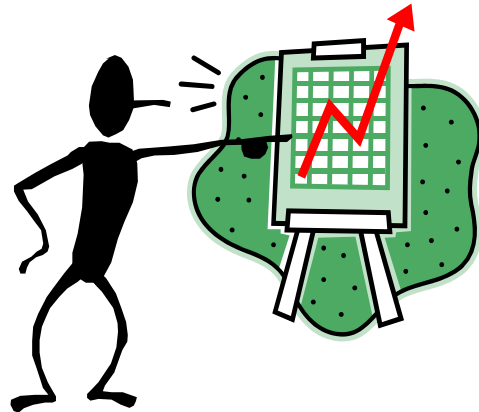


# Getting To Outcomes (GTO)



## 10 Steps for Achieving Results-Based Accountability

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## **“Getting To Outcomes” Offers 10 How-To Steps for High Quality, Outcome-based Programs**

In 2004, the RAND Corporation published an approach called Getting To Outcomes—GTO for short—with the aim of helping communities develop or improve their substance abuse prevention programs. The authors are Matthew Chinman, Pamela Imm, and Abraham Wandersman. RAND’s work was supported by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and since 2004 GTO has been adapted for use in a wide range of programs.

GTO consists of 10 steps that empower program developers to:

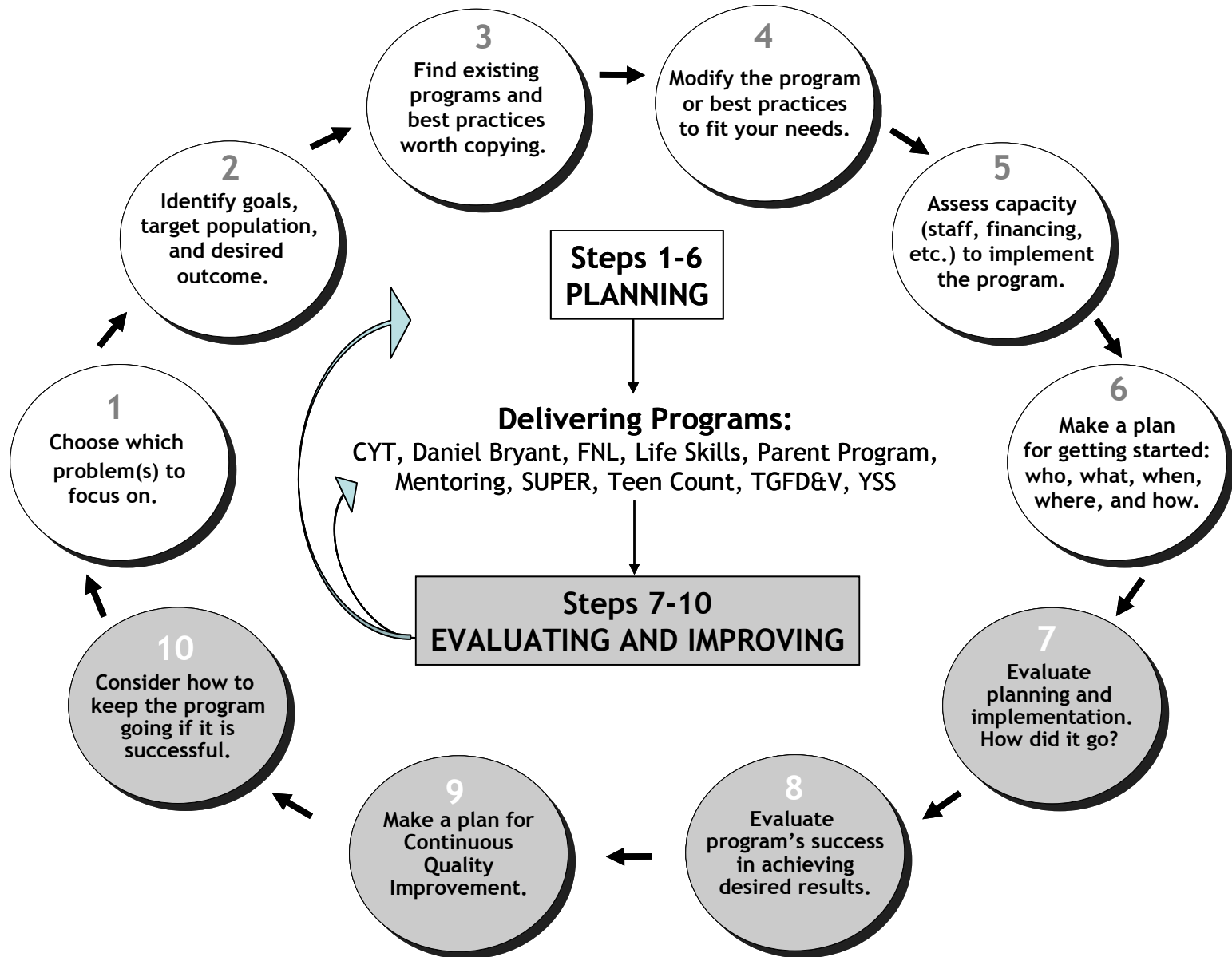
- **Plan** effective programs that are accountable and achieve intended outcomes. The GTO model is flexible enough to facilitate many different types of programs.
- **Implement** the programs.
- **Evaluate** the programs to see how well they worked, continuously improve them, and provide outcomes data to funders. GTO provides tools for demonstrating that a program works and that it uses its resources effectively to achieve and sustain projected goals and outcomes.

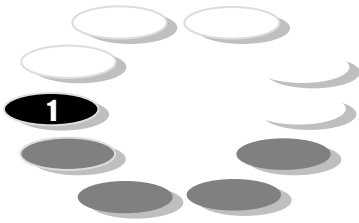
### **This GTO Summary Describes the 10 Steps**

The 10 GTO steps are described briefly in the following pages. For more detailed information, see the manual, *Getting To Outcomes 2004: Promoting Accountability through Methods and Tools for Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation* (GTO-04). The GTO manual can be downloaded from the Web without charge. See [http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical\\_reports/TR101/](http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR101/).

Included in the manual is an example of how GTO was used in a real-life situation by a substance-abuse prevention program. We call the example “WINNERS.”

# The 10 Steps

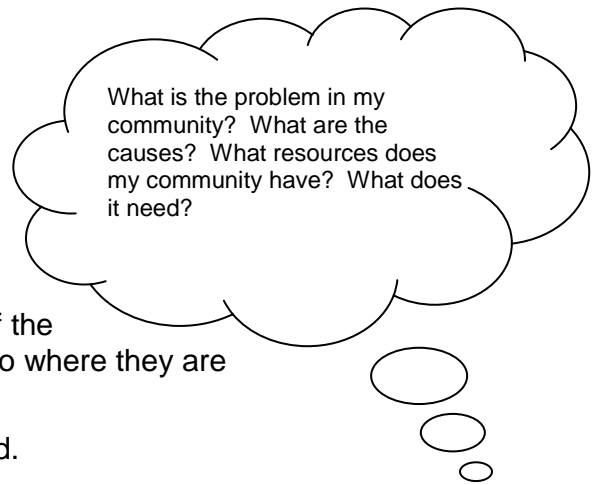




## Step 1: Conduct a needs assessment; choose which problems to focus on.

### Why?

- Get first-hand knowledge of the problems you are trying to fix and the clients you work with.
- Prioritize start-up tasks and narrow scope of the effort. Funnel time, energy, and resources to where they are needed most.
- Plan a program that addresses the real need.



### How?

- Gather expertise, opinions and hard data about the problem and its causes and about your community's current conditions, needs, and existing resources.
- Use several different methods to gather information and data. For example: community discussion forums, interviews with experts, surveys, and research of existing information and data.

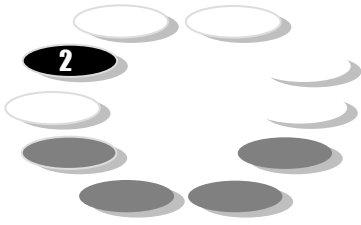


### Key Points

- A needs assessment does not have to take a long time or be expensive or complicated.
- A needs assessment can also be directed at those you currently serve to assess the need for a new program or service.
- Your community's "resources" include policies, previous programs, volunteers, facilities, and local expertise, as well as financial support.

### Linking the Steps Together

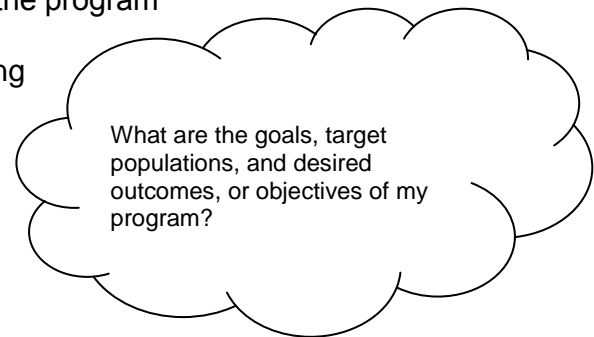
Knowing more about the problems or need for services will help you set realistic goals and objectives in Step 2. In Step 2 you will think about what you want the intervention to do, who it will be for, what changes you want to see as a result, when the change will be seen, and how the change will be measured.



## Step 2: Identify goals for the program, the people you want to target with the intervention, and desired outcomes (objectives).

### Why?

- Focuses your program on your target population and objectives.
- Makes it possible to judge the “success” of the program based on whether or not it meets specific objectives or makes progress toward meeting long-term objectives.
- Achieving specific objectives can support the case for continued funding.



### How?

- Write *goals* as broad statements that describe what you want to accomplish in the long-term.
- Focus on one group of people and tell how the program will help them change.
- Write *objectives* in concrete terms that can be measured. What will change, for whom, by how much, and by when? Include how the change will be measured.

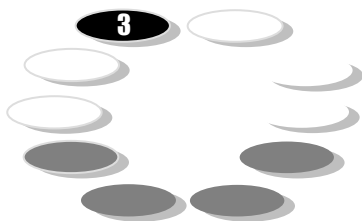


### Key Points

- If you select an existing program that serves your target population, it is likely that goals have already been identified.
- Make sure your objectives are realistic given your time and resources.

### Linking the Steps Together

Step 3 suggests that you take a look at the programs that are already out there that research has shown to be effective. You might be able to adapt one of these existing programs to fit your needs rather than starting from scratch.



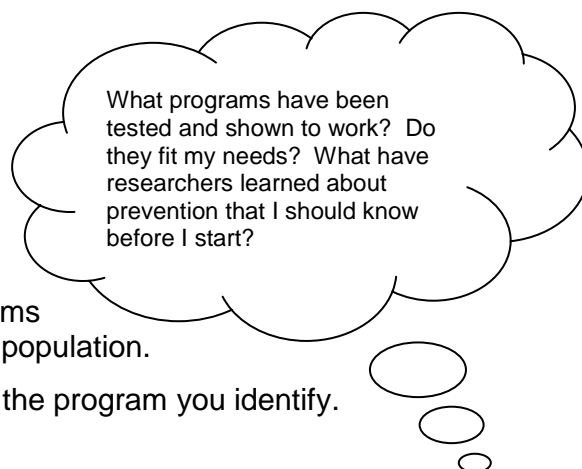
## Step 3: Look for existing programs and best practices worth copying.

### Why?

- Take advantage of the experience of others accomplishing what you need and want to accomplish for your community—you don't have to reinvent the wheel.
- Spend your resources wisely, on programs that have been shown to work.
- Reassure funders that your program is based on research and is likely to make a difference.

### How?

- Use the resources in libraries and on web sites (for example, [http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/sppd/eff\\_practices/](http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/sppd/eff_practices/)) Talk to other people in your field.
- Look for programs that match your needs in terms of content area (access to services) and target population.
- Make sure you have the resources to carry out the program you identify.



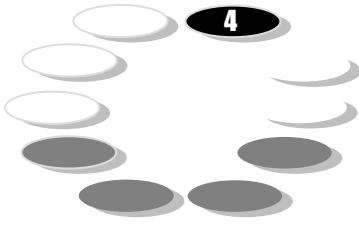
### Key Points

- It is more likely that you will achieve your goals if you use programs that have been shown to work for the particular problem you are trying to solve.
- If you copy a program that has been tested and shown to work, it is important to implement the program in the same way to get the same positive results.
- You can make changes to the program to make it fit your needs, but make sure it follows basic prevention best practices.



### Linking the Steps Together

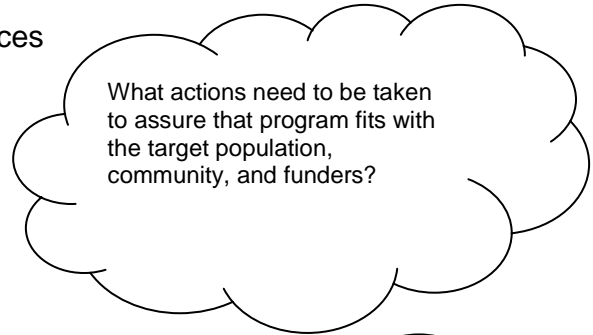
In Step 4, you will learn more about how to assure that the program will fit your community's goals, target population, and objectives.



## Step 4: Examine the program you chose and see how well it fits the needs of your target population and community.

### Why?

- Increase the chances that the program will be accepted by the target population and community.
- Avoid offering duplicate or incompatible services to the target population.
- Avoid finding out at the evaluation stage that the program failed because it was a mismatch with the target population or community.



### How?

- Use the data collected in Step 1. Compare the population that was helped by the program you selected with your target population.
- Consider whether your community is ready to accept your program (for example, talk to community leaders).
- Consider whether the selected program is compatible with other programs already offered to the target population

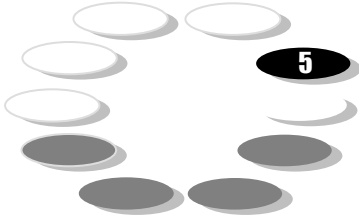


### Key Points

- Fit can be the relationship between new and old programs directed at the same target population.
- A new program can be modified or, if necessary, a different program can be selected.
- Fit might not relate to the program itself. For example, if the program is opposed by a group of parents, the fit problem may go away if you communicate with them more fully and address their concerns.

### Linking the Steps Together

In Step 5, you will evaluate what your organization or coalition needs in order to deliver the selected program.



## Step 5: Assess whether your organization has the capacity to implement the program.

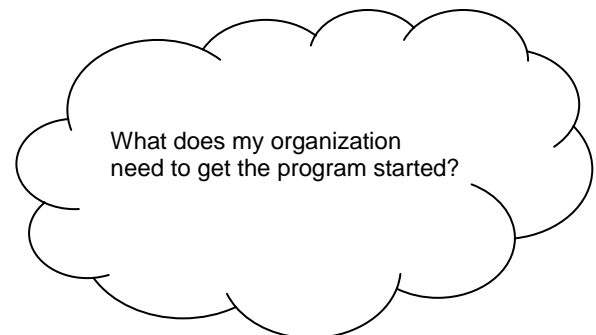
### Why?

- Prevent the program from failing by identifying and correcting human, technical, and fiscal resource shortfalls before they sabotage your success.
- Build and maintain goodwill by ensuring that no one person is overburdened.
- Meet the goals and objectives of the program.
- Make sure each member of the collaboration is clear on their roles and responsibilities, if you are planning the program with a collaboration of agencies.

### How?

Evaluate whether there is enough:

- Funding from grants, gifts, sponsorship, fund raising events, sale of products, and special tax set-asides.
- Staff—enough people and the right type of experience, and what training might be needed.
- Expertise, especially evaluation skills.
- Contacts with the community and target population for collaboration.



### Key Points

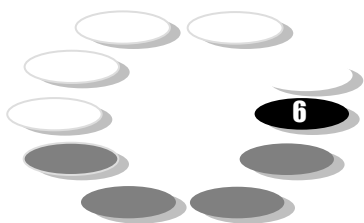
- The four capacities listed above represent what research has shown to be important in planning, implementing, and evaluating prevention programs.
- If you do not have enough capacity, you may be able to improve it. For example, staff can be trained and new grants can be written.
- If significant resource shortfalls are found, seriously consider choosing a different program.



### Linking the Steps Together

You have identified the need and target population in Step 1, determined your goals and objectives in Step 2, identified a program in Step 3, considered the program's fit and your capacity in Steps 4 and 5. Now, in Step 6, you will make a specific plan to actually start the program.

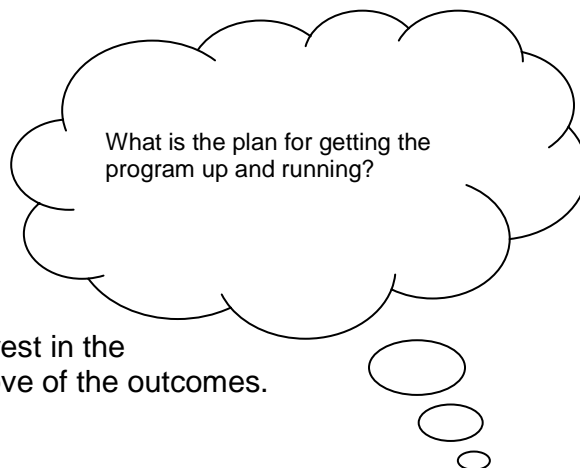




## Step 6: Make a plan for implementing the program.

### Why?

- Make sure you don't forget any tasks.
- Forecast the need for changes before problems arise.
- Engage a variety of people who have an interest in the program to make it more likely they will approve of the outcomes.



### How?

- Give your program a name.
- Prepare a roadmap by answering these questions.
  - **Who** will do the implementation?
  - **What** needs to be done? What are the main pieces of your program? What tasks will each person do?
  - **When** will they do it? By when will the tasks be done?
  - **Where** will the tasks be done?
  - **How** will the tasks be done?
  - **Why** will the tasks be done? Make sure all activities are important.
  - **What** are the process outcomes (e.g. numbers & hours of each activity, number of target population served and how often, etc.)?
  - **What** will happen/change for participants/agencies because of participation (participant outcomes)?

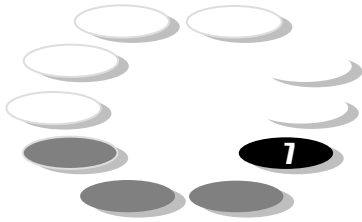


### Key Points

- Planning includes outlining activities, staffing, locations, and timelines and stating up front what you expect for attendance, duration of activities, and resources needed.
- The program will fit your community better if you pay attention to the cultural relevance of program materials, staff, language, and even any food offered.
- Putting the program in place will go better if you include in the process everybody who has an interest in the program, including funders.

### Linking the Steps Together

In Step 7 you will evaluate how the implementation process went.



## Step 7: Think ahead about how you will know whether the program has been implemented successfully.

### Why?

- Make needed changes while the program is running.
- Maintain consistency from the plan for the program, to implementation, and to desired outcomes.
- Understand strengths and weaknesses of the implementation for future planning.



### How?

Answer questions such as:

- What activities were actually implemented (versus what was planned)?
- Was the program implemented on time?
- What was done well (e.g. with fidelity to the best-practice program you selected)?
- Were program participants the population the program was intended to reach
- What mid course corrections should be made?

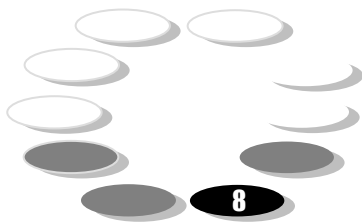


### Key Points

- A process evaluation should start before the program starts and continue while the program is running.
- Doing both a process and outcome evaluation (Step 8) is important to get a complete picture of the program's effectiveness.
- A process evaluation can involve asking questions of staff and/or program recipients, taking attendance at program activities, or tracking how well the program stuck to the plan (i.e., fidelity).

### Linking the Steps Together

Now you have a plan for evaluating the process of putting the program in place. In Step 8, you will make a plan for evaluating participant outcomes of the program.



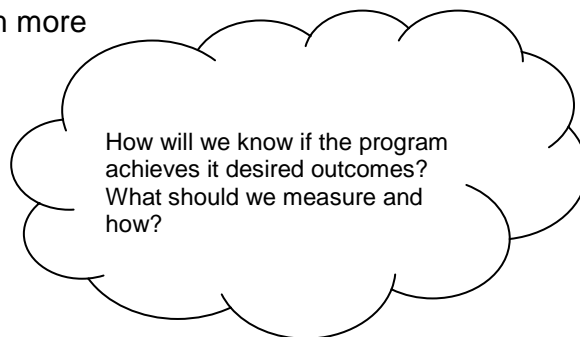
## Step 8: Think ahead about how you will measure whether the program meets its goals, reaches its target audience, and achieves its desired outcomes.

### Why?

- Get evidence that your program worked (or didn't).
- Produce facts and numbers that persuade funders to continue their support.
- Identify changes that could make the program more successful.

### How?

- Choose a design and methods for data collection and analysis.
  - Decide what will be measured; for example, actual results from referrals? Results from advocacy?
  - Decide who will be measured, when, and how—with what type of survey, interview, etc.
  - Make a plan for analysis and interpretation of the data. This may require outside consultants.
- Think about ethics issues such as consent, confidentiality, and anonymity.
- Combine process data from Step 7 with outcome data to learn about the program's effectiveness.

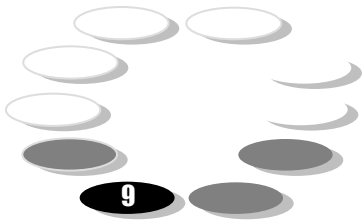


### Key Points

- An outcomes evaluation often measures the target group's attitudes, skills and behaviors to see if they have changed. It is good, especially, to evaluate behaviors (e.g. communication among agency staff).
- Designs and different methods for data collection and analysis all have benefits and costs that need to be weighed.
- It is better to measure more people rather than fewer and long-lasting rather than short-term changes.
- Don't confuse process with outcomes; for example, number of classes taught versus change in behavior among students.

### Linking the Steps Together

In Step 9, you will learn how to use information from all the previous steps to continuously evaluate and improve your program.



## Step 9: Make a plan for continuous quality improvement of the program.

### Why?

- Take advantage of what you learn over time to improve the program.
- Incorporate changes into the program without starting over.
- Keep your program fresh and a good fit for your target population and community.

How will Continuous Quality Improvement strategies be incorporated?

### How?

- In an orderly way, look at the information and data you have about the planning, implementation, and outcomes of the program.
- Start with Step 1 and review Steps 1-8.
- Think about what the process and participant outcome data tell you about how you could improve the program.

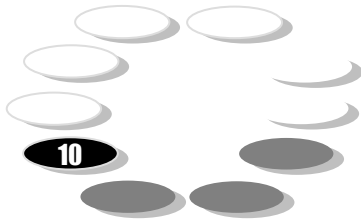


### Key Points

- When you keep track of what works well, you can use the same methods in the future.
- Develop a culture of organizational learning in which everyone is open to learning and continuously making the program better.
- Investing in evaluation makes sense when evaluation findings are used for improvement.

### Linking the Steps Together

In Step 10, you will learn how to find additional funding to keep your successful program going.



## Step 10: Consider what will be needed to keep the program going if it is successful.

### Why?

- If the original problem still exists, the program will still be needed.
- Get the payoff from the large investment in *starting* the program.
- Maintain the good feeling your successful program generated in the community and funders.

If the program is successful, how can we sustain it? How can we pay for the program after the first money runs out?

### How?

- Determine if the program works, addresses the community's needs, and should be sustained.
- Begin planning for more funding before the first funding runs out.
- Obtain funding from more than one source to maintain independence and stability.



### Key Points

The likelihood of continued funding depends on several factors, such as whether:

- The organization that sponsors the program likes the program and it meets political needs.
- Multiple staff are trained to run the program.
- The program has an influential advocate.

### Linking the Steps Together

Use information from other steps to determine if this program should be continued (e.g., Steps 7, 8, 9). Use information from Step 8 and Step 9 to make an argument to funders to continue support.