

# RESOURCES FOR ANALYZING EVALUATION OPTIONS

## TIP SHEET

There is a wide range of evaluation resources available to alcohol and other drug prevention programs including:

1. Web-based evaluation information
2. Internal staff with graduate training in evaluation
3. Graduate students in disciplines such as public health that are looking for "hands on" opportunities/projects
4. Outside, independent evaluators

### Web-based Evaluation Information

- ▶ CSAP <http://preventionpathways.samhsa.gov/>
- ▶ WestCAPT <http://casat.unr.edu/westcapt/>
- ▶ Aspen Institute <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/Programt3.asp?bid=1278>
- ▶ Community Tool Box [http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/tools/EN/part\\_1010.htm](http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/tools/EN/part_1010.htm)
- ▶ Kellogg Foundation <http://www.wkkf.org/Programming/Overview.aspx?CID=281>

### Internal Evaluation

In many cases, program evaluations can be undertaken by program staff. Consider the following factors when designing an internal evaluation:

#### *Pros*

- There is no extra cost associated with staffing the evaluation
- Often staff know more about the program and what it is designed to do, so they can design a more appropriate evaluation, evaluation instruments, etc.

#### *Cons*

- Often staff get busy with other things and evaluation becomes a very low priority
- Staff may not have adequate training to design and carry out an evaluation, design instruments, etc.
- Staff evaluations may not be seen as legitimate by certain parties such as outside funding agencies.

## External Evaluation

1. Graduate students: Graduate students, particularly those specializing in public health or public administration, are an often-untapped pool for evaluation assistance. These students are often required to take on a research project during their graduate studies and are looking for places where they could do some research. These students provide a low cost form of evaluation assistance. However, just like hiring for any job, you need to review resumes, conduct good interviews, and get references. You also need to supervise this person to be sure the work is on target.

### *Pros*

- › Low cost, sometimes even free
- › Can bring a high degree of enthusiasm
- › Because of their low cost, they may be able to undertake more labor-intensive evaluation methods, e.g. participant observation, etc.

### *Cons*

- › They can get off track, pursuing their own interests rather than your program interests.
- › They can be unreliable, particularly if they are volunteering.
- › They can be uninformed about CSAP or ADP directives regarding research-based prevention and outcome evaluation.

2. Professional evaluators: Professional evaluators have a wealth of experience that can save you time and money, even if their hourly rate is higher than someone less experienced. Evaluators who use participatory methods will allow your staff to get more involved in the design and implementation of evaluations. (See Working With an Outside Evaluator tip sheet, page 5-3.)

### *Pros*

- › They often have years of experience that from which you can benefit.
- › They are often well-versed on mandates from funding agencies
- › They can provide a fresh perspective as an outside observer.
- › If the purpose of evaluation is to try to get the program validated as a model program, it may be more appropriate to use an outside evaluator.

### *Cons*

- › You generally have to pay more for their experience and expertise
- › They can be unwilling to work with or train staff interested in evaluation
- › They can take your data off-site, do data entry into programs that you are unable to access, or believe they "own" your data,
- › They can be wedded to a preferred kind of evaluation, e.g. quantitative vs. qualitative, not being responsive to your funding requirements.
- › They may have numerous clients and therefore not be as accessible as might be needed.