviated information and use data visualizations to engage audiences with the content. They are a nice way to summarize findings in a succinct way and are effective for disseminating evaluation findings to stakeholders that are interested in big picture findings.

Executive summaries generally have more detail than an infographic but less detail than a full evaluation report. Executive summaries a great way to summarize evaluation findings, recommendations, and accompanying actions in an approximately 5 page narrative. These are great final end products if you use a rapid evaluation cycle approach.

Full evaluation reports are useful tools that can serve as a roadmap for future program improvements. They will provide a clear connection between your evaluation objectives, data collection and analysis, findings, recommendations, and prioritization. Be sure that your evaluation report aligns with the scope of your evaluation. That is, a smaller scope will yield a shorter, more succinct evaluation report.

Evaluation Opportunities

- **Actionable evaluation findings inform program improvement**
- Recommendations may come from stakeholders and participants
- Prioritized recommendations allow program staff to effectively target changes that are most feasible and have greatest opportunity for impact
- Future evaluations may track program progress/maturation following implementation of evaluation recommendations

There is value to taking this evaluation approach in your setting.

Actionable evaluation findings can provide specific evidence and direction for improving a program.

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Recommendation can come from stakeholders and program participants or recipients, thereby increasing the likelihood of buy in.

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You can integrate these strategies into your evaluation toolbox for implementation in your organizational setting. Taking practical approaches to evaluation can maximize evaluation use and the opportunity for a program to best meet it's goals and the needs of program stakeholders. While there are many ways to arrive at actionable evaluation findings, integrating these strategies into your day-to-day evaluation approaches can prove to be beneficial and efficient.

At this time, we'll take an questions but first we'll check to see if any questions have come in through the Q&A tab.

ADD 3 MOCK QUESTIONS

Q1: How can an organization triage action steps for priorities that are deemed high impact/low feasibility?
A1: This depends largely on the primary interests of the key decision makers at your organization. Using this approach, evaluations can yield many action steps with varying levels of priority. A stakeholder may consider how many resources – like staff time or budget - are available to implement the action steps in these categories. More likely than not, you will have to pick a few actions to take at a time and how much capacity or bandwidth your organization may have to implement these steps.
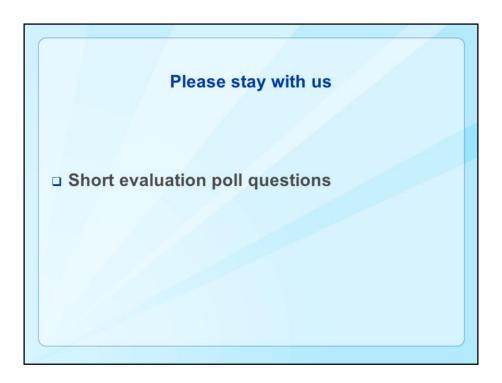
Q2: What's example of an appropriate scope for an evaluation question for a rapid cycle evaluation?
A2: This is an important question. Establishing a reasonable scope for the evaluation question is essential for setting up your rapid cycle evaluation to help you arrive at actionable evaluation findings. A more comprehensive evaluation question may assess a state's progress towards implementing evidence based interventions like team-based care

or achieving population level health outcomes like hypertension control. However, a rapid cycle evaluation question may focus more on program quality and process improvement. For example, a smaller scoped evaluation question could look at a single program component like a recognition program for clinics that meet select quality of care indicators and assess how this program component is achieving it's goals and contributing to the larger intervention or program at hand.

Q3: Do all evaluations need to result in some kind of dissemination or communication product? What are some other strategies for communicating with stakeholders about the findings from an evaluation?
A3: Rather than thinking of evaluation reports being end products of an evaluation, I like to think of them as tools for helping an evaluation inform action, decisions, and program improvement. I shared three examples of communication tools – an infographic, an executive summary, and an evaluation report. While these are traditional tools for sharing evaluation findings and recommendations, you could also use other approaches depending on the needs of your stakeholders. Particularly for rapid cycle evaluations, a briefing presentation may be sufficient for your stakeholders to glean the results from the evaluation and make decisions about next steps. One-pagers, fact sheets, and short impact statement statements may also be helpful tools for you to share with stakeholders when sharing the results of your evaluation.

Please stay with us a few poll questions.

This coffee break was worthwhile for me.
Yes, very worthwhile
Somewhat
No, not at all

The level of information fit my needs.
Yes
Somewhat
No, not at all

The information presented was helpful to me.
Yes
Somewhat
No, not at all

Reminders!

All sessions are archived and
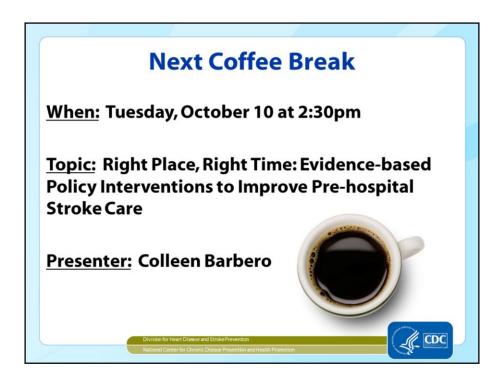the slides and script can be accessed at:
http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/pubs/podcasts.htm

If you have any questions, comments, or topic
ideas send an email to:
AREBheartinfo@cdc.gov

All sessions are archived and the slides and script can be accessed at our Division website. Today's slides will be available in 2-3 weeks.

If you have any ideas for future topics or questions, please contact us at the listed email address on this slide.

Our next Coffee Break is scheduled for Tuesday, **October 10th** and is entitled "Right Place, Right Time: Evidence-based Policy Interventions to Improve Pre-hospital Stroke Care".

Thank you for joining us. Have a terrific day everyone. This concludes today's call.