

Monitoring & evaluating your crime prevention project



Justice

Monitoring refers to the systematic collection of information that will enable you to answer questions about your crime prevention program.

Evaluation is about using monitoring and other information collected to make judgements about the effectiveness of your crime prevention program.

What is monitoring and what information should be collected?

“Monitoring” refers to the continuous collection of information relevant to your crime prevention program. It is this information that can then be used to report on program progress and to inform program evaluation. The collection and monitoring of crime related information and crime prevention program operation should commence during the planning stage of your crime prevention program and continue throughout the program process and outcome evaluations.



Why conduct an evaluation?

The implementation of crime prevention programs can be costly and time consuming, but the costs and time involved in implementing these programs is considered to be outweighed by the benefits they bring to the community through a reduction in crime. However, in the absence of a program evaluation, there is no way to be certain that the program has been successful in preventing and/or reducing crime. A program evaluation allows you to answer such questions as: How is the program going? Is it making a difference? Is it reaching the intended participants? Are there any unintended program effects? Should this program be re-funded?

Program evaluations:

- provide an understanding of program features that did/did not work
- measure program success in meeting stated goals and objectives
- provide an evidence base to justify program continuation and/or expansion
- provide accountability.

Conducting a program evaluation

Program evaluations are conducted in three phases. Phase one is the planning stage, phase two, the process (or implementation) evaluation, and phase three, an impact (or outcome) evaluation.

The planning stage should take place during program start-up. The program planning document should:

- include base-line data
- identify and measure the extent of the problem (e.g. Use the Recorded Crime Statistics reported by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research to examine trends in the identified crime over time)
- determine and document the desired program activities (the interventions your program will provide), progress indicators (identification of program benchmarks, scheduling of progress reports) and outcomes (goals and objectives)
- document the tools and strategies that will be used to assess program implementation and to measure the program outcomes (identify data sources, develop data collection methodologies and data collection instruments).

Ideally, these issues would be addressed during the grant writing/program proposal process.

The process evaluation provides an account of the program in operation, and it is this process that allows for program replication. The timing of the process evaluation should be pre-determined during the planning phase. The process evaluation may be undertaken as a progress report, on this basis, it may be appropriate to undertake more than one process evaluation. The process evaluation should cover such issues as:

- any modifications made to program implementation to improve program effectiveness
- whether the program benchmarks have been achieved, and any changes to scheduling

- the resources required to implement the program
- the effectiveness of the partnerships identified for the program in assisting program implementation
- any difficulties faced during the start-up phase
- any difficulties associated with data collection processes
- any issues that may impede program success
- whether crime displacement has occurred as a result of the program
- the impact of the intervention program on any previously existing crime prevention strategies.

The impact evaluation measures the program outcomes, reporting whether the goals and objectives have been achieved and assessing program effectiveness in terms of end results. Some questions that could be included in the impact evaluation are:

- What were the main benefits of the program?
- What were the main drawbacks of the program?
- Were the goals realistic and achievable?
- Was the crime prevention strategy successful in reducing the incidence of the targeted crime? If yes, by how much and over what period?
- How long did it take for the strategy to start having an effect and has the effect been continuing?
- Has there been an increase in the reporting of these crime incidents?
- Has the intervention impacted on the level of the target crime in surrounding areas?
- How do the program outcomes measure up against the program performance indicators?
- Have there been ANY unintended program effects? Document both positive and negative unintended outcomes.

Further information

For more crime prevention resources, please visit www.crimeprevention.nsw.gov.au