How Are We Doing?

A Guide to Local Program Evaluation

176292

TAKE A BITE OUT OF
CRIME

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CRIME

The National Crime Prevention Council is a private, nonprofit tax-exempt [501(c)(3)] organization whose principal mission is to enable people to prevent crime and build safer, more caring communities. NCPC publishes books, kits of camera-ready program materials, posters, and informational and policy reports on a variety of crime prevention and community-building subjects. NCPC offers training, technical assistance, and national focus for crime prevention: it acts as secretariat for the Crime Prevention Coalition of America, more than 117 national, federal, and state organizations committed to preventing crime. It also operates demonstration programs and takes a major leadership role in youth crime prevention. NCPC manages the McGruff "Take A Bite Out Of Crime" public service advertising campaign, which is substantially funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Proceeds from the sale of materials funded by public sources are used to help support NCPC's work on the National Citizens' Crime Prevention Campaign.

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Foreword

When I wrote *What, Me Evaluate?* for the National Crime Prevention Council in 1986, it was clear that for many programs, evaluation was a terrifying and nearly impenetrable concept. *What, Me Evaluate?*, according to its fans, may have helped reduce the terror and penetrate the barriers to appreciating and using basic evaluation strategies. Not a best-seller, the book reflected crime prevention in its relative infancy.

As the increasing success of comprehensive, strategically grounded crime prevention efforts emerged in the late 1980s and grew during the 1990s, it became clear that communities wanted to assess progress and result, but that many were at a loss about how to frame the evaluation task, how to identify and work with an evaluator who could help them, and ways to use the results effectively. You in the field have asked us repeatedly for an updated evaluation document to meet these challenges. This guide is our response.

This guide has been developed to meet the needs of these communities. It provides a framework for defining and demystifying evaluation basics, identifying evaluation needs and interests, a method of using this information and other key data to select and work with an evaluator, and an inventory of ways to use evaluation results to communicate program results to all concerned parties and to improve program performance.

As usual with NCPC publications, this guide is the result of the work of a team. Barbara Copple, a consultant, took on the daunting task of framing and drafting this work and reworking it in a second draft. Jean O'Neil, NCPC's Director of Research and Policy, provided extensive conceptual and editorial direction, sharpening and synthesizing concepts, managing the review process, and negotiating changes and enhancements in the final text. Robert H. (Bob) Brown and Robert Kirchner of the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice went far beyond the role of funder to provide insightful comments that contributed significantly to the final utility of the guide. BJA as the funder for the development of this book carries on its exemplary record of helping local programs and state criminal justice agencies to promote, teach, and use sound evaluation techniques. We *always* get people in the field to review our work as a road test before publishing, so our hearty thanks go to Mike Walker of Cleveland, Ohio, Tracy Johnson of Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Services of Illinois, Freeport, Illinois, Elizabeth Chamberlain of the Center for Prevention Research and Development, Urbana, Illinois, and Patsy Thomas of Fort Worth, Texas, for their thoughtful reviews that helped us reflect the needs and interests of the

guide's prospective users. NCPC's Judy Kirby, Managing Editor, and Penny Russell, Administrative Assistant, provided enormous support in polishing the product and moving it to production.

Evaluation can indeed be one of the best friends your program has. We hope this guide will help you gain all, or at least most, of its benefits.

October 1998

John A. Calhoun
Executive Director
National Crime Prevention Council

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The What and Why of Evaluation

A 75-year-old woman rose to her feet at a town meeting in a Midwestern city to offer a suggestion on how community leaders might discourage the open-air drug markets in her neighborhood. In the front of the room were the chief of police, the county sheriff, the county prosecutor, and the assistant city manager. As the woman made her way to the microphone, attendees grew quiet and prepared to listen. "You know," she said, "if you add one more street light per block, you might just get rid of these thugs selling drugs in my neighborhood. They're like rats. They prefer the dark." The moderator chuckled as if that were the dumbest idea he had ever heard. The assistant city manager, however, said, "Why not? Let's try it!"

The city manager's office and the police department designated the 16-block neighborhood area as a test zone. The outcome they were seeking was a safer and less crime-plagued neighborhood with fewer drug sales. They examined crime statistics for the 16-block area for each of the five prior years to establish a baseline. They gathered data on reported vandalism, burglary, rape, aggravated assault, drug-related arrests, homicides. They tallied the areas of known drug trafficking. After two months of meetings among city officials, the local utility company, neighbors, and the police, the street lights went up. Using Community Development Grant Block money designated in the city budget for street lights in high crime areas, each street received an additional three lights. The environment was now changed. After three months and after a year, there were significant decreases in all monitored crimes for the 16-block area, compared with similar time periods over the past five years. A tally showed open air drug markets had dropped from nine to two. The desired outcomes were achieved.

Were the street lights the only reason for achieving the desired outcomes? Perhaps not. Yet a citizen with a simple idea advanced her position, and the key community leaders listened. A problem was identified and verified. An intervention (the addition of the street lights) was designed and implemented. A similar area not receiving more lights was identified and baseline data were gathered. After an appropriate time period, the data were examined again. The results showed significant improvement. Crimes and drug markets were reduced in the lighted area compared with the similar unimproved area.

This is an example of how citizens, community leaders, and evaluators working together can create and measure change. With sound technique and measurable results the community solved a problem and could demonstrate that the solution was effective. Evaluation was a vital part of the effort.

A city of 176,000 had experienced increased youth violence and deterioration in key neighborhoods. There were signs of gang presence as well. The mayor and other civic leaders were distressed at the trends and determined to reverse them. Taking a cue from other communities' experience, they formed a comprehensive task force that involved grassroots and citywide leaders, government departments ranging from parks to sanitation to health to code enforcement, youth, business leaders, youth-serving and social service agencies, faith community leaders, and school officials. This group started to develop a vision for their city and a set of goals and objectives to make that vision a reality.

Some naysayers scoffed at the effort, insisting it would produce "just another report" yielding a few programs with no real impact. To ensure against such an outcome, the task force emphatically built evaluation into its plans, specifying how each objective would be measured (including interim benchmarks) and what levels of accomplishment would spell success for each of the activities and objectives they had agreed upon. For example, neighborhood organizing as a goal was matched with benchmarks that within six months, at least half of the thirty neighborhood associations would have met at least three times with reports to the task force on neighborhood needs. Within a year, every association would have provided such reports. Closing drug markets was a major goal. The objective of closing crack houses included targets that by the end of the first year, at least 250 of these houses would not only be closed but be in the process of being converted to low-cost, owner-occupied housing or office space. When the task force sought a formal contract for an evaluation, it could already spell out the kinds of measures it wanted assessed and the kinds of data it knew were available.

This example applies evaluation to inform and strengthen a comprehensive, community-wide anti-crime effort. It demonstrates that evaluation considered up front helps improves the entire planning process by making goals and objectives more explicit and identifying key measures of success right from the start.

In both of these examples, evaluation—an intentional commitment to measure program actions, results, and impacts—played a key role in justifying expenditure of effort and funds, and in reducing crime.

Evaluation can benefit local initiatives in many ways—documenting process, assessing outcomes, examining impact. It is a tool for analyzing programs and building better ones. It is a means of identifying and celebrating progress and recognizing challenges to be overcome.

From many, the very term "evaluation" invokes fear—or at least stress. Evaluation does require planning and rigor, but if done properly, the rewards far outweigh the investment. Evaluations at their roots measure one or more basic questions.

Process evaluation answers questions like:

- How did the program actually work?
- What consequences did variations seem to have?
- Whom did the program reach and how did that group compare with its intended target?

Outcome evaluation answers questions like:

- Did the program deliver the kinds and amounts of services intended?
- Did it reach the type(s) of clients or targets planned?
- What products did the program produce?
- Were there changes in participants' skills or knowledge or attitudes?

Impact evaluation answers questions like:

- Did program participants change their behavior because of the program?
- Are specific targeted problems reduced or prevented?
- Have stated goals been achieved?

How Does *How Are We Doing* Help?

This guide seeks to help communities reap the benefits of evaluation in their crime prevention work by planning and executing evaluations that meet their needs. Intended for community-wide efforts, it may be applied neighborhood by neighborhood. Its workbook-style format is designed to help users systematically organize their key thoughts on evaluation needs.

It is based on a relatively straightforward model of program evaluation, which envisions a program's development and operation pattern as shown in the diagram below.

Problem/Approach	*Input*	*Program Treatment*	*Outcome*	*Impact*
Problem and proposed action (plus reasons action is believed appropriate)	Money Time Goods and services Target audience or clients	Applies resources to clients/targets according to specified method	Knowledge Products Actions	Appropriate change in problem or situation

A useful evaluation must meet needs of all stakeholders—those funding the program, managing the program, and participating in the program.

Using This Handbook

There are numerous books—many quite good—that describe evaluation, explain its theory, teach its techniques, and document its application. Yet community-level programs, including those run by local governments, continue to struggle with how they can get a fair, useful evaluation that is within their means but meet their needs.

This guide is designed to make that task easier. It provides a framework that a community group can use in identifying its evaluation interests, developing an agreement with an evaluator about key work to be done, and playing an active role with the evaluator in developing and managing the detailed evaluation design and plan.

Part I of the guide reviews some basic evaluation terms, lays out benefits of evaluation, demystifies the concept of evaluation as a process, shows how evaluation links with program planning, and describes how to develop a request for proposals and select an evaluator.

The second part lays out the kinds of evaluation approaches, the kinds of measurements, and the kinds of tools that you and your evaluator might use jointly to develop a detailed evaluation work plan.

The third part talks about what to do once you've gotten the data and the report. It describes ways to structure a communications effort focused on evaluation results, how to display and present for easy analysis the key data to be shared, and how to use the data in a number of other ways to support and strengthen your program.

The final part provides an extended list of specific evaluation references and resources that are suitable both for beginners and for more advanced students. Appendices provide survey examples and techniques as well as other useful but more detailed tools.

The key to using this handbook wisely is using it *twice* for every program—perhaps even more than twice. The first time through you (and perhaps one or two other key people) should be answering questions on the worksheets to the best of your ability or belief about stakeholders, about key program goals and objectives and how they might be measured, and about how you want to reach people and whom you want to reach with what information. After you've done this, come back to the front of the book, look at how your comments throughout the worksheets jibe with your work plan and whether your observations and your work plan fit with a logic model of what your program is trying to do.

Having undertaken this review, you're then ready to develop a request for proposals to secure the services of an evaluator well qualified to help find out whether your program has done what it set out to do and whether it's done it the way you intended.

The apparent conundrum here is a real one. In order to best make use of an evaluator's services, you need to evaluate what it is that you want to know. In some cases, programs fortunate enough to have the services of an outside evaluator from the very beginning get input from the evaluator in how to design and develop measurable goals and objectives and how to include evaluation criteria. If this is your situation, you will gain even more from the evaluation itself. Many program operators however, find themselves in a situation where evaluation, even if begun early in the program, starts after the program has been defined and started on its way. This guide can help those in this situation to organize what they already know or believe and what factors, situations, or measures they already see as important, providing a base upon which to make some intelligent determinations about what the evaluator should be asked and what should be expected from an evaluator.

This guide assumes that users are familiar with program management and have some basic grounding in evaluation. The text recaps measurements, concepts, and issues that relate to the validity and usefulness of an evaluation design, both to refresh memories and to assist program managers in presenting information to the many stakeholders with whom they must deal.

Evaluation Refreshers

The following books may be of special interest to those seeking to refresh their recollections about evaluation techniques and strategies in more detail. Also please see the references section at the end of the guide for further resources to explore evaluation practice and theory.

New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives

Current United Way Approaches to Measuring Program Outcomes and Community Change

Evaluation Research

Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation

See Resource section for details.

This guide can help not only to identify evaluation targets and measures, but also to identify the kinds of evaluation that are most important given the stage in which the program currently exists and its likely future. For many programs, the very high cost of an impact evaluation may be out of reach (or nearly so) financially. An outcome evaluation coupled with process information may meet the majority of needs of a majority of audiences.

Yet another way in which the guide can help is to identify ways to bring community members, representatives of the other agencies, and other actors and stakeholders into the evaluation process so that they see its value. If the program plan does not have evaluation criteria already attached to it, a coalition or community-wide consortium could tackle this task

in small groups, helping to identify the things they think most important to measure and ways they believe those measurements can be achieved. This process is a remarkably strong way to invest people in understanding that evaluation can help them understand what has happened compared with what they wanted to happen and whether the program actually can take credit for changing conditions that changed. This makes evaluation a reinforcing agent in the community building process.

A reminder—you'll need to go through this book at least twice, including the section on communication. As you review how you might want to communicate evaluation results you will find yourself thinking of results that you want to communicate. As you examine the kinds of measures and different frameworks for evaluation design, you'll find yourself thinking about how each of those might fit your program. If yours is a community-wide program or one that represents the consortium of groups or a framework in which many activities are being carried out, we strongly encourage you to reap the benefits of employing a professional evaluator who can bring insight and objectivity to the process and is experienced in unraveling the complexities of these relationships and programs. The evaluator can help to paint a useful and comprehensible picture for everyone involved. Chapter 2 suggests ways that you may be able to reduce costs of hiring an evaluator and ways to tap local talent at little or modest cost (or even at no cost).

Evaluation can meet funder and policy maker needs, but it is more important to communities as a management tool to help improve results—to assist communities everywhere in reducing and preventing violence, drugs, and other crime.
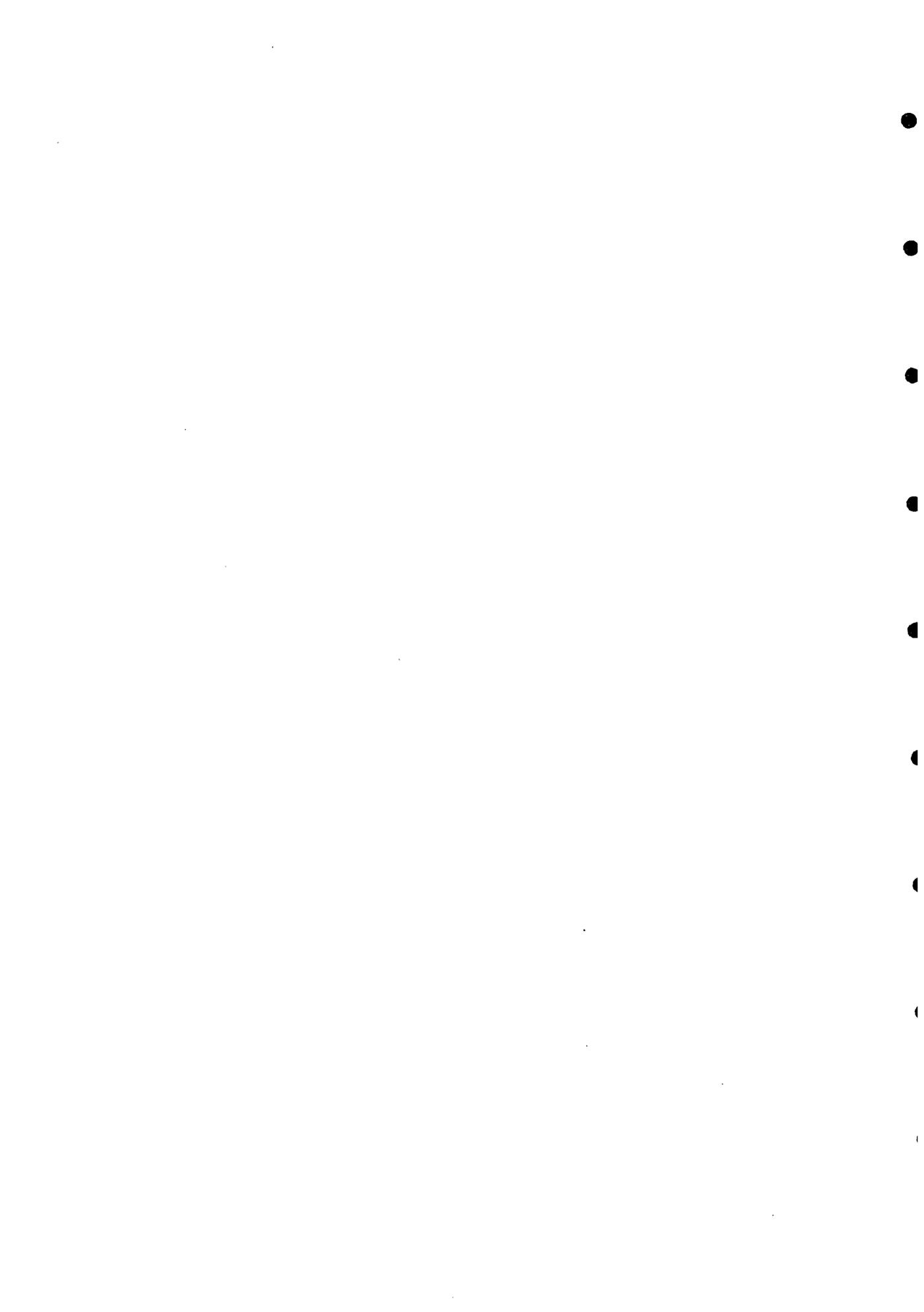
Framing the Work and Finding the Evaluator

This part of the handbook helps you review the kinds of benefits you want from evaluation and the kinds of work that you will need to do to reap those benefits. It describes the process and outlines the way to use this book to help you get the most out of your evaluation resources.

It also explores ways to present a request for proposals to an evaluator and identifies methods to use in sorting through responses so that your selection of an evaluator will most closely match your needs.

1

Evaluation is increasingly necessary to the success of crime prevention initiatives. Done properly, evaluation can be a tool for sound management, a platform for building on success and correcting failures, and a means for demonstrating the effectiveness of the community's investment. Done poorly, it disguises results, confuses cause and effect, and irritates everyone involved. The trick is to do it well from the start and to help others appreciate its benefits.

Evaluation: Friend or Foe of Community-based Collaborative Programs?

E fforts to evaluate community collaboration and crime prevention are relatively new. Many researchers continue to use evaluation models from the criminal justice and public health fields. These models, at times, do not recognize or capture the results of collaborative behavior, the benefits and leveraging that takes place in partnerships, and the advantages (and pitfalls) of taking a comprehensive, strategic approach to the issue of crime and its causes. Older models may not capture the unexpected results of collaboration or the subtle byproducts that enrich the community.

Newer frameworks for evaluation and planning work hard to capture the essence of collaborative and comprehensive efforts. They are based on capturing changes in interactions among people and in how people perceive the quality of their community's life rather than simply on crimes reported to police. In addition, the growth of program evaluation, which is the focus of this handbook, has moved significantly forward as a tool for helping managers and funders and community members assess whether their actions are producing sufficiently desirable results.

Program evaluation differs sharply from research-style evaluations that use "scientific" hypothesis testing and control-experimental designs. Program evaluation is used to inform decision makers, clarify options, reduce uncertainties, and provide feedback to decision makers and stakeholders about the program being evaluated. It is, therefore more decision-oriented[1] than research-oriented. It focuses more on what is intended and what is accomplished than on control groups and experimental or quasi-experimental treatment groups. It is intended to help assess whether both the process and the outcome have reached or surpassed the desired goals.

Measuring the Work

Measures used in evaluations include *process measures, outcome measures,* and *impact measures. Process measures* are used to track organizational progress (e.g., Has a strategic plan been developed? Has an evaluator been employed? Have the planned meetings been held? How many people were served?). *Outcome measures* reflect the environmental changes (e.g., the number of street lights installed, the traffic patterns altered, the graffiti removed) and behavioral changes (e.g, increased use of the once drug-infested park, reduction in criminal assaults, increases by students in using peer mediation) that lead to

impact changes. Impact changes mean that the prevention work performed has an effect on the *impact measures*, sometimes called community indicators (refer to Chapter 4), that have been selected to gauge the ultimate changes the prevention efforts have generated in the community.

Is the Effort Worthwhile? YES!

You will discover that evaluation is worth the effort. Evaluation will help you show that your prevention initiative has achieved goals like these:

- reduces crime
- reduces the fear of crime
- costs less than the community benefits it engenders
- creates a lasting impact upon the community
- raises the quality of life throughout the community
- is worthy of continued financial and in-kind support[2]

Prevention evaluations must measure the effect of crime prevention programs both on crime rates and on how a community feels about itself.[3] They also need to assess how residents use and value their community. Do more people use parks? Have more local businesses opened? Are new services being offered because the area is or feels safer?

Evaluation does not have to be hard! Broken down into simplified, practical, and logical steps, evaluation asks some or all of the following series of questions:

- What is the problem? (defined by community indicators, behavioral/attitudinal/ opinion surveys or public perception).
- How does the project intend to address the problem? (goal statements: for example, "Reduce property crime in the target area by 10 percent by the year 2002).
- What does the project do to resolve the problem? (objectives: for example, "Add three street lights to each block in the target area by 2001).
- How does the project carry out its objectives to address the problem? (e.g., form collaborative among the utility company, the city government, the police, etc. to get the street lights erected).
- What (over time) impact does the prevention project have upon the problem? (over, for example, three years time, property crime in the target area was reduced by 5 percent).

Although lessons can be learned from all evaluators, do not be constrained by the "tyranny of the model." Adapt the evaluation design to your own circumstances while respecting work that has gone before. Adjust, modify, and pursue questions with local evaluators to determine what works best for you while providing valid evaluation results.

Notes

1. Shalock, Robert L. *Outcome-Based Evaluation.* New York: Plenum Press. 1995. Page 5.
2. *What, Me Evaluate? A Basic Evaluation Guide for Citizen Crime Prevention Programs.* Washington, DC: National Crime Prevention Council. 1986. Page 6.
3. Ibid Page 4.

Linking Evaluation to Your Program Plan

Evaluation should have obvious, direct links to your program plan. Without a plan in place, you do not know what your project is supposed to do or how it is going to do it. Therefore, without a plan or planning process, evaluation is impossible or at least severely impaired. The links between your plan and evaluation are critical to the success of your evaluation and your ability to document results.

Overview

A plan customarily consists of five elements: the vision or mission, goals that point toward the vision, objectives that generate movement toward each goal, strategies for implementing each objective, and tactics or action steps for the attainment of each objective. Some plans are developed through the strategies level before being approved by the group.

The *mission statement* outlines the organization's purpose and task. For example,

■ The mission of Citizens Versus Crime is to reduce crime in Stilwell County.

Goals to achieve that mission must be concise; outcome-oriented (such as reducing vandalism); and inclusive—not limited in the strategies or sectors of the community to be involved. For example:

■ Reduce the number of crimes in Stilwell County.
■ Reduce the number of assaults in Stilwell County.
■ Reduce fear among residents of high-crime areas in the county.
■ Increase legitimate uses of neighborhood parks in 12 key neighborhoods.

Objectives refer to specific, measurable results of the prevention initiative to meet each goal. They include key behavioral outcomes, such as change in the frequency and incidence of crimes; related community outcomes, such as the number of victims; and key aspects of project process (adoption of a strategic plan, selection of an evaluator, etc.). Objectives set specified levels of change and dates by which change will occur.

Objectives must be measurable, challenging, important to achieving the overall mission, and feasible to accomplish.

You should have a number of objectives for each goal. For example, one goal above is: Decrease the number of reported property crimes in Stilwell County. Objectives could include:

■ By the end of 1998, add three street lights to each block of the high burglary-rate areas of Stilwell County.
■ By January 1, 1999, complete home security surveys for 80 percent of the homes in Stilwell County.

- By May 1, 1999, produce two editions of community newsletter highlighting project achievements for residents.
- By May 1, 1999, complete at least four park-focused community events at each neighborhood park.

When the street lights have been erected, you have produced an *outcome*. Each of your objectives should result in an *outcome measure*. *Outcome measures* can include reported behaviors (e.g., park use), attitudes (e.g., levels of fear), and beliefs (e.g, perceived levels of crime) as measured by surveys and interviews, as well as other kinds of data.

Potential *outcomes* can be grouped under several different types of tasks:

- *Provision of Information*
  (e.g., the promotion of the adoption and use of effective crime prevention curricula in schools);
- *Enhancement of Skills*
  (e.g., the provision of skills training to resist peer pressure);
- *Provision of Incentives and Disincentives*
  (e.g., support for increasing fines for landlords of "crack" houses and more frequent raids on "crack" houses);
- *Improvements in Community Life*
  (e.g., more people walking at night, businesses staying open longer, greater legitimate use of neighborhood parks, parents allowing children to play on sidewalks);
- *Facilitation of Support From Influential Others*
  (e.g., providing information in the media about the availability of recreational, employment, and mentoring programs for youth who are at risk);
- *Change in the Physical Design of the Environment*
  (e.g., addition of street lights in designated "high crime" neighborhoods);
- *Improvement of Services*
  (e.g., provision of after-school programs, support groups in schools, re-entry programs for offenders, etc.);
- *Modification of Policies Within all Sectors of the Community*
  (e.g., adoption of drug-free workplace policies by local businesses, etc.);
- *Provision of Public Feedback on Goal Attainment*
  (e.g., provision of a community "report card" regarding level of property crime and the trends in the local indicators of property crime); and
- *Modification of Broader Policies That Affect the Entire Community.*
  (e.g., endorsement from school boards and volunteer organizations to partner in providing community service experiences for youth).[1]

Another Outcome Example

You want the city council to establish a drug-free, gun-free zone surrounding all public parks and open spaces in the city. This is your objective.

Staff and volunteers research:

- The number of drug and weapons violations/arrests within 1,000 feet of known city parks and open spaces for each of the past five years.
- Any pertinent existing ordinances or statutes regarding drug sales and use as well as weapons possession and use within 1,000 feet of public parks and open space.
- Which members of the city council would be likely to support the creation of a drug-free, gun-free zone within 1,000 feet of public parks and open space.

- ■ Which city council members will likely present concerns and objections to increased limitations and sanctions.
- ■ Which influential and/or partner organizations in the city would lend support to the creation of drug-free, gun-free zones surrounding parks and other open space (e.g., District Attorney's Office, U. S. Attorney's Office, Anti-Violence Task Force, etc.).

As important as each of these steps are, they represent *process events*. The *outcome event* is that on a specific date, say, October 2, 1999, the city council adopted an ordinance creating drug-free, gun-free zones within 1,000 feet of all city parks and open spaces.[2]

The evaluator should document when *outcomes* are achieved. They can be graphed each month (or other suitable intervals) for review at project board meetings and meetings with potential project funders.

Staff and volunteers, by reviewing achievements, get a clearer sense of project progress, essential for morale and motivation.

For each objective and for each action step, there should be measurable events that can identify whether the step or objective is moving the initiative toward the desired outcome. Here is how Baltimore's Comprehensive Communities Program set forth measurements:

Objective	Tasks	Activities	Events
Develop and implement 6-part comprehensive community based anti-crime strategy in core communities to reduce incidence of violent crime associated with open air drug markets	Maximize accountability and participation of community stakeholders	Conduct ongoing outreach to community stakeholders, churches, stores, landlords, including specific requests for each stakeholder	Outreach plan completed, including identification of "anchor" institutions in community and plan for strengthening links with community residents Strategic plan developed for stores that are experiencing drug problem

Accomplishments (Performance Indicators)	How Measured?	Timeline (Quarter 1,2,3,4)
Contact (including specific request) made with 65% of churches in target communities (+2 = 80%, −2 = 40%) Contact made with 60% of all treatment programs in area Contact made with 60% of all stores in area Contact made with 60% of all schools in area Participation of 3 churches in One Church One Addict or other community support for recovery effort (+2 = 10, −2 = 1) Implementation of strategic plan for 8 stores that suffer from drug related activity (@2/core area)	Calendar, copies of letters, log of contacts, meetings and phone calls with results Copy of outreach plan Names of churches participating in One Church One Addict or other community support for recovery effort Names and addresses of stores identified, copy of plans, and narrative of effectiveness	1-Contacts begin 2-Outreach plan developed, stores identified and plan, list of stakeholders to contact developed 3-contacts 4-contacts

List a few of the *outcomes* planned in your prevention initiative:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

In Part II, you will be looking more closely at process, outome, and impact measures as tools to use in working with your evaluator to develop a powerful evaluation plan.

Notes

1. *Strategizer series. Evaluation of Substance Abuse Coalitions.* Alexandria, VA: Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America. 1994.
2. Ibid.

3

Selecting an evaluator
involves matching your
evaluation needs, your
resources, and your
project's characteristics
with an evaluator's
interests, capacities,
experience, and
expense.

Choosing the Right Evaluator

B y reviewing this handbook on your own first, you and key project staff have gathered some ideas about

- whose evaluation interests need to be considered;
- what those interests are;
- whether your project should be examined from a process outcome or impact standpoint (or some combination of these);
- what kinds of measure of process, outcome, and impact may be available, desirable, and useful; and
- what kinds of audiences there will be for evaluation results and how you want to communicate them.

Community-based prevention initiatives engage the community in defining the problem, designing the solutions, and delivering the activities and interventions. Thus, the evaluator must be able to operate on a level that treats community members as colleagues, not subjects of an experiment.

In addition, the effectiveness of prevention hinges on the comprehensiveness of the solution. This means involving many sectors of the community in the prevention effort, such as businesses, law enforcement, parole and probation, religious organizations, schools, civic associations, and non-criminal-justice government agencies. Given the many actors and interests, it can be difficult to track the initiative's actions and what effects they are having. An evaluator who understands the complexity of the task and the richness of rewards in doing it well can be a major asset to the effort. The evaluator needs to have the flexibility and intellectual curiosity to look toward imaginative ways of assessing progress and change. Evaluations of effective programs look far beyond crime reports to such results as these:

In Baltimore, trash has been removed, crack houses have been shut down, and properties have been put into receivership to be managed on behalf of neighborhoods. . . . In Columbia, South Carolina, police can now park both their personal and police cars in public housing developments without fear of vandalism, and pizza is again being delivered to residents. . . . In East Boston, the head of a

local business association is asking merchants to remove the metal shields over their
doorways and windows . . .[1]

An evaluator who cannot see beyond mere numbers to more unusual indicators of
changes in neighborhood and community health will not have much success in capturing the
numerous changes generated by comprehensive crime prevention initiatives of the type
increasingly being undertaken by our nation's communities. One who is sensitive to new ways
of measurement can bring enormous insight to the task. The evaluator should also have the
ability to relate comfortably to people from many different backgrounds.

Reject Cookie-Cutter Proposals

Make sure the evaluation is tailored to your prevention project. Often a pre-existing evalua-
tion model will not be adequate in evaluating your program. Be sure you prepare a state-
ment that outlines your evaluation needs in detail, perhaps geared to evaluation information
you need and critical areas that must be assessed.

Finding Potential Evaluators

As you seek evaluators, talk with other communities. Explore demonstration programs and
find out who conducted evaluations of initiatives similar to yours. Talk with both criminol-
ogists and evaluators at area colleges and universities about their experience and colleagues
they know who have relevant experience.
     Use the following work space to list potential evaluators:

Name	Agency/Institution	Contact Person	Cost/Bid

Developing a Request for Proposals

Prepare a package that states the evaluation goals and needs that your project must meet.
Describe your community and the key stakeholders. Outline the levels and kinds of data that
you anticipate collecting as part of the initiative. Name the kinds of outcome and impact
measures your initiative has chosen. Every evaluator should have the same information. Use
the forms in this handbook to keep track of key points to include in your request for evalu-
ation proposals.
     Selecting an evaluator is best done by preparing a request for proposals (RFP). Even if
you have an evaluator in mind, formalizing this process helps clarify expectations, identify
essentials, and establish the terms of the working relationship.
     An RFP needs to state what you want done. It can do so in terms of results you desire
or the specific processes you wish to have used. It can identify priorities and ask how the eval-

uator would meet them within a specified budget, or it can ask for specific pieces on several major areas of evaluation.

The RFP needs to be clear about describing your group or organization, the project's scope and purpose, and the time constraints under which the evaluator must work. Sometimes it is helpful to distribute a basic RFP widely and offer a supplemental packet to those interested.

The responding evaluators should be asked to provide a statement of qualifications and experience, along with specific references for similar work.

Obviously, a deadline for submissions needs to be set—usually 30 to 60 days after the RFP has been sent out. Once all proposals are received, your group must rate them. It's an excellent idea to form a subcommittee for this purpose to gain a variety of impressions and assessments. Sometimes it is possible to narrow the applicants down quickly to three or fewer. It is highly advisable to arrange interviews with finalists, in person if possible and by conference call if necessary. Your subcommittee should review in advance key questions to ask each group.

Once you have completed the interviews, examine proposed costs and products versus your needs and budgets. Assess the evaluator's fit with your program in terms of experience, approach, and attitude. The checklist below can help highlight key aspects of the evaluator's fit with your group.

Recognize that evaluators' cost estimates or bids will be based on your description of the effort. You may want to ask for separate bids for different parts of the proposal, dividing your needs into essential or core evaluation requirements and one or two levels of highly desirable and useful measures, so that you can determine from each evaluator what your project can afford.

Rank each potential evaluator according to the following:

	Not at All				*Extremely*
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1. Team is one whose judgment you trust.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Team is sensitive—members talk with, not down to, the community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Team is supportive—able to help with strategic planning, project implementation, grant writing, and other support needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Team is willing to meet with you monthly or at least frequently enough to meet with the decision-making and project management teams.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Team is insistent that they render technical assistance, not just a [summative] judgment regarding your project.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Are you satisfied that the selected evaluator:

Yes   *No*

☐ ☐   Knows the community?

☐ ☐   Will be accepted by the community and other stakeholders?

☐ ☐   Has familiarity with prevention theories and constructs?

☐ ☐   Has familiarity with each of the evaluation interests you have listed for your stakeholders?

☐ ☐   Makes itself constantly accessible to the program operators?

☐ ☐   Has input in the design of the program?

☐ ☐   Views regular and constant feedback to be essential? Such feedback should be given as technical assistance to the project.

☐ ☐   Proposes useful data that lends itself to ongoing project adjustments, data to generate support and provide a competitive edge in funding efforts, and data needed to meet the evaluation interests you have listed for all groups interested in your project?[2]

☐ ☐   Can present results in policy- and program-useful ways?

Does the proposed evaluation design:

Yes   *No*

☐ ☐   Support improvement of the initiative, not simply pass judgment on its success or failure?

☐ ☐   Empower community prevention initiatives to further develop and renew themselves?

☐ ☐   Begin early and integrate itself into the project's developmental process?

☐ ☐   Create a participatory and a collaborative process?

☐ ☐   Monitor systems that can help community leadership establish and maintain effective functioning of the initiative?

☐ ☐   Provide evaluation data to your project at frequent and regular intervals, especially in the developmental stage of the project?

☐ ☐   Provide a clear road map to an achievable destination?

☐ ☐   Present information that helps discover whether the initiative's efforts are actually effective?

☐ ☐   Help direct the project's attention to the variables or interventions that actually might make a long-term difference?

☐ ☐   Recognize that behavioral change is often slow and difficult?

☐ ☐   Communicate results openly and frequently to all community leadership, project participants, project operators, and funders?

☐ ☐   Provide useful information for attracting and maintaining support and resources for the initiative?

Yes   No

☐   ☐   Include collection of several different types of information to measure progress and change?

☐   ☐   Help hold the project accountable for productivity?[3]

Negotiate with potential evaluators who are willing to be realistic regarding your initiative's capacities and resources. Try to find an evaluation candidate who will ask how much you can spend on evaluation, then work with you to fashion their efforts to cover the most pressing needs while staying within your budget.

If you simply cannot afford any outside help with evaluation, be realistic about the types and frequencies of the measures you can ascertain. Most "do it yourself" evaluation efforts are able to measure process fairly well. Outcomes, on the other hand, require careful long-term tracking in many instances and usually are subject to many influences beyond those provided by your project. Objectivity of your outcome measures is more difficult to maintain without an independent evaluator involved.

In addition to these insights, you will need to consider how much money you have available, at what stage your program is currently, and your time lines for the program and its evaluation.

Summarize and Prioritize

Review your notes from a first trip through this book. Look for patterns of interests. For instance, nine of your 20 stakeholders may be interested whether the initiative was successful in stabilizing and strengthening neighborhood-level associations. Five stakeholders may want to know whether at-risk youth and their families received help. Two funders may require that you document that all services were delivered as promised. List your priorities and needs for evaluation on the worksheet below.

Subject	*Types of Evaluation*	*Measures*
Services delivered (Goal I, Objective 3)	Process	Staff logs Client forms Program attendance lists
Neighborhood associations strengthened (Goal IV, Objectives 1, 2, 5)	Outcome	Organizational structure Activities Recognition/public perception

As you develop priorities, you will be identifying some of the capacities and experiences you will want to seek in an evaluator. You will also be developing some thoughts on how resources need to be allocated within the evaluation workplan.

A Case Study

Let's take another look at the street light example as a convenient way to illustrate the basic process of developing an evaluation plan and how your evaluator might help strengthen your program and your ability to identify and report results.

1. Assessment (What are the problems locally?)

The police department identified a 16-block area as a defined "high crime area" based upon statistics (indicator data) showing higher reported crimes against persons, higher drug trafficking and dealing, and higher property crimes than in comparable other areas of the city. The indicators used included burglaries, assaults, rapes, homicides, drug-related arrests, and robberies. An elderly resident of the neighborhood also identified those crimes as a problem during a town meeting (public perception). Her comments were strongly endorsed by other residents at the meeting. Using those two assessments in tandem, city officials deemed the neighborhood in need of attention.

Your evaluator might suggest a comparison of trend data in the high crime area with a similar area in another part of town. The evaluator might also propose gathering data via trained observers about who uses the area and how often in the twilight and evening hours. The evaluator might also propose a survey of residents and businesses in the high crime area to determine their experiences with and feelings about crime and safety in the neighborhood.

2. Expected Outcomes (What changes will you produce?)

The same resident offered a solution: the addition of street lights on each block of the neighborhood. This became the objective of city officials (the desired outcome). (Note: This outcome is a change in environment; fone could also measure changes in behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs.)

Your evaluator might suggest that your program should examine some other outcomes, including involvement of local associations and other groups in the decisions and changes in uses of public space (not a direct crime measure) such as parents taking children for evening walks where none had done so before or older people sitting outside on their front lawns where few had previously done so.

3. Process (Did your program work as planned?)

- Assigning a budget figure to the addition of each street light;
- Examining the Community Development Block Grant monies to be sure there were adequate funds for additional street lighting; and
- Meetings among the city officials, the police, and the local utility company to plan the timing and logistics of adding street lights.

Your evaluator could propose an assessment of how effectively resident concerns about light placement were taken into account, how grant monies or other funds were used to complement the lighting program, and how effectively local officials worked together given the focused (16-block square) nature of the project area.

4. Outcomes

This question looks at the "what happened" of the program. In this example, were the lights installed promptly? Were they placed appropriately? Did placement cause other problems (e.g., lights shining into someone's bedroom)?

Your evaluator might suggest looking at conditions in the similar area you identified in Step One to see what changes have taken place there, examining conditions in the project area to see what other things took place (perhaps the recreation department ran a major summer evening program that drew large numbers of residents to the parks). Perhaps it was an unusually rainy autumn, and people stayed inside in the evening because they wanted to stay dry.

5. Impact (Did it solve or reduce the problem?)

The police department had tracked the rates and numbers of burglaries, assaults, rapes, homicides, robberies, and drug-related arrests within the 16-block area for the past five years. They continued to track the same crimes for three months, a year, three years, and five years following the addition of the street lights. The data showed that until the street lights were added, the rates of each crime had been on the rise (upward trend) and at a greater rate than similar neighborhoods. When the data were analyzed for each year following the addition of the street lights, the rates for each crime declined (downward trend) even though crime dropped only slightly in other parts of the city. The *impact* of the addition of street lights was the reduction in the rates of burglaries, assaults, rapes, homicides, drug-related arrests, and robberies within the 16-block target zone.

Your evaluator might propose examining the same statistics for the comparison area and conducting the same survey that you conducted to assess the situation at the start of the program. The evaluator might also propose some "key informant" interviews of leaders among the residents and of public officials to gain their perceptions of whether the area has improved. Interviewers might also ask these officials if they saw other major effects.

6. Reporting

Your program staff should be sure to share these findings with police, residents, community leaders, funders, and news media as well as through other communications channels. Graphs identifying rates for the neighborhood versus the city as a whole or similar neighborhoods before and after the installation of additional street lights would help to convey the news vividly and concisely.

Your evaluator might propose developing some comparison bar graphs showing "before and after" levels of crime and of fear, as well as preparing a convenient one- to two-page summary to accompany the more detailed report. The evaluator might also suggest ways to tie in findings of other changes that the lighting project may have brought about.

Notes

1. Kelling, George, Mona R. Hochberg, Sandra Lee Kaminska, Anna Marie Rocheleau, Dennis P. Rosenbaum, Jeffrey A. Roth, and Wesley G. Skogan. *The Bureau of Justice Assistance Comprehensive Communities Program: A Preliminary Report.* Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. 1998. (NCJ 171132)

2. *Work Group Evaluation Handbook: Evaluating and Supporting Community Initiatives for Health and Development.* Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas. 1994. Page 5.

3. Ibid. Pages 3-6.
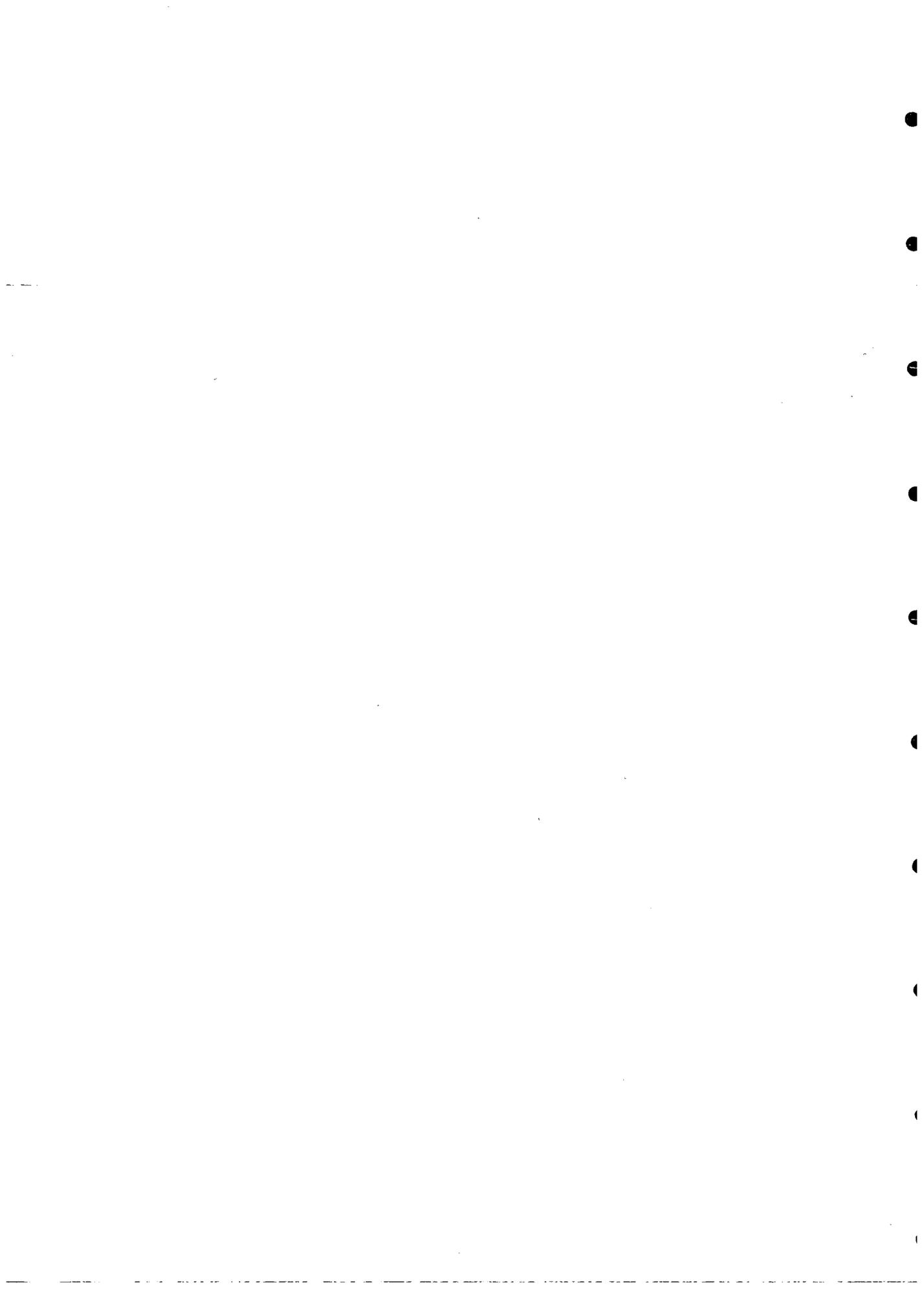
A Toolkit for Evaluation Design

This part of the handbook presents worksheets to help you identify your program's evaluation interests and objectives. It is designed to familiarize you with the kinds of measurements and tools that will likely be proposed by your evaluator, as well as to help you determine what the most urgent needs are for that evaluator to meet.

It includes identifying stakeholders in your project as well as their interests in the evaluation; examining process, outcome, and impact measures that can help document program activities and their results; and using surveys and other tools to develop assessments and gather both baseline and post-program measurements to help determine outcomes in terms of knowledge and attitude changes, especially. Because the health of the collaboration or coalition itself may be an important barometer of the program's impact on the community, this part of the handbook also presents ideas on ways to measure these kinds of changes.

Remember that after you have reviewed and commented on these sections, you will want to revisit them again once you have selected your evaluator. Evaluation design works best if it is a mutual effort between people involved in the project and people conducting the evaluation. Many of the tools here and much of the data that is available through existing channels requires good working relationships and a sense of common purpose between evaluator and program people. Designing the work together can help smooth the way for more effective and meaningful results for both the program and the evaluation.

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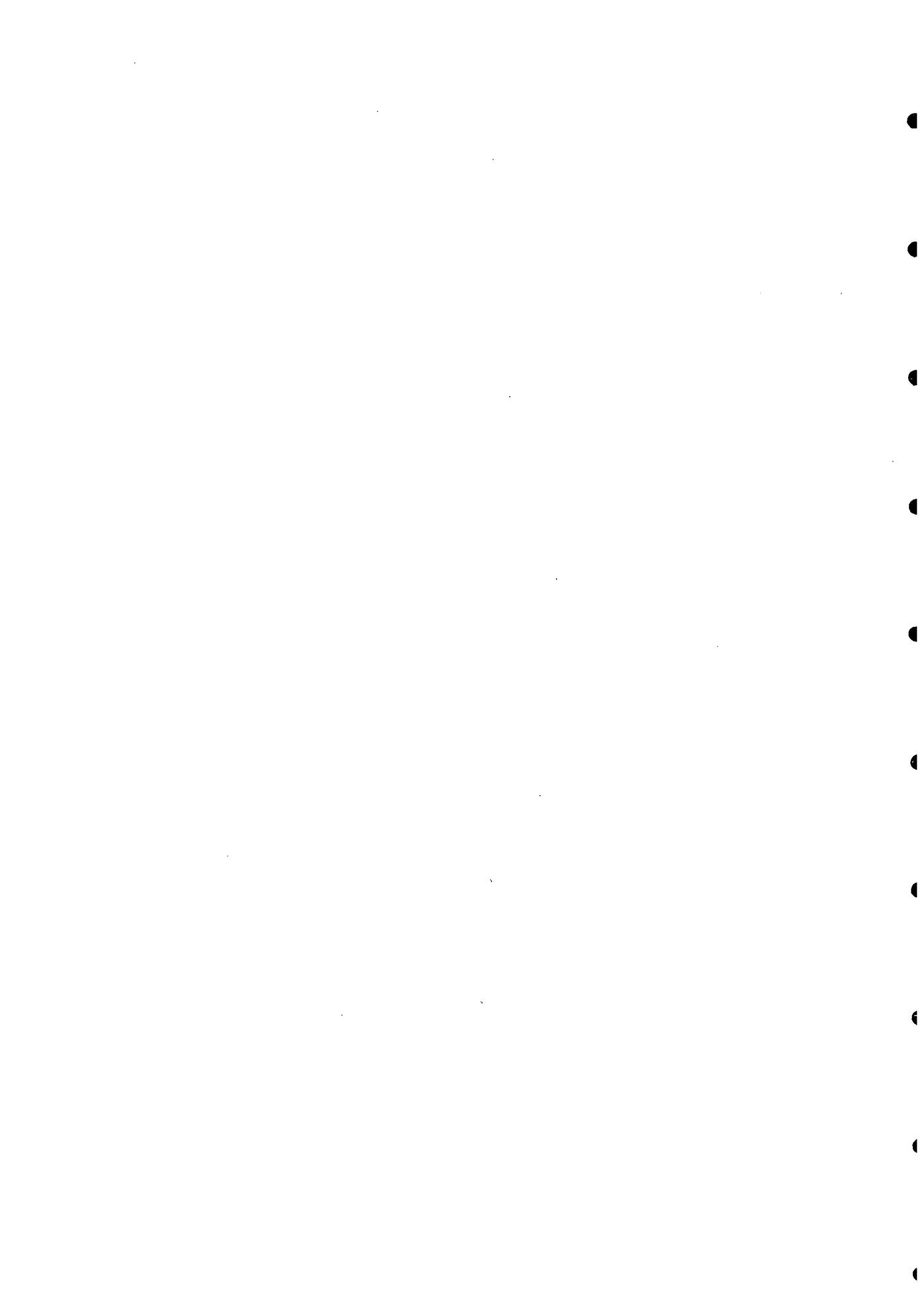
Identifying Stakeholders

This chapter is designed to help you identify the people whose interests and views should be considered as you shape your evaluation. Their interests may vary; many will overlap. But for each group, their own interests— not those of other groups—are paramount.

Involving these groups and reflecting their concerns makes your evaluation design stronger, the results more meaningful to more people in the community, and the program and the perspectives on its assessment richer and more fruitful.

Most evaluations of community crime prevention initiatives involve forming relationships among several distinct kinds of groups: community leaders, funders and prospective funders, program participants, program operators, community residents, and evaluators. Each of these kinds of groups has a different set of interests in the evaluation of your crime prevention efforts.

Stakeholders and Interests

One of the most important things to identify is who *are* key stakeholder groups and what are their key interests. A stakeholder group is any group that has any reason to be interested in the outcome of your initiative. Using a worksheet like the one below, take an initial cut at listing the stakeholders you need to consider. If possible, discuss your list with some leaders of these groups.

Community Residents

Those who reside in the community need to know that their problems have been effectively addressed and that their public resources have been effectively employed. An evaluation that does not address these basic needs fails in one of its primary roles. Residents of both the general and the specific community need to help shape questions the evaluation will answer and methods that will be used to get these answers. Residents of the specific community or neighborhood are stakeholders in both the program and its evaluation. Residents of the target area(s) may hold program goals in a different priority than do leaders, funders, or program participants. Perhaps parents in the area see a safer route to and from school as more important than reducing an already low crime rate in the school.

Community Leaders

Community leaders needs the evaluation to be clear, intelligible, timely, and useful for making managerial and policy decisions regarding the prevention initiative. Community

leaders may include staff, administrators, committee chairs, agency personnel, civic leaders, neighborhood activists, and the board of directors of the initiative. This group, collectively, usually has enough preconceived notions about evaluations to be dangerous and only a little helpful. You will need to guide them through their biases and prejudices. That is OK! Staff and members of an advisory group may have very little time and energy to provide data to an evaluator or to help with data reporting. They may have to make some time! The evaluation must be responsive to decision-making requirements.

Who comprises community leadership? Use the following form to list names and their interest in evaluation of your project.

Elected Officials

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Civic Leaders
(heads of community-wide organizations, etc.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Staff of Project

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Project Administrators
(umbrella agency for project)

_____

_____

_____

_____

Project Committee Chairs

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Partner Organization/Agency Personnel

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Program Board Members

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Opinion Leaders
(news media, etc.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

● Funders

Funders expect clear and timely reports, information to track leadership accountability, and evidence of community change and impact. These groups may include program officers or other representatives of governmental agencies, foundations, or other current or prospective sources of financial support. Funders may also want an evaluator's assessment of the project's implementation to help identify elements important to its success.

Use the following form to list all current and prospective funders (also identify the evaluation interest(s) of each):

Governmental Sources and Contact Name   *Foundation Sources and Program Officer's Name*

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Grants (federal or state) *and Program Officer's Name*   *Corporate Sources and Contact Person's Name*

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Individual Donors   *Civic Groups and Contact Person's Name*
(Kiwanis, Optimists, etc.)

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Prospective Funders

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Funders may also be interested in the theoretical base for the program and whether it can or should be replicated elsewhere. If the prevention concept is solid and implementation documented in a format useful to the funder, the funder will be celebrating your initiative at foundation and funder meetings!

Program Partners

Partnering programs, organizations/agencies, and individuals involved in helping to implement the project have evaluation concerns as well. Use the following form to list partners, by type, and to list their primary interest in evaluation findings.

Partner Agencies/Organizations	*Primary Evaluation Interests*
First Baptist Church	Number of children attending after-school program
	Number of crimes committed from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in neighborhood(s) served by church

Volunteers	*Primary Evaluation Interests*
Ernie Stewart	How many kids does he read to each week?

Staff	*Primary Evaluation Interests*
Adele Thomas	Efficacy of after-school programs

● Program Operators

What about your needs? Think about the kinds of information you have to have in order to do your job well.

It is generally your job to

☑ Elevate local crime and violence prevention on the local public agenda?

☑ Convince your supervisors and those who make policy regarding the expenditure of public money (as well as community groups and the general public) that your crime prevention initiative is worthy of support?

☑ Help residents of the community identify their concerns and roles and how they will carry out their roles?

☑ Help the community establish a vision regarding the reduction/eradication of crime and violence and explain ways in which your project helps achieve that?

☑ Unite the community behind that vision and show the community that by uniting in crime prevention efforts, the community will become stronger and benefit in the short- and long-terms?

☑ Constantly assess your prevention efforts and techniques so that improvements and adjustments can be made quickly, leading to a more productive effort?

What other responsibilities do you have? List below:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Evaluators

Evaluators need input on goals and issues to be addressed by the prevention initiative, accurate information, and full cooperation from participants and officials within the community. Evaluators need to know that the community supports their process. The evaluators assess the process used by the program as well as the effectiveness of the initiative in meeting its goals.

Whether an internal component of the prevention effort or external to the initiative, the evaluation team has its own legitimate interests. It is an excellent idea to bring the evaluator or evaluation team on board the moment you begin writing a proposal for funding. An evaluation (to be of any use) should be designed as the project is designed. Evaluators can actually help with wording of project objectives so that they are more readily measurable. The evaluator is your technical assistance resource. Expect—no demand—that your evaluators give you regular and frequent feedback on project progress. See Chapter 3 for more information on selecting evaluators.

Ask your evaluator(s) to list their needs:

_____

_____

_____

_____

As discussed, each of the groups interested in the evaluation findings of your prevention project has different interests. The trick is to sort out what each group wants, which of those "wants" is most important, and how they fit together in an evaluation of your project.

So, take time to simplify the evaluation in your mind. What is it you (the community groups collectively) want and can reasonably expect from an evaluation? Review your list of the groups involved in your project and interested in evaluation. Look at the interests that you listed for them. See if the interests fit into the following:

☑ Important aspects (techniques) of the prevention initiative

☑ Data useful in improving the prevention initiative

☑ Results that can help generate support and funding

☑ Aims of the prevention initiative vis a vis the local demographics and political culture

☑ What works and what does not in your initiative

☑ Results that change the community and individual behavior(s) in positive ways.[1] These are reasonable expectations for any evaluation.

Keeping Tabs on Interests and Needs

To keep track of stakeholders, any reporting requirements or needs, and specific evaluation interests, create a stakeholders' notebook. List each with amount or kind of support, key contact person's name, primary program interest(s), primary evaluation interest(s), and when any reports are due. For example:

Stakeholder Type: Civic Groups

Name	Key Contact/ Phone	Support	Program Interests	Evaluation Interests	Report Needed
Derby Optimists	Sam Tucker 768-0202	$2,000 15 volunteers	School violence	Impact of mediation	9-14-98

Do not rely solely on written reports to keep stakeholders interested, especially if they are not directly involved in day-to-day service delivery. Create a tickler file containing the contact person for each funding source. Periodically, phone that person with a human interest story regarding the program. The human face is worth far more than numbers. Stakeholders will appreciate both.

The money received from the Optimists was used to help residents of the 16-block target zone start a Neighborhood Watch program, which involves area students as well as adults. Two months after the watch program started, children reported not feeling as fearful as they walk home from school. "Because of the neighbors watching out for us during the day and the street lights at night," said Vanessa While, age 11, "there are no scary groups of people hanging around when I get home."

● Note

[1] *Work Group Evaluation Handbook: Evaluating and Supporting Community Initiatives for Health and Development.* The Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas. 1994. Page 5.

Indicators, Surveys, and Assessment

Assessment of current problems and conditions is vital to both effective planning and useful evaluation. It helps establish the outcomes and impacts the initiative is expected to have and how they will be measured.

What are the crime and violence problems both measured by statistics and measured by residents' perceptions? What are the other key issues that residents see as either generating crime or going hand in hand with it? Are there other community conditions, events, or processes (positive or negative) that affect how residents feel about the crime issue? Are residents comfortable in their own neighborhoods yet fearful in others?

Developing a baseline is critical. How else will you know whether property crimes or crimes against persons increased or decreased? How can you determine changes in community attitudes if you have no information on the attitudes the community members started with?

You will also discover that many baseline indicators are linked. Whether the major community problem is property crime, domestic violence, fear of crime, bias-motivated violence, or other crime-related issues, any effective prevention effort will touch upon all issues that feed into it. For example, truancy is documented to relate directly to juvenile crime, so dealing with juvenile crime requires some attention to reducing truancy.

So, How Do I Define the Problems?

Start with what is currently going on in your community. What happened when a teen brought a handgun to school? Is drug trafficking an issue in a certain section of town? Are arrests for burglary up? Are reports of vandalism down? Find out also what people in the community (at large or in a specific target area) think or believe are the problems. You may see burglary as the issue when the community sees loitering as the problem.

Look at what statistics are already available to measure the problems. For example, how many weapons have been confiscated from students at area schools in each of the past three years? Are incidents increasing? How many students report carrying weapons to school on a regular basis? Is the community collectively concerned about weapons possession in the schools?

Use several methods to identify crime and violence problems. No one method should be used alone in any given community. Methods of assessment include

- Indicator research using local statistics;
- Behavioral, attitudinal, and belief surveys; and
- Perception of citizens, using town meetings.

Indicator Research

What is a community indicator? Indicators are data (usually statistics) already collected by an organization and used for some monitoring purpose by that organization. Indicator data compare current conditions to those in the past. Indicators generally are linked to program outcomes or impact. They may describe and monitor changes in such things as

- the numbers and types of crime and violence;
- the levels of community harm associated with crime and violence;
- the level of community effort to prevent or deal with crime and violence;
- the community's perceptions of its quality of life and neighborhood cohesion; and
- the level of business and other activity in the area.

They are seen as gauges of community conditions rather than specific program-related actions or results.

Indicator measures are generally shown as "population-based rates." The most common of those is the number of events per 100,000 people living in the community. It doesn't matter what population base is used as long as it is consistent. In other words, you can measure on the basis of 10,000 or 1,000 population rather than 100,000. When certain indicator events are infrequent (for example, drug-involved homicides), a small increase or decrease in the number of such events leads to abrupt changes in indicator rates. Therefore, rates should generally be followed for at least five years to determine whether you are seeing trends or chance fluctuations.

Who Should Conduct Indicator Research?

Indicator research should include members of a project steering committee, any staff to the prevention project and, ideally, an independent researcher who has experience in indicator research. The program evaluator can offer valuable insights as well. One way to involve local universities and colleges in your prevention efforts is to seek such assistance, perhaps on a pro bono basis. While urban and suburban areas may have access to more indicator data, rural communities can conduct research using fewer community indicators.

Individuals working on this project must be willing to spend time reviewing data (city/county crime reports, emergency room records, school records of violent incidents, weapons expulsions, etc.) and phoning the agencies and individuals necessary in order to gather background information and current data.

Examples of Indicators

Indicators can be positive or negative. Positive indicators are those in which an increase in the indicator numbers shows progress. In negative indicators, the community will consider only downward movement to be good news.

"Negative" indicators used by communities may include

- Number of arsons
- Number of juvenile drug arrests

- Number of adult drug arrests
- Number of teen victimizations
- Number of burglaries
- Number of DUI/DWI arrests/convictions
- Truancy rates
- Number of hate crimes
- Number of assaults

"Positive" indicators used by communities may include

- Number of jobs available for teens/adults
- Number of mentoring programs
- Number of recreational programs
- Percentage of high school graduations
- Number of Neighborhood Watch programs
- Number of police per capita
- Number of community-oriented policing officers
- Use of public spaces such as parks

Every indicator will carry some cautions and footnotes. Some common ones are discussed here.

Validity. Does the indicator measure what it says it does? For example, to what extent does the number of DUI arrests measure the prevalence of drinking while driving as opposed to the aggressive enforcement of local laws by police?

Reliability. Have the data been collected consistently each year by the same source? Is that source trustworthy?

Obtainability. Are the data practical to collect? Will the agency tracking the data release them easily?

External influence. Is the indicator subject to changes not caused by your program? Perhaps the new police chief cracks down on burglars and arrests go up. The burglary indicator would normally be negative (a decrease is desirable) but in this case an increase might in reality be good.

Cost. Will the collecting agency provide the data for a fee? Is that fee reasonable and affordable to you? Can it be waived in your case?

Relevance. Do members of the community think that the indicator provides an accurate representation of a major aspect of the community's crime/violence problem? For instance, if parks are heavily used already, will changes in park use really reveal any relationship to crime?

Stability. How long have the data been gathered? When possible, use indicators collected for at least five years to discover whether any trends exist.[1]

You must also be careful to not use community indicators individually or collectively to evaluate your prevention program's effectiveness. While community indicators, when tracked over time, yield a sense of trends, implying cause and effect relationships between indicators and community action is fraught with uncertainties. Though there may be a correlation, there may not be a causal relationship when an indicator changes. There are just too many variables to prove cause and effect. For example do lower DUI/DWI arrests prove lower alcohol consumption before or while driving? Lower arrests may mean DUI/DWIs have become a lower enforcement priority among law enforcement. Lower arrests may mean people are bypassing police checkpoints effectively.

Where Can I Find Indicator Data Already Collected and Accessible?

Take a look at the following:

Uniform Crime Reports, Federal Bureau of Investigation/Department of Justice (FBI/DOJ): published annually; includes violent crimes such as rape, assault, homicide, and robbery. Phone 202-324-3000 in Washington, DC, to get phone numbers for state contacts. Published annually as *Crime in America* (year).

National Center for Health Statistics Mortality Data and *Centers for Disease Control Mortality Data* (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA.): includes data collected based on the ninth edition of the *International Classification of Diseases* (ICD-9 codes); summarizes the deaths in the United States by cause and demographics. Reports only national data.

America's Children 1998, available (single copies) through the National Maternal and Child Clearinghouse, 703-356-1964, Internet http://nces.ed.gov/childstat/ac1998/ac.htm.

Kids Count Data Book, published annually by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (7-1 St. Paul Street, Baltimore, MD 21202, 410-547-6624), offers statistics on children and youth both nationally and state by state.

State Crime Data (for example, the State Department of Public Safety or Bureau of Investigation): published annually; includes the same information provided to the FBI for its *Uniform Crime Reports* but is broken down by county and metropolitan areas.

State Incident-Based Reporting System (for example, from the State Bureau of Investigation): unpublished data; includes information provided by police agencies through "Standard Offense Reports" and "Standard Arrest Reports." Some states use this system instead of the Uniform Crime Reporting System.

Local sources of data may include the United Way, local, regional, and jurisdictional planning agencies, transportation agencies, economic development agencies, coroner reports, local police reports, hospital data, caseworker reports, school district information, social service agency data, DAWN (hospital-based Drug Abuse Warning Network), and ADAM (criminal justice-system linked Alcohol and Drug Abuse Measurement). Police departments that qualify for accreditation must conduct extensive community surveys that identify local problems as well as assess police effectiveness and community satisfaction with police services.

List sources (and types) of indicator data you know about:

Data	Measures This	Collected by

Track Indicator Data Over Time

Try to obtain data on key indicators for previous years—as many as five years. Each year after the project's inception, collect the same indicator data for the reporting year. Did the numbers go up or down? Having identified trends, tracking data for two to five years can help identify program impact.

Using Surveys to Assess the Problem(s)

Studying people's behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs is critical in crime and violence prevention. Law enforcement regularly uses surveys. Surveys can be helpful in gathering data on how police are perceived by the public and in helping to determine police priorities. The Reno, Nevada, Police Department conducts such a survey every six months.[2] The Madison, Wisconsin, Police Department regularly surveys individuals who have had contact with the police to determine the quality of police-public encounters.[3]

Surveys can also be used to identify specific problems in target neighborhoods or among special populations. In many cities, community surveys have been used to help define community concerns and plans to address those concerns. Special populations such as the elderly, women, school-aged children, and others can be surveyed to learn their special crime and violence concerns.[4]

Additionally, pre- and post-surveys can be used to determine changes in citizens' behavior, attitudes, and beliefs following a specific prevention project.

Results of surveys are usually shown in percentages. For each question asked, the number of responses for each possible response is summed. The sum is divided by the number of those responding to that particular question. Keep in mind that survey results represent the opinions, views, and actions of those who responded on the day they responded.[5]

Attitudinal, belief, and behavioral surveys are huge undertakings that require a substantial investment of time and money. It is recommended that you use existing data collected via reputable surveys. Such data may be available through local school districts, health departments or other appropriate agencies. If you do not, at least base your survey on tested questions and test out your questionnaire before using it in the field.

Behavioral Surveys

Behavioral surveys are methods used to obtain information on how often key behaviors related to crime and violence actually occur.

Why do it?

Behavioral surveys help

- Assess the level of actual risk or peoples' perception of risk for specific crimes;
- Identify how people were/are reacting to their neighborhood or community environment; and
- Indicate whether people have adopted preventive strategies.

Behavioral surveys include questions about behaviors **that put people at risk** for the specific concern—assault, rape, etc. They can also reveal whether people are using public spaces (e.g., sidewalks, parks, playgrounds) more or less often and whether they have adopted preventive behaviors (e.g., installing and using sturdy locks, parking in well-lighted areas, storing firearms locked and unloaded). These surveys can also identify whether and to what extent people have taken preventive actions. In addition they can help find out whether people perceive crime differently from what actual statistics show, which in turn suggests educational and persuasive strategies your program may need to adopt.

Surveys may be conducted in person, by telephone, or through the mail. In-person surveys are labor-intensive, which makes them the most costly unless reliable volunteers are available. Telephone surveys are not as personalized, but they are less expensive and usually quicker than face-to-face interviews. Mail-back surveys are subject to low rates of return (which may be biased in favor of one area) and offer more opportunity for misinterpretation, though they are the least expensive.

Surveys can be based on sampling (asking a representative or random portion of the residents), but it is important to note that in most areas a sample of at least 500 to 1,000 will probably be necessary.

Keep in mind that since surveys are self-reports, they may—unless very well designed—under- or over-estimate actual behaviors. However, tracking self-reported behavior over time permits an analysis of risk for a particular group. If the levels are high, the data may help elevate the issue on the public agenda. The data may also be used to evaluate the effects of the prevention initiative's efforts toward its mission (i.e., reducing risk and enhancing public safety). As you can see, survey data may have some of the same problems as indicator data.

List the crime- and violence-related behavioral surveys available locally or at the state level:

Name of Survey	Agency/Organization Sponsor of Survey	Contact Address/Phone	How Frequently Administered?	Cost

Attitudinal and Belief Surveys

Likewise, attitudinal and belief surveys can help assess the public's **perception of the level of risk** they face for any particular crime and can help identify which crime concerns are of the highest priority to the public at-large.

Sources for data include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) in Atlanta, GA, excellent survey related to adults, the Behavior Risk Factor Survey (BRFS). Similarly, the CDC offers the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) for a variety of youth issues. Other surveys combine behavior and attitude, including the Monitoring the Future Survey, the Household Survey, and the National Longitudinal Survey. The Resources section lists the sources for these surveys.

Perceptions and Beliefs

If the program is about changing conditions in the real world, conditions that can readily be measured, why worry about measuring perceptions and beliefs? The fact is that if people perceive conditions to be unacceptable but unchangeable, if they do not believe that a situation is fixable, if they do not envision themselves as having power to make things happen, they may not support or enlist in your program. Though this is especially true in community situations, it applies in examining individual behaviors as well.

Perceptions are people's views of the world around them. Perceptions are shaped by upbringing, experience, beliefs, and expectations, to name just a few key factors. Perceptions can be changed, but to do so requires education and motivation—information and knowledge to supplant the perception and reason to make the change.

Beliefs encompass the principles, tenets, and precepts by which people live or try to live. The Ten Commandments may or may not be a set of beliefs, depending on whether someone tries to live these commandments in their daily lives. Holding that all people are out to take whatever they can from others is a belief. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" is a belief. "I can succeed at whatever I try" is a belief. "I am doomed to fail" is also a belief.

● What can be learned about perceptions and beliefs? It is possible, depending on resources, to identify what the perceptions and beliefs are, how and why people hold them, what could persuade people to change them, and how they relate to the goals for the program. It is likewise possible to determine whether perceptions and beliefs have changed and what convinced people to change them.

● A note of caution: experience in various disciplines has strongly suggested that changing perceptions and beliefs is not a short-term task. It can take a year or even several years to provide people with the information they need and the room they require to make these changes. Thus, for many programs, the best use of information about perceptions and beliefs is in assessing situations and conditions at the beginning of the program and using that information to strengthen the program's design.

● One example of a perception that is frequently measured in crime prevention situations is fear of crime. People are asked how safe the community or city is, how safe the neighborhood is, and whether they feel safe on the block or walking within a mile of home. These are indeed perceptions but they measure levels of fear of crime. Underlying the fear of crime are perceptions that may suggest fear. People might, at the end of a project, feel safer but they may not be able to explain why. Their perceptions may have been affected in ways that they do not yet recognize, but the result (reduced fear) still marks an achievement for the project.

Tools that can help measure perceptions and beliefs include surveys (which give broad levels of measurement about groups of people), focus groups (in which trained facilitators and observers help a small group of eight to ten people discuss a topic and then report on how the group dealt with it based on perceptions and beliefs), and one-on-one interviews with psychologists or other trained personnel (which frequently are used to probe individuals' thinking about key issues and how they arrived at these perceptions and beliefs). Appendix A discusses these tools in some detail and describes how they are administered. Surveys are among the important tools used to gather data on what people perceive (how they view the world around them) and believe (what they try to live by).

List the attitudinal and belief surveys available locally or at the state level:

Name of Survey	Agency/Organization Sponsor of Survey	Contact Address/Phone	How Frequently Administered?	Cost

The evaluator you select should recommend surveys on behavior, attitude, and beliefs and should summarize the data and report the information back to you for use by your initiative. Obviously, the closer to home you can get the data, the more useful for your project (i.e., local school districts, census tracts, zip codes).

If behavioral, attitudinal, and belief survey data already exist, they can be adapted or adopted by initiative leaders or staff. The evaluator should have access to these data as well

as access to any data available through local school districts, health departments, or other
appropriate agencies. If survey data are NOT available, conducting such surveys on your own
will require a conscious commitment of time, money, and staff, but it may produce results
with multiple uses.

Planning Questionnaires and "Check-ups"

Surveys can also help you get a better sense of the community you serve. What are the
community's problems? How well do the various systems of the community operate together?
How do the citizens think and feel about the community/their neighborhood? These types of
surveys lend themselves well to pre- and post-testing. They can be augmented by key infor-
mant surveys of influential local leaders.

    Pre- and post-tests measure the changes in your sample before and after your project has
been implemented. In other words, you are comparing respondents to *themselves* after a
lapse of time, during which a prevention strategy has been implemented. Changes in
responses can indicate an *impact* from the program or strategy. Again, be careful about
asserting cause and effect. The implementation of your program will probably not be the only
variable responsible for any change. The economy could have improved, the seasons may
have changed, a new law could have been passed, a new landlord could have enforced rules
more strictly, etc.

Focus Groups, Key Informant Interviews, and Town Meetings

A less formal and sometimes less reliable method of learning about public opinion is to
assemble a group for discussion and even debate about key issues, or to interview key local
leaders about these issues one-on-one. Smaller, structured discussion groups are usually
considered focus groups. Groups that engage in debate and discussion are generally classi-
fied as town meetings (sometimes town hall meetings). Key leader interviews are just that—
more in-depth information from people who shape or influence public opinion and may
(or may not) have special knowledge of the subject at hand.

    Focus groups generally consist of six to ten individuals who are drawn from the general
population. They need to be led by someone who has had some training in conducting
these groups. Focus group leaders need to be able to keep the group on task, ensure that
everyone gets an opportunity to be heard, be sensitive to emergent issues that should be
explored in depth, and able to make everyone in the group feel comfortably at home. Focus
groups are usually classified by age and gender (young women 18 to 25, for example) and
even by ethnic group and status (middle-aged, Spanish-speaking mothers, for instance).
These groups are used to help probe how people think about complex issues at the national
or community level. For instance, a focus group might explore attitudes of men and women
(parents and teenagers) toward the issue of dating violence. The results of these groups would
be used to help design further research and identify issues for exploration. Focus groups
require help from trained professionals; universities, advertising firms, public opinion
researchers, and similar groups might be able to lend expertise or even facilities to conduct
focus groups.

    Town meetings—open gatherings for that anyone can attend—need to be carefully
structured to ensure that "single issue aggressives" (people with a personal or civic ax to grind)
don't take over the meeting and dominate the issues. These meetings can (and probably
should) be held at the neighborhood rather than the community-wide level, so that people
from each neighborhood can travel to a convenient and familiar setting (the local school or

a meeting room in the library, perhaps) to voice their concerns. These meetings should *not* be the setting for speeches, nor should they provide informational lectures. Their advertised purpose should be met: to hear from people in that neighborhood or community about what problems they face and what solutions they believe should be considered or implemented. Discussions should be recorded on overhead transparencies or flip charts, noting problem issues, solutions suggested, and other items for action. Attendees should be told what the next steps are in the process and how they fit in.

Teens are an important group in any community, but too often they are discouraged from attending adult-focused meetings and speaking out. Town meetings directed at older and younger teens, again held at sites throughout the community, can be highly productive ways to gather information from young people and to identify young people who might want to be involved in your prevention initiative.

Other groups may require focused attention in these speak-outs. Public housing residents, for example, may need a meeting in which they are assured that authorities will not retaliate for any comments made. They may want a senior housing official to attend in person. They will face issues in their communities that others do not face; they also have options that other communities do not under drug-free, crime-free public housing initiatives. Think of other groups in your community—refugees and immigrants, young parents, senior citizens, for example—who may benefit from a separate gathering.

Key leader interviews can tap the expertise of experienced leaders who know the community and help identify areas where prior efforts went astray, concerns that will be addressed soon in local budgets, issues in which state legislative action is needed for local action to occur, and some of the interrelationships among the community's civic leadership. These interviews can also uncover local neighborhood leaders who may become great advocates, find resources that your group can tap into, and learn about prospective leadership allies you can join with.

It is important to recognize that key leaders in the community are not simply those elected to office. The head of the child welfare service, the police chief, the county health department director, the president of the citywide parent-teacher council, the head of the local Chamber of Commerce may each be a key leader in your community.

Following up. You can use the same techniques to follow up at a six-month or one-year interval to determine what impact your program has had with these groups. It will probably be difficult if not impossible to get the same individuals to attend a town meeting at the same time a year later; it may be difficult to gather focus groups that meet the same descriptions as your earlier groups. But you can certainly locate and interview most if not all key leaders.

Notes

[1] *Strategizer series. Evaluation of Substance Abuse Coalitions.* Alexandria, VA: Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America. 1994.

[2] *A Police Guide to Surveying Citizens and Their Environment.* Monograph. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance. October 1993. Page 7.

[3] Ibid. Page 7.

[4] Ibid. Page 7.

[5] *What, Me Evaluate? A Basic Guide for Citizen Crime Prevention Programs.* Washington, DC: National Crime Prevention Council. 1986. Page 49.

6
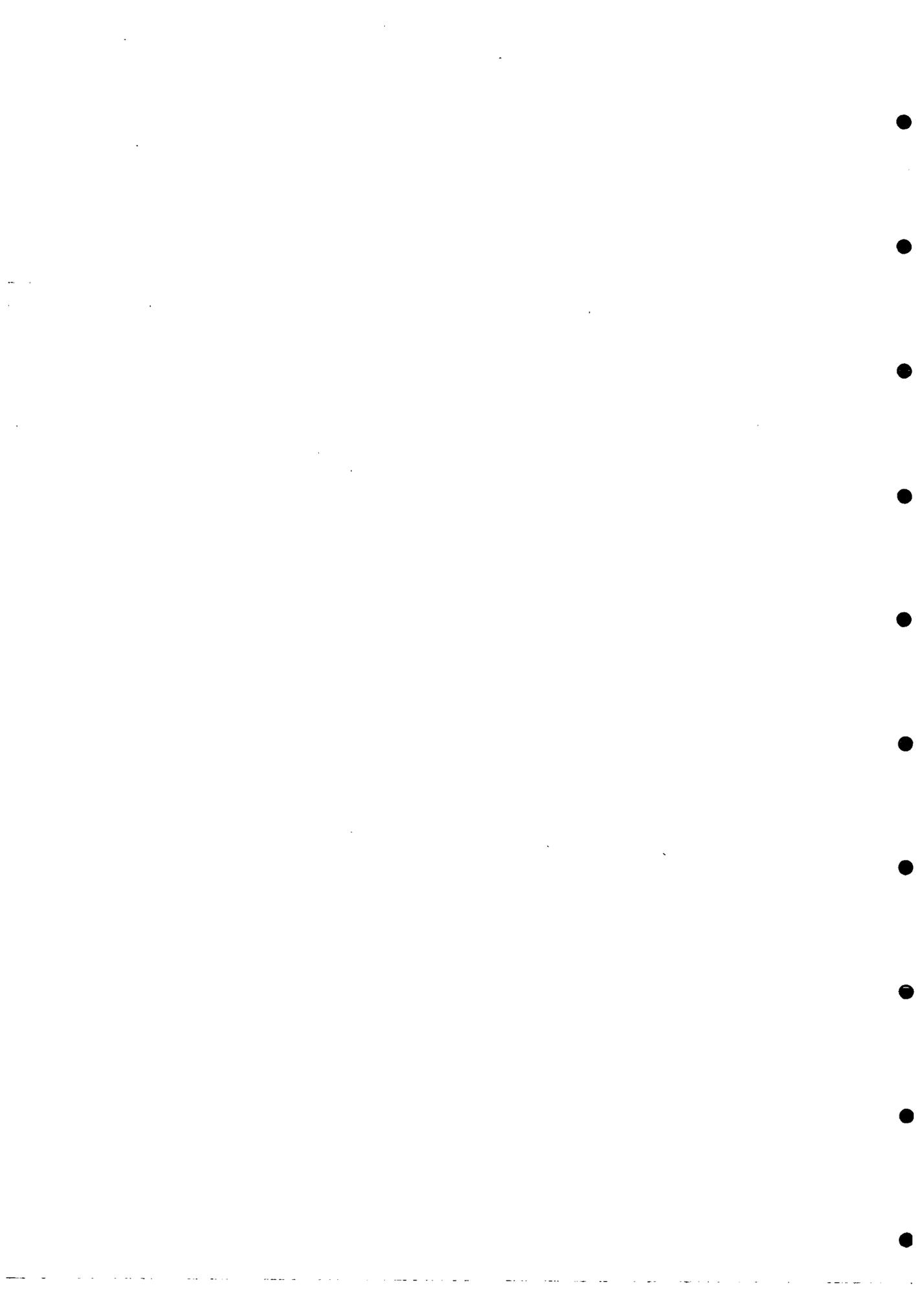
Process measures help
document what the
initiative actually did
(as contrasted with
what it planned to do)
and how energy and
resources were applied
in carrying out the
program's goals.

Process Measures
Describing What Happened

D o evaluations measure anything other than impact and outcome? Yes. Feedback on process is needed as well. Documenting process is vital in determining what volunteer, cash, in-kind, and staff resources were required; whether new issues arose in the midst of the program or initiative; and how problems and challenges were resolved. Process measures, well documented, help managers make effective mid-course corrections when efforts are off track and identify and document new or revised objectives and goals that may be necessary.

Process measures describe what was done to implement the initiative; *outcome measures* in comparison gauge the results of the implementation.

Process measures can include (but are certainly not limited to)

- Number of participants in the project (e.g., members, affiliates, partners of the project);
- Numbers of persons attending community meetings;
- Numbers of persons taking part in community activities;
- Numbers of persons seeking services from project components;
- Numbers of persons inquiring about project activities;
- Numbers of new partners acquired or current partnerships strengthened;
- Number of volunteers working with the project;
- Number of grants and other financial resources generated for the project (dollar amounts received, in-kind professional services, and other resources received by the project);
- The units of service provided by the project (e.g., number of speeches about the project to civic groups, schools, social service agencies; classes, workshops, newsletters, screenings, other informational or service programs provided by the project within the community);
- Number of times and frequency with which the project received coverage from the electronic and print media (TV, radio, newspapers, billboards, etc.);
- Number of times the project has rendered technical assistance (e.g., a similar prevention project in a neighboring county asks you to give input on what they have planned);

- Number of times partner organizations brought together by your prevention project meet (e.g., YMCA after-school program and the chief juvenile judge); and
- Products of planning (e.g., a set of by-laws, if your project is becoming a nonprofit entity; other internal products resulting from planning activities such as new objectives, committee plans, etc.).[1]

If your project has begun, list some of the *process measures* to date:

Members participating for first time this calendar year

Ellen Fitzgerald

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

New volunteers since beginning of calendar year

Harry Watts

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Resources Generated

$2,000 from Derby Optimist Club (11/20)

_____
_____
_____
_____

Units of Service to the Community

Speech to Interfaith Alliance (12/1)

_____
_____
_____
_____

Media Coverage

"Live at Five" on Channel 7 (12/4)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Technical Assistance Opportunities

Met with State Juvenile Justice Commission (11/17)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Partner Meetings

Met with Boys & Girls Club of NE neighborhood (12/4)

_____
_____
_____
_____

Planning Products

Adopted a plan to help B/G Club gain access to Stanley Elementary (12/20)

_____
_____
_____
_____

How can you keep track of *process measures?* Gather *process measures* from meeting minutes, staff calendars, activity logs, and logs of key achievements. Such records will tell you when a meeting occurred for the first time among given partners, when a speech was made to the Optimists that resulted in receiving $2,000 for the project, etc.

It is recommended that your evaluator have you list new *process* achievements on a monthly basis. He/she can then chronicle all activity, by category, using graphs and charts as appropriate. This simple method allows project operators and others to follow the management of the project by assessing activity. For instance, if five *outcome measures* are supposed to be achieved within the next six months, but staff of the project is spending the majority of their time making public presentations *about the project* instead of carrying out project steps project operators may want to set different priorities for staff time and energy.

Process measures also help identify new partners and stakeholders and warn of inactivity or disengagement by stakeholders. They suggest activities that appear to be producing promising results and areas where efforts need to be revamped or strengthened for best results.

Note

[1] *Strategizer series. Evaluation of Substance Abuse Coalitions.* Alexandria, VA: Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America. 1994.
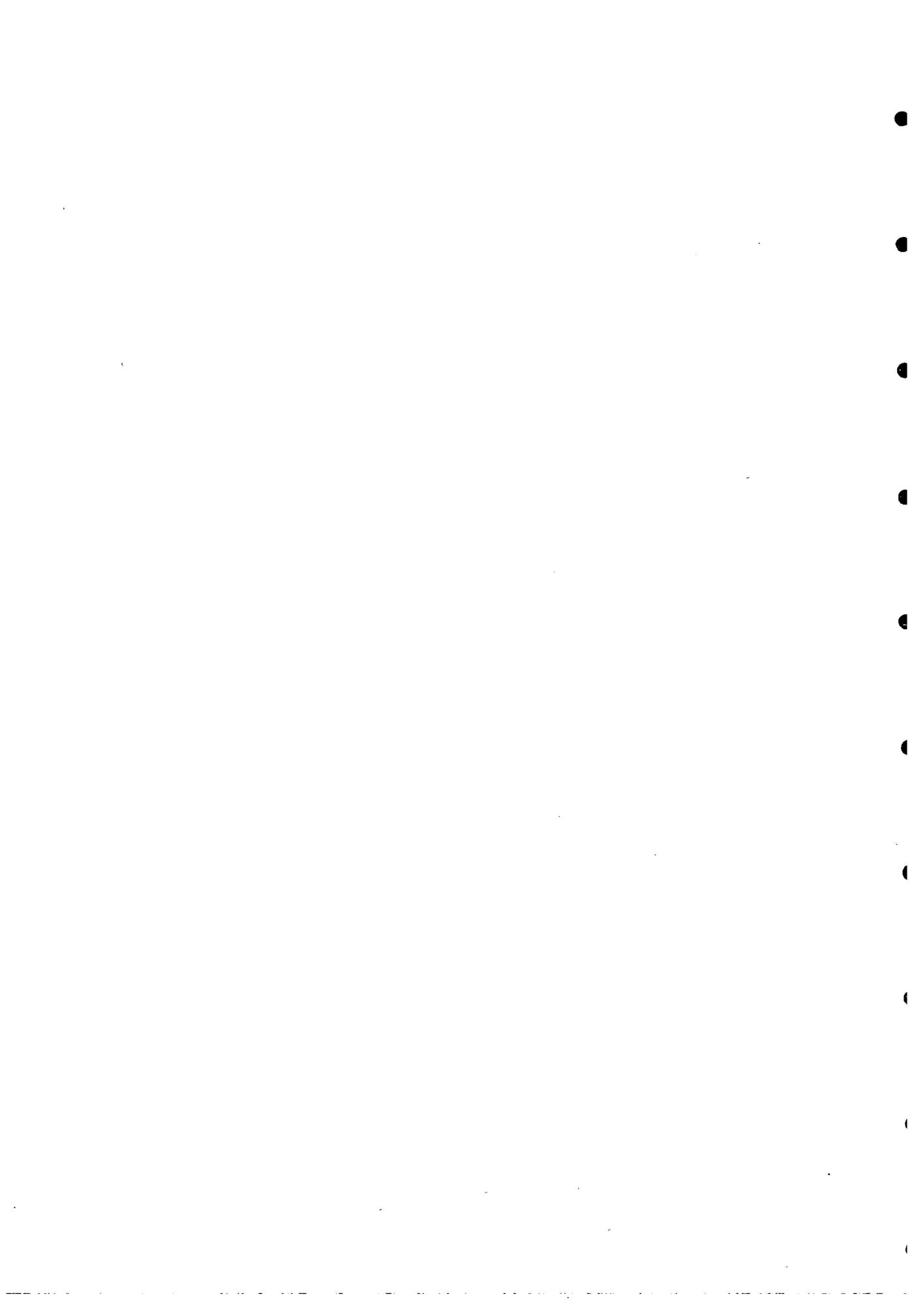
Outcome and Impact Measures

Gauging the Results of Prevention

Many people confuse impact and outcome measures. Using the example of the addition of street lights in a target zone, the difference between impact and outcome can be described this way. The objective was to add three street lights to each block. When those street lights were put into place, the outcome (desired result of the objective) was achieved.

Howevery, we can only measure whether those street lights had an *impact* by examining the numbers and rates of crimes in the target zone over time, the levels of fear (or security) that residents experience before and after the installation, and the after-dark use of the public spaces before and after the new lights were installed. Think of *impact* as a longer-term measure than either outcome or process measures.

In many cases, prevention projects take more than a few months to show impacts, especially impacts on such complex measures as crime rates (which are subject to many external forces). It may be that no impact is measurable for five years or more. That is why baseline measures for your community must be researched and the same data tracked consistently over time. Establishing those baseline measures is the first step.

The measures to be tracked over time can include crime and violence indicators (data); data from behavioral, belief, and attitudinal surveys; and the perceptions of residents. Existing record-keeping systems can provide much of the data. For example, it may be useful to collect the number, types, and frequency of property crimes. By examining police and sheriff records for the past five years, you will be able to determine whether property crimes are on the increase or decrease. (Data for five years or more indicate a "trend.") These baseline data can be used to demonstrate the level of the problem of property crimes in the city or county you serve. By tracking these data over the duration of your prevention initiative, you can assess the overall *impact* your project has had.

Increasingly, communities are investing in Geographic Mapping Systems (also called Geographic Information Systems-GIS). This computer software is used to organize and display data for particular zip codes, census tracts, or other local areas. Remember, the more "local" the data you use, the more accurately you can show *impact*.

Other impact data are important in assessing the impact of community-level initiatives. Trained observations can document changes in behavior by residents. Do more people let their children play on the sidewalks? Are more groups of children allowed to play in the park with less intense supervision? Have property values increased, especially in comparison with other neighborhoods? Are new businesses or services moving to the community? Are existing businesses expanding hours or stocks? All of these kinds of impact measures can be assessed through non-criminal-justice records, yet they can be vital indicators of success in preventing crime. In New York City, relocation agents,

who had been helping major corporations relocate to the city's suburbs, reported as much as a 60 percent falloff in business as the city's crime rate dropped and misdemeanors and incivilities were reduced. The agents were clear that clients wanted to stay in the city because it was now cleaned up and (relatively) crime free.[1]

Consider the concerns of stakeholders (See Chapter 4). These will provide you with important clues to the kinds of non-crime-report *impacts* that your initiative should consider tracking. Ask stakeholders what signs would demonstrate to them that crime and fear of crime had been reduced.

Can you be absolutely certain that the *impact* demonstrated is because of your prevention project alone? Absolute certainty is highly unlikely. It may be that crime became more person-oriented and violent, thus reducing property crime rates. It may be that increased enforcement targeted property crimes, resulting in a decrease in rates. Comparing your program area to a similar area that did not get help is one way to deal with this, but it can be expensive and may not be conclusive.

Measuring prevention impacts is still a difficult business. Within the prevention field, we must plan to achieve *outcomes* that we believe will have an eventual *impact* on crime and violence. Until evaluation of prevention efforts overcomes the difficulties in unraveling and documenting cause and effect, we must concentrate on measuring those outcomes that experience and research suggest have some impact.

What is your desired impact and by what measure will you judge it?

Goal Example:

- Reduce all type of (list the types of property crime) in the Target Zone by 10 percent by 2005.

Outcome Examples:

- Create a Neighborhood Watch Program with 85 percent participation by 2000.
- Increase the number of residents locking their homes, cars, and other property at night by 20 percent by 1999.
- Reduce truancy at the nearby middle and high schools by 25 percent by 1999.

Impact Examples:

- Reduce burglaries in the Target Zone by 10 percent by 2005.
- Reduce car thefts in the Target Zone by 10 percent by 2005.

Think about examples of outcomes and impacts for your program and list them:

Outcome Measures	*Impact Measures*

Now consider how you will link outcome and impact measures. Your plan's goals should reflect the problems that your initiative will address. It is important to determine the impact measures that are most directly related to these goals and to the outcomes your plan is designed to produce. Impact measures are time-consuming to track, in many cases, and can be subject to a host of external forces. The idea in selecting impact measures is to be sure that

- there are tools for making the measurements (or that developing them will not be cost-prohibitive;
- there is both research and theory that demonstrates a link between the outcomes and the impact and between the impact and the measures you propose;
- impact-related data will be available for two to five years at minimum;
- there is a method for noting possible external forces that affect program impact (events beyond the program's control that move the impact measures in favorable or unfavorable ways); and
- you have selected a reasonable number of impact measures to track, given the program's scope and resources. Large-scale programs in urban and suburban communities may decide to track as many as six to ten problems. A rural community or a small-scale program might decide to track only three. Whatever the community size, set priorities and focus on what is measurable and doable.

Impact Measurements To Be Used—A Working List

Problem	*Measure/Indicator*	*Data Source*
Burglary	Burglary statistics Resident surveys	Police department Project staff

Note

[1]News broadcasts, WCBS Radio (880 AM), Sunday, September 6, 1998, Noon, 1:00 p.m., and 2:00 p.m.

8

Gauging the Program's Own Health

Surveys in various forms can help evaluators and program managers understand whether stakeholders concur on program operations and strategies, rates of progress, and levels and significance of outcomes toward achieving both the program's overall mission and the needs of specific stakeholders. They can also help identify benefits of or problems with collaboration and point toward unanticipated benefits of the program to various groups.

Sometimes, the health of the coalition or collaboration that is sponsoring or conducting the program is a key interest for a number of stakeholders. Do groups work more closely together on other issues? Have benefits of collaboration become accepted by many or all? What challenges or roadblocks have reduced opportunities to work together toward shared goals? Are needs of all parties being reasonably met? Gauging the program's own health means asking those affected by it or taking part in it how they think the project is going.

Planned outcomes can be ranked annually by project participants and others for importance to achieving the mission and feasibility. This can be accomplished relatively easily. Using a Likkert 5-point scale, list each planned outcome on the survey form. It would look like this:

The city will install three additional street lights on each block of the Target Zone by 1999.

	Low				High
	1	2	3	4	5
Importance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feasibility	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

By averaging the collective responses for importance and feasibility of each planned outcome, you will place a priority on each item for implementation. These surveys require significant interpretation in light of other program issues, including funder requirements and concerns in key communities. What is important to the Lakedale neighborhood may be irrelevant in the rest of the city, for instance, but Lakedale may be a high crime area in need of intensive attention.

Process

"Constituent" surveys of process can be useful in any collaborative community project. A survey of process asks participants and those impacted by the initiative to indicate their

satisfaction with how the initiative operates on a day-by-day basis. Questions can be posed regarding planning, leadership, services, degree of community involvement, and progress toward achieving goals.

Such a survey gives people an opportunity to comment about how they feel the initiative is functioning or progressing. Data collected in this way can help identify, for funders, project management and community leadership and the strengths and weaknesses of the initiative.

Use the following step-by-step process:

Step One: Develop a survey to assess consumer satisfaction with the process of the initiative.

Step Two: Obtain ratings about satisfaction and overall approval (strongly agree →strongly disagree)

Step Three: Assess satisfaction with

- planning,
- leadership,
- services,
- community involvement with the initiative, and
- progress and outcomes.

Step Four: Use the data to improve the functioning of the initiative

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Sample Cover Letter to Accompany Consumer Satisfaction Survey

Date:

Dear_____:

The purpose of the attached consumer satisfaction questionnaire is to get your feedback on how well the Peace in the Neighborhoods Initiative is doing. As you know, the Peace in the Neighborhood's mission is to _____ in _____city or county.

Please complete each question by circling the number that best shows your satisfaction with that aspect of the initiative. We welcome additional comments and suggestions you may have for improving the Peace in the Neighborhoods Initiative.

To protect anonymity, please use the enclosed envelope to return your completed questionnaire to our evaluators:_____(name them and list address and phone number for them).

Thank you in advance for your valuable advice and feedback.

Best Regards.

Initiative Project Director or Volunteer from Board

An annual consumer satisfaction survey can be sent to all policy makers, funders, project leader, and project participants in order to render feedback on management and focus of the project. This is important so that the community you serve with your prevention project has input as to how efficient or non-efficient the implementation of the project was. It might look like this.

Sample Annual Consumer Satisfaction Survey
The Peace in the Neighborhoods Initiative

We welcome your feedback on how well the initiative is doing. For each item, please circle the number that best reflects your level of satisfaction with the referenced aspect of the initiative. Provide additional comments if you wish.

Your satisfaction with the...

	Very Dissatisfied				Very Satisfied
	1	2	3	4	5

Planning and Implementation

1. Planning process used to prepare the initiative's objectives ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

2. Follow-through on initiative activities ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

3. Strength and competence of staff ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Leadership

4. Clarity of the vision for where the initiative should be going ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

5. Strength and competence of initiative leadership (board of directors, etc.) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

6. Sensitivity to cultural issues ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

7. Use of the media to promote awareness of the initiative's goals, objectives, and accomplishments ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Changing Community

8. Difference it has made in community ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

9. Speed of actions ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

10. Priority of actions ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
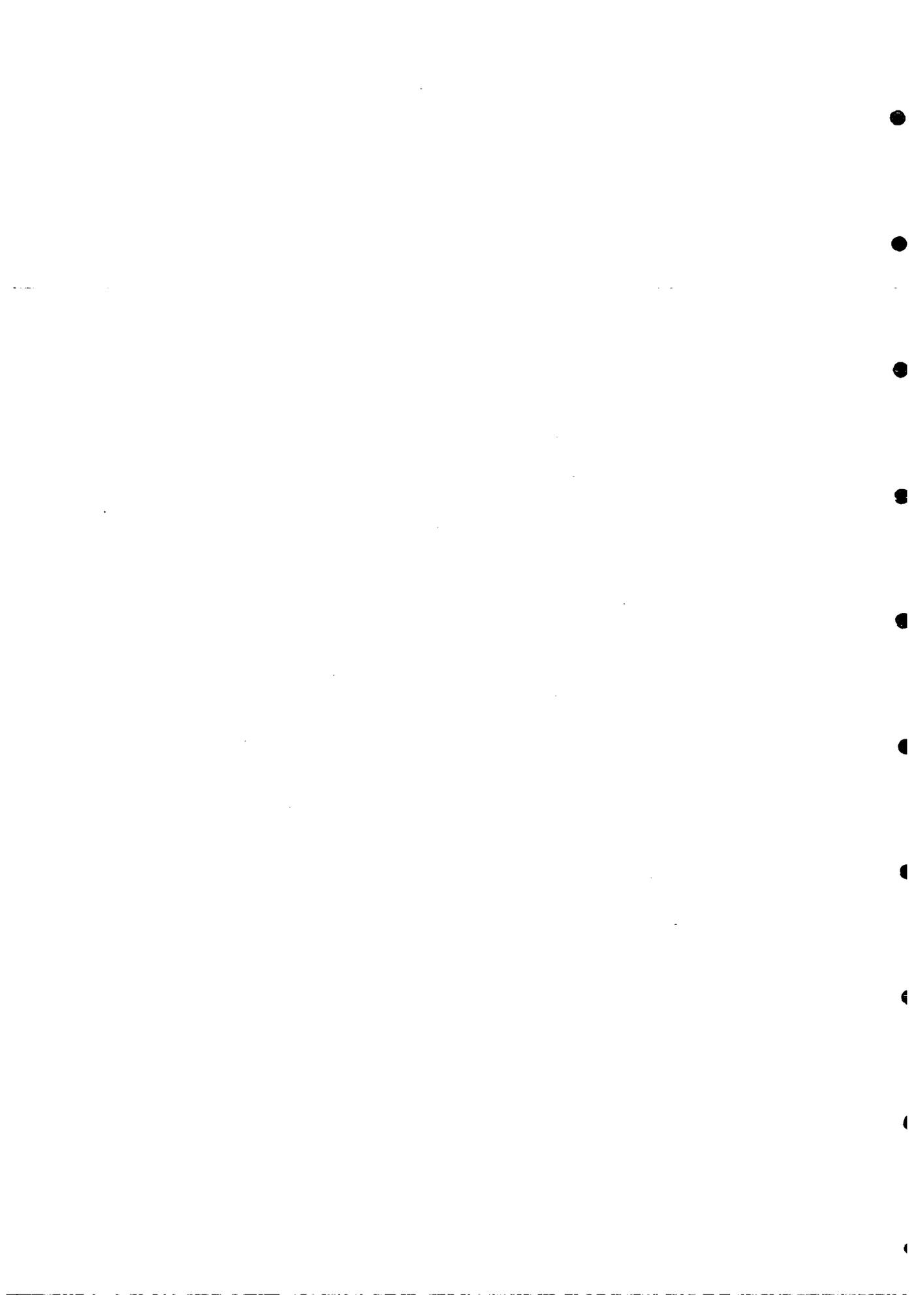
Communicating Findings and Results for Maximum Impact

This part of the handbook helps you to consider what you will want and need to communicate and to whom. It is also designed to help you lay out helpful findings from various stages of project development to educate and involve your community. It will show you how to use assessment and indicator data to persuade, document, recruit, update, inspire, and energize. It lays out ways to communicate evaluation results and to present those results using a variety of techniques to help make appropriate points clear to a range of audiences.

In short, this section helps you maximize the payoff from the hard work of your evaluation and the related activities you have undertaken to document program activities and results.
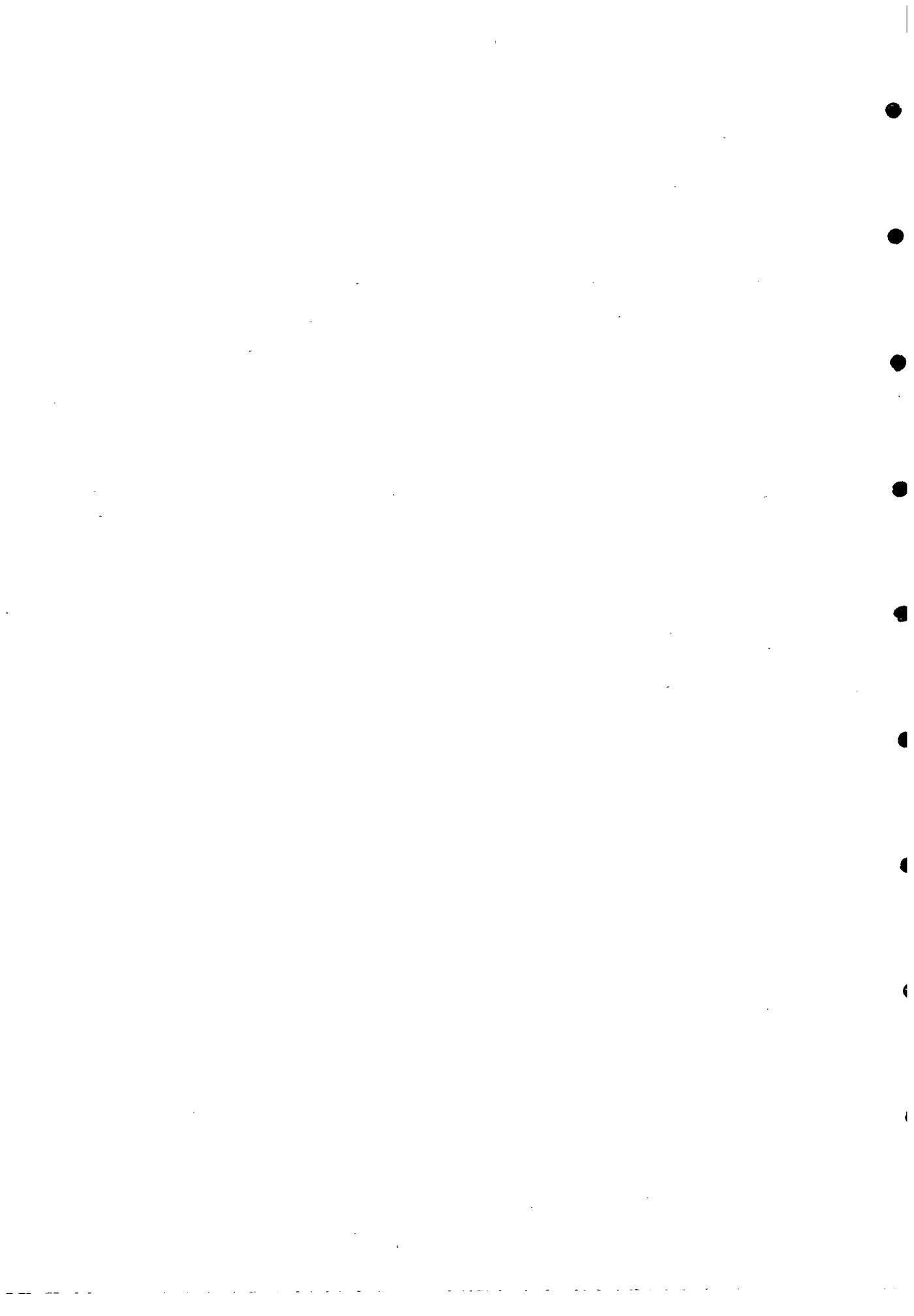
Communicating With Assessment and Indicator Data

The primary use of the data you and your evaluator gather, of course, is to document changes in your community, directly or indirectly, that will remove crime and fear and improve quality of life. The data you collect should be designed to identify problems and determine whether they have been effectively addressed. Are parks better used? Have housing values improved? Have traffic pattern changes driven out drug markets? Are fewer eighth graders trying fewer drugs?

Assessment data help you paint a picture of the community you and your colleagues are trying to change. These data provide a "where we started" framework that helps mark progress, celebrate success, and convey messages about the community's improvement that might otherwise go unremarked. A community that had only four legitimate businesses may not notice that it now has nine—although it benefits from the presence of each business. A neighborhood that had gone unheard in the local criminal justice process may not realize that its community impact statements on key trials have been acknowledged in twelve major court cases as being influential in sentencing decisions. Assessment data can also help identify indicator data that are going to hold special significance for the community.

One excellent use of assessment and indicator data is to educate the public regarding the extent and severity of violence and other crimes and the range of problems in the community that contribute to crime and disorder. Data are also important for documentation to potential and current funders that crime prevention projects are critical to the community. Justifiably, funders feel they are wasting their time and resources if programs cannot demonstrate the severity of a problem and the extent to which their program will impact the problem.

Many prevention efforts use community assessment data to compare their community with other cities, counties, states, or the nation as a whole. These comparison should be done only with great caution and with expert guidance. Valid comparisons from location to location are very difficult. Comparison communities must be chosen based upon similarities to your community demographically, geographically, socio-economically, etc. Have experienced evaluators choose comparison communities and track the data.

Use assessment data to market your project to the community and educate and persuade the community that the problems you have identified (along with the approach your prevention initiative is using to address those problems) are important. Use such information to elevate crime and violence issues on the local agenda. Present to the local media and public at-large the trends and numbers (the number of assaults on the elderly will mean more to the media and citizens than rates-per-thousand residents) for several identified problems.

Remember, no one indicator, survey, or public perception survey will adequately represent the local crime or violence problem. You must use them in combination.

Assessment findings and trends can be the substance for press conferences or to announce the formation of your prevention initiative to address locally identified needs.

At the very least, you can educate the community each year by publishing a community assessment brochure or "report card." Present, in graph form, the trends for each chosen indicator, survey, or perceived problem from year to year. Such brochures are not meant to provide precise quantitative measurements but are intended to provide the reader with a sense of the severity and breadth of the crime or violence problem. For each indicator or survey result, include the name, address, and phone number of the contact agency who collects and interprets the data. Anyone interested in precise data sources and methods thereby has access to them.

Use assessment data for making decisions regarding your prevention initiative. Data should be an ongoing tool you can use for initiative management, programs, and social policy positions. For example, some communities are beginning to collect very precise indicator data for the purposes of targeting specific populations and geographic locations with prevention and/or intervention programming.

To illustrate, CLEW Associates and the Institute for the Study of Social Change at the University of California at Berkeley have devised an Alcohol-Sensitive Information Planning System or ASIPS. Two community police departments in the State of California have agreed to have officers complete the ASIPS one-page questionnaire when responding to calls. The survey asks several questions each time there is an arrest or incident the officer feels may be alcohol-related. For both alcohol-related incidents and arrests, the questions raised are as follows:

- Type of criminal activity, using existing police codes;
- Geographic location of the event in the community using police beat area, census tract, zip codes, address;
- Type of setting (i.e., places defined as domestic, alcohol retail outlet, park and open space, vehicle, school, etc.—the questionnaire gives 27 such setting options);
- Time of day, week, month, and year; and
- Participant involved in the incident or arrest (gender, ethnicity, age-range, drinking and/or drug using status).

The results of such progressive data experiments make it possible to determine the extent of crime and other problems locally by age range, gender, most frequent locations, etc. For example, by recording type of criminal activity, geographic location, type of setting, time of day, and profile of the participant, target areas for the addition of street lights would be easy as in our initial illustration. Likewise, if incidents and arrests take place at the same park after school on Fridays, it may be that a prevention program focus would be on organized and supervised after-school recreation in that park on Friday afternoons. Such data can also be used for policy and practice including ordinance enforcement in locations where most problems are occurring. Using the park example, it may be that city officials, based on the data, decide there is a need for a drug-free, gun-free zone within 1,000 feet of all parks and open space in the city.

How can you use assessment and evaluation data in your community? List the opportunities below:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

10

You and your evaluator
developed a plan of
work with careful
attention to stake-
holders' needs; with
thoughtful construction
of process, outcome,
and impact measures;
and with careful
attention to assess-
ments of conditions
and attitudes. The
evaluator has provided
feedback along the way
to help the program
improve. The results
are now in. How do you
present them? How do
you get attention for
them?

Communicating Evaluation Results

What is Communicated?

The core purpose of this communications effort is to inform local, state, and national audiences of the achievements of your initiative, as demonstrated by the evaluation. In doing so, you also demonstrate that your initiative is serious about measuring the impact of efforts and resources. You need to communicate results in ways that various audiences will not only understand but appreciate, demonstrating the relevance of the results to each group.

The whole report—including those parts that point out problems or missed targets—needs to be available to the public. Many groups dread evaluation because it might present "bad news." Evaluations produce ideas for improvement, not "bad news." If clients strongly disliked waiting to see caseworkers, perhaps the program should shift to an appointment system. If Neighborhood Watch groups did not feel they got suffi-cient support from county agencies, the program may want to start a county wide council of Watch representatives to meet periodically with key agency managers. In other words, show how findings that otherwise might be considered negative will be used to strengthen the program.

Why Is It Communicated?

Evaluation results are communicated first and foremost to help stakeholders under-stand the results of their efforts and support. They are also communicated locally and statewide (even nationally, perhaps) for a variety of reasons.

At the local level to

- Show project results and use the results to adjust the project strategy;
- Help attract volunteers, funding, and in-kind resources from local concerned citizens and agencies;
- Promote recognition of the efforts of volunteers and collaborators;
- Effect changes in local ordinances or practices to address community prob-lems; and
- Spur civic pride in accomplishment.

At the state (and national) level to

- Help establish or strengthen a statewide network of people and agencies with similar goals;
- Effect policy and legislative changes to address community problems;
- Help garner recognition and resources from state, regional, and national audiences; and
- Encourage replication of a successful initiative.[1]

How Can Findings be Communicated?

Communication about evaluation will have many different forms. Traditional press, particularly around issues of significance and importance to the broader community, will be a primary consideration. However, looking at alternative press, such as trade press, newsletters, neighborhood periodicals, local newsletters and church bulletins, and research briefs will be important. Understand that individuals and groups receive their information in many different ways. Be sensitive to how your community receives and processes information.

Publicize via Media

Most people think of the word "media" as meaning television reporters, radio reporters, and newspapers. Media includes far more, such as magazines, special interest newsletters, community bulletins, and presentations to civic groups. Media plans are usually part of an overall public relations plan. Your project should have both. These should be a major vehicle for communicating your evaluation results.

Prevention projects should have a plan in place at the start both to involve local media decision makers and to reach for media coverage by such steps as

- developing news stories and advising media of events,
- meeting with reporters to educate them (regularly and frequently since reporters change "beats" often) about your issues and your project,
- meeting with the editorial board of the local newspapers, and
- writing op-ed (opinion) pieces for local newspapers.

You should not rely on news reports to inform important audiences of your evaluation results. Arrange to present briefings to such groups as

- the city or county council,
- the school board,
- planning and zoning boards,
- youth coalitions,
- public issues shows on broadcast and cable TV and on radio, and
- community-based groups.

If you have conducted ongoing, periodic briefings with key editors, reporters, and magazines and broadcast outlets, you will be able to brief these contacts on the results of the evaluation. Make sure they get news of the final results!

List editors, reports, general managers, news editors, and magazine editors locally. Be sure to include ethnically specific media, weekly newspapers, and neighborhood and civic group publications. Grassroots neighborhoods are more dependent on neighborhood-based communication than on other types of media.

● *Name and Position*   *Do you have a good relationship?*

                                                          Yes   No

●   _____   ☐   ☐

●   _____   ☐   ☐

    _____   ☐   ☐

    _____   ☐   ☐

●   _____   ☐   ☐

    _____   ☐   ☐

▶ When You Are Ready to Discuss Findings of Your Project

Community-wide

Schedule a press conference or hold individual briefings with reporters and producers who might be interested in the evaluation findings of your initiative. You may want to "springboard" off a release of national-level data on crime and violence to announce local findings. Select a time and place that is most convenient for reporters. The best time for press conferences is usually 10 a.m. or 2 p.m. (you want to make the noon and dinner-hour broadcasts). Mondays and Saturdays are usually the slowest news days, thus giving you a better chance to receive coverage.

When you have decided upon a date, time, and location, send a media advisory to all those on your media lists. An advisory is sent one week in advance of your media event. Take a look at this sample media advisory:

Sample Media Advisory
Sambuloto Project To Reduce Violence

WHAT: The Sambuloto Project To Reduce Violence will announce that over 50 percent of local violent criminals have been shown to have been drinking at the time of their offense. More than 400 people in the metropolitan area are victims of violent crimes each year.

WHO: Mayor Mark Mikey, chair of the Sambuloto Project to Reduce Violence

WHEN: Monday, March 16, 2000, 10 a.m.

WHERE: Runner's Inn Downtown Banquet Room

Follow the media advisory with phone calls to all your media contacts.

One day prior to the press conference, send a press release to all your media contacts. The press release will be longer than the advisory but should not, generally, exceed one page, double-spaced.

Sample Press Release

For more information contact:
Mayor Mike Mikey, Chair

or press contact:
Thomas O'Reilley

Sambuloto Project To Reduce Violence
1212 Main Street
Sambuloto, MS 23885
Phone: 415-000-7759
Fax: 415-000-7750
e-mail: M@APL.com
Web Site: www.violence.no.com

On March 16th, the Project To Reduce Violence will release its latest findings regarding the profile of the local violent offender at 10 a.m. at the Runner's Inn Downtown Banquet Room. Last year, over 408 people were the victims of violent crimes including assault, armed robbery, rape . . . Violent crimes are estimated to cost $1 million each year in lost productivity and health care costs.

The Sambuloto Project To Reduce Violence is composed of 70 agencies and individuals who are educating the various sectors of the metropolitan area regarding the causes and types of violence in Sambuloto. Its most famous initiative, to date, has been the Take Back Our Streets campaign.

Findings of the Sambuloto Project To Reduce Violence include:

_____

_____

_____

The public is invited to attend the press conference to learn how they might play a role in reducing local violence. Contact_____at_____for more information.

During the press conference or in any interview, decide beforehand on three points you want to emphasize. Have a true human interest story, if possible, to emphasize each point. Obviously, you should choose the most articulate person with the highest stature within your project to serve as spokesperson. It is generally not a good idea to have your evaluator give presentations regarding findings unless he/she can present the data in non-academic ways that both the media and public can understand. However, the evaluator should be present to answer research-based questions, e.g., the methodology used or statistical analysis.

Form a Speakers Bureau

Identify other key audiences for presentation of the data. They may include

Local

Civic and fraternal organizations
Business groups
Housing authority groups
Community-based organizations

- School boards and teacher groups
  Youth-serving groups
  PTAs/PTOs
  Elected and appointed officials
  Health organizations
  Funders and potential funders
  Faith communities
  Homeowners' associations

State and National

- State and regional professional conferences
  Regional professional training workshops
  Grassroots and advocacy organizations
  Grant makers
  Legislators and executive branch officials

What Do I Present?

Take a deep breath! The information you present to the public must be planned carefully and should tie all facets of your project evaluation together in the simplest, most concise way possible.

Assemble several items:[2]

- ☑ A list of the project's goals (desired *impact*);

- ☑ How you assessed the community (techniques);

- ☑ The list of objectives and results (*outcomes*);

- ☑ The measurement instruments you used to see whether the outcomes were · achieved;

- ☑ The analysis of output and outcome data from the project (*process*);

- ☑ Any qualitative findings; and

- ☑ Any other measures you performed (a cost-benefit analysis, a series of trained observation reports, etc.).

Relate each of the findings to one or more of the program's goals. Start with the *outcomes* since these are the essence of what you said the project would accomplish. Of course, highlight your successes. Be sure to credit all partner and funding organizations!

Perhaps you did not achieve all your objectives. Show how the evaluation has provided helpful information for you to succeed next time. Consider in advance what prevented you from achieving any objectives and how you'll correct the situation or how new initiatives have emerged to address problems that were uncovered.

Write a Report (or work with your evaluator to do so)

Structure a report in five sections. The Crime Prevention Council's *What, Me Evaluate?* suggests these five:

- Goals (what you planned to achieve and how you planned to evaluate success);
- Descriptions of the community (the assessment and thus, who was targeted by the project);

- Evaluation design (did you use surveys? which ones?);
- Output results (*process measures*—the number of volunteers involved, the amount of money raised, the number of activities sponsored, etc.); and
- *Outcome measures.* A check-off of your project's objectives.[3]

Remember to credit all partner and funding organizations in the report as well as in presentations!

Format

Use graphs, tables, and charts but don't overload your report. Keep it simple! Tie any use of illustrations to major achievements (objectives and *process measures*). Trends and simple check-offs of *outcomes* may be easier to absorb than specific measurements. Emphasize results using human interest stories that illustrate the *outcome* or *process measures* you are discussing. Place all extensive (and super-detailed) data in appendices.

Convene a Town Meeting

Inclusive, well-planned town meetings are an extremely effective mechanism for disseminating evaluation findings.

Step One: Location and Promotion of Town Meetings

1. Start to plan the meeting process at least two months in advance.
2. Schedule meetings during the evening and sponsor at least one meeting in each quadrant of the area.
3. Hold meetings in facilities where citizens are comfortable. That may mean a recreation center, church, school, or other recognizable neighborhood institution. Be aware of the fact that some citizens are not comfortable in *any* type of institutional setting.
4. Promote attendance at the meeting(s) at least two weeks before the meeting will be held. Use public service announcements, the newspaper, and television to announce the town meeting schedule. Fliers posted in churches, synagogues, grocery stores, beauty salons, and barber shops are important. Make sure that fliers are catchy and excitement-generating. Translate fliers if necessary (and be sure to have a translator at meetings if needed).
5. Obtain commitment from among the community's key leaders to help sponsor any meetings and to attend if at all possible.
6. Plan on 20 to 30 minutes for sharing the evaluation results and 15 to 20 minutes for questions.

Step Two: Holding meetings

1. Staff/volunteers and steering committee need to arrive early to set up a sign-in table. Encourage everyone who attends the meeting to sign the sheet provided giving name, address, and, if available, phone number. Do not despair if only a handful of people attend. Analyze the possible reason(s) for low attendance and make adjustments prior to the next meeting.
2. In order to set the stage for comments from each person present, the facilitator should begin the meeting by describing the following:

   a. Definition of the prevention initiative;
   b. The community assessment process in which the project engaged;

    c. The strategies used by the project to meet the community's needs; and

    d. The outcomes of those strategies.

After the meetings, formalize input and follow-up. Send each town meeting attendee a copy of any report, report card, or other summarization of the findings regarding your prevention project.

Keep a Record of What You Did

Public attention to the results of the program is part of the reward that paid staff and volunteers alike treasure. Being part of a known success is always more exciting than being part of an unknown one!

Develop a news clippings and presentations book. Usually a looseleaf notebook with pages on which news stories are pasted up and in which memos of televison, radio, and live reports or presentations are placed can be organized to meet your needs with maximum flexibility. A summary report for key stakeholders of the favorable publicity is always a good idea. It also becomes a persuasive document for current and prospective funders who seek acknowledgment of their contributions or the success of efforts they support.

Notes

    [1] *Work Group Evaluation Handbook: Evaluating and Supporting Community Initiatives for Health and Development.* The Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas. 1994. Page 87.

    [2] *What, Me Evaluate? A Basic Guide for Citizen Crime Prevention Programs.* National Crime Prevention Council. 1986. Page 65.

    [3] Ibid. Page 66.
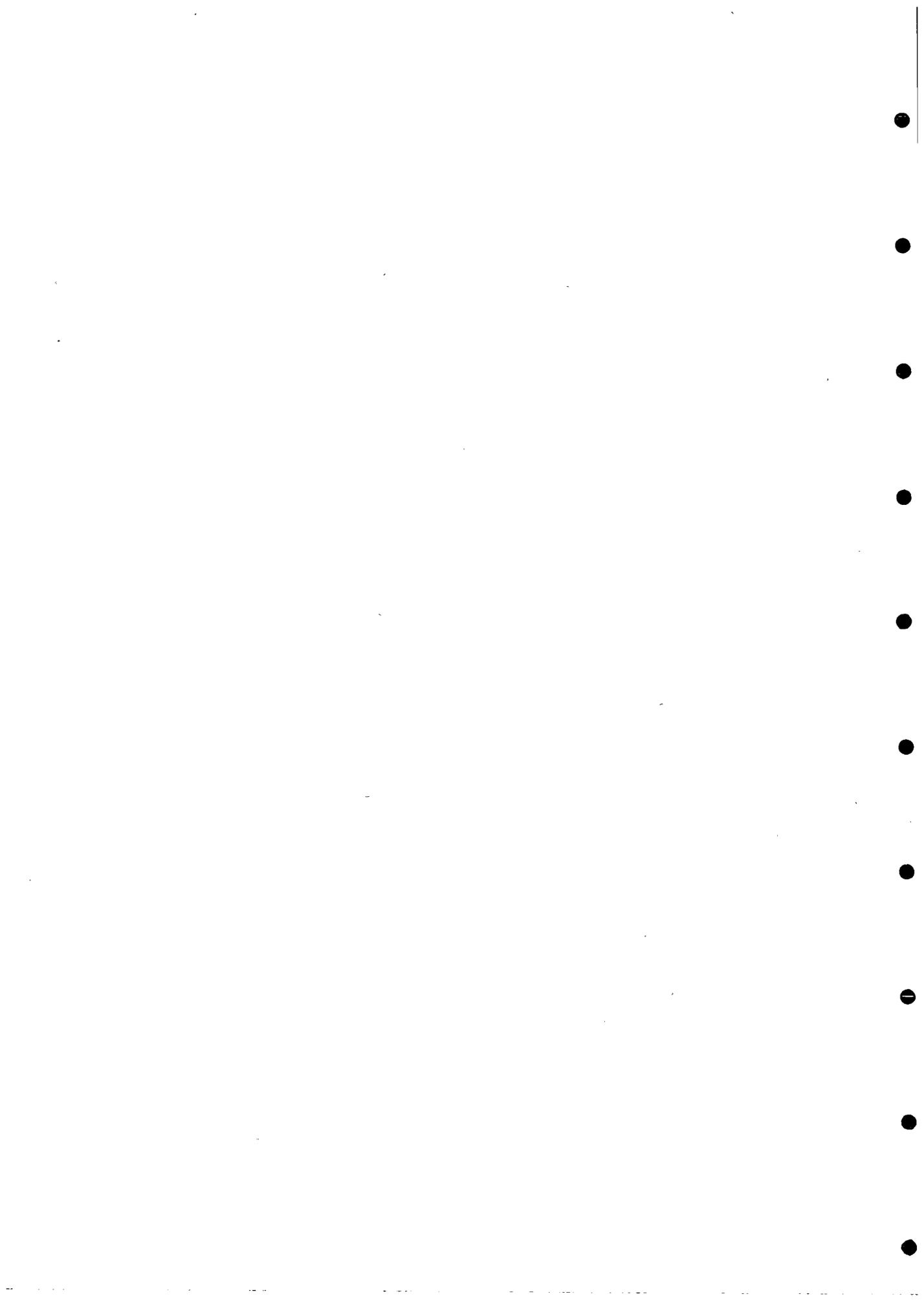
Mapping and Illustrating Results

Here are just a few examples of ways these data can be presented. The illustrations can be used for transparency overheads, computer-based projections, enlarged displays on paper (poster-size, for instance), brochures or executive summaries, or supplemental or detail material in reports.

You can measure in several ways. Here are some common ways to look at measurement.

- **Over time:** For example, to compare one year's conditions to another's; conditions in one season from year to year;
- **Across space:** Perhaps to compare one neighborhood's conditions to another's or one school's situation to another's;
- **In absolute numbers:** For instance, crimes reported to police; numbers of businesses operating in the neighborhood;
- **In proportions:** For example, percentage of population holding particular beliefs or ratio of homeowners to home renters in different communities.

Comparisons should be made between like items. Graphing changes in real estate values on the same display as changes in crime statistics presents difficult challenges of scale and impact. One message or the other is likely to get lost or be misunderstood. Equally, presenting results for July through September of one year and January through March of succeeding years can send misleading messages.

Project goals can be graphed. This is often helpful in building support for celebration of progress, in identifying areas in need of further work without having to verbally "finger point," and in helping participants gain a sense of overall perspective. Graphs can simply report on progress toward completion or can offer comparisons of prior status with current status.

Line graphs can be helpful in highlighting trends when several data points are involved. For example, one community wants to examine monthly changes in crime rates. A single graph helps compile the data in a way that still shows each kind of crime but also brings attention to the trends involved during the six months. The lines' directions and degrees of change are reasonably apparent to most people looking at the graph. Note, though, that a graph attempting to compare rates for similar crimes during a

FIGURE 1   Goal Six ("Cleaner Downtown") Objectives
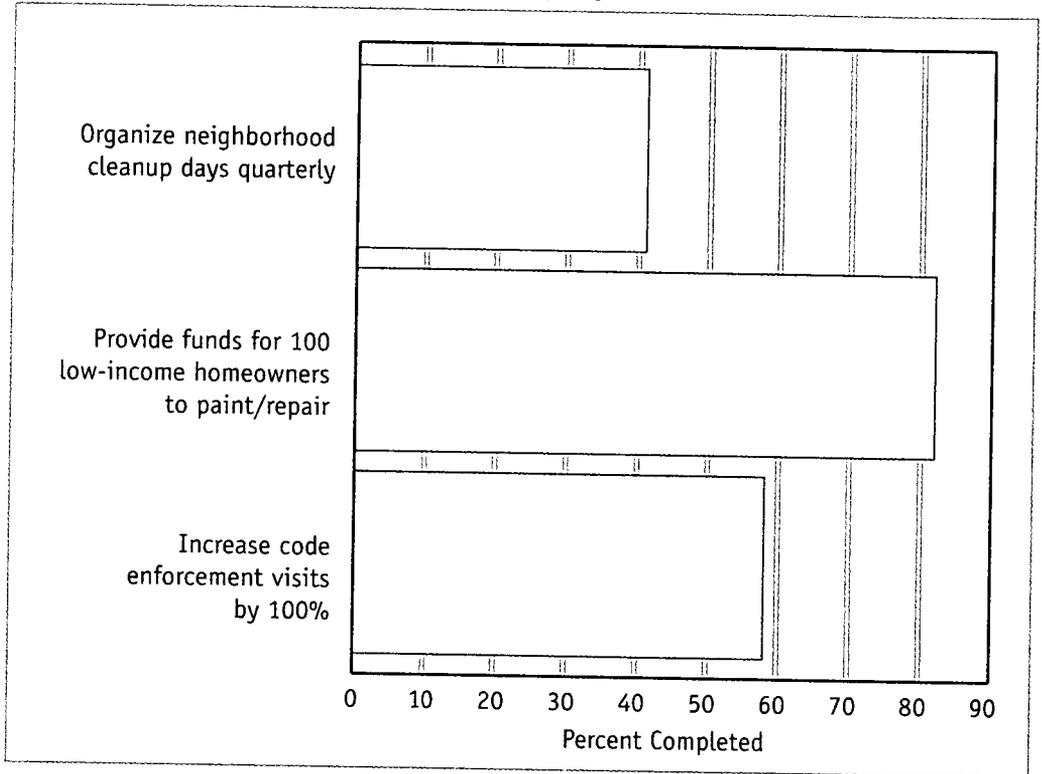
FIGURE 2   School Violence Prevention Working Group Objective Status
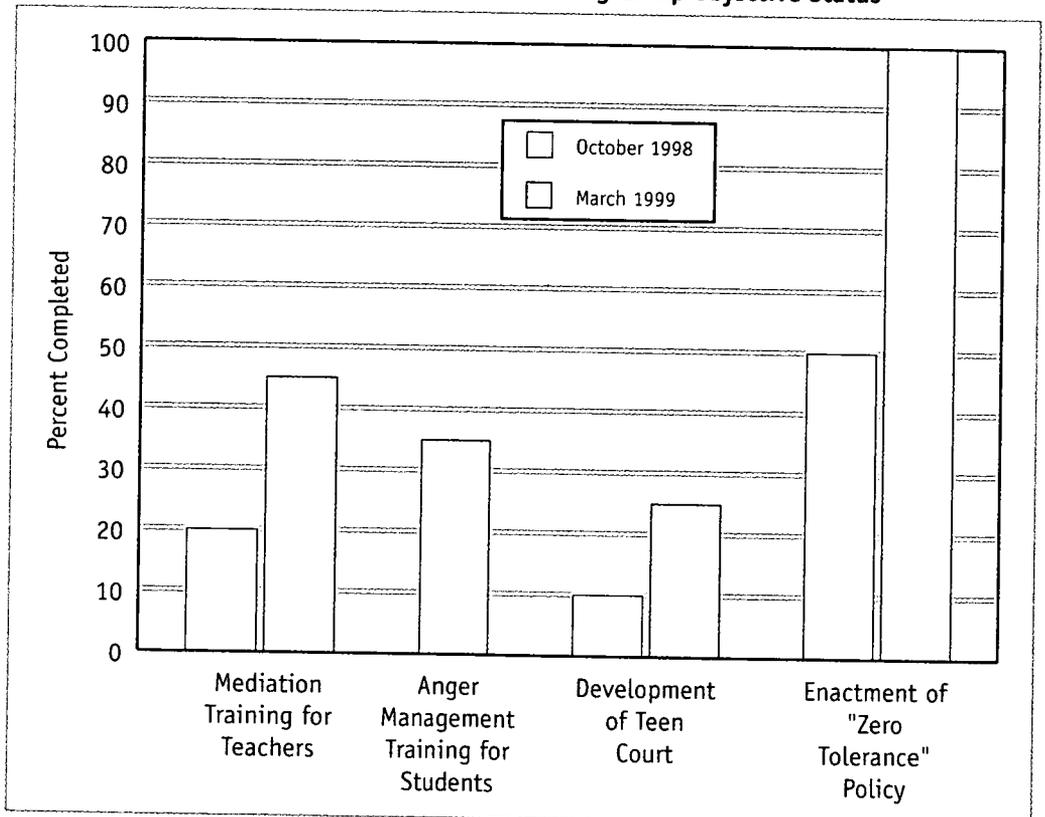
similar period one year ago should probably be separated into six graphs (one crime per graph) or at least three (two crimes per graph) so that the reader can decipher trends and comparisons more easily.

FIGURE 3   Key Reported Crime Statistics for Anytown (Jul-Dec 1998)
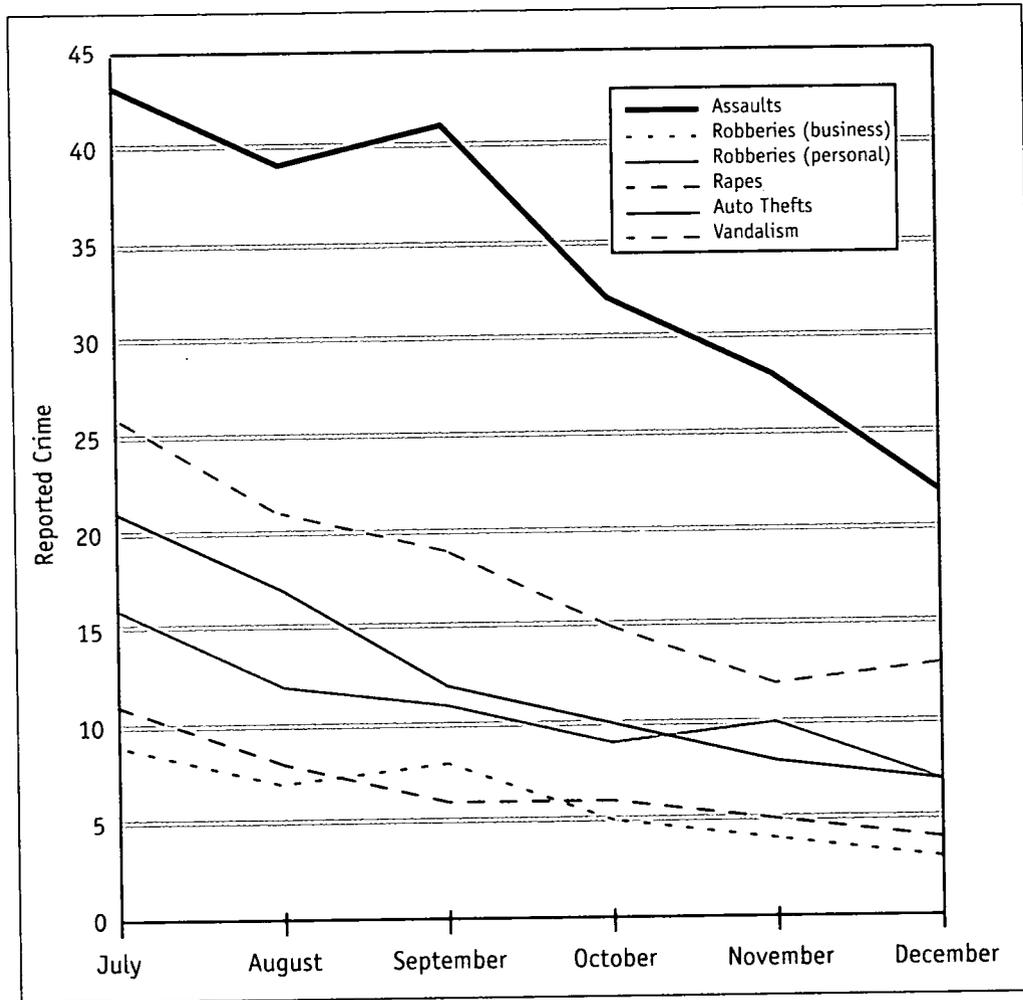
Viewing data as proportions can sometimes help make relationships more obvious. In one case, a group examining school crime issues found the problems as students saw them were significantly different from the problems adults perceived.

FIGURE 4   Views of School Problems
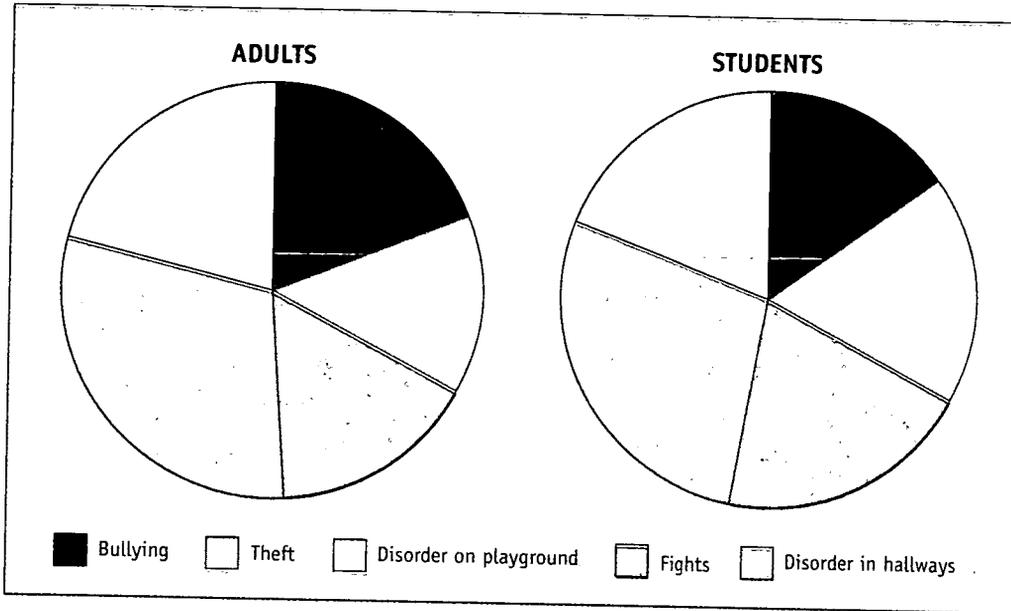
Tables can also provide significant help in presenting data, especially results:

Goal	Planned Completion Date	Percent Completed September 30, 1998	Comments
Downtown business district clean-up	March 30, 1998, for central business area	100%	Two months behind but cleaned larger area than originally planned
School mediation training	Training in place in all schools by September 1, 1998	65%	Difficulty with state board of education in getting curriculum approval
Parenting skills courses at all community centers	December 31, 1998	100%	Civic Club's adoption of goal sped completion
Formation of official planning task force by city ordinance	February 1, 1999	100%	Completed March 15, 1999; Council budget debate postponed enactment
Grant proposal for state assistance in implementing community policing	May 15, 1999	100%	Grant was awarded August 12!

Here are sample surveys that can help enrich your knowledge of a neighborhood and help identify changes in neighborhoods or the community you are working with.

Sample Planning Questionnaire[1]

1. In general, would you say this area has become a better place to live in the last year, a worse place, or about the same?

   ☐ Better ☐ Worse ☐ Same ☐ Don't Know ☐ Refused to Respond

2. Here are some problems people often mention in their neighborhoods. Can you tell me whether any of these are a big problem, something of a problem, or little or no problem for your neighborhood?

	Big	Some	Little	Don't Know	Refused to Respond
Quality of shopping facilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Number of shopping facilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Crime	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Schools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Noise	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Trash	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Traffic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kinds of residents	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Abandoned/run-down buildings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Vandalism/graffiti	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Unsupervised children and youth	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Unusable parks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. Would you agree or disagree with this statement: "There is little my neighbors and I can do to solve the problems in this neighborhood."

   ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Unsure ☐ Refused to Respond

4. What kinds of community groups are you active in? (check all that apply)

   ☐ Church ☐ School ☐ Fraternal ☐ Sports ☐ Political Group

   ☐ Block Assn. ☐ Service Club ☐ Social Club ☐ Youth

5. How do you feel about going out for meetings at night?

   Walking? ☐ Very Safe ☐ Pretty Safe ☐ Somewhat Unsafe ☐ Very Unsafe ☐ Don't Go

   Driving? ☐ Very Safe ☐ Pretty Safe ☐ Somewhat Unsafe ☐ Very Unsafe ☐ Don't Go

6. Do you and your neighbors get together for social events?

☐ Often   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Occasionally   ☐ Rarely/never

For community needs discussions/meetings?

☐ Often   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Occasionally   ☐ Rarely/never

Here are some contrasting ways to describe this neighborhood. Please pick the one that is closer to how you feel.

7. ☐ A real home   OR   ☐ Just a place to live

8. ☐ People stop other's kids   ☐ People won't interfere with
      from doing something wrong   OR   other's children, no matter what

9. ☐ People help each other   OR   ☐ People go their own way

10. ☐ Easy to tell a stranger from   ☐ Hard to know who is a
       those who belong   OR   stranger versus who belongs

11. If you really wanted to get something done for the neighborhood, who would you ask to help you?

_____   _____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____   _____

12. How many people in this neighborhood could you ask for a small favor (e.g., a ride to the store if they were going there anyhow?) #_____

13. How do you find out about news events in your neighborhood? Check all that apply.

☐ School   ☐ Television   ☐ Daily newspaper   ☐ Weekly newspaper
☐ Religious congregation   ☐ Family/friends   ☐ Self (own observations) ☐ Others

Sample Neighborhood Check-up Survey[2]

1. In general, has this neighborhood become a better or worse place to live in the past year, or is it about the same?

☐ Better   ☐ Worse   ☐ Same   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Refused to Respond

2. In general, do you think this area will be better, worse, or about the same a year from now as a place to live?

☐ Better   ☐ Worse   ☐ Same   ☐ Don't Know   ☐ Refused to Respond

3. Here are some statements. Please tell me whether each one is, in your view, mostly true or mostly false about you and your neighbors?

	Mostly True	Mostly False	Don't Know	Refused to Respond
If I were sick, I could count on a neighbor to run an errand for me.	☐	☐	☐	☐
If I have to be away from home for a day or two, I know a neighbor will keep an eye on my place.	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is very little my neighbors and I can do to change things around here.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Crime in my neighborhood is more of a problem than in other nearby areas.	☐	☐	☐	☐
If I had to borrow $25 in a real emergency, I could turn to someone (not family) in this neighborhood.	☐	☐	☐	☐
My neighbors and I talk about community problems and how to solve them.	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. Have you heard of community group meetings to discuss local problems?

☐ Not at All   ☐ Vaguely Recall Some   ☐ Yes

5. (If vaguely or yes) Did you ever attend such a meeting?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

6. Can you tell me, for each of the following, whether it is a big problem, something of a problem, little or no problem, in your neighborhood, *compared with a year ago*?

	Adequate	Big	Some	Little	Don't Know	Refused to Respond
Quality of shopping facilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Number of shopping facilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Crime	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Schools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Noise	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Trash	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Adequate	Big	Some	Little	Don't Know	Refused to Respond
Traffic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kinds of residents	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Abandoned/run-down buildings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Vandalism/graffiti	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Unsupervised children and youth	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Unusable parks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Any new problems since last year?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Notes

[1] *Charting Success: A Workbook for Developing Crime Prevention and Other Community Service Projects.* Washington, DC: National Crime Prevention Council. 1995. Page 51.

[2] Ibid. Page 55.

If You Decide to Do Your Own Survey or Interviews

There are advantages and disadvantages of surveys and interviews. Interviews are usually more complex and qualitative than are surveys. In his book, *Survey Research Methods*, Floyd Fowler points out that the time and cost of doing surveys and interviews must be considered before undertaking such a task. Mail and telephone survey procedures, in most cases, cost less than doing personal interviews. The costs of doing a survey vary and depend upon various factors. Consider the amount of professional time required to design the questionnaire, the length of the questionnaire, the geographic dispersion of the sample being surveyed, the availability and interest level of that sample, the collection process, respondent selection, and the availability of trained staff.[1]

While mailing a survey may, at first blush, seem more cost efficient, consider the cost of postage, the clerical time for preparation and mailing, and the cost of printing questionnaires. If there are to be telephone follow-ups, then the costs rise. Generally, properly executed mail surveys are likely to be very similar in cost to telephone surveys.[2] You need to talk with someone familiar with survey technique about acceptable response levels for your situation. The more certain and reliable you want results to be, the greater the response you need, in general.

Are Surveys Better Than Interviews?

Fowler suggests that the facilities and staff available should be the deciding factors regarding the data collection method. In many instances, the strengths of a personal interview procedure make it the best choice to achieve an overall view of local prob-lems. However, developing an interviewing staff is costly and difficult. Attrition rates are usually high for newly trained interviewers. Many new interviewers are not very good at enlisting the cooperation of respondents so the project may experience high refusal rates in the beginning. In addition, people who are good at training and supervising interviewers are not easy to find. IF your project has access to an ongoing survey opera-tion (i.e., through a local college or university) or if staff/volunteers have experience in interviewer supervision and training, interviews become more feasible. If not, self-administered surveys are the better alternative.[3] Another factor to consider is how sensitive the questions are. People might not admit some things to an interviewer that they would answer on an anonymous form.

How Long Will a Survey Process Take?

Mail surveys usually take two months to complete once the survey technique and ques-tions are designed. Then the process requires mailing the questionnaires, waiting, doing more mailings, waiting, and conducting eventual follow-up with those who have not returned their survey.

Telephone surveys (after the technique and questions have been designed) can be done in a few days time. They can be done more quickly than a mail or personal inter-view survey of comparable size.

The time required to conduct personal interviews depends, of course, on the availability of staff and how many people you plan to interview.[4] You should consider training community residents as interviewers because they know the area and may be more easily accepted.

What About Interviews?

What Should Be Expected of the Interviewer?

Interviewers, as outlined by Fowler in *Survey Research Methods*, have three primary roles to play in the collection of survey data:

1. To locate and enlist the cooperation of the selected respondents;
2. To train and motivate the respondents to be a "good respondent"; and
3. To be a "good" questioner and answer recorder, asking the questions in a standardized way, and ensuring that the answers meet the objectives of the survey.[5]

Interviewers have to be available when respondents want to be interviewed, they have to be available (and persistent) enough to make contact with hard-to-reach respondents, and, for in-person interviews, must be able and willing to go to where the respondents are.

Interviewers should, according to Fowler, each be trained in

1. The way they are to present the study and the task at hand.
2. The way they are to ask questions (exactly as they are written with no variation or wording changes).
3. How to ask follow-up questions if the respondent gives incomplete answers.
4. How to record answers so that no interviewer-induced variation occurs.
5. How to handle the interpersonal interaction in a professional, non-threatening way, especially if the respondents are from different ethnic, cultural, or life-experience backgrounds than the interviewer.[6]

Who Makes a Good Interviewer?

Interviewers can be paid or volunteer. High school students, college students, and community residents are all excellent sources. Fowler advocates that interviewers should have good reading and writing skills (at least a high school graduate and, preferably, some college experience), be willing to work part-time and intermittently, have flexible hours, and the mobility to reach the interviewing site. Interviewers need not have previous experience. If you plan to have the interviewer record his/her observations or rate responses, you are entering a higher level of surveying, which demands more training and some experience.

The main things that differentiate successful from unsuccessful interviewers are their ability to live with the hours and low pay and their ability to enlist respondent cooperation. There is no easy way to tell in advance which interviewers will have or create problems. The best way to attempt to minimize interviewer attrition and to avoid problems is to build as much information into the recruitment process as possible. Many potential interviewers will drop out of the process before too much time and energy has been put into training them. Careful monitoring and supervision of the interviewer during training and also as the interviewer begins work can spot problems quickly.

What Constitutes Good Supervision?

Fowler cautions to assess the costs, rate of response, quality of completed questionnaires, and the quality of the interviewing.

- Costs include
  - ☐ time spent;
  - ☐ time spent vs. number of usable responses;
  - ☐ mileage;
  - ☐ telephone costs; and
  - ☐ travel costs when interviewer is going at wrong times to see respondent.

  Response rates
  - ☐ number of contacts made (if a telephone survey); and
  - ☐ number of refusals.

  Quality of completed questionnaires

  A sample of completed questionnaires should be reviewed to assess the quality of data that is being collected.

  Quality of interviewing
  - ☐ appropriate introduction of the study;
  - ☐ asking questions exactly as written;
  - ☐ probing appropriately and non-directively; and
  - ☐ appropriate handling of the interpersonal aspects of the interview.[7]

▶ How Do I Design the Questionnaire to Be Used in Either Surveys or in Interviews?

Questions come in two groups—those for which a list of acceptable responses is provided to the respondents (closed questions) and those for which the acceptable responses are not provided the respondent (open questions). Fowler, in his book, describes the two types of questions as well as their advantages and disadvantages.

There are advantages to open questions. They will provide the interviewer answers that are unanticipated. They may also describe more closely the real views of the respondent. Respondents also like to answer questions in their own words. However, asking a closed question is usually a better and more efficient way to collect data. Closed questions allow

1. The respondent to perform the task of answering the question reliably when alternatives are given;
2. The researcher to more reliably interpret the meaning of answers when the alternatives are provided to the respondent; and
3. Limiting the options for the respondent, thus ensuring that there will be enough people answering any given question so that it can be analyzed.[8]

First Decide What the Survey or Interview Is Supposed To Accomplish

Make sure questions asked are directly related to what you want to know about your prevention initiative. Just as you must be aware of problems with indicator data, the data collected

via surveys and interviews has problems as well unless certain standards are followed when
designing the questionnaire.

For example,

1. Is this a question that can be asked exactly the way it is written?

   The data desired may be reflected in the way the question is written, but will the
   respondent interpret the question differently if it is asked and not read by the
   respondent?

2. Is this a question that will mean the same thing to everyone?

   When the word "violence" is used, will people think of physical violence against
   persons or vandalism and defacement of property?

3. Is this a question that people can answer?

   You cannot, for example, get reliable responses from asking people if their neighbors
   have experienced any crime personally.

4. Is this a question that people will be WILLING to answer, given the data collec-
   tion procedures?[9]

   If, for example, a male volunteer is conducting a personal interview, will an elderly
   female be willing to discuss sexual assaults or rape she may have experienced?

Who Do I Survey/Interview?

The procedure for selecting people to be surveyed or interviewed is called **sampling**. A sample
is a subgroup of the larger population in which you are interested. There is always a chance
that the sample for a survey or interview is not representative of the population regardless of
how it was selected.[10] As pointed out in *A Police Guide to Surveying Citizens and Their Envi-
ronment*, some sampling methods minimize the risk, however, and allow an analyst to calcu-
late the probability that the results from the sample are very close to the results that would
be obtained if the entire population were surveyed.

Random selection is the most common way of obtaining a sample. *A Police Guide to
Surveying Citizens and Their Environment* lists four reasons for the popularity of random
sampling:

1. Random sampling removes the possibility that the person selecting the respon-
   dents inadvertently biases the sample;
2. Random sampling is simple to use. All you need to do is assign an identification
   number to each member of the sample;
3. Statisticians can estimate the probability that results of a random sample are char-
   acteristic of the larger population and not due to chance; and
4. There are variations to random sampling that fit the needs of most survey efforts.[11]

Non-random sampling selections are simple but often leave open the possibility of
drawing from a biased group. Further, you cannot determine how far the estimates obtained
from sample statistics differ from the true population.[12] *A Police Guide to Surveying Citizens
and Their Environment* discusses types of non-random sampling:

1. Convenience Sampling: selecting respondents based on how easy it is to get in touch
   with them.
2. Accidental Sampling: selecting respondents on some arbitrary characteristic such as
   whom you happen to pass on the sidewalk.

3. Systematic Sampling: selecting every nth person or household
4. Purposive Sampling: selecting members of the sample to achieve a specific objective (i.e., to learn how drug users find out where drugs are available, a group of arrestees is interviewed after an undercover reverse "buy").[13]

Do I Need to Be Concerned About Privacy and Confidentiality? YES.

All surveys and interviews must be done in an ethical manner.

Inform Respondents

Prior to being asked to answer any questions, Fowler insists that respondents have the following information:

Checklist:

☑ Name of the organization that is doing the survey/interview and interviewer's name.

☑ Name of the organization/person who is paying for the survey/interview.

☑ Brief description of the purposes of the data collection/what issues and topics will be covered?

☑ An accurate statement of the extent to which answers are protected with respect to confidentiality.

☑ Assurance that cooperation is voluntary and that nothing negative will result for those who choose not to participate.

☑ Assurance that respondents can skip any questions they do not want to answer.[14]

How Many Should Be Sampled?

Two factors are important in deciding the sample size. They are cost and how confident you are in the findings of the survey or interview. If, for example, you interview 12 residents of a housing project of 400, you may want to question how heavily you can lean on the results. It would be more reliable to have interviewed at least 40 residents (10 percent of the total).

How Do I Word Questions?

Make sure questions are clear and simple. Let's look at some examples of good and bad wording of questions as described by Fowler in *Survey Research Methods.*

Problem One: Incomplete Wording

Bad   *Better*

Age?   What is your age today?

Problem Two: Standardized Wording

Bad	*Better*
I would like you to rate different features of your neighborhood as very good, good, fair, or poor. Please think carefully about each item as I read it.	I am going to ask you to rate different features of your neighborhood. I want you to think carefully about your answers. How would you rate (option)—would you say very good, good, fair, or poor?[15]
a. Public schools	a. Public schools
b. Parks	b. Parks
c. Other	c. Other

The problem with this question is that the response alternatives are given prior to the actual question. Will the respondent even remember the real questions? The other category combines open-ended questions with closed questions.

Optional Wording

Sometimes optional wording is required to fit different respondents and their circumstances. For example,

Were you (or anyone living here with you) attacked or beaten up by a stranger during the past year?

Did (he/she) report the attack to the police?

Poorly worded optional wording would be:

What do you like best about this neighborhood? (We're interested in anything like houses, the people, the parks, or whatever).[16]

Other Potential Problems

One potential problem is using words that are not universally understood. Use simple, widely understood words. Another common mistake is using words that can have multiple meanings. Do not use ambiguous terms or concepts. For example, "When did you last see a doctor?" That could refer to an MD or a dentist. Perhaps you were in an MD's office but only saw the nurse—does that count?[17]

Another potential problem is asking "double-barreled" questions—more than one question at a time. For example, you may ask respondents to agree or disagree with the statement "My community should dedicate its resources to preventing rape and burglaries." Some people will be able to agree or disagree with that statement. But some will be unable to respond. Some may want to dedicate resources to preventing rape and violence. Others may want to prevent burglary and vandalism. As a general rule, whenever the word "and" appears in a question you should check to make sure you are not asking a double-barreled question.

You should also avoid using questions with a negative. When asked to respond to the statement "The community should not dedicate resources to preventing burglary," a large number of respondents will miss seeing the word "not." Better phrasing: "The Community should spend less to prevent burglary."

Use the following space to practice wording questions about what the major crime concerns are in a specific neighborhood:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Now go back to the examples and assess how you did.

Once You Decide Upon Questions

Put questions in a form to facilitate interviews or self-administration of a survey or an interview. A first step is to simply order the questions. Many people like to begin with the relatively easy, straightforward questions that help get the ball rolling. Questions requiring a good deal of thought or those thought to be sensitive are often reserved for the middle or later sections of questionnaires.[18]

For self-administered questionnaires, Fowler suggests that the same type of guidelines apply. The self-administered questionnaire should be

☑ Self explanatory. Reading instructions should not be necessary because they will not be read consistently.

☑ Restricted to closed answers only and few in number.

☑ Formatted on the computer and put in a clear and uncluttered format.[19]

Pretest All Questionnaires

Try your questions out on a small group to make sure the questions are understood as you meant them to be and the answers give you the information you wanted and can use. Find out how long it takes to complete the questionnaire in writing or via interviews. A rule of thumb is that surveys should take less than one-half hour to complete.[20]

Decide the Method You Will Use

Decide whether you will mail the survey, use in-person teams for interviews, or ask questions over the telephone.

In his book, *Survey Research Methods,* Fowler outlines the pros and cons of each survey and interview method.

Personal Interviews

Potential Advantages

1. There are some questions that can be best responded to in a personal interview format.
2. Personal interview procedures are probably the most effective way of enlisting the cooperation of most populations.
3. You can ask clarifying questions of the person being interviewed to make sure you get a complete and useful answer.

4. The interviewer, if trained, can watch for body language and other visual cues from the respondent.
5. Rapport and confidence building are possible.
6. Longer questionnaires hold the respondents' interest better when done in person.[21]

Potential Disadvantages

1. It will almost certainly cost more than other methods.
2. A trained staff of interviewers that is geographically close to those to be interviewed is needed.
3. The total data collection period is likely to be longer than telephone procedures.
4. It is labor intensive as personnel must be carefully trained so they do not bias the questions.
5. Some people (e.g., those in high-rise buildings or high-crime areas) may be more accessible using a different collection method.[22]

Telephone Interviews

Potential Advantages

1. Lower costs compared to personal interviews.
2. Random samples can be obtained by randomly dialing the telephone.
3. Access to certain populations is easier compared to a personal interview.
4. The data collection period is shorter than for mail surveys.
5. Interviewer staffing and management are easier since a smaller staff is needed and need not be geographically close to the sample. Thus, supervision and quality control potential is greater.
6. The response rate is likely to be higher than of a mail survey.[23]

Potential Disadvantages of Telephone Interviews

1. There are sampling limitations—you miss those without telephones or with unlisted numbers.
2. There is a limit on use of visual aids and interviewer observations.
3. May be a less appropriate method for asking personal or sensitive questions.[24]

Self-administered Questionnaires

Fowler explains that self-administered surveys can be done by mail, to groups, or in households. Each approach has strengths and weaknesses.

Potential Advantages of Self-Administered Questionnaires

1. Ease of presenting questions requiring visual aids compared to telephone surveys.
2. Asking questions with long or complex potential responses becomes more reasonable.
3. Respondent better assured of privacy as opposed to speaking to an interviewer.

Potential Disadvantages of Self-Administered Questionnaires

1. Need to design the questionnaire especially carefully so each respondent will think the same question is being asked without interviewer assistance.
2. Open-ended questions are usually not workable.
3. Literacy levels of the respondents make tailoring of the questionnaire very important.

4. The interviewer is not present to exercise quality control with respect to answering all questions, meeting the objectives of the questions, or the quality of the answers given.[25]

When administered in a group, according to Fowler, there are generally high cooperation rates and the interviewer can explain the questions, answer any questions, and give the respondent time to thoughtfully answer the questions. This method tends to produce as high a response rate as personal interviews. The cost of this method is about the same as a personal interview, and trained staff are essential.

Mail Surveys

Surveys administered by mail are low cost, can be accomplished with minimal staff and facilities, give respondents ample time to give thoughtful answers, and provide access to widely dispersed samples and those that cannot be reached by telephone or in person. The downside to self-administration via mail is that there may be low compliance; there is no contact between interviewer and the person being questioned; and reliable mailing addresses are essential. In addition, the sample may be biased since similar types of respondents may be the only ones to take the time and interest to reply. Mail surveys are, of course, self-administered surveys, and the same problems apply.

The most important difference between good mail surveys and poor mail surveys is the extent to which you make repeated contact with non-respondents.

Tips for Getting Responses

1. About ten days after the initial mailing, mail all non-respondents a reminder card.
2. About ten days after the postcard is mailed, mail the remaining non-respondents a letter again emphasizing the importance of their response and include another questionnaire for those who may have lost or thrown the first one away.
3. A professional-looking, more personalized, and more attractive questionnaire will increase response rates because it appears more responsible and looks shorter and easier to answer.
4. Add incentives like discount coupons or tickets for random prize drawings from local businesses.

Example Survey Questionnaire[26]
School Survey on Crime and Crime Prevention

Date: _____

Person Answering: ☐ Male   ☐ Female   Grade _____

1. I worry about crime.

    ☐ a lot   ☐ only a little

    ☐ often but not a lot   ☐ never

2. Please ORDER the places in which you feel safest. Put a "1" in front of the place you feel safest, a "2" after the next safest place, a "3" after the third safest place, and a "4" next to the least safe place.

    _____ at school   _____ going to/from school

    _____ at home   _____ in your neighborhood

    Please indicate the name of your neighborhood:

    _____

3. In my school, crime is _____.

    ☐ very serious   ☐ not too serious
    ☐ somewhat serious   ☐ not a problem

4. In my school, I feel _____ safe.

    ☐ very   ☐ somewhat   ☐ not very

5. I or someone I know was the victim of a crime sometime in the past year.

    ☐ yes   ☐ no

6. If I saw a crime taking place, I would _____ (check only one).

    ☐ call police   ☐ my own business
    ☐ call a friend   ☐ try to report anonymously
    ☐ try to catch the person

7. The three biggest crime problems that teens in this community face are _____ (check only three).

    ☐ fighting among students   ☐ stealing from lockers or other
                                          personal areas
    ☐ students using drugs
                                       ☐ students getting drunk or "high"
    ☐ truancy/skipping school
                                       ☐ vandalism
    ☐ extortion (bullying to demand
      money/valuables)   ☐ harassment of students

    ☐ shoplifting from nearby stores   ☐ other (please name)_____

Example Survey Questionnaire (*Continued*)

8. Which of the following do you enjoy and feel you are good at?
   (Check all that are appropriate)

   ☐ being friendly to people   ☐ singing

   ☐ writing plays, stories, poems   ☐ helping friends with problems

   ☐ sports   ☐ being leader of a group

   ☐ working with little kids   ☐ writing about teens

   ☐ making speeches   ☐ other (please name)_____

9. What kinds of skills do you wish you knew or knew better? (Check all that are appropriate)

   ☐ teaching   ☐ counseling

   ☐ public speaking   ☐ drug and alcohol prevention

   ☐ performing   ☐ writing

   ☐ stopping fights safely ☐ other (please name)_____

10. To make your school the best it can possibly be, what would you choose as the two most important things to do?

   ☐ clean up the building and the grounds

   ☐ get drugs out of the school

   ☐ field first-rate sports teams

   ☐ produce a school newspaper

   ☐ increase school pride

   ☐ have more after-school activities

   ☐ make advanced subjects available in classes

   ☐ other (please name)_____

What do you think of this survey?

Strengths	*Weaknesses*
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Overall, this survey is excellent.

While most questions are clear, some wording is ambiguous. For example, on question #10, what is meant by clean up the building and the grounds? Does that mean no smutty materials in lockers? No random placement of posters on walls? Or does it mean specific physical improvements of the brick and mortar type?

One other weakness is that in each place where the option is given to respond with an "other," there is not much space allowed—will this constrict the number of answers you get on the questionnaire under the category of "other"?

This survey is best administered in person or mail. It will be hard for people to rank things (questions a, 7, and 10) over the phone. This survey is a good example of why testing of all questionnaires is so crucial. Are the answers from which the respondent can choose even relevant to students today? Adding an "other" category can help ensure that you learn about issues or needs you may have missed in writing up the questions.

Once You Have Chosen Which Survey to Use

☑ Annually administer the survey in a consistent manner.

☑ Have your evaluators calculate the data on the percentage of people reporting the behavior, attitude, or belief.

☑ Have your evaluators plot the data and provide feedback to your project on key behavioral, attitudinal, and belief measures.

☑ Use the data to assess risk, elevate the issue(s) on the public agenda, and evaluate the effects of the prevention.

Notes

[1] Fowler, Floyd J., Jr. *Survey Research Methods.* Applied Social Research Series. Volume One. Sage Publications, 1988. Pages 70-71.

[2] Ibid. Page 68.

[3] Ibid. Page 69.

[4] Ibid. Page 69.

[5] Ibid. Page 107.

[6] Ibid. Page 109-110.

[7] Ibid. Page 118-120.

[8] Ibid. Page 87.

[9] Ibid. Page 99.

[10] *A Police Guide to Surveying Citizens and Their Environment.* A Monograph. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance. October 1993. Page 11.

[11] Ibid. Pages 11-12.

[12] Ibid. Page 12.

[13] Ibid. Page 13.

[14] Fowler, Floyd J., Jr. *Survey Research Methods.* Applied Science Research Series. Volume One. Sage Publications, 1988. Page 136.

[15] Ibid. Page 78.

[16] Ibid. Page 77.

[17] Ibid. Page 79.

[18] Ibid. Page 102.

[19] Ibid. Page 103.

[20]Ibid. Page 105.
[21]Ibid. Page 70.
[22]Ibid. Page 70.
[23]Ibid. Page 70.
[24]Ibid. Page 70.
[25]Ibid. Page 70.
[26]*Charting Success: A Workbook for Developing Crime Prevention and Other Community Service Projects*. Washington, DC: National Crime Prevention Council. 1995. Page 23.
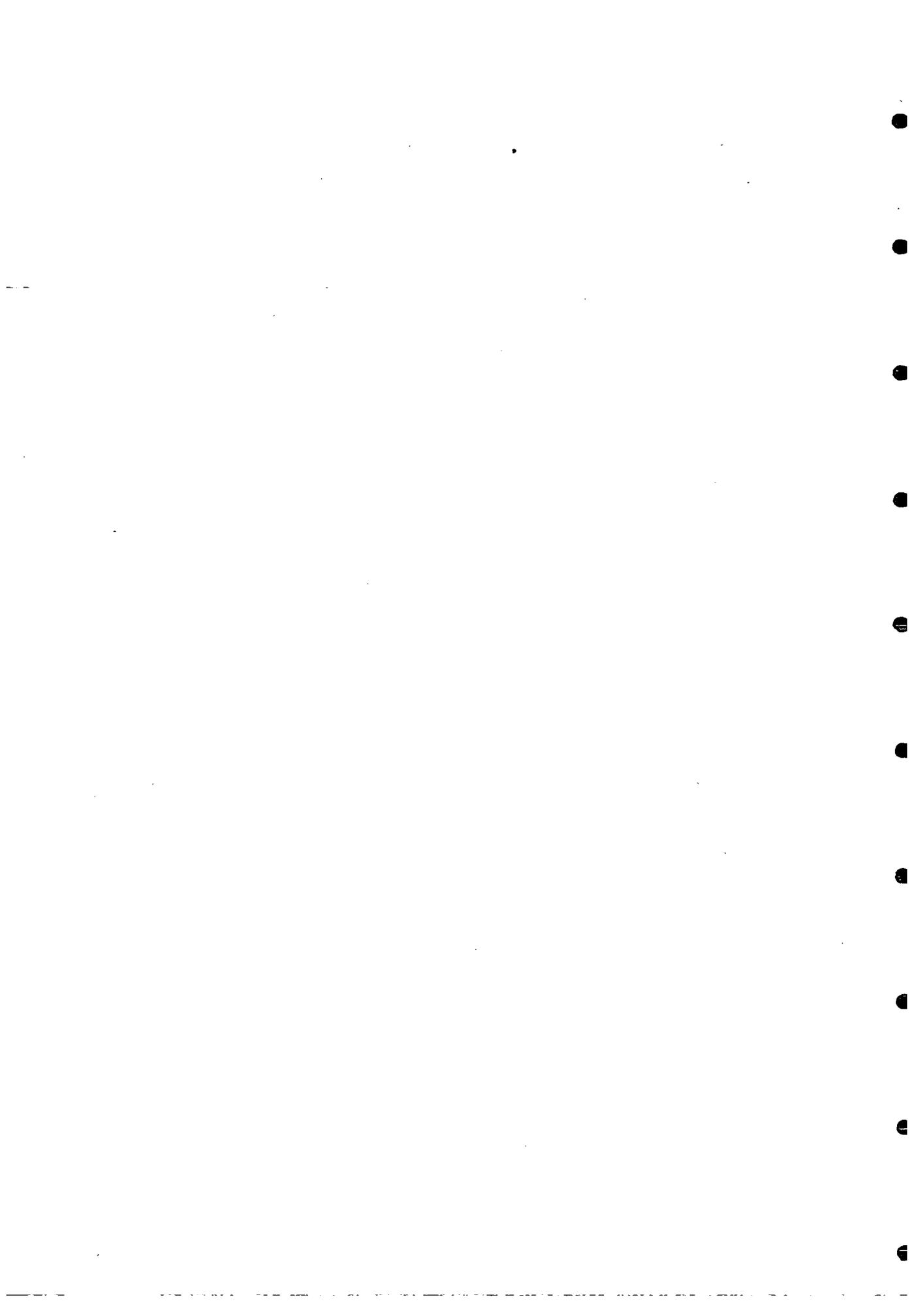
Summary

Lessons to remember about evaluation include the following:

A comprehensive evaluation system provides information about the prevention initiative's *process, outcome,* and eventual *impact.* Feedback to initiative participants and the community regarding progress toward planning goals and objectives (*outcomes*) should be regular, frequent, and easy for lay people to understand.

1 Evaluation Efforts Should Begin Early and Be An Integral Part of the Initiative Development Process

Evaluators should be involved with the initiative from the beginning to enable them to better understand the aims and resources for the initiative. Evaluators should render technical assistance regarding the strategic planning process and help facilitate the design, implementation, and adaptation of projects impacting the integrity and credibility of the project. They should be involved in working with residents, program participants, and staff as well as data sources.

2 A Monitoring and Feedback System Helps Establish and Maintain Effective Initiative Functioning

Measures of functioning (*process*) should be collaboratively designed and implemented among staff, participants, and evaluators. Only those measures that are important to the initiative's critical audiences—especially participants and funders—should be included in an evaluation system. Such measures could include services provided; resources generated; volunteers; and planning products. Measurements of the initiative's presence in the media, such as column inches of newspaper publicity or the frequency of appearances on television and radio, may also help measure influence and public awareness. The scoring and reliability of measurements should be maintained by an evaluator outside the project in order to maintain the quality and validity of data.

3 Feedback From an Independent Source Should Be Provided at Regular Intervals

Early in the life of the project, feedback should be immediate (perhaps monthly). Encouragement from evaluators should be plentiful, even for efforts not yet resulting

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in *outcomes*. As the initiative matures, quarterly feedback should be sufficient. Feedback for a mature project should closely relate to *outcomes* since these are more closely related to having an eventual *impact*.

Monitoring of data provides an occasion for celebration of the accomplishments and a critical reappraisal of efforts. Trends in data should be discussed during feedback sessions, such as why more *outcomes* were achieved in a particular time period or why services provided (*process* such as speaking engagements) seem to be occurring more often than the attainment of *outcomes*. Such a review of the data is useful for allocation of staff time and other aspects of project management. The data may also be helpful in identifying which committees are more or less effective in bringing about *outcomes*.

4 Do Not Assume That Initiative Efforts Are Effective Without Evidence

It will always be tempting to assume that all carefully planned and implemented initiatives actually have an *impact*. No implementation, however, is perfectly executed and imperfect implementation reduces effects drastically.

5 Evaluation Results Should Be Communicated Openly and Frequently With Community Members, Community Leaders, Initiative Participants, and Funders

Evaluation results are a sort of report card to the community about initiative's progress or lack thereof. Evaluation data inform management and leadership of the initiative regarding key choices, where and when to distribute efforts and resources, whether a particular strategy or technique needs adjustment, maintenance or recommendation to other prevention initiatives, and whether future financial and volunteer support for the initiative is warranted.

6 Funding Agents Will Use Evaluation Information To Encourage Productivity

Program officers of funding sources can enhance the motivational value of evaluation data by requiring such information in progress reports and by being an integral part of periodic discussions with the evaluator and initiative leadership.

7 Evaluation Data Can Promote Awareness, Spur Further Action, and Help Secure Funding

Data collected regarding community crime and violence indicators, can be used to elevate crime and violence issues on the public agenda. An annual report card to the community regarding *outcomes* and trends in indicators or survey results can be very effective for public awareness. Any documented evidence or reduced trend levels following project implementation, can be used (although such reductions don't prove cause and effect, remember?) to attract financial support.[1]

Note

[1]*Strategizer Series. Lessons on Coalition Building.* Alexandria, VA: Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America. 1994.

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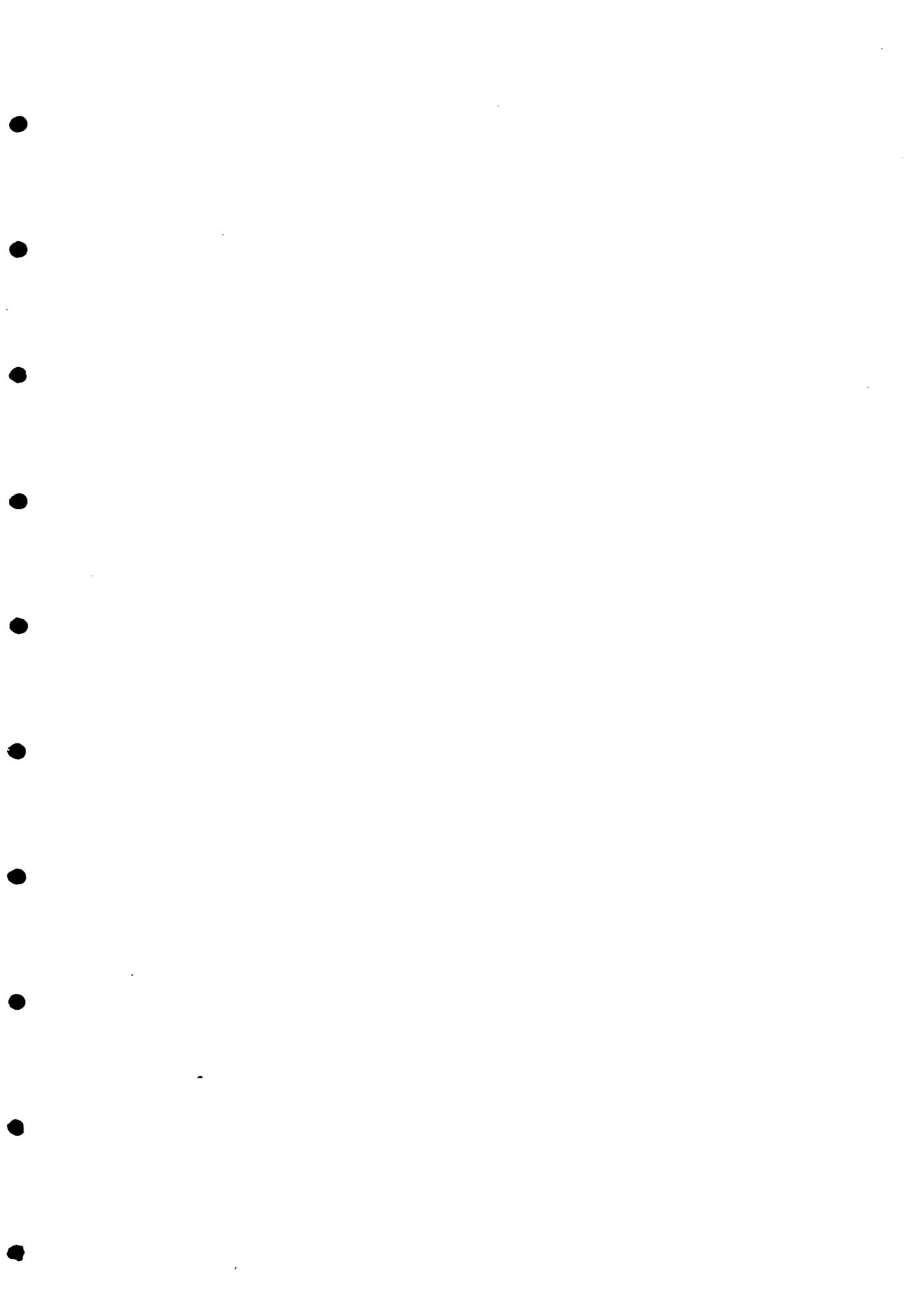
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