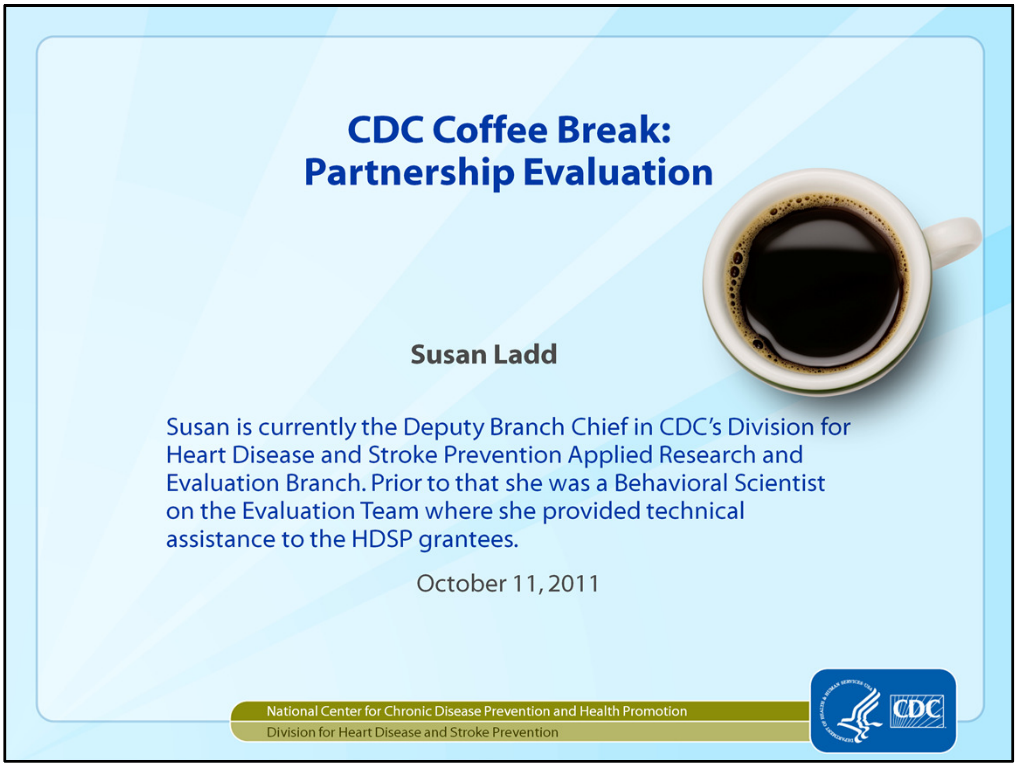

Welcome to today's Coffee Break presented by the Evaluation and Program Effectiveness Team in the Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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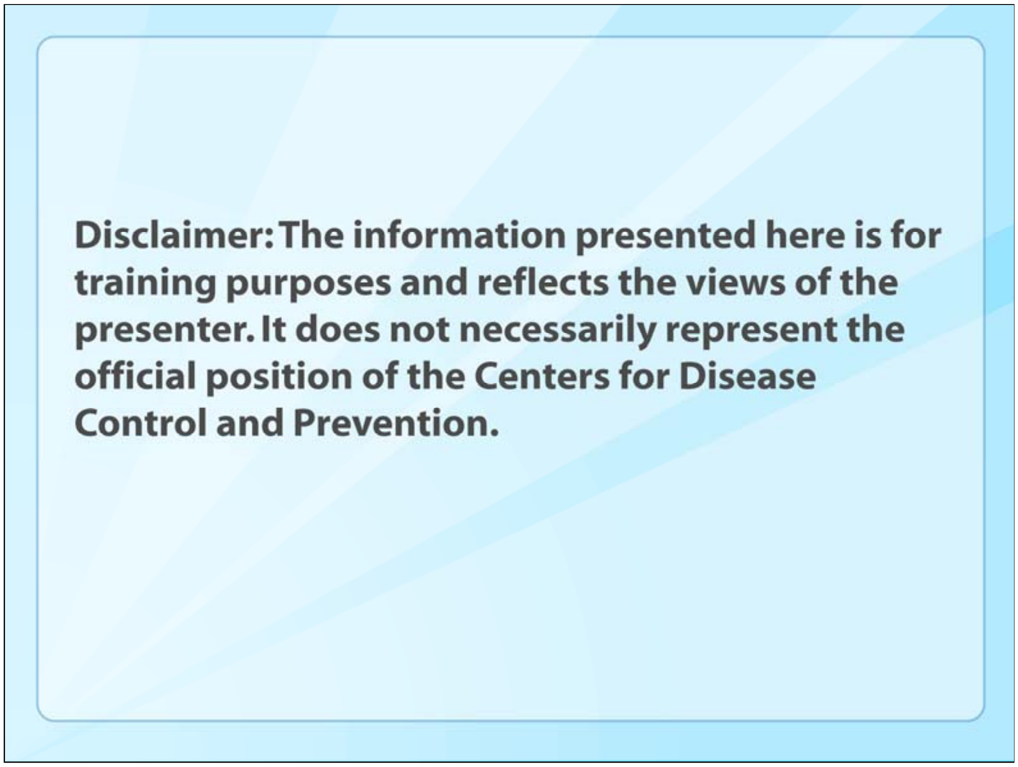
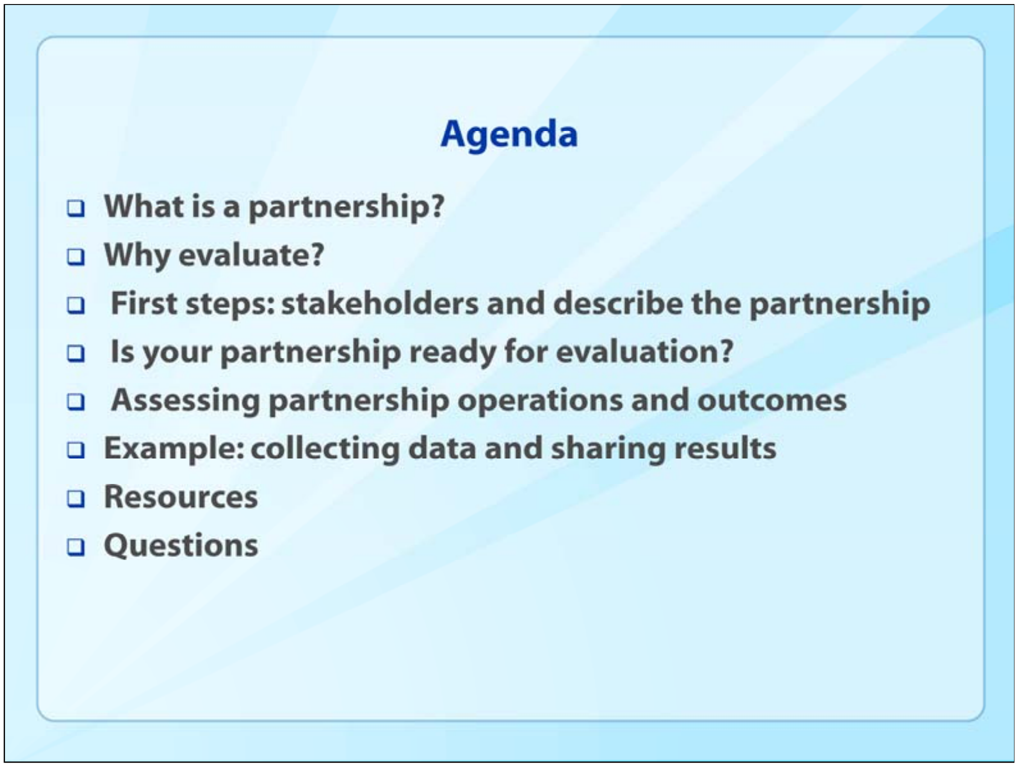


The information presented here is for training purposes and reflects the views of the presenter. It doesn’t necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



In our time together today we will talk about several aspects of evaluating partnerships.

We will spend just a little time talking about what a partnership is, the benefits of evaluating them, and first steps in planning the evaluation. We will then touch on three specific types of partnership evaluation activities: evaluability assessment, evaluating how well the partnership operates, and evaluating partnership outcomes.

Then we'll talk about indicators, data sources, and data collection and wrap up with some resources.

As we go through the presentation today, you'll probably notice that we are applying the CDC six-step evaluation framework. The guide I'll reference at the end applies these steps in more detail to plan and carry out a partnership evaluation.

So, lets begin by talking briefly about what we mean by a “partnership.” A partnership is a group of individuals representing diverse organizations or constituencies who agree to work together to achieve a common set of goals, generally within a formal structure.

Partnerships can vary substantially in size and scope of work. They may range from a small workgroup tasked with completing a very specific project, to a large group of stakeholders who come together around a major initiative like developing and implementing a state plan, or identifying and prioritizing community needs to lobby for action, or to collaborate on a major community improvement project.

Partnerships also don’t come together and are instantly ready to achieve great things. A partnership moves through various stages to become a smooth working and productive group.

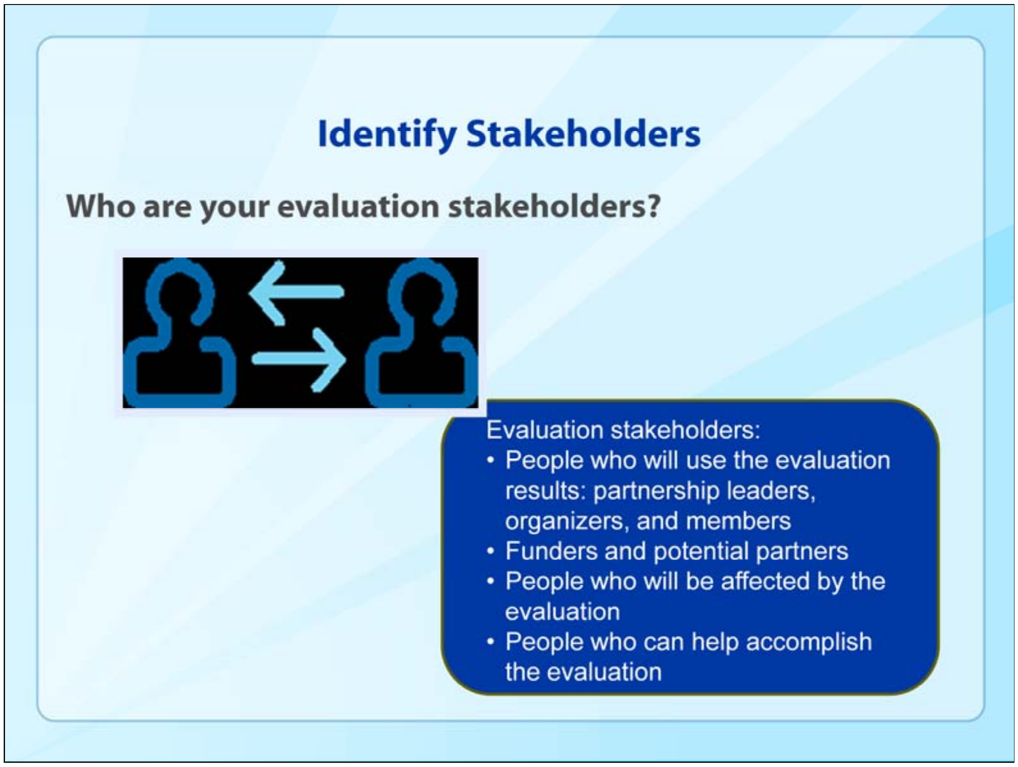
Why should you evaluate your partnership? The are number of reasons:

- First, to monitor the growth and progress of the partnership. This may include determining if organizations with the needed skills and expertise are participating, as well as monitoring progress of work, work products, and outcomes.
- Secondly, to improve the work partnership—to identify limitations or barriers to efficient operation or to identify challenges to progress so they can be addressed.

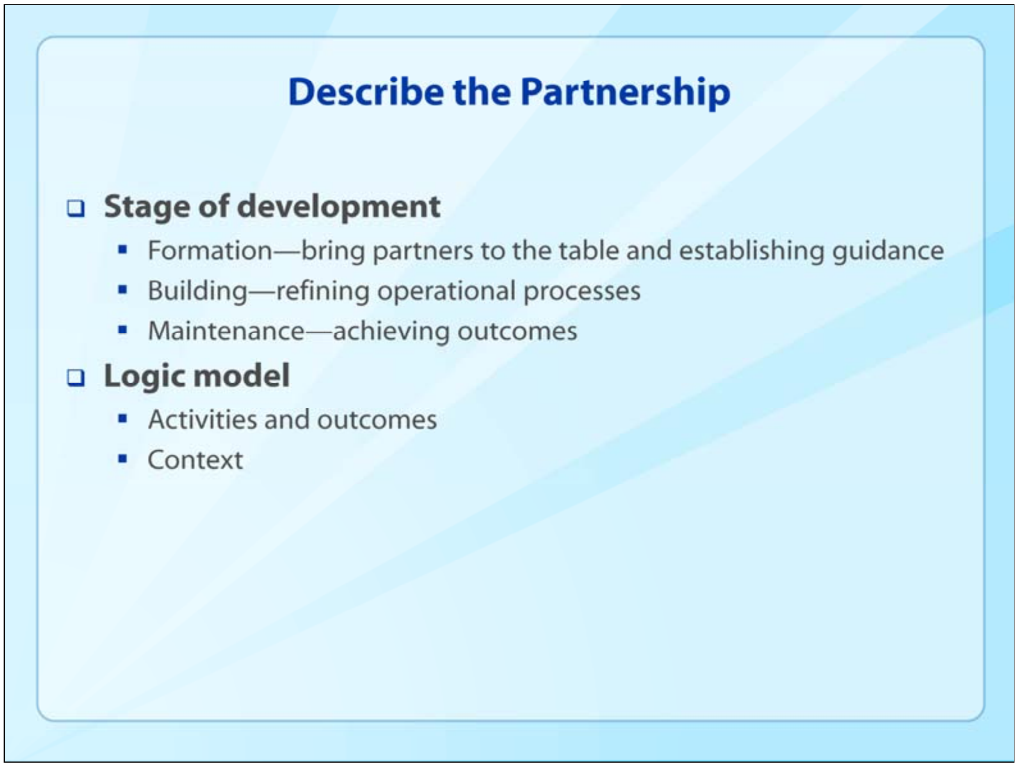
Participating in evaluative thinking and evaluation tasks can build the partnership's capacity to understand and conduct evaluation. Instilling evaluative thinking into activity planning and implementation can create an organization that incorporates assessment and measurement into all its tasks.

Evaluation can also provide the accountability needed to preserve and grow the partnership. The evaluation can determine if planned objectives and outcomes have been met. This accountability is essential for funders to justify continued support and can also be used to increase awareness in your community of the good work your partnership is doing.

And importantly, in the case of state heart disease and stroke prevention programs, it may be a requirement of your funder.



One of the first questions you'll need to answer as you begin the evaluation is: Who are my evaluation stakeholders? Stakeholders are people who will use the evaluation results, people who will be affected by the evaluation results, and people who can help accomplish or hinder the evaluation. When evaluating a partnership, stakeholders include partnership leaders, funders, organizers, members, potential members, and the larger community that the partnership serves.



When describing the partnership, two pieces of information are important that will help you focus the evaluation:

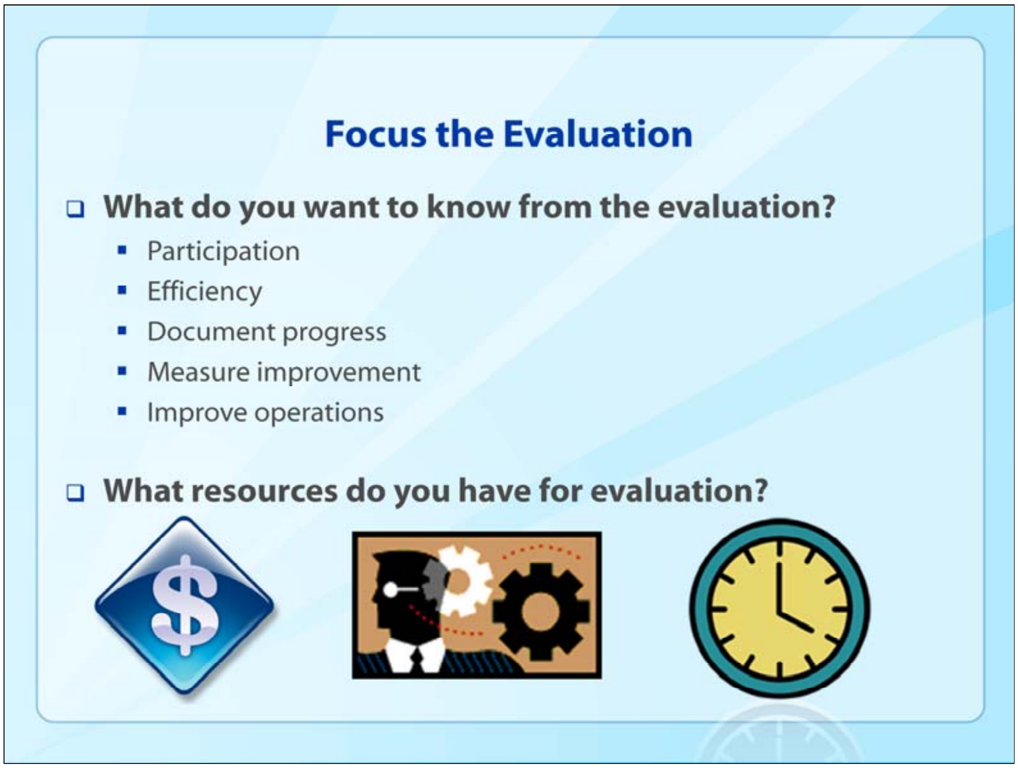
- Where is the partnership is terms of its development?
- What is the purpose of the partnership?

If your partnership is the “formation” stage, reasonable questions to ask will include: Do I have the necessary mix of knowledge, skills, and influence to operate the partnership and achieve objectives?

If your partnership is the “building” stage, reasonable questions to ask will include those about operational processes like leadership and communication.

If your partnership has been together for some time and is maintaining itself, questions about achieving outcomes would be appropriate.

You can use a logic model to describe your partnership’s purpose and associated activities, goals, outcomes. The social, political, and environmental factors that exist and affect the work of the partnership will influence the feasibility of its work and may help explain evaluation findings.



Next: what do you and your stakeholders want to learn from the evaluation? Of the uses we talked about, which is your goal? And within that, what specifically do you want to know? Is it participation? Effectiveness? Influence? Efficiency? Later in the evaluation planning, you'll refine the questions you have identified based on feasibility, utility, and priority.

You also need to ask yourself: What resources do I have for evaluation? Resources include money, people or access to people with the skills to conduct the evaluation, and time. Planning and conducting the evaluation is often a balance of resources and time to get the best results within your resources.

So, we've laid groundwork to start thinking about the evaluation. Now lets look at three ways to focus an evaluation.

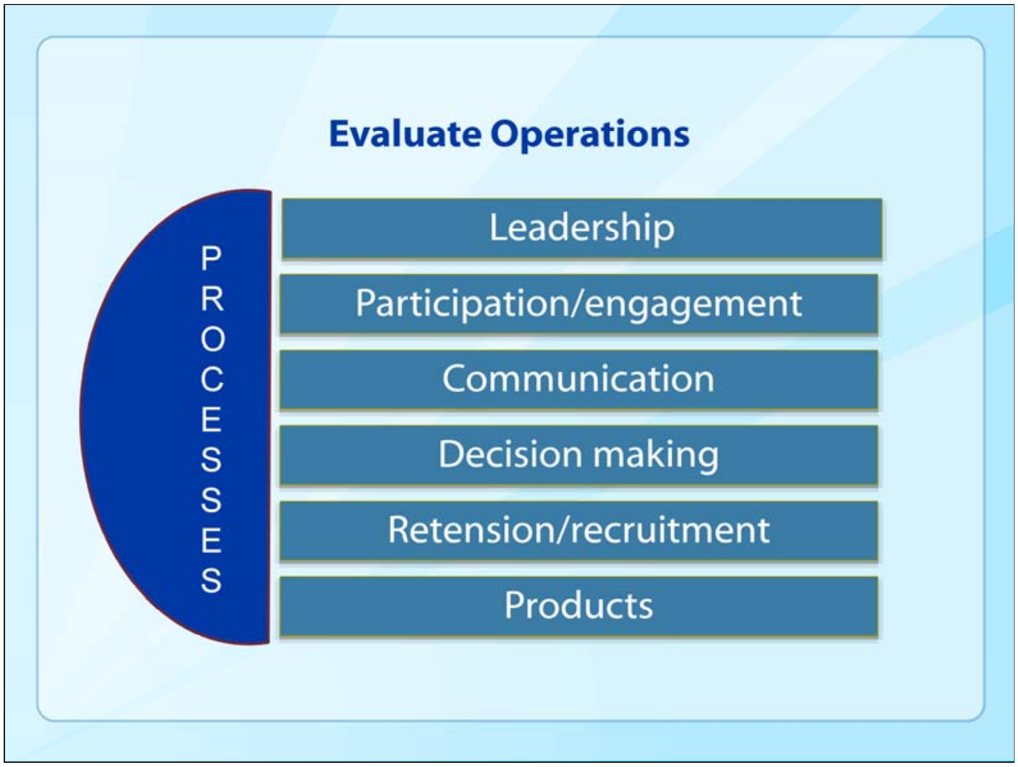
1. An assessment of whether the partnership is ready for evaluation
2. Evaluating the operation of the partnership
3. Evaluating partnership outcomes

First, is the partnership ready for an evaluation? Deciding if an evaluation will produce usable results, is justifiable and feasible, and is a good use of resources is called an evaluability assessment.

Key factors that determine if the partnership is ready for evaluation include whether:

- The purpose of the evaluation is clear and is appropriate for where the partnership is in terms of purpose and maturity.
- The partnership has clearly defined and realistic activities, goals, and objectives.
- Stakeholders value evaluation and can use the findings.
- Evaluators have access to resources and data for evaluation.

If these factors are not in place, you may need to spend more upfront time to bring together stakeholders, clarify goals, gain support for evaluation, and so on.

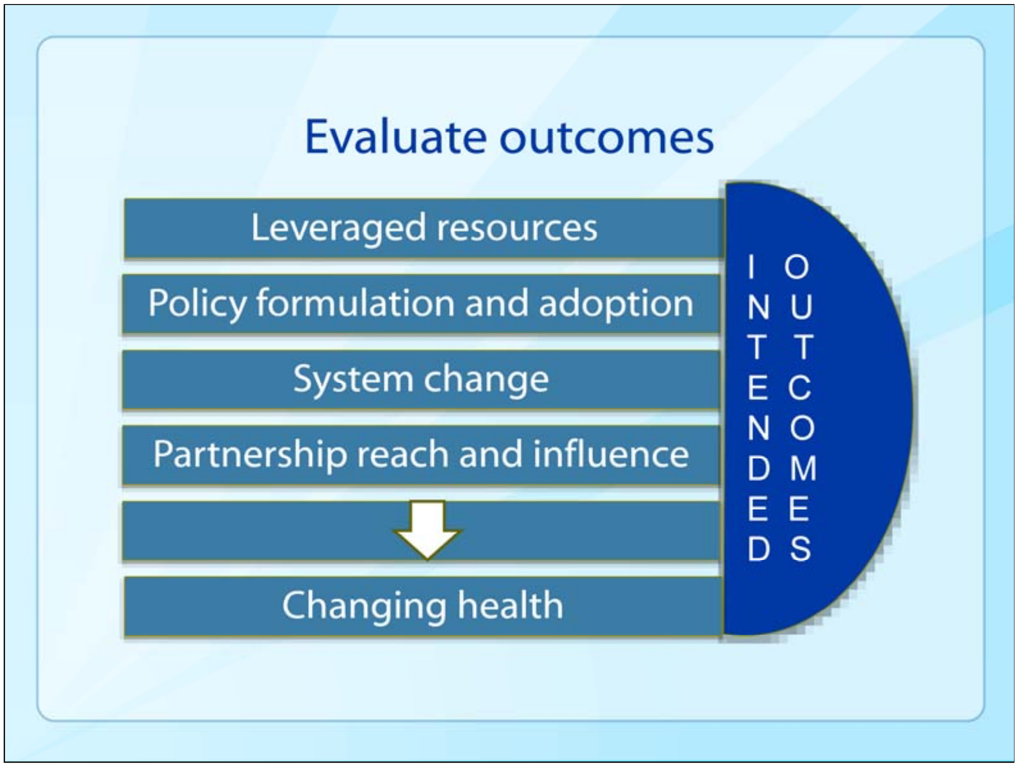


The second type of evaluation we'll talk about is looking at how well the partnership operates—or its processes. These evaluation findings will be used primarily to improve the functioning and/or structure of the partnership so that it is more efficient and cohesive. This involves identifying and assessing characteristics of interest, delving into what isn't working and why, and identifying what can be done to improve them.

Characteristics that you may want to study include:

- The strength and effectiveness of your leadership. Are they motivational, decisive, collaborative, etc.?
- Members' understanding of roles and responsibilities.
- Is decision making transparent? Timely? Is the decision-making method communicated?
- Participation and engagement of members.
- Are meetings and activities effective and well organized and a good use of folks' time?
- Is communication clear and frequent enough among internal and external partners and stakeholders?
- Is there agreement among partners on the goals of the partnership?
- Is the partnership effective at training members, keeping members interested, and recruiting for needed skills and expertise?
- Are the products the partnership creates used, valued, and of high quality?

Understanding and sharing these assessments with key stakeholders provides an opportunity to generate an improvement plan or refocus partners. These and other important processes, as well as a tool for assessing them, are provided in detail in the Mattessich resource that I'll give you at the end.

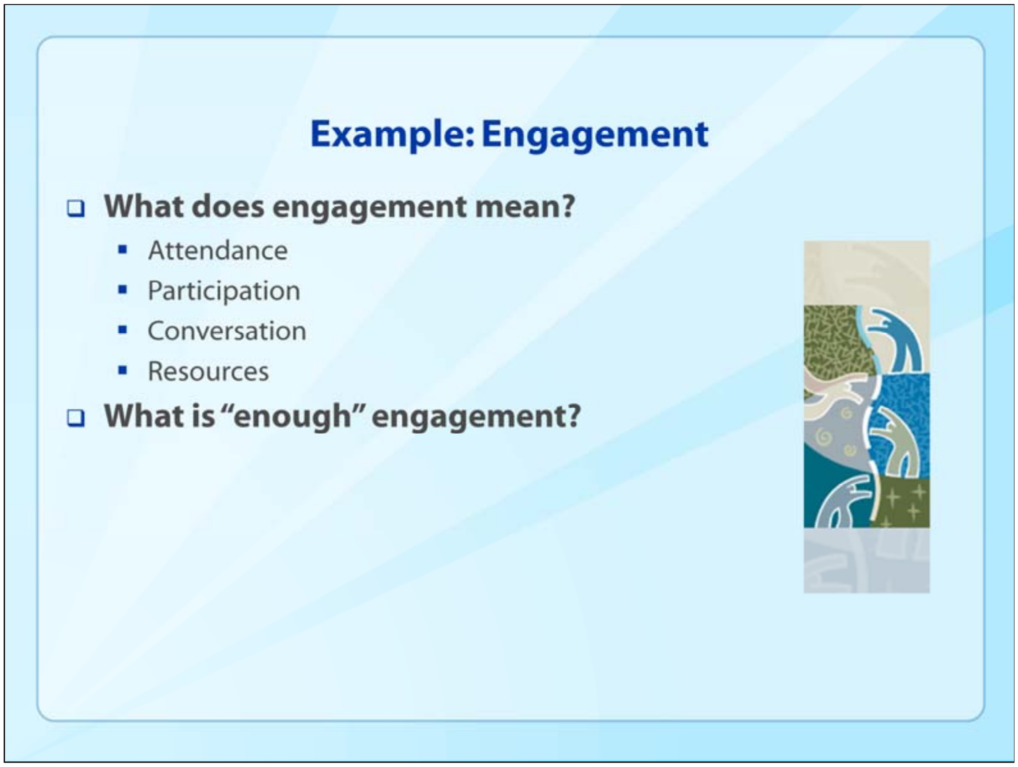


The last type evaluation that we'll talk about is an outcome evaluation. This focuses on the outcomes that the partnership expects to achieve. Partnership outcomes are sometimes difficult to identify but may include:

- Increased collaboration
- Increased influence in the community
- Increased or leveraged resources
- Policy change or the momentum for a policy change
- Implementation of a plan that results in changes in health systems
- Change in health status of the community

Evaluating the outcomes of a partnership can be challenging and time-consuming. Why? For several reasons. One, a partnership has to have ample time to bring about change, given that often this work is ancillary to participants primary work. Also, the partnership doesn't have direct control or authority over partners actions or contextual factors. And because the nature of partnerships is to leverage and collaborate and share, attributing change to partnership activities can be hard to document.

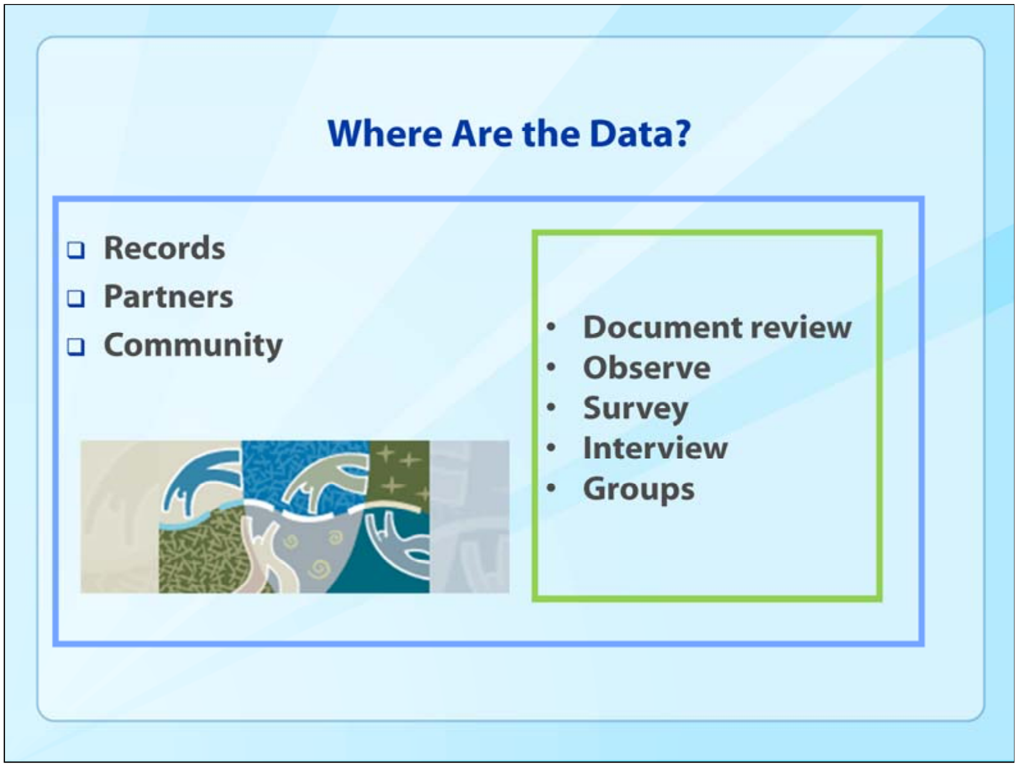
Sometimes the best we can do is describe how the partnership contributed to successes.



Now, rather than talk generally about indicators, data sources, and data collection, I'd like to use an example. Let's assume we have identified our partnership's evaluation stakeholders, we have a logic model and have described the partnership's planned work and context, and are clear on the objectives of the partnership. And let's imagine that we have access to all the time, money, and people we need to conduct an evaluation. (That's a real dream!)

In our example, stakeholders agree the partnership is moving along well, but believe that in order to achieve the desired policy change, having highly engaged state level advocacy groups is essential. So they are interested in documenting "engagement" of partners. They also believe that 75% engagement is "acceptable" based on what they have read recently about collaboration.

Our first challenge is defining engagement so that we can measure it. Is engagement attending meetings? Is it participating in meetings or in smaller work groups? Is it bringing additional resources? Is it talking about the partnership work with friends or coworkers? Is it investing time outside meetings for partnership work? Let's decide for our stakeholders, we need to measure all these things and use each piece to document engagement.



How can we measure these indicators? Well, there are number of ways to collect these data, and both qualitative and quantitative data are important.

- For meeting or workgroup attendance we'll review documents—like meeting minutes—and track the number of attendees over time, and the consistency of attendance.
- For meeting participation, we can review those same documents, counting how many times each attendee was mentioned in the notes. And we can observe meetings and document participation—how thoroughly discussions occur, how many opportunities there are to participate, and so on. For each of these, we can calculate a percentage based on number of potential attendees or number of opportunities to participate. We can compare that to our target of 75%.
- We'll use document reviews of budgets and volunteer hours to answer questions about contributions of time and materials.
- We'll also add to this information the "quality" of participation and compare it to general meeting participation. If these numbers are low, we can interview a selection of participants and non-participants to determine why they do or don't participate. This qualitative information can help identify strategies to increase participation.
- To measure outside conversations or work, we'll survey the membership. We'll ask a few key questions at the next meeting such as: How many times in past 30 days have you spoken with a friend or colleague about the work of the partnerships? Or: How many hours in the past 30 days have you spend working on partnership tasks outside of meetings? For folks that weren't at the meeting, we'll contact them by e-mail. This information will give a sense of how engaged our members are outside of meetings and we can compare it to our target of 75%.
- And finally, we'll hold several focus groups of leaders and separately members to confirm our data and to gather solutions.

And once we have analyzed the data, and made sense of them, we'll **share them**:

- At leadership meetings to discuss the results and next steps.
- At general partnership meetings to let members know that we heard them.
- Through partnership newsletters, funder, or key partner newsletters.
- Through e-mail or individual conversations.
- In a report to our funders that is brief, readable, and to the point.

We'll then **use** the findings to develop a plan to improve meeting attendance, provide more opportunities for participation, generate new funders and new membership, identify new communication tools like elevator speeches, develop strategies to share the workload more broadly, and so on.

Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Evaluation Guide: Fundamentals of Evaluating Partnerships. Atlanta: DHHS 2007.
  - www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/programs/nhdsp_program/evaluation_guides/index.htmhttp://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/programs/nhdsp_program/evaluation_guides/index.htm
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Evaluation Technical Assistance Document: Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (DNPAO) Partnership Evaluation Guidebook and Resources, 2011.
  - www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/PartnershipEvaluation.pdf
- Butterfoss FD. Coalitions and Partnerships in Community Health. San Francisco, CA. Jossey-Bass; 2007.
- Mattessich PW, Murray-Close M, Monsey BR. Collaboration: What Makes It Work. 2nd Edition. St. Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation; 2004.

Please Stay with Us

- Q&A
- Short evaluation poll questions

Thank you

If you have questions, please contact:
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