

7

Challenges, Lessons Learned, and Implications for Program Improvement

What do I want my audience to take away from my report?

In this section you will look at the big picture and summarize what you've learned from your evaluation. This section is brief but may be tough to write, because the goal is to distill the most important lessons.

You will identify the **Challenges, Lessons Learned, and Implications for Program Improvement**, in this order. These three steps are all linked, and each builds on the one before it.

What are Challenges?

Sometimes preventionists believe — understandably — that evaluations should include only positive information about their programs. However, the best way to help others who are running similar programs is to **speak honestly about the obstacles you encountered with your program**, in addition to the successes. This will help your colleagues anticipate their own challenges and avoid approaches that don't work. Don't be afraid to address:

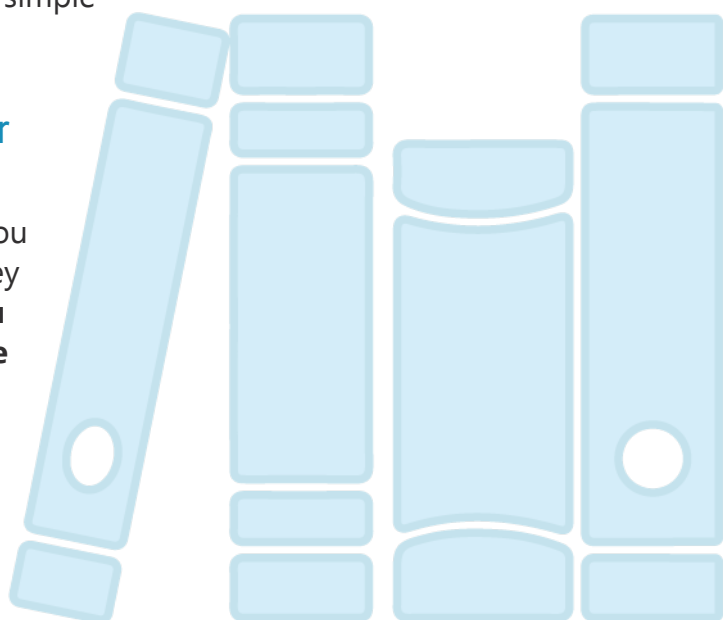
- Difficulties that you encountered as you implemented your program.
- Program results you did not expect.

What are Lessons Learned?

Each challenge you encounter in your program will teach you a lesson. For example, you may come up with solutions that will help overcome a particular challenge or avoid it altogether. You may also identify solutions that simply did not work. Lessons learned can be simple and straightforward.

What are Implications for Program Improvement?

These are based on the lessons you learned from your evaluation. They state succinctly **what actions you took, or intend to take, to make your program more effective.**



Module 7: Challenges, Lessons Learned, and Implications for Program Improvement

How to write your “Challenges, Lessons Learned, and Implications for Program Improvement”

- 1) Revisit your implementation and outcome reports, and ask yourself: “What was difficult and/or didn’t go well?” Ask this question for each result.
- 2) When you see a result that is not what you hoped for or not what you intended, write one sentence to describe the challenge. Enter this in the “Challenge” column of your worksheet.
- 3) Once you have completed your list of challenges, write what you learned from each challenge in the “Lesson Learned” column of your worksheet.
- 4) If your Lesson Learned involves a program change, write down this change in the third column of your worksheet. Describe in several sentences what changes you made or might make.
- 5) Some program changes may include a larger budget or involvement from others at your agency. Other changes might take a while to implement or may not be in your immediate power to implement. You can note these changes — just be sure to make them feasible and mention that you won’t be able to make the improvements immediately.

Some results may not involve any difficulties. In this case, just think about the biggest and most important challenges. Programs usually have two or three, though this can vary.

MODULE 7: CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED, & IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT EXAMPLE

Challenge	Lesson Learned	Implications for Program Improvement
<p>We had some training-related challenges. A small number of Peer Opinion Leaders (POLs) said they lost interest or their minds wandered at some points during the training session.</p>	<p>Even a very energetic and interactive training session will have slow moments.</p>	<p>We introduced more interactive elements to our second POL training session, including an additional role-play. We also think that in the future, it would be good to add another preventionist to the POL training. Doing this would help maintain the energy level and interactivity throughout the day-long training.</p>
<p>We noticed that POLs decreased their hostile masculinity endorsement more than fraternity brothers did.</p>	<p>The way a program is delivered makes a difference in the outcome. The POLs have an intensive day-long training session with our preventionist. The brothers, on the other hand, have no dedicated training sessions. Instead, active POLs are present in the fraternity houses. The more direct and interactive POL intervention appears to have greater impact.</p>	<p>We chose to use POLs for this project because doing so is supported by the research on behavioral change, including around sexual violence prevention. This research indicates that hearing messages from peer leaders, rather than from outside trainers, is more effective in changing young men's opinions and behavior. Because the fraternity brothers do not get the intensive training session, it's not surprising that they exhibit different amounts of change than POLs. That being said, we believe there is room to modify the POL training to include additional ways to teach fraternity brothers about hostile masculinity.</p>

Notice that one of these challenges is about **implementation** and the other is about **outcomes**. Challenges can arise in both parts of your program.

MODULE 7: CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED, & IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT WORKSHEET

Challenge	Lesson Learned	Implications for Program Improvement