

EVAL3 - Using Rigorous Evaluation Results to Make Decisions

Certification Guide



What is this document for?

To help your city achieve EVAL3, we have compiled a guiding list of goals, considerations, and resources. It is a starting point and reference guide for identifying ways to satisfy EVAL3 within your government's structures and priorities. This document is NOT what is submitted for certification.

What does it mean to meet EVAL3?

Your local government regularly uses rigorous evaluation results to make decisions. Specifically, your local government must meet the following every year:

- **EVAL 3.1:** In the past year, your local government has used the results from at least two evaluations to make decisions. Decisions were aimed at improving services for residents or related to key citywide priorities.

Rigorous evaluations are systematic assessments, using standard research methods to help gain insight into the design, implementation, or effects of a policy, program, or practice.

Requested validation during the assessment for “Yes” responses:

- A brief summary of the process for using results from evaluations to inform decisions, such as an evaluation working group or inclusion of evaluation in other decision-making meetings.
- Include descriptions of the evaluations and the decisions they informed.
- Note: while some audits may meet the definition of a process evaluation, audits focused on compliance typically do not count towards this criterion. Submitted audits should include all the elements of a high quality evaluation plan.

Why should my city meet EVAL3?

The benefit of evaluations is that they empower cities to make decisions based on evidence. By meeting this criteria every year, cities build their ability to interpret and act upon evaluation results to improve the quality and effectiveness of their programs, practices, and policies.



Not sure how to use evaluation results to inform decision making?

Check out the [“Put the Results to Work”](#) section on [BIT’s Evaluation Resource Hub!](#)



Want to stay in the know of WWC events and resources and connect with other evaluation-minded cities?

Once you submit the [WWC Certification Assessment](#), join the WWC Community Forum for new resources and future opportunities!

What needs to be submitted to meet EVAL3?

For each of the 3 different or newly justified decisions:

- Validated documentation that describes the decision and corresponding evidence supporting that decision, **OR**
- A brief summary of the sustained, regular process for using results from rigorous evaluations to inform decisions (e.g. an evaluation working group)

Examples of qualifying decisions include:

- **Example of a different decision:** The process evaluation of a piloted Program X showed promising increases in learning outcomes, but that recruitment was more successful through word-of-mouth than direct outreach. The city decided to scale the program but with a new recruitment strategy.
- **Example of a newly justified decision:** The impact evaluation of Program Y showed positive impacts on pedestrian safety, so the city continued to fund the program as is.

Decisions informed by process, quasi-experimental, and experimental evaluations are eligible to meet this criterion. Decisions informed by resources such as a data dashboard do NOT count towards this criterion.

Examples of validated documentation include:

- Emails or memos documenting the decision made or action taken based on an evaluation’s results
- Press release or other public statement about an action or decision that references evaluation results

- Budgetary determination to scale up or down a program based on evaluation results
- Minutes of a city council or other public meeting discussion on how evaluation results informed the decision

How can my city meet EVAL3?

We suggest you reflect on the goals and considerations below to identify what evaluation should look like in your city. Please note that a city need not develop or provide this full set of documentation to satisfy EVAL3; it is a “menu” of approaches and documentation options.

Goal	Considerations	Resources & Examples to Meet Goal
<p>Preserve institutional knowledge and make it accessible</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a digital location where city staff can identify prior evaluations and the lessons learned from those evaluations? • Is it intuitive to navigate and is it a resource with broad awareness and use? • Are evaluation results reported in a standard manner / format? 	<p>Create an online repository of past evaluations that's simple to navigate and filter for relevant evaluations. Make the lessons learned simple to extract.</p> <p>Make this repository and how to use it well known.</p> <p>Create a template for reporting evaluation results to make the process more efficient for evaluation teams and the report structure digestible and familiar to individuals external to the team.</p> <p>→ Report Template</p>

Goal	Considerations	Resources & Examples to Meet Goal
<p>Promote knowledge transfer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there internal communications strategies that keep departments in the know of ongoing / completed evaluations in the city? • Does your city encourage staff to become part of evaluation knowledge sharing networks? 	<p>Highlight ongoing / completed evaluations in e-newsletters, on the home page of your city's intranet, Lunch and Learn presentations, etc. and encourage staff to consider how findings might be relevant to their departments.</p> <p>Designate individuals of departments to a cross-departmental working group where they report on their departments' evaluations to the working group then report back to their individual departments about interesting or relevant evaluations from other departments.</p>

Goal	Considerations	Resources & Examples to Meet Goal
<p>Interpret the results of evaluations / existing evidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do staff have the relevant skills to accurately interpret evaluation results / review high-quality evidence and make recommendations for action to relevant stakeholders? After evaluations run by your city are completed, is there a process to ensure / document that the results inform decisions about the evaluated program, policy, or practice? 	<p>Create a requirement to identify, agree on, and complete next steps based on evaluation results when city evaluations are closing.</p> <p>Encourage teams to collaboratively discuss and interpret evaluation results.</p> <p>→ Interpretation Discussion Guide</p> <p>→ What does it mean when a study finds no effect?</p> <p>When major decisions are being made (e.g., discontinuing a program, significantly modifying program implementation, creating a new program), require staff to justify the decision using evaluation results or existing evidence.</p> <p>Build capacity within teams by providing training, hiring for specific skills, and/or providing access to resources that help staff understand how to interpret evidence.</p>

Goal	Considerations	Resources & Examples to Meet Goal
<p>Share the results of your evaluations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a place where City staff / departments can share their successes, including their evaluation methods and findings, internally with other departments? • Is there a way for City staff / departments to share successful outcomes of their evaluations publicly? • Do decision-makers ask for evidence from evaluations when making programmatic or budgetary decisions? 	<p>Contact your internal comms team about highlighting a recent evaluation or key staff members who may be responsible for evaluation / data analysis. → Report Example (Topeka)</p> <p>Share any evaluation results on the landing page of an external facing or internal facing City website.</p> <p>Work with RfA (Results for America) to be featured in an upcoming blog.</p> <p>Use the Report Template slides for sharing results.</p>
<p>Turn results / existing evidence into action</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the decision require buy-in from any stakeholders for approval, allocation of resources, implementation, etc.? • Is the sustainability of the decision (e.g. funding to scale a program, etc.) considered? 	<p>Strategically communicate the results of the evaluation to convey the benefits of implementing the decision. → See the "Evidence on Economic Mobility" section for examples of reports</p> <p>Consider the barriers and facilitators to implementing the decision. Gain stakeholder buy-in by addressing those barriers and guarantee the sustainability of the decision.</p>