

EVALUATION 101

LEARNING COMMUNITY

NOVEMBER 20, 2023

THE

CIRCUIT

TRAILS

GOALS

- **Demystify evaluation**
- **Encourage the use of reflection as an essential part of evaluation**
- **Add evaluation and reflection to your professional and personal toolkit**

MISCONCEPTIONS

- **Requires technical or statistical expertise**
- **High Costs**
- **Large Time Commitment**
- **All or Nothing**
- **Unused results – little return on investment**

EVALUATION IS... a systematic effort
to learn from experience what
worked and what did not

QUESTIONS THAT SHAPE EVALUATION

- **Why evaluate?**
- **Who should conduct the evaluation?**
- **Who will use the results?**
- **What?**
- **When?**
- **Where?**
- **How?**
- **What difference will this make?**

QUANTITATIVE VS. QUALITATIVE DATA

Quantitative Data

Data represented numerically, including anything that can be counted, measured, or given a numerical value. Tells us how many, how much, or how often in calculations.

Qualitative Data

Information not represented by numbers. Examples are information gathered from interviews, focus groups, diaries, maps, photographs, or observations. Helps us understand why, how, or what happened behind certain behaviors. Qualitative data is interpretation-based.

EVALUATION VS. RESEARCH

EVALUATION

Seeks to improve

Seeks to generate information for decision making

Seeks to improve policy, procedure, and practice

Grows out of the interests of stakeholders

It can be messy--takes place in settings in which there may be few controls, changing locations, participants, timelines, priorities, and resources.

Improves decision-making

RESEARCH

Seeks to prove

Seeks to generate new knowledge

Makes recommendations to propose new knowledge

Grows out of scientific inquiry and intellectual curiosity

Usually done in a controlled setting

Advances knowledge and theory

REFLECTION

Reflection: taking the time to think analytically about what has been learned from the evaluation or our professional practice to gain insights into how we can improve our own or program effectiveness. It is as important, if not more so, than any other aspect of evaluation.

ROLE OF REFLECTION

Reflection → Insight and Understanding → Learning → Improvement

ISSUES FOR REFLECTION

- **What have we learned?**
- **Did we do what we planned or committed to do?**
- **What can we do better?**
- **What should we do differently?**
- **What should we stop doing and why?**
- **How did timing and sequencing impact outcomes?**
- **Were the “right” partners involved doing the “right things”?**
- **Did the setting contribute to outcomes? How?**

ISSUES FOR REFLECTION

- For recurring programs, was the current offering better or less effective than past offerings? Why?
- What external factors affected performance? How?
- Were the results achieved worth the cost and effort? (Return on the investment)
- Were there unintended consequences—either positive or negative?
- How do we maximize program strengths?
- How do we correct or mitigate program weaknesses?
- Would it be helpful to others to share what we learned?
- Program or experience specific questions.

WILLIAM PENN'S PERSPECTIVE

- **WPF is developing its strategic plan now. Equitable access to nature is likely to be an area of focus. New guidelines expected to roll out by late summer 2024.**
- **Sees evaluation as a learning function and a way of identifying how WPF funding is helping to advance grantmaking goals.**
- **Evaluation should be informative to grantees and shape grantee decisions in the same way that grantee decisions about programming has been shaped by the OpinionWorks Equity of Access Study has done.**
- **WPF looks to draw on existing plans (e.g., Circuit Trails strategic plan) to inform metrics tracked by WPF, rather than create separate new metrics that require additional burden and may not provide the same degree of utility to grantees.**

EVALUATION & REFLECTION IN CT'S WORK

- **Analysis of the Circuit Trails strategic plan**
- **Structure of our coalition**
- **Review of major initiatives such as the Community Grants Program and other work growing out of the Equity of Access Study.**