When developing indicators for an evaluation, the following expectations should be met:

- Indicators must be valid and relatable
- Indicators must be relevant to outputs and outcomes that have been identified
- Indicators should abide by ethical standards for research and evaluation

For program outcomes that are difficult to capture, the most relevant and practical indicators should be selected. Quite often, evaluators might have to opt for using indicators that only measure something indirectly. It's important that the evaluator acknowledges the limitations of selected measures when the findings are reported.

Here are some examples of indicators that can be defined and tracked including measures of program activities and program effects:

Indicators of program activities:	***Indicators of program effects:***
● The program's capacity to deliver services ● Participation rates ● Levels of client satisfaction ● The efficiency of resource use ● The amount of intervention exposure	● Changes in participant behavior ● Changes in community norms, policies or practices ● Changes in health status and/or quality of life ● Changes in settings or environment around the program

CHECKLIST TO SELECT HIGH-PERFORMING EVALUATION INDICATORS

Criteria	**Description**
❒ Accepted Practice and History of Use The degree to which use of an indicator is consistent with current and previous practices	This criterion requires identification of the advantages and limitations of an indicator based on previous use, including use in other contexts or settings; this will help to avoid selecting an indicator solely because it has been used in the past. It may result in data collection in a different or novel direction (e.g., to address persistent gaps in knowledge regarding the program, improve the precision or sensitivity of the indicator).

Criteria	Description
❒ Applicability in Different Settings The degree to which an indicator is relevant in diverse settings	This criterion is especially important in planning for data collection in multiple locations or sites. The ability to collect comparable and consistent data across sites is a key consideration when determining the usefulness of an indicator.
❒ Availability of Data The degree to which data are accessible for use as part of the Study.	This criterion requires identification of potential sources of data (primary or secondary) for each indicator. Consider the availability of data at a single point in time (e.g., baseline data) and over time, as appropriate. However, an indicator should not be used solely because data are accessible.
❒ Burden of Data Collection on Participants The degree to which data collection imposes burden on participants	The necessary data collection of each indictor should be assessed for the human and fiscal burden it entails. When evaluation activities include overlapping or related programs, opportunities for collaboration or shared data collection among relevant donors or organizations should be explored.
❒ Clarity of Focus and Meaning The degree to which a single indicator is unambiguous and reflects or represents the evaluation accurately	An indicator should not be used if it will distort or misrepresent the evaluation (i.e., the focus or object of the evaluation), including the conditions or context in which the program is implemented. Stakeholders should view the indicator as a meaningful descriptor or marker of the status of the evaluation. In addition, stakeholders should consider whether or not additional information is required to appropriately or fully interpret data for a specific indicator.
❒ Cultural Appropriateness and Relevance The degree to which an indicator is culturally appropriate in terms of content or focus and related data collection activities	Stakeholders should determine whether or not the indicator is appropriate and relevant in the context or setting. Typically, these determinations require in-depth, meaningful dialogue with stakeholders.

Criteria	Description
❒ Data Quality The degree to which information collected will be complete, reliable, and valid	Thresholds for data quality will vary by setting, based on stakeholder expectations and values. The relative importance of different dimensions or types of quality will also vary. Those responsible for the evaluation should engage stakeholders in establishing explicit standards for data quality.
❒ Investment of Resources The amount of resources (e.g., funds, personnel, time) needed for data collection, analysis, and use of data or findings	Selection of an indicator requires a precise understanding of the resources needed to collect and analyze the data. This criterion includes consideration of the knowledge or skills necessary to use an indicator. In many cases, discussion of investment of resources results in identification of hard choices to be made regarding feasibility, quality, and timeliness of the data.
❒ Non-directional Language The indicator is written as neutral, not defined as positive or negative in advance of data collection	In many cases, program outcomes are presented as statements of achievement or progress (e.g., increase or decrease). Indicators should be written as neutral and non-directional; the interpretation of the data for the indicator should occur when data collection is complete. For example, the indicator should be written as "level of knowledge" versus "increase in knowledge" or "prevalence of tobacco use among young people" versus "decreased prevalence of tobacco use among young people."
❒ Opportunity to Detect Unexpected or Unintended Findings The degree to which an indicator allows for documentation of unexpected or unintended aspects of the program	In many cases, indicators are constructed to determine whether or not what was thought would happen actually occurs, both in terms of program implementation and outcomes. However, some of the indicators should be flexible enough to create an opportunity for unexpected or unintended findings to emerge.

Criteria	Description
❐ Pathway for Use of Data The degree to which use and users of data are known and agreed upon	This criterion speaks to two issues: who will use data collected and how the information will be used. The criterion is intended to assure that dialogue regarding potential indicators includes explicit and purposeful links to intended use. Accordingly, it's critical that data to be collected are well-suited to the intended use (i.e., provide the types and quality of information needed to achieve the desired use).
❐ Relevance to Evaluation Questions The degree to which an indicator helps to address predefined evaluation questions	If an indicator doesn't clearly contribute to answering evaluation questions, then consider whether or not to include it. Also, ensure there is sufficient diversity of indicators to adequately address the evaluation questions. The set of indicators may be too focused on a single aspect or dimension of the evaluation (e.g., use of fiscal resources, delivery of programs or services). For example, if stakeholders want to document progress toward intended outcomes over time, the indicators must not be limited to implementation or outputs of the program.
❐ Strength of Evidence The degree to which an indicator is considered to be technically sound in a particular domain or field	Evidence for use of an indicator may include published or unpublished literature, stakeholders' experience or values, consultation with those most familiar with the program, or lessons from monitoring or evaluation of similar programs. Stakeholders should determine whether or not the evidence is sufficient to support use of the indicator.
❐ Value within a Set of Indicators The degree to which a single indicator adds meaning to a set of indicators	In addition to assessing the individual merits of an indicator, assess the value of an indicator within a set of indicators to fully determine its utility. This criterion helps identify duplications or redundancies in data collection and may result in use of a more manageable, smaller number of high-performing indicators.

Adapted from: Western Michigan University – The Evaluation Centre
http://www.wmich.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/u350/2014/Indicator_checklist.pdf