



Elite Research, LLC.

Evaluability Assessment Tool

2025



Evaluability Assessment Tool

Purpose

The Evaluability Assessment Tool (EAT) is designed to help organizations determine whether a program or project is ready to be evaluated. The EAT draws upon established evaluability frameworks commonly used by nonprofits, foundations, and public agencies. The tool assesses critical dimensions of readiness across organizational capacity, leadership, program design, implementation, data quality, evaluation feasibility, and reporting and use of findings. It is structured to identify strengths, surface potential barriers, and provide clear recommendations about next steps before investing in an evaluation.

The primary purposes of the EAT are to:

1. Assess whether your program is sufficiently defined, implemented, and supported to benefit from an evaluation.
2. Highlight gaps in program design, data systems, leadership alignment, or implementation that may need to be addressed before evaluation.
3. Help organizations determine whether a **process**, **outcome**, or **impact** evaluation is appropriate based on current readiness.
4. Provide actionable recommendations—such as proceeding with evaluation, modifying the program, building infrastructure, or reassessing program viability.
5. Encourage a culture of reflective practice and evidence-informed decision-making across your organization.

Timing

The EAT should be completed at key moments when your organization is considering, planning, or preparing for an evaluation. The ideal times to use this assessment include:

1. Before launching an evaluation or before writing an evaluation RFP, hiring an evaluator, or initiating any formal evaluation activities. This ensures that your program is sufficiently designed, implemented, and supported to benefit from an evaluation. An evaluability assessment is strongly recommended at this stage.
2. During program design or redesign, which includes developing a new program, preparing a pilot or early-stage implementation, or revising an existing program model. This helps identify design gaps (e.g., unclear outcomes, missing logic model) before they become evaluation barriers.
3. At the early stage of program implementation sometime within the first 6–12 months of implementation to assess whether the program is stable enough for a process or outcome evaluation.
4. Before investing in outcome or impact evaluation, to ensure the necessary infrastructure, data, and stability are in place. An evaluability assessment is strongly recommended before any major evaluation investment.
5. When significant changes occur that could affect evaluability, such as new leadership, revised program goals, expansion or scaling, new target populations, and changes in data systems or requirements.
6. During organizational evaluation planning cycles (if your organization conducts these), to serve as a routine check-up to prioritize which programs are ready for evaluation in a given year.



General Tool Instructions

There are 2 documents needed. The first is this set of guidelines, the second is the assessment itself. The EAT should be completed by individuals who possess comprehensive knowledge of the program and its organizational context. Ideally, this includes program leaders who oversee daily operations and can speak to program goals, staffing, and resource needs; frontline staff who work directly with participants and can provide practical insight into how the program is actually implemented; and data or evaluation staff who understand data systems, data quality, and measurement capacity. Senior leadership or organizational decision-makers should also participate, as they bring important perspectives on priorities, resource allocation, and readiness to act on evaluation findings. When feasible, insights from external stakeholders (funding partners, community partners, and advisory groups) may further strengthen the assessment by providing their perspective on expectations, accountability requirements, and broader system-level context.

While the tool may be completed by a single individual, a small group representing these roles typically produces a more accurate and balanced assessment of evaluation readiness. If only one person completes it, they should consult with others (staff, leadership, data teams) before responding to items outside their direct expertise. It is designed for these first six(6) pages to be deleted, leaving you with your organization or team's own Assessment Report.

1. Read through this full document and the assessment questions.
2. Complete the assessment. Check in with Elite Research to receive the scoring tool.
3. Go to the Table of Contents page and *update* (to do this, you can right click on the TOC, click *Update Entire Table*). You may need to un-bold the text. Replace collaboration image and branding colors as needed, as well as footer. We ask that you keep the *Acknowledgements* page.
4. Save.

Assessment Directions

Each item in the assessment should be rated according to the four-point scale provided, reflecting the program as it *currently exists* rather than as it is hoped or planned to be. When scoring, circle the number that currently best fits your experience (not your ideal situation): a "1" if you Disagree with the statement; a "2" if you Slightly Agree with the statement, a "3" if you Somewhat Agree with the statement; and a "4" if you Strongly Agree with the statement. If your response is "I don't know," leave the column responses blank. Also, a row for notes is provided to capture any "aha" moments and/or questions. Respondents are encouraged to **be honest and realistic**, as the goal of the assessment is learning and improvement, not judgment. Where necessary, staff may confer with colleagues to clarify information or fill knowledge gaps before providing a response.

The EAT is structured in seven (7) sections, each building on the previous one, to assess readiness across organizational capacity, leadership, program design, implementation, data systems, evaluation feasibility, and reporting. It is important to complete all sections in order, as they are designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of program evaluability.

Once all items are completed, responses can be scored to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. The results can then be interpreted using the scoring framework (next page) to guide decisions about whether the program is ready for evaluation, whether adjustments are needed, or whether further capacity building is recommended. Discussion among team members following completion of the assessment is strongly encouraged, as it helps translate findings into actionable steps for program improvement and evaluation planning. The full process typically takes 20–30 minutes, depending on the number of team members involved and the complexity of the program. Taking the time to complete the EAT thoroughly ensures that any subsequent evaluation is both feasible and meaningful.



Assessment Scoring

Each section of the assessment (e.g., Organizational Readiness, Program Design Readiness) is scored by calculating the average of all items within that section. This ensures that sections with more questions do not disproportionately influence the overall assessment. Please reach out to [Elite Research](#) for a scoring tool. Using the following table, interpret the categorical scores.

Average Score	Interpretation	Recommended Action
1.0 – 1.5	Low readiness	Major program revisions are needed before an evaluation can be meaningful. Focus on addressing gaps in design, implementation, data, or leadership.
1.6 – 2.5	Moderate readiness	Some gaps exist that could limit evaluation effectiveness. Consider implementing improvements first and starting with a process evaluation .
2.6 – 3.5	High readiness	Program is largely ready for evaluation. Minor adjustments may improve outcomes assessment. Suitable for outcome evaluation .
3.6 – 4.0	Very high readiness	Program is fully ready for evaluation. Appropriate for full evaluation, including impact studies if desired.

Using the table above, map the score and the readiness level into the [Evaluability Assessment Results](#) page. Examine section averages to see where readiness is strongest and weakest and then identify actions that can strengthen weaker areas.

Based on the results, your organization can use the evaluation readiness score and program maturity to decide whether a process, outcome, or impact evaluation is appropriate. Not all evaluations require the same level of readiness. Use the section scores to identify areas that might need strengthening before moving to a higher level of evaluation.

- **Process evaluation** focuses on whether the program is implemented as intended. It requires moderate readiness in implementation, leadership, and organizational support. [If most sections are 2.0–2.5, start with a process evaluation.](#) Scores below this threshold have additional work to do before they are even evaluable.
- **Outcome evaluation** focuses on whether program activities lead to expected results. It requires strong program design, data, and implementation readiness, plus moderate leadership and reporting readiness. [If most sections are 2.5–3.5, you can move to an outcome evaluation.](#)
- **Impact evaluation** focuses on long-term, causal changes. It requires high readiness across all sections, especially design, data, and evaluation readiness. [If all or nearly all sections are above 3.5, the program is ready for an impact evaluation.](#)

It is important to note, even if most sections are high, a single critical section (like Data Readiness or Program Design) with a low score can limit your ability to conduct a meaningful outcome or impact evaluation. The **lowest scoring critical section** effectively determines the highest evaluation type possible: *if all sections are ≥ 3.0 except Data Readiness = 2.5 \rightarrow highest feasible evaluation = Outcome Evaluation.* Use section averages together with professional judgment to select the evaluation type.



An example results page is provided below:

Evaluability Assessment Results

Program/Project Name: Project Exemplar

Date of Assessment: December 5, 2025

Completed By: Jane Doe Exemplar

Section	Score	Readiness Level	Recommended Action
Organizational Readiness	2.8	High	The organization has sufficient resources and infrastructure to support evaluation. Minor improvements may include formalizing roles or increasing staff awareness of evaluation processes.
Leadership Readiness	2.5	Moderate	Leadership engagement is moderate. Consider increasing visibility of evaluation goals, ensuring leaders participate in planning, and aligning evaluation priorities with strategic objectives.
Program Design Readiness	3.2	High	Program goals and logic model are clear. Review documentation to ensure theory of change is fully articulated, and clarify outcome measures if needed.
Program Implementation	2.4	Moderate	Implementation varies across staff/sites. Strengthen fidelity by standardizing procedures, offering training, and documenting deviations.
Program Data Readiness	3.6	Very High	Data systems are strong and consistently collected. Continue current practices, and consider periodic quality checks or additional data points to support more advanced evaluation.
Evaluation Readiness	2.7	High	Program is generally ready for an outcome evaluation. Address gaps in measurement alignment and define clear evaluation questions before proceeding.
Reporting Readiness	3.0	High	Reporting and communication systems are sufficient. Enhance use of evaluation findings by integrating them into staff meetings, strategic planning, and stakeholder communications.

Scoring Guide:

Evaluation Type	Threshold	Ready?
Process Evaluation	Most sections \geq 2.0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Outcome Evaluation	Most sections \geq 2.5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Impact Evaluation	Most sections \geq 3.5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Recommendation:

- (4) Based on the section averages, the evaluation type best suited for this program is: **Outcome Evaluation**
- (5) Key strengths include: **Data collection and systems**
- (6) Areas for improvement before attempting higher-level evaluation: **Leadership engagement, standardize procedures across sites, measurement alignment and clear evaluation questions**



Internal Self-Assessment vs. Third-Party Evaluability Assessment

While the Evaluability Assessment Tool (EAT) enables organizations to reflect on their own readiness, a third-party evaluability assessment offers an additional level of rigor, depth, and objectivity. Internal teams using the EAT gain an accessible and structured way to identify strengths, gaps, and capacity needs across program design, implementation, and data systems. This self-assessment fosters internal dialogue, builds shared understanding, and supports informed decision-making about whether and how to proceed with evaluation.

However, there are circumstances in which an external perspective provides distinct advantages. A third-party evaluator can independently review documentation, examine data quality, conduct interviews, and assess program logic and implementation in ways that extend beyond what internal staff can easily or objectively accomplish. This is especially valuable when programs are preparing for high-stakes evaluations, seeking to demonstrate effectiveness, operating across multiple sites, or facing expectations from funders or boards for independent review. External evaluators can also surface blind spots, challenge assumptions, and provide technical expertise that strengthens both the evaluation plan and the program itself.

Together, internal and external approaches are complementary. The EAT serves as a practical first step, helping organizations determine whether they are ready to invest in evaluation and where additional preparation may be needed. When deeper analysis or impartial assessment is required, engaging a qualified external evaluator can provide the credibility, methodological expertise, and strategic insight necessary to move forward confidently.

If your EAT results indicate gaps or uncertainties, consider using this moment as an opportunity to strengthen your program, and, when appropriate, to partner with an external evaluator who can help you build the clarity, capacity, and confidence needed for a meaningful and successful evaluation.



Acknowledgements

This tool has been developed by Elite Research, LLC using the following sources:

- (1) BetterEvaluation. (2022). *Evaluability assessment template*. BetterEvaluation. <https://www.betterevaluation.org/>
- (2) Evaluation.gov. (2022). *Introducing the Impact Evaluability Assessment Tool*. U.S. Federal Evaluation Center. <https://www.evaluation.gov/>
- (3) United Way of Central Maryland. (2025). *Checklist for program readiness*.
- (4) National Scholarship Providers Association. (n.d.). *Assessing your organization's evaluation readiness*.
- (5) Office of Development Initiatives. (2013). *Evaluability assessment for impact evaluation: Guidance, checklists and decision support*. ODI.
- (6) Davidson, E. J. (2005). *Evaluation methodology basics: The nuts and bolts of sound evaluation*. Sage Publications.
- (7) Wholey, J. S., Hatry, H. P., & Newcomer, K. E. (2010). *Handbook of practical program evaluation* (3rd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- (8) Patton, M. Q. (2008). *Utilization-focused evaluation* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

About Elite Research, LLC.

Elite Research, LLC is an Irving, Texas based market research, process optimization, evaluation, and statistical consulting firm. They are certified as a WBENC Women Business Enterprise (WBE), a Historically Underutilized Business (HUB), and an SBA Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB).



As a global provider of research and statistical consulting they provide expert support to academic researchers, government entities, nonprofits, researchers in the private sector and corporations in all facets of the research process, including the sampling, design, collection, analysis, reporting, implementation, and optimization of findings. Over thirty consultants and staff provide expertise in research design, programming, analysis, data management, survey development, sampling methodologies, web-based surveys, data collection plans, technical writing, and statistical analysis.

Phone. (972) 538 - 1374

Email. info@eliteresearch.com

Website. www.eliteresearch.com

Address. 9901 Valley Ranch Pkwy. E., Ste. 2035, Irving, TX 75063