# Evaluation Methods, Advantages/Challenges and Resources Needed

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| Document Review | To gather information from pre-existing written materials, such as meeting minutes, reports, budgets, newspaper articles, etc. | + Most common method for evaluation  
+ Good method for reviewing materials on how a program was implemented  
+ Uses information that is already available | + Can be done by program staff themselves  
– Takes a lot of time to review existing files, especially if program is complex and of long duration |
| Observation   | To gather information on how the program operates, or on visual changes that have resulted | + Good for process evaluation, because you can get an immediate impression about how the program is progressing  
– Information can be difficult to interpret  
– May be biased by how staff interpret the information  
– Events that are seen can be time-dependent, and not representative of what is really going on  
– If people know they are being observed, they may act differently than usual | + Can be done by program staff themselves  
– Takes a lot of time to review existing files, especially if program is complex and of long duration |
| Interviews    | To obtain information from individuals about their experiences, or to learn more about their answers to surveys | + Excellent for both process and outcome evaluation, because you can get in-depth information from participants  
+ Can ask sensitive questions that require confidentiality  
– Data can be difficult and complex to analyze  
– Interviewer can bias the responses | – Can take a lot of time to conduct  
– May require data inputting and analysis programs  
– May require assistance from a consultant to design the interview protocol and develop the database program |

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| **Focus Groups**   | To hold discussions with groups of people (10-12) to understand in-depth what they believe were the effects of the program, or how they saw the program implemented. | + Good for outcome evaluation, because you can ask people to explain how the program affected them  
+ Can identify a lot of issues and effects  
+ Can give staff better understanding of the program from participants’ own words | + Can be done relatively quickly (1-2 hours per focus group)  
− Requires a good facilitator  
− Takes time to analyze and interpret the discussion  
− May require extra resources for facilitator’s time and participant incentives |
| **Case studies**   | To describe a program or experience in depth, often using some or all of the other evaluation methods to construct a case study. | + Good for combining process and outcome evaluation  
+ Can be a powerful way to describe the program  
+ Can depict personal experiences, quotes, and unique program processes | − Can take a lot of time to collect information, organize and describe the program |
| **Surveys and questionnaires** | To get information from individual people about their changes in tobacco use knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. | + Excellent for outcome evaluation  
+ Can get information from a lot of people  
+ Can be done confidentially or anonymously, so may be more valid  
+ Can be used as pre/post tests to measure changes from program educational sessions  
+ Can use questions from existing surveys  
− More effective when using yes/no or true/false type questions  
− Are more impersonal for participants, and usually not good for getting quotes in participants’ own words | − Takes time to develop questionnaire  
− May require database program to manage and analyze a lot of data  
− May require extra resources for participant incentives and data analysis |