

OVC FACT SHEET

ACTION RESEARCH

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2018, the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) will transition recipients of human trafficking grants from an evaluation model to an action research model. Prior to FY 2018, OVC required human trafficking grantees to include an evaluation research component in their grant program activities. After a detailed review of this process, OVC has determined that an action research model is a better fit. This fact sheet is intended to help you transition to the new action research model.

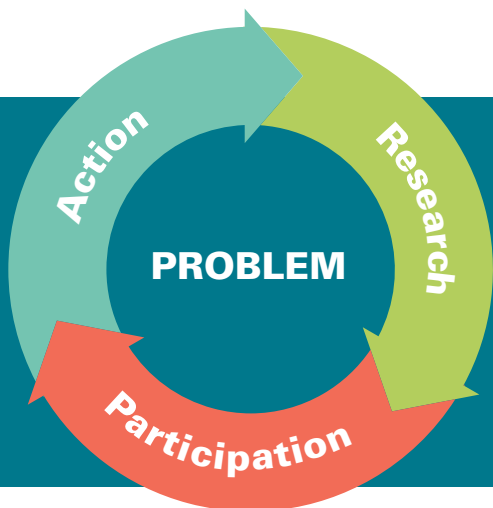
What is action research?

Action research is social research carried out by a team consisting of a professional researcher and representatives from an organization or group seeking to improve its processes, products, or services. Action research involves jointly defining a problem to be addressed, generating knowledge about the problem through data collection, leveraging data to develop a solution or action plan, implementing the solution or action plan, and interpreting the results of the solution or action plan. Action research relies on the scientific knowledge and analytic skills of the researcher, combined with stakeholders' (the organization representatives) knowledge, to generate a solution grounded in evidence and customized to local conditions.

How is action research different from evaluation research?

You may be more familiar with evaluation research, which aims to document the processes and outcomes of your program to determine their effectiveness. While this type of knowledge is important to the field, it does little to help organizations navigate day-to-day implementation activities and make sound decisions when challenges arise. Action research focuses on problem solving, which can be much more useful for grantees.

Action research focuses on solving the micro-challenges that organizations face with any project implementation. It is like course-correcting as we drive down the road, not waiting until we arrive at the wrong destination to realize we were off course.



ACTION RESEARCH ELEMENTS

Action – Find and implement an actionable solution to a challenge.

Research – Grounded in the scientific method and established literature.

Participation – Researchers and stakeholders gather data and design, implement, and test solutions.



Building Solutions
Supporting Communities
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JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS
JUSTICE FOR ALL

Office for Victims of Crime
OVC

When and how should I use action research?

Action research should be used continually throughout your project. It is not a long-term evaluation but rather a means to thoughtfully and purposefully steer your project over the course of its lifetime. You should be continually asking yourself what challenges you are confronting that can be informed by data and how action research can help. For example, if there is a drastic change in the number of clients your organization routinely serves, you can use action research to—

- identify potential causes of change,
- direct action toward addressing the change, and
- conduct checkups with clients and employees to assess their perspective on the situation.

What should I look for in a research partner?

Research partners are typically academics but could be anyone with an advanced knowledge of research, analysis, and the relevant literature on a particular topic. A research partner should guide the action research activities by ensuring that the team follows best practices. Their role is not to tell your organization what to do but rather to work with your organization as an equal partner.

A good partner is one who understands and appreciates the value of action research. It is especially important that your potential action research partner understands the difference between traditional research methods and action research.

How should I report action research activities?

You should report your action research activities to OVC in your annual report. You should document

In 2011, Detroit, MI, was awarded a grant from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to conduct action research on issues related to untested sexual assault kits (SAKs). Now able to test old SAKs for the first time, the action research team was faced with a dilemma: how best to present this information to the victims? The team developed a two-stage, victim-centered, trauma-informed notification protocol grounded in research and tailored to the situation. This protocol led to the majority of contacted victims agreeing to participate in investigations and prosecutions stemming from the newly tested SAKs.

A summary of this action research project, which was also conducted in Houston, TX, is available at www.nij.gov/journals/270/pages/answers-through-research-action.aspx.

when action research was used, what challenges it addressed, and the results it produced. In addition, your report should describe three essential components: successes, challenges, and recommendations.

- Successes are instances when action research resulted in some benefit to the stakeholders and the community they serve (e.g., helping to determine the ideal caseload for reducing employee stress and turnover).
- Challenges are occasions when action research did not result in some benefit to the organization due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g., data was not collected properly, preventing the action research team from being able to determine a solution).
- Recommendations address action research challenges in order to improve future action research processes (e.g., changing data collection practices to better inform future action research).

View a logic model of how action research is implemented at www.nij.gov/topics/crime/gun-violence/prevention/exhibits/pages/action-research-model.aspx.