Developing Evaluation Plans

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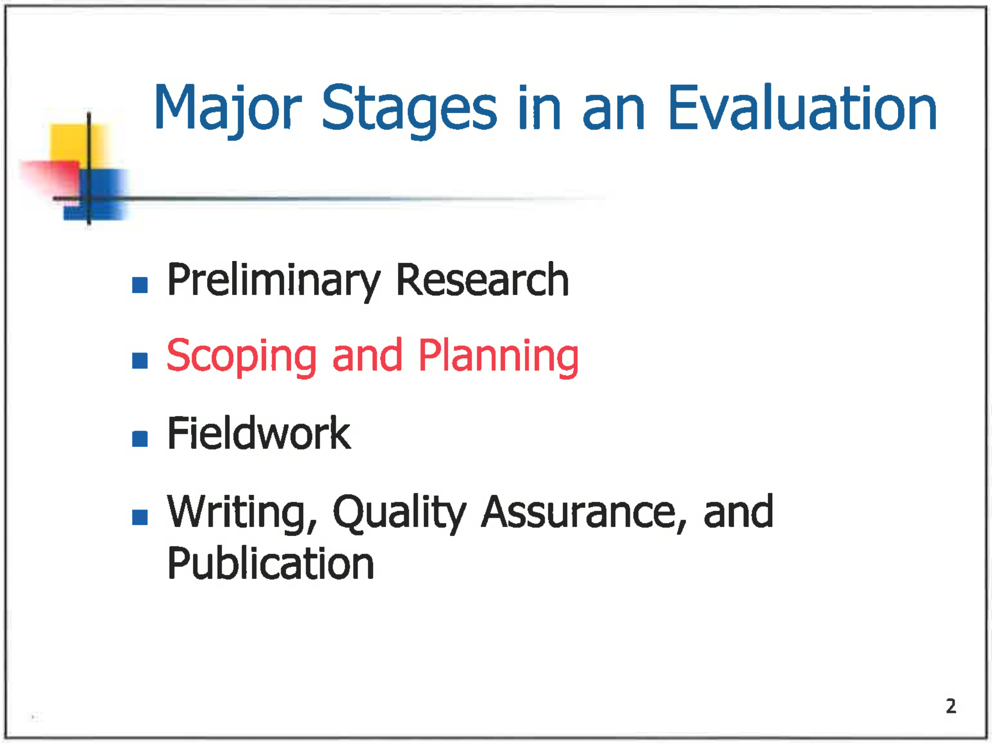
Our discussion today is about developing evaluation work plans.

The class will last for an hour, and include some small group, hands-on efforts to rough out a work plan for a hypothetical evaluation.

Please feel free to stop me if you have questions or observations about what we are discussing.



As you know, there are usually four major stages to an evaluation.

In most reviews, you begin with some **preliminary research,** which is often fairly broad, to familiarize yourself with the topic and the background of the specific request or directive.

Then, before you dive into gathering and analyzing information through fieldwork, you pause and organize your quest, your team, and your resources. This is the time to scope and plan your review, and to develop your evaluation plan.

Scoping and Planning

- Identify the specific questions or issues you will address
- Develop your evaluation plan and timelines
- Plan for internal and external communication throughout the evaluation

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In this phase, you will … [slide text]

Finding the Practical Balance

- How can we provide the **most** value in the time and with the resources we have available?
- How much do we **need** to do to be able to answer the questions?
- What will we be able to say with this information?
- What risks do we face by doing or not doing additional fieldwork?

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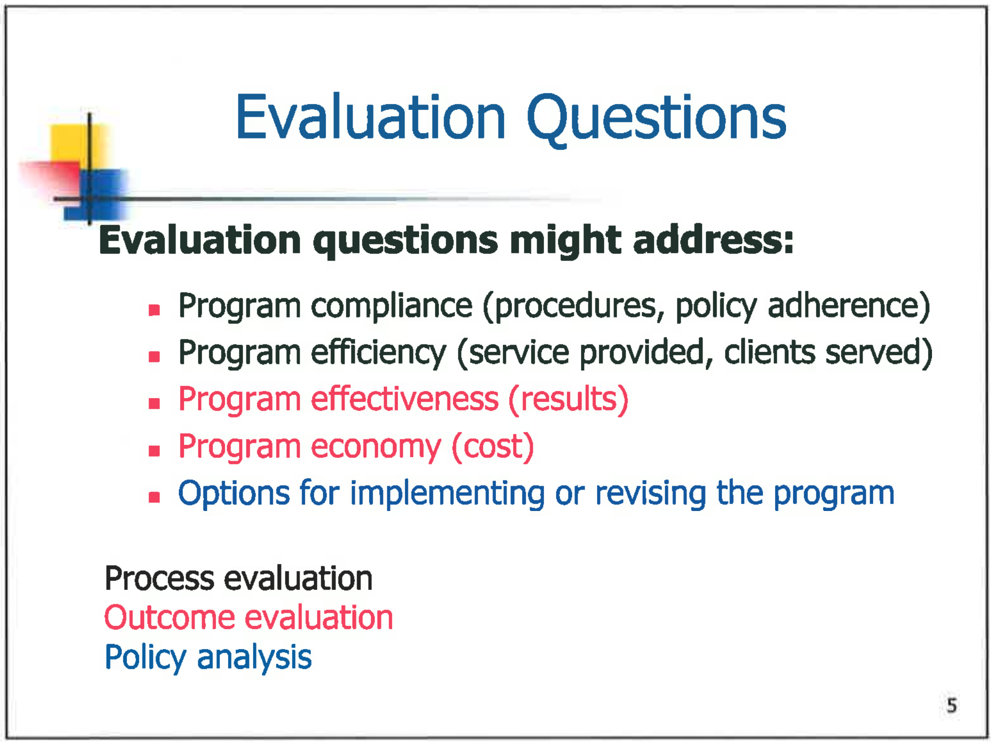
As we get into the details of scoping and planning a review, it is important to keep a practical frame of mind.

Our office wants to provide the best product possible. But, it also operates under very real resource constraints. Your time **IS** money, and the office has a limited amount of resources to allocate among its work projects for the year.

So keep these questions in mind as you brainstorm and prepare your plan… [slide text]



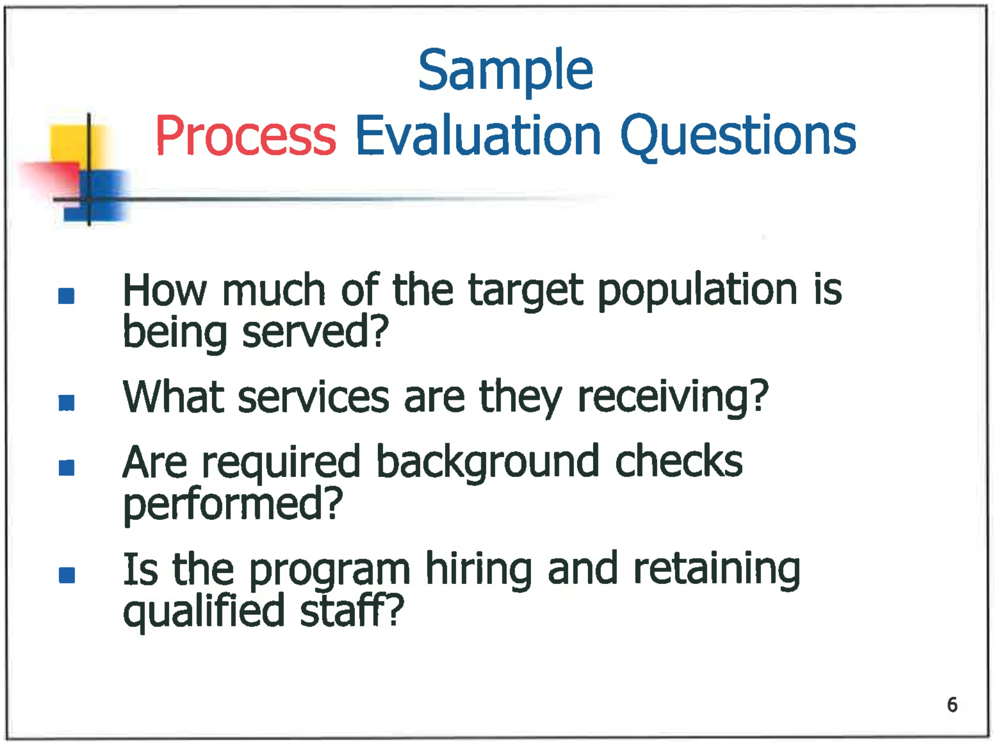
Legislative evaluations can address many types of questions. Some of the main types are shown here.

Generally speaking, questions about the first two bullets, compliance and efficiency, are considered process evaluations.

Program effectiveness and economy questions, the next two bullets, are typically used for outcome evaluations.

And policy analyses focus on questions of how to implement or revise programs or compare multiple programs.

Some evaluations are hybrids. The bottom line is to get the information your legislature is requesting, regardless of what it is called!



Let's look at some of the variety of questions and issues that we may be called upon to address.

Here are some sample process evaluation questions.... [slide text]

Sample
Outcome Evaluation Questions

- Do participants of the job-training program obtain and remain in targeted jobs for a specified period of time?
- Do drug court graduates have lower recidivism rates than similar offenders who were sentenced to prison?

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And some sample outcome evaluation questions…[slide text]

Sample
Policy Analysis Questions

- How could the groundwater protection program be restructured to better achieve its legislative intent?
- What resources would be required for each option?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each option?

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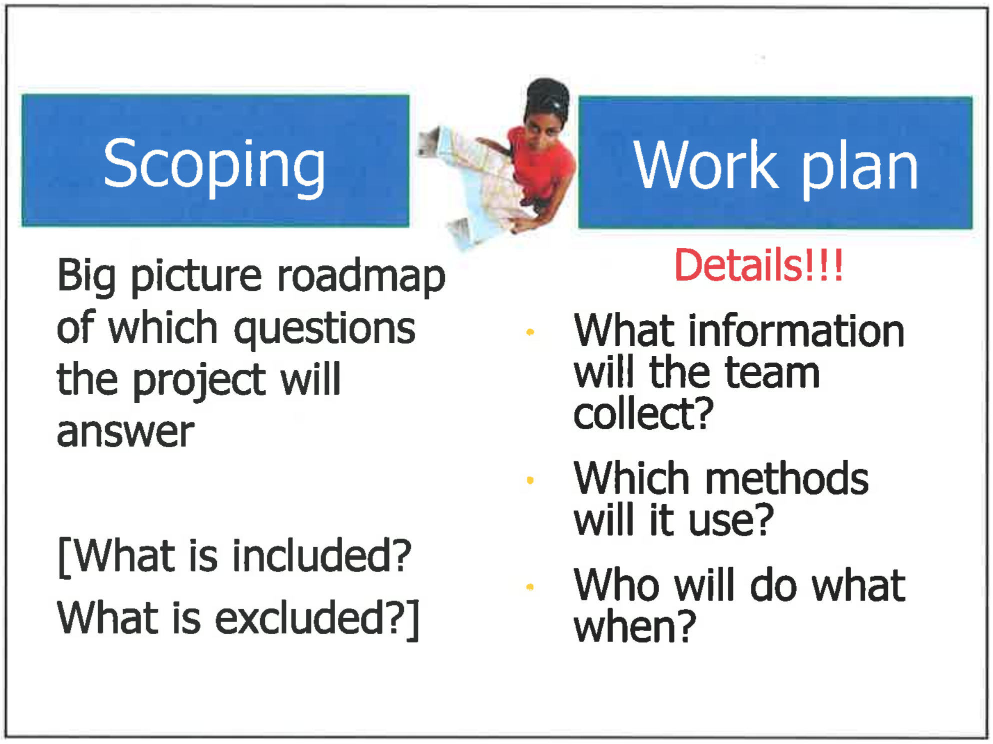
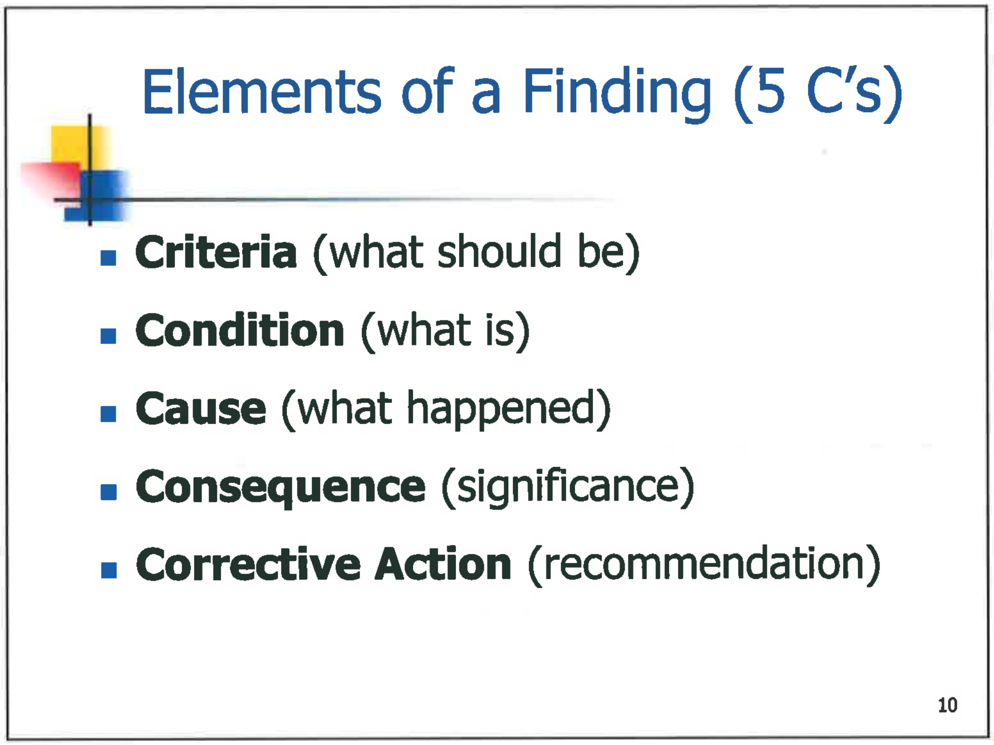
And finally, some policy analysis questions. [slide text]

Two things that I really enjoy about our work are the variety of topics and the creative problem-solving that goes into refining and narrowing the possible questions and methods down to a specific plan.



In scoping, we delineate the boundaries of the project. What we decide to exclude is as important as what we will pursue during fieldwork.

From there we move to putting a plan down on paper. It should include specific details such as… [text on right side of slide].

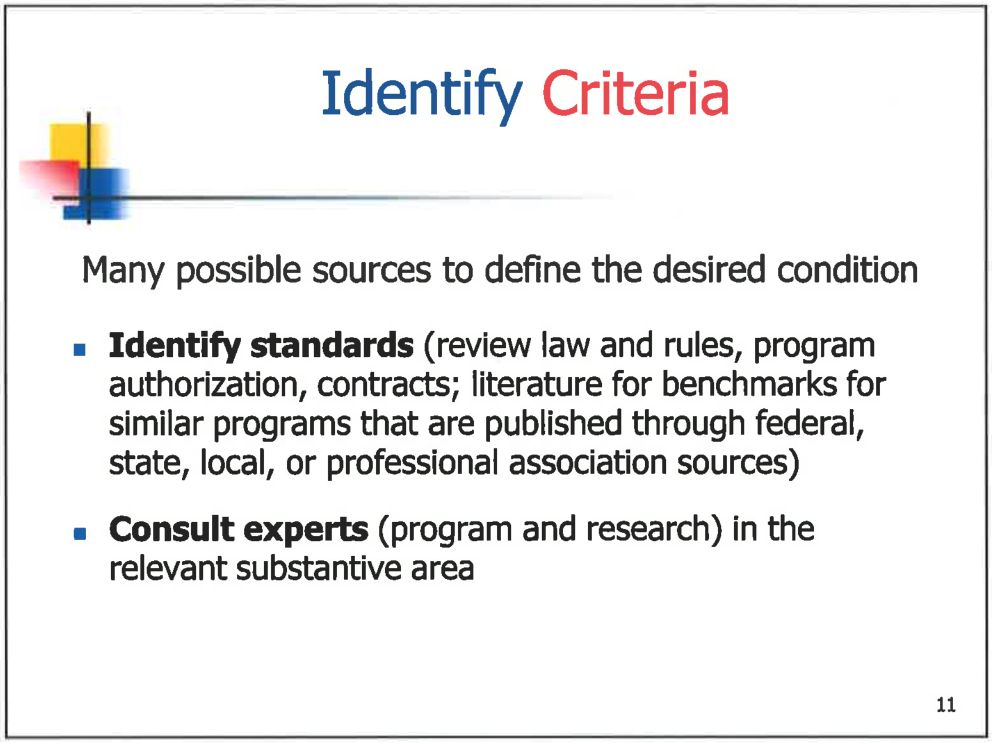


If you are struggling with what to include and exclude in your plan, it is useful to consider the "5 C's."

Unless you have been directed to address a very specific and narrow question, most readers/legislators will want to know this about the topic at hand:

[slide text]

Let's look at them individually for a few minutes.



There are many possible ways to identify the criteria, or the way things should work.

Many times the criteria are specified in law. If not, you can consult other documents, including administrative code and contracts, or literature from other states or other levels of government.

Professional association sources are useful too, such as American Correctional Association Standards.

You can also consult audit topic experts in your or other states.

Develop Operational Definitions for Criteria

- For example, a unit of treatment will be one hour of multi-systemic therapy
- Will recidivism be measured by arrests or convictions and for how long after drug court completion?
- Will reading success be making specified gains or reading at a specific grade level?

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Sometimes the operational definition of the criteria is also specified in law. If not, it will be important for the team to operationalize the criteria so that there is agreement and specificity about what your standard will be.

[slide text]

Identify Condition

- Is the program providing the contracted amount of multi-systemic therapy to clients?
- What is the recidivism rate for drug court graduates?
- Are participants making reading gains?

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Condition, or the way things actually are, is important to legislators in almost any evaluation.

Some example of condition questions include…[slide text]

Identify Cause

- Are salary, conditions, or availability making it difficult to hire MST therapists?
- Is a residential treatment option available for drug court participants?
- Are students regularly attending the reading program?

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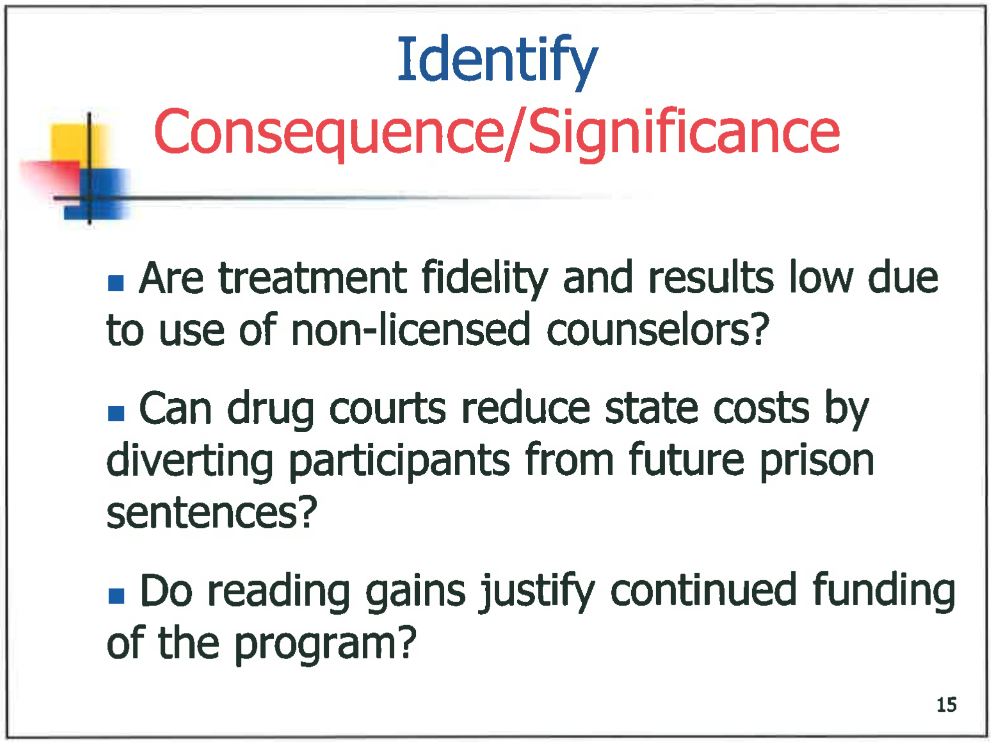
Members also want to know why things are the way they are. Examples of cause questions are…[slide text]

This can be one of the most difficult parts of the review because sometimes the cause is not clear.

You may or may not be able to get data you want, or you may get it and find it is incomplete. Another factor is that programs occur in a complex world. So, there may be more variables at play than what your project is measuring.

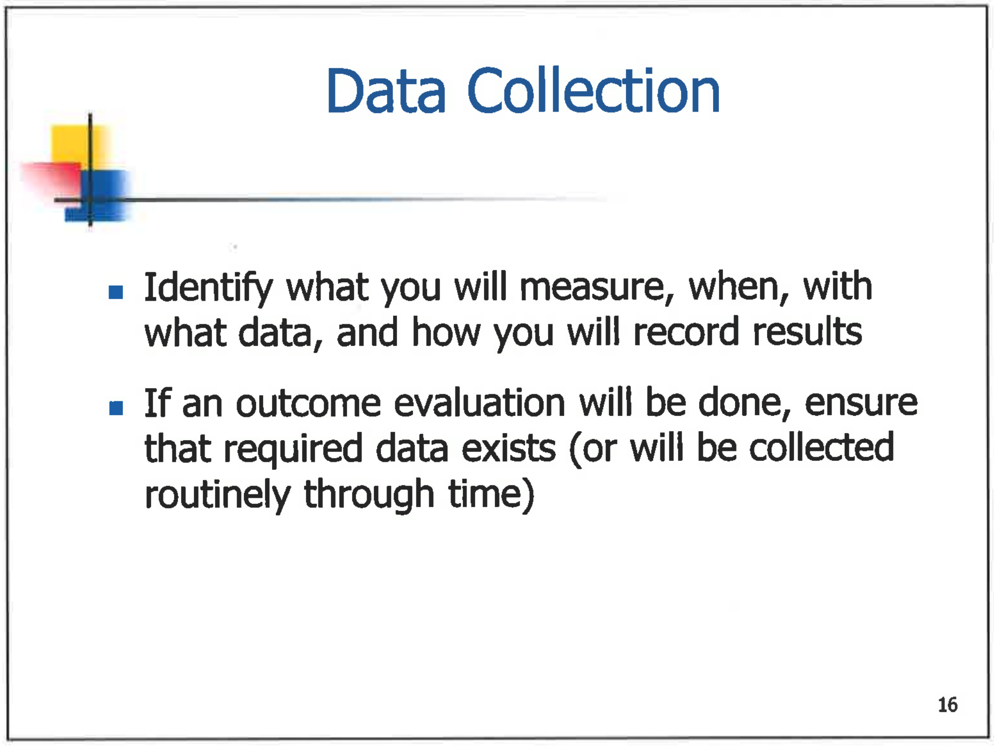
We still need to proceed to get the best information we can. However, your report should be clear about important data limitations. You should also remember that often we are able to demonstrate a CORRELATION rather than cause.



And finally, many evaluations need to answer the “who cares?” or “so what?” question to determine if action is needed.

Some examples of possible significance include…[slide text]

Also, because legislative evaluation shops operate in a political world, the perception of what is significant or important is sometimes fluid over time.



Once you have decided what your evaluation questions, issues, or hypothesis questions are, your team will need to decide what information it needs to collect.

[slide text]

Remember to stay focused; what will the information allow you to say? Get what you need but don't spend time getting more.

How Many Sites?

- If program has multiple sites/providers, will you examine multiple sites or just one?
- Collecting data from a single site is cheaper, but limits extent to which findings can be generalized
- Collecting data from multiple sites is more expensive, but provides more ability to generalize and reduces risk of wrong conclusions
- Budget, time, staff resources, and deadlines drive these decisions!

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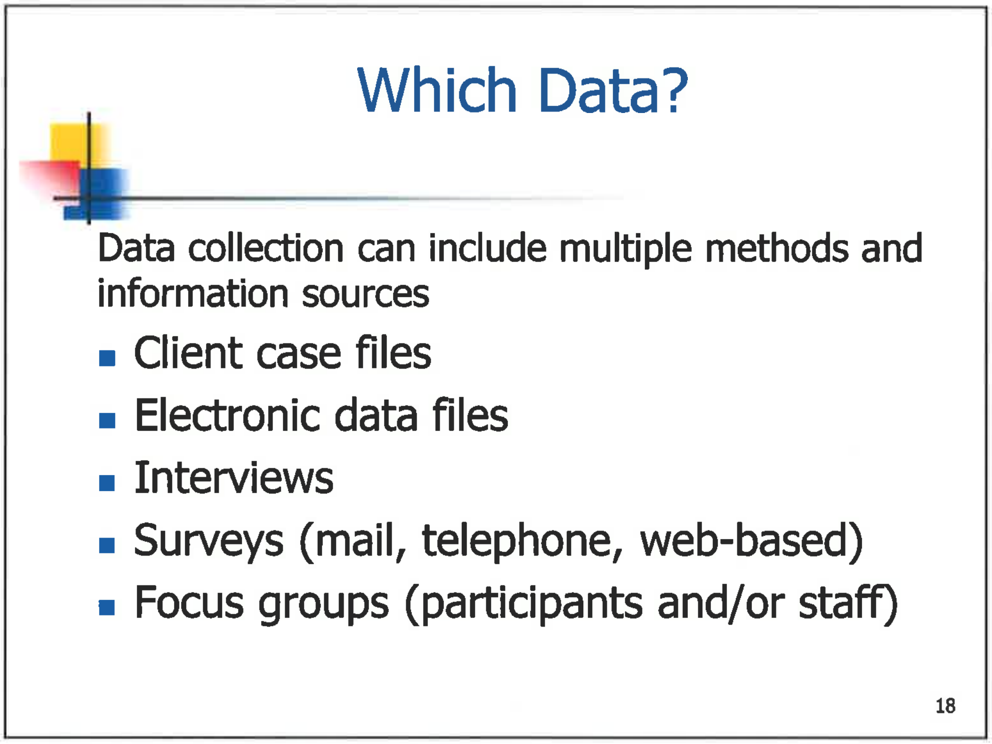
Another thing you will need to decide to develop your plan is how many sites or providers you will study.

Is the universe so large that a sample is warranted?

[slide text]



What data will you need? [slide text]

Will you want to look at the entire universe of that data, or is a sample preferable?

If you choose to use a sample, think through how to select the set.

- Enough to allow statistically significant results?
- Geographic distribution?
- Where the largest number of participants or amount of money is found?

These decisions should be made now, in the planning stage, as you think through your time and resources.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data

- To the extent possible, it is better to use multiple data collection methods to 'triangulate' your major conclusions
- Example – Review case files, survey a sample of clients, observe field activities, review trend data
- Triangulation helps you pin down condition, cause, and consequence/significance

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A key question is what methods you will use to collect the information you need.

What data is available? Is it reliable and valid? Do you have access to it?

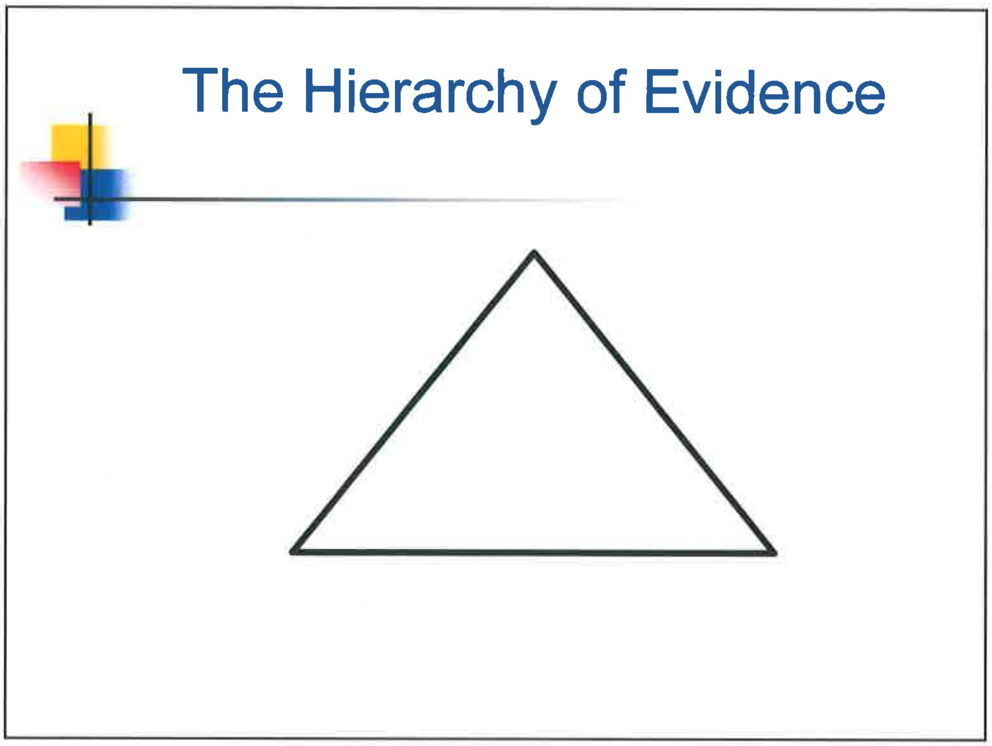
Can you get qualitative data, such as interviews? Quantitative data, such as enrollment over five years?

What best suits this review?

How long will it take to get it, clean it, analyze it?

And, importantly, how much is enough?

[slide text]



Lets talk about what KIND of information or evidence you should try to get.

What is the BEST evidence you can obtain? What is the weakest? … get them to talk about this for a bit

Best to worst

- Data collected and analyzed by your office
- Other "audited" data
- Agency reports
- Literature reviews
- Respected newspaper articles, reputable Internet sites
- Blogs, dissertations, theses, Wikipedia [not acceptable]

Data Source Quality

Assess the credibility of secondary data

- Who collected the data?
- How were the data collected?
- When were the data collected?
- Why were the data collected?

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We often need to use data from agency or other secondary sources.

Ask yourself these questions before deciding how it can be used. [slide text]

Data Source Timing

- Snapshot
- One group pretest-posttest
- Time series (prior, during, after)
- With control group
- Case study

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Timing of data and information is another thing to consider as you develop your plan.

Is it…[slide text]

What is most appropriate and realistic given your project timeframe and the data that is available?

Staff and Resources

- Generally a team should have the collective competence (knowledge and skills) to conduct the work
- The number of persons needed to get the necessary work done in the allocated amount of time

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What kind of staff should be included in the project plan?

Yellow Book standards require that the team have the collective competence– knowledge and skills-- to conduct the work.

You also need to think about how many people are required. More staff can sometimes speed up a project, but they also make it more expensive and divert people from other projects.

The Evaluation Plan

An evaluation plan should describe

- What information you need
- How you will collect the information
- How you will analyze the information, and
- How you will administer the evaluation

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[slide text]

The plan should also describe **WHO** will do each task and **WHEN**.

It should allow everyone on the team to be clear about their responsibilities and those of their teammates.

The plan assures that the team and supervisors are in agreement about how to proceed and what the timeframes are.

Design Matrix for
LR OPS employees

Researchable Question(s)	Information Required and (Source)	Scope and Methodology	Limitations	What This Analysis Will Likely Allow us to Say
1. What are OPS employees?	a. Identify statues and rules defining the role of OPS employees (F.S., DMS rules), and determine appropriations	review relevant statutes and rules regarding OPS employment FLAIR object codes run by agencies on salary and fringe for OPS		State agencies hire OPS employees to accomplish a range of agency goals
2. Why do state agencies hire them?	Agency-specific reasons that OPS employees are hired or retained, as opposed to hiring FTEs	Survey Human Capital Officers about why they hire OPS	Would have to make the reasons pretty generic, and would they be substantively different than retention reasons?	Most agencies reported that primary reason they hire OPS (e.g.) for seasonal or peak workloads, such as X.
3. How many OPS employees have state agencies used over the past few years?	total number of OPS per year for several years by agency ratio of FTE to OPS for several years by agency	SSN count from FLAIR data: payroll or Workforce report averages		OPS employment is not a growing segment of the state government workforce (has not increased over time) X agencies hire the highest proportion/number of OPS employees.
4. What types of positions do OPS employees occupy?	data on occupations of OPS data on supervisory status of OPS	Analysis of DMS data, identifying clusters of occupations via the class codes HCOs will provide a few examples of occupations in the survey.	DMS data warehouse has documented limitations with PAR-based queries; we have no information that suggests we're in trouble, though.	OPS employees occupy a range of short term positions Most OPS occupy (e.g.) clerical positions Few OPS employees are managers or supervise state employees.
5. Why do agencies retain OPS?	Qualitative and quantitative data on reasons for retention; source = agency HCO	Analysis of OPS qualitative data, for in-depth examples of the work OPS accomplish Review OPS codes for retaining OPS: A,B, C, D.	OPS does a blanket approval	Agencies report OPS that are not exempt from the time limits are retained because they do mission-critical work. Often agencies report that they would like to retain their OPS because of their experience; agencies say it's more inefficient to hire and train a new employee.

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Here is another example.

The two columns on the right, “limitations” and “what this analysis will likely allow us to say” can be very useful as the team works out its approach.

WORK PLAN AND PROJECT SCHEDULE

Project:
Team members:
Publication date:

Project Administration			
Tasks and Methodology	**Timeframe**	**Analyst**	**Status**
Set up administrative volume with document authorizing the project, statement of independence, engagement letter, contact with AG and agency IG, work plan, requests for confidential information, project decision log, scoping and message documents, and copy of P&T			
Develop schedule of project milestones, including any critical path. Milestones include scoping meeting; planned updates with requestor and legislative staff; message meeting; complete background; draft to staff director, editor/coordinator, and QA; delivery of P&T, publication date			

Background (Descriptive information on the community based substance abuse treatment)			
Tasks and Methodology	**Timeframe**	**Analyst**	**Status**
Review authorizing directive for the program			
Draft background section of report			

Q 1:			
Tasks and Methodology	**Timeframe**	**Analyst**	**Status**

Q 2:			
Tasks and Methodology	**Timeframe**	**Analyst**	**Status**

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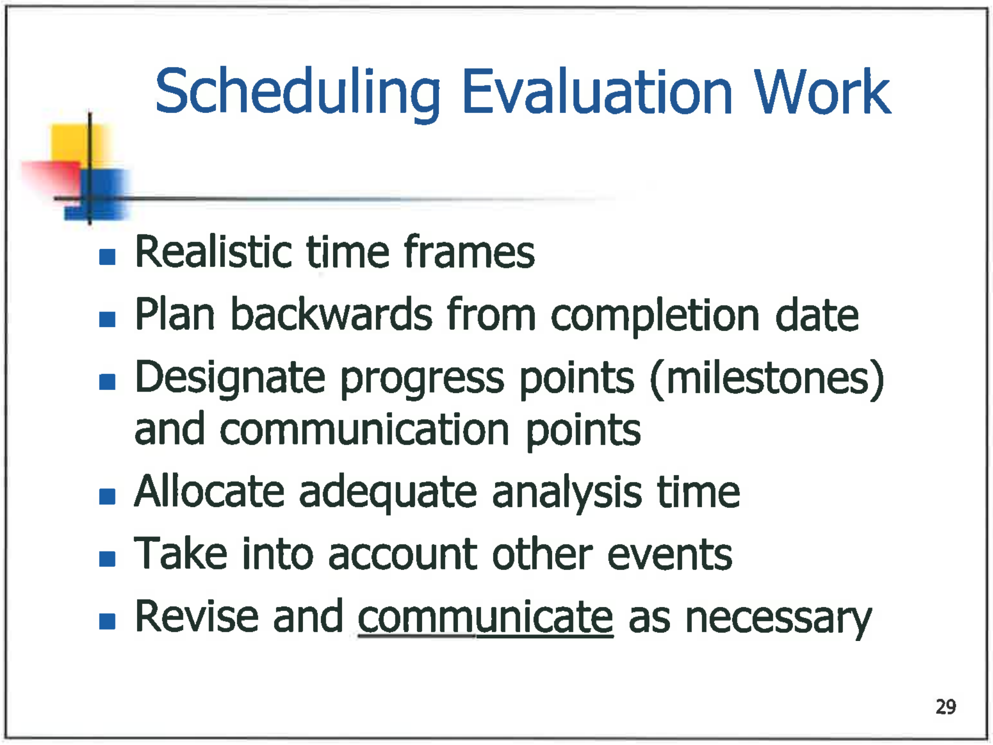
Here is another template used by an evaluation shop.

Note that it begins with project administration so that this aspect of planning, and the time and tasks required, are not overlooked.

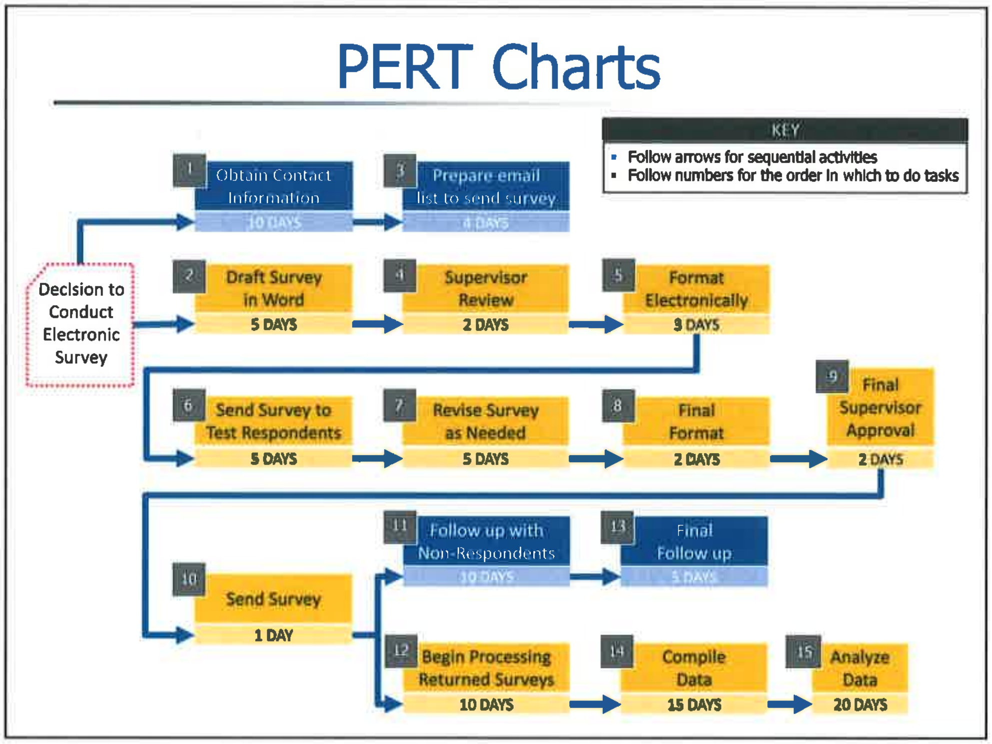
Q1. To what extent have the new Civil Citation programs required by s. 985.12, *Florida Statutes*, increased the number of youth diverted from the juvenile justice system? [Question]			
Criteria [Information required, source, method for collecting]	**Who**	**When**	**Share**
1. Review Florida Statutes to document legislative intent of Civil Citation to divert youth from the juvenile justice system	LW	11-1-13	
2. Review Florida Statutes and DJJ policies to identify who is eligible to be diverted by Civil Citation	LW	11-5-13	
Condition			
3. Using JIS data set (obtained from Emma in DJJ data shop), identify the youth who meet current Civil Citation eligibility requirements who entered the juvenile justice system in FY 2010-11, 2011-2012, and 2012-13			
4. Using the same data set, identify which county the eligible youth were adjudicated in, and whether the number of youth entering the juvenile justice system in each county changed from 2010-11, 11-12 to 2012-13 when the change occurred			
5. Interview DJJ managers and program descriptions to identify which counties operated Civil Citation Programs in 2012-13			
6. Using the data set, identify how many youth in each of these counties participated in the Civil Citation Program			
Cause			
7. Interview DJJ managers, sheriffs, and judges in the counties that did not participate to determine why			
8. If significant numbers of eligible youth in each participating county still entered the juvenile justice system (see #3), follow up with case managers, and judges if warranted, to determine why the youth were not diverted			
9. Analyze youth data to see if there are common characteristics of those not diverted, by county			
Consequence			
10. Determine the average cost per youth of participating in Civil Citation vs. entering the juvenile justice system. (Information from DJJ managers and program cost data from the department)			
11. Using information from #10, calculate the additional cost of eligible youth not diverted, in aggregate.			
12. Document by reviewing the Florida Statutes and interviewing DJJ managers that diverted youth do not incur a criminal record, whereas those who enter the juvenile justice system do, and the educational and employment ramifications of a record.			
Conclusions (and Recommendations, if applicable)			
13. Summarize the extent to which youth are being diverted from the juvenile justice system to Civil Citations.			Discuss with Phil and project requestor
14. In counties where a significant number of youth are still entering the juvenile justices system, summarize why they are not being diverted to the Civil Citation Program. Ask stakeholders how this condition could be changed.			
15. Summarize the extent to which the Civil Citation Program is reducing juvenile justice system costs.			
Q2. Determine the charged crimes and criminal histories of youth committed to residential treatment.			
Criteria	**Who**	**When**	**Share**
1.			

Here is that same template, filled out to address a specific evaluation question shown at top in blue.

The sections below describe the work planned to determine the 5 C's and write a traditional finding.



- Once you have your evaluation questions or issues and a good idea of the data you need and how you will get it, it's time to think seriously about timeframes.
- Often at this stage you might need to pare back your original idea of what you would ideally do, to fit into the time you have.
- Writing the evaluation plan is a process of going backward and forward, like parallel parking, to find the best fit between aspirations and realistic planning. Start with your deliverable(s) deadline(s) and work backwards.
- If you can't finish your plan on time, is it possible to add more staff? Can you extend the deadline? Would a sample work? How significant/necessary is each task? Time for serious discussion among the team members and supervisors.
- Build in a small buffer for things beyond your control. And, take into account other factors, such as holidays and other projects that will be coming in at the same time and compete for your supervisor's attention.



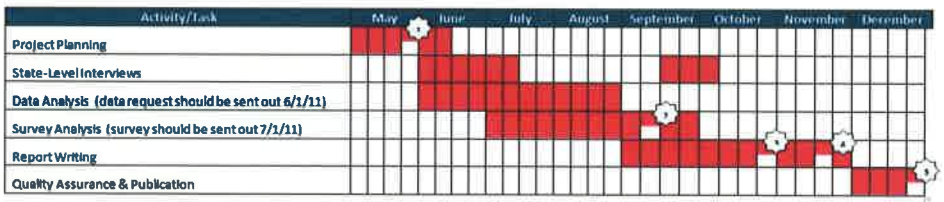
A very handy tool for thinking through time allocations is the Program Evaluation Review Technique, or PERT chart. It was developed by the Navy in the 50's to manage development of Polaris submarine weapons system.

PERT articulates project activities, the time they require, and their deadlines, so that you can see which tasks can be run concurrently, and what the longest time, or critical path is (see gold boxes). (For more on PERT charts see http://web2.concordia.ca/Quality/tools/20pertchart.pdf)

If there is NO WAY to get it done, or no room whatsoever for unforeseen circumstances, revisit your plan and develop alternative methods or strategies.

Milestone	Target Date	Completion Date	Comment
Preliminary Scoping	5/12/11	5/19/11	
Scoping meeting with legislative stakeholders	5/23/11		
Scoping meeting with management (1)	6/1/11		
Work plan completion	6/19/11		
Submit data request to DOC	6/1/11		Request going out this week, will revise timeline
Finalize data analysis	8/31/11		
Send survey to providers	7/1/11		
Summarize survey results	9/1/11		
Fieldwork meeting with management (if necessary)	7/15/11		
Fieldwork meeting with legislative stakeholders (if necessary)	7/18/11		
Message meeting with management (2)	9/16/11		
Message meeting with legislative staff	9/19/11		
Draft to staff director (3)	10/30/11		
Draft to management (4)	11/21/11		
Draft to QA	12/5/11		
Draft P&T	12/14/11		
Report publication (statutory deadline 1/1/12) (5)	12/30/11		

Project Timeline



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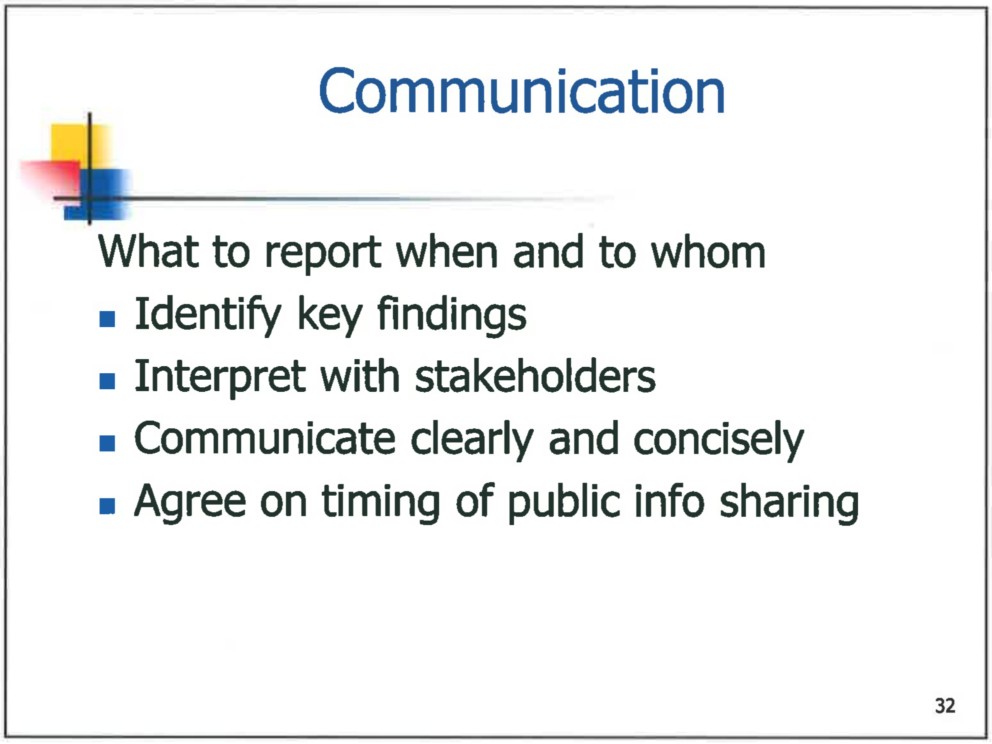
Another useful tool for thinking through schedules is the Gantt chart, shown here on the bottom of the page. It helps you track major milestones and phases of our project so that you keep each portion of the project on time.

Remember, timeliness trumps all. The best report, delivered after the Legislature needed it, is virtually worthless.

Choose a team member who is good at staying on schedule to help keep the group on time and on track!

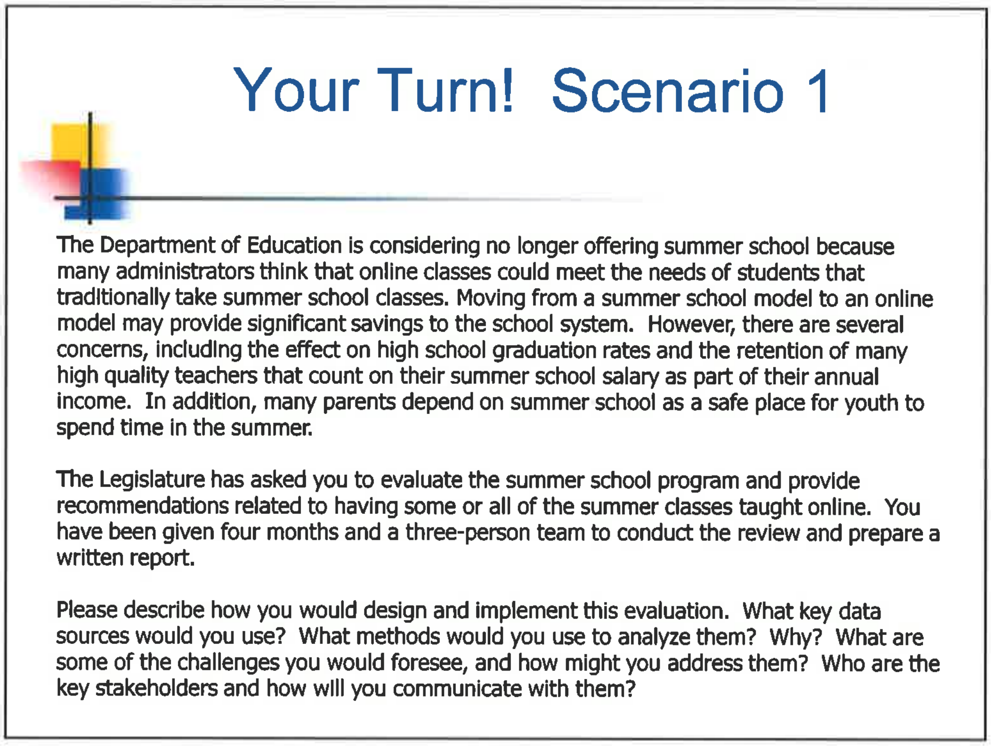


Finally, but very importantly, add communication to your evaluation plan.

Who will you need to talk to about the project, and at which stages of the review?

You should consider the communication within your office, with the agency, and with your legislative stakeholders.

To avoid confusion, and because these interactions can be sensitive, many offices direct that the team leader be responsible for these interactions, particularly those outside the office.



Now it's your turn to develop an evaluation plan.

[Divide the class participants into small discussion groups]

Please take a few minutes to read the project scenario, then discuss with your team how you would proceed.

Feel free to use the big notepads provided.

We'll get back together in 15 minutes to hear how your team plans to conduct the review.

Your Turn! Scenario 2

The Legislature has directed your office to evaluate issues at the agency that provides community-based residential services to the developmentally disabled. The agency has 12 residential sites in five counties and serves over 900 clients. There has been a high rate of turnover among counselors in the program; the average counselor is employed with the agency for 2.5 years. Counselors assist clients with life skills, such as employment and money management. In addition, there have been several stories in local papers of residents going missing for days at a time without the program contacting family members or law enforcement.

The Legislature is also thinking about reducing the number of sites and is interested in the results of your review before making this decision. Thus, you have been told to present your findings in 90 days. Your team of four has been asked to answer the following questions.

1) Why is there a high rate of turnover among counselors?
2) Are any sites following "best practices" for community-based residential services for the developmentally disabled?
3) Which sites are performing the best and which are performing the worst?
4) Are there problems with the management or leadership at any of the sites?

Describe how you would design and implement this evaluation. What data sources would you use? Why? What methods would you use to analyze the data? What are some of the challenges you foresee and how would you address them? Who are the key stakeholders and how will you communicate with them?

Instructors, this is another option you can use for class discussion.

Pitfalls to Avoid

- Spending too much time perfecting the plan
- Over-documenting the situation
- Letting your schedule slip
- Losing the big picture while in the details
- Insufficient communication, inside and outside of your team!!!

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A well thought-out plan is a vital beginning for legislative evaluations.

It is equally important to keep in mind that **planning is a CONTINOUS** process. You will need to adjust your scope, objectives, and methods as you go forward and learn more. Your evidence must be sufficient and appropriate.

Some questions and objectives may need to be discarded.

Some new questions or objectives or methods may need to be added.

In cases in which the scope or issue is established in law, there is less latitude for change. However, there will probably still be nuances that you will need to adjust.

Start outlining your finding or report early, and revisit it often to ensure you don't collect too much or too little to make your case.

Here are some pitfalls to avoid…[slide text]

Questions or Comments?