



Australian Government
Australian Institute of Criminology

‘Well, we won’t make that mistake again’: Some reflections on evaluation practice

Anthony Morgan
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17 November 2015



Evaluation in an ideal world:

- Started early
- Dedicated personnel
- Necessary expertise
- Well planned and designed
- Plenty of data
- Rigorous analysis
- Transparent reporting
- Engaged stakeholders



Positive findings that
make a difference to
the project



1. Target evaluation at the areas where it will be of most benefit



Deciding whether to invest in an outcome evaluation

1. Is an outcome evaluation required and, if so, what are you expected to deliver?
2. Does the project warrant the investment in evaluation?
3. Will it be possible to conduct a good quality evaluation?



In reality, implementation is often infinitely more complex than it first appears, demanding much greater attention and care than is commonly imagined (Scott 2006)



Process evaluation

- Understanding project components
- Implementation fidelity
- Project reach
- Stakeholder involvement
- Consistency with best practice
- Factors impacting on project delivery
- Cost and efficiency
- Improvements to project operation

Outcome evaluation

- Impact of the project
- Progress toward desired outcomes
- Unintended outcomes (positive or negative)
- Factors impacting on effectiveness
- Financial benefits relative to costs
- Changes to improve overall effectiveness



2. Start with a process evaluation, especially for innovative programs



3. Reach agreement on the outcomes that *really* matter before you start the evaluation



Steps in conducting an evaluation

1. Clarify (or identify) the aims and objectives of the project
2. Develop a program logic model
3. Determine the purpose of the evaluation
4. Identify the questions that need to be answered
5. Decide upon an appropriate research design and data collection methods
6. Develop an evaluation framework
7. Collect and analyse data, prepare the report
8. Disseminate the evaluation findings and use them to inform decision making



4. Start the evaluation as soon as possible



Starting the evaluation early means you can:

- Collect baseline data before you implement the project
- Establish simple methods for data collection
- Collect data on a regular basis from the commencement of project
- Incorporate evaluation activities into project activities
- Negotiate access to data from other organisations
- Dedicate more time to the evaluation



5. Draw on a variety of data sources to measure the impact of your project



Alternatives to police recorded crime data?

- Calls for police attendance
- Health, education and housing data
- Other administrative data, including internal and external sources
- Observational data
- Community surveys (pre/post, post only)
- Entry and exit assessments
- Case file analysis
- Formal feedback from project stakeholders or participants (ie interviews)



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Thank you

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Trends & issues

in crime and criminal justice

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Foreword | *The Australian Institute of Criminology has spent a number of years working with crime prevention agencies across Australia reviewing large-scale programs that involve the delivery of varying activities directed at the prevention of crime. Taken as a whole, this experience has shown that, despite good intentions and aspirations to evidence-based practice, both the level and quality of evaluations have been limited by several practical challenges. In turn, this has hampered efforts to develop a body of good quality Australian evidence about what is effective in preventing crime and what is required in order to deliver effective interventions.*

Using previously unpublished data collected as part of the reviews of two national Australian crime prevention programs, the authors examine the practical factors that impact on evaluation and make a number of important recommendations for the evaluation of projects delivered as part of large-scale community crime prevention programs. The authors argue that rather than persisting with traditional approaches that encourage local organisations to undertake potentially expensive and time-consuming evaluations of their own work, program managers and central agencies must become more proactive and increasingly innovative in their approaches to evaluation.

Adam Tomison
Director

Evaluating crime prevention: Lessons from large-scale community crime prevention programs

Anthony Morgan and Peter Homel

A basic principle underpinning modern crime prevention is that it requires the practical application of research and evaluation findings in the development and implementation of strategies to reduce crime (AIC 2012; ECOSOC 2002). Evaluation is therefore an important prerequisite for effective crime prevention. A good evaluation can determine whether a program has been implemented as planned (and if not why not), what outcomes have been delivered as a result, whether the stated objectives of that program have been achieved and the reasons that a program did or did not work. This can inform improvements to that program, as well as decisions about whether it should be continued. It also contributes to the development of a sound evidence base that can be used by policymakers and practitioners in deciding what to do to (and how to do it) to address the crime problems that confront them.

However, despite growing recognition and support for the evaluation of crime prevention efforts internationally (Bodson et al. 2008; Idriss et al. 2010), several reviews of local crime prevention programs delivered in Australia have highlighted notable deficits in both the amount and quality of evaluation practice (Anderson & Homel 2006; Anderson & Tresidder 2008; Homel et al. 2007; Willis & Fuller 2012). This has had important implications for the quality of the evidence base available to decision makers in this country.

In this paper, the factors that have impacted on the standard of evaluation in large-scale community crime prevention programs are examined. Drawing upon a number of crime prevention capacity building projects undertaken by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), several recommendations to enhance the level and quality of crime prevention evaluation are proposed.



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Also available from: www.aic.gov.au

National Crime Prevention Framework

Prepared by the Australian Institute of Criminology
on behalf of the Australian and New Zealand Crime
Prevention Senior Officers' Group



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Australian Institute of Criminology

Effective crime prevention
interventions for
implementation by
local government

Anthony Morgan
Hayley Boxall
Kym Lindaman
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AIC Reports
Research and
Public Policy Series 120



Attorney General
& Justice



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Australian Institute of Criminology

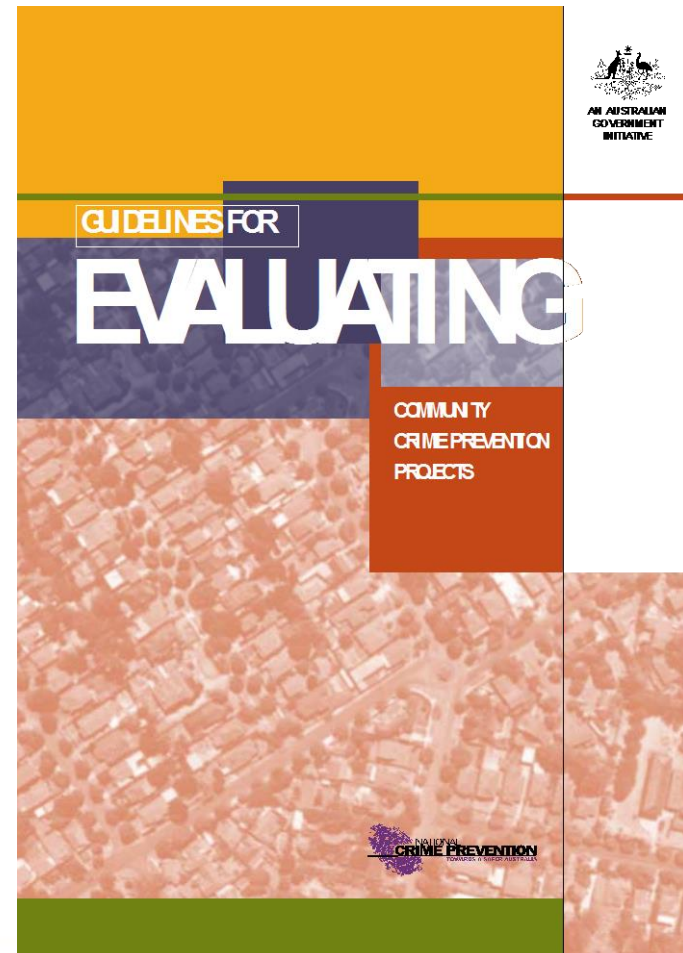
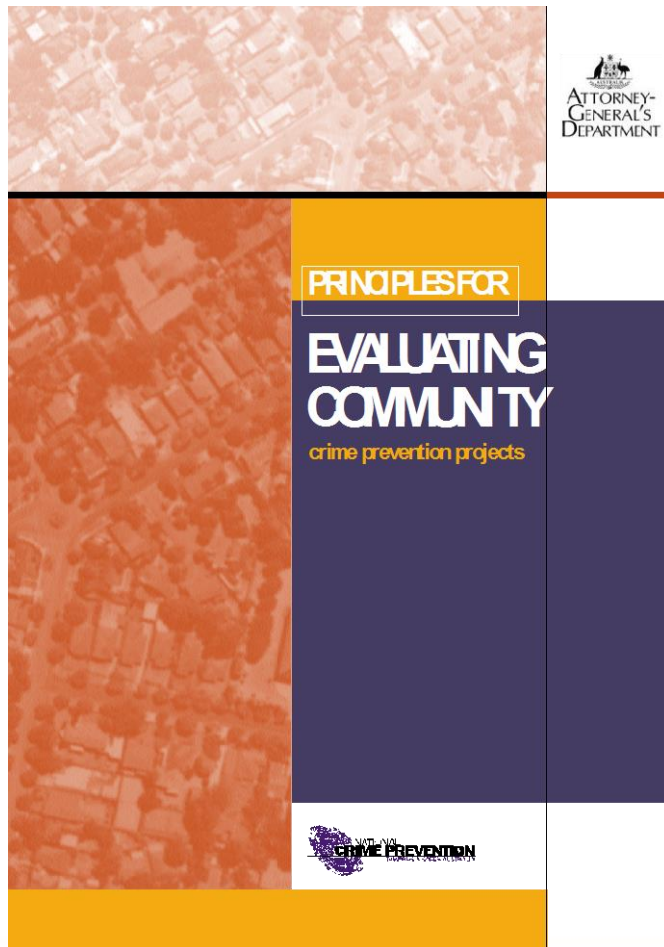
A model performance
framework for community-
based crime prevention

Anthony Morgan
Peter Homel

AIC Reports
Technical and
Background Paper 40



Other useful resources





Other useful resources

- Better Evaluation: <http://betterevaluation.org/>
- Community toolbox: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents>
- Social research methods knowledge base: <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/contents.php>



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