Module I: Introduction

The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to the evaluation process. Evaluation is part of a larger cycle of planning (needs assessment), development, and implementation.

What is evaluation?

Evaluation in its very basic form helps ascertain the answer to two major questions.
1. Did we do what we said we were going to do?
2. Did we achieve what we said we were going to achieve?

It is difficult to speak of evaluation with talking about program design and needs assessment and vice versa. During the design and implementation of the needs assessment, it is critical to build evaluative measures. Careful design of a program hypothesis, goals, and objectives are imperative to a strong evaluation to any project or program. Figure 1 illustrates the planning, implementation, and evaluation model that indicates the continuous nature of the process.

The Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation Model

Six activities necessary to sound program evaluation are as follows. (Suchman, 1967)

- Analysis of the problem
- Identification of the goals to be evaluated
- Description and standardization of the activities
- Measurement of the degree of change that takes place
- Determination of the costs of the program, including costs associated with achieving results
- Determination of whether the observed change is due to the activity or some other cause

Evaluation is a test of the hypothesis, concerned not only with determining whether or not the outcomes of the program were achieved but also whether or not the program was implemented according to its design. (We will discuss program hypotheses in a later module.) Evaluation allows us to examine or test the potential relationships that were identified in the hypotheses. What works? What doesn’t work? Evaluation is based on the goals, objectives, and activities that are outlined prior to the development of the program.

The modules to follow will provide a basic introduction to goals, objectives, and developing program priorities, building the context upon which evaluation of programs are built.