

The CYFAR Philosophy and Evaluation

The CYFAR philosophy encourages Extension professionals to implement programs that promote positive development. The research on risk and resilience identifies attributes of effective programs that promote positive development.

1 Exemplify a Community-Based, Holistic Philosophy

A holistic approach to evaluation views families and programs as existing within a community, and within the larger society. Effective evaluations take into account the broader context within which programs exist and consider the constraints affecting them.

2 Promote Partnership with Citizens

In evaluation, community members are deemed important stakeholders. Since community members are always evaluating the programs they participate in, evaluations benefit when the views of community members are represented.

3 Address Complex Conditions

Families and programs exist within complex and dynamic environments. To be useful and effective, evaluations must consider the complexity of the program. Effective evaluations are often used to inform legislation and policy.

4 Solicit and Value Diversity

With multiple, diverse stakeholders invested in a program, evaluations are more successful when they incorporate a broad spectrum of perspectives and experiences. In addition, effective evaluations utilize culturally sensitive measures that honor the rich diversity of program participants.

5 Instill Collaboration

"Collaboration between national and local development organizations, researchers, [citizens], and funders is necessary to ensure that program outcome evaluation is efficient" (National Collaboration for Youth, 1996). The most appropriate evaluation strategy is developed when funders collaborate with service providers. This collaborative process leads to an evaluation plan that is best able to serve children, youth, families, and communities (National Collaboration for Youth, 1996).

6 Combine a Coherent Spectrum of Services

In evaluation, multiple services are best assessed by multiple methods. The ability of an evaluation to capture program effectiveness, along a wide range of program activities, is dependent on the evaluator's ability to draw upon different types of measurement tools.

7 Are Accessible and Respectful of People

Effective evaluations provide results that are easily understood by staff, volunteers, and participants. Committed evaluators work with the staff directly in developing the evaluation plan. They care about and are respectful of all program and evaluation stakeholders.

8 Bolster Resiliency

The continuous feedback process between program implementation and evaluation encourages growth and improvement in both. As a result, the program will be better able to promote resiliency in participants and become sustainable.

In sum, effective programs and evaluations utilize and value the collaborative input of a wide array of people, including various levels of service providers, community members, and funders. The views and beliefs of all stakeholders are deemed important in the provision of services and in the promotion of resiliency.