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# Evaluation for Grantseekers

From Proposal to Reporting

The **Improve** Group

# CONTENTS

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Common Evaluation terminology..... 2

common grant application terms ..... 3

Logic Model template..... 4

Evaluation Questions ..... 9

Selecting Data Collection Methods ..... 10

Evaluation Planning Worksheet..... 14

# COMMON EVALUATION TERMINOLOGY

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- **Research:** Seeks answers to questions in order to generate new knowledge and/or understanding
- **(Program) Evaluation:** “Evaluation is assessing the strengths and weaknesses of projects, programs, personnel, and organizations to improve their effectiveness.” (Source: the American Evaluation Association)

Another definition: Program evaluation is a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer questions about projects, policies and programs, particularly about their effectiveness and efficiency. In other words, research done with the objective of improving programs and organizations.

- **Developmental evaluation:** Supports innovative and adaptive development by bringing data to inform and guide decision-making in complex, dynamic environments.
- **Evaluation capacity:** Ability to do and use evaluation.
- **Evaluation capacity building (ECB):** Intentional work to increase the ability of an organization to conduct and use evaluation.
- **Formative evaluation:** Explores if and how a program or initiative is making progress toward its goals.
- **Summative evaluation:** Determines the long-term effects (positive or negative, intended or unintended) of a program or initiative.
- **Logic model:** A diagram describing a program and its expected results.
- **Monitoring:** Tracks adherence to accountability requirements or uses quantitative indicators to routinely measure progress.
- **Qualitative:** Information expressed through words and images.
- **Quantitative:** Information expressed in numbers.
- **Stakeholders:** People who have an investment and/or interest in your program or organization (e.g. organizational staff, program participants, funders, community members).

## Websites with additional definitions (in plain English):

- Central Piedmont Community College: <http://www.cpcc.edu/learningcollege/learning-outcomes/vocabulary-for-assessment-and-evaluation>
- U.S. Department of Energy: [http://www1.eere.energy.gov/ba/pba/program\\_evaluation/glossary.html](http://www1.eere.energy.gov/ba/pba/program_evaluation/glossary.html)
- Better Evaluation: <https://www.betterevaluation.org/>

# COMMON GRANT APPLICATION TERMS

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- **Evidence:** Usually refers to the sources of data and analysis methods you will use to determine success. The What Works Clearinghouse provides a hierarchy of evidence.
- **Objectives, outputs, outcome & impact:** These words are often used imprecisely/interchangeably. USAID, the CDC, and others have good glossaries.
- **Change, results:** The ways in which individuals, groups or communities will be different after you have served them.
- **Rigor, scientific, experimental:** Evaluation strategies that attempt to demonstrate causation rather than correlation. Often rely on comparison groups or statistical methods.
- **Use:** The ways in which findings from your evaluation will be reviewed, interpreted and addressed in your program design.
- **Performance:** The degree to which you delivered what you said in your application. Often refers to your activities rather than the experiences of or changes in participants.
- **Measure, metric, and indicator:** these terms are often used interchangeably to describe the data used to measure progress towards the program's goals

# LOGIC MODEL TEMPLATE

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## Logic Model Elements:

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes	Long-Term outcomes

## Definitions:

- **Inputs:** The resources that are essential for activities to occur. Examples include financial resources, human resources, space, technology, equipment, and materials.
- **Activities:** The actions that are needed to implement the program; the actions that use program resources (inputs) in order to achieve program outcomes and goals.
- **Outputs:** Quantified descriptions of accomplishments from activities; outputs characterize the application of activities.
- **Outcomes:** The results that the program intends to achieve if implemented as planned. Outcomes include the changes that occur or the difference that is made for individuals, groups, organizations, systems, or communities during or after the program, and should be within the scope of the program's control or sphere of reasonable influence. Outcomes answer the questions "what difference does the program make?" or "what does success look like?"

## Why develop a logic model?

Developing a logic model has two primary benefits for an organization or initiative.

***Building consensus and excitement:*** Going through the steps of developing a logic model gives your stakeholders an opportunity to share their views and experience on what makes your initiative successful. This gives everyone a better understanding of their colleagues' experiences and allows staff to feel valued and heard in the organization.

***Supporting your initiative:*** A final logic model will be a concise tool that can be used for a number of purposes, including:

- Helping to get everyone on the same page, and orienting new staff, volunteers and partners to the initiative;
- Describing your initiative to current and potential funders (useful for grant proposals!);
- Describing your initiative to other stakeholders;
- Providing clear and concrete guidelines for a program;
- Guiding evaluation and assessment efforts; and
- Guiding allocations of resources.

A logic model is not meant to be static. It is beneficial to review and modify logic models periodically to account for changes in resources, implementation, evaluation or assessment results, and changes to the political, economic, social and technological environment in which you work.

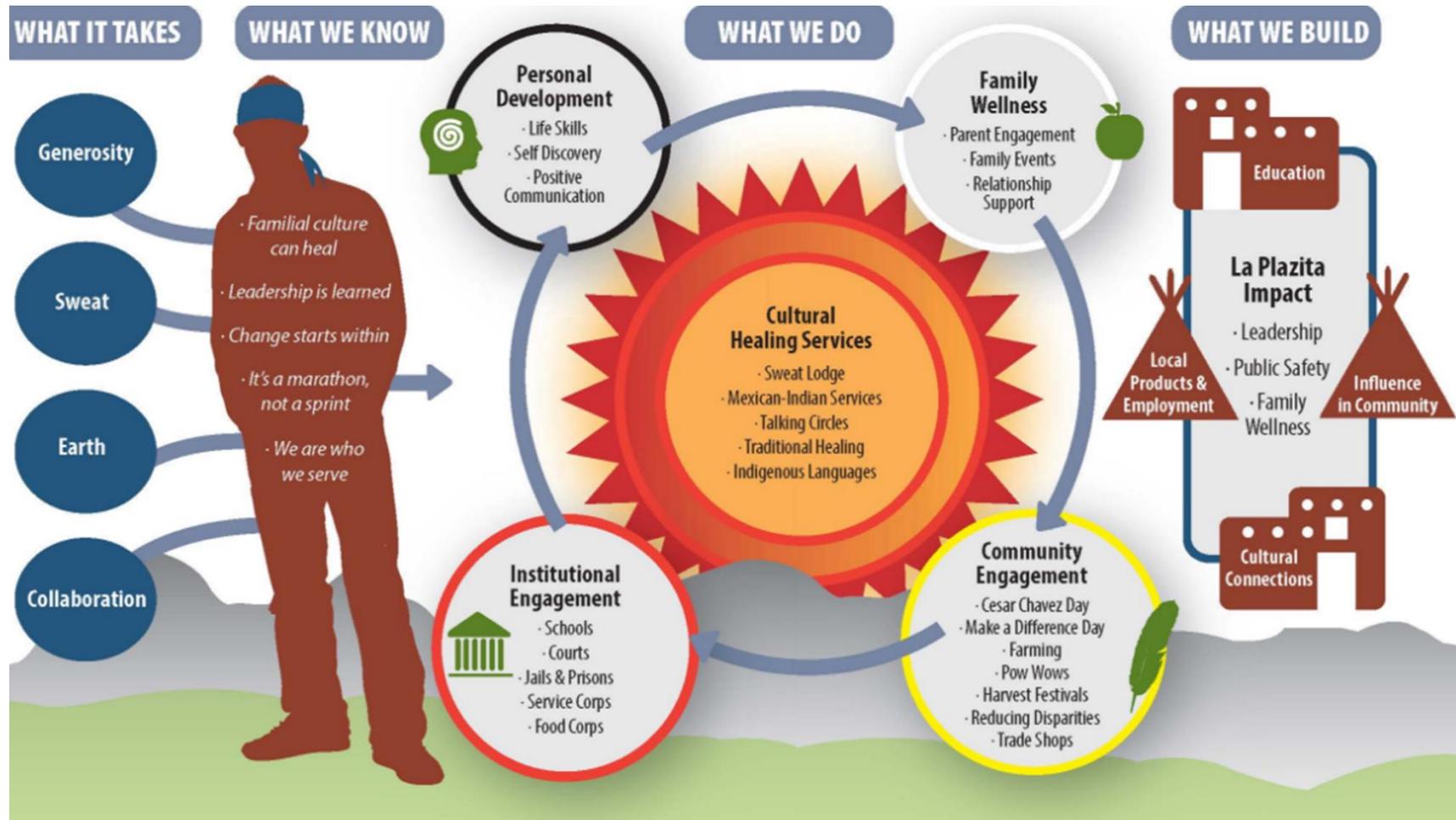
## People involved

In developing a logic model, it is very important to involve people that represent all aspects of your work, including administrative staff, those in direct service, board members or elected officials, volunteers, funders, initiative participants and community members. It is not necessary to have every stakeholder involved in every step of the process, but having each point of view represented will ensure that all perspectives, ideas and opinions are expressed.

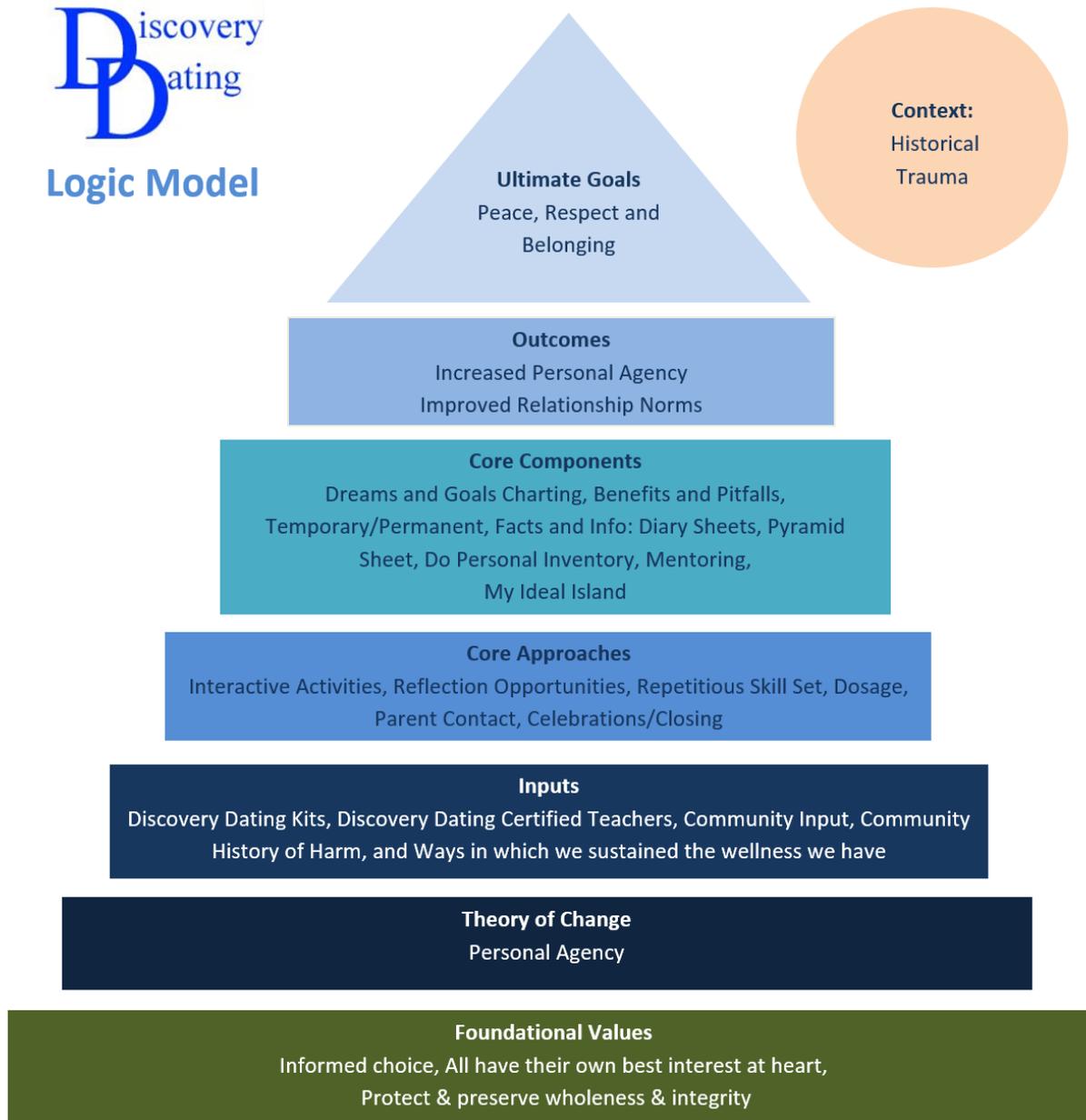
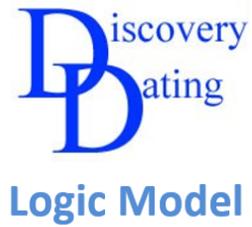
## Logic model examples

Logic models can take many forms depending on what sort of guidance and information is needed. The following pages include some examples.

**Example 1**



**Example 2**



# EVALUATION QUESTIONS

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## Why are evaluation questions important?

Evaluation questions identify what aspects of a program or policy will be investigated. They provide the boundaries of the evaluation and should provide answers that are useful and informative for the project's intended use.

## What makes a good evaluation question?

A good evaluation question will have the following qualities:

- Evaluative – determine the significance of the program and/or directly inform programming decisions
- Useful – questions are related to the program's purpose and needs
- Reasonable – questions are answerable given current resources
- Specific – questions clearly identify what will be investigated
- Answerable – questions reflect real-world constraints on data collection

## What makes a bad evaluation question?

- Questions with only yes/no answers
- Questions that deal with only discrete data – program outputs, usage numbers, etc.

- **What are evaluation questions commonly used for?<sup>1</sup>**

- Fit – how well does work fit and complement other services?
- Design – is the design right? How well does it address underlying causes?
- Implementation – how well the program being delivered meets people's needs?
- Outcomes – are the outcomes worthwhile?
- Learnings – where and for whom do our services work best? Why?
- Sustainability – how sustainable are program impacts?
- Overall Value – how worthwhile is the program?

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<sup>1</sup> \*Drawn from the work of E. Jane Davidson, *Actionable Evaluation workshop*

# SELECTING DATA COLLECTION METHODS

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## Considerations when choosing data collection methods

There are many factors that can affect what data collection methods you choose for your evaluation. These are some factors that you should consider when trying to decide which methods will work best:

- **What information is important to your stakeholders?**
- **What data sources will your stakeholders consider reliable?** Who can you collect data from, and will that data be seen as credible/legitimate to the main stakeholders for the evaluation?
- **How will you analyze the data?**
- **Who will analyze the data?** This will determine what methods to use. For example, if you don't have the capacity to do quantitative analysis, perhaps a survey is not the best method.
- **How much time do we have to collect data and do analysis?** Some data collection methods may take a much longer timeframe, for instance if you want to engage members from difficult to reach populations.
- **What resources do we have?** Resources and time are key: you may have great ideas for collecting the best data, but if you don't have the time and/or resources to collect the data, then it's not practical.
- **How much access to data sources will we have?** If you cannot possibly get interviews with the people you want interviews with, then you will want to consider alternatives. You need to adapt your methods to be accessible to your data sources—the people who are providing information to you for the evaluation.

## Quantitative vs. qualitative data

### Quantitative data:

Quantitative data quantifies. Numbers tell us how many people did an activity, agree or disagree with a concept, or think we did a good or a bad job. They don't give insights into how people feel about a program, or insights into aspects of programs that cannot be quantified. Quantitative data is typically gathered from:

- Surveys
- Administrative data
- Polls
- Trained observer ratings
- Test scores

### Qualitative data:

Qualitative data helps explain how a program works and why it has played out in a certain way. It can explain why a program faced certain stumbling blocks, and may even explain hard to-measure outcomes that cannot be defined quantitatively, such as: social connectivity, relationship building, transformation for social justice, and leadership development. Qualitative data is typically gathered from:

- Interviews
- Observations
- Written documents

- Open-ended survey questions
- Photographs
- Videos
- Social media content

**Example of a quantitative question vs. qualitative question:**

Question type	Example question
<b>Quantitative Question:</b>	How many pounds of produce from the Community Garden did you integrate into your family's meals?
<b>Qualitative Question:</b>	Please tell me some stories about how the garden improved your health?
<b>Quantitative OR Qualitative Question (depending on how it is asked)</b>	What did you value most about your garden experience?

## Advantages and disadvantages of common data collection methods

Data collection method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Surveys (general)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can survey many respondents with relatively low added cost or time for each respondent</li> <li>• Relatively inexpensive per person if the sample is large</li> <li>• Everyone gets the same instrument</li> <li>• Interpretation of data is fairly objective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to get much detail</li> <li>• Response rate can be affected by setting; commitment to initiative; and how well respondent understands questions</li> <li>• Can't control how respondents will interpret questions</li> <li>• People are over surveyed</li> <li>• Difficult to change the survey during implementation</li> <li>• Can be difficult to gather data about context/perceptions</li> </ul>
Group administered surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can observe how well respondents are answering questions</li> <li>• Can be administered across groups and compare groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluator conducting survey will have to avoid biasing results</li> </ul>
Telephone surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to ask for more detail when needed</li> <li>• Costs per respondent are relatively low for large surveys or polls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes difficult reaching respondents—accurate telephone numbers are becoming harder to get</li> <li>• Set up and training costs are high</li> </ul>
Online surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can control how respondents answer questions and avoid invalid responses</li> <li>• Costs for each additional survey are very minimal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not appropriate for all stakeholders or communities</li> <li>• Time and training for set up can be extensive</li> </ul>

<b>Data collection method</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Interviews (general)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluator can know how respondents are interpreting questions</li> <li>• Can capture more nuanced details and able to ask for more detail when needed</li> <li>• Help new ideas to percolate up</li> <li>• Can help interviewee see connections</li> <li>• Respondents can provide detailed data about areas of interest</li> <li>• Can get interesting stories or anecdotes that illustrate points (people like telling stories)</li> <li>• Opportunity to build rapport with interviewee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time-consuming; can only get one respondent's data at a time</li> <li>• Because of time, can limit sample size</li> <li>• Interpretation of data is fairly subjective</li> <li>• Can be expensive</li> <li>• Can be difficult to identify common themes or findings among respondents</li> </ul>
Electronic interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively low burden for both respondent and Evaluator</li> <li>• Can send same questions out to multiple respondents and then follow-up as needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response rate may be low without an existing relationship between Evaluator and respondent</li> <li>• Respondents will likely have concerns about anonymity and privacy</li> <li>• Not a great method for all populations</li> </ul>
Focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluator can know how respondents are interpreting questions</li> <li>• Able to interview multiple respondents at one time, thus, more cost-effective</li> <li>• Can get interesting stories or anecdotes that illustrate points</li> <li>• Comments from one respondent stimulate discussion among other respondents, creating a deep understanding of an issue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group setting may inhibit some respondents from providing information</li> <li>• Strong facilitation skills are sometimes necessary if there are dominant or reluctant respondents</li> <li>• Sometimes hard to coordinate multiple schedules</li> <li>• Comments from one respondent stimulate discussion among other respondents, possibly biasing results</li> </ul>
Electronic or web-based focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can keep questions "open" for multiple days so respondents can continue to add thoughts</li> <li>• Electronic format is more comfortable for some respondents that may be shy in person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respondents will likely have concerns about anonymity and privacy</li> <li>• Not a great method for all populations</li> <li>• Set-up costs may be higher (including staff time learning software)</li> </ul>
Workshops and participatory meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respondents not only share information, but generate ideas</li> <li>• Evaluator can know how respondents are interpreting questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk of selection bias because most interested respondents are most likely to attend</li> <li>• Complex roles for everyone – Evaluator and participants are both giving and gathering information</li> </ul>

Data collection method	Advantages	Disadvantages
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can break into smaller groups about specific issues</li> <li>• Able to interview multiple respondents at one time, thus, more cost-effective</li> <li>• Comments from one respondent stimulates discussion among other respondents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideas that are generated need to be validated by non-participants</li> </ul>
Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective interpretation</li> <li>• Low burden for respondents providing data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time-consuming</li> <li>• Some items are not observable</li> <li>• Can be expensive</li> <li>• Participant behavior may be affected by observer presence</li> </ul>
Records review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective interpretation</li> <li>• Low burden for respondents providing data</li> <li>• Relatively inexpensive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not correspond to exactly what evaluator wants</li> <li>• May be incomplete or require additional interpretation</li> <li>• May have restrictions about how data can be used if respondents were guaranteed privacy</li> </ul>

# EVALUATION PLANNING WORKSHEET

What do we want to know? (evaluation question)	What questions will we ask? (question on data collection tool)	What are we measuring? (Indicators)	How will we get the information? (data collection method)	Where will we get this information? (data source)	Who will interpret the information? (analysis)	Who should get the results? (sharing)
Evaluation Question #1						
Evaluation Question #2						