LESSON 3: EVALUATION WITHIN AND ACROSS THE POLICY PROCESS DOMAINS
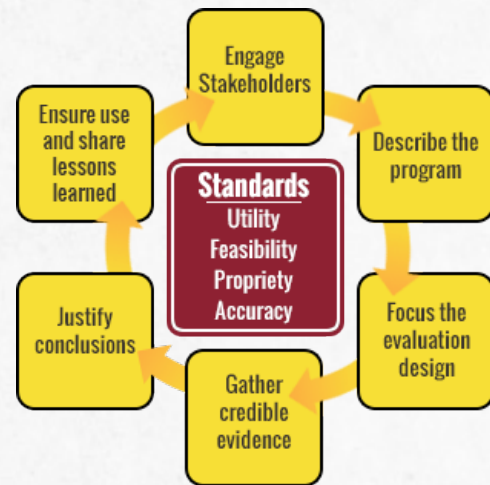
In this lesson, you learned how to perform policy evaluation using the CDC Evaluation Framework.

The objectives for this lesson were

- **Describe how to apply the CDC Evaluation Framework throughout the policy process.**

- **Identify key questions to ask throughout the policy process.**

KEY POINTS

- In **Step 1: Engaging Stakeholders**, you may need to include policy experts, evaluation experts, subject matter experts, those impacted by the policy, decision makers, and those responsible for adopting, implementing, and enforcing the policy.

- **Step 2, Describing the Policy Effort**, involves scrutinizing the features of the policy being evaluated, including its purpose and place in a larger public health context.

- Logic models are helpful tools that articulate the underlying logic, assumed causal pathways between a policy or policies and behaviors, and the links between those behaviors and long-term impacts.

- In **Step 3, Focusing the Evaluation Design**, the design and focus of the evaluation are based primarily on the purpose(s), user(s), and uses(s) of the evaluation, as well as the policy characteristics and context.

- **Step 4, Gathering Credible Evidence**, you may use primary or secondary data sources and quantitative or qualitative data collection methods.

- In **Step 5, Justifying Conclusions**, you will interpret results within the context of the evaluation questions, policy goals, and the policy logic model, being sure to present analysis results in an unbiased manner that considers alternative explanations for the findings and the influence of external factors.

- In **Step 6, Ensuring Use of Findings and Sharing Lessons Learned**, you will need to share findings with policymakers, colleagues, partners, and the public.

- Sample evaluation questions to ask throughout the policy process are summarized in the table on the next two pages.

Domain	Sample Evaluation Questions
Problem Identification	- What data were collected and analyzed? - Was the data collection comprehensive enough to provide an accurate picture of the problem and the context? - Were the nature and causes of the problem included such as frequency, scope, and severity? - Were gaps in data identified? - Was the problem defined in a way to lend itself to policy solution(s) or actions? - Were the right stakeholders engaged in the definition of the problem, data collection, and analyses to ensure a comprehensive assessment?

Policy Analysis	- Was an evidence-based theory of change used?
	- How were the policy options examined?
	- Did the analysis of policy encompass the following:
	  o Political feasibility?
	  o Public health impacts?
	  o Economic and fiscal impacts?
	  o Resources necessary for enactment?
	- How were policy options and priorities assessed?
	- Were requirements for implementation outlined in the policy?
	- Were negative or positive unintended outcomes considered?
	- Were the stakeholders engaged so that the identification and prioritization of policy options reflect the economic and political realities of the context?

Strategy and Policy Development	- What were key activities taking place during the development phase? Which of these activities are critical in achieving the outcomes? - Were there any key changes in the policy content originally proposed and the final policy content? - What are the key barriers to the enactment of this policy? - Does the policy clearly state the goals or objectives? - Does the policy clearly articulate a theory of change that is supported by evidence? - Are the components of the policy consistent with "model" policies?

Domain	Sample Evaluation Questions
Policy Enactment	- Was the policy adopted/enacted? - What was the content of the policy adopted/enacted language? - Was the enactment consistent with the best available evidence/findings of the policy analysis? - What were the barriers to or facilitators for enactment? - Was adoption/enactment uniform? What were the factors responsible? - Were stakeholders engaged so that the evaluation of enactment will include barriers and facilitators especially where enactment is not uniform? - Are the requirements for implementation clearly stated in the policy? Are these requirements feasible given the resources and capacity of the stakeholders who will be implementing the policy?
Policy Implementation	- Did the policy clearly identify the critical implementation steps? - Were implementation standards and indicators/measures identified in the legislation/policy? - Did the activities result in the anticipated outputs? - What inputs and resources were used to implement the policy? What inputs or resources were required, but not available? - Was the policy implemented according to the policy requirements? Was implementation uniform? - Was implementation uniform? What were the factors responsible? - Were there barriers or facilitators contributing to success of implementation?
Policy Impact	- Were stakeholders engaged in the selection of outcome measures of success and their collection? - Did the activities result in the anticipated outputs? - Is the policy achieving its intended outcomes? Was there a change in the outcomes of interest? - Were there positive or negative unintended outcomes? - Did contextual factors influence the level of impact? What external factors influenced the implementation? - What was the economic impact of the policy (cost-effectiveness or cost-benefit)?