

Introduction

An evaluation team consisting of community site coordinators, staff, project directors, evaluators, and other stakeholders will use this guide to evaluate community-based projects. Each member of the team is deemed critical to the evaluation effort as each brings an important perspective, knowledge and expertise. As a result of this collaborative effort, it is expected that communities will develop a greater understanding of the total evaluation process. While team members will learn from each other, it is not expected that every member will become an expert in every area of the project. The value of the team approach is that many experts can come together to pool resources for a common understanding and joint effort that result in successful evaluation.

After reviewing a number of evaluation models, we chose to present a modified version of Jacobs' (1988) five-tiered approach to program evaluation. Jacobs' approach has sound theoretical underpinnings and practical applications. Over time, teams will work through this guide, and thus the five tiers, to evaluate the process of their program and conduct short-term outcome and long-term outcome evaluations.

We recognize and respect the diversity of community-based projects. Projects address a variety of issues, have differing work styles, are at different stages of program implementation, and have differing needs relative to evaluation. As a result, we cannot present an "all inclusive" model of evaluation. What we offer is a framework for developing an evaluation. For projects in the early stages, the guide can be used to develop an evaluation plan simultaneous with the program. On the other hand, projects with evaluation plans in place will find this guide most useful for the supplemental information it contains, including resources and reporting forms.

As teams work through the guide, written documentation is encouraged at each tier; however, the extent of this documentation is up to the discretion of each team. The guide begins by introducing the CYFAR philosophy and resources and collaborators of the Evaluation Collaboration. The remainder of the guide is used to introduce Jacobs' (1988) five-tiered model and present the tasks associated with each tier.