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# TECHNICAL REPORT

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## Getting To Outcomes™

### 10 Steps for Achieving Results-Based Accountability

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Supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The research in this report was supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The research was conducted within RAND Health, a division of the RAND Corporation.

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Published 2007 by the RAND Corporation  
1776 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138  
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## Preface

The use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, especially among youth, exacts a high toll in local communities. Substance abuse prevention programs can improve the health of community members. However, the programs need to be of high quality and implemented carefully to bring about these benefits.

Prevention practitioners face several challenges as they develop and implement prevention programs. Such work requires substantial knowledge and skill and entails many steps: for example, assessing need, setting priorities, planning and delivering programs, monitoring, and evaluation. The work is made more complicated by the fact that prevention programs are needed and implemented in a wide variety of communities and community settings, so planning and implementation need to be tailored to fit each situation.

To help address these challenges, RAND published the manual, *Getting To Outcomes™ 2004: Promoting Accountability Through Methods and Tools for Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation*, Santa Monica, Calif: RAND Corporation, TR-101-CDC, 2004 (GTO™-04). The manual presents a 10-step process that empowers prevention practitioners to plan, implement, and evaluate their own substance abuse prevention programs. The GTO™-04 manual was specifically designed for agencies, schools, and community coalitions to help them develop or improve their own programs, especially programs targeted toward youth.

Research that has been conducted since the GTO™-04 manual was published suggests that using GTO™ can lead to increased capacity in prevention programs and better performance. However, many community members have commented that the full GTO™-04 manual, at 400 pages (including appendixes), can be overwhelming. This summary was created in response to the need for a more concise overview.

This report was supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and RAND Health, a unit of the RAND Corporation.



## **Acknowledgments**

The authors would like to acknowledge the members of the Santa Barbara Fighting Back coalition and the staff of the Santa Barbara Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, whose feedback led to the creation of this summary. The authors would also like to acknowledge Sandra Petitjean and Michael Woodward of RAND, who contributed to the graphic design.





## “Getting To Outcomes”™ Offers 10 How-To Steps for High-Quality, Outcome-Based Programs

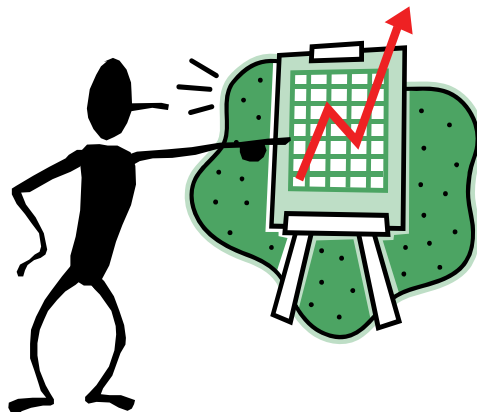
In 2004, the RAND Corporation published an approach to the prevention of substance abuse called “Getting To Outcomes”™—GTO™, for short—with the aim of helping communities develop or improve their substance abuse prevention programs. GTO™ consists of 10 steps that empower program developers to do the following:

- **Plan** effective programs that are accountable to developers and funders and achieve intended outcomes. The GTO™ model is flexible enough to facilitate many different types of programs.
- **Implement** the programs.
- **Evaluate** the programs to see how well they worked and continuously improve them, providing outcome data to funders. GTO™ provides tools for demonstrating that a program works and that it uses its resources effectively to achieve and sustain projected goals and outcomes.

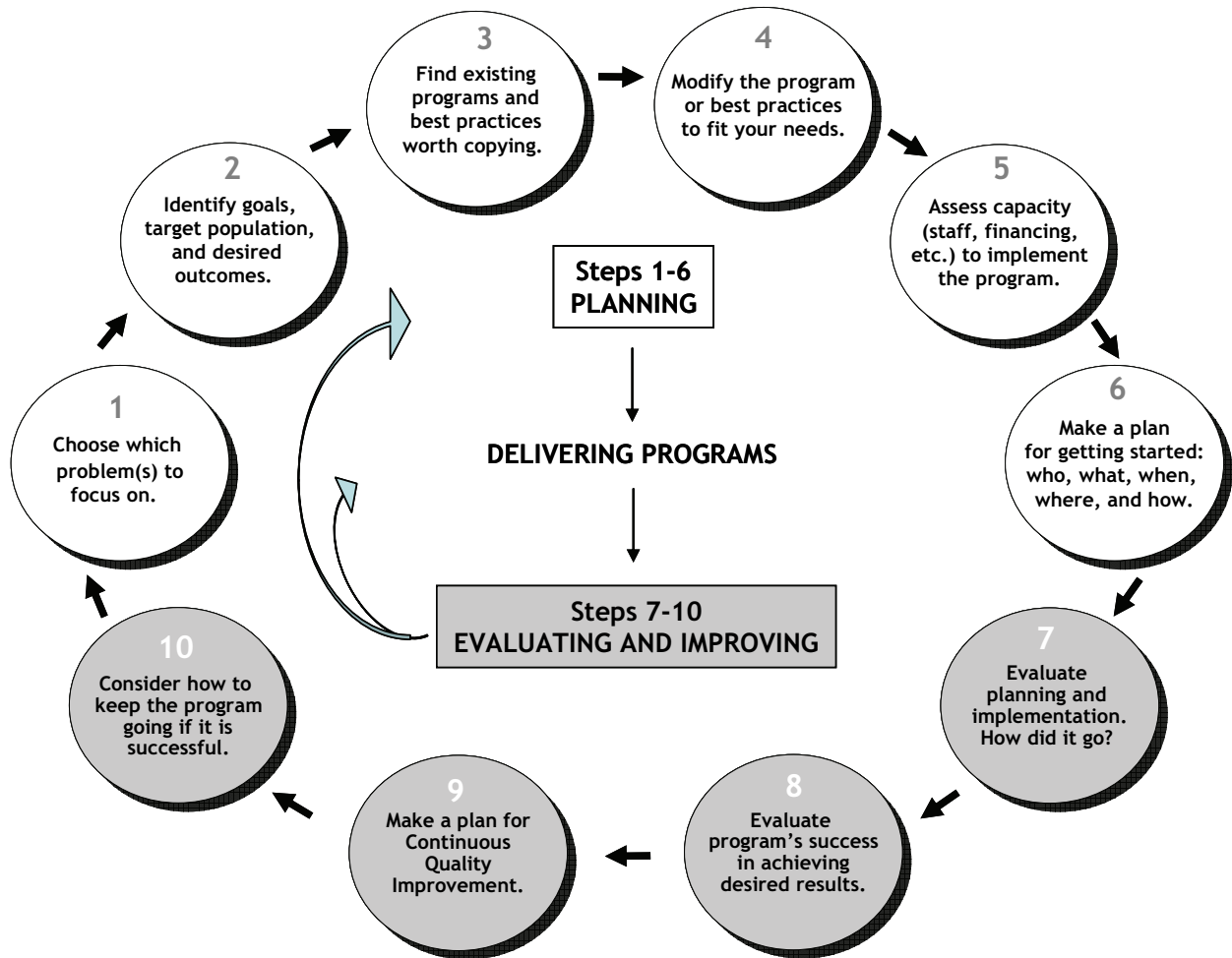
### This Report Briefly Describes GTO’s™ 10 Steps

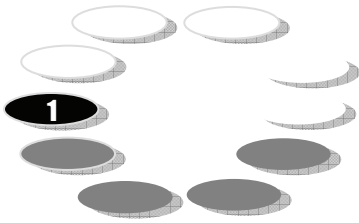
For more detailed information, see the manual, *Getting To Outcomes™ 2004: Promoting Accountability Through Methods and Tools for Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation* (GTO™-04) by Matthew Chinman, Pamela Imm, and Abraham Wandersman.

GTO™ work was supported by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and, since 2004, it has been adapted for use in a wide range of programs.



# The 10 Steps

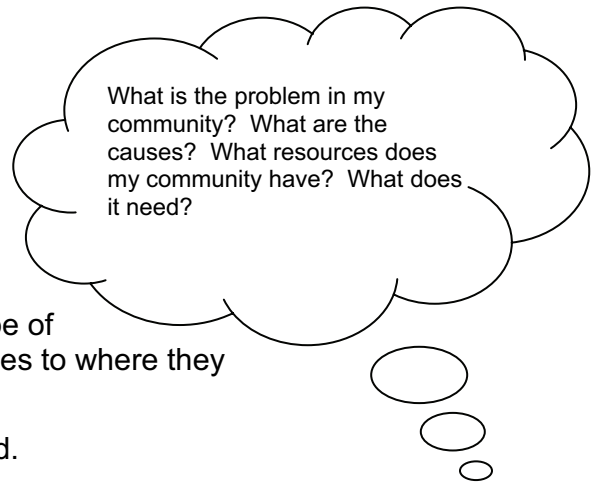




## Step 1: Conduct a needs assessment; choose which problems to focus on.

### Why?

- Get first-hand knowledge of the problems you are trying to fix and the clients with whom you will work.
- Prioritize start-up tasks and narrow the scope of the effort. Funnel time, energy, and resources to where they are needed most.
- Plan a program that addresses the real need.



### How?

- Gather expertise, opinions, and hard data about the problem and its causes and about your community's current conditions, needs, and existing resources.
- Use several different methods to gather information and data: for example, community discussion forums, interviews with experts, surveys, and research of existing information and data.

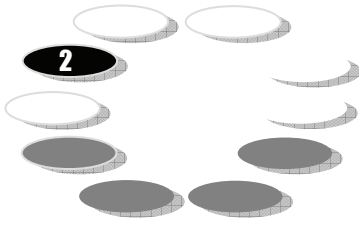


### Key Points

- A needs assessment does not have to take a long time or be expensive or complicated.
- A needs assessment can be directed toward those you currently serve to assess the need for a new program or service.
- Your community's "resources" include policies, previous programs, volunteers, facilities, and local expertise, as well as financial support.

### Linking the Steps

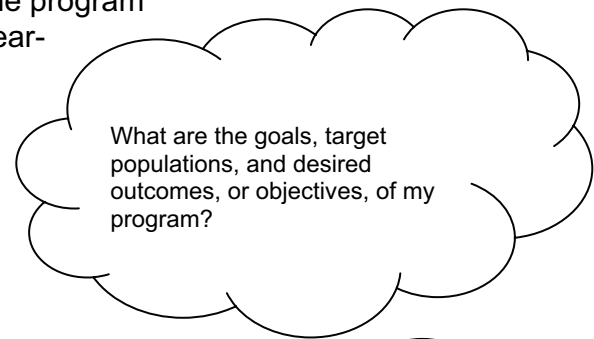
Knowing more about the problems or need for services will help you set realistic goals and objectives in Step 2. In Step 2, you will think about what you want the intervention to do, who it will be for, what changes you want to see as a result, when the changes will begin to take effect, and how the changes will be evaluated.



## Step 2: Identify goals for the program, the people you want to target with the intervention, and desired outcomes, or objectives.

### Why?

- Focus your program on your target population and objectives.
- Make it possible to judge the “success” of the program based on whether or not it meets specific near-term objectives or makes progress toward meeting long-term objectives.
- Support the case for continued funding by achieving specific objectives.



### How?

- Write *goals* as broad statements that describe what you want to accomplish in the long term.
- Focus on one group of people and describe how the program will help them change.
- Write *objectives* in concrete terms that can be measured. What will change, for whom, by how much, and by when? Include how the change will be measured.

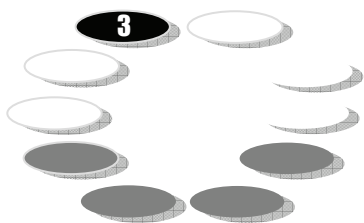


### Key Points

- If you select an existing program that serves your target population, it is likely that goals have already been identified.
- Make sure that your objectives are realistic, given your time and resources.

### Linking the Steps

Step 3 suggests that you take a look at the programs that are already out there that research has shown to be effective. You might be able to adapt one of these existing programs to fit your needs rather than starting from scratch.



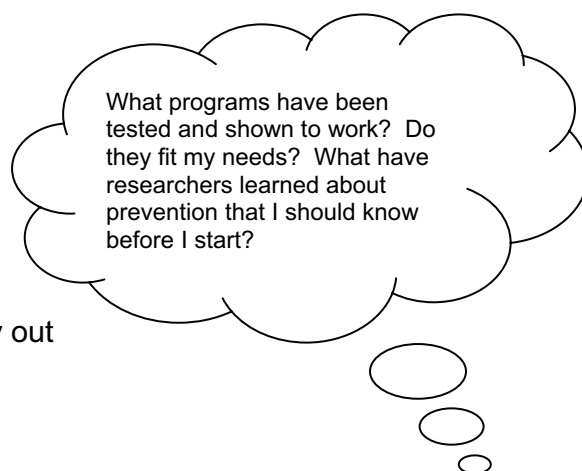
## Step 3: Look for existing programs and best practices worth adopting.

### Why?

- Take advantage of the experience of others who are working toward similar goals—you don't have to reinvent the wheel.
- Spend your resources wisely—on programs that have been shown to work.
- Reassure funders that your program is based on research and is likely to make a difference.

### How?

- Use the resources in libraries and online. Talk to other people in your field.
- Look for programs that match your needs in terms of content area and target population.
- Make sure that you have the resources to carry out the program that you identify.



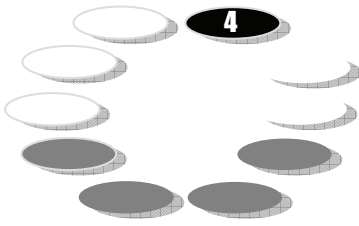
### Key Points

- It is more likely that you will achieve your goals if you use programs that have been shown to work for the particular problem that you are trying to solve.
- If you copy a program that has been tested and shown to work, it is important to implement the program in the same way to get the same positive results.
- You can make changes to the program to make it fit your needs, but make sure that it follows basic prevention best practices.



### Linking the Steps

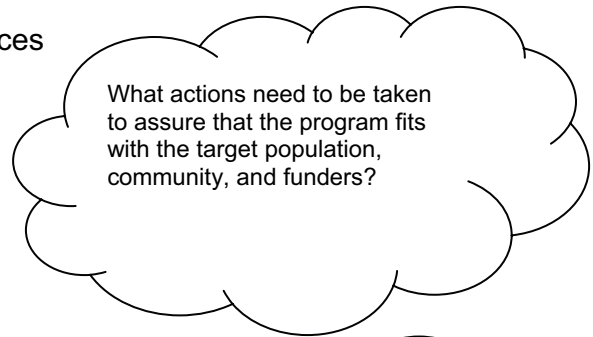
In Step 4, you will learn more about how to ensure that the program will fit your community's goals, target population, and objectives.



## Step 4: Examine the program you chose and see how well it fits the needs of your target population and community.

### Why?

- Increase the chances that the program will be accepted by the target population and community.
- Avoid offering duplicate or incompatible services to the target population.
- Avoid finding out at the evaluation stage that the program failed because it was a mismatch with the target population or community.



### How?

- Use the data collected in Step 1. Compare the population that was helped by the program you selected with your target population.
- Assess whether your community is ready to accept your program (for example, talk to community leaders).
- Consider whether the selected program is compatible with other programs already offered to the target population

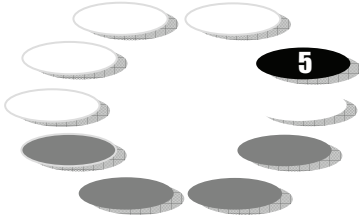


### Key Points

- Fit can be the relationship between new and old programs directed toward the same target population.
- A new program can be modified or, if necessary, a different program can be selected.
- Fit might not relate to the program itself. For example, if the program is opposed by a group of parents, the fit problem may be resolved if you communicate with them more fully and address their concerns.

### Linking the Steps

In Step 5, you will evaluate what your organization or coalition needs to deliver the selected program.



## Step 5: Assess whether your organization has the capacity to implement the program.

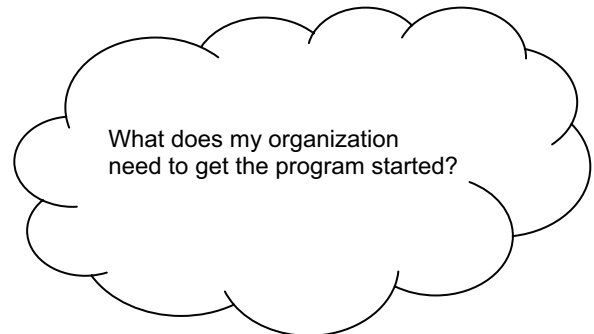
### Why?

- Prevent the program from failing by identifying and correcting any shortfalls in funding, staff, expertise, or contacts before they sabotage your success.
- Build and maintain goodwill by ensuring that no one person is overburdened.
- Meet the goals and objectives of the program.
- Ensure that all members of the collaboration are clear on their roles and responsibilities, if you are planning the program with a collaboration of agencies.

### How?

Evaluate whether there is enough

- Funding from grants, gifts, sponsorship, fundraising events, the sale of products, and special tax set-asides.
- Staff—enough people and the right type of experience, and what training might be needed.
- Expertise, especially evaluation skills.
- Contacts with the community and target population for collaboration.



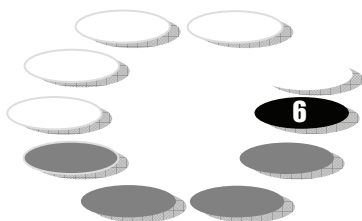
### Key Points

- The four capacities listed above (funding, staff, expertise, and contacts) represent what research has shown to be important in planning, implementing, and evaluating prevention programs.
- If you do not have enough capacity, you may be able to improve it. For example, staff can be trained and new grants can be written to try to obtain additional resources.
- If significant resource shortfalls are found, seriously consider choosing a different program.



### Linking the Steps

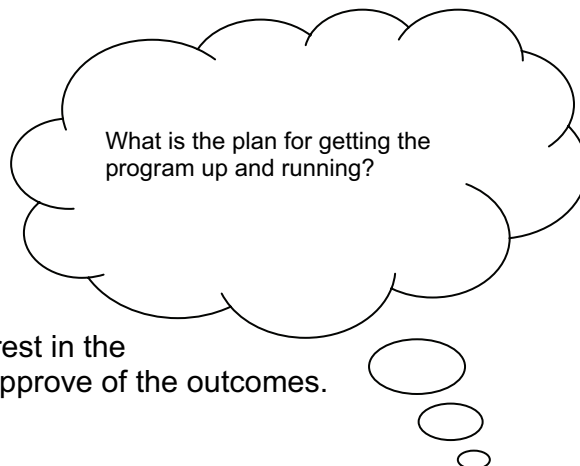
You have identified the need and target population in Step 1, determined your goals and objectives in Step 2, identified a program in Step 3, and considered the program's fit and your capacity in Steps 4 and 5. Now, in Step 6, you will make a specific plan to actually start the program.



## Step 6: Make a plan for implementing the program.

### Why?

- Make sure you don't forget any tasks.
- Forecast the need for changes before problems arise.
- Engage a variety of people who have an interest in the program to make it more likely that they will approve of the outcomes.



### How?

- Give your program a name.
- Prepare a roadmap by answering these questions:
  - **Who** will implement the program?
  - **What** needs to be done? What are the main pieces of your program? What tasks will each person do?
  - **When** will they do it? By when will the tasks be done?
  - **Where** will the tasks be done?
  - **How** will the tasks be done?
  - **Why** will the tasks be done? Make sure that all activities are important.
  - **What** are the process outcomes? (For example, how much of each activity should be implemented, how many people should be served and how often?)
  - **What** will happen/change for participants/agencies because of their participation in the program (participant outcomes)?



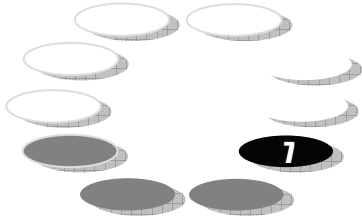
### Key Points

- Planning includes outlining activities, staffing, locations, and time lines and stating up front what you expect in terms of attendance, duration of activities, and resources needed.
- The program will fit your community better if you pay attention to the cultural relevance of program materials, staff, language, and even any food offered.
- Putting the program in place will go better if you include in the process everyone who has an interest in the program, including funders.

### Linking the Steps

In Step 7, you will evaluate how the implementation process went.

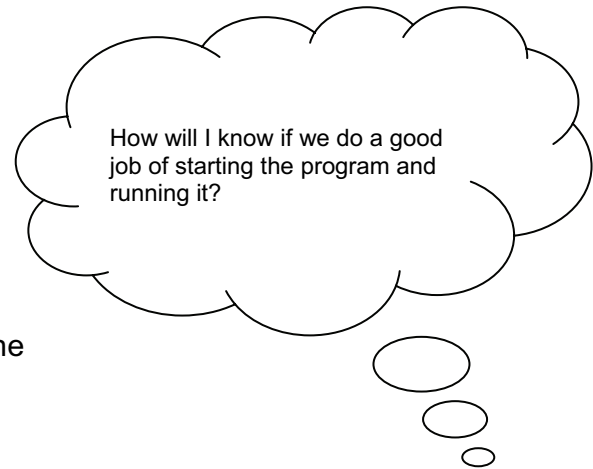




## Step 7: Think ahead about how you will know whether the program has been implemented successfully.

### Why?

- Make needed changes while the program is running.
- Maintain consistency from the plan for the program to implementation to desired outcomes.
- Understand strengths and weaknesses of the implementation for future planning.



### How?

Answer questions such as the following:

- What activities were actually implemented (versus what was planned)?
- Was the program implemented on time?
- What was done well (for example, with fidelity to the best-practice program you selected)?
- Did the program participants match the population that the program intended to reach?
- What midcourse corrections should be made?

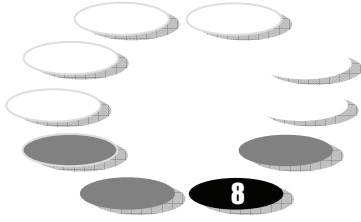


### Key Points

- A process evaluation should start before the program starts and continue while the program is running.
- Doing both a process and outcome evaluation (Step 8) is important to get a complete picture of the program's effectiveness.
- A process evaluation can involve asking questions of staff and/or program recipients, taking attendance at program activities, or tracking how well the program stuck to the plan (i.e., by measuring fidelity).

### Linking the Steps

Now you have a plan for evaluating the process of putting the program in place. In Step 8, you will make a plan for evaluating outcomes for participants in the program.



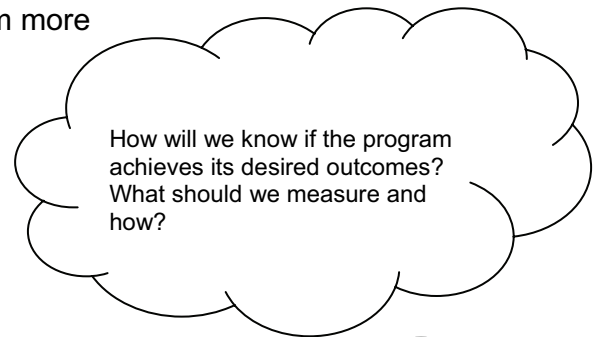
## Step 8: Think ahead about how you will measure whether the program meets its goals, reaches its target audience, and achieves its desired outcomes.

### Why?

- Get evidence that your program worked (or didn't).
- Produce facts and numbers that persuade funders to continue their support.
- Identify changes that could make the program more successful.

### How?

- Choose a design and methods for data collection and analysis.
  - Decide what will be measured (for example, actual results from referrals, results from advocacy).
  - Decide who will be assessed, when, and how—with what type of survey, interview, etc.
  - Make a plan for analysis and interpretation of the data. This may require outside consultants.
- Think about ethics issues such as consent, confidentiality, and anonymity.
- Combine process data from Step 7 with this step's outcome data to learn about the program's effectiveness.

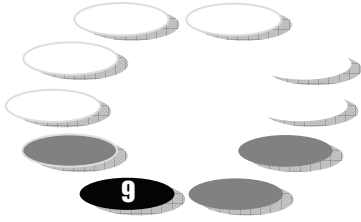


### Key Points

- An outcome evaluation often assesses the target group's attitudes, skills and behaviors to see whether they have changed. It is good, especially, to evaluate behaviors (for example, communication among agency staff).
- Designs and different methods for data collection and analysis all have benefits and costs that need to be weighed.
- It is better to assess more people, rather than fewer, and long-lasting changes, rather than short-term changes.
- Don't confuse process with outcomes (for example, the number of classes taught versus changes in behavior among students).

### Linking the Steps

In Step 9, you will learn how to use information from all the previous steps to continuously evaluate and improve your program.



## Step 9: Make a plan for continuous quality improvement of the program.

### Why?

- Take advantage of what you learn over time to improve the program.
- Incorporate changes into the program without starting over.
- Keep your program fresh and a good fit for your target population and community.



### How?

- In an orderly way, look at the information and data you have about the planning, implementation, and outcomes of the program.
- Start with Step 1 and review Steps 1–8.
- Think about what the process and participant outcome data tell you about how you could improve the program.

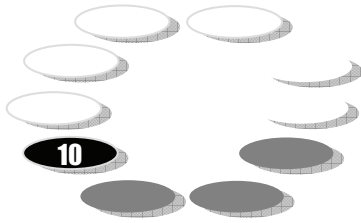


### Key Points

- When you keep track of what works well, you can use the same methods in the future.
- Develop a culture of organizational learning in which everyone is open to learning and continuously making the program better.
- Investing in evaluation makes sense when evaluation findings are used for improvement.

### Linking the Steps

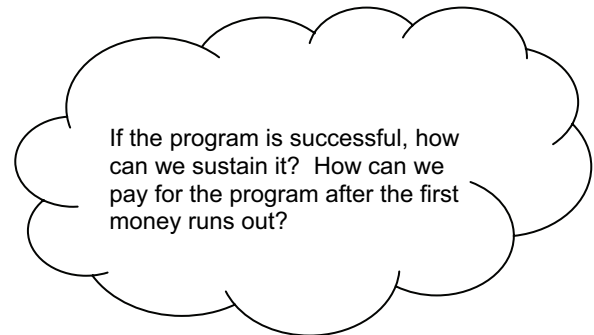
In Step 10, you will learn how to find additional funding to keep your successful program going.



## Step 10: Consider what will be needed to keep the program going if it is successful.

### Why?

- If the original problem still exists, the program will still be needed.
- Get the payoff from the large investment in *starting* the program.
- Maintain the good feeling that your successful program generated in the community and among funders.



### How?

- Determine whether the program works, addresses the community's needs, and should be sustained.
- Begin planning for more funding before the initial funding runs out.
- Obtain funding from more than one source to maintain independence and stability.



### Key Points

The likelihood of continued funding depends on several factors, such as whether:

- The organization that sponsors the program likes the program and it meets political needs.
- Multiple staff are trained to run the program.
- The program has an influential advocate.

### Linking the Steps

Use information from other steps to determine whether this program should be continued (for example, Steps 7, 8, 9). Use information from Step 8 and Step 9 to make an argument to funders to continue support.