Diving into the Nuances of Specific Populations

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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
An Iterative Approach

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A prescribed data collection strategy & protocol is used for all communities. Also asks: what else should we be asking about? Of whom?
Data-Seeking-Data

An Iterative Approach

An external data source identifies “communities of interest”

A prescribed data collection strategy & protocol is used for all communities. Also asks: **what else should we be asking about? Of whom?**

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

An Iterative Approach

An external data source identifies “communities of interest”

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

Round two analysis, which may lead to additional data collection

A prescribed data collection strategy & protocol is used for all communities. Also asks: **what else should we be asking about? Of whom?**

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

- **Timeline**: being iterative takes more time!
Key Considerations of Data-Seeking-Data

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• **Iterative protocols:** whose questions get asked?
Key Considerations of Data-Seeking-Data

• **Timeline**: being iterative takes more time!

• **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?