

# EVALUATION RESOURCE TOOL KIT FOR STATE COMMISSION AMERICORPS FORMULA PROGRAMS

## Introduction

The following resources are intended to help State Commission AmeriCorps Formula programs design evaluation methods that measure beyond performance outcomes, and identify the overall level of impact for the community, participants and stakeholders. Even though annual performance outcomes appear to be met, the impact on the community or participants or stakeholders may be determined deficient based upon an overall program evaluation. Fundamentally, program interventions that lack evaluative impact in helping a target group as compared to a similar group not receiving intervention services, must be refined/strengthened to properly address an identified need.

**CNCS Resources** (*Note: the instructional guidance in these resources are intended for national direct and state competitive programs, however, they can be used by AmeriCorps formula programs for instructional purposes in conjunction with state commission evaluation guidance*)

<https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation>

[https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/Data\\_Quality\\_Elements\\_Performance\\_Measures\\_LearningAidFinal7.23.pdf](https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/Data_Quality_Elements_Performance_Measures_LearningAidFinal7.23.pdf)

[https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/Data\\_Quality\\_Review\\_Best\\_Practices.pdf](https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/Data_Quality_Review_Best_Practices.pdf)

## Evaluation Groups

- Target communities and organizations benefitting from interventions provided to target populations by an AmeriCorps program
- Target populations within a community or organization receiving an intervention
- Stakeholders, partners and investors in the service organization
- AmeriCorps members receiving workforce training and development
- AmeriCorps program staff responsible for program and performance design

## Definitions

### Performance

Data collected throughout a project year, comparing planned inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes stated in a logic model to actual inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes that occurred by the end of the project year. Performance measurement results are the necessary evidence upon which certain evaluation impact results would be based.

### Evaluation

Depending on the performance inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes presented in a logic model, evaluation could involve different types that review the impact or effectiveness of each step covered in a logic model. Typically, the level of overall program impact from resolving an identified community problem or need is the primary evaluative goal. Fundamentally, evaluations are the scientifically-based research results that determine the level of impact when comparing observed program outcomes with what would have happened to a group similar to the target group, in the absence of the program.

### Measurement Basics

Empirical research designs typically consist of quantitative and qualitative research. **Quantitative** research is the study of the numeric properties of naturally occurring events and relationships. **Qualitative** research typically involves the study of human behavior, which in the social science field, includes the affective domain of assessment, and attempts to identify patterns relating to positive or negative perceptions, emotions and or feelings. Quantitative and qualitative research methods are often combined in the same study.

## Research Methods

**Randomized Control Trials (RCT):** Participants are randomly assigned to experimental groups in which one group receives a treatment that is under experimentation, and the other group receives a perceived treatment that is a placebo. The RCT method is used to minimize bias in the research results. RCT is often used in the medical field.

**Quasi-experimental Design (QED):** Participants are not randomly assigned to experimental groups. Research results are gained by direct and/or indirect observation of impact on a subject group resulting from an intervention. A comparison group would consist of similarly profiled participants who did not receive an intervention. QED is often used in the social science field.

## Evaluative Research Questions

Best practices include conducting an evaluation of the processes stated in your logic model. Program design processes are evaluated in-order-to identify efficiency strengths and weaknesses that contribute to the success or failure of stated outcomes. Best practices also include an evaluation of the impact that your achieved outcomes have on the community, participants, staff and stakeholders. Evaluations are conducted by using research questions that address each stage of the logic model.

Measurable research questions should be developed as you are designing your logic model. Data collection systems, should also align with your logic model processes and your outcome based research questions.

- **Process evaluation - example questions**

“What was the adequacy level of available resources (inputs)”

1. Severely Inadequate (SI)
2. Less Than Adequate (LTA)
3. Adequate (A)
4. More Than Adequate (MTA)
5. Overwhelmingly Adequate (OA)

“Rate the adequacy level of resources in the following areas”

Funding:	1. SI	2. LTA	3. A	4. MTA	5. OA
Staff:	1. SI	2. LTA	3. A	4. MTA	5. OA
AmeriCorps Members	1. SI	2. LTA	3. A	4. MTA	5. OA
Volunteers	1. SI	2. LTA	3. A	4. MTA	5. OA

“What was the adequacy level of available reading tutors for students below the benchmark?”

1. Severely Inadequate (SI)
2. Less Than Adequate (LTA)
3. Adequate (A)
4. More Than Adequate (MTA)
5. Overwhelmingly Adequate (OA)

“Rate the adequacy level of each area of reading tutorial services”

Available Tutors/Volunteers	1. SI	2. LTA	3. A	4. MTA	5. OA
Academic Preparedness of Tutor	1. SI	2. LTA	3. A	4. MTA	5. OA
Sufficiency of Allowed Tutorial Time	1. SI	2. LTA	3. A	4. MTA	5. OA
Quantity of Below Benchmark students	1. SI	2. LTA	3. A	4. MTA	5. OA
Space Where Tutorial Service Occurred	1. SI	2. LTA	3. A	4. MTA	5. OA

- **Outcome evaluation - example questions (Participants)**

“What percentage of students who completed the AmeriCorps reading tutorial program, scored at or above their applicable minimum reading literacy benchmark at the end of the intervention?”

“What was the average percentage of growth among all students who completed the AmeriCorps reading tutorial program?”

“In the case of the students who completed the AmeriCorps reading tutorial program and whose reading literacy assessments were still below the benchmark at the end of the period, what average growth percentage was observed?”

- **Outcome evaluation - example questions (Comparative Non-Participants)**

“What percentage of students who did not participate in the AmeriCorps reading tutorial program, and who were also below the reading literacy benchmark at the beginning of the same period, scored at or above their applicable minimum reading literacy benchmark at the end of the period?”

“What was the average percentage of growth among students who did not participate in the AmeriCorps reading tutorial program, and who were also below the reading literacy benchmark at the beginning of the same period?”

- **Outcome evaluation - example of post-research questions (Community Impact)**

**(note: pre-assessment evaluation research questions would have been completed at the beginning of the period to establish a benchmark in which a post-assessment would be compared to determine evaluative impact)**

“What was overall reading literacy assessment growth percentage for the participating grades at the school(s) where the AmeriCorps reading tutorial program was active?”

“From an observational perspective, how did the parents of the children who participated in the AmeriCorps reading tutorial program rate their child in the specific areas listed below by the end of the period?”

“From an observational perspective, how did the parents of the children who would have been eligible to participate in the AmeriCorps reading tutorial program, but did not, rate their child in the specific areas listed below by the end of the period?”

Use the following scale:

- 1 No Improvement (NI)
- 2 Slight Improvement (SI)
- 3 Average Improvement (AI)
- 4 Increased Improvement (II)
- 5 Greatly Improved (GI)

Ability, Skills and Knowledge	1. NI	2. SI	3. AI	4. II	5. GI
Attitude Towards Reading	1. NI	2. SI	3. AI	4. II	5. GI
Participation in Academic Services	1. NI	2. SI	3. AI	4. II	5. GI
Academic Confidence	1. NI	2. SI	3. AI	4. II	5. GI
Overall Academic Attitude	1. NI	2. SI	3. AI	4. II	5. GI

## Evaluation Plan

Example of Sections:

- Alignment of the evaluation plan with State Commission requirements
- Alignment of the evaluation plan with program design
- Relevance of research question types to logic model process and overall impact
- Overall evaluation design – pre-and post-implementation stages
- Data collection tools and methods (validity, alignment, policies/procedures)
- Data review processes (personnel assignment, instruction, data security and accuracy)
- Evaluation stages (training)
- Evaluation Budget (adequacy and planned expenditures)

Under each evaluation plan section, programs should develop questions, activities and/or processes that guide each stage of the evaluation plan.