

Program Evaluation Tip Sheet: Integrating Cultural Competence into Evaluation

This Tip Sheet contains important excerpts from the *Practical Strategies for Culturally Competent Evaluation*, an evaluation guide designed for programs and partners funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention and Division of Environmental Hazards and Health Effects' National Asthma Control Program. The guide highlights the prominent role of culture in the work of evaluators and provides important strategies and guiding questions for enhancing cultural competence in evaluation.

What Is Cultural Competence?

Cultural competence is "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables effective work in cross-cultural situations."¹ Cultural competence is an essential and ethical obligation for all evaluators.

Applying a critical cultural lens to evaluation will ensure that efforts have cultural relevance and will generate meaningful findings that stakeholders ultimately will value and use. This Program Evaluation Tip Sheet contains tips and guiding questions aligned with the six steps of CDC's *Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health*.²

Self-Reflection Questions for Evaluators

To help explore your own identity, ask yourself

- Where am I from (nationality, region, and heritage)?
- What are my beliefs, values, and religious and political orientation?
- What is my biological sex and gender identity?
- What is my age group?
- What is my social class?
- Which of the above factors are significant to me?
- What do I see as potential opportunities, challenges, or conflicts for this evaluation?
- What stereotypes do I hold?



Ensuring Cultural Competence in Evaluation

Tips	Guiding Questions
<p>Engage Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess cultural self-awareness. • Request that stakeholders who reflect the diversity of the community be included throughout the evaluation. • Lay clear ground rules for participation to establish equality. • Build trust by talking openly with the community about the evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the stakeholder group fully represent the diversity of the program's participants and others affected by the program? • Are meaningful roles planned for stakeholders throughout the evaluation? • Is there a distribution of power among stakeholders? To other distinctions related to status and social class? • Are there multiple voices in planning, implementing, interpreting, and decision making?
<p>Describe the Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct key informant interviews to clarify stakeholders' perspectives of the program. • Hold an information-gathering session for stakeholders about the social and historical context of the program. • Use models that resonate with the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are stakeholders' perspectives appropriately reflected? • What is known about the strengths, assets, challenges, and barriers of the community, including the talents and expertise that individual community members or organizations bring? • Are there "gatekeepers of knowledge" within the community that can help describe the social and political context of the program/community?
<p>Focus the Evaluation Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage an experienced facilitator familiar with the community who can guide the development of evaluation questions that reflect stakeholders' values. • Develop a visual chart that describes evaluation design options in such a way that all stakeholders understand the choices and the implications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What/whose values and perspectives are represented in the evaluation questions? • Is the design appropriate to the evaluation questions as well as the cultural context and values of the community? • Is the evidence considered credible by the community and stakeholders?
<p>Gather Credible Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select culturally appropriate data collection instruments. • Develop data collection methods that factor in cultural and linguistic distinctions. • Adapt data collection processes to the stakeholder context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whose perspectives are accepted as credible evidence? Credible to whom? • Are the language, content, and design of the instruments culturally sensitive? Have the instruments been validated with their intended audiences? • Have verbal and nonverbal communication been addressed?
<p>Justify Conclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to developing final conclusions, discuss cultural implications during data analysis. • Involve diverse stakeholders in interpreting data. • Ensure that many stakeholders' voices are heard when making judgments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are different stakeholders' perspectives and values addressed in the analysis and interpretation of the evaluation findings? Are conclusions validated by participants? • Are conclusions balanced with culturally appropriate recommendations and community capacity? • Are findings meaningful to the group or community of interest?
<p>Ensure Use and Share Lessons Learned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate recommendations through an inclusive process by providing a role for various stakeholders to implement the evaluation findings. • Tailor dissemination of evaluation results to stakeholder needs. • Encourage the use of evaluation information by holding an inclusive meeting about developing an action plan for evaluation use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are communication mechanisms culturally appropriate? • Does the reporting method meet stakeholder needs (both the message and the messenger)? • Are the data presented in context, with efforts made to clarify issues and prevent misuse? • Has the community benefited as anticipated? How?

References

- ¹Anderson LM, Scrimshaw SC, Fullilove MT, Fielding JE, Normand J, Task Force on Community Preventive Services. Culturally competent healthcare systems: a systematic review. *Am J Prev Med.* 2003;24(3S):68–79. www.thecommunityguide.org/social/soc-A/1PM-evrvy-healthcare-systems.pdf. Accessed October 10, 2014.
- ²Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Framework for program evaluation in public health. *MMWR.* 1999;48(RR-11):1–40.