Submitting Reports

Guidelines for submitting reports

General Guidance

The Final Evaluation Report is a stand-alone deliverable completed for each primary objective identified in the scope of work. A separate Brief Evaluation Report is needed for each non-primary objective. Final Evaluation Reports and Brief Evaluation reports are submitted online through https://otis.catcp.org, the California Tobacco Control Program's Online Tobacco Information System (OTIS).

Write the report for the general reader who may be unfamiliar with issues in tobacco control using concise, straightforward language. Prepare and format the report using the section headings detailed in the Instructions and Scoring Rubric.

When Final Evaluation Reports are received, they are reviewed and rated for completeness and quality. (See the Scoring Rubric for details on the criteria used in rating.) Reports rated "Good" and "Exemplary" are then catalogued in a searchable database by the Rover Tobacco Control Library. Copies of well-written Final Evaluation Reports may also be posted on the California Tobacco Control Program (CTCP) and Tobacco Control Evaluation Center (TCEC) websites and shared with researchers and national organizations upon request.

CTCP uses information from the Final Evaluation Reports and Brief Evaluation Reports to communicate the effectiveness of funded projects to policymakers in the California Department of Health Services and other state government agencies. Evaluation findings have influenced analysis of proposed tobacco control legislation and provided data for reports provided to the governor, state legislature, and federal agencies. The evaluation reports are also used by CTCP administrators as a communication tool to justify the need for continued funding and to offer accountability to the public for the use of state taxpayer funds. TCEC uses the Final Evaluation Reports to compile summary reports of effective strategies and for technical assistance it provides to CTCP-funded projects.

Usefulness of Reports

Projects funded by the California Tobacco Control Program are required to carry out evaluation activities to assess their tobacco control efforts. Evaluation is a way of examining and understanding the relative effectiveness of various tobacco control interventions. By knowing what is working and what is not working, for whom, and in what context, projects can be more successful in changing norms toward a tobacco-free California

For evaluation to contribute to future tobacco control activities, evaluation results must be communicated effectively. A well-written evaluation report can be used to inform state and local stakeholders and policy-makers about the impact of your program. In addition, abstracts, executive summaries, highlights, or full reports from other funded projects may provide promising approaches to achieving an objective or effective methods of evaluating an intervention that could be adapted for use in your own tobacco control program. Final Evaluation Reports are a valuable tool for channeling tobacco control efforts toward the activities and interventions that have the greatest public health impact and the greatest likelihood of success.

Keep in mind that there is often more than one way to interpret the results of a project. It is important that agency staff and the evaluator discuss the results and proposed conclusions during the process of writing an evaluation report. Reaching consensus about the interpretation of findings improves the validity, accuracy, and utility of the report.

Instructions

Guidelines for writing evaluation reports

Use the following instructions as a guideline for writing your final evaluation report. The headings should serve as the outline for your report format. The instructions under each heading are intended to guide the content for each section of your report, but don't include these instructions in your report.

Cover Page

This page identifies for readers the report's topic, authors, contact information and project time period.

The cover page includes relevant information about the project, the report and its authors. Start by giving the report a descriptive title that indicates the focus of the objective (what occurred and where it took place). Provide information about the project such as the name of the organization and project director, as well as the organizational website or contact information so readers can contact you with questions. Identify the funding cycle when the work took place. List the report authors or evaluation firm and a recommended citation. Lastly, include a California Department of Public Health attribution that identifies the contract number and funding source for this work. (This can go on the inside cover.)

Abstract

This section summarizes the key components of the report so readers can get a brief overview of project efforts on this objective. Abstracts are useful formats for submitting articles for publication, presentations at conferences, or archiving in the ROVER library.

In 350 words or less, summarize the background, methods, results, and conclusions for work on this objective.

- Succinctly state what the objective was and why it was important to work on this objective in this particular jurisdiction at this point in time.
- Describe how the project attempted to achieve the objective—include only the key intervention and evaluation methods that moved the effort along.
- Summarize key findings—what happened as a result of the intervention and evaluation activities. Include important evaluation findings that either moved the work forward or documented baseline or outcome measures.
- In the conclusion, state to what extent the objective was achieved. If not completed, explain what still needs to happen. Relate which activities proved to be most effective and make recommendations for changes or improvements.

Aim and Outcome

This section identifies the purpose of the project and outcome of the objective.

Don't keep your readers in suspense. Start off the body of the report by stating what the project was trying to achieve (the objective and indicator) as well as the end result (the degree to which the objective was achieved). Knowing this up front makes the rest of the report easier to follow.

Background

This section provides the rationale for working on the objective.

Explain why you chose this objective. Provide some context for the choice. Don't just state that the indicator rated highly during the Communities of Excellence (CX) process.

- Describe the need for this objective—why this topic was appropriate for this target jurisdiction at this point in time. The rationale may include noting the tobacco use rates and norms of your community, key demographics or other related factors. Avoid just listing irrelevant elements from the county profile. Whatever pieces of information you include should

serve as the rationale for this objective. For example, with a tobacco retail licensing objective it would be appropriate to discuss the characteristics and size of the target jurisdiction, the number of tobacco retailers, recent illegal sales rates of tobacco products to minors, and community norms about government regulation and youth access to tobacco, etc.
- State whether or not any previous work had been done on this issue in the target jurisdiction or nearby. Describe where and how recently work took place, with what effect, and why there was reason to hope that efforts in this contract period would be more successful.
- Lastly, discuss the role of the community in assessing needs and selecting and formulating the objective. In a sentence or two, mention something about your CX decisionmaking processes—the number of participants involved, the number of indicators assessed, and why this objective was determined to be a high priority.

Evaluation Methods and Design

This section provides an outline of the key components of the evaluation plan. Based on its logic, appropriateness and rigor, readers can make a determination about the quality of your findings.

Describe your overall plan for using evaluation to support this objective and/or for measuring outcome. It is not necessary to mention all the evaluation activities you conducted, just those that were most significant. (Less essential activities can be in the appendix.)

This section should address the following:

- Describe key process and outcome measures. Relate the purpose and method of each activity.
- Describe how you ensured data quality. For example, how were data collectors trained?
- Summarize how quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed. Describe the statistical tools used to analyze quantitative data (e.g., descriptive statistics, chi-square, etc.) and your method used for analyzing qualitative data (identifying themes, content analysis, etc.). You don't need to state the analysis type for each evaluation activity separately.
- Lastly, state potential design limitations. For example, due to limited resources, the public opinion survey sample size was too small to be fully representative.
- Add a table that summarizes the process and outcome evaluation activities that were conducted along with their purpose, sample size, and timing.

Implementation and Results

The purpose of this section is to document how your project worked to achieve this objective.
With a coherent narrative, detail the approaches and strategies deployed as well as the successes and barriers you encountered along the way.

Rather than reporting intervention and evaluation activities separately, provide a chronology of activities that shows how they fit together and supported each other. Summarize what happened as a result for intervention as well as evaluation activities. Describe how data and lessons learned informed next steps.

It's not necessary to include every activity from your plan or every evaluation finding in the body of the report. Focus on those that proved to be important—either for the progress they contributed or for the challenges encountered and lessons learned. Less essential activity descriptions and supplemental results can be reported in the appendix (or not at all).

Be sure to address the following:

- Describe activities that took place early in the cycle to lay the groundwork for achieving the objective, midway through to capitalize on that foundation, and towards the end to either push the objective through or to implement it. Include specifics about who the activity targeted, how many participated, what the activity consisted of, when it took place, how long it lasted, and who led the activity. Explain what strategies were used and how effective they were at achieving their goals. What support or barriers did you encounter? If something didn't work as well as expected, why do you think that was? What did you learn from the activity? What would you do differently next time?
- Relate what happened as a result of the activity and how those results may have informed next steps. For example, "Early meetings with policymakers indicated that they were hesitant to restrict perceived individual liberties, such as smoking, except when it came to environmental issues. As a result, we were able to frame the issue of smoking in public places as harmful

to the environment because tobacco litter ended up in nearby water sources and surrounding riparian habitat. This argument proved to be successful in overcoming their concerns and a majority of council members ended up supporting the measure and adopting a policy to prohibit smoking in the downtown district."

- Follow a similar process for recounting key evaluation activities. Describe the purpose, the timing, the location, the number of waves, the sample size and composition, who collected the data, and the response rate of the data collection. If more than one person was involved in collecting the data, in a few sentences explain how data collectors were trained and assessed.
- Communicate key evaluation results from data collection. Highlight important findings with no more than five impactful charts, graphs or other ways to visually represent data. Be sure to provide interpretation of the data; say what the results indicate. Explain how the data was used. For example, did it inform the timing or content of education activities? Or was it used in presentations to the community or decisionmakers? How did it make a difference?
- Include a timeline (template provided) that summarizes intervention and evaluation activities in chronological order by year. This makes it much easier for readers to follow your story.
- Discuss how activities, materials, data collection instruments, and data analysis were specifically tailored to different stakeholders in the community. What culturally competent practices did the project use to approach, engage and incorporate the viewpoints of populations of interest during the process of working on this objective? Describe how results were communicated and shared back with the public and other relevant parties.
- State how community members were involved in the collection of data and/or interpretation of results, how you shared evaluation results along the way, and how you plan to disseminate the final evaluation report.

Conclusions & Recommendations

This section is an opportunity to reflect on efforts toward achieving the objective—to assess how things went and how far the endeavor got.

- Although you already stated whether you achieved your objective in the Aim and Outcome section, restate the degree to which the project achieved the objective here. If it wasn't acheived, summarize barriers that hampered success. Explain where things stand now and what still needs to be done.
- Assess key activities, strategies or approaches employed. Which proved particularly effective or useful? Which were less useful or effective?
- From the lessons learned along the way, make useful recommendations that provide clear advice about specific tactics to try. Avoid generic or obvious statements like "Incorporate youth in activities." Instead, transform this into an Aha! statement like: Policymaker informants said that council members respond better to presentations made by youth than adults because "No one wants to be the jerk who says 'No' to a kid." Train a dedicated core of youth volunteers to be spokespersons who can give a personal face to the issue you are asking policymakers to consider.

Appendix

Attach relevant data collection instruments and more detailed intervention and evaluation activity descriptions, materials or results in the appendix. This allows readers to seek more detail if they wish. Appropriate documents can include: educational materials (information packets, fact sheets, presentations, infographics), media pieces (ads, social media posts, press releases, letters to the editor), images, data visualizations, training activity descriptions, additional evaluation results or complete evaluation activity summaries. (However, you do not need to attach all evaluation activity results you wrote up for progress reports.)