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CAMPAIGN EVALUATION

By Robyn D. Robertson, and Ward G.M. Vanlaar, TIRF

Why is it important to evaluate your program?

Evaluation of a road safety campaign is useful to gauge whether it has had the desired effect or not, and to gather evidence of any effects. Other reasons include:

- To continuously improve the delivery of the campaign by identifying gaps and how to overcome them to increase effectiveness.
- To provide hard evidence to decision-makers that the campaign is having positive effects and to justify continued or new funding.
- To determine whether the program is reaching the appropriate audience and find even more effective ways to reach them.
- To identify how and why the program has influenced the behaviour of the target audience, and their reactions to the campaign. This can be important to ensure continued support and motivation to deliver the campaign.

Who can help to create and/or conduct an evaluation?

Conducting an evaluation can be a daunting task. As a first step, it is useful to identify any persons in your community who can provide assistance and support to develop an evaluation plan as well as conduct an evaluation. Talking to different stakeholders who may have some experience with evaluations is a good first step. For example, local governments often undertake evaluations of programs and services at various times and in relation to different issues. Similarly, businesses and non-profits may be involved in market research and the evaluation of the effectiveness of services. Finally, students in college and university who are taking courses in statistics, research methods, and social sciences may also be local resources that can provide knowledge and assistance. In particular, students are often required to conduct case studies or their own research projects and may be interested in using a campaign evaluation for a project for their class.

When should a campaign evaluation plan be developed?

Planning for an evaluation should occur as the campaign is being developed. Often evaluation plans are not considered until after the campaign has been completed. However, this can make it very difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign. This is because some of the data that are needed to measure effectiveness must be collected before the campaign is launched or during the campaign. In other words, if data are not collected prior to or during the campaign, it may be impossible to evaluate its effects, or to determine if positive effects were a direct result of the campaign as opposed to other factors.

In addition, an evaluation of the campaign will also have some costs that need to be accounted for in the campaign budget.

How do I design an evaluation?

The **SMART principle** is very useful to guide the design of an evaluation plan. SMART is an acronym that describes the key objectives of your evaluation:

- **Specific:** An example of a clearly defined campaign objective is 'to decrease drink driving by a specific amount (e.g., 15% or 30%)'. A more general objective such as 'to decrease drink driving by as much as possible' makes it impossible to evaluate whether you have reached your objective.
- **Measurable:** The objectives of your campaign should be measureable, and measures may include changes in behaviour, attitudes, beliefs or knowledge. The data that will be used to measure these changes must be collected as part of the evaluation. For example, changes in behaviour are often measured through observations or roadside surveys whereas changes in attitudes and beliefs may be measured using public opinion surveys or focus groups. Collecting these data prior to the campaign and then again after the campaign can then determine if any changes occurred.

  In addition, tools or devices may be needed if an objective is to reduce the level of alcohol impairment or speed of vehicles. In other words, are the tools (e.g., breathalyzer, speed cameras) available and do campaign organizers or partners (e.g., police) have the ability and the authority to collect these measures.
- **Actionable:** This means that you are able to do something that can reduce the road safety problem that is the focus of the campaign. For example, can you do anything to reduce speeding in your community, such as increase knowledge about the risks or reduce the number of people who speed?
- **Reasonable:** When delivering a campaign to change behaviour and make roads safer, it is important to be realistic when setting is objectives. For example, it may be more realistic to aim to decrease the number of drink drivers in your community by 15% rather than 95%. It is important to strike a balance between setting a challenging goal and also setting a reasonably achievable goal within the timeframe of the campaign. Keep in mind it is often easier to change knowledge and attitudes and more difficult to change behaviours so objectives should be selected with this in mind.

  In addition, the size and frequency of the problem will influence the amount of change that can be achieved. For example, very few people do not wear their seatbelt or drink and drive so it will be harder to achieve substantial change among this minority of drivers who likely have already been exposed to other campaigns. Conversely, many more people speed or drive distracted so there is a much larger population of drivers who can be changed.
- **Time-specific:** The objectives of an evaluation should be time-specific, meaning that the objectives that will be achieved by the campaign will be achieved within a specific period

of time; this is often the period of time during which the campaign will be delivered. For example, a campaign objective to reduce the number of distracted driving violations will be reached within a 12 month period.

What types of evaluations should be considered?

There are generally two types of evaluations that can be considered depending on the needs of the community.

- An impact (or outcome) evaluation is used to determine whether a campaign achieved its objectives (e.g., a change in behaviour, a reduction in crashes, a change in knowledge or attitudes).
- A process evaluation is used to understand why the program did or did not achieve its objectives.

If a community replicates a campaign that was previously delivered and evaluated in another jurisdiction for effectiveness, campaign organizers may prefer to only conduct a process evaluation to determine whether the campaign was properly implemented and how it can be improved.

What tools are needed to conduct a process and an impact evaluation?

Tools for a process evaluation generally include:

- Timeline, Gantt chart to monitor progress in light of agreed-to timeline;
- Work flow chart to clarify who is responsible, when, and for what;
- Budget expenditures to estimate and track costs and to help avoid over-spending;
- Surveys to collect information about experiences;
- In-depth interviews or focus groups (guided by a set of key questions that are developed in advance and used with all participants) to measure opinions and attitudes of key-stakeholders.

Outcome evaluations typically consist of comparisons of the situation prior to campaign delivery to the situation after campaign delivery. This should be done with a control group which is a group of participants that are not exposed to the campaign. This means that the situation (e.g., knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, crashes, violations) before and after the implementation of your campaign among persons exposed to the campaign is compared to the situation before and after the campaign among people that are NOT exposed to the campaign. Comparing this before/after situation among those two groups of people (i.e., your target audience and persons not exposed to the campaign), makes it possible to rule out alternative explanations that may explain any changes that occur and makes it more likely any changes were due to the implementation of your campaign. For example, the effect or change that occurs might be perceived as due to another program or effort that is taking place simultaneously with your campaign. However, using a second group of people who are not exposed to the campaign to control for this factor makes it possible to determine whether the effect is truly the result of your campaign.

What research questions should be asked?

Essentially, an evaluation is conducted to find out whether a campaign has had the desired effect, or not, and why. However, the way that research questions are formulated depends on different factors, such as the objectives of the program and what data are available or what data can be reasonably collected for the evaluation. For example, the objective of a road safety campaign may be to increase awareness about the risks associated with speeding. In this case, research questions would focus on whether levels of knowledge and awareness have increased or not. The objective of the campaign may also have been formulated as a reduction in speeding-related crashes, in which case research questions would focus on the actual behaviour and resulting crashes. Depending on what data are available or can be collected, research questions can be further refined accordingly. In the former example, self-reported levels of knowledge and awareness before and after the campaign can be used to evaluate the impact of the campaign. Alternatively, the audience reach or penetration of the campaign can be used as a proxy measure of awareness. In the latter example, crash data can be used to measure trends over time in terms of speeding-related crashes.

What types of data or indicators can I use for my evaluation?

There are two important types of indicators that are complementary and should be included in an evaluation plan to help communities understand whether their campaign was effective, and why it was effective.

- Outcome indicators demonstrate whether the campaign produced positive changes in outcomes such as knowledge, attitudes and behaviours as well as social norms, and ultimately crashes.
- Process indicators provide insight into why campaigns were effective (i.e., what campaign practices, features or strategies contributed to positive outcomes).

There are also different types of data sources that have distinct strengths and limitations that, combined, can provide a clearer understanding of effectiveness as part of an evaluation. These data sources can include:

- enforcement and violation data;
- crash data;
- measures of knowledge and attitudes collected through surveys, focus groups and interviews with citizens as well as stakeholders;
- measures of behaviour which can be collected through self-report surveys and observational surveys;

- measures of social norms that can be collected through self-reports or observed behaviours;
- measures of campaign dissemination including:
  - » estimated ad value of media plays
  - » number and placement of media articles;
  - » distribution of campaign materials and persons reached;
  - » measures of social media engagement;
  - » downloads from websites and related web analytics gathered through programs such as Sysomos, Radian6 and Source Metrics;
  - » measures of community interaction related to events or contests.

Communities are also encouraged to collect data at multiple points both during the campaign as well as post-campaign. While collection of data throughout the campaign can provide opportunities to identify challenges and re-adjust the campaign to improve delivery during active periods, ongoing data collection at multiple points post-intervention can help gauge at what point campaign effects begin to deteriorate and the optimal time to reinforce campaign messages by repeating campaign activities.

Obtaining data for an evaluation can be expensive and labor-intensive. For this reason, it is recommended that stakeholders are involved upfront to verify what types of data may already be available. For example, police or City Councils or transportation departments may be able to share crash data or enforcement data. Or perhaps a stakeholder has already collected data about the public's attitudes and opinions, which could be valuable.

What types of analyses should be considered?

While some simple comparisons between the before and after situation can be revealing, the topic of data analysis can become rather complicated very quickly in evaluation research. For example, when using crash data, a small number of crashes make it difficult to reasonably compare changes in the number of crashes before and after the campaign. Similarly, when looking at trends (year-to-year changes), more than two data years are needed to draw conclusions. While analysis of one variable (e.g., speed) or two variables (e.g., speed in relation to time of day or type of road) can be useful and are not difficult to manage, it is recommended to consult with someone experienced in the analysis of multiple variables to ensure valid conclusions are drawn.

Where can community-based organizations obtain more information about conducting an evaluation?

There are some useful guides that have been developed by non-profit and health organizations to assist community-based organizations in undertaking research. These guides have been designed to help communities undertake their own evaluations and provide step-by-step explanations for the different features of evaluations. These guides can be accessed at:

- Zarinpoush, F. (2006). Project Evaluation Guide for Non-Profit Organizations. Fundamental Methods and Steps For Conducting Project Evaluation. Imagine Canada. (http://sectorsource.ca/sites/default/files/resources/files/projectguide_final.pdf).
- Public Health Ontario. (2012). Evaluating Health Promotion Programs. (http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/Evaluating_health_promotion_programs_2012.pdf).
- Bond, S., Boyd, S., & Rapp, K. (1997). Taking Stock. A Practical Guide to Evaluating Your Own Programs. Horizon Research, Inc. Chapel Hill, North Carolina. (http://www.horizon-research.com/publications/stock.pdf).

Notes

This document is part of the Community-Based Toolkit for Road Safety Campaigns.

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To order a printed toolkit please contact the Manager, Marketing and Communications at the Traffic Injury Research Foundation.
1-877-238-5235 | tirf@tirf.ca