

ILLUSTRATIVE EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BRIEF

Program Evaluation Strategy: Turning Learning Into a Management Decision

FICTIONAL DECISION-SUPPORT EXCERPT · NOT CLIENT WORK · EXECUTIVE STRATEGY

Program Evaluation Strategy: Turning Learning Into a Management Decision > **Illustrative-sample notice:** This DecisivIQ sample demonstrates the form and judgment of a Program Evaluation Strategy engagement. The organization, program, people, data, and numbers are hypothetical. They are not verified findings and do not promise results.

Executive premise

[Northstar Youth Pathways needs clarity on the decision its Career Launch evidence must serve. The fictional pilot has reached 180 participants at three sites. Its executive sponsor is considering whether to retain the design, revise it for another cohort, or expand it. The organization tracks attendance, workshop completion, and self-reported confidence. Those measures describe activity; they do not show whether participants secure and sustain an early employment step, which is the strategic aim.] [The next move is neither to declare success nor pause reflexively. It is to install a lean evaluation architecture that separates operating signals from outcome evidence, names an accountable decision owner, and creates a regular moment for leaders to act on what they learn. It avoids scaling visible activity while decisive assumptions remain untested.]

Illustrative decision situation

[Career Launch is a fictional eight-week transition-to-work program for young adults ages 18 to 24. It combines workshops, coaching, employer introductions, and a 30-day follow-up. Sponsor Maya Chen must recommend one path: retain the three-site pilot, revise it for one cohort, or extend to two more sites.] [The program director owns delivery. Maya owns the recommendation. Site leads and the employer-relations manager contribute evidence but should not decide the program’s direction. The leadership team is the decision audience. A hypothetical board committee may receive a later management-approved update; it is not the owner of this operating choice.] [Staffing is thin, follow-up is inconsistent, and sites use different spreadsheets. Employment outcomes also reflect local conditions and participant circumstances. Set credible claims, use feasible measures, and state what remains unresolved.]

Decision-quality observations

- 01 The logic chain has a missing bridge.**

Workshops and coaching may strengthen job-search readiness, but an employer introduction does not itself yield a job offer or sustained employment. The logic should state the bridge: introductions are timely and relevant; employers consider participants; participants can act; and roles are accessible. Otherwise, effort can be mistaken for effect.
- 02 The measure set favors convenience.**

Attendance and completion show delivery, but are not enough for a scale decision. Add a small core set: completed employer introductions, interviews within 60 days, accepted roles, and employment status at 30 and 90 days. Comparable definitions are essential.
- 03 Learning lacks a decision right.**

Site check-ins will create noise unless the program director documents adjustments and Maya has an escalation point. The executive review should ask whether the logic is holding, whether access differs materially across groups, and whether evidence supports continuation, adaptation, or a pause on expansion.
- 04 The evidence cannot support causal claims.**

A participant finding work may also benefit from experience, networks, or local conditions. The near-term strategy should not claim attribution. It should record reach, service receipt, progression, follow-up completeness, and material context. An impact study would require separate scope.

DECISIVIQ / STRATEGY INTO OPERATING DISCIPLINE

Choose with clarity. Execute with control.

Options and material tradeoffs

Option A: Expand now using participation metrics.

This preserves momentum, but spreads unresolved site variation. Leadership would choose reach before knowing whether the service model travels well. It is reasonable only as a monitored extension, not proof of impact.

Option B: Run one revised cohort, then decide on scale.

This is the preferred tradeoff. It delays expansion modestly, yet lets the organization standardize the pathway, test follow-up discipline, and determine whether indicators can be collected without crowding out participant support. The cost is forgone near-term reach; the benefit is a more credible operating decision.

Option C: Pause enrollment for a comprehensive study.

This may interrupt services and consume attention disproportionate to the pilot's stakes. Reserve it for a material concern that available information cannot address. This illustrative case does not establish that threshold.

Recommended action architecture

01 Confirm one decision map before the next cohort.

Define the scale decision, decision owner, contributor roles, decision points, and escalation route. Pair it with a logic chain naming assumptions and external factors. Maya approves the frame; the program director uses it to manage delivery.

02 Implement a minimum viable evidence matrix.

Use a limited group of operational and progression measures, each with a definition, source, cadence, owner, and stated limitation. Standardize follow-up across sites. Do not build a dashboard first. Establish that the routine works for one cohort.

03 Run a 90-day learning cycle with an action log.

Hold monthly management reviews and an executive decision review at cycle end. Record evidence considered, interpretation, action, accountable owner, due date, and unresolved question. Expansion remains conditional on that review, not anecdotal demand.

Executive questions to test

- 01** Which links in the program logic are supported, and which assumptions is leadership treating as facts?
- 02** Can every site produce comparable 30- and 90-day follow-up evidence without drawing staff from essential participant support?
- 03** What threshold of evidence, operating readiness, and acceptable uncertainty will Maya use to recommend continuation, adaptation, or expansion?

Professional boundary

This is strategic planning and decision support for one defined program or tightly bounded initiative. It clarifies purpose, users, logic, roles, measures, evidence limitations, and learning cycles. It does not collect or validate data; conduct surveys, interviews, focus groups, observations, site visits, sampling, or statistical analysis; produce a full evaluation, impact study, randomized design, return-on-investment analysis, accreditation self-study, or longitudinal research plan; facilitate sessions or board presentations; manage implementation; train; build dashboards; or operate measurement. It is not legal, tax, accounting, investment, regulatory, procurement, compliance, audit, certification, or government-representation advice. It does not provide legal interpretation of reporting or funding requirements, grant applications, binding instruments, or filings. Governance and 501(c)(3) planning materials require review by appropriate qualified counsel. No outcome, funding, award, board adoption, certification, compliance status, or organizational result is guaranteed.

Engagement snapshot

Fixed price: \$ 695 **Timeline:** 5 business days, beginning once required inputs are received and the 45-minute kickoff with the primary contact is completed.

Scope and inputs: One defined program or tightly bounded initiative; program description and decision need, source materials, stakeholder and sponsor roles, constraints, kickoff, and consolidated feedback from the authorized reviewer.

Deliverables: (1) an 8 to 12 page Program Evaluation Strategy Brief in PDF form; (2) a Program Logic and Decision Map; (3) a Measures and Evidence Matrix; and (4) a 90-Day Learning Cycle Plan. One consolidated revision is included with feedback within seven calendar days. It does not add a second program, new stakeholder interviews, data collection, or a new evaluation design.

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