



THINGS to CONSIDER

Limitations on the Type of Question You Can Answer



It is common for context to limit the type of question you can ask (and answer) when conducting a program evaluation. It is important to think about these limitations before crafting a research question to make sure the program evaluation is based on a question that can be answered.

CONTEXT	LIMITATIONS	QUESTION
No one is currently receiving the service, and we plan to provide it to a subset of potential recipients.	There are no limitations; depending on how you provide access, you can answer any of these questions.	Is receiving this new service better than not receiving any service at all?
Some people are receiving the service, but others are not.	You will not be able to compare different ways of receiving the service if people are already receiving the service in the same way.	Is receiving one service better than receiving another service?
Everyone has access to the service, but we plan to implement it in two different ways.	If everyone is receiving the service, you cannot determine the effect relative to not receiving the service or receiving a different service; that requires a comparison group of non-recipients.	Is one way of receiving a service better than another way of receiving the same service?
Everyone has access to the service, but we know there are some who receive it more in-depth or more frequently and some who receive it less in-depth or less frequently.	If everyone receives the service, you cannot determine the effect relative to receiving no service or receiving a different service; that requires a comparison group of non-recipients. You can only ask if receiving the service more frequently or in-depth is better than receiving it less frequently or in-depth.	

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