Demystifying Evaluation of Environmental and Policy Change Strategies

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Environmental and policy change (EPC) strategies are prevention strategies that aim to improve policies, systems, and environments to promote health.
Presentation Overview

1. Why evaluate?
2. Evaluation logic model
3. EPC as an outcome
4. EPC as an intervention
5. Tools and resources
Why Evaluate?

- Opportunity for learning
- To improve strategic efforts
- To promote sustainability
- To be accountable to funders
Traditional Program Evaluation

Logic Model

Strategy / Intervention
- Nutrition education classes

Behavior Changes
- Improved eating behaviors

Health Outcomes
- Lower BMI
- Lower cholesterol
- Lower blood pressure
Strategy / Intervention
- Offer tax incentives to food retailers to offer healthier foods
- Change zoning ordinances to allow new grocery stores

Environmental/Policy Changes
- Existing retail outlets sell fresh fruits / vegetables
- New supermarket opens

Behavior Changes
- Improved eating behaviors

Health Outcomes
- Lower BMI
- Lower cholesterol
- Lower blood pressure
Evaluation steps are universal to all types of evaluation, including environmental and policy change strategies.
Focusing EPC Evaluation

3-10+ years?

Strategy / Intervention → Environment / Policy Changes → Behavior Changes → Health Outcomes
Focusing EPC Evaluation

EPC as the Desired Outcome of the Evaluation

- What environmental and policy changes were achieved?
- What milestones were achieved along the way?
- Were partners engaged across multiple fields and sectors?
- Were strategies targeted to highest need/priority areas?

Strategy / Intervention → Environment / Policy Changes → Behavior Changes → Health Outcomes
When EPC is the Outcome

- Don’t limit yourself to all or none outcomes
- Articulate intermediate milestones for demonstrating progress
- Every process is different
- Document stories, challenges, & lessons learned
- Examine quality and nature of multi-field partnerships
Policy Change Domains

**Coalition Formation/Partner Engagement**
- Breadth/depth of coalition
- Interaction/information flow
- Shared responsibilities

**Framing/Positioning**
- Problem set: defined, vetted, visibility
- Solution set: agreement/alignment, resolved disagreements, visibility/reception among policy makers

**Intermediate Outcomes**
- Advocacy capacity
- Champions
- Health/equity issues prominent

**Policy Outcomes**
- Health/equity issues in target legislation
- Health/equity issues in other proposals

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Focusing EPC Evaluation

EPC as the Independent Variable of the Evaluation

- Was the policy fully implemented/enforced?
- Was the policy uniformly implemented across multiple settings (schools, worksite, daycare settings)?
- Did EPC correspond to changes in behavior or health outcomes?
- Did EPC reach high priority populations?
When EPC is the Intervention

- Measuring policy implementation and enforcement can be time and resource intensive
- Define your target population
- Take advantage of existing data sources
- Focus on contribution rather than attribution
- Don’t expect big changes from one intervention – use a comprehensive approach
The Measures Project (aka COCOMO)

Purpose: 24 EPC strategies and measures for local governments

http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/recommendations.html

The Change Tool

Purpose: Community assessment provides snapshot of local policy, systems, and environmental change strategies currently in place

http://www.cdc.gov/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools

Bridging the Gap

Purpose: to improve the understanding of how policies and environmental factors affect diet, physical activity and obesity among youth, as well as youth tobacco use.

www.bridgingthegapresearch.org
Key Points

- Evaluation is an opportunity for learning
- Fundamental evaluation steps apply to EPC strategies
- Match your outcome expectations with your timeline
- Build intermediate milestones into your evaluation design (not all or none outcomes)
- Focus on contribution rather than attribution
- Tell your story!
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