SRAENE

Sexual Risk Avoidance Education
National Evaluation

IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATIONS: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This document provides an overview of implementation evaluations for Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (SRAE) grant recipients.

What is an implementation evaluation?

An implementation evaluation examines whether program activities are being implemented as intended. Specifically, an implementation evaluation can allow evaluators to assess if the program is operating as planned, identify areas for improvement, and examine the connections between program inputs, activities, and outputs. Sometimes implementation evaluations are called process evaluations.

- An **input** is a resource needed to implement the program, such as staff, materials, money, or partners.
- An **activity** is what the program does and who the program reaches, such as implementing a curriculum or providing staff training.
- An **output** is a product of the program's activities, such as the number of youth served by the curriculum, the number of staff trained, or the number of program hours delivered.

What topics can be studied in an implementation evaluation?

Common topics examined in an implementation evaluation include dosage, fidelity, quality, implementation context, and youth and staff reactions to the program. The image below defines each of these topics.

Dosage	Amount of the program youth actually received
Fidelity	Degree to which program components delivered as intended
Quality	Level of quality in program delivery
Implementation context	Other events, policies, programs that could affect implementation
Youth reactions to the program	Youth participants' perceptions of the program and its delivery
Staff reactions to the program	Program or partner staff's perceptions of the program and its delivery

What are examples of research questions you might ask in an implementation evaluation?

Before you begin an implementation evaluation, you should determine which topics you want to examine and develop research questions related to each topic. Each research question should focus on a single topic, be feasible to answer using data you can collect, and align with areas where you could make program improvements. The research questions should also align with the type of data you plan to collect and the type of analysis you plan to conduct. Some examples of research questions include:

- Over the course of the grant, what training did facilitators receive before implementation began?
- Over the course of the grant, what was the partner organizations' level of investment and commitment to the project?
- What was the quality of interactions between facilitators and youth during programming in fall 2021?

What data sources can be used to answer the research questions?

Most implementation evaluations rely on data from multiple sources to answer their research questions. Common data sources for implementation evaluations are:

- Attendance records from partner sites or logs completed by facilitators
- Fidelity logs completed by facilitators
- Observations of program sessions
- Observations of facilitator trainings
- Interviews or focus groups with program or partner staff
- Interviews or focus groups with youth
- Surveys of program staff
- Surveys of youth
- Documents or news stories on policies or programs that might affect programming

When can an implementation evaluation be conducted?

An implementation evaluation can begin at any point during a program's life cycle. Implementation evaluations can be most useful when you are first starting a program but also when your program has been ongoing for a while and the program should be at a stage where implementation is as intended.

What is the difference between an implementation evaluation and other types of evaluations?

An implementation evaluation differs from an outcome or impact evaluation. An *implementation evaluation* determines whether program activities have been implemented as intended, whereas an *outcome evaluation* examines program and participant outcomes, often comparing data collected before and after the program is delivered. Meanwhile, an *impact* or *effectiveness evaluation* examines participants' outcomes compared to a comparison group; an impact evaluation requires random assignment or a quasi-experimental design.

An implementation evaluation can be conducted at the same time as an impact or outcome evaluation so that the programming provided can be thoroughly described. It is also possible to conduct only an implementation evaluation, and many programs do so before considering looking at program outcomes or impacts.

What steps are involved in conducting an implementation evaluation?

1. Develop an evaluation plan, including identifying research questions, data sources, and staff that will help conduct evaluation activities
2. Collect data
3. Analyze data
4. Summarize findings
5. Share findings

Where can I learn more about implementation evaluations?

For more information on implementation evaluations, you can see overview information at:

- Evaluate the Implementation Process from RAND
- Conducting an Implementation & Process Study from the Evaluation Hub at the Early Intervention Foundation
- What's the Difference? Understanding Process and Outcome Evaluation from James Bell Associates
- The Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation, Second Edition from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation at the Office of the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

In addition, there are three toolkits with more resources on conducting an implementation evaluation. Toolkit 1 focuses on planning for an implementation evaluation; Toolkit 2 focuses on collecting data for an implementation evaluation; Toolkit 3 focuses on analyzing data and reporting findings for an implementation evaluation.