

## Evaluation

Evaluation is an important part of the strategic planning process that helps determine whether a particular policy or program is having the intended effect. The evaluation is most helpful when designed during the planning and implementation phases—not after the initiative is completed. Collecting and analyzing data along the way will help assess if the intervention should continue or be adjusted in some way. A well-designed evaluation documents implementation of the initiative, as well as both short- and long-term outcomes.

Collected data is either *quantitative* or *qualitative*. *Quantitative* data refers to data that can be counted, such as data collected in student surveys; police report data; arrest data; incident data; and structured observations. In each case, the data are collected in a way that allows evaluators to count something. Collecting quantitative information allows for the use of descriptive statistics such as averages and using inferential statistical techniques to determine if the outcome is greater than might be expected by chance.

*Qualitative* data is not countable in a standardized form; rather it is collected in more of a narrative form. Qualitative data is gathered through methods such as focus groups, interviews, observations, and document review. While qualitative data may be less rigorous and precise, it often provides additional detail not found in more structured data collection efforts.