# Evaluation Overview

Evaluating programs will provide you with the information you need to see if your program is working and determine if there is any component that needs to be changed or improved. The information obtained from program evaluation will assist in the development of more effective initiatives. In accordance with the employee recognition policy, departments will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of their own recognition programs.

## Why evaluate?

- To determine the effectiveness of a program
- To determine if a program's goals and objectives have been met
- To determine if an element of a program requires change/improvements
- To provide a benchmark for comparison
- To be accountable

## Methods of Measurement

There are various qualitative and quantitative methods that can be used to evaluate a program. The table below provides some examples:

| Examples of Qualitative Methods | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Description** | **Purpose** | **Strengths** | **Limitations** |
| **Focus Groups** | * A semi-structured discussion with 8 to 12 stakeholders<br>* led by a facilitator who follows an outline<br>* proceedings are recorded | * To gather in-depth information from a small number of stakeholders<br>* To pre-test materials with a target audience<br>* Develop a better understanding of stakeholder attitudes, opinions, and language<br>* Often used to prepare for a survey | * Provides in-depth information<br>* Implementation and analysis requires a minimum of specialized skills<br>* Can be inexpensive to implement | * Participants influence each other<br>* Subjective<br>* Potential for facilitator bias<br>* Can be difficult to analyze<br>* Results are not quantifiable to a population |
| **In-depth interviews** | * Telephone or in-person one-on-one interviews<br>* Interviewer follows an outline but has flexibility<br>* Usually 10 to 40 are completed | * To investigate sensitive issues with a small number of stakeholders<br>* To develop a better understanding of stakeholder attitudes, opinions, and language | * Provides a confidential environment<br>* Eliminates peer influence<br>* Opportunity for interviewer to explore unexpected issues<br>* Provides more detailed information than focus groups | * More expensive to implement and analyze than focus groups<br>* Potential for interviewer bias<br>* Can be difficult to analyze<br>* Results are usually not quantifiable to a population |
| **Open-ended survey questions** | * Structured questions on a telephone or e-mail survey that allow the respondent to provide a complete answer in their own words | * To add depth to survey results<br>* To further explore the reasons for answers to close-ended questions for exploratory questions | * Adds depth to quantitative data<br>* Generalizable to population | * Time-consuming to analyze properly<br>* Adds considerable time to the survey<br>* Not flexible |
| **Diaries** | * Detailed account of aspects of the program<br>* On-going documentation by one or more stakeholders | * Used primarily to evaluate programs already underway | * Puts other evaluation results in context<br>* Captures information often not thought of before<br>* Very inexpensive to collect | * Can be difficult and expensive to analyze<br>* Observations are subjective |

## Examples of Quantitative Methods

| | Description | Purpose | Strengths | Limitations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Surveys** | * Completion of structured questionnaire by many stakeholders within a relatively short time frame<br>* Can be completed by telephone, mail, fax, or in-person | * To collect feedback that is quantifiable and generalizable to an entire population | * Results are generalizable to an entire population<br>* Standardized, structured questionnaire minimizes interviewer bias<br>* Tremendous volume of information collected in short period of time | * Rarely provides comprehensive understanding of respondent's perspective<br>* Can be very expensive<br>* Requires some statistical knowledge and other specialized skills to process and interpret results |
| **Process Tracking forms/records** | * Collection of process measures in a standardized manner<br>* Usually incorporated into a program routine | * To document the process of a program<br>* To identify areas for improvement | * Can be incorporated into normal routine<br>* Fairly straightforward to design and use<br>* Can provide very accurate, detailed process information | * Can be seen as extra burden on staff<br>* Risk that forms will not be completed regularly or accurately |
| **Large data sets** | * Accessing existing sources of research data for information about your population of interest | * To position your program within a broader context<br>* To monitor trends in your population of interest | * Can be expensive or free to access<br>* Can provide accurate, well-researched information<br>* Can lead to networking and information-sharing opportunities | * Minimal usefulness for evaluating your program<br>* Can be difficult to relate specifically to your program |

*Excerpt from The Health Communication Unit at the Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto (2005). Evaluating Health Promotion Programs.*