Defense Centers of Excellence
for Psychological Health and
Traumatic Brain Injury

PROGRAM EVALUATION GUIDE

MODULE 9
Reporting Findings

May 2017 | 2nd Edition

Table of Contents

Overview of the Program Evaluation Guide 1
Purpose and Use of the PEG 1
Purpose and Use of this Module 2
Identifying Key Stakeholders and Common Areas of Interest 2
- Who are the Stakeholders? 2
- How Can Programs Keep Stakeholders Engaged? 4

Choosing Appropriate Communication Formats 5
- Written Reports 8
- Websites and Social Media 9
- Promotional Materials 10

Conclusion 11
Key Takeaways 11
References 12
Selected Resources for Additional Study 12

Overview of the Program Evaluation Guide

This Program Evaluation Guide (PEG) is developed and published by the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE). Program evaluation is an important part of the DCoE **mission** and helps military program administrators and leadership assess and improve service quality and outcomes. By making program evaluation an inherent part of everyday program activities, we create a culture of effectiveness to better build a sustainable, efficient and well-integrated continuum of prevention and care services for military members, their families and veterans.

The first edition of the PEG, published in July 2012, provided a standardized approach to program evaluation for psychological health and traumatic brain injury (TBI) program leaders. This version of the PEG (2nd Edition) has been updated and revised to reflect the most current needs of psychological health and TBI programs. This edition of the PEG is organized as a series of modules containing content specifically designed for use by program administrators or other staff members tasked with internal program evaluations as part of their duties within Defense Department psychological health and TBI programs. This PEG is designed for those who have limited prior knowledge and experience with the conduct of program evaluation activities.

Purpose and Use of the PEG

This PEG is one part of a collection of trainings, toolkits and support services offered by DCoE to assist personnel at the program level in developing their capabilities to conduct internal program evaluation activities. The PEG is designed for use in coordination with other training materials, such as the DCoE program evaluation and improvement webinar series, references provided in the PEG and webinar series, consultation with experts and other resources that may be available to program personnel.

The modules in this PEG are not intended to serve as a substitute for formal coursework on evaluation methods, statistics or data management. In addition, because the PEG is intended for use by a wide variety of programs, it will not provide specific guidance to programs on best practices for clinical or non-clinical services. Finally, the PEG is not intended as a manual for how evaluators who are external to a program should conduct their activities. However, the information herein will generally be useful in helping program personnel become more familiar with the evaluation process and consequently more effective in responding to external evaluation initiatives.

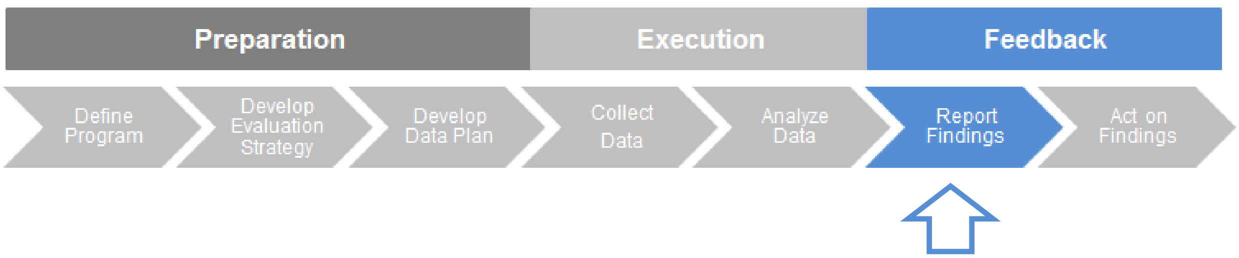
Reporting Findings

Purpose and Use of this Module

Once program evaluation data have been analyzed, the program is ready to move on to the next step of the evaluation process, Reporting Findings.

This module is designed to assist program personnel with demonstrating the results of program evaluation and improvement efforts to their key stakeholders. Topics covered include identifying key stakeholders and interests in program evaluation results, using communications to engage stakeholders and applying best practices for communicating program evaluation findings.

Because programs vary widely in their purposes and the populations they serve, this module provides broadly applicable guidance on reporting findings to maximize stakeholder engagement and demonstrate accountability.



Identifying Key Stakeholders and Common Areas of Interest

Stakeholders support a program in several important ways that can advance a program's mission. Developing and implementing reporting processes that communicate evaluation findings to stakeholders in line with their interests can enhance support in addition to meeting reporting requirements. Benefits of sharing findings with stakeholders include the ability to demonstrate accountability, identify lessons learned, build relationships, and acquire or maintain funding and support.

Who are the Stakeholders?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], evaluation stakeholders are "people or organizations that are invested in the program, are interested in the results of the evaluation and/or have a stake in what will be done with the results of the evaluation" (CDC, 2006). Based on this definition, program administrators should develop a stakeholder list that identifies groups of individuals who fall within the following three broad categories of stakeholders, each of which may have different needs and interests in relation to program evaluation findings:

- Implementation team – those responsible for delivering program services or managing program operations
- Participants and community – those who receive or are affected by the program's services
- Decision makers – those with oversight responsibilities or fiscal accountability for a program

Table 1 is a simple illustration depicting the types of stakeholders that may fall within the three categories discussed above for a given program. Keep in mind that some stakeholders may fall within multiple groups and that individual stakeholders within these roles often change over time. It is important to update the listing regularly to account for changes in group composition.

Table 1: Example Stakeholder Groups and Categories

	Stakeholder Categories		
Example Stakeholders	**Implementation Team**	**Participants and Community**	**Decision Makers**
Policy Makers			✓
Senior Leaders			✓
Managers/Supervisors	✓		
Program Staff	✓		
Participating Service Members		✓	
Family Members		✓	
Health Care System		✓	
External Programs		✓	
Community Organizations		✓	

What Are Stakeholders' Interests?

Once stakeholders have been categorized, the next step is to consider what information stakeholders need or want as part of the evaluation effort. Table 2 below includes four broad questions frequently addressed in the program evaluation process and corresponding examples of more specific questions that different stakeholders may ask. Reporting the results of program evaluation efforts should be organized and directed specifically toward these varied interests.

For example, the first row reflects interests in program fidelity. Program staff would want to know if the program is being conducted properly, whereas participants and their families may be more interested in what services a program offers to meet their needs. Alternately, a decision maker, such as an oversight body, might want to know if the program is operating in accordance with its policy justification. The bottom row focuses on outcomes. An individual who is implementing the program (e.g., a health care provider) would want to know if the program is meeting its intended outcome of benefiting the participants.

Table 2: Program Evaluation Questions

Evaluation Questions	Implementation Team	Participants and Community	Decision Makers
Was the program implemented with fidelity?	Are activities being conducted properly?	What services does the program offer?	Is the program operating according to its mission?
Is the program sustainable?	Are there documented standard operating procedures?	Will this program be available in the future?	Is the program collecting and using feedback?
How do program structures and processes function?	Do program operations allow for efficient delivery of care?	What can I expect during program participation?	How many people have access and who are the participants?
Has the program achieved its intended outcomes?	Does the program benefit participants?	Is this program helping me and/or my family?	Is this program cost-effective in meeting its intended outcomes?

Understanding stakeholders' interests requires collecting information and feedback from them. This can be accomplished through a variety of formal and informal means. Formal means of data collection, for example, could include satisfaction questionnaires, focus groups or structured interviews. Informal means of collecting information may include a review of emails and social media postings or phone calls with key leadership members. The method of collecting this information should be matched with the type of information desired and take into account cultural norms and command structures.

How Can Programs Keep Stakeholders Engaged?

Stakeholders play a vital role in program sustainability and funding. Demonstrating program effectiveness and engaging stakeholders in the evaluation process can increase stakeholder satisfaction and program buy-in. All levels of program administrators are vital to successful reporting to stakeholders. As the program's chief advocate, the administrator's role is to assert the program's value, highlight its strengths and educate stakeholders about how a program works and how well it achieves its stated purpose. By effectively engaging stakeholder support, program personnel can help ensure a more effective program that accomplishes its mission and serves its target population.

Stakeholder engagement can be enhanced by creating targeted communications delivered through a variety of pathways. Conference calls and scheduled briefings encourage personal engagement and back-and-forth communication and questions. Emails and web postings may be used to summarize information in a less personal manner. Formal reports can provide a high level of technical detail, in addition to a written summary of evaluation findings, and are often required by decision makers and funding agencies. Developing coordinated, regularly scheduled communications about programs keeps stakeholders up-to-date, which is vital to establishing stakeholders' trust and support. Sending messages through the right channels ensures the "right people" receive the information (Patton, 2014).

Furthermore, regular reports strengthen the communication channels between administrators and stakeholders, thereby supporting responsiveness to needs and interests.

Engagement strategies should ideally be contained in a communications plan that matches communication formats and content to stakeholders' interests. As described in more detail below, a variety of communication formats are necessary to achieve different purposes, and each has different strengths and limitations in reporting on evaluation findings.

Choosing Appropriate Communication Formats

Format choices for reporting evaluation findings are best made by considering the stakeholder group's interests and the message that is intended for that group. Effective communications showing program evaluation data that benefit stakeholders' specific interests will help inform their decisions, for example, with regard to using services for potential participants or funding a program for leadership. Communicating and disseminating evaluation results are important components of the program evaluation process. Effective communication increases the likelihood that the results will be used toward program improvements. Develop and implement a communications plan that includes the methods and schedule of program evaluation findings to various stakeholders in the manner they prefer.

There are many communication formats from which to choose. For example, a briefing is a presentation conducted by designated program personnel with a live audience, generally leadership or decision-makers, typically using presentation software such as Microsoft PowerPoint®. A briefing may be delivered in person, by teleconference or virtually. Sequencing a series of communication events, such as a written report followed by a meeting, followed by a broadcast, can underscore the importance of findings and recommendations. For any communication, be sure to coordinate with the appropriate public affairs office for permissions and release.

In addition to choosing formats, it is important to track communications metrics related to dissemination of results, such as the number and type of stakeholders who receive a briefing or access a website and the dates the information was distributed. Whenever possible, it is worthwhile to gather information on whether the communication had its intended effect (e.g., increasing knowledge, awareness or support for the program) by soliciting feedback. This will help program personnel determine whether a communication strategy is effective.

Key Considerations for Choosing Reporting Formats

Specific aspects of communicating or reporting will depend on a number of factors:

- Target Audience – consider the audience background and level of expertise when choosing the appropriate type of information for each stakeholder group. Commercials and public service announcements can be used to communicate to the participant community, while detailed tables and figures may be used with program personnel and leadership which typically require more detailed knowledge about the program.
- Reporting Resources – determine what type of reporting can be achieved given the resources that are available. Consider the resources needed to create, host and update webpages for program communication.
- Regulations and Requirements – always obtain required approvals when publishing or producing any materials. Ensure that the program has signed releases and permissions for all photos and they do not contain personally identifiable information

or protected health information.
- Norms – what is reported needs to be appropriate to the stakeholder group. Use plain language directives when communicating with service members and their families. Use appropriate military rank and title when communicating with executive leadership.

Table 3 provides examples of appropriate communications formats matched to stakeholder audience groups.

Table 3: Communications Formats Based on the Audience

Stakeholder Audience	Format Option
Implementation Team	
Program staff Contracting officer's representative Program administrator Champion/advocate	Technical report Quad chart Executive summary Staff meeting Commander's call
Participants and Community	
Program participants Family members Installation Community	Town hall meeting or conference Program newsletter Print, social media Radio and TV (commercial, PSA)
Decision Makers	
Funding agencies Program sponsors Board members Executive leadership	Evaluation report Executive summary Mission impact statement Commander's update briefing

Communication Planning

Integrate communications strategies into a plan. Communication plans increase accountability by specifying benchmarks for what type of reporting is completed by whom, when and in what format. They help to coordinate reporting about program evaluation findings and improve a program's sustainability by approaching reporting in an organized fashion. This will keep stakeholders engaged over time. Goals or objectives should be matched to each type of communication and stakeholder group, in addition to timelines and tracking procedures. Table 4 below is an example of a basic communications plan. A template to build a custom communications plan is provided in Template A.

Table 4: Basic Communications Plan

Target Audience	Messaging Goals	Format	Timeframe
Implementation Team	▪ Inform staff about progress ▪ Enhance cohesiveness and effort toward program objectives	▪ Meetings and briefing documents ▪ Final evaluation report ▪ After action report	▪ Weekly ▪ Monthly ▪ Within 180 days of conclusion of funding
Participants and Community	▪ Promote program ▪ Recruit and/or retain participants	▪ Social media ▪ Radio interviews ▪ Flyers ▪ TV	▪ Weekly ▪ Monthly ▪ Quarterly
Decision Makers	▪ Show program value and maintain or increase program funding ▪ Demonstrate accountability	▪ Executive summary ▪ Targeted program briefs	▪ Within 90 days of conclusion of funding ▪ Quarterly

Best Practices for Effective Reporting

Once the best communication formats have been selected and incorporated into a communications plan for program evaluation results, there are several general guidelines to keep in mind on presenting that information. Regardless of which format is selected, remember the five C's as described in the following table (Table 5: General Guidelines for Reporting).

Table 5: General Guidelines for Reporting

All forms of reporting should be:	
Clear	Use plain language and define terms, acronyms and abbreviations
Concise	Include only relevant information and provide a brief summary at the start and end
Consistent	Use the same terms to mean the same thing
Correct	Maintain accuracy and acknowledge what is and is not known
Compelling	Provide information in a way that tells a story about the program and its results

The final steps in reporting evaluation findings are a vital part of the evaluation process. Listed below are several reporting methods that may be used either independently or in combination to deliver the most robust evaluation findings.

Presentations

Presentations are a common format used to convey information about program evaluation results that allow direct interaction with stakeholder groups and are useful for gathering feedback. While they vary widely in length, content and style, each should include sections related to the nature of the program, evaluation methods used, results and conclusions.

It is best to gather feedback or respond to questions throughout the presentation. For larger audiences, however, one or two designated times for questions may be needed. Feedback may be gathered through a paper or electronic questionnaire, as well as informally. Always include a point of contact and resources for additional information, such as a link to the program website and phone and email contact information for follow up with relevant program personnel.

Several best practices to keep audience members engaged are:

- Tailor content to the audience by considering the audience level of experience and expertise
- Break up the content into manageable, digestible sections
- Use images and examples to enhance understanding and illustrate important concepts
- Make accompanying documents and handouts associated with the presentation as comprehensive as possible for individuals who could not attend
- Avoid overly complex language, acronyms and abbreviations
- Avoid lengthy presentations and excessive text

Written Reports

As in any large organization, military programs operate in an environment that includes a large number of written reports, which makes it all the more important that communications about effectiveness are clear, concise, consistent, factually correct and compelling. Written reports on program evaluation are required for accountability to funding agencies and are regularly requested by senior-level stakeholders. These reports should be structured and follow an outline similar to the one listed below in Table 6. The executive summary should appear first, followed by an overview of the program, evaluation methods and results gleaned from the evaluation.

Table 6: Written Report Outline Example

- **Executive Summary**
  - appears first, but is the last section written
  - contains only key points of the report
  - is typically one to two pages
- **Program Overview**
  - begins the narrative section
  - includes the program's mission statement, goals and objectives
  - discusses the inputs (what the program needs to operate)
  - discusses activities (what the program does)
  - discusses outputs and outcomes (what the program produces and strives to change or improve for its participants)
  - may include a logic model (provides a common understanding of the program)
- **Program Evaluation Methods**
  - explains how results were generated
- **Results and Conclusions**
  - discusses what was learned from the evaluation, both program successes and opportunities for further development
  - proposes changes for the program moving forward
  - uses data in the form of graphs, tables and quotes to support conclusions
- **References**
  - cites external sources that were used during the evaluation process, such as articles, websites or interviews
- **Appendices**
  - includes detailed information, such as forms or procedural manuals

Websites and Social Media

Websites should be tailored to suit the audience. Social media sites and blogs allow interaction with participants, family members and the community. Many programs now operate Facebook pages and Twitter feeds that allow program personnel the chance to provide updates, receive feedback and respond to questions. Highlighting program evaluation results informs potential participants about the potential benefits they or their family members may receive by engaging in program activities or receiving program services. As illustrated in Figure 1, the DCoE website home page example provides a quick snapshot of the various activities as well as links to specific resources.

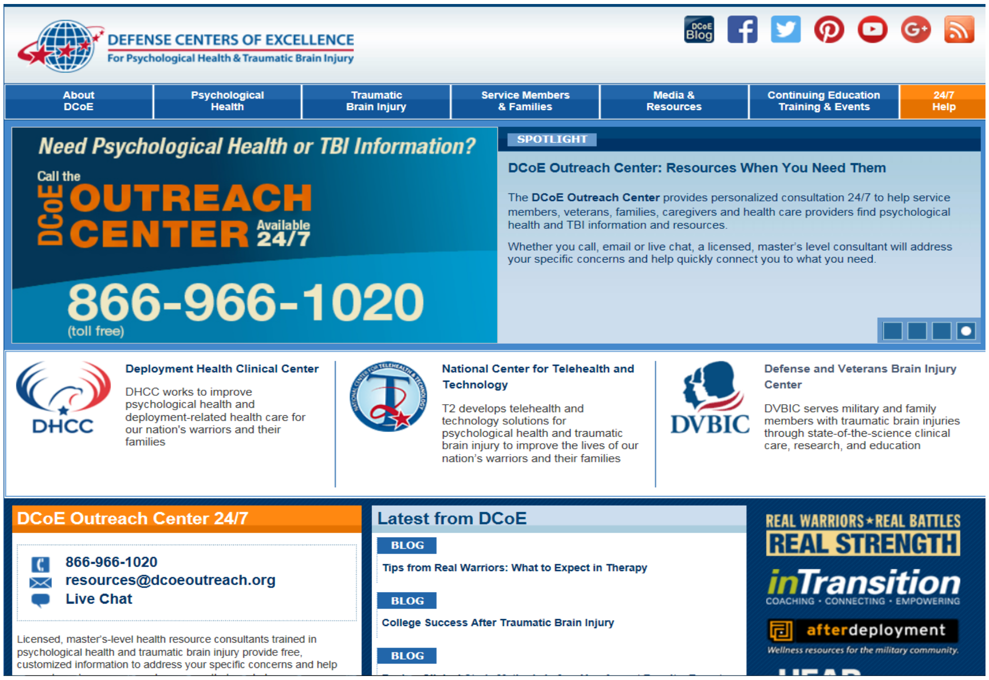


Figure 1: Website Home Page Example from DCoE

A useful reference guide is “Research-Based Web Design and Usability Guidelines” developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It stresses that the home page is very important. A well-constructed home page will project a good first impression of the site overall. It should have certain characteristics that distinguish it from subpages within the website. Users have come to expect certain features on a home page, including the ability to find important links, access a site map and conduct a search.

Evidence-based guidelines have been developed to ensure that web-based communications are clear, consistent and created with the needs of the user in mind, including following Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. § 794 [d]) that requires Federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology (EIT) accessible to persons with disabilities. For additional information on Section 508 requirements, please visit http://www.section508.gov.

Finally, always coordinate with the appropriate public affairs office for guidance. The content on all DoD public facing internet and social media sites must be reviewed and approved by a government public affairs officer.

Promotional Materials

Printed promotional pieces should be tailored to suit the audience and can be basic or in-depth. These “leave behind” documents should be visually appealing and follow the general guidelines for reporting listed in Table 5 above. Many programs now operate Facebook pages and Twitter feeds that allow program personnel the chance to provide updates, receive feedback and respond to questions and pointers to these channels can be included in the printed materials. In many cases the public affairs office staffs and maintains the content on these channels directly, so always coordinate with them in advance. These sites provide opportunities to highlight program strengths and benefits for participants and other stakeholders. Flyers and brochures are useful in providing summary information to participants, the public and program partners to:

- Advertise or inform
- Recruit participants
- Generate referral
- Gather support

When designing a brochure, consider: audience, messaging and the best design and layout to complement your message. Additionally, the brochure needs a concept and a theme to tie it all together. Consistency and simplicity are key to a successful design that is geared toward the target audience (Pennsylvania State University, 2008).

Conclusion

At the conclusion of this module, Reporting Findings, program personnel should have developed the skills needed to identify key stakeholders and their most common areas of interest with respect to program evaluation results. Program personnel should be able to use strategic communications and apply best practices for various reporting formats to enhance stakeholder engagement. Reporting program evaluation findings to stakeholders and incorporating these processes into daily activities can increase program accountability, sustainability and future funding prospects.

Key Takeaways

- Stakeholder engagement is essential to program evaluation efforts and requires strategic communications in support of stakeholder interests
- Multiple reporting formats are needed to convey information effectively, highlight program successes and demonstrate program effectiveness to stakeholders
- Following communication best practices brings clarity to the program’s message to increase stakeholder support and sustainability

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2006). *Evaluation manual: Step 1 - Engage stakeholders*. Retrieved from: http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/program-planner/Step1.html

GSA Government-wide Section 508 Accessibility Program. Retrieved from: http://www.section508.gov/

Marketing Materials Best Practices (2008). Information Technologies (IT), College of Agricultural Sciences, Penn State. Retrieved from: http://agsci.psu.edu/it/files/MarketingMaterialsBP.pdf

Patton, M.Q. (2014). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4^{th} ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

U.S. Department Health and Human Services (2011). *Research-Based Web Design and Usability Guidelines*. Retrieved from: http://www.usability.gov/sites/default/files/documentsguidelinesbook.pdf?post=yes

Selected Resources for Additional Study

Best Practices Task Force, (2007). Best Practices Within the Promotional Products Industry. Retrieved from: http://www.ppai.org/members/supplier-resource-center/documents/suppbestpractices.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: http://www.cdc.gov/eval/index.htm

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1999). *Framework for program evaluation in public health*. MMWR, 48 (No. RR-11). Retrieved from: http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/ preview/ mmwrhtml/rr4811a1.htm

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2013). *Developing an effective evaluation report: Setting the course for effective program evaluation*. Retrieved from: http://www.cdc.gov/eval/materials/Developing-An-Effective-Evaluation-Report_TAG 508.pdf

DCoE Program Evaluation Guide: http://www.dcoe.mil/About_DCoE/Program_Evaluation/2015_Resources_and_Training.aspx

Deployment Health Clinical Center: http://www.pdhealth.mil/

Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center: http://dvbic.dcoe.mil/

DoD Manual for Written Material: http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/511004m_v1.pdf

DoD Plain Language Website: http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/plainlanguage.html

Fitzgerald, E. (2014). *Show and tell: Disseminating evaluation results*. Retrieved from Grant Professional Association website: http://grantprofessionals.org/site-map/articles/77-gpa/254-show-and-tell-disseminating-evaluation-results

Government Accountability Office (2012). *Designing evaluations* (GAO Report No.12-208G). Retrieved from: http://gao.gov/products/GAO-12-208G

Minnesota Department of Health: http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/opi/qi/toolbox

Michigan Public Health Training Center: http://miphtcdev.web.itd.umich.edu/trainings

National Center for Telehealth and Technology: http://www.t2.health.mil/

National Network of Libraries of Medicine: http://nnlm.gov/evaluation/guides.html

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: http://captus.samhsa.gov/access-resources/reporting-your-evaluation-results

The Community Tool Box, University of Kansas: http://ctb.ku.edu/en

Template A. Basic Communications Plan

Use the template to customize a communications plan.

Target Audience	Messaging Goals	Format	Timeframe
Implementation Team			
Participants and Community			
Decision Makers			