

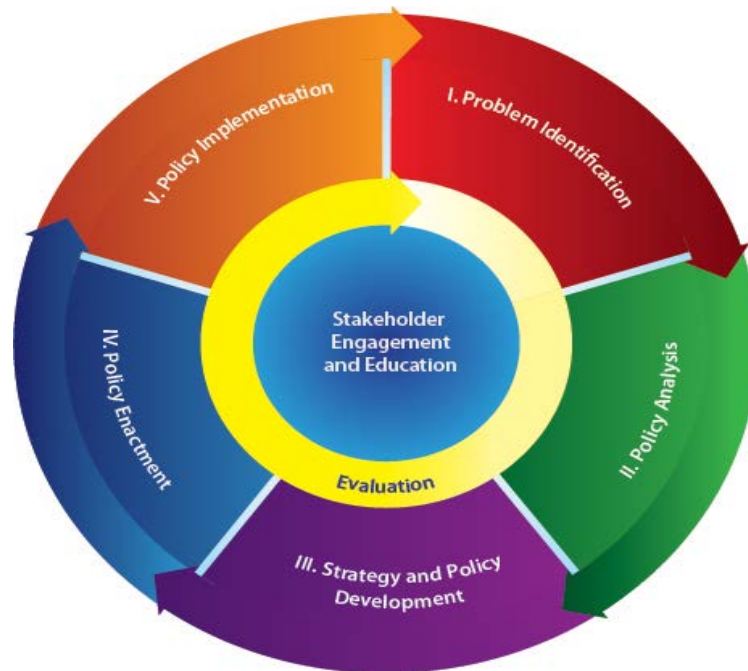
## Policy Evaluation Guide

### I. Introduction

Public health professionals play an important role in the policy process, for example, by conducting policy analysis and evaluation, communicating findings, developing partnerships, and promoting and implementing evidence-based interventions. CDC's model of the policy process was developed to foster a common language and understanding of what policy is and the process by which it is conceptualized, developed, adopted, and evaluated.

The CDC policy process includes the domains of problem identification, policy analysis, strategy and policy development, policy enactment, and policy implementation with the overarching domains for stakeholder engagement and education and also evaluation (see Figure 1; <http://intranet.cdc.gov/od/adp/process/index.htm>). The policy process is rarely a linear process; often the domains of the policy cycle overlap or occur out of order. However, in the ideal scenario, a problem is defined, potential policy solutions are identified, analyzed, and prioritized, and the best solution is adopted and the best solution is adopted and evaluated. This guide expands on the Evaluation Domain of the policy process which is overarching and applicable to all other domains.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, throughout this document the term 'policy effort' is used to refer broadly to policy-related interventions, activities and/or strategies within any of the domains of the policy process.

**Figure 1: Policy Process**



This document provides information on how to identify and evaluate one or more domains of the policy process, including the outcomes and impacts of the policy.<sup>2</sup> The goals are to provide CDC staff with a step-by-step guide to:

- Improve understanding of evaluation as it applies to the policy process;
- Recognize the value of and opportunities for policy evaluation;
- Improve the ability to evaluate one or more domains of the Policy Process, and;
- Use evaluation findings to inform the evidence base.

## II. Definitions

**Policy** is a law, regulation, procedure, administrative action, incentive or voluntary practice of governments and other institutions. Within the context of public health, policy development includes the advancement and implementation of public health law, regulations, or voluntary practices that influence systems development, organizational change, and individual behavior to promote improvements in health.<sup>3</sup>

**Program** is the object of evaluation, which could be any organized public health activity, including direct service interventions, community mobilization efforts, research initiatives, surveillance systems, policy development activities, outbreak investigations, laboratory diagnostics, communication campaigns, infrastructure building projects, training and educational services, and administrative systems.<sup>4</sup>

**Evaluation** is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs (which may include interventions, policies, and specific projects) to make judgments about that program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform future decisions about program development.<sup>5</sup>

**Policy Evaluation** is the systematic collection and analysis of information to make judgments about contexts, activities, characteristics, or outcomes of one or more domain(s) of the policy process. Evaluation may inform and improve policy development, adoption, implementation, and effectiveness, and builds the evidence base for policy interventions.

## III. Framing Policy Evaluation

Before setting out to evaluate policy efforts, it is important to first determine why the evaluation is being conducted, **who** is asking for or will use the information (e.g., stakeholders), **why** the information is needed (e.g., congressional mandate) and **how** this information will be used (e.g., to inform future efforts).

It is very important to understand the **context** of the evaluation, including:

- When are the results needed?
- What resources (monetary, staff) are available to conduct the evaluation?
- What (if any) ethical considerations must be taken into account?
- What level of rigor and accuracy may be demanded of the results?

Framing the evaluation and clearly understanding the context you are working in can help to guarantee that the right questions are being asked. This can also ensure that the needs of stakeholders are being met, and that results can be used to inform and improve policy efforts moving forward, thus enhancing the ability of policies to improve public health.

**Key considerations when evaluating one or more domains of the Policy Process:**

Below are nuances that differentiate policy evaluation from program evaluation.

- Boundaries may be defined differently for policy efforts (e.g., jurisdictional or geographic) compared to programmatic efforts (e.g., population or demographic).
- A policy effort is more likely to be one of multiple strategies in a comprehensive approach to reach a health outcome, making it harder to document the link between the policy itself and observed outcomes.
- Policy efforts may develop without an explicit theory of change linking a policy to a specific outcome thereby making it harder to recognize or show how a policy may lead to health impacts.
- There may be more variation in the timeline around policy efforts, where a programmatic effort is more likely to have a known and defined timeline (e.g., a specific funding period).
- A policy effort may be more heavily dependent on stakeholders to adopt/implement more influence by context compared to programmatic efforts.
- Policy efforts may be more uncertain and dynamic compared to programmatic efforts.
- With policy efforts, people can be impacted without their consent, which may lead to resistance. People often choose to participate in a program, or receive services. This may also affect data collection efforts.
- Defining the audience for a policy effort may be more complicated compared to defining the audience for a programmatic effort.
- It may be more difficult to identify a comparison group or community for a policy effort, compared to a programmatic effort.
- The evidence base for policy may not be as strong as the evidence base for programs/individual level interventions.
- The scale and scope of data collection may differ, with more emphasis on data at system and community levels, and hence, the use of surveillance and administrative data.
- The type and number of stakeholders involved may be different, and is dependent on the stage of the policy process.
- Due to federal anti-lobbying regulations it is essential when evaluating a policy effort or activities that the outcomes and measures reflect activities that are permitted using federal funds.
  - ❖ However, CDC and CDC-funded grantees are allowed to track and evaluate laws that have already passed.
  - ❖ Additionally, CDC and CDC-funded grantees may conduct research regarding policy alternatives and their impact, and make evidence-based recommendations on public health policy matters, including potentially those that may require some type of legislative or executive action to be implemented.
  - ❖ In performing such activities, caution should be exercised that such recommendations do not involve express calls to engage in grass roots lobbying activities.\*

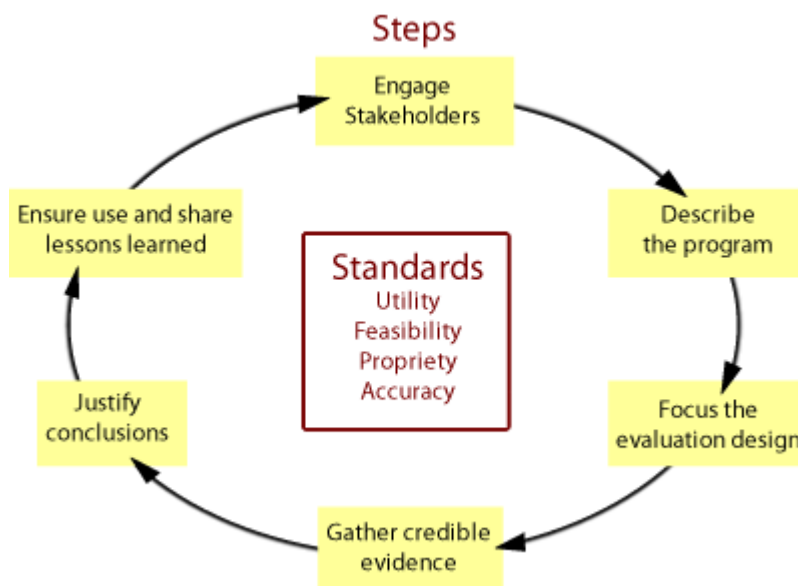
This policy evaluation guide uses CDC’s Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health to lay out a practical, step-by-step approach to evaluate any or all of the domains of the policy process. CDC’s Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health is composed of six steps that should be taken into consideration in any program evaluation. The steps include: engaging stakeholders, describing the program, focusing the evaluation design, gathering credible evidence, justifying conclusions, and ensuring use and sharing lessons learned (see

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\* Even when operating within what are thought to be legal limits, attention must be paid to appropriateness of policy positions, Congressional intent regarding the use of appropriations, and the appropriateness of our grantee activities. Please see “CDC Implementation of Anti-Lobbying Provisions,  
<http://intranet.cdc.gov/od/adp/docs/ImplementationofAnti-LobbyingProvisions-June2012.pdf>

**Figure 2).** For more information regarding the steps and standards associated with program evaluation, please see: <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/framework/index.htm>.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 2**



It is possible to conduct an evaluation at any stage of the Policy Process (**Figure 1**). Therefore, it is important to first determine where you are in the policy process, because the evaluation steps might require different considerations in each domain. For example, while the evaluation process might be the same for both policy analysis and policy implementation, the information needed or received and how that information is used could be different.

#### **IV. Key Steps to Evaluate one or more of the Domains of the Policy Process:**

##### **1. Engaging Stakeholders**

Stakeholders play a crucial role in the policy process and its evaluation. Evaluation stakeholders may be the same stakeholders that were engaged in the policy process, a subset, or a different group altogether. The stakeholders who are engaged during policy evaluation may depend on where you are in the policy process. It is important to identify and engage key evaluation stakeholders as early as possible to review and affirm the purpose and uses of the evaluation, key evaluation questions, appropriate evaluation design and data collection methods. A policy evaluation may require broader or deeper engagement of stakeholders compared to a typical program evaluation.

When evaluating a policy effort, a variety of stakeholders may be involved including:

- Policy experts
- Evaluation Experts
- Subject Matter Experts
- Those impacted (implementers & stakeholders)
  - ❖ Engaging stakeholders who oppose the policy can provide valuable insight into initial or on-going resistance to the policy and their involvement can lend credibility to evaluation findings
- Decision makers, and
- Those responsible for adopting, implementing or enforcing the policy

## 2. Describing the Policy Effort—Logic Models

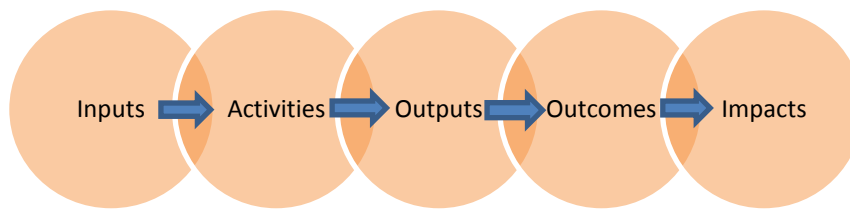
The most thorough evaluation is likely to occur when there is clarity and consensus regarding the components, intended outcomes, and policy effort being evaluated.

A **Logic Model**<sup>†</sup> is a helpful tool to ascertain clarity and consensus on aspects of the policy effort. It visually depicts the linear pathways between the policy activities and specific outcomes, as well as the links between intermediate and long-term outcomes and impacts.<sup>7</sup>

Logic models can include some or all of the following key components:

- **Inputs:** resources required to develop/implement the policy effort
- **Activities:** actions that comprise the program, in this case identifying the problem and developing and implementing the policy effort
- **Outputs:** direct products or deliverables that result from activities.
- **Outcomes and Impacts:** changes in people, conditions, behaviors, and health outcomes that result from the policy-related activities

Logic models generally display these components as a sequence:

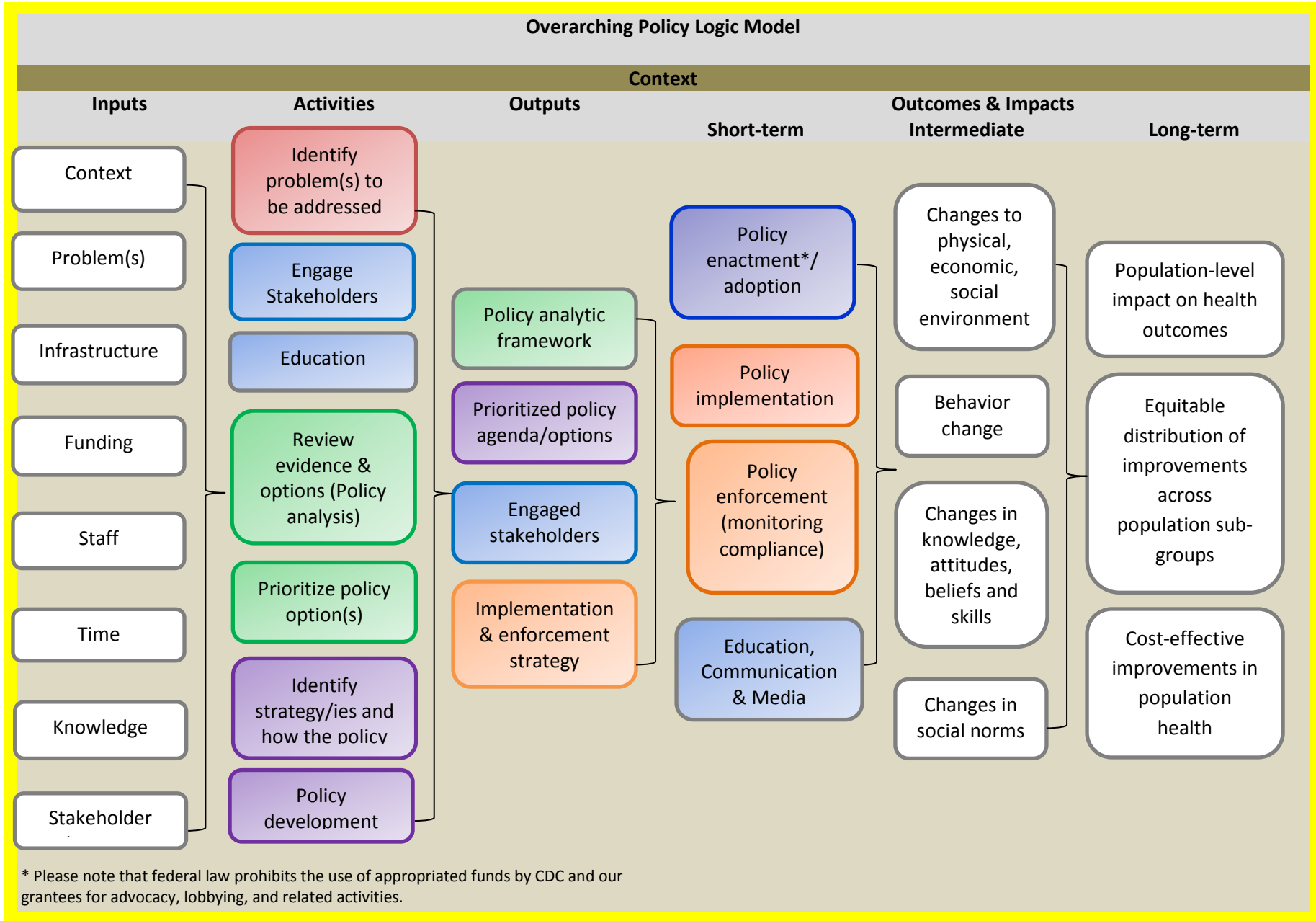


All of the components listed above occur within the larger context of environmental or system influences that might help or hinder the ability of a policy's activities/outputs to achieve outcomes/impacts.

The following generic logic model is aligned and color coded to follow the domains of CDC's policy process (**Figure 1**). It displays typical inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes that can be revised iteratively over time.

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<sup>†</sup> Depending on the policy effort a system dynamics model may be relevant to your evaluation.



### 3. Focusing the Policy Evaluation Design

After describing the policy and its context, it is important to focus the evaluation design. Focusing the evaluation design means planning in advance about where the evaluation is headed and what steps will be taken to get there. A plan anticipates intended uses and creates an evaluation strategy that has the greatest chance of being effective.

Evaluation underlies all domains of the Policy Process and a policy evaluation could focus on only one domain (e.g., problem identification) or the entire policy process. The design and focus of the evaluation will depend on which domain(s) of the Policy Process are being examined and the answers to the following questions:

Purpose(s): Why is the evaluation being conducted?

User(s): Who will use the information and what is their focus?

Use(s): How will the information gained from the evaluation be used?

The answers to these questions will vary over the life of the policy effort (i.e., at implementation, at one year post enactment, and five years later).

Formative, process, and outcome/impact evaluation are three common ways to classify evaluations.

- Formative evaluation looks at the larger context and environment to determine the main problem and identify solutions that are feasible, appropriate, and meaningful for the target population.<sup>8</sup> For a policy evaluation, this would happen before a policy is adopted and implemented. It would also encompass questions related to the content of the policy:
  - ❖ Core components and implementation requirements of policy
  - ❖ Evidence-base supporting policy strategy
  - ❖ Context of policy development and adoption
  - ❖ Stakeholder roles and responsibilities
  - ❖ Content of similar policies
- Process evaluation examines the implementation of the activities that comprise the policy. For a policy effort, process evaluation would examine the implementation of a policy, focusing on the degree to which the inputs, activities and outputs were implemented as planned, and barriers to and facilitators of implementation.
- Outcome/impact evaluation examines whether the intended outcomes and impacts occurred, and may also examine whether or not outcomes and impacts can be attributed to the policy.<sup>9</sup>

As discussed, evaluation can be applied to any and all of the domains of the Policy Process. Across the domains the purpose and use of the evaluation will change, and therefore, different evaluation questions will be used. As shown in **Table 1**, the type of evaluation used will depend on the Policy Process domains and the purpose of the evaluation.

**Table 1: Evaluating the Domains of the Policy Process**

Policy Process Domain	Type (s) of Evaluation	Purpose of Evaluation	Potential Evaluation Questions
<b>Problem Identification</b>	Formative	Identify the context and cause(s) of the issue and the extent that it lends itself to potential policy solution(s) and prioritized action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What data were collected and analyzed?</li> <li>• Was the data collection comprehensive enough to provide an accurate picture of the problem and context?</li> <li>• Were the nature and causes of the problem included such as frequency, scope, and severity?</li> <li>• Were gaps in data identified?</li> <li>• Was the problem defined in a way to lend itself to policy solution(s) or actions?</li> <li>• Were the right stakeholders engaged in the definition of the problem, data collection, and analyses to ensure a comprehensive assessment?</li> </ul>
<b>Policy Analysis</b>	Formative	Understand the process of policy development, including analysis of policy options, contextual support/opposition, and potential public health, and economic and fiscal impact(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was an evidence-based theory of change utilized?</li> <li>• How were the policy options examined?</li> <li>• Did the analysis of policy encompass the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Political feasibility?</li> <li>○ Public Health impacts?</li> <li>○ Economic and fiscal impacts?</li> <li>○ Resources necessary for enactment?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How were policy options and priorities assessed?</li> <li>• Were requirements for implementation outlined in the policy?</li> <li>• What negative or positive unintended outcomes may occur?</li> <li>• Were the stakeholders engaged so that the identification and prioritization of policy options reflect the economic and political realities of the context?</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy and Policy Development</b>	Formative, Process, Outcome	Assess the development process; whether the policy met standards, the language was clear and included the right components.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How was the adoption strategy developed?</li> <li>• In developing the strategy was attention paid to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Matching the strategy to specific settings or jurisdictions?</li> <li>○ Matching the strategy to resources and capacity</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



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			<p>needs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was a draft of the proposed policy developed?</li> <li>• Was information provided on how the policy will operate?</li> <li>• Is there a mechanism for monitoring implementation and measuring success?</li> <li>• What policy actors were included (e.g., decision makers)? Were these stakeholders engaged so that jurisdictional and organizational context were reflected and was there clarity and consensus regarding the policy?</li> </ul>
<b>Policy Enactment</b>	Process, Outcome	Assess adoption/enactment (including laws, regulations, procedures, administrative actions, incentives, or voluntary practices) of the policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the policy adopted/enacted?</li> <li>• What was the content of the adopted/enacted policy language?</li> <li>• Was enactment consistent with the best available evidence/findings of the policy analysis?</li> <li>• What were barriers or facilitators to enactment?</li> <li>• Was adoption/enactment uniform across all contexts?</li> <li>• If enactment was not uniform, what factors were responsible?</li> <li>• Were stakeholders engaged such that the analysis of enactment included barriers and facilitators, especially where enactment was not uniform?</li> </ul>
<b>Policy Implementation</b>	Process, Outcome	Understand how the policy was translated; identify the occurrence and variation of intended and unintended outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were implementation standards and indicators/measures included?</li> <li>• Are there educational efforts supporting the implementation?</li> <li>• Is there a sustainability plan?</li> <li>• What was the level of support for implementation?</li> <li>• What was the degree of compliance with the policy?</li> <li>• Is the policy achieving its intended outcomes?</li> <li>• Was implementation uniform?</li> <li>• Were there barriers or facilitators to implementation?</li> <li>• To what extent are outcomes occurring uniformly across all</li> </ul>

sectors and settings?

- If implementation was not uniform, what factors were responsible?
- Were there negative or unintended outcomes?
- Were stakeholders engaged in the selection of outcomes measures of “success” and their collection?

#### 4. **Gathering Credible Evidence**

Once the evaluation focus and key evaluation questions have been determined, the next steps involve collecting and analyzing data. Data should be gathered in a way that is considered trustworthy and accurate by key stakeholders. Additionally, data should support the evaluation design and answer the established evaluation questions. Potential data sources for evaluation can be broadly classified as primary or secondary, and then quantitative or qualitative, based on how the data was obtained, its content and characteristics.

##### **Considerations regarding context and content when selecting data sources:**

When engaging in policy evaluation efforts, data might be needed from multiple sources, some or all may or may not be available. For example, data might not be available at the level needed—it is available at the state level but not at the school district level. Additionally, some data sources could have a delay, up to several years, before the data becomes available.

The **context** of the evaluation:

- How much time is there until results are needed?
- How many resources (monetary and human) can be devoted to the evaluation?
- Are there special ethical considerations that need to be taken into account?
- What is the level of rigor and accuracy demanded of the results?
- Should the outcome be measured at one point in time or at multiple time points?

The **content** of the questions:

- Is the evaluation or question regarding a sensitive topic?
- Can a behavioral outcome be observed without influencing the target behavior?
- Are there issues of confidentiality or anonymity to consider?
- Are we seeking a point in time estimate or are we trying to more fully understand the activity or outcome?
- Are there readily available and accurate secondary data?

##### **Smart Objectives**

When conducting any evaluation, it is helpful to start with well-written objectives. This will help set priorities and targets for progress and accountability. Your objectives should be SMART in order to move your ideas into action:

- **Specific:** Concrete, detailed, and well defined so that you know where you are going and what to expect when you arrive (e.g., what exactly are you going to do? What strategies will be used?)
- **Measureable:** Numbers and quantities provide means of measurement and comparison (e.g., how will you know that change has occurred? Are you able to gather needed measurements?)
- **Achievable:** feasible and easy to put into action (e.g., can this objective be completed in the proposed timeframe?)
- **Realistic:** Considers constraints such as resources, personnel, cost, and time frame (e.g., do you have the resources available to achieve this objective?)
- **Time-Bound:** A time frame helps to set boundaries around the objective (e.g., when will this objective be accomplished? What is the stated deadline?)

##### **Indicators and Measures**

The terms “indicators” and “measures” are sometimes used interchangeably. It can be argued that they are the same, and that any difference is only semantic. For those who distinguish between the

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two, **measures** refer to activities that are done (e.g., by a grantee) and can be used to determine that activities were performed as proposed, or that a policy was implemented with fidelity. **Indicators** can serve as proxies for milestones on distal health achievements – to indicate that you are going in the right direction or that you have fallen short and need to change course (e.g., the prevalence rate of smoking among U.S. adults).

Indicators and measures help convert activities, outcomes, contextual factors and key evaluation questions into something specific and quantifiable. This can lend clarity to what the evaluation is actually looking for and help define the best data collection options. Indicators and measures may pertain to either the activities of the policy effort (process measures, process indicators) or the intended outcomes and impacts (outcome measures, outcome indicators). When tracked over time, both measures and indicators provide quantitative information to stakeholders and decision makers. Additionally, when viewed collectively, measures and indicators provide a more comprehensive view of your progress and achievements.

### Example

If the policy effort includes “collaborate with key partners” as an activity, the *process indicator* would help elaborate what “key” meant: a partnership with representation from each of [named] stakeholders or sectors; a partnership with representatives who can commit resources on behalf of their organization; a partnership that includes members with access to key decision makers or constituencies.

If the policy effort has as one intended outcome “families eat healthier”, the *outcome indicator* might be “families serve leafy green vegetables at three or more meals per week.” This definition of the indicator also helps us narrow down our data sources and data collection methods.

### Selecting a Data Source

The selection of data methods and sources for a given evaluation, along with the content of specific evaluation questions or indicators may be guided by the context of the evaluation.

#### How the data was obtained? Primary v. Secondary Data:

There are a number of issues to keep in mind when choosing data sources. Data can be existing (**secondary data**) or data collected specifically for the evaluation (**primary data**). Data is not always easy to obtain, and is not always complete or accurate enough for evaluation purposes. In addition, some data may be proprietary, which might need to be purchased or obtained via an established process. An important question to answer is--does the evaluation require collecting new (primary) data or can it rely on existing (secondary) data?

**Utilizing Existing Data: Secondary**

When evaluating a policy implemented on a large-scale, a feasible option might be to use a surveillance system or administrative data, which are secondary data. Secondary data is primary data collected by someone else for a different purpose. Researchers and evaluators reuse and repurpose information as secondary data because it is available and it is often more cost effective than collecting new data. This may save resources; however, there are some unique challenges when working with existing dataset. You may lack control over the data (what is collected, when, by whom, and how frequently) and secondary data sources may not contain all of your desired variables.

**Collecting Additional Data: Primary**

Primary data is information collected by the researcher or evaluator directly through instruments such as surveys, interviews, focus groups or observation. Primary data may be collected if existing secondary data is not available, or if there is a need for data that is tailored to specific needs. It is important to understand how to develop data collection measures and a data collection plan. It is also important to decide who will collect the data (internal or external), based on the nature of the data being collected, potential demand on the implementers, and the resources available to conduct the evaluation.

**What is the content of the data? Quantitative v. Qualitative:**

**Quantitative data** is numerical data that can be analyzed to measure policy outcomes and impacts, whether they are short-term, intermediate, or long-term, intended or unintended. **Qualitative data** is information that is not numerical, which describes attributes or properties of an object or activity. Both types of data may come from a variety of sources. The content of the data will be an important factor in determining the type of analyses conducted.

**Qualitative data analysis** seeks to organize data in a way that allows the analyst to look for meaningful patterns. Qualitative analysis includes reviewing and organizing the data, coding the data by identifying and labeling themes, and then interpreting the meaning of the themes, including the relationships between the themes.<sup>10</sup> Because qualitative analysis can be extremely time-consuming and complex, it is important to ensure that the data collected is directly relevant to the evaluation questions.

**Quantitative data analysis** counts or compares data on a numerical scale. There are several different approaches to analyzing quantitative data depending on the evaluation question, including:

- Using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and means.
- Demonstrating the magnitude and direction of relationship(s) between multiple indicators or variables.
- Establishing a causal relationship between a policy and (an) impact(s).
- Illustrating that a policy is cost-beneficial or cost-effective through economic analyses.

	Primary	Secondary
Quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questionnaires/surveys</li> <li>• Measurement through direct observation (e.g., seatbelt use observed at stoplights)</li> <li>• Media tracking (including social media)</li> <li>• Tracking, registry included in policy language (e.g., mandatory reporting requirements included in policies, cooperative agreements, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing research</li> <li>• Existing surveillance systems (e.g., Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)</li> <li>• Geographic Information Systems (GIS) research</li> </ul>
Qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content analysis of the policy itself, any revisions to the policy, amendments, revised regulations, court rulings, or other formal changes to the policy</li> <li>• Key Informant Interviews</li> <li>• Focus Groups</li> <li>• Case studies</li> <li>• Observations (e.g., meetings, community characteristics, walkability)</li> <li>• Media tracking (including social media)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secondary analysis of primary qualitative data sets (e.g., secondary analysis of interview transcripts) – the use of existing data to find answers to research questions that differ from the questions asked in the original research.<sup>11</sup></li> <li>• Retrospective review of charts/case notes</li> <li>• Literature review</li> <li>• Environmental scan</li> </ul>

### Analyzing the Information

The analysis plan should fit the evaluation questions, the evaluation design, and the characteristics of the data collected. The goal is not to conduct all possible analyses, but to conduct the most appropriate data analyses to answer your evaluation questions.

**Example:**

Multiple data sources may be used to evaluate policy efforts in any domain of the policy process. Take for example a state that passes a comprehensive smoke-free air law then asks for assistance with evaluating the law. It is important to record that the policy was enacted and implemented, but there is much more to the story.

Analyzing the policy language can provide primary, qualitative data to help determine whether or not the law enacted is consistent with the best available evidence, and whether or not provisions exist that allow or support enforcement of the law.

Focus groups of community members may be used to provide primary, qualitative data about any contextual differences in implementation of the law (e.g., differences by neighborhood, by type of establishment). Additionally, key informant interviews of restaurant or bar owners may provide primary, qualitative data about existing or potential barriers and facilitators to implementing the law.

Questionnaires and surveys may provide quantitative, primary data regarding public awareness of the law and attitudes about the law before and after enactment, and before implementation. This in turn can be used to better educate the public and address misperceptions.

Existing surveillance systems like the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) or the Adult Tobacco Survey (ATS) can provide quantitative, secondary data to help determine intermediate and long-term impacts of the law, including changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors.

## **5. Justifying Conclusions**

It is important to interpret findings and draw conclusions that are relevant to the stakeholders. Findings and conclusions should also be presented clearly to encourage their use.

Stakeholders may have differing opinions regarding a policy effort. A range of stakeholders can be (re)engaged to interpret findings and draw conclusions based on the evidence. Alternative explanations for findings could also be considered, along with the potential influence of external factors such as changes in other policies in the same place at the same time.

Data may be gathered through multiple collection methods or within different stages of the policy process. One strength of such an approach is that results can be examined for consistency to increase confidence in the conclusion. If the results are contradictory, then reasons for inconsistencies can be examined and may shed light on the effectiveness of the policy effort or any barriers to effectiveness.

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A mixed methods approach is often useful, and has the ability to reinforce findings by using multiple designs and analyses that demonstrate similar results. However, if a mixed methods design is used, it is critical to conduct separate and appropriate analyses for each of the quantitative and qualitative components.

## 6. Ensuring Use of Findings and Sharing Lessons Learned

Once you analyze and interpret your findings, you may need to make some recommendations for action based on those findings. It is important that findings are communicated to stakeholders and that the potential and intended uses are clear. Stakeholders should be engaged early and often, and continuous feedback should be provided to and solicited from stakeholders (e.g., interim findings and decisions) to facilitate the transfer of evaluation findings into strategic decision making.

### Reporting and presenting findings

In order to report and present the findings of a policy evaluation in a way that will be useful, it is important to:

- Know your audience
- Identify the objectives of your communication
- Consider the best format for your message to meet determined communication objectives
- Consider the method(s) you will use to deliver your message

One mechanism for disseminating results may be an evaluation report tailored to your audience. The evaluation report should be clear, succinct, and impartially communicate all stages of the evaluation. You may also consider oral presentations tailored to various audiences.

#### Example:

If the target audience is policy makers, it is important to ensure that you are providing the best available objective evidence on a specific topic for their use in decision making. Policy makers have competing demands and may have little time for analysis and interpretation. Information should be provided in a concise, relatable, and easy-to-understand **format** such as a one-page policy brief, fact sheet, or a short question-and-answer document, and may be provided via email, as a written document, or as an in-person briefing (method). An example is NCIPC's policy impact brief addressing motor vehicle safety:

<http://www.cdc.gov/MotorVehicleSafety/pdf/PolicyImpact-SeatBelts.pdf>

## Conclusion

In many ways, the evaluation of a policy effort applies the general principles of program evaluation, but there are some nuances that should be considered.

The approach presented here warrants that those differences are highlighted and attended to in our evaluation design. Likewise, the policy process is a complex set of steps and domains. An approach like the one laid out here ensures that we identify the domains applicable for a specific evaluation, identify the questions of most relevance, and use an approach to evidence gathering and analysis that will be deemed most credible.

The intent is for evaluation to feed a cycle of continuous improvement—where one examines the implementation of their efforts, determine if they have achieved their intended outcomes, and if not,



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determine the actions to take to improve their effectiveness. The approach out in this guide ensures that the right questions are being asked and feed the needs of those who are in the best position to improve policy efforts moving forward, and thus enhancing the ability of policies to improve public health.

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- <sup>1</sup> Policy Process (2012); CDC Office of the Associate Director for Policy (OADP); PDF Available upon request, please contact [ADpolicy@cdc.gov](mailto:ADpolicy@cdc.gov).
- <sup>2</sup> Policy Process (2012); CDC Office of the Associate Director for Policy (OADP); PDF Available upon request, please contact [ADpolicy@cdc.gov](mailto:ADpolicy@cdc.gov).
- <sup>3</sup> Definition of Policy (2011); CDC Office of the Associate Director for Policy (OADP); PDF Available upon request, please contact [ADpolicy@cdc.gov](mailto:ADpolicy@cdc.gov).
- <sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Framework for program evaluation in public health. MMWR 1999;48(No. RR-11):3.
- <sup>5</sup> Improving the Use of Program Evaluation for Maximum Health Impact: Guidelines and Recommendations (November 2012). CDC Office of the Associate Director for Program (OADPG), PDF Available upon request, please contact [ADprogram@cdc.gov](mailto:ADprogram@cdc.gov).  
[http://intranet.cdc.gov/od/oadpg/docs/Final\\_CDC\\_Evaluation\\_Recommendations\\_Formatted\\_120412.pdf](http://intranet.cdc.gov/od/oadpg/docs/Final_CDC_Evaluation_Recommendations_Formatted_120412.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> Improving the Use of Program Evaluation for Maximum Health Impact: Guidelines and Recommendations (November 2012). CDC Office of the Associate Director for Program (OADPG), PDF Available upon request, please contact [ADprogram@cdc.gov](mailto:ADprogram@cdc.gov).
- <sup>7</sup> Cite NCIPC document
- <sup>8</sup> Thompson N, Kegler M, Holtgrave D. Program evaluation. In: Crosby RA, DiClemente RJ, Salazar LF, editors. Research methods in health promotion. San Francisco (CA): Jossey-Bass; 2006. p. 199-225.
- <sup>9</sup> Cite NCIPC docs/brief
- <sup>10</sup> Cite Injury Guide
- <sup>11</sup> Hinds PS, Vogel RJ and Clarke-Steffen L (1997) The possibilities and pitfalls of doing a secondary analysis of a qualitative dataset. Qualitative Health Research 7(3): 408–424.

## Appendix A: Resources (selected)

Policy Evaluation Lecture: How Do We Know if We Are Making Good Policy . . . or Just Sausage?” presented by Ross C. Brownson, PhD, July 7, 2011 [Brownson’s slides are on the OADPolicy Intranet](#).

CDC University “Introduction to Policy Analysis” (Online Course)

NCIPC Policy Evaluation Guide [http://intranet.cdc.gov/od/adp/process/docs/NCIPC\\_Policy\\_Evaluation\\_Guide.pdf](http://intranet.cdc.gov/od/adp/process/docs/NCIPC_Policy_Evaluation_Guide.pdf)

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Brownson R. C., Royer C., Chiqui J. F., & Stamatakis, K. A. (2009). Understanding evidence-based public health policy. *American Journal of Public Health*, 99(9), 1576-1583.

Shaping Policy for Health Resources: A web based resources supporting state and community efforts to improve health through policy and environmental change. <http://www.shapingpolicyforhealth.org/resources/publications.aspx>.

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The Magenta Book: Guidance for Evaluation (H.M. Treasury). Provides general and technical guidance on policy evaluation. Available at: [http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/data\\_magentabook\\_index.htm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/data_magentabook_index.htm)

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