
Assessing Research and Program Readiness: Exploring Evaluation Interests, Resources, and Needs

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Session Goals

- ❧ **Describe the goals and activities of the 2013 NAWRS Research Academy**
- ❧ **Identify potential program evaluation opportunities by walking through a logic model exercise**
- ❧ **Discuss evaluation design alternatives and factors to consider when developing the most appropriate research design**
- ❧ **Prepare for the subsequent Research Academy sessions by discussing next steps**

Research Academy Goals

- ❧ **Build research/methodological skills and substantive expertise of state and local public welfare researchers, particularly around the use of small-scale research experiments**
- ❧ **Encourage the use of existing research to inform policy/practice decisions**
- ❧ **Discuss strategies for improving the working relationship between research and practice communities**
- ❧ **Create a collaborative peer learning/support community**

Academy Activities

Lunchtime Plenary Session

Three workshops

- Assessing Research and Program Readiness
- Lessons from Small-Scale Experiments
- Developing a Research Plan and Building Capacity

Working session for consultants

Webinars and other events throughout the year

Top Priorities for the Academy: Survey Findings

- 🔗 **Find out more about the research and evaluation work of state and local social service agencies (57%)**
- 🔗 **Learn more about how I can conduct program evaluations as part of my work (55%)**
- 🔗 **Build connections with researchers in the field of social policy (48%)**
- 🔗 **Professionally network with state and local government officials (45%)**
- 🔗 **Learn about funding opportunities for research and evaluation work (29%)**

Discussion Questions

🎯 From the list, what resonates with you?

🎯 What would you add to the list?

Defining the Intervention and Desired Outcomes

- ❧ **Start with a logic model or framework that explicitly defines the inputs and outcomes**
- ❧ **Model or framework should be:**
 - **Specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic**
 - **Coherent – linking the intervention to the results**
 - **Logical – arrows that are meaningful**
 - **Communicate clearly**

What is a logic model?

- ❧ **Visual representation of how a program is expected to “work” – relates resources, activities, and intended changes or impacts a program is expected to create**
- ❧ **They are typically diagrams or flow charts with illustrations, text, and arrows indicating how planned work is expected to benefit program participants**

Why use a logic model?

- ❧ **Helps program administrators better understand their programs – creates a map of how to achieve program goals**
- ❧ **Self-reflection exercise – requires discipline and awareness; gives the program focus – anchors the model for administrators and staff at all levels**
- ❧ **Makes sure that everyone is on the same page with program processes and outcomes**
- ❧ **Provides an opportunity to clearly define and measure program components**

What are the core elements?

- ❧ **Inputs – Resources available for program investments (e.g., staff, funding)**
- ❧ **Program activities – Organized activities planned by a program (e.g., services)**
- ❧ **Outputs – Direct products of program activities (e.g., number of clients served)**
- ❧ **Outcomes – Changes in program participants as a result of the intervention**
- ❧ **1 and 2 are planned activities; 3 and 4 are effects of planned activities**

Exercise: Inputs and Program Activities

- ❧ **What is being provided?**
- ❧ **How much?**
- ❧ **Who is providing it?**
- ❧ **How is it being provided?**
- ❧ **When is it provided?**
- ❧ **How long does the intervention last?**
- ❧ **Who gets the intervention?**

Exercise: Outputs and Outcomes

- ❧ **What would you expect to happen as a result of the intervention?**
- ❧ **What would be considered a “success”? How could it be measured?**
- ❧ **What data elements effectively capture what you hope to achieve?**
- ❧ **What are potential process measures? What are outcome indicators?**

Research Readiness

- ❧ **What are your research questions?**
- ❧ **To what extent do you have buy in from key program administrators/decision-makers?**
- ❧ **What resources are available to carry out the study? (e.g., staff, funding, methodological and substantive expertise)**
- ❧ **What is the availability of accurate and reliable data?**
- ❧ **What is the feasibility of random assignment?**

Research Readiness (cont.)

- ❧ **How quickly is feedback needed?**
- ❧ **What is the size of treatment and control groups required to detect program impacts?**
- ❧ **Other considerations?**

Exercise: Research Resources and Needs

- ❧ **Based on your logic model, what types of evaluation design might be appropriate?**
 - **Implementation study – How did the program/ intervention operate?**
 - **Impact study – Did the program make a difference?**

- ❧ **What resources do you have to carry out your study?**

- ❧ **What additional resources might be needed?**

For More Information

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