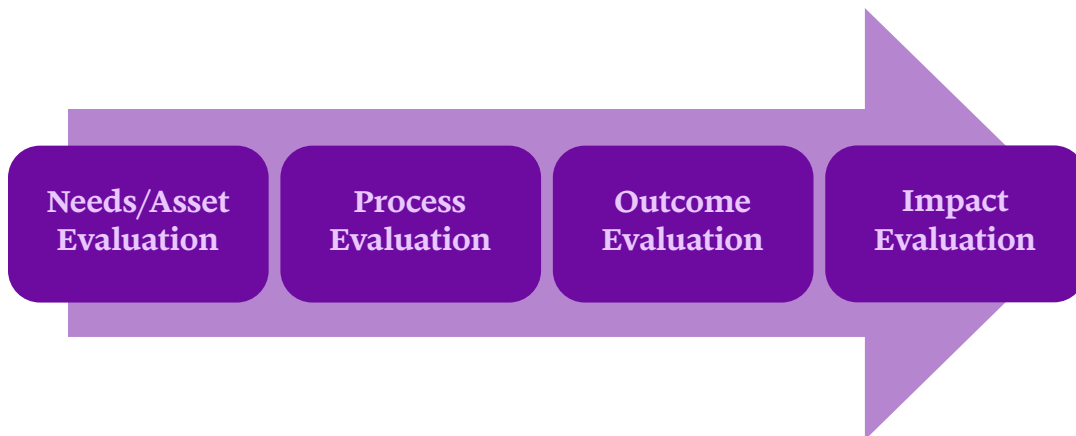


## 8 Steps to Evaluating the Effectiveness of Training

How often do you design a training and then remember at the last minute that you haven't created an evaluation form? It happens all the time because for many of us, evaluation is either intimidating or, in the greater scheme, doesn't seem as urgent as finishing your slides or completing participant handouts. The reality is, you are probably already doing evaluation if you are designing education, you just don't realize it.

Evaluation is fundamental to education and though we often don't think about it until the end of the design, it really should be the first thing we consider. But how do you evaluate something you haven't designed yet? The reality is that evaluation is iterative and should begin at the very first stages of your design and continue throughout and after delivery.



Let's imagine you are designing an educational session for court-based mediators on the impact of domestic violence on children and you want to incorporate evaluation so that you can provide the course several more times and continue to improve the content. What steps should you take to evaluate whether your training had the impact you hope for?

Before you begin, take a moment to ask this foundational question. *What is the problem I am trying to solve with education?*

Once you have answered that question. You have the foundation of a big picture education goal. A goal is a description of where you expect your learner to be at the very end of the education. So if you have a problem you are trying to solve with education, your goal is the aspirational statement of where you want to **GO**.

Let's consider the example of an educational session for mediators on the impact of domestic violence on children. What is the problem?

*Mediators don't understand that domestic violence has an impact on children even if they are not directly harmed themselves.*

With that problem in mind, what is a goal for your session?

Perhaps we could use a working goal: *Develop education for court-based mediators to help them identify the impact of domestic violence on children who are exposed.*

Based on your goal, we can now embark on the first real evaluative process: *a needs assessment.*

## **Step 1: Needs Assessment**

The first step of your evaluation plan is the first step of a good curriculum or educational design process: needs assessment. Before you design any educational programming, it is essential that you consider your intended audience and identify the knowledge, skills and habits that the audience needs to learn, practice or adopt in a given subject. The gathering of such information is, in and of itself, evaluation. In our example, ask yourself and others who have a vested interest in the outcome of this topic:

*What do mediators need and want to learn about the impact of domestic violence on children who are exposed? Sometimes it is helpful to break these needs out into three buckets: knowledge, skills and habits. In other words, what knowledge, skills or habits do mediators need when approaching these types of cases?*

After you create a comprehensive list, rank the items in terms of importance. This will help you prioritize the topics you must include in your session.

## **Step 2: Define Clear Objectives**

Clearly define the objectives of your training program. What specific knowledge, skills, or behavior changes do you expect participants to gain?

*Example: "As a result of this educational session, learners will be better able to (1) identify three impacts that domestic violence can have on children who are exposed; and (2) consider how the impacts of domestic violence on children apply to your recommendations in custody determinations.."*

### **Step 3: Identify Sub-Objectives and Engaging Learning Activities**

When planning a training with multiple activities, draft clear objectives for each learning activity that participants will engage in. Design interactive activities that allow learners to absorb information, apply it in practical scenarios, and connect it to their work.

### **Step 4: Select Appropriate Evaluation Methods**

In the example we have been using, consider conducting pre- and post-surveys. These are most effective if you link an individual's learning journey, so consider assigning each learner a unique identifier that will keep their identity private, but that you can use to link their pre and post answers.

You should always conduct evaluation throughout a training both through direct solicitation of feedback and observation. This can be as simple as periodically asking for people's reactions to what they are learning and also, observing how they actually engage in the activities you designed. This is not necessarily about gauging whether an individual learner enjoyed the segment or found the information interesting or even relevant, it is about whether or not the learner is engaging with the activities as contemplated and whether they achieved the activities' objectives. One easy way to do this is through an Activity Based Assessment. For each learning activity in your training, you can construct a rubric to determine how effective the activity itself was, and then utilize the findings for iterative curricula improvement.

Learners' written evaluations are another way to collect evaluative data. It is best to do these periodically if you are hosting a longer education program, such as one or more days. If you wait until the very end, you are unlikely to get responses that reflect the entire program. Evaluations should be brief and apply to the learner's assessment of the content and its relevance and usefulness to them.

Interviews with learners are also a useful method to collect data. Overall, consider both quantitative and qualitative information. While output (i.e. numbers reached for instance) is often important for progress reporting and to show scale and reach of a training, impact is what demonstrates "learning transfer" or whether the learner actually "got it." Impact is difficult to assess using quantitatively.

For more information and an overview of sample assessment methods, please refer to the linked document [here](#).

### **Step 5: Develop User-Friendly Evaluation Tools**

Create user-friendly evaluation tools that participants can easily understand and complete. Keep the language simple and avoid jargon. For example, here are three questions asked after each half day of a three-day judicial institute:

1. What was most important about this segment?
2. How could we improve this segment?
3. How will you use this in your work?

**Step 6: Set Realistic Data Collection Points**

Determine when and how often you will collect data to evaluate the training's effectiveness.

If you would like to assess an individual's learning transfer, it is helpful to try pre and post evaluations that are linked to the individual through an anonymous and unique identifier.

Post evaluations are useful even if you are not conducting individual pre- and post- analysis. Post-program evaluations should occur at least three months after the learning event if you wish to assess for behavior change. Consider collecting data immediately after the training and at specific intervals afterward.

In our example, we were conducting a two-day training for mediators on children's exposure to domestic violence. In addition to the needs assessment that we would conduct before the training, we could:

- Conduct a pre-evaluation immediately before the training event.
- Assess learner engagement and performance during the event both through observation and through activity-based assessments.
- Collect written evaluations from mediators at half day intervals.
- Collect an evaluation at the very end of the program.
- Conduct interviews with learners approximately 3-6 months after the program.

- Assess the data.
- Revise, Re-deliver, and re-assess!

**Step 7: Communicate the Purpose and Benefits**

Clearly communicate to participants the purpose of evaluation and the benefits it brings, such as improving future training programs and meeting their needs effectively.

*Example: Explain that their feedback will help identify areas of improvement, tailor future training sessions, and enhance the overall learning experience.*

**Step 8: Analyze and Share Findings**

Analyze the collected data and identify patterns, trends, and areas for improvement. Prepare a summary report or presentation to share the findings with relevant stakeholders.

Remember, evaluation is a valuable tool for continuous improvement. Emphasize the positive impact that data collection and evaluation can have on future training programs.

Evaluation is ongoing and should occur continuously in order to provide effective, engaging and relevant education.

**Example: Court-Based Mediator Training Evaluation**

After conducting the training session for court-based mediators on impact of domestic violence on children, you collect feedback through post-training surveys and participant reflections. Upon analyzing the data, you notice a pattern: mediators express a need for more in-depth training on culturally sensitive responses when working with survivors from

diverse backgrounds. You identify this as a crucial area for improvement. You prepare a summary report that highlights this trend and recommend developing additional training modules focused on cultural responsiveness. You share these findings with the organization's leadership, emphasizing how these enhancements can improve the support provided to survivors, leading to more effective and personalized care.

---

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Contact the Center for Justice Innovation's Technical Assistance Team at [dvinfo@innovatingjustice.org](mailto:dvinfo@innovatingjustice.org) and/or Futures Without Violence's Institute for Leadership in Education Development (I-LED) at [futureswithoutviolence.org/ILED](http://futureswithoutviolence.org/ILED) for additional guidance on creating inclusive learning environments.

This project was supported by Grant No. 15JOVW-22-AG-04354-MUMU awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Justice.

**Center for Justice Innovation**

---

520 Eighth Avenue  
New York, NY 10018

p. 646.386.3100  
f. 212.397.0985

[innovatingjustice.org](http://innovatingjustice.org)