Diving into the Nuances of Specific Populations

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Community **Action**
Partnership of Ramsey
& Washington Counties

PARTNERING WITH PEOPLE TO OVERCOME POVERTY
SERVE. EDUCATE. TRANSFORM.

The**Improve**Group

Overview

- Being **Responsive** to Communities in Evaluation
  - Why this Matters
  - Data-Seeking-Data Approaches
- Community Action's **Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning Process**
  - Overview
  - Goals
  - Results
- **Key Considerations** when using Data-Seeking-Data
- What do you think? **Let's discuss!**

Being Responsive to Communities in Evaluation

"Community-responsive evaluation recognizes the complexities of each community, and uses methods that **respect** community members and allow a **wide variety of community voices** to be heard."

– The Improve Group

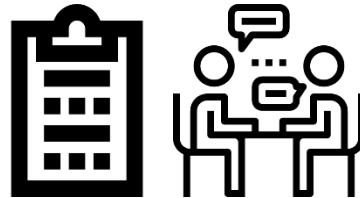# Community Responsive Evaluation: Why it Matters

- Deeper, more authentic data

- Build respectful relationships with community members

- Minimize potential bias

- Counteract historical injustices

Data-Seeking-Data

Linear Data Collection

An external data source identifies "communities of interest"

A prescribed data collection strategy & protocol is used for all communities

Data is analyzed for key findings

Data-Seeking-Data

An Iterative Approach

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Data-Seeking-Data

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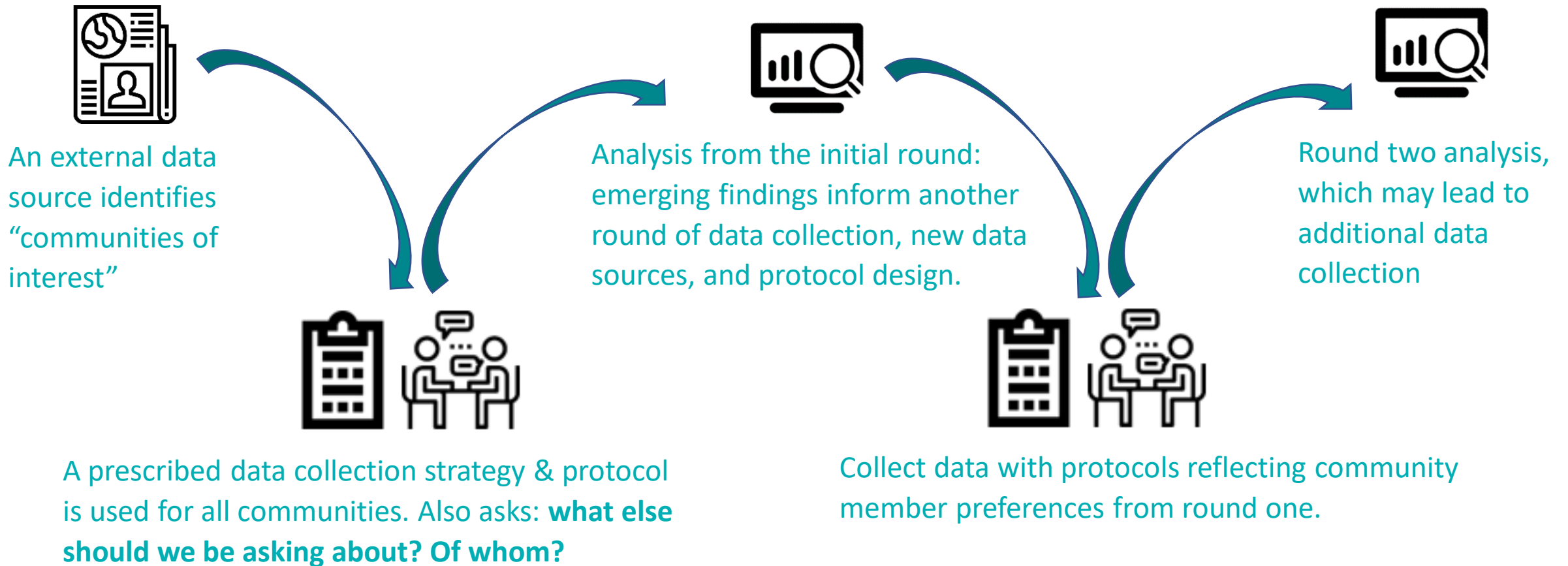An external data source identifies "communities of interest"

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Analysis from the initial round: emerging findings inform another round of data collection, new data sources, and protocol design.

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Collect data with protocols reflecting community member preferences from round one.

Round two analysis, which may lead to additional data collection

Community Action's Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan

- WHO? Community Action Partnership of Ramsey & Washington Counties

  - "Partnering with People to Overcome Poverty through Service, Education, & Transformation"

  - Fighting poverty in the East Metro for 55 years

  - Support ~60,000 low-income people each year through programs and services

- WHAT? Nationwide poverty fighting movement authorized by the Civil Rights Act of 1964
  - Founded on the principal that poverty is best addressed at the LOCAL level –local problems, local leadership, local solutions

  - Foundational funding comes through Federal and State competitive grants—accompanied by reporting and practice requirements

    - Maximum Feasible Participation—Low-income people are the EXPERTS about poverty

    - Board Composition—1/3 of members are low-income

    - Triennial Community Needs Assessment

    - Strategic Planning

Community Action's
2018 Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan

- 14 month process

- Leadership priorities for 2018 assessment and planning process:
  - "One Journey": Continue to align needs assessment with strategic planning and annual work plans
  - More qualitative data to make sure we hear the VOICES of low-income people
    - "Don't just amplify the voices of marginalized people—AMPLIFY them!"
  - No "data dump" when communicating with Board

- Establishment of "One Journey" Work Group

- RFP process

Community Action's
2018 Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan

- **Four Methods of Data Collection that BUILT upon one another—data-seeking-data**!
  - Community Profile—summary and analysis of available demographic data
  - Trends Analysis—interviews with "key informants"
  - Community Survey
  - Solution-focused Inventory—series of focus groups comprised of people who share a common experience or identity
    - IMPORTANT: Convened by people who also share that identity or experience; participants were PAID for their time because they are EXPERTS

- **Board Involvement**
  - Membership in work group
  - Two half-day retreats (consider more and longer retreats)
  - FIVE study sessions at monthly Board meetings—one for each for four collection methods and one for Mission, Vision, Values edits/updates

- **Dissemination of Findings**
  - Final report— 73 pages
  - "Community Report" summarized findings and included a call to action—sent to supporters, partner agencies, and assessment participants
  - Annual Dinner with Board and other supporters
  - Convening of participants

Community Action's
2018 Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan

OUTCOMES OF "Data-seeking-Data"/Iterative process:

- Revealed a THEME that could not be ignored--each method of data collection supported and reinforced one overarching finding

- We couldn't ignore or sideline the THEME—even when it made some of us uncomfortable

- The THEME caused a shift in understanding, in action, and the deployment of resources
  - Reminded us to widen our focus and re-commit to our founding principles
  - Specifically, our focus *expanded* from meeting and understanding individual and community needs to ensuring that our work includes a focus on addressing the causes of poverty, and this accompanying (and often uncomfortable) truth: *A root cause of poverty in our community is historical and systemic oppression of groups of people along racial and ethnic lines.*
    - *Our strategic plan and work plans now place more emphasis on:*
      - *Thought-leadership and education of elected officials, leaders, and citizens*
      - *Publicizing our "call to action"*
      - *Expansion of programs that focus on increasing the income of low-income people so that their budget can stretch beyond meeting basic needs helping families to, once and for all, move out of poverty*

Key Considerations of Data-Seeking-Data

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- **Iterative protocols:** whose questions get asked?

- **Fatigue...** *sigh*

Discussion Questions

- **What opportunities exist to incorporate data-seeking-data approaches in your evaluation processes?**

- **How do you think data-seeking-data would benefit your evaluation processes?**

- **What aspects of data-seeking-data are you skeptical or doubtful about?**