EVALUATION DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

~ A tool to guide evaluation and assessment of programs and initiatives ~

1) Figure out what you want to evaluate.

Programs vary in size, shape and complexity. Begin by asking yourself: Do I want to evaluate the entire program, one or two program components, or even one or two services or activities within a component?

- ✓ What's the name of the program, program component, service or activity you wish to evaluate?

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- ✓ What's the objective of this program/activity/group?

  _____

- ✓ What is the reason for conducting the assessment?

  _____

- ✓ What is your research question? What are trying to learn? Be as specific as possible.

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2) Determine the purpose of your evaluation.

What question(s) do you want answered?

While most of us would like to know the impact of our programs, some programs are better served by focusing their initial evaluations on how and why programs are functioning as they are, asking questions such as the following:

- What is working?
- How effective is the program in achieving its goals?
- Who is the evaluation being conducted for?

For those programs ready to assess impact, questions such as the following might be asked:

- How do the programs being carried out support (or undermine) the mission of the organization?
- What are the intended outcomes, or changes the program should produce?
- Does participation in the initiative lead to measureable results?

Use the examples above to write your own question(s). If you have more than one question, prioritize them, focusing on what you need to know and need to report.

- ✓ How will you and/or others use the information that answers your questions, once you have collected it?

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  _____

- ✓ What are your intended (program) goals and/or outcomes?

  _____

3) Determine the information needed to answer your questions.

What types of information will answer your questions? Sometimes, it is a clear, easily identified piece or two of data, such as the following:

- What percentage of program participants attended the annual meeting?
- What percentage of our hunger program participants has launched a community garden?

Other times, the information to answer your questions will not be able to be quantified in a way that is helpful; and other types of data such as interviews, observations and focus groups will better help you to answer your questions. Here is one example:

- When looking at a program, if you want to understand the impact, you could carry out interviews with the participants as well as observations of the groups.

- ✓ Who can provide you with the information? Who is your target audience?

  _____

4) Determine data collection methods.

What evaluation tools and process will help you collect the information you're looking for? Important factors to consider include choosing methods and tools that are most likely to provide the data you need, are the least disruptive to your program and clients, and are most affordable for your agency. Examples include:

- Online/paper surveys
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Reported data for the program (participant sign-up sheets, website analytics, numbers of individuals served/impacted, etc.)

- ✓ What evaluation tools and processes are you currently using?

  _____

- ✓ Which methods are most likely to provide the data you need?

  _____

✓ What is the timeframe for your evaluation?

_____

✓ How do you intend to execute your assessment? Electronically? US Mail? In person?

_____

✓ Do you have a draft of survey questions prepared?

_____

5) Analyze your data.

The purpose of data analysis is to make sense of the information. It needs to be interpreted and presented in a way that people can understand not only what is obvious, but more subtle nuances that may be important.

✓ How will you analyze your data once it is collected?

_____

✓ Will you need assistance analyzing the responses?

_____

6) Share your results.

How you share your findings from your evaluation is determined by the goals of the evaluation. You may want to present it to any/all of the following:

- Program staff, to discuss program adjustments
- Funders, to show program impact
- Policy makers, to inform legislation

✓ Who are you trying to reach and what are you trying to accomplish with this information?
✓ What will be the most effective ways to share this information?

If possible, you should find a way to share your findings with the evaluation participants.

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