You Have Evaluation Data! Now what?

Analyze your data!

Analyzing data can be a very complex process. If you do not have qualified evaluation staff within your organization, it may be beneficial and cost effective to hire a qualified evaluator to analyze the data. If data are analyzed incorrectly, it can lead to misinterpretation or misunderstanding of a program and its effects.

Questions to Ask Yourself When Interpreting and Utilizing Your Data

Data results are a useful source of information about your progress toward the achievement of intended outcomes. This information can help determine how to maximize the effectiveness of your program.

1. How large was your sample (i.e., what is the number of matched pre and posttests or how much data did you collect)?
    a. If the number is lower than anticipated:
        i. Does it reflect challenges in reaching the number of people you planned to reach? If yes, how might you change or expand your recruitment process?
        ii. Does it reflect challenges with data collection and management (e.g., surveys were lost)? If yes, how might you modify your data collection and/or data management process?

    b. Were there other challenges encountered that could have affected the sample you obtained? If yes, what steps will you take in the future to address these challenges?

    c. How does the sample size impact your interpretation of the findings? Consider both the absolute number, and the proportion of program participants.

        i. If using quantitative methods, small sample sizes (fewer than 15-20 people) can limit the utility of the information.

        ii. If only a very small proportion of program participants responded, consider how representative the results are likely to be.

2. What do the overall results for each of your measures tell you about the progress toward the outcomes you hope to achieve?

3. Are results what you expected?
    a. If not, what factors might have affected the results? (e.g., the population served was different than the target population, participant attrition, participant motivation, lost data, issues with program fidelity/adeptness of program facilitator, staff turnover, etc.)

4. How do you explain the results you see, and what are some alternative explanations for

4. If you used any other methods to obtain data/information (e.g., interviews, focus groups), what methods did you use? What were some of the major findings from that data?

5. Is there a need for new and/or additional measurement tools and/or evaluation components in order to help you better assess the outcomes you hope to achieve? If yes, please explain.

6. How do you plan to share your findings and who do you plan to share the findings with?

Applying what you learned

Use the questions below to guide your thinking about steps you will take to build upon successes and lessen challenges to implementation and evaluation of your program.

7. How will you apply what you have learned?

8. What kind of support (e.g., evaluation and/or other assistance) might be useful to achieve your desired outcomes?

   a. Do you have the internal capacity for this? If not, do you need to consider expanding your staff and/or contracting services?

How Well Are You Using Your Evaluation Findings?

How well are you using your evaluation findings to…	Excellent	Okay	Needs Improvement	N/A	Comments
educate decision makers, funders, and/or key stakeholders					
demonstrate accountability; satisfy public inquiries					
guide budget and resource allocations; gain resources					
show progress when planned outcomes aren't expected until a distant future					
make people aware of the program, achievements, and/or needs (program visibility)					
guide program improvements					
promote the program, maintain commitment					

enhance public image					
recruit volunteers, participants, and/or partners					
identify effective practices					
share lessons learned					
celebrate accomplishments					

*Adapted from University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension (2008). Building capacity in evaluating outcomes: A teaching and facilitating resource for community-based programs and organizations. Madison, WI: UW Extension, Program Development and Evaluation.