STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO PROGRAM EVALUATION

HR HANOVER RESEARCH

For K-12 districts around the nation, one of the most urgent challenges is deciding the best possible uses for Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds. Intended to help K-12 schools and students find their footing during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, ESSER funding can be used to implement programs that address academic, social, and emotional needs. But how can districts ensure their programs are positioned for success?

Conducting regular program evaluations is critical to ensuring consistent, successful outcomes. It's also, however, a demanding, rigorous process that requires a strategic approach and ample preparation. Using this step-by-step planning tool, districts can assess their readiness to complete a program evaluation.
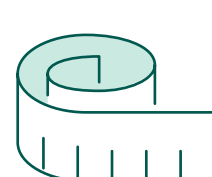
STAGE 1: PRIORITIZATION

A first and crucial step in program evaluation is to identify and prioritize your goals and objectives. By the end of this stage, you should be able to answer critical questions about your program evaluation, including:

WHAT ARE OUR OBJECTIVES FOR THIS PROCESS?

HOW CAN WE BETTER ALIGN PROGRAMS WITH OUR STRATEGIC GOALS?

WHICH OUTCOMES ARE WE MONITORING FOR PROGRESS?

Completing the following tasks should help you answer the questions listed above.
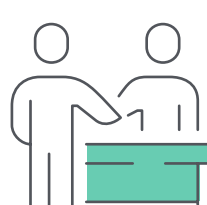
	NOT COMPLETE	SOMEWHAT COMPLETE	COMPLETE	UNSURE
1. Create a list of **major programs and initiatives** currently implemented				
2. **Categorize programs and initiatives** based on target outcomes, population served, and/or focus areas				
3. **Establish criteria** (e.g., state mandates, relevance to strategic plan) for determining which programs and initiatives will be evaluated				
4. **Remove programs and initiatives that are low-priority,** small in scope, or "hot topics" (i.e., those with attributes that will prevent meaningful change) from consideration				
5. **Choose programs and initiatives to evaluate** that strongly align with strategic goals, reach large populations, and/or are resource-intensive				
6. **Identify outcomes to monitor progress toward** in the evaluation				

STAGE 2: PLANNING

Once you've identified your priorities and objectives, it's time to move on to the planning stage. During this stage, you'll develop a comprehensive strategy for undertaking the evaluation itself, including designing evaluation protocols, setting timelines, organizing or building your staff capacity, and more. Ultimately, you should be able to answer:

WHAT ARE OUR GOALS FOR THE EVALUATION?

HOW CAN WE GET STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN?

WHEN WILL WE NEED TO USE THE RESULTS OF OUR EVALUATION?

Complete the tasks below to find the answers to these questions and gauge your readiness for stage 3.

	NOT COMPLETE	SOMEWHAT COMPLETE	COMPLETE	UNSURE
7. **Build staff and organizational capacity** to perform effective and accurate evaluations				
8. **Engage relevant stakeholders and promote stakeholder buy-in** to help support planning and evaluation				
9. **Increase familiarity with program evaluation standards—** such as those published by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE)—to guide planning				
10. **Set goals** for the program evaluation process				
11. **Create a logic model** for the evaluation's expected outcomes				
12. **Design evaluation protocols** based on the logic model				
13. **Select multiple instruments and methods** to collect and analyze relevant data				
14. **Determine a timeline** for completing the evaluation, including checkpoints for collecting formative results (if necessary)				

STAGE 3: EVALUATION

With the first stages completed, it's time to begin the evaluation. Each step in the evaluation process will prove critical in assessing your program's value and success—and each step requires preparation of its own. Over the course of the evaluation, you should develop answers to the following questions:

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE DATA?
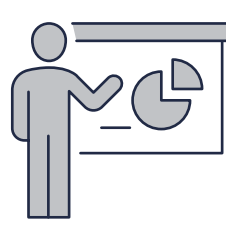
HOW WILL WE COMMUNICATE OUR FINDINGS TO STAKEHOLDERS?

WHAT ARE OUR NEXT STEPS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT?

Rate your level of preparation to complete the following steps in the evaluation process.

	NOT AT ALL PREPARED	SOMEWHAT PREPARED	PREPARED	UNSURE
15. **Collect and synthesize data** via multiple instruments and methods				
16. **Analyze data to determine outcomes** resulting from the program or initiative				
17. **Develop findings** based on analyzed data				
18. **Communicate findings to program administrators** and school and district leadership				
19. **Communicate findings broadly** to other stakeholders, including staff and parents				
20. **Create an action plan** based on program evaluation findings				
21. **Implement the established action plan** to improve program functionality or replace ineffective programming with an alternative				
22. **Communicate additional findings after implementing the action plan** to program administrators, district and school leadership, staff, parents and other relevant stakeholders				

Take your programs to the next level with Hanover's **Critical Steps to Program Implementation** toolkit.