

## **Stage 6: Utilizing and Reporting the Results**

Utilize results

- Reassess goals and objectives

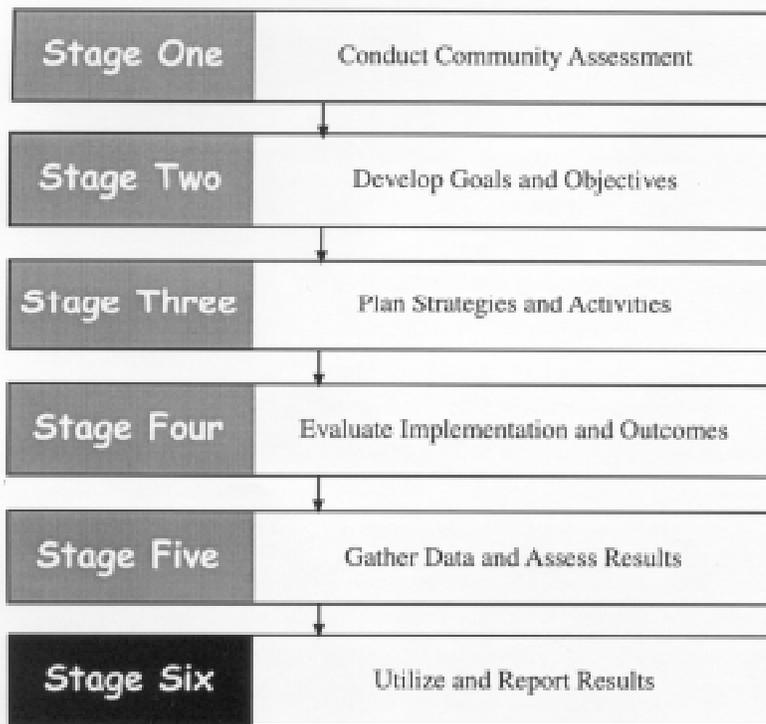
- Identify effective activities or strategies

- Compare costs and results of different activities

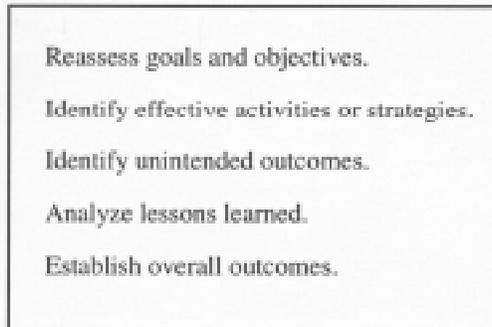
Report preparation

Report structure

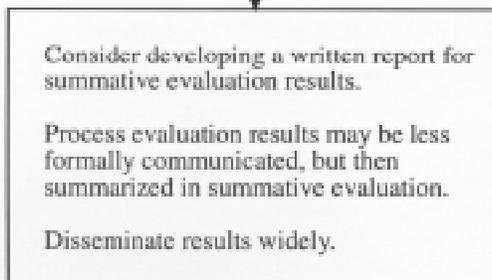
Dissemination of results



**Put Results in Context**



**Share Results**



Once you have completed the data analysis phase, the results must be interpreted and shared. You can use your results to:

- Improve your outreach program
- Justify the program to management and/or funding sources
- Provide evidence of need for additional funds or resources
- Increase understanding of and support for outreach activities among your targeted community
- Encourage ongoing partnerships or cooperative ventures with partner organizations

A formal report should include a summary of the program's implementation and effects. The evaluation tasks you identified in your evaluation plan should be discussed (or other questions discussed if appropriate). Taking the time to write the report will help you:

- Consider everything that happened in the course of the evaluation
- Critically analyze the results
- Think about any changes you should make as a result of the evaluation

In the process evaluation phase, findings that assess ongoing activities for the purposes of fine tuning and quality improvement may be less formally communicated – perhaps in conversations or discussions with outreach or site staff. Face-to-face meetings provide staff with a forum for active involvement in outreach planning and evaluation activities, and for discussion, clarification, and detailed elaboration of the evaluation's findings.

There should be a schedule for interim reports (whether oral or written) to allow for continual feedback on ways that outreach activities can be yet more appropriate, effective, and appealing for participants.

### **Utilize Results**

Making the most of your evaluation means taking the time to apply what you have learned. The following steps to revise a program are adopted from Arkin, 1992 (1).

### ***Reassess Goals and Objectives***

- Has anything changed with your target audience or your organization's mission that would require revisions in the original goals and objectives?
- Are some objectives not being met? Why?
- Are there strategies or activities that did not succeed? Why?

### ***Identify Effective Activities or Strategies***

- What objectives have been met as a result of successful activities?
- Should these activities be expanded because they appear to work well?
- Or, are the objectives considered successful and completed?

### ***Compare Costs and Results of Different Activities***

- What were the relative costs (including staff time) and results of different aspects of your program?
- Are there some activities that appear to work as well but cost less than others?

Depending on the focus and use of your evaluation, those interested in results will be outreach staff, the funding sponsor, the community targeted by the outreach program, and other library outreach professionals.

High quality and useful reports or presentations about the results of your evaluation will help you get the most mileage from your evaluation investment. Let sponsors and other primary users of the evaluation read the report in draft form so they can indicate where clarification is needed or point out places where misunderstandings might occur.

The following tips about report preparation and structure are adopted from Reisman et al, 1994 (2):

### Report Preparation

1. **Allow Adequate Time.** When creating the timeline for your evaluation process, be sure to allow adequate time to prepare the report. If quality is compromised, readers may have doubts about the credibility of your findings.
2. **Know Your Audience(s).** Target your report to the audience and the information they are most interested in. For example, the type and level of detail of interest to a community leader will be different than information of interest to your colleagues. You may need to prepare more than one report to accommodate various audiences.
3. **Remove Hurdles.** Depending on your audience and findings, you may need to consider those with stakes in a program's success or failure. One way to help deflate concerns or preconceived ideas is simply to acknowledge that they exist. A few lines in your opening section about your awareness of people's concerns or perceptions can go a long way toward reducing defensive postures.

### Report Structure

Although you will decide on the level of detail and content according to your audience, the typical evaluation report is likely to include the following sections:

1. **Executive summary.** A one- to four-page version that summarizes the key points. Bear in mind that some people will read *only* the executive summary, so include the most essential information on the purpose of the evaluation, key findings, and any resulting recommendations. Also, executive summaries are often photocopied from reports, so include identifying information (contact person, address, telephone number, and date).
2. **Purpose.** Explain why you conducted the evaluation – what are the broad questions the evaluation is trying to answer? Who requested or initiated the evaluation?
3. **Background.** Provide readers with adequate background information about your outreach program's structure, history, and goals.

What do they need to know in order to understand the evaluation?

4. **Methodology.** Explain your evaluation design, including what data collection tools and sampling methods you used. (Include copies of data collection instruments as attachments.)
5. **Summary of results.** Give a summary conclusion about the key questions the evaluation set out to answer.
6. **Principal findings.** Provide more detail on the findings that support your summary conclusions. Include charts or tables to illustrate your findings.
7. **Considerations or recommendations.** Depending on the purpose of your evaluation, it may be appropriate to include a section that discusses the implications of the findings – what actions might be warranted if the program is succeeding or failing? Not all evaluation reports include this information; you should make clear at the outset of your evaluation project whether yours will include this information and to whom it will be directed.
8. **Attachments.** Information that is important but too cumbersome or long for the main report can be placed in the appendices, such as:
  - **Profile of respondents.** A description of the numbers and characteristics of respondents for your various data collection tools. For example, if you conducted a survey, you should include the number of respondents and a profile of demographic or other relevant data you collected about them.
  - **Copies of data collection tools.** Survey instruments, focus group questions, and interview guides are helpful to include.
  - **Detailed results.** You may have detailed write-ups of focus group results, interviews, and survey results that you want to attach to the report. Be sure to consider confidentiality issues – readers should not be able to identify specific respondents.
  - **Testimonials**

### **Dissemination of Results**

You can probably identify several audience(s) who will be interested in the results of your evaluation, such as your funding agency, targeted community, staff, and professional colleagues. Distributing a printed report is one appropriate method for disseminating results, but look for other publishing, presentation, or promotional opportunities such as professional meetings and activities, websites, listservs, or print or electronic journals.

For example, the Outreach Special Interest Group of the Medical Library Association sponsors the Outreach Librarians Discussion List. You can announce results of your evaluation and generate further discussion among colleagues who have similar goals and challenges. Subscribe to the list by sending an

email “subscribe Outlib-L,” in the body of the message to [OUTLIB-L-request@LSV.UKY.EDU](mailto:OUTLIB-L-request@LSV.UKY.EDU). Or, the Research Section of MLA sponsors paper and poster sessions at the MLA annual meeting to facilitate the dissemination of relevant research results within the MLA membership.

If you want to publish results in a journal article format, potential publications include the *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* or the *MLA News*. If your strategies and research draw from health education or health communication theories, consider publishing or presentation opportunities in other fields such as health education or health communications. Or, if you’ve conduct a public health outreach program, consider public health journals.

### **References**

1. Arkin EB. Making Health Communications Programs Work: A Planner's Guide. Bethesda, MD: U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, National Institutes of Health, Office of Cancer Communications, National Cancer Institute, NIH Publication No. 92-1493, 1992.
2. Reisman J. A Field Guide to Outcome-Based Program Evaluation. Seattle: Organizational Research Services, Inc., 1994.