
**HOW CONFIDENT DO WE HAVE TO BE IN OUR EVALUATION RESULTS?
WHAT SHOULD WE CONSIDER IN TERMS OF EVALUATION RESOURCES VS. RIGOR?**

The level of confidence or scientific rigor needed for a particular evaluation depends in large part on the kinds of decisions that will be made based on the evaluation results. When decisions are being made that affect people's lives, stakeholders will want to be quite confident that what they are doing is making a positive difference. In addition, since resources to make change are often viewed as very limited, decisions that involve a lot of resources – human and financial – call for the best information possible. At the same time, rigorous evaluation designs can be costly. This is particularly true for evaluations that are trying to measure whether or not a given strategy is creating its intended results, and whether or not those results would have happened without the intervention. Given the cost, there is almost always a compromise that needs to be reached between evaluation goals and rigor and evaluation cost.

There is a general rule of thumb that evaluations should cost approximately 10 percent of the total budget for doing the work. However, it is important to consider the following in deciding how much effort and resources to expend on evaluation:

- What evaluation questions need to be answered at this point?
 - It is usually important to look at how well things are being implemented in the beginning, and particularly, whether or not the strategies are reaching the people they are supposed to reach.
 - However, if you have to choose, it is usually wise to put more resources into measuring results than measuring implementation – particularly for social justice activities, since results that actually make a difference in this area are hard to come by and important to demonstrate.
- What decisions will be made from evaluation information and what are the consequences of those decisions for your constituencies?
- Have the strategies of the group been in place long enough for their implementation to be assessed and/or to make it likely that their effectiveness can be evaluated?
- What do key stakeholders expect regarding the type and quality of evidence from the evaluation?
- What research or evaluation expertise and skills do members of the group have or can draw on from within the community? What data are already available for the evaluation?

Answers to these questions can help you decide where you can save money or other resources and how much rigor you are likely to require to meet the needs of various constituencies. These in turn help you decide on an evaluation design, and where to target your evaluation dollars or other resources most effectively. See Tip Sheets: [What Are Some Statistical Methods for Indicating Whether An Activity Made An Important Contribution to Change](#), [What Are Some Non-Statistical Methods for Indicating Whether An Activity Made An Important Contribution To Change](#) and [How Can The Effects Or Impacts Of Strategies Be Measured](#). See Also [Evaluation Glossary](#).