Evaluation Design

Tobacco Control Evaluation Center

There are three options for evaluation design in tobacco control: **1) non-experimental; 2) quasi-experimental; and 3) experimental**. The evaluation design for most CTCP-funded objectives is classified as non-experimental design.

For objectives that require Outcome Evaluation, there are two feasible evaluation design choices: non-experimental or quasi-experimental. Each of these is described in more detail below.

Non-experimental design

The most common design, non-experimental design involves comparing data from the community of interest (also known as the intervention group) before and after a program's efforts. This is the least rigorous study design because it can only provide a weak indication of a possible connection between program efforts and the intended outcome. However, it is useful in many situations when a stronger design is not appropriate or when resources are limited.

Quasi-experimental design

Quasi-experimental design is more rigorous because it involves either comparisons with other groups or multiple measurements over time. With comparison groups, the intervention group and a control group have similar baseline characteristics so that any difference between the two groups measured after interventions were made can be better attributed to program efforts. Assignment to groups is organized by demographic characteristics, convenience, availability, or non-random. Multiple measurements over time (at least three points in time, e.g., before, during, and after, or one before and two after policy implementation), allows projects to treat one group as both the treatment and comparison group. If there are only two points in time, it must be classified as non-experimental.

Experimental design

In OTIS, projects may also see the option experimental design, but it is not used in local programs. This is the most convincing and rigorous study design for demonstrating that program efforts caused the intended outcome. A randomized control trial is a type of experimental design that requires at least one intervention group, one control group, AND randomized assignment of the groups in the study. However, this method is resource intensive and often unethical in local California Tobacco Control contexts as we would not intentionally withhold lifesaving interventions from a group simply for research purposes. For this reason, local projects should employ either a non-experimental or quasi-experimental design.

Note: The design type should be stated in the evaluation summary narrative of the work plan for each objective.