

# EVALUATION FOR LEARNING

News for an Evaluating Community

Spring 2004

## INTRODUCTION TO MEASURING PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

**N**eed help evaluating how a direct service program benefits participants? Sign up for Measuring Program Outcomes, a thorough, hands-on workshop that covers terminology, measurement, analysis and reporting. *The next sequence of sessions is scheduled for Tuesday, September 7, 14 & 21, 2004 from 12:30 to 4:30 pm in the Greater Kalamazoo United Way Board Room (709 S. Westnedge Ave., Kalamazoo). Contact Elaine Griffin at (269) 343-2524 for a registration form. Cost is \$15/person; any community member is welcome.*

## QUALITATIVE DATA

**U**tilizing qualitative data is very valuable in program evaluation; however, it is often challenging to collect qualitative data and can be even more difficult to analyze qualitative data. Dr. Jane Davidson and Dr. Antoinette Brown offer tips for deciding whether or not to collect qualitative data, and how to design qualitative questions. Look for suggestions for analyzing qualitative data in the next edition of Evaluation for Learning.

### Should you collect qualitative data?

Consider:

1. Qualitative data supplements quantitative data but rarely replaces the need for quantitative data. When choosing what type of data to seek, remember that
  - quantitative questions generally ask about responses you expect and for which you need feedback from all respondents.
  - qualitative questions are generally used to flesh out quantitative questions, to dig for unexpected responses, and to hear people's perspectives in their own words.
2. Program needs/uses for qualitative data may include:
  - sound bites or human interest examples for public relations
  - evidence to support program strengths
  - evidence to identify program weaknesses
  - suggestions for improvements
  - identification of client priorities

If, after considering these factors, you decide to collect qualitative data, the next step is to design questions for a survey or interview to elicit the data.

### How should I design tools to elicit usable qualitative data?

1. Qualitative instruments can be quick to design but the responses they generate take a long time to analyze. Consider the resources available for analysis as you determine the length of the instrument. Don't collect more data than you can use or analyze.
  - For every hour of a recorded interview or focus group you should expect at least three hours for transcription. To shorten that time you can use a scribe during the interview, rather than doing a verbatim transcription from a recording.
  - Each page of qualitative data takes at least 30 minutes to analyze.

ASKING GOOD  
QUESTIONS

COLLECTING AND  
SHARING USEFUL  
INFORMATION

USING THE  
INFORMATION FOR:  
➤ IMPROVEMENT  
➤ ACCOUNTABILITY

CONTINUING  
TO REPEAT  
THE CYCLE

*EVALUATION FOR LEARNING*  
NEWSLETTER IS A PRODUCT OF THE  
GREATER KALAMAZOO EVALUATION  
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THE GREATER KALAMAZOO EVALUATION PROJECT PUBLISHES THIS NEWSLETTER TO FOSTER EVALUATION THROUGHOUT THE KALAMAZOO AREA.

Send your ideas and examples to:

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2. Good qualitative questions ask directly about process or outcome.
  - Example of a process question: Describe anything that was particularly interesting in the program.
  - Example of an outcome question: What other changes or events, good or bad, have happened to you because you attended the program?
  
3. Before finalizing the questionnaire, develop a rubric for analyzing the data. To develop a rubric, define what constitutes “good” responses. This is a valuable process for the organization in terms of thinking through “how good is good,” and it will also facilitate the effectiveness and efficiency of the analysis process.

SAMPLE RUBRIC PROVIDED BY DR. JANE DAVIDSON

Excellent	Very positive comments, with a substantial number that indicate a very strong impact; few if any neutral or negative comments.
Good	A good number of positive comments (few neutral or negative); clearly showed that the program had made a noticeable positive effect on students.
Satisfactory	A mix of positive and negative comments, skewed somewhat towards the positive. Evidence points in the right direction, but not to a very noticeable impact.
Marginal	A real mix of comments; no clear skew in either the positive or the negative direction.
Poor	A mix of positive and negative comments, skewed somewhat toward the negative. Not enough evidence to call this a really noticeable negative impact.

\* Categories lower than poor were not defined because none of the program components were performing that poorly.

**Other Resources:**

For more information on this subject, please see

E. Jane Davidson, 2004. The multipurpose evaluation guidebook: The nuts and bolts of putting together a solid evaluation. Sage.

**EVALUATION FOR  
LEARNING IS:**

- EVERYONE’S RESPONSIBILITY
  
- CONTINUALLY ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS, GETTING ANSWERS, AND TAKING ACTION BASED ON THOSE ANSWERS
  
- INTEGRATED INTO THE DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS OF THE ORGANIZATION
  
- A DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS
  
- COLLABORATIVE AND DEPENDENT ON INFORMATION SHARING
  
- TIME WELL SPENT
  
- GOING TO ENSURE THE ORGANIZATION’S HEALTH AND VIABILITY IN THE LONG RUN IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

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