

About Us

The Applied Research and Program Evaluation team partners with organizations across multiple sectors to develop and implement utilization-focused studies that address public health, human services, and educational programs and initiatives. Our philosophy reflects a rigorous but practical orientation, reflecting our belief that research is most meaningful when findings can be applied to public benefit. We are committed to using evaluative work as a key driver in advancing equity and strive to utilize culturally responsive and inclusive evaluation practices in all of our work.

Our team offers deep quantitative and qualitative research skills in a range of contexts and content areas, including:

- Early intervention, education, and childcare
- K-12 education and youth development
- Post-secondary and adult education
- Economic and workforce development
- Mental and behavioral health
- Economic mobility and housing security
- Healthy communities
- Trauma-informed care
- Violence, injury, and disease prevention

Our clients include federal, state, and local government agencies, health care systems and community hospitals, foundations and non-profit organizations. Whether you are leading a small, local effort or a multimillion-dollar grant initiative, our team can help you collect, analyze, and interpret the data you need to enhance program quality and build capacity.

The UMass Donahue Institute

Established in 1971, the UMass Donahue Institute is a public service, research, and economic development arm of the University of Massachusetts. Our mission is to advance equity and social justice, foster healthy communities and support inclusive economies that alleviate poverty and promote opportunity. In collaboration with partner organizations and clients, we carry out our mission through research, education and training, capacity building, and direct services to strengthen our collective impact. For more information: www.donahue.umass.edu.

Contact Us

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Applied Research and Program Evaluation

Partnering with organizations to develop and implement utilization-focused studies that address the social determinants of health.

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Our Services

Program Evaluation studies the effectiveness and impact of a program as it aligns to its goals. Rigorous evaluation begins with thoughtful planning, rooted in an understanding of the program, its theory of action, and its expected inputs, outputs, and outcomes. We collaborate with clients to develop research designs and evaluation plans, implement the studies, synthesize and interpret the results, and develop recommendations based on the insights gained.

Applied Research explores practical questions regarding needs, trends, implementation, root cause, and potential outcomes. We design studies in collaboration with clients to discover answers to these practical questions that lead to policy reform, inform system-wide transformation, and provide insights for program innovation. Our applied research approach includes qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods designs that combine secondary data sources such as existing literature and program or population data, with primary data collection through surveys, on-site interviews, structured observations, as well as workshops and focus groups.

Monitoring provides decision makers with up-to-date information on the function and status of their constituency or program. Our reports combine expert analytics and data visualization to place relevant, at-a-glance information at clients' fingertips. We partner with clients to identify the information required, the most user-friendly means to display it, and the cadence in which reports are generated.

Advisory Services provide the expertise required to deliberately plan, execute, and effectively apply research and evaluation results. Our highly experienced advisors provide consultation to enhance clients' capacity in proposal writing, study design and implementation, and data management and analysis. We support clients as they grow their internal capacity to conduct evaluation and research that guides their organization's vision and mission.

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