

## **Q & A about Developing Evaluation Plans**

*Ask an Evaluator is a forum for project directors, health educators, data collectors and evaluators of any CTCP-funded project to ask questions about evaluation topics. If you have a question for our next issue, don't hesitate to send it to [rakipke@ucdavis.edu](mailto:rakipke@ucdavis.edu)!*

### **How are proposed work plans scored?**

A separate review process occurs for the applications for the Competitive Grant RFA 10-100 and the 2010-2013 Local Lead Agency Comprehensive Tobacco Control Plans. Teams of reviewers are assigned to read and score a batch of proposals based on the criteria set forth by CTCP in each specific funding opportunity. Review teams consist of project directors, program experts, budget specialists and evaluators. Some reviewers are from out-of-state or from other public health programs to add an outside perspective. Each component of the work plan is given a point score based on how sound, complete and logical it seems. While fresh, innovative ideas can be frosting on the cake, what reviewers are really looking for is whether the plan makes sense. Is there an apparent logic that connects the intervention activities to the objective and to the community assessment? Will the evaluation clearly support and inform the intervention? Do the data collection activities match the plan type and evaluation design? Is the justification for the evaluation approach clearly laid out in the narrative? Is the budget reasonable? Do all of the pieces fit together to reveal the big picture of the puzzle? So pay attention to the little components as well as the overall view and make sure to provide enough detail so the brilliant logic of your plan shines through!

### **What should go into the evaluation narrative?**

The OTIS Evaluation Guide describes both the purpose and the components of an evaluation narrative (see pages 131-132). Basically, it should provide a reader insight into what your evaluation plan will consist of and why you are using this approach. One way to think about the narrative is, what information would need to be included in order to satisfy critics that your results are valid? You would need to describe: 1) what you were trying to do and why [what was your objective and why you chose to work on that topic. And don't just say it became a priority due to the CX process!], 2) what your evaluation plan was designed to do [how it supports/informs the objective], 3) your evaluation design [plan type, process and outcome measures, overview of data collection activities], 4) describe the data collection activities in chronological order so it is clear how all of the steps fit together, 5) how data collection will be carried out [target population, sample size and selection, data collection training, who will collect the data], 6) how data will be analyzed and what you think it will tell you, 7) how results will be used and shared, and 8) outline any anticipated limitations and challenges to the evaluation. The narrative should be infused with the rationale for the evaluation approach you've decided to take. It should convince the reader that the approach that you are proposing in the evaluation plan is logical!

### **How should you write a plan which continues work on current objectives that were not yet achieved?**

Start with what has been done to date, then show what still remains to be done and discuss why it is important to continue on this objective at this time. Much of this information can be included in the narrative for the objective, and any lessons learned should be reflected in changes to your previous

activities. For example: What hindered the achievement of the goal in the current cycle? What did the results of your data collection reveal? Is there a lack of public and/or leadership support? Is more education and outreach needed? If so, then plan more frequent, widespread or effectively targeted activities. Do you need more/better media coverage? Then plan press campaigns or media events to garner more coverage. Would decision makers be convinced with more or better data? Then think about what type and scope of data collection activities could capture data that would be convincing. Is there just a lack of political will due to factors outside of your control, such as council members that are vehemently opposed to a policy because of personal reasons or ideals? Then what activities can be planned that could work around those members or bring political pressure on them? The lessons you have learned from your efforts to date should shape the activities and approaches of your new work plan.

Decide whether the amount of work needed to achieve a second round on this objective will constitute a primary focus of your program (primary objective) or will it be a lesser focus (non-primary objective). Write up your proposed work plan from there.

### **What's the best way to determine percent allocations for deliverables?**

There is no standard way to determine this. It will depend on a number of variables -- the size of your program, the number of objectives in your plan, whether the objective is primary or secondary, and your budget to carry out and staff those activities. The one set rule is that all of the deliverables in your overall work plan should total 100%. How you determine a value for each deliverable is somewhat subjective, but the smallest increment is 0.5%. In general, think about which objectives your project will spend the bulk of its efforts on. Assign a ratio for each objective, for example: (1) getting a TRL policy passed in this city is likely to be a tough sell and quite time consuming when compared to (2) developing culturally relevant materials (3) or passing an outdoor parks policy in a supportive community, so you might figure 50% of your project's time will be spent on obj. 1, 20% on obj. 2 and 30% on obj. 3. That means you have 50% points to divvy up between intervention and evaluation activities for objective 1. Within each objective, use a similar process to determine which activities will take the most time and effort and assign a percentage value to each deliverable from the subtotal allotted for the objective. Look at all of the activities you are proposing and see if the ratios seem realistic in proportion to the others. Make sure your total deliverables for the entire plan add up to 100%.

Remember that collaboration and coordination activities for a policy objective are not deliverables (see Communities of Excellence, Module 4, pages 40-41 for more explanation on deliverable percentages). Primary objectives typically require more time and effort, and so might get more % time allocated than non-primary objectives.

When in doubt, look at other plans in OTIS working on an objective similar to yours (see the September 21st, 2009 Partners posting on how to find them). You can also phone other project directors and ask how they arrived at the percentages for their deliverables on a specific objective. The LLA Technical Assistance session, where you can run ideas, objectives and activities by a Program Consultant, is November 10th. You could also request advice through the Project Director's Association by emailing Rich Heinz at [thellapda@yahoo.com](mailto:thellapda@yahoo.com) or contacting the Association President, Bill Hall in Modoc County via email at [bhall@modocounty.us](mailto:bhall@modocounty.us).