

How does program evaluation differ from populations research?

The main distinction is purpose. Program evaluation is a specific field within applied research. While, research aims to produce knowledge and generalize findings to a whole population (i.e. Hunger in America 2014), evaluation requires a significant consideration of context, including location(s), environment, key stakeholders, and targeted populations. Evaluation aims to inform the development, implementation and improvement of programs, as well as investment and sometimes disinvestment in programs.

What are the two common categories of program evaluation?

Formative Evaluations	Summative Evaluations
The development, refinement, and assessment of a program model and program delivery system, including inputs and program activities. In formative evaluation, we are most interested in assessing the merit or worth of a program’s design. Formative evaluation can be conducted throughout the life of a program	The results of a program which determine whether the goals and objectives of a program were achieved. In summative evaluation, we are most interested in outcomes and impact of the program on intended clients, and communities. Summative evaluation can only be applied after a program has been implemented.
Methods: <i>Process</i> evaluation	Methods: <i>Outcomes</i> evaluation

Component	Other Terms	Related Questions
Activities	Processes, methods, strategies, action steps	Does the organization have adequate resources or capacity to implement these activities?
Outputs	Deliverables, units of service, products	Do all outputs have activities (and resources) associated with them? Are the outputs quantifiable? Measurable?
Outcomes	Results, impacts, objectives	Can these outcomes realistically be expected to occur because of the activities? Are the outcomes phrased in terms of change? Do the outcomes clearly identify who or what will experience the intended change? Are the outcomes measurable?
Goal(s)	Impacts, objectives, long-term outcomes	Is the goal framed in terms of change? Is this goal realistic? Can we expect it to come about as a result of the intended outcomes? Does the goal specify the target population? Does the goal adequately encompass the entire scope of the activities and outcomes?

This overview of program evaluation has been adapted from a resource from [the Innovation Network](#). For a more detailed overview of all evaluation terms, review [this glossary from the Community Resource Exchange](#).