

Program Evaluation: Understanding What Works in Your Agency

CNA specializes in conducting rigorous program and policy evaluations that help justice agencies measure the effectiveness of their initiatives and programs. Our evaluations help answer key questions around critical topics, such as a program's fidelity, reach, influence, and cost effectiveness. By systematically assessing program performance, we provide valuable insights and recommendations that can enhance program outcomes and ensure alignment with organizational goals.

WHAT is program evaluation?

Program evaluation is a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer questions about projects, policies, and programs. This process involves assessing the design, implementation, and outcomes of a program to determine its effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. A key component of program evaluation is defining the evaluation plan and the evaluation measures. Program evaluation measures can be grouped into four categories:

- Formative measures evaluate program development and implementation to improve design and performance.
- Process measures assess the implementation process to ensure that the program is delivered as intended.
- Output measures assess the direct tangible reports, products, or services delivered by the program.
- Impact measures determined the broader effects and long-term changes resulting from the program.

WHY should your agency evaluate a program?

Our program evaluations offer numerous benefits to justice agencies:



By providing an **objective and evidence-based analysis**, we ensure that your programs are evaluated impartially and accurately.



Our **tailored recommendations** are specifically designed to meet the unique needs of your agency, helping you to refine and enhance your programs.



Our evaluations help **demonstrate accountability** to stakeholders and funders by showcasing the effectiveness of your initiatives.



By staying aligned with **best practices** and industry standards, your agency can continuously improve and adapt to changing needs and environments.

WHO should request a program evaluation?

Justice agencies with existing programs or initiatives aimed at improving community safety, reducing crime, or enhancing operational efficiency should consider requesting a program evaluation. Program evaluations apply to local law enforcement agencies, local prosecutors' offices, sheriff's offices, correctional facilities, small and large agencies, state departments of corrections, and community service providers. Agencies looking to demonstrate the influence of their programs to stakeholders, secure funding, or make data-driven decisions will find our evaluations particularly beneficial. Whether your program is newly implemented or well established, our evaluations can provide the insights needed to optimize performance and achieve your agency's goals.

HOW can CNA help your agency with program evaluation?

CNA's program evaluation can occur at various levels. At the lowest level, CNA can conduct a short-term evaluation over the course of three months to examine a component of a program, such as the implementation of a new technology or a change in a process or procedure. At higher levels, CNA can conduct a longer term evaluation over the course of a year or longer to examine the effect of a program in its entirety or the interaction of multiple processes, systems, and elements. Specifically, we offer justice agencies a variety of services along the path of program evaluation:

- ✓ **Designing and documenting a methodology** for evaluation, including developing specific and tailored objectives, measures, and metrics by which the program will be assessed
- ✓ **Conducting program evaluation**, including collecting and analyzing data and developing a findings report
- ✓ **Developing actionable recommendations** based on findings to improve program performance, enhance participant satisfaction, optimize resource utilization, and ensure sustainability and long-term success
- ✓ **Providing training** on program evaluation or **operations assistance** for recommendation implementation
- ✓ **Developing communication strategies** for engaging stakeholders throughout the evaluation process

About CNA

CNA is a not-for-profit analytical organization dedicated to the safety and security of the nation. With nearly 700 scientists, analysts, and professional staff across the world, CNA's mission is to provide data-driven, innovative solutions to our nation's toughest problems. It operates the Center for Naval Analyses—the Department of the Navy's federally funded research and development center (FFRDC)—as well as the Institute for Public Research. The Center for Naval Analyses provides objective analytics to inform the decision-making by military leaders and ultimately improve the lethality and effectiveness of the joint force. The Institute for Public Research leverages data analytics and innovative methods to support federal, state, and local government officials as they work to advance national and homeland security.

To learn more or request program evaluation support from CNA, please contact Vivian Elliott at elliottv@cna.org.