

A2J Evaluation and Research Options

	Question	When To Use	Methods	Usefulness	Limitations	Examples
Formative Assessment	1. Who, What, Where – What is known about the landscape within which your program operates? (e.g., population demographics and needs, access to services, infrastructure, laws and policies, other trends)	When launching a new program, modifying an existing one, or periodically tracking population changes over time.	<p>Qualitative:</p> <p>(1) Focus groups with users; (2) Interviews with stakeholders; (3) Direct observation</p> <p>Quantitative:</p> <p>(4) Analysis of program; administrative data (5) Analysis of external data sets (e.g., U.S. Census data)</p>	<p>This approach will help determine whether a program is a good fit for accomplishing its intended goals by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> describing the landscape before introducing a new program; guiding modifications to a planned program before full implementation; periodically tracking whether the landscape has changed over time; describing the need for funding and resources 	<p>Methodology: this approach is descriptive. It will not determine if a program is working as designed, i.e., if it is or will be effective.</p> <p>Implementation: it is difficult to draw conclusions about the population based on data from a sample. It is also difficult to obtain high/representative response rates to surveys.</p>	<p>FED. COMM. COMM'N, BROADBAND PROGRESS REPORT (2016).</p> <p>AM. BAR ASSOC., SUPPORTING JUSTICE: A REPORT ON THE PRO BONO WORK OF AMERICA'S LAWYERS (2018).</p> <p>The Justice Index; also see this overview.</p> <p>List of legal needs assessments, compiled by the American Bar Association</p>
Process Evaluation	2. What - Does the program operate the way it was intended to operate? Does it run smoothly? Was it implemented as designed?	At the time of program launch or during operation.	<p>Qualitative:</p> <p>(1) Interviews with program staff; (2) Direct observation; (3) Client surveys</p> <p>Quantitative:</p> <p>(4) Client surveys; (5) Statistical analysis of administrative data</p>	<p>This approach will help determine whether a program or program is accomplishing actually its goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it operating according to the implementation plan (e.g., is it reaching its target population). Is it faltering in any respect (e.g., enabling program administrators to see if protocols are being followed) 	<p>Methodology: this approach is descriptive. It will not determine if a program is or will be effective.</p> <p>Implementation: it is difficult to draw conclusions about the population based on data from a sample or beta testers. It is also difficult to obtain high/representative response rates to surveys.</p>	<p>THOMAS M. CLARKE & REBECCA L. SANDEFUR, PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF THE WASHINGTON STATE LIMITED LICENSE LEGAL TECHNICIAN PROGRAM (2017).</p> <p>JUDICIAL COUNSEL OF CALIF. ADMIN. OFFICE OF THE COURTS, MODEL SELF-HELP PILOT PROGRAMS--A REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE (2005).</p> <p>BRIDGEPORT CONSULTING, MICHIGAN LEGAL HELP EVALUATION REPORT (2015).</p>

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Return on Investment Evaluation	3. Cost - What are the economic benefits of the program compared to its costs? Is the program cost-effective and sustainable?	Before program launch and during the operation of an existing program	<p>Quantitative & Qualitative:</p> <p>(1) Cost-benefit/economic impact analysis (2) Return on investment analysis</p>	This approach will help determine the sustainability of a program, namely: the efficiency or economic viability of a program through a comparison of costs incurred against benefits yielded. It provides administrators and funders with evidence of the program's financial feasibility. It may also help you secure additional funding.	<p>Methodology: this approach focuses only on relative costs and benefits. It will not reveal if a contemplated or implemented program is effective.</p> <p>Implementation: it does not necessarily provide a holistic understanding of savings, through community improvements and other social impacts, and it often does not include costs to the clients themselves.</p>	<p>BOSTON BAR ASS'N, INVESTING IN JUSTICE: A ROADMAP TO COST-EFFECTIVE FUNDING OF CIVIL LEGAL AID IN MASSACHUSETTS (2014).</p> <p>STOUT RISIUS ROSS, INC., THE FINANCIAL COST AND BENEFITS OF ESTABLISHING RIGHT TO COUNSEL IN EVICTION PROCEEDINGS UNDER INTRO 214-A (2016).</p> <p>GREACEN ASSOC., LLC, THE BENEFITS AND COSTS OF PROGRAMS TO ASSIST SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS (2009).</p>
Outcome Evaluation	4. Outcomes - Is my program associated with positive or negative outcomes its recipients/users?	At the conclusion of a pilot phase, perhaps at appropriate intervals during the program's existence	Observational (e.g., pre-post) statistical analysis, perhaps combined with quantitative or qualitative outcome measurements	This approach will help you determine, with some caveats, the efficacy of a program, i.e., whether and to what extent a program has met the goals that its designers intended to affect as well as any unintended consequences	<p>Methodology: this approach provides at least correlational, possibly close to <i>causal</i> information on a program's effectiveness, depending on the method(s) deployed</p> <p>Implementation: it can be difficult to identify and rule out confounding factors. The extent to which a study of this design will measure the intended causal pathways depends the extent to which confounding variables are identified, measured, and controlled for using statistical techniques.</p>	Jessica K. Steinberg, <i>In Pursuit of Justice? Case Outcomes and the Delivery of Unbundled Legal Services</i>, 18 GEO. J. ON POVERTY L. & POL'Y 453 (2011).

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Natural / Quasi-Experimental	5. Outcomes - Does my program <i>seem to cause</i> any positive or negative outcomes for the recipients/users?	At the conclusion of a pilot phase, perhaps at appropriate intervals during the program's existence	Assignment to program or control, but using criterion other than random assignment (e.g., eligibility cutoff) followed by a combination of quantitative or qualitative outcome measurements	This approach can provide some causal evidence of a program's effectiveness if the underlying quasi-experimental framework is valid. This approach may be an option when a true experimental design is not practical or ethical	<p>Methodology: this approach can mimic full causal inference but is not as strong as a true experimental design</p> <p>Implementation: it can be difficult to rule out confounding factors; the extent to which this design will measure the intended causal pathways depends on the extent to which confounding variables are identified, measured, and controlled for using statistical techniques.</p>	<p>JILL T. MESSING ET AL., POLICE DEPARTMENTS' USE OF THE LETHALITY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM: A QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL EVALUATION (2014).</p> <p>GREACEN ASSOC., LLC, NORTH DAKOTA SUPREME COURT FAMILY MEDIATION PILOT PROGRAM EVALUATION (2012).</p>
Experimental Evaluation	6. Outcomes - Does my program <i>cause</i> any positive or negative outcomes for the recipients/users?	At the conclusion of a pilot phase or after an initial phase of data collection	Randomized control trials, which formally assign units to program or control (e.g., using a lottery) followed by a combination of quantitative or qualitative outcome measurements	Provides causal evidence of a program's effectiveness	<p>Implementation: This method will often provide a narrow answer to a research question that is specific to the case type and population and therefore may require replication in other locations with other participants. It is also resource- and time-intensive and requires careful attention to selection mechanisms and compliance with ethical standards</p>	<p>D. James Greiner, Cassandra Wolos Pattanayak & Jonathan Hennessy, <i>The Limits of Unbundled Legal Assistance: A Randomized Study in a Massachusetts District Court and Prospects for the Future</i>, 126 HARV. L. REV. 901 (2012).</p> <p>JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIF., EVALUATION OF THE SARGENT SHRIVER CIVIL COUNSEL ACT (2017).</p>