The AmeriCorps Evaluation Plan
----------------------------------
What is it? What does it need in it?

EVALUATION WEBINAR TOPICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Webinar Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEC</td>
<td>Laying the Groundwork for Your First Evaluation and Overview of the Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAN</td>
<td>What's in an Evaluation Plan?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEB</td>
<td>Basics of Evaluation Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAR</td>
<td>Considerations for Using Internal versus External Evaluators</td>
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<td>APRIL</td>
<td>Budgeting for Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAY</td>
<td>Basic Steps in Conducting Evaluations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUNE</td>
<td>Evaluation Reporting and Use of Findings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from: http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation
WEBINAR 2 OVERVIEW: WHAT’S IN AN EVALUATION PLAN?

➤ What is an evaluation plan?
➤ What are the sections we need to have for the preliminary plan for a recompete?
➤ Preliminary versus revised plans
➤ What should I write for each section?

WHAT IS AN EVALUATION PLAN?

➤ Written document that details all of the evaluation steps and activities you plan to conduct
➤ Dynamic tool (i.e., a living document) that should be continually updated as you plan and develop each aspect of the evaluation
➤ Required component of your AmeriCorps application
**PROCESS EVALUATION**

**FOCUS:** PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

**IMPACT EVALUATION**

**FOCUS:** CAUSALITY & PROGRAM IMPACT

**WHY DEVELOP AN EVALUATION PLAN?**

- Helps evaluation team be *more systematic and comprehensive* in their evaluation efforts
- **Increases efficiency** of the evaluation
- Helps the evaluation team and/or program staff **anticipate potential challenges and plan accordingly** to avoid any missteps
- Creates a **shared understanding of the purpose and use** of evaluation results for program stakeholders
- Facilitates a **smoother transition if staff turnover** occurs
- Serves as a **written understanding between the grantee and external evaluator(s)**, if applicable
EVALUATION PLAN/REPORT CYCLE

Preliminary Evaluation Plan
(for recompete application)

Revised Evaluation Plan
(in Year 1 after receive grant)

Evaluation Report
(in Year 3 for next recompete)

EVALUATION PLANNING

Goal: Develop a plan for your evaluation, which will occur in your next grant cycle (if not earlier).

- Key components
  - Select research questions
  - Budget for evaluation
  - Develop evaluation plan
  - Make design decisions (process or impact, internal or external)
SECTIONS IN AN EVALUATION PLAN

I. Introduction
II. Program Background
III. Research Questions
IV. Evaluation Design
V. Data Collection
VI. Analysis Plan
VII. Timeline
VIII. Budget and Other

PLAN FIRST!

I. INTRODUCTION

The introduction is intended to establish the context of your planned evaluation.

It should explain:

• Your program model (brief overview)
• Purpose, scope, and timeframe of the evaluation
• Intended use and users of the evaluation results
• Who will be involved in planning and implementing the evaluation
II. PROGRAM BACKGROUND

- A description of the program and which specific program components the evaluation will focus on helps set the stage for understanding the evaluation approach.

- Your program background section should include:
  - Statement of need
  - Your program’s theory of change and supporting research evidence
  - Summary of previous evaluations (if applicable)
  - Narrative account of your program
  - Your program’s logic model
  - Description of which program components the evaluation will focus on

Logic model of a fictional homelessness prevention program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Short-Term</th>
<th>Medium-Term</th>
<th>Long-Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INPUTS</td>
<td>ACTIVITIES</td>
<td>OUTPUTS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What we invest</td>
<td>What we do</td>
<td>Direct products from program activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Receiving housing relocation and stabilization services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AmeriCorps members</td>
<td>Provide educational workshops</td>
<td># families received relocation and stabilization services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-AmeriCorps volunteers</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td># families attended workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of program participants</td>
<td>Total # of program participants</td>
<td>Increase in # of families averted displacement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased knowledge of responsible home owner or tenant practices/skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased knowledge of resources/services in community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increase in # of families in stable housing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reduction in first-time homelessness in the community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AmeriCorps
DEVELOP RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Research questions are a list of questions to be answered at the end of the evaluation.
- Research questions should be:
  1. Clear, specific, and well-defined
  2. Measureable by the evaluation
  3. Aligned with your logic model

Research Questions - Strong or Weak?

How did the low-income families in the county benefit from participation in the homelessness prevention program?
Research Questions - Strong or Weak?

How did the low-income families in the county benefit from participation in the homelessness prevention program?

IMPACT EVALUATION

Research Questions - Strong or Weak?

What impact did the homelessness prevention program have on beneficiaries’ knowledge of healthy food practices?
Research Questions - Strong or Weak?

What impact did the homelessness prevention program have on beneficiaries’ knowledge of healthy food practices?

Logic model of a fictional homelessness prevention program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Short-Term</th>
<th>Medium-Term</th>
<th>Long-Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, opinions</td>
<td>Changes in behavior or action that result from participants’ new knowledge</td>
<td>Meaningful changes, often in their condition or status in life</td>
<td>Reduction in first-time homelessness in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in # of families averting displacement</td>
<td>Decrease in foreclosures and evictions</td>
<td>Increase in # of families in stable housing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased knowledge of responsible home owner or tenant practices/skills</td>
<td>Increased adoption of responsible practices/skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased knowledge of resources/services in community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Questions - Strong or Weak?

Did program beneficiaries increase their knowledge of housing, financial, and other types of services and benefits in the county as a result of participation in the program?

IMPACT EVALUATION

AmeriCorps
Research Questions - Strong or Weak?

**WEAK**

Were the housing relocation and stabilization services implemented according to program standards/protocol at each site? Why or why not?

**STRONG**

Were the housing relocation and stabilization services implemented according to standards or protocol at each site? Why or why not?

PROCESS EVALUATION
Research Questions - Strong or Weak?

Which family shelters and temporary housing have the best reputation?

Research Questions - Strong or Weak?

Which family shelters and temporary housing have the best reputation?
IV: EVALUATION DESIGN

- Evaluation design is the structure that provides the information needed to answer each of your evaluation questions.
- Your intended evaluation design should be based on and aligned with the following:
  - Your program’s theory of change and logic model
  - Primary purpose of the evaluation and key research questions
  - Funder’s evaluation requirements
  - Resources available for the evaluation

What type of evaluation design will be used?
- The two “sides” of a program’s logic model align with the two types of evaluation designs: process evaluation and outcome/impact evaluation.
IV: EVALUATION DESIGN

Process Evaluation

- Focuses on a program’s inputs, activities, and outputs
- Documents what the program is doing and the extent to which the program has been implemented as intended
- Informs changes or improvements in the program’s operations
- Includes qualitative and quantitative data collection
- Does not require advanced statistical methods
- Does not require a comparison or control group

IV: EVALUATION DESIGN

Non-Experimental Outcome Evaluation Design

- Outcomes are only tracked for the intervention group.
- There are several variations within the category of non-experimental outcome designs, differing only in number and timing of outcome measurement points:
  a) Single group post-test
  b) Single group pre- and posttest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention Group</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Single group post-test</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Single group pre- and posttest</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X = intervention is administered
0 = measurement is taken
IV: EVALUATION DESIGN

Quasi-Experimental Evaluation Design

- Defined by collecting data on two or more study groups – an intervention group and a comparison group.

- The intervention and comparison groups are identified from pre-existing or self-selected groups and are not formed through a random assignment process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intervention Group</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison Group</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X = intervention is administered
0 = measurement is taken

Pre-existing differences between the intervention and comparison groups at the outset of the intervention may lead to inaccurate estimates of the program’s effects.

IV: EVALUATION DESIGN

Experimental Evaluation Design (Randomized Controlled Trial)

- Defined by collecting data on two or more study groups – an intervention group and a control group.

- Random assignment techniques (e.g., lottery draw) are used by the evaluator to assign study participants to either the intervention or the control group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intervention Group</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X = intervention is administered
0 = measurement is taken

Random assignment ensures the study groups are equivalent prior to intervention, thus experimental designs are often considered the most credible design in regards to producing evidence of program impact.
 Describe your evaluation study group(s)

- The evaluation design section of your plan should provide a description of each study group.
- Explain how each study group will be identified.
  - Define the target population from which you will recruit your study group participants.
  - Describe how you will access or recruit participants for each study group.
  - Specify any applicable eligibility criteria for each study group (e.g., study participants from your target population must be within a certain age range, hold a certain degree type).

### IV: EVALUATION DESIGN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Outcome Evaluation Design</th>
<th>Control or Comparison</th>
<th>Ability to produce causal evidence about a program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>Randomly assigned intervention and control groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quasi-Experimental</td>
<td>Statistically matched intervention and comparison groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Experimental</td>
<td>No statistically matched groups or group compared</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This section focuses on the data you plan to collect to answer your key research questions.

Describe how you plan to answer each research question by specifying:

- What information will be collected (i.e., data indicators)
- Who/what will be the source of data
- Data collection tools/instruments
- When the data will be collected and by whom
- Sampling methods (if any)

Indicators (or variables) help define exactly what information will be used to answer your research questions.

- Specific, observable, and measurable sources of information

Indicators can be quantitative (numerical) or qualitative (non-numerical).

There can be more than one indicator for each activity or outcome you choose to measure.
**Example indicators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Indicator(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>(Process-oriented)</em> Were the educational workshops consistently implemented across the four program sites?</td>
<td>a) Members received training on how to deliver curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Topics covered during workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Duration of each workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Total number of workshop participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) Characteristics of workshop participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Outcome-oriented)</em> Did program beneficiaries increase their knowledge of responsible home ownership practices?</td>
<td>Benefits show an increase in knowledge of:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) Refinancing options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Credit repair and recovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Money saving strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**V: DATA COLLECTION**

- Identify your data sources.
  - Existing data (e.g., administrative records, program databases, external datasets, program documents)
  - Beneficiaries, comparison/control group individuals, program staff, AmeriCorps members

- Identify your data collection tools/instruments.
  - Surveys
  - Interview protocols
  - Focus groups guides
  - Observation templates
### V: DATA COLLECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Quantitative Methods</th>
<th>Qualitative Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope</strong></td>
<td>Less in-depth data across a larger number of study participants</td>
<td>More in-depth data on fewer study participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data collection</strong></td>
<td>Collect data using structured instruments (closed-ended survey items and rating scales)</td>
<td>Collect narrative data using semi- or unstructured instruments (open-ended survey items, interviews, observation, focus groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data format</strong></td>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td>Non-numeric (text-based)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data analysis</strong></td>
<td>Statistical (e.g., frequencies, means, crosstabs, regression models)</td>
<td>Non-statistical (e.g., content analysis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Results</strong></td>
<td>More objective; more generalizable to a larger population; able to provide evidence of program impact</td>
<td>More subjective; less generalizable to a larger population; NOT able to provide evidence of program impact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Combining qualitative and quantitative data methods may provide more in-depth answers to your research questions.

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### V: DATA COLLECTION

- Specify the start and end date and frequency of data collection.
  - Single measure (e.g., after the intervention only)
  - Pre- and post-measures before and after the intervention
  - At various times or continuously during the course of the intervention
  - Over time (longitudinal)
- Specify who will be responsible for collecting the data.
  - Internal program staff or AmeriCorps members
  - External evaluator
- Describe your approach to managing and securing the data.
Specify whether a sample will be drawn.

- Will you collect data on the entire population that you intend to study or will a sample of study participants be drawn?
- If selecting a sample, include information on:
  - The population from which your sample will be drawn
  - Selected sampling techniques
  - Expected sample size
- Sampling is a complex process and should be determined by an experienced evaluator.

This section explains the analytic techniques you plan to use in the evaluation.

- Quantitative data analysis techniques
  - Statistical analysis (mean, median, chi-square, t-test, ANOVA, regression, etc.)
- Qualitative data analysis techniques
  - Content analysis (cross-site analysis, theme identification, case study descriptions)
### VI: ANALYSIS PLAN

#### Process Evaluation of a Homelessness Prevention Program for Low-income Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>What is collected and how?</th>
<th>From whom / data sources?</th>
<th>When collected and by whom?</th>
<th>How will you analyze the data?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the program’s activity – educational workshops - being implemented as designed?</td>
<td>a) Duration of workshops</td>
<td>a, b, and c) Members report details about workshops in logs with pre-defined categories of reporting</td>
<td>a, b, and c) Member logs</td>
<td>a, b, and c) Evaluator collects the workshop logs quarterly</td>
<td>a, b, and c) Generate average duration of workshops; average rate of workshop attendance; and frequencies on use of curriculum;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Participant workshop attendance rates</td>
<td>a and b) Observations of workshops</td>
<td>a and b) Observations of workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Topics covered by member</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Members delivery of program curriculum during workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### VI: ANALYSIS PLAN

#### Impact Evaluation of a Homelessness Prevention Program for Low-income Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Outcome of interest</th>
<th>What is collected and how?</th>
<th>From whom / data sources?</th>
<th>When collected and by whom?</th>
<th>How will you analyze the data?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What impact does the homelessness prevention program have on beneficiaries’ ability to hold a stable tenancy relative to a comparison group?</td>
<td>Tenancy status of low-income families at risk of homelessness</td>
<td>Low income families’ housing stability is measured with a survey.</td>
<td>a) Low-income families participating in the program serve as the intervention group. b) Low-income families facing an immediate housing crisis that do not participate in a homelessness prevention program serve as the comparison group.</td>
<td>The evaluator administers the survey at two time points: - before the homelessness prevention program begins - 1 year after the homelessness prevention program is implemented</td>
<td>Calculate the difference in average outcome in the intervention group minus the difference in average outcome in the comparison group before and after treatment (difference in differences method)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VII. TIMELINE

- Include a timeline of when you expect to carry out each of your key evaluation activities specified in your plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Activities</th>
<th>Example of Timing of Activities for Grant Year 1 – Grant Year 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: Sept-Nov; Q2: Dec-Feb; Q3: Mar-May; Q4: Jun-Aug</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop/refine logic model</td>
<td>Q1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hire/identify evaluator</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop evaluation plan and data collection tools</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit study participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis/interpretation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report/dissemination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VIII. BUDGET AND OTHER

- Include an estimated budget for your evaluation. Common cost categories:
  - Staff time
  - Materials, equipment, and supplies
  - Travel
  - Data collection

- Include any other relevant information that is not in other sections of your evaluation plan:
  - Institutional Review Board (IRB) clearance
IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

Evaluation Plan... helps you get clear and focus your efforts to insure everything is in alignment.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

Tool to insure all stakeholders are on the same page about what evaluation will address.
GOT EVALUATION QUESTIONS??

Any FL Program...
Feel free to email me to ask evaluation questions you have:
shyatt@bigpurposebigimpact.com

EVALUATION RESOURCES

• CNCS's Knowledge Network
  – http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation

• The American Evaluation Association
  – http://www.eval.org

• The Evaluation Center
  – http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/

• The Community Tool Box

• Choosing the Right Research Questions