

Doing community program evaluations well: capitalising on multiple data sources to determine performance and impact

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Introduction: The Local Drug Action Team (LDAT) Program supports communities nationally to deliver evidence-based activities to prevent harms from Alcohol and other Drugs (AOD). Measuring the performance of such programs is essential to determining whether they benefit the community as intended. That said, it is also challenging, requires careful planning and multiple data sources. Our recent LDAT evaluation addressed these challenges to measuring program performance and impact on community.

Method: The evaluation involved a review of Program support mechanisms and in-depth analysis of quantitative and qualitative impact data, such as LDAT evaluation reports, internal Program records, and LDAT surveys and case studies.

Key Findings Results: The vast majority of LDATs reported positive impacts on their communities, which in part can be attributed to Program support mechanisms. For example, the Program is effective at supporting LDATs to build strong partnerships, with long-term partnerships considered important to help ensure successful delivery of activities.

LDATs are highly satisfied with Program resources and guidance, citing their Relationship Managers (RM) as instrumental to the success of their activities.

Finally, LDATs highlight the importance of building trust and positive relationships with community for creating an environment where impacts can occur.

Discussions and Conclusions: The evaluation revealed how we can continue to support LDATs to positively impact their communities, including which support mechanisms benefit them most, and areas where more support is needed. The evaluation demonstrated that by combining program support and impact data, we can achieve a more nuanced understanding of how to boost LDATs performance and impact.

Implications: Utilising both top-down and bottom-up approaches has allowed us to begin mapping Program support mechanisms to community impact. This process reveals practical pathways from Program design to community impact. This approach can be used by other Not-for-Profit and Non-Government Organisations running similar programs.

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