

## Lesson 4: Evaluation Within and Across the Policy Process Domains

### Lesson Overview

In lesson 3, you learned about how the CDC Evaluation Framework is used for policy evaluation. You learned that the evaluation steps might require different considerations in each of the policy process domains. This lesson presents several examples that discuss how to conduct evaluation throughout the policy process.

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to identify key evaluation questions for each policy domain.

Some material in this lesson was adapted from *Step by Step — Evaluating Violence and Injury Prevention Policies* briefs produced by CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. See the lesson resources for more information.

### Evaluation Within the Problem Identification Domain

Domain: Problem Identification	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
<p><b>Maria:</b> I'd like for my family to eat more fruits and vegetables, but the stores around here don't stock much produce, and what they do have is so expensive! We just can't afford to buy healthier food."</p>	<p>"I'd like for my family to eat more fruits and vegetables, but the stores around here don't stock much produce, and what they do have is so expensive! We just can't afford to buy healthier food."</p> <p>—Maria, rural community member</p> <p>&lt;Photo of a Hispanic woman.&gt;</p>
<p><b>Policy Evaluation Expert:</b> Maria's assessment of her family's situation is just one example of a larger problem. According to studies conducted by CDC, many low-income people have difficulty accessing the necessary foods for maintaining a healthful diet.</p>	<p>Many low-income people have difficulty accessing the necessary foods for maintaining a healthful diet.</p> <p>&lt;Photo of grocery store aisle with no fresh produce available.&gt;</p>



Domain: Problem Identification	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
Let's consider how an evaluation of the Problem Identification domain for this example could be carried out.	<Graphic of the policy process with the Problem Identification domain highlighted.>
The purpose is to evaluate the process of identifying the context and cause(s) of the issue and the extent that it lends itself to potential policy solution(s) and prioritized action.	<p><b>Purpose</b></p> <p>To evaluate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The process of identifying the context and cause(s) of the issue.</li> <li>▪ The extent that it lends itself to potential policy solution(s) and prioritized action.</li> </ul> <p>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: What is the purpose of the evaluation within this domain?&gt;</p>
The evaluation considers which stakeholders were involved and how they were engaged. Stakeholders during Problem Identification may include policymakers, health department staff, and community planning groups.	<p><b>Stakeholders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Policymakers</li> <li>▪ Health Department Staff</li> <li>▪ Community Planning Groups</li> </ul> <p>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: Which stakeholders were involved, and how were they engaged?&gt;</p>
<p>The evaluation also considers uses, such as understanding and documenting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The process by which stakeholders addressed the issue.</li> <li>▪ The needs and resources of the target community as it relates to the issue.</li> <li>▪ How possible theories or approaches for addressing the problem were identified (theories of change).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Use</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Process by which stakeholders addressed the issue.</li> <li>▪ Needs and resources of the target community.</li> <li>▪ How possible theories of change were identified.</li> </ul> <p>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: How will the evaluation of this domain be used?&gt;</p>





Domain: Problem Identification	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
<p>Several evaluation questions may be asked, such as questions about the type of data collected and analyzed, the nature and causes of the problem, identification of gaps in the data, definition of the problem, and stakeholder engagement.</p>	<p><b>Evaluation Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What data were collected and analyzed?</li> <li>▪ Was the data collection comprehensive enough to provide an accurate picture of the problem and the context?</li> <li>▪ Were the nature and causes of the problem included such as frequency, scope, and severity?</li> <li>▪ Were gaps in data identified?</li> <li>▪ Was the problem defined in a way to lend itself to policy solution(s) or actions?</li> <li>▪ Were the right stakeholders engaged in the definition of the problem, data collection, and analyses to ensure a comprehensive assessment?</li> </ul> <p><i>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: What do we need to know in order to conduct the evaluation for this domain?&gt;</i></p>
<p>Methodology considerations may include qualitative data, such as interviews with stakeholders involved in the needs assessment, or environmental scan strategies. Evaluators also look for documentation of the problem identification process, such as discussions around problem identification.</p>	<p><b>Methodology Considerations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Qualitative data</li> <li>▪ Documentation of problem identification process</li> </ul> <p><i>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: How will the evaluation of this domain be conducted?&gt;</i></p>
<p>To read about the example used for this domain, consult these documents, linked on the Resources page.</p>	<p><b>Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Availability, Affordability, and Accessibility of a Healthful Diet in a Low-Income Community</li> <li>▪ Healthier Food Retail: Beginning the Assessment Process in Your State or Community</li> </ul>



Evaluation Within the Problem Analysis Domain

Domain: Policy Analysis	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
<p><b>John:</b> I can't wait for the Atlanta BeltLine project to be completed. Having a bike trail that runs right by my neighborhood will make it easier to stay fit.</p>	<p>"I can't wait for the Atlanta BeltLine project to be completed. Having a bike trail that runs right by my neighborhood will make it easier to stay fit." —John, Atlanta resident</p> <p>&lt;Photo of a man riding a bicycle&gt;</p>
<p><b>Policy Evaluation Expert:</b> Decision makers must rely on more than anecdotal evidence when spending millions of dollars on projects and policies to impact public health.</p> <p>Let's consider how an evaluation of the Policy Analysis domain for the Atlanta BeltLine project could be carried out.</p>	<p>&lt;Graphic of the policy process, with the Policy Analysis domain highlighted.&gt;</p>
<p>The purpose of the evaluation is to understand the process of policy development, including analysis of policy options, contextual support/opposition, and potential public health, and economic and fiscal impact(s).</p>	<p><b>Purpose</b></p> <p>To understand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The process of policy development.</li> <li>▪ Analysis of the policy options.</li> <li>▪ Contextual support/opposition.</li> <li>▪ Potential public health, economic, and fiscal impacts.</li> </ul> <p>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: What is the purpose of the evaluation within this domain?&gt;</p>
<p>Evaluators consider how stakeholders, such as policymakers, health department staff, and community planning groups, were engaged.</p>	<p><b>Stakeholders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Policymakers</li> <li>▪ Health Department Staff</li> <li>▪ Community Planning Groups</li> </ul> <p>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: Which stakeholders were involved, and how were they engaged?&gt;</p>





Domain: Policy Analysis	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
<p>They consider uses, such as understanding of several factors.</p>	<p><b>Use</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How policy options and related pros and cons were identified.</li> <li>▪ How the most appropriate policy option was selected.</li> <li>▪ How key strategies—and potential challenges—to enacting selected policy were identified.</li> </ul> <p><i>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: How will the evaluation of this domain be used?&gt;</i></p>
<p>They also ask several questions during the evaluation, such as questions about the theory of change used, how policy options were examined, what factors the analysis considered, how policy options and priorities were assessed, whether implementation requirements were outlined, unintended outcomes were considered, and stakeholders were engaged.</p>	<p><b>Evaluation Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Was an evidence-based theory of change used which articulated connections between the policy activities and outcomes?</li> <li>▪ How were the policy options examined?</li> <li>▪ Did the analysis of policy encompass the following:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Political feasibility?</li> <li>○ Public health impacts?</li> <li>○ Economic and fiscal impacts?</li> <li>○ Resources necessary for enactment?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ How were policy options assessed and priorities assessed?</li> <li>▪ Were requirements for implementation outlined in the policy?</li> <li>▪ Were negative or positive unintended outcomes considered?</li> <li>▪ Were the stakeholders engaged so that the identification and prioritization of policy options reflect the economic and political realities of the context?</li> </ul> <p><i>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: What do we need to know in order to conduct the evaluation for this domain?&gt;</i></p>



Domain: Policy Analysis	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
<p>The evaluator may want to consider which analytic tools and methods were used during Policy Analysis. For example, to anticipate and influence the Atlanta BeltLine’s effect on health determinants, a health impact assessment (HIA) was conducted. An HIA is a useful tool that can provide decision makers with recommendations for maximizing positive health impacts and mitigating potentially negative health impacts.</p>	<p>&lt;Photo of joggers on a trail.&gt;</p>
<p>Evaluators of the Policy Analysis domain will consider how the HIA was conducted, as well as other tools and methods that may have been used, such as a review of literature, legislation, and case studies or interviews, as well as an environmental scan of potential facilitators for, and barriers to, implementation, such as engaged stakeholders, political support or opposition, level of policy change required, and resources required. Evaluators may also review other data, such as analytic reports and meeting notes.</p>	<p><b>Methodology Considerations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Health Impact Assessment (HIA).</li> <li>▪ Literature review (published and nonpublished) to identify possible policy strategies to address issue.</li> <li>▪ Legislative review to identify communities in which policy has been implemented.</li> <li>▪ Case studies or interviews to understand how a similar approach has been implemented in other communities.</li> <li>▪ Environmental scan of potential facilitators for and barriers to implementation of policy options.</li> <li>▪ Analytic reports, meeting notes, and other data.</li> </ul> <p>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: How will the evaluation of this domain be conducted?&gt;</p>
<p>To read about the example used for this domain and for more information, consult these documents, linked on the Resources page.</p>	<p><b>Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Health Impact Assessment of the Atlanta Beltline</li> <li>▪ Case Studies of HIAs</li> <li>▪ HIA Resources</li> <li>▪ Choosing Effective Policies and Programs</li> <li>▪ Selecting and Implementing Evidence-Informed Health Policies</li> <li>▪ Economic Evaluation of Public Health Laws and Their Enforcement</li> </ul>





Evaluation Within the Strategy and Policy Development Domain

Domain: Strategy and Policy Development	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
<p><b>Antonio:</b> I found out my mother was taking painkillers prescribed by two different doctors. She didn't realize how dangerous it was.</p>	<p>"I found out my mother was taking painkillers prescribed by two different doctors. She didn't realize how dangerous it was."</p> <p>—Antonio, son of Sophia</p> <p>&lt;Photo of a middle-aged man and an elderly woman.&gt;</p>
<p><b>Policy Evaluation Expert:</b> Most states have enacted prescription drug monitoring programs aimed at preventing the situation Antonio described.</p>	<p>&lt;Photo of prescription drugs.&gt;</p>
<p>For states considering such a program, or changes to their existing programs, let's consider how an evaluation of the Strategy and Policy Development domain could be carried out.</p>	<p>&lt;Graphic of the policy process with the Strategy and Policy Development domain highlighted.&gt;</p>
<p>The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the policy and the adoption and implementation strategies in the specific settings and jurisdictions.</p>	<p><b>Purpose</b></p> <p>To assess, in the specific settings and jurisdictions, the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Policy</li> <li>▪ Adoption strategies</li> <li>▪ Implementation strategies</li> </ul> <p>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: What is the purpose of the evaluation within this domain?&gt;</p>
<p>Evaluators consider how stakeholders were engaged.</p>	<p><b>Stakeholders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Policymakers</li> <li>▪ Health Department Staff</li> <li>▪ Community Planning Groups</li> </ul> <p>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: Which stakeholders were involved, and how were they engaged?&gt;</p>



Domain: Strategy and Policy Development	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
<p>When the focus is on development of a policy, the aim is to understand how a particular policy strategy was selected, advanced, and subsequently enacted. This evaluation can be used in many ways.</p>	<p><b>Use</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evaluating activities, such as in education and communication.</li> <li>▪ Fostering partnerships.</li> <li>▪ Recommending general policy strategies.</li> <li>▪ Describing the process of development.</li> <li>▪ Looking at whether the policy achieved desired outcomes.</li> </ul> <p><i>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: How will the evaluation of this domain be used?&gt;</i></p>
<p>Evaluators also ask several questions, such as questions about the activities that took place, changes in content of the policy, barriers to and facilitators for enactment, clarity of goals and objectives, articulation of an evidence-based theory of change, and consistency with evidence-based policies.</p>	<p><b>Evaluation Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What were key activities taking place during the development phase? Which of these activities are critical in achieving the outcomes?</li> <li>▪ Were there any key changes in the policy content originally proposed and the final policy content?</li> <li>▪ What are the key barriers to and facilitators for the enactment of this policy?</li> <li>▪ Does the policy clearly state the goals or objectives?</li> <li>▪ Does the policy clearly articulate a theory of change that is supported by evidence?</li> <li>▪ Are the components of the policy consistent with evidence-based policies?</li> </ul> <p><i>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: What do we need to know in order to conduct the evaluation for this domain?&gt;</i></p>





Domain: Strategy and Policy Development	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
<p>Evaluation of the Strategy and Policy Development domain typically relies heavily on qualitative methodologies. As one example, Harvard Family Research Project developed the Bellwether Methodology, in which evaluators interview influential thought leaders in the public and private sector (“bellwethers”) to gauge the visibility and momentum of a policy issue.</p>	<p><b>Methodology Considerations</b></p> <p>Heavy use of qualitative methodologies, such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bellwether methodology</li> <li>▪ Media tracking</li> <li>▪ Policy tracking</li> <li>▪ Public polling</li> </ul> <p>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: How will the evaluation of this domain be conducted?&gt;</p>
<p>To read about the example used for this domain and for more information, consult these documents, linked on the Resources page.</p>	<p><b>Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Fact Sheet from the Office of National Drug Control Policy</li> <li>▪ Evaluating an Issue’s Position on the Policy Agenda: The Bellwether Methodology</li> </ul>

Evaluation Within the Policy Enactment Domain

Domain: Policy Enactment	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
<p><b>Naomi:</b> It’s amazing to think about how far we’ve come in this country through immunizations. My grandmother contracted polio when she was a child, and she was never the same after that. My father nearly died when he was a boy because of complications from measles. Thanks to vaccines, I don’t worry about my daughter being exposed to those diseases at school.”</p>	<p>“It’s amazing to think about how far we’ve come in this country through immunizations. My grandmother contracted polio when she was a child, and she was never the same after that. My father nearly died when he was a boy because of complications from measles. Thanks to vaccines, I don’t worry about my daughter being exposed to those diseases at school.”</p> <p>—Naomi, mother of a kindergarten student</p> <p>&lt;Photo of a woman and a kindergarten-aged girl.&gt;</p>



## Introduction to Policy Evaluation in Public Health

Domain: Policy Enactment	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
<p>Since the first school vaccination requirement was enacted in Massachusetts in 1855 to prevent smallpox transmission, school immunization laws have played a key role in the control of vaccine-preventable diseases in the U.S.</p>	<p><i>&lt;Photo of a school child from the nineteenth century.&gt;</i></p>
<p>Now, all 50 states have some form of vaccination requirements, not only for schools, but also for child care centers. To understand the effectiveness of these requirements, evaluators can study how they have been enacted across the states.</p>	<p><i>&lt;Photo of a preschool student.&gt;</i></p>
<p>The purpose of evaluating the Policy Enactment domain is to assess the process of policy adoption/enactment (including laws, regulations, procedures, administrative actions, incentives, or voluntary practices).</p>	<p><i>&lt;Graphic of the policy process, with the Policy Enactment domain highlighted.&gt;</i></p>
<p>Evaluators consider how stakeholders, such as policymakers, state health departments, community groups, and implementers (in this case, child care providers) were engaged throughout the process.</p>	<p><b>Stakeholders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Policymakers</li> <li>▪ Health Department Staff</li> <li>▪ Community Planning Groups</li> <li>▪ Implementers</li> </ul> <p><i>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: Which stakeholders were involved, and how were they engaged?&gt;</i></p>
<p>Evaluating the content of a policy can improve future efforts and provide important context necessary for interpretation of implementation and impact evaluation results. It can also help to identify whether the actual content clearly articulates the requirements of the policy and is based on a theory of change with sufficient evidence.</p>	<p><b>Use</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve future efforts</li> <li>▪ Provide important context</li> <li>▪ Identify whether the content articulates policy requirements</li> <li>▪ Identify whether the content is based on a theory of change with sufficient evidence</li> </ul> <p><i>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: How will the evaluation of this domain be used?&gt;</i></p>





**Domain: Policy Enactment**

**Audio Transcript**

Evaluators will ask several questions about the adoption and enactment of the policy, including questions about the content of the policy as adopted or enacted, consistency with the evidence base, the barriers to, or facilitators for, adoption or enactment, the uniformity of the adoption or enactment and factors responsible, stakeholder engagement, and clarity and feasibility of implementation requirements.

**Visual Display**

**Evaluation Questions**

- Was the policy adopted/enacted?
- What was the content of the policy adopted/enacted language?
- Was the enactment consistent with the best available evidence/findings of the policy analysis?
- What were the barriers to or facilitators for enactment?
- Was adoption/enactment uniform? What were the factors responsible?
- Were stakeholders engaged so the evaluation of enactment will include barriers and facilitators especially where enactment is not uniform?
- Are the requirements for implementation clearly stated in the policy? Are these requirements feasible given the resources and capacity of the stakeholders who will be implementing the policy?

*<Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: What do we need to know in order to conduct the evaluation for this domain?>*



Domain: Policy Enactment	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
<p>In this example, evaluators could review the state laws, regulations, and rules dealing with vaccination requirements for enrollment and attendance in childcare facilities and schools and compare them to evidence of vaccine-preventable disease occurrences in these states.</p> <p>Even simple policies can be deceptively complicated. Evaluators often measure policies in yes/no terms, which ignores many important complexities within each of the policies.</p> <p>Articulating the relevant dimensions and components of the policy being evaluated is a critical step in content evaluation. When comparing the content of different policies, construct a table, chart or spreadsheet to describe the components of the policies. Then look for different categories or components occurring across the policies.</p>	<p><b>Methodology Considerations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Compare the policy language as enacted to criteria based on evidence.</li> <li>▪ Be careful not to oversimplify the evaluation.</li> <li>▪ Compare similar policies to identify key similarities and differences.</li> <li>▪ Describe the components of policies and look for different categories or components occurring across different policies.</li> </ul> <p><i>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: How will the evaluation of this domain be conducted?&gt;</i></p>
<p>To read about the example used for this domain and for more information, consult these resources, linked on the Resources page.</p>	<p><b>Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CDC Vaccination Coverage and Surveillance: School and Childcare Vaccination Surveys</li> <li>▪ Vaccination Mandates: The Public Health Imperative and Individual Rights</li> </ul>





Evaluation Within the Policy Implementation Domain

Domain: Policy Implementation	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
<p><b>Desmond:</b> My son loves to play football, and I enjoy watching his games. But I've seen athletes in the news with brain trauma from multiple concussions, and I have to admit, it worries me.</p>	<p>“My son loves to play football, and I enjoy watching his games. But I've seen athletes in the news with brain trauma from multiple concussions, and I have to admit, it worries me.”</p> <p>—Desmond, father of a middle school football player</p> <p>&lt;Photo of a man with his son, holding a football.&gt;</p>
<p>Between 2009 and 2012, at least 43 states and the District of Columbia passed laws requiring removal and clearance for Return to Play among youth athletes. But how effectively have these laws been implemented?</p>	<p>&lt;Photo of an American football team.&gt;</p>
<p>The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) conducted a case study evaluation comparing implementation efforts in two states, Washington and Massachusetts.</p>	<p>&lt;Graphic showing the outlines of the states of Washington and Massachusetts.&gt;</p>
<p>The purpose of policy evaluation for the Policy Implementation domain is to understand how the policy was translated into practice.</p>	<p>&lt;Graphic of the policy process with the Policy Implementation domain highlighted.&gt;</p>
<p>In this example, evaluators conducted in-depth interviews with a variety of stakeholders, including policymakers, state health departments, community groups, and implementers (such as school coaches, regional athletic directors, and interscholastic athletic associations) who were involved in implementation.</p>	<p><b>Stakeholders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Policymakers</li> <li>▪ State Health Departments</li> <li>▪ Community Groups</li> <li>▪ Implementers</li> </ul> <p>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: Which stakeholders were involved, and how were they engaged?&gt;</p>



Domain: Policy Implementation	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
<p>Evaluating implementation can identify critical differences between planned and actual implementation as well as barriers, facilitators and successes.</p> <p>Depending on the circumstances of policy implementation, it may be possible to compare the implementation of different intensities or variations of a policy.</p> <p>Implementation evaluation results can be used to improve the implementation process and inform future policy development.</p> <p>Having a thorough implementation evaluation can inform the development of the impact evaluation plan and assist with interpretation of impact evaluation results.</p>	<p><b>Use</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify critical differences between planned and actual implementation.</li> <li>▪ Identify barriers, facilitators, and successes.</li> <li>▪ Compare the implementation of different intensities or variations of a policy.</li> <li>▪ Improve the implementation process.</li> <li>▪ Inform future policy development.</li> <li>▪ Inform the development of the impact evaluation plan.</li> <li>▪ Assist with interpretation of impact evaluation results.</li> </ul> <p><i>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: How will the evaluation of this domain be used?&gt;</i></p>
<p>As with other policy process domains, evaluators ask many questions to find out how clearly the policy identified implementation steps, whether standards and measures were identified, whether the anticipated outputs resulted, what inputs and resources were required and used, whether the policy was implemented according to requirements, in a uniform manner, and what barriers to, and facilitators for, implementation existed.</p>	<p><b>Evaluation Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Did the policy clearly identify the critical implementation steps?</li> <li>▪ Were implementation standards and measures identified in the legislation/policy?</li> <li>▪ Did the activities result in the anticipated outputs?</li> <li>▪ What inputs and resources were used to implement the policy? What inputs or resources were required, but not available?</li> <li>▪ Was the policy implemented according to the policy requirements?</li> <li>▪ Was implementation uniform? What were the factors responsible?</li> <li>▪ Were there barriers or facilitators contributing to success of implementation?</li> </ul> <p><i>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: What do we need to know in order to conduct the evaluation for this domain?&gt;</i></p>





Domain: Policy Implementation	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
<p>Evaluation of policy implementation often relies on non-experimental descriptive or exploratory designs such as case studies and cross-sectional designs.</p> <p>Typically, the focus of the design is on accurately describing implementation rather than “proving” any specific hypothesis or demonstrating relationships between variables.</p> <p>The evaluation design may also include exploration of differences in implementation in different contexts or for different variations of the policy.</p> <p>To make comparisons between implementing jurisdictions, a cross-sectional design may be used or multiple case studies may be conducted. Be sure key contextual differences between the jurisdictions are identified and measured.</p> <p>If a policy has a range of different components or “levels” of implementation, qualitative and quantitative data may be collected on the differences between the jurisdictions. This information can be valuable in comparing the relative effectiveness of the various components.</p>	<p><b>Methodology Considerations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Relies on non-experimental descriptive or exploratory designs.</li> <li>▪ Focuses on accurately describing implementation rather than proving a hypothesis.</li> <li>▪ May include exploration of differences in implementation.</li> <li>▪ May use a cross-sectional design or multiple case studies.</li> <li>▪ May use qualitative or quantitative data.</li> </ul> <p><i>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: How will the evaluation of this domain be conducted?&gt;</i></p>
<p>To read about the example used for this domain and for more information, consult these resources, linked on the Resources page.</p>	<p><b>Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implementing Return to Play: Learning from the Experiences of Early Implementers</li> <li>▪ Interactive Youth Sports TBI Laws Map from LawAtlas<sup>SM</sup></li> </ul>



Evaluation of Policy Impact

Policy Impact	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
<p><b>Clarice:</b> My grandparents bought a mobile infant walker for our baby when she was born. I know they're made to safer standards now, but I was still afraid to use it. I exchanged it for a stationary activity center. She just loves it, and I feel better knowing she can't get into places she shouldn't.</p>	<p>"My grandparents bought a mobile infant walker for our baby when she was born. I know they're made to safer standards now, but I was still afraid to use it. I exchanged it for a stationary activity center. She just loves it, and I feel better knowing she can't get into places she shouldn't."</p> <p>—Clarice, new mother</p> <p>&lt;Photo of a young woman holding a baby.&gt;</p>
<p>Clarice made a smart choice; in fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends a ban on the manufacture and sale of mobile infant walkers because of their association with injuries and deaths.</p> <p>The revised American Society for Testing and Materials F977 voluntary infant walker standard, implemented in 1997, requires that walkers be too wide to fit through a standard 36-inch doorway or to incorporate features to stop the walker at the edge of a step.</p> <p>Has this policy been effective at reducing injuries to infants?</p>	<p>&lt;Photos of a stationary infant activity center and a mobile infant walker.&gt;</p>
<p>To find the answer to this question, a policy outcome evaluation may be conducted. As with evaluation within the domains of the policy process, the evaluators assess how stakeholders were engaged, and which ones were involved.</p>	<p><b>Stakeholders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Policymakers</li> <li>▪ State Health Departments</li> <li>▪ Community Groups</li> <li>▪ Implementers</li> </ul> <p>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: Which stakeholders were involved, and how were they engaged?&gt;</p>





Policy Impact	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
<p>Evaluation to determine policy impact involves identifying the occurrence and variation of intended and unintended outcomes.</p> <p>Evaluating the outcomes of an evaluation aims to determine whether the intended changes have occurred; whether those changes can be attributed to the policy; and oftentimes the economic impact of these changes.</p>	<p><b>Use</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identifying intended and unintended outcomes</li> <li>▪ Determining whether changes can be attributed to the policy</li> <li>▪ Assessing the economic impact of the changes</li> </ul> <p><i>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: How will the evaluation of this domain be used?&gt;</i></p>
<p>As with evaluation within the policy process domains, evaluators ask many questions to find out about stakeholder engagement, whether the anticipated outcomes resulted, whether any unintended outcomes resulted, how factors influenced impacts and implementation, and what the economic impact of the policy was.</p>	<p><b>Evaluation Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Were stakeholders engaged in the selection of outcome measures of success and their collection?</li> <li>▪ Did the activities result in the anticipated outcomes?</li> <li>▪ Is the policy achieving its intended outcomes? Was there a change in the outcomes of interest?</li> <li>▪ Were there positive or negative unintended outcomes?</li> <li>▪ Did contextual factors influence the level of impact? What external factors influenced the implementation?</li> <li>▪ What was the economic impact of the policy (cost-effectiveness or cost-benefit)?</li> </ul> <p><i>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: What do we need to know in order to conduct the evaluation for this domain?&gt;</i></p>



Policy Impact	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
<p>Evaluation of policy impact may focus on short-term, intermediate, and long-term health outcomes such as knowledge, attitudes, and especially health behavior.</p> <p>While determining if changes have occurred is relatively straightforward, attributing changes to the policy presents some challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ You may have difficulty isolating the effects of the policy from the influence of other interventions and external factors.</li> <li>▪ A considerable amount of time may pass before a change is evident.</li> <li>▪ It may be difficult to identify appropriate comparison groups.</li> <li>▪ The necessary data may not be available.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Methodology Considerations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ May focus on short-term, intermediate, and long-term health outcomes</li> <li>▪ Attributing change to policy can be challenging for several reasons:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Difficulty in isolating the effects of the policy</li> <li>○ Time delays</li> <li>○ Identification of comparison groups</li> <li>○ Lack of data</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>&lt;Photo of a woman and the following question in a speech bubble: How will the evaluation of this domain be conducted?&gt;</i></p>
<p>Many factors may affect evaluators' ability to make the case for a causal relationship between the policy and observed changes in outcomes. These factors include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The nature of the relationship between the policy and the impacts</li> <li>▪ Expected magnitude of change in impact</li> <li>▪ Expected length of time to see evidence of the policy effects</li> <li>▪ Nature and extent of external influences, including other interventions, on health outcomes</li> <li>▪ Availability of data</li> <li>▪ Extent of implementation</li> <li>▪ Availability of adequate comparison groups</li> </ul>	<p><b>Methodology Considerations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nature of the relationship between policy and impacts.</li> <li>▪ Expected magnitude of change.</li> <li>▪ Expected length of time to see evidence of policy effects.</li> <li>▪ Nature and extent of external influences on health outcomes.</li> <li>▪ Availability of data.</li> <li>▪ Extent of implementation.</li> <li>▪ Availability of adequate comparison groups.</li> </ul> <p><i>&lt;Photo of a person reviewing documents.&gt;</i></p>
<p>Although randomized, experimental design provides the greatest validity, this type of design is very difficult to conduct for policy because of time constraints and all the variables involved. Therefore, this type of design is rare in the world of policy evaluation. As an alternative, rigorous quasi-experimental designs can be used for impact evaluations.</p>	<p><b>Methodology Considerations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Randomized, experimental design provides the greatest validity but is difficult to conduct for policy evaluation.</li> <li>▪ Rigorous quasi-experimental designs may be used.</li> </ul>





Policy Impact	
Audio Transcript	Visual Display
<p>Non-experimental designs are unable to clearly link the impacts to the policy because they are unable to rule out alternative explanations for the impacts. These types of designs are most appropriate when it is impossible or impractical to compare changes over time or to use a comparison group. Two potential non-experimental designs for impact evaluation include cross-sectional and case study.</p>	<p><b>Methodology Considerations</b></p> <p>Non-experimental designs may be appropriate in some cases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cross-sectional</li> <li>▪ Case study</li> </ul> <p><i>&lt;Photo of a person reviewing documents.&gt;</i></p>
<p>Economic evaluation methods compare the costs of the policy to the resulting benefits. These methods are used in conjunction with the designs previously described because they are dependent upon understanding the amount and types of changes that occurred as a result of the program.</p>	<p><b>Methodology Considerations</b></p> <p>Economic evaluation methods may be used in conjunction with other methods.</p>
<p>In the example we began with of injuries from mobile infant walkers, evaluators conducted a retrospective analysis of data from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System maintained by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.</p>	<p><i>&lt;Photos of a stationary infant activity center and a mobile infant walker.&gt;</i></p>
<p>The evaluators found that between 1990 and 2001—after implementation of the revised standard for mobile infant walkers—injuries associated with infant walkers decreased by 76%—from 20,900 injuries in 1990 to 5,100 in 2001.</p>	<p><i>&lt;Chart showing a decline in injuries from 1990 to 2001.&gt;</i></p>
<p>To read about the example used for this topic and for more information, consult this document, linked on the Resources page.</p>	<p><b>Resource</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Success in the Prevention of Infant Walker-Related Injuries: An Analysis of National Data, 1990-2001</li> </ul>



### Lesson Summary

This lesson presented examples of policy evaluation within each domain of the policy process, including purpose, possible stakeholders, uses, evaluation questions, and methodology considerations.

You should now be able to identify key questions to ask throughout the domains of the policy process.

The next lesson will examine some common challenges to conducting policy evaluation and presents some methods for overcoming them.

