

Evaluation of Peer-Led Interventions

Louis D. Brown, Ph.D.

Evaluation Learning objectives

To understand how different types of evidence can inform the selection and implementation of peer-led interventions

To learn how to use evaluation to promote the quality, reach, and sustainability of peer-led interventions

Evaluation Overview

- Evaluation research is an enormous cross-disciplinary scientific field with many researchers working in psychology, public health, medicine, sociology, education and many other fields.
- Imagine a medical system where prescription drugs didn't need to be rigorously evaluated for safety and efficacy
- Evaluation research helps us know what to do to promote mental health and prevent substance use

Know the existing evidence

- The most straightforward way to promote mental health and recovery from addiction is by using strategies already known to be effective
- Sometimes existing strategies don't match community needs
- Not everything we do is backed by rigorous evidence
- Know the existing evidence related to peer-led intervention
- Sometimes interventions that sound good and are well liked don't actually impact outcomes

Selecting evaluation goals

- Outcome evaluation - does it work?
- Process and formative evaluation - are we doing it well? how can we do it better?
- The weaker the evidence, the more outcome evaluation is needed

Outcome evaluation rigor

- Level 1: Post-test only
- Level 2: Pre-test and post-test
- Level 3: Include long term follow-up (e.g. 12 months), examining outcomes in the short-term (e.g. skills) and long-term (e.g. health behavior)
- Level 4: Include a comparison group not exposed to intervention
- Level 5: Randomly assign people: half to intervention, half to comparison group

Comparison group

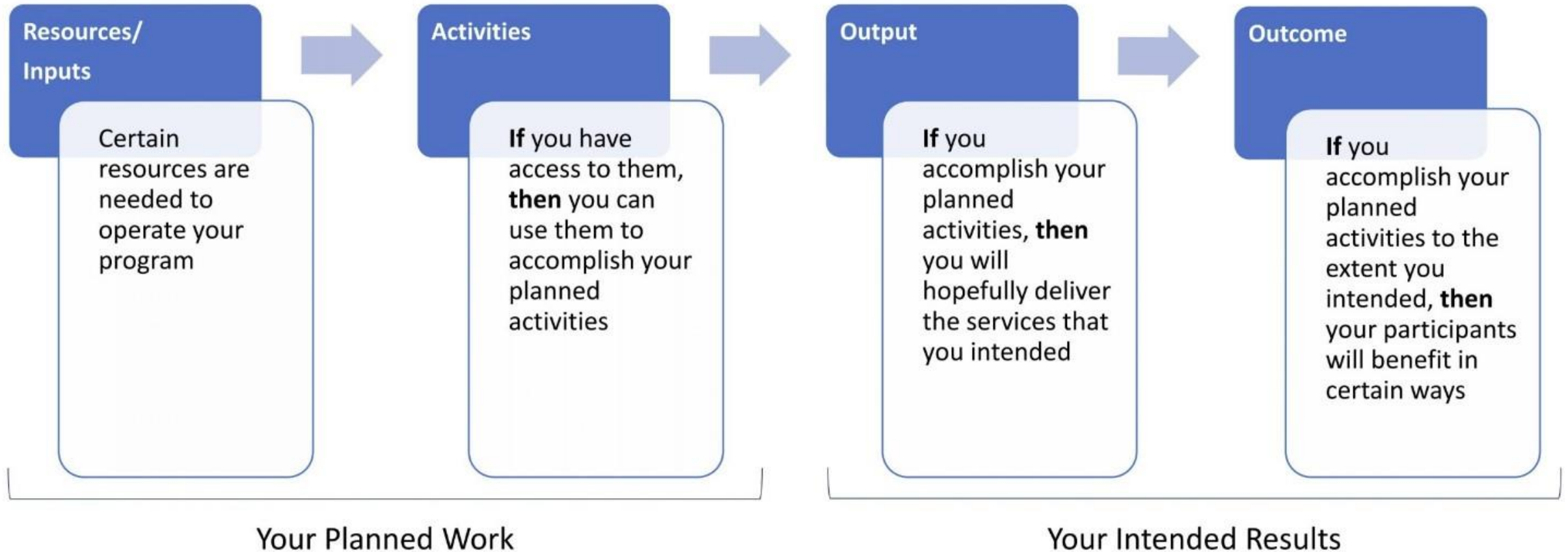
- Match the outcomes of activity participants to a comparable group of individuals who did not participate
- A low-cost way of establishing a comparison group is to copy questions from an ongoing assessment. You can then compare participant data trends over time

Potential comparison group data sources

- SAMHSA National Survey on Drug Use and Health:
<https://www.samhsa.gov/data/data-we-collect/nsduh-national-survey-drug-use-and-health>
- Census county profiles:
data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=0100000US
- Census Business Builder: Regional Analyst Edition:
<https://cbb.census.gov/rae/#>
- Health Resources & Services Administration - Health Professional Shortage Areas: data.hrsa.gov
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation - County Health Rankings:
www.countyhealthrankings.org
- Know local data availability!

Develop a logic model so you know what to measure

Thinking of Logic Models as a Series of *If . . . Then* Statements



Adapted from: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention (https://www.cdc.gov/dhds/evaluation_resources/guides/logic_model.htm).

Measuring outcomes

- Once outcomes are selected, review literature to identify existing measures
- Select measures that are practical yet valid

Qualitative evaluation

- Qualitative data includes observations, interviews, and focus groups, typically with participants and implementers
- Data informs program adjustments to improve implementation quality
- Use qualitative data to tell the story of the activity's impact
- These “stories” can be useful in **recruitment efforts**, and when seeking resources to **sustain interventions**

Developing interview guides

- Write down the larger evaluation questions. Outline broad areas of knowledge relevant to answering these questions.
- Develop questions within each of these major areas, shaping them to fit particular kinds of respondents. The goal here is to tap into their experiences and expertise.
- Ask “how” questions rather than “why” questions to get stories of process rather than acceptable “accounts” of behavior. “How did you come to join this group . . .?”
- Develop probes that will elicit more detailed and elaborate responses to key questions.

Organize your interview guide

- Begin the interview with a “warm-up” question—something that the respondent can answer easily and at some length (though not too long).
- Think about the logical flow of the interview. What topics should come first? What follows more or less “naturally”?
- Ask difficult or potentially embarrassing questions toward the end, when rapport has been established.
- The last question should provide some closure for the interview

Qualitative data analysis

- Identify patterns and themes in data that help answer research questions
- Ongoing, fluid, and cyclical process that happens throughout data collection and carries over to the analysis stage
- Keep guiding questions in mind to reflect back on the study's purpose

Qualitative data analysis cont.

- Are there deviations from emerging patterns and themes?
 - If yes, what factors could explain the atypical responses?
- What interesting stories emerge from the data?
 - How can these stories shed light on the broader study question?
- Do any of the patterns/emergent themes suggest additional data needs to be collected?

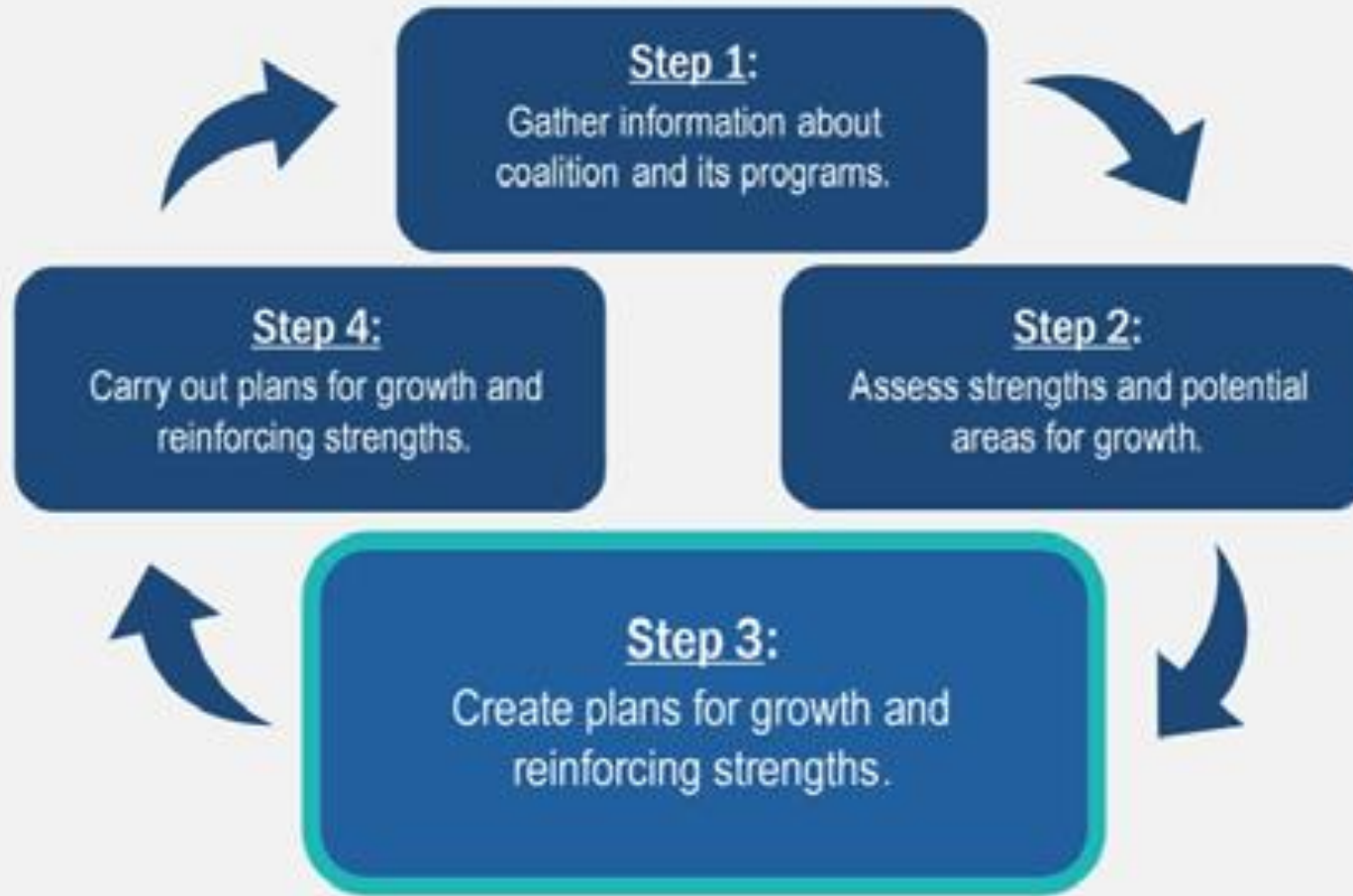
Evaluation report use

- Don't collect data for it to just sit on a shelf!
- Use data to start a conversation
- Two primary audiences:
 - Implementation team
 - Stakeholders whose support you need

Implementation team feedback

- Use evaluation data in an ongoing, continuous quality improvement process
- Helps to build buy-in and ensure evaluation data is complete
- Create a report template to plug in evaluation data for ongoing reporting purposes
- Ensure regular data reviews lead to conversations about how to improve implementation

Coalition Check-Up Annual Process For Increasing Coalition Capacity to Prevent Youth Substance Abuse



External stakeholder feedback

- Do not let your evaluation report sit on a shelf!
- Have a clear plan in place to share evaluation findings with stakeholders
- Which organizations will receive reports or presentations?

Think, Pair, Share

- Select an intervention you are considering evaluating
- What evidence exists that suggests the activity will promote mental health or addiction recovery?
- What outcome data could you collect that might suggest the activity promotes mental health or addiction recovery?
- What qualitative data could you collect to inform implementation efforts?
- Who could you share evaluation findings with? For each stakeholder, describe the kind of conversation you want to have after sharing the findings.

Next steps

- Continue to flesh out evaluation plan
- Consider evaluation capacities you want to develop
- Consider how evaluation might support future grants and sustainability
- Share draft plan with implementation team and other stakeholders for feedback

Additional resources

- The Community Tool Box (ctb.ku.edu) has several good readings on evaluation:
- [Chapter 36. Introduction to Evaluation](#)
- [Chapter 37. Operations in Evaluating Community Interventions](#)
- [Chapter 38. Some Methods for Evaluating Comprehensive Community Initiatives](#)
- [Chapter 39. Using Evaluation to Understand and Improve the Initiative](#)