Public Participation and Community Engagement Toolkit

Developed by:

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Notice

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Introduction

This toolkit is designed to support government agencies in evaluating the effectiveness of their public participation and community engagement (PPCE) activities. Government agencies are responding to the President's Management Agenda by increasing their focus on direct public engagement to drive improvement of Federal services. A vital part of this effort is to increase engagement with communities who have historically been excluded from public engagement or who have been underrepresented in traditional public comment processes. As agencies try new and innovative ways to engage a greater diversity of communities, it is important to track effectiveness of PPCE efforts and generate learnings to support continual improvement of PPCE over time. **This toolkit will guide agencies through clear steps to evaluate their PPCE efforts through an equity lens and share learnings for improvement.**

Users of this toolkit may be agency staff planning to evaluate PPCE efforts, or staff planning to hire an evaluator to conduct the evaluation. Either way, the step-by-step instructions in this document will guide readers through conducting the work themselves, or knowing what to expect when managing an external vendor.

Each chapter of this toolkit covers one phase of how to do an evaluation, presented in chronological order guiding the reader through what to do next at each stage. Sections within each chapter cover key steps of how to evaluate: first with a description of the step and its importance, followed by "how-to" sections with concrete tools and worksheets to help the reader implement each evaluation phase. Sections contain call out boxes highlighting definitions and equity practices, and contain hyperlinks to navigate between chapter sections and their associated "how-to" sections. With these tools, readers can design and implement evaluations of their own PPCE efforts.

Each chapter of this toolkit ends with a use case scenario showing how the content can be applied, using the fictional example of Agency X and their PPCE work. Agency X is seeking to improve how it delivers its services and expand participation and enhance public trust in its new environmental justice programs. Right now, they're working on a process for getting input on limits for certain mining waste materials for drinking water safety and they really want to make sure they connect with people from communities that may have had barriers to providing input in the past. They will use the toolkit to plan and implement an evaluation of their new PPCE efforts. More specifics about Agency X are laid out in the following case scenario.

Use Case Scenario

Agency X seeks to improve how it delivers its services, and expand participation and enhance public trust in its new environmental justice programs. To help achieve these goals, Agency X wants to implement PPCE approaches that ensure the Agency is able to broadly share information with and get feedback from those individuals impacted by these programs, including underserved communities (see E.O. 13985 for definition intended). The agency also wants to ensure its participation processes are inclusive and accessible, and that its efforts build trust with participants. The agency plans to use this diverse feedback to identify and address challenges that the public may face in accessing or participating in these programs. Agency X has historically only used Requests for Information (RFI) as a PPCE method with citizens. Generally, RFI responses are primarily received from industry associations. Agency X officials feel that this approach will be insufficient for garnering broad and diverse engagement in the development of its new environmental justice initiative it is planning. Agency X wants to implement PPCE approaches that will ensure it reaches broad audiences as intended, hears from many and diverse perspectives, and is accessible and inclusive in its efforts to engage with the public.

Evaluation Planning

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Phase 1: Evaluation Planning

The first phase of an evaluation is evaluation planning. In this phase, the goal is to come to a clear and common understanding of what the evaluation will answer and how it will do so. Key steps during this phase are to:

- ✓ Identify stakeholders and their interests
- ✓ Articulate your PPCE model
- ✓ Define evaluation purpose and use
- ✓ Create evaluation questions
- ✓ Choose evaluation methods
- ✓ Document your plan

Identify stakeholders and their interests

The first step in planning to evaluate is identifying the key individuals or groups interested in the evaluation. These could be called interested parties, vested partners, stakeholders, collaborators, or something else—regardless of the name, these are people who, in some way, are connected to your work or your evaluation. (Section continued on page 10 after equity considerations.)

Equity considerations during evaluation planning

There are several considerations and opportunities in the evaluation planning phase to ensure the evaluation is equitable, both in the way it is designed and implemented and in how it will be used. These include:

- **Scoping**: Consider creative and thoughtful use of the resources for the greatest possible change; make sure scope/limitations are clear.
- **Learning**: Devote time to learning about the racial, cultural, historical and community contexts, and think about how these impact program theory and project design documentation.

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Equity considerations during evaluation planning (continued)

There are several considerations and opportunities in the inception phase to ensure the evaluation is equitable, both in the way it is designed and implemented and in how it will be used. These include:

- **Framing:** Pay/draw attention to how issues are framed
    - Reframe with systems lens – not blaming individuals, but framing as a failing of system or structure to meet individuals' needs
    - Identify assumptions and root causes
    - Use asset-based (not deficit) framing
    - Guard against perpetuating stereotypes or biases
    - Clarify what equity means in this context
- **Evaluation Questions**: Include specific equity focused evaluation question(s) (Does the evaluation look at who is not being served/reached, differential impacts, impact on root causes or at unintended consequences?)
- **Stakeholders**: Conduct stakeholder analysis and create plan for involvement
    - Plan for key stakeholders to be involved in every major decision, especially around evaluation purpose, how community is engaged, how to interpret findings and how to share results
    - Acknowledge expertise and contributions of stakeholders (pay community advisors for their expertise)
    - Involve those who you want to use the evaluation
- **Relationships**: Plan engaging activities that help build relationships with key stakeholders
- **Methods**: Use mixed-method, culturally appropriate, trauma-informed and participatory methods – valuing different kinds of evidence, especially the evidence that is valued by communities affected – and articulate strengths and weaknesses of different methods. Reflect on burdens, risks and opportunities and moderate them appropriately so that one group does not bear undue burden or risk.
- **Communication**: Plan for communication of results with stakeholders

This includes those who will need to make decisions based on your evaluation findings, those who will be impacted by the outcomes of your work, those who are just interested in your findings, and others.

In addition to identifying vested partners, it's important to consider their connection to your work and how they should or could be engaged with evaluation. Benefits of involving interested parties in evaluation efforts include:

- Increasing validity by understanding different perspectives and recognizing what others know.
- Increasing the relevance of the evaluation because you are responding to their needs and interests, which, in turn, increases use of the evaluation when it's completed.
- Increasing equity by raising questions that may not have otherwise been raised by those in power, and by unearthing and questioning preconceived ideas or assumptions.

While it might seem early, this is also a good opportunity to consider who needs to know what about the results of your evaluation. Considering the audience(s) for your results helps you be prepared to share in the end—after all, your evaluation work is only meaningful if results are actually used for learning and improvement.

How to do stakeholder analysis.

Articulate your PPCE model

The next step in planning your evaluation is to articulate your plans for public participation and community engagement (PPCE) and your ideas about how it will achieve your goals. Essentially, the model will succinctly lay out all the engagement components to describe their combined function in achieving engagement goals. While it may seem counterintuitive to map out the PPCE process itself when thinking about evaluation, it is a key part of understanding how evaluation fits in your work. Accordingly, there are four primary functions for articulating your PPCE model:

- **Communication:** Summarizing all key engagement components provides an at-a-glance explanation of what the PPCE is, does, and hopes to achieve, which is valuable for communicating with stakeholders.
- **Consensus-building**: It's common for stakeholders to keep their assumptions unspoken; this process commits those assumptions to paper, which is the first step toward building consensus. The process of articulating the engagement model, when done collaboratively, is often an exciting way to get everyone on the same page and build buy-in.
- **Engagement planning:** Having all the engagement's key components on paper means the model can serve as a rubric for examining

potential shifts in plans, as stakeholders consider the logic of what is laid out in the model.
- **Evaluation planning:** Because the model spells out the goals and changes that are expected to result from PPCE, they neatly guide the development of evaluation plans. Similarly, spelling out the intended results makes it easier to know how to structure an evaluation to measure those changes.

There are two primary ways to articulate your model: a theory of change and a logic model. While both are important, descriptive engagement planning documents, there are some meaningful differences between the two. The purpose of a theory of change is to articulate the underlying assumptions of how and why an engagement or program will lead to the expected outcomes and overall goal. The purpose of a logic model is to describe the engagement or program and its components (the "what"), and how those pieces work together to achieve the goal. This toolkit includes tools to develop both a logic model and a theory of change; you may decide to create either or both for a PPCE effort, depending on your needs.

It is important to note that these models are best when developed in a shared process. Getting multiple perspectives from a variety of stakeholders is the best way to ensure your model accurately reflects reality and maximizes its usefulness. That may look like developing the model collaboratively in a workshop or getting feedback from others on a draft. Regardless of the method, get input from others when creating your model.

How to develop of a theory of change.

How to create a logic model.

Define evaluation purpose and use

Now that you clearly understand your PPCE model and the interests of stakeholders, it is time to identify what you want your evaluation to achieve and how you want to use evaluation results. Generally, evaluation efforts fall in three broad areas, each with different goals:

1. Evaluating **design** is about understanding how well the design (i.e., plan) for your PPCE matches your stated goals and the context.
2. Evaluating **implementation** is about understanding how well your carried out your plan for PPCE and whether your assumptions about your PPCE efforts were accurate.
3. Evaluating **outcomes** is about understanding the changes that occurred because of your PPCE or the impacts of your PPCE.

Your evaluation efforts could include one, two, or all three of these purposes—it is all about what you and your stakeholders want to learn and how you want to use the results of the evaluation. Some common uses are to:

- Prove your engagement model,

- Make things better,
- Create a learning community,
- Reflect,
- Build support,
- Influence others, or
- Prepare for the future.

Remember that the more reasons you have for your evaluation, the more complex it will be. To focus your work, you can bring people to consensus about your evaluation's purpose through activities such as workshops or priority-setting surveys. It may also be helpful to first articulate a priority "use" in order to clarify your purpose.

How to define evalaution purpose.

Create evaluation questions

Once you start thinking about your evaluation's purpose, it can be easy to want to know *everything*. This is where evaluation questions come in—they define the boundaries of the evaluation by articulating what is included (and not included) based on your evaluation's purpose and intended use. Evaluation questions are not single survey or interview questions; they are answered by analyzing multiple pieces of data collected through the evaluation. Good evaluation questions are:

- **Evaluative** – they determine significance, merit, or worth and can directly inform decisions.
- **Useful** – they are related to the PPCE's substance, purpose, activities, and/or outcomes and address the needs of the evaluation user(s).
- **Reasonable** – they are answerable given current resources and reasonably linked to what can practically or realistically be achieved or influenced.
- **Specific** – they clearly identify what will be investigated.
- **Answerable** – they reflect real-world constraints on data collection.

In addition, there is one main thing to *avoid* when coming up with evaluation questions: questions that that have a discrete answer. This could be a yes/no answer or some other specific answer, like the number of people who attended an event. Some example evaluation questions for each evaluation purpose that meet the characteristics described above are shown in the following table.

Evaluating design	Evaluating implementation	Evaluating outcomes
• What were the strengths and weaknesses of the PPCE strategies? • What did participants like or not like? • How well do PPCE efforts align with stakeholder goals and their community/cultural contexts? • What lessons were learned about designing PPCE on this topic or with this audience?	• To what extent have engagement efforts attempted to reach all stakeholders? • To what extent have participants been representative of all stakeholder groups? • To what extent were the level of staff resources and skills adequate to achieve the engagement goals? • What lessons were learned about implementing PPCE on this topic or with this audience?	• What were the key impacts that results from PPCE and how well do they match initial goals? • What impact did PPCE have on the final decision/issue/project? • To what extent do participants know the purpose of the engagement work and how their input is being used? • To what extent did engagement build positive outcomes with stakeholders (e.g., trust, relationship, empowerment)?

How to write evaluation questions.

Choose evaluation methods

Now that you've decided *what* you want to learn through your evaluation, it's time to choose *how* you will gather the information you need. Evaluation methods are the ways data will be gathered to answer the questions and fulfill the evaluation purpose.

There are many different options for collecting data, and some common options include:

- **Surveys** (these could be short or long; online, over the phone, or in person)
- **Interviews** (these could be short or long; formal or informal)
- **Focus groups** (these could be in person or online; synchronous or asynchronous)

- **Observation** (this could be brief or in-depth; it could occur in many different contexts or environments)
- **Participatory activities** (these could range from an interactive workshop to a role play—there are many participatory data collection methods)
- **Document review** (this could be brief or extensive; it could include internal documents, external documents, or both)
- **Existing data** (this could include anything from internal sign-up or attendance data to publicly available Census data)

These options can be overwhelming, so focus on two anchors: your data sources and your resources.

> **Data sources** describe who and where data will come from; identifying the data sources can help you pinpoint which methods will work best for each data source. For example, if you know your data sources are busy, choose a method that is easy and quick for participants.
>
> **Resources** describe the time, funds, staff, knowledge, or anything else you need to carry out your evaluation work; identifying resources can help you be clear about opportunities and constraints. For example, if you know that you have limited availability, choose a method that takes less time or work for you to conduct.

It may also be helpful to think about the following considerations as you select a method:

- **Data Type**: What type of data will you need for your evaluation?
- **Analysis**: How will you analyze the data? Who will analyze the data?
- **Existing Opportunities**: What data already exists? Are there any opportunities to embed data collection into existing meetings? Events? Existing sources of information?
- **Access**: How much access to data sources will you have?
- **Stakeholders**: What information is important to your stakeholders? What methods and sources will your stakeholders consider to be reliable?

How to select evaluation methods.

Document your plan

You've done a lot of work so far to prepare for your evaluation—now it's time to pull it all together in one place: an evaluation plan. An evaluation plan is like a roadmap. It clarifies the steps needed to assess the processes and outcomes your work; it also indicates how you'll use and share the results of your evaluation. The evaluation plan clarifies the "what," the "how," and the "why it matters" for your work. Effective evaluation plans are also dynamic, and you should feel free to update it on an ongoing basis as plans change or priorities shift.

It might seem like an extra step to document all these pieces, but having a written evaluation plan helps with:

- Thinking ahead about all aspects of the evaluation,
- Getting everyone on the same page and preventing misunderstandings,
- Staying on track and in scope, and
- Communicating with others about your evaluation.

How to write an evaluation plan.

Use Case Scenario

Agency X begins their process by thinking deeply about the many people and groups that have an interest in this PPCE. Historically, they've heard from industry associations, so they know that is one stakeholder, but Agency X knows there are many more. Using the stakeholder analysis tool, they identified several other groups: rural communities, immigrant communities, communities with low incomes, people who primarily speak languages other than English, people with disabilities, and Native nations. Agency X also mapped out each group's interest in the topic and thought through important facets of how they should be engaged. For example, rural communities that rely on private wells for drinking water should be engaged because water quality standards impact their well water. Agency X also knows that rural communities are geographically dispersed, making in-person events difficult and costly to attend. Knowing how important it is to hear from rural communities, Agency X decided to work with a rural community advocacy organization to support the PPCE and its evaluation.

Along with the advocacy organization, Agency X created a logic model of their PPCE efforts. The overarching hope for the work was to reach a broad audience that includes diverse perspectives in an accessible and inclusive way (i.e., goal or vision). Knowing what they know about their stakeholders, they decided on a series of virtual town halls co-hosted by the advocacy organization (i.e., activities). They hoped that 200 people would attend across 4 town halls (i.e., outputs). The changes they hope to achieve for the town hall were accessible and successful engagement of rural community members and increased trust with rural community members (i.e., outcomes).

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Use Case Scenario continued

Now that they had defined their PPCE model, it was easy to identify the purposes of their evaluation efforts. It was clear that they wanted to evaluate the design, implementation, and outcomes of the PPCE. This led them to their evaluation questions:

- To what extent have the PPCE methods we chose to implement met our goals around access and inclusion?
- How well did we succeed in engaging the people we needed to engage?
- How well did we build trust with participants?

Agency X then considered data sources for each of these evaluation questions, considered pros and cons for methods to collect data. Through this, they selected a few different methods. To assess how well they engaged the appropriate groups, Agency X decided to use registration data about attendees' demographic information, including ZIP code, race/ethnicity, income, and immigration history. Then, they decided to use a brief, anonymous survey for attendees to complete after the virtual town hall to assess feelings of inclusion and trust. Finally, Agency X decided to interview some representatives from key advocacy organizations for various groups to dig deeper into access and inclusion for these groups.

Agency X had been documenting their decisions and tools along the way but wanted to make sure to pull it all together in one place for ease. Using the evaluation plan "how to," they created a document that clearly laid out the evaluation; they then shared the evaluation plan with their partners at the rural community advocacy organization and kept it available to continue to reference, add to, and edit as they implemented their plan.

Tool Design

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Phase 2: Tool Design

After you plan your evaluation, you need to design tools to support data collection and analysis. This might include a survey to collect data and an outreach plan to help you get your survey to people. It's also helpful at this stage to plan how you will analyze the data from your survey and identify what you will be able to say based on your analysis. Planning this out before finalizing your data collection tools allows you to edit your data collection tools if desired based on what you learn from creating your analysis plan. Key steps in this phase are to:

- ✓ Identify your indicators and data collection questions
- ✓ Create data collection tools
- ✓ Create an outreach plan to invite people to participate in your evaluation
- ✓ Plan how you will analyze data and what you will be able to say based on that analysis
- ✓ Make any revisions to tools, if needed

Equity considerations during tool design

There are many ways to build equity considerations in the design phase. Begin by reviewing what you covered in the evaluation planning phase, including descriptions of who you hope will participate in your public engagement and what you know about their needs and preferences. Then keep the following in mind as you work through this phase:

- Responsive and accessible: Design data collection instruments to be responsive and accessible to people who are providing information; maximize benefit and minimize burden.
- Appropriate: Use culturally appropriate and respectful language and symbols/pictures/colors/imagery in outreach and tools.
- Input: Seek stakeholder guidance in your design: pilot tools with people from the communities or groups you are hoping to reach and seek advice on where and when to hold events and where and how to do effective outreach.
- Give back: Plan thoughtful incentives or ways of compensating people for their time, energy, and expertise.
- Sampling: Learn about the groups you seek to engage and plan carefully to reach them.

Identifying your indicators and data collection questions

In Phase 1: Evaluation Planning, you identified what you hope to learn through evaluating your PPCE (these are your evaluation questions). You also created a table mapping your evaluation questions to data sources and data collection methods. Now it is time to get more specific about what questions you will ask people when you do data collection and create the tools you will use.

To do this, you will identify indicators to help you answer your evaluation questions, and you will identify questions to ask people in your data collection tools to inform your indicators. The links below will take you to banks of potential indicators and questions that can help in your design. You can use items directly from these banks, modify them to suit your needs, or use them as inspiration to create your own from scratch.

How to identify indicators.

How to identify data collection questions.

Creating data collection tools

In the last section, you identified your indicators and made a list of data collection questions that would inform them. Your next step is to craft the data collection tools you plan to use and insert your selected data collection questions into the tools. It is important to make sure that any data collection you do is **responsive and accessible** to the people you hope to reach, and that you build trust and positive relationships with the public when you do public engagement. Otherwise, you may have a situation in which your program does not serve the people it needs to, but you don't know what to change because you can't reach the people who can give you the information you need to improve your program. By carefully considering the contexts and preferences of your various stakeholder groups, you can design a responsive and accessible process that will help you build relationships and learn what you need to improve your programs. For example, if you are hoping to invite

Definition: What is an indicator?

An indicator is a piece of information or data that tells us when we have reached a goal. One indicator measures one aspect of an engagement or program. While a single indicators can provide some insight, looking at several indicators will give a fuller understanding. Monitoring indicators over time to compare points in time or notice trends of improvement or change can also be useful.

parents of young children to a feedback session, be sure to incorporate some type of childcare or childcare stipend within your plan or consider a virtual event that people can attend from home. It is also important to think about compensating people for their time and input in your evaluation process, especially for methods like interviews that take a bit more time.

Participants in your data collection are the experts in the data they are providing, so plan for appropriate compensation or incentives for your project.

You will also want to make sure that you design any surveys, interviews, or other tools in ways that are **easily understandable** to the people participating in your PPCE, and will therefore give you the information you are seeking for your evaluation. The following "How To" sections will provide tips for overall structure for data collection tools, and tips for drafting tool questions so you can create your own questions or modify questions from the bank above.

How to design responsive and accessible tools.

How to inform people about your evaluation and gain their consent to participate.

How to write a survey.

How to write an interviewer guide.

Definition: What is a data collection question?

A data collection question differs from an evaluation question. In Phase 1: Evaluation Planning, you created a small number of broad evaluation questions that are guiding your overall evaluation of your PPCE efforts. For example, one evaluation question could be "How well did our PPCE efforts align with stakeholder goals and their community/cultural contexts?" However, data collection questions are more specific questions that you ask individual people through data collection methods like surveys or interviews. In other words, your data collection questions are the questions in your survey. To create survey questions to address the above evaluation question, you could first identify the stakeholder goals (maybe one is for PPCE efforts to be highly accessible to the diversity of community residents), then draft one survey question for each stakeholder goal to find out how well people felt the goals were met.

How to evaluate participatory events.

How to use existing data.

Planning your analysis and making tool revisions

After all your data collection tools are created, you can plan how you will analyze the data you will collect. An analysis plan can include elements like:

- The data collection questions, sources, and methods.
- High level description of how you plan to analyze the data from each question.
- List of the demographic or other subgroups that you want to use for subgroup analysis.
- A placeholder statement showing what you expect you will be able to say from the analysis of each question.

A key benefit of creating your analysis plan at this stage in your process is that it allows you to document your planned subgroup analysis (which can help you create your outreach plan!) and mock up what you expect you will be able to say based on the data you receive. This gives you a chance to ensure that your collected and analyzed data will be in synch with your overall goals and purposes for your evaluation, and any particular needs of your stakeholders. If you find that your placeholder statements do not give you the type of information you were hoping for, you can make needed revisions to your data collection tools to ensure that you will be gathering the data you need to produce the types of findings that you and your stakeholders are expecting. You can also ask any community navigators to review your data collection tools and mock findings statements the tools could generate and provide any feedback for revision.

Equity practice: doing subgroup analysis

An important way to increase equity in your evaluation is to analyze data by subgroup. You can take a look at subgroups of participants according to their shared race or ethnicity, income level, geographic areas of residence, or other relevant characteristics. By looking to see if the experiences of subgroups with a given characteristic differ overall from groups who have other characteristics, you can learn important things about who you are serving well and who you are not serving well. However, it is vital to take care about reporting subgroup analysis for very small groups (such as six people or fewer) because doing so could compromise the confidentiality or anonymity of the people in those small groups.

Things to think through in planning your analysis might include:

- Who will do the analysis?
- How much time do they have to complete the analysis?
- What software or other resources do they have that they can use?
- Are we using any software in our data collection that will produce parts of the analysis for us (like survey software that provides auto analysis of answers)?
- How can we improve our data collection plans to make our analysis tasks easier and more equitable?

How to make an analysis plan.

Creating an outreach plan to invite potential participants

You're almost ready to start collecting data! Your last step is to create an outreach plan. This will help you identify who to invite to participate in your evaluation and think through how you will reach them. An outreach plan can include description of:

Equity practice: planning to include stakeholders in analysis

An important way to build more equity into your evaluation is to include stakeholders from different groups throughout the stages of your evaluation process. Planning now to include a few community members, program participants, or other stakeholders in helping you do your analysis, or in attending an **emerging findings meeting** to help contextualize the analysis, will help you strengthen your analysis, build relationships and trust, and increase equity in your evaluation.

- Who you want to invite to participate,
- Ways you will reach potential participants for each data collection method (such as newsletters, flyers, social media, etc.),
- Who will conduct outreach,
- Draft language for each form of communication, and
- Timelines

How to identify potential participants

How to make an outreach plan.

Equity practice: partnering with community navigators

Agencies often want to hear from the people who have been least engaged with their services or programing so they can learn why people are not engaged, and make service or program improvements to better serve more people. However, it can be challenging to reach and engage people in your evaluation who are already not engaging in your service or program. This is where community navigators can help. You can hire one or two community navigators from each community you need to reach, then seek their advice at each stage of your planning process, including outreach. Community navigators can provide invaluable advice about where and how to reach potential participants, and what types of barriers people may have in participating and how you can mitigate those barriers through your evaluation design. You can also hire community navigators to conduct outreach, which can be very helpful as these individuals are likely to have higher levels of trust and better relationships with community members than would agency staff who are not known to community members. By hiring community navigators, you can form authentic, long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with members of the communities you most need to reach, which will help you improve trust and community relations over time.

Use Case Scenario

Agency X is feeling pretty good about how Phase 1: Evaluation Planning has guided them to the point of having a clearly documented evaluation plan, and they are ready to jump into "Section 2: Design" of the toolkit and dig in!

The first thing that "Phase 2: Design" walks them through is identifying indicators and data collection questions. They found that the toolkit contains tables for them to fill out at each stage of the work and resources for them to draw from. First, they transferred the evaluation questions they created in Phase 1: Evaluation Planning into a table, then they skimmed a bank of potential evaluation indicators to find indicators that aligned with their evaluation questions. For example, a section of the indicator bank is titled "How did engagement build relationships," which is quite similar to their third evaluation question, "How well did we build trust with participants?" They selected an indicator from that section, "Percentage of participants agree they felt respected during the engagement process." Then, they found a question from the question bank that they could revise to inform that indicator, and used the tips on writing survey questions to make that revision. They completed this process for each of their evaluation questions and filled in the table with indicators and data collection questions. When completed, they saw that this table listed for them exactly **what they should measure and how**! They saw that they were now ready to create their tools!

The next section of the toolkit chapter gave them clear instructions and tips on how to take their data collection questions and create full data collection tools. The toolkit had tips on the structure of data collection tools and how to ensure they are responsive and equitable.

Agency X also needed to plan for how they would embed evaluation throughout their PPCE activity, and the toolkit tables and worksheets **showed them what they needed to do as they planned for implementation and roll-out of their PPCE activity**. For example, it guided them through creating all the needed data collection tools and deciding at what points in their PPCE activity they would implement them.

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Use Case Scenario continued

Now that Agency X had all their data collection tools ready and knew when they would implement each, they were ready to create an analysis plan. They found that wasn't as hard as it sounds - the toolkit walked them through filling out a table laying out how they would analyze each data collection tool, and creating placeholder statements of what they would learn from each data collection question. For example, "X% of participants have increased trust." They found it very helpful to have the placeholder statements because they realized that their data collection question about trust didn't specify trust in *what*. By creating the placeholder results statement, they learned they needed to revise their data collection question to specify trust in Agency X. They were glad they did this process before holding their event and collecting all the data!

They were also grateful for the many equity suggestions throughout the toolkit. For example, after they revised their data collection tools, they asked their community navigators to review the tools and give them any additional feedback for their final revision. They also took the suggestion to invite representatives from key advocacy organizations for various groups to an emerging findings meeting after they finish analysis to help them interpret findings. Planning for this now while creating their analysis plan gave them enough lead time to invite everyone and get the meeting on busy people's calendars.

The last step in the design process was to create an outreach plan. Since Agency X identified many stakeholder groups, they needed multiple avenues to reach so many diverse people. The toolkit walked them through creating an outreach plan, including suggestions for how to increase equity such as engaging paid community navigators to help with responsive design and outreach. They worked with several navigators, who gave them helpful tips on how best to describe their event for different audiences, then who conducted outreach within their respective communities. Because the navigators were trusted community leaders themselves, they were able to use their networks to get the word out and encourage people to participate.

With outreach done, Agency X was feeling ready to dive into Phase 3 of the toolkit: data collection!

Data Collection and Analysis

Public Participation and Community Engagement Toolkit

Phase 3: Data Collection and Analysis

Collecting Data

Key steps during data collection are:

- ✓ Pay attention to details of administering your tools
- ✓ Ensure people we should include are being identified and participating
- ✓ Look for convenient times for participants to respond, perhaps as part of an event or before they leave an event
- ✓ Monitor response
- ✓ Targeting additional outreach can help with equity goals in response
- ✓ Non-response bias can affect your insights from data if some groups do not participate
- ✓ Communicate what you are hearing to encourage more participation, for example, "We heard evenings are an easier time for people to attend, so we will do this for our next Town Hall."

It's time to implement all your planning and design! While you have done a lot of the heavy thinking, you need to pay attention in data collection to ensure your goals and principles carry through. In this phase you are thinking through the details of logistics, watching your schedule of

Equity considerations during data collection

- Ensure people inviting engagement and collecting data are aware of and respecting cultural norms and practices of the people being asked to participate.
- Be transparent about the purpose, use and security practices being used.
- Provide space to attend to trauma and respect how it affects people's engagement.
- Work with paid community members to gather and report on their own data when possible, maintaining data control and ownership within the community.
- Reflect and examine unconscious bias as you engage with folks in data

planned events and responding to natural unpredictability of engagement.

Iteration (change) is good! If you are seeing that a planned activity is not landing well, a key group is not responding, or interview questions are confusing – be ready to learn and adapt! Updating an interview protocol or selecting another participatory activity for the next workshop could bring you better participation and therefore better data.

This is also a great time to continue to build and deepen relationships with stakeholders. People want to tell you what they think, even or especially if engagement has not gone well for them.

Remember that information you are collecting as a public agency could be public data. As you collect and store data, consider data privacy, only identifying data when necessary and taking steps to separate identifiable information from sensitive information. Also, think carefully about systems you are using to collect and store information to make sure they are secure. Finally, don't skip over the part of your protocol when you make sure participants are aware of what they are sharing and for what purpose.

How to conduct an interview.

How to administer a survey.

Equity considerations during data analysis

- Disaggregate data by race, income, gender, disability status, or other group characteristics amongst your key stakeholders to identify disparities in outcomes; pay attention to interpretation so it is used to adjust engagement activities to close inequities.
- Engage stakeholders in interpreting findings.
- Inform finding statements with historical and community context about what has led to or lies underneath perspectives.
- Reflect on how systems shape inequities and ensure this is taken into account when it arises in your analysis.
- Consider implications of interpretation to ensure they are lessening not deepening structural barriers to engagement and participation.

How to manage informal / participatory activities.

Analyzing the data you collected

Key steps during analysis are:

- ✓ Review, clean and organize your data
- ✓ Summarize your data
- ✓ Balancing explorations of patterns, contradictions or connections in your data with the depth of analysis needed to answer your evaluation questions
- ✓ Interpret with others what your data means

Now you have all that precious data, it is time to process it so you can use it. This phase, which involves analysis and interpretation, focuses on reviewing, categorizing and summarizing data so it goes from a sea of data to a set of relevant facts and insights. Remember to use the analysis plan you created in Phase 2: Tool Design to guide your analysis, and tie your analysis back to your original evaluation questions. This will remind you how to group your summary analysis according to the evaluation question you intended it to help answer.

How to analyze quantitative data.

How to analyze qualitative data.

Interpret and make meaning of your analysis

Key steps during interpretation are:

- ✓ Interpret what your data means with others
- ✓ Develop answers to your evaluation questions
- ✓ Identify any context (e.g., other activities or events in the community that may have affected engagement) that helps you interpret findings

Once you have your analysis done (e.g., calculated frequencies from your survey, put together themes from your interviews or put together themes from a graffiti wall), you need to put these data points together in a way that helps you develop answers to your evaluation questions. This is a powerful step in the evaluation process. Answers to evaluation questions require you to

Equity considerations when interpreting and analyzing data

- Engage stakeholders in interpreting findings
- Inform finding statements with historical and community context about what has led to or lies underneath perspectives
- Consider implications of interpretation to ensure findings are lessening not deepening structural barriers to engagement and participation

interpret data analysis. Because the evaluation questions you prepared in Phase 1: Evaluation Planning were not yes/no questions, you need to use more than one source of data and more than one data point together to make a judgment to answer your evaluation questions.

Knowing that 60% of people who came to your event had a good experience is one fact. Making meaning of that in terms of your evaluation questions (e.g., how effective was this outreach effort, how meaningful were input opportunities for key groups) is the important next step after establishing that fact during analysis. Looking at and using all your data helps you to put these individual facts together into answers to your evaluation questions. This involves judgment and interpretation, so having multiple perspectives involved is important for deepening your answers and limiting the bias since we can all see only so much from our own perspective and experience. Critically, you should involve some people from affected communities (your stakeholders) to make sure their interpretation helps to develop the findings; this demonstrates transparency and supports buy-in. These stakeholders will also help you to identify context needed for understanding what your analysis means.

How to host a participatory findings meeting.

How to facilitate a findings meeting.

Use Case Scenario

Agency X entered into the data collection phase, which was also their community engagement implementation phase. As they monitored registration for the first workshop, they noticed respondents left some key fields blank. Consulting with community navigators, Agency X planners concluded that attendees may be feeling nervous about sharing some of that data about themselves. So, planners adjusted the town hall format to invite people to participate in different breakout rooms according to different aspects about themselves (e.g. neighbors within 5 miles of a mine versus those living further away). Doing the survey while in breakout rooms allowed organizers to layer on this group characteristic to survey data.

Agency X did initial interviews after the first workshop to learn how engagement activities and dynamics had worked. Because the staff was confident in doing the interviews themselves and analyzing (theming) the data, they had results right away to reflect on and apply to the next workshop, along with the survey/poll data. When participants and community partners heard Agency X referencing what they had learned from previous workshops and taking action to improve their experience, participants encouraged others to attend future events, assisting in outreach.

When all the workshops were done, Agency X completed analysis of all their data. They used the automatic summarizing features of the survey/poll tool to look at these results. In addition, because they knew the importance of disaggregating results, they used a filter to look at responses for different subgroups, such as those who speak English as a non-primary language and those who live close to mining sites. The analysis revealed that the responses around "feeling respected" were lower than they had hoped, especially among those closest to mining operations.

Reviewing the analysis in the emerging findings meeting, meeting participants noted the lower "feeling respected" ratings, as well as a theme from interviews that the permitting process for the mines had been contentious and the local community was very disgruntled that their concerns had not been heard. Participants in the emerging findings meeting helped to interpret that the survey results were actually a fairly positive response compared to what they have seen in other data collection or community meetings.

In these ways, Agency X was able to use data to improve not only future but current engagement.

Sharing

Public Participation and Community Engagement Toolkit

Phase 4: Sharing

The final phase of an evaluation is sharing what you've learned with internal and external stakeholders. The goal of this phase is to ensure transparency and documentation of the process and outcomes of evaluation work to benefit those affected by it. Key steps during this phase are to:

- ✓ Report back to stakeholders
- ✓ Decide what actions to take based on findings
- ✓ Communicate about your decisions
- ✓ Reflect on the process
- ✓ Start again!

Report back to stakeholders

Hopefully you included interested parties in each phase of your work; if not, reporting is an excellent time to re-engage them in the evaluation. You may remember that the very first task in evaluating planning was to identify stakeholders and their interests, including identifying what stakeholders need to know about the results of the evaluation. Now, it's time to close the loop and actually share the information they need!

Equity considerations during the sharing phase

- Carry through framing, contextualization and other elements from above.
- Involve those affected by the results in reviewing draft sharing products.
- Present recommendations in a way to facilitate reflection, action, planning and implementation.
- Share findings in a community-friendly way (e.g., use plain language, share in an easily accessible format).
- Seek feedback from stakeholders about how relevant, respectful, valid, and useful the work was.
- Include terms and their definitions (e.g., structural racism and white privilege) in reports in relevant explanations.

In addition to identifying what information needs vested partners have, it's also important to consider *how* to communicate with interested parties in ways that will be effective. Some things to think about are:

- **Accessibility** (e.g., visual accessibility, readability, communication methods)
- **Level of detail** (e.g., high-level vs very detailed)
- **Writing style** (e.g., expository, descriptive, narrative, persuasive)
- **Tone** (e.g., formal or informal, serious or playful)
- **Visuals** (e.g., photos, infographics, data tables/charts)
- **Design** (e.g., style guides, branding)

You will likely find that different interested parties have different needs—that's ok! The goal is to communicate relevant results to stakeholders in meaningful and easily accessible ways; this, too, is a form of PPCE.

How to write a findings statement.

Decide what actions to take based on findings

After you know the findings and have shared the feedback with stakeholders, you likely have some decisions to make. These could be internal or external, low stakes or high stakes. Regardless, this is one of the key goals of evaluation—using data to make decisions. Data-driven decision making helps keep your work aligned with the reality of what your stakeholders want and need and provides confidence that you're moving in the right direction.

How to use data to make decisions.

Communicate about your decisions

Now that you've made your decisions, it's important to both communicate those decisions and how you made them. This goes beyond just sharing actions or decisions and includes some "justification" of how you arrived at those decisions based on the data you collected. Some benefits of sharing back evaluation findings in the context of decisions include:

- Helping people who contributed to the evaluation feel heard.
- Building buy-in to your decisions as everyone can see what information you used.
- Encouraging future participation in evaluation by demonstrating that you care about and use input from others.

Of course, it's not enough to just communicate your decisions or actions—you have to actually do them! This may mean periodic updates on how things are going, a dashboard with your progress, or some other way of showing that you're doing what you said you would. This is a foundational aspect for trust in evaluation.

How to communicate decisions about data.

Reflect on the process

In a busy world, it can be difficult to take time to reflect; however, this process is like a mini evaluation where your experiences are the data, and you can make better decisions when you analyze and interpret them. Reflection allows you and your stakeholders to think about what went well or not so well about the evaluation, and what lessons you can apply in the future. This might be a brief step, but it is very important for continuous learning and improvement.

How to reflect on your evaluation.

Start again!

Congratulations, you have completed your evaluation effort! From planning to implementation to sharing, your evaluation work has resulted in useful findings that helped you make data-informed decisions. However, evaluation does not end here—in fact, it is a cyclical process that continues as new goals, needs, or questions arise. Therefore, the final stage of this evaluation toolkit is to start again!

Return to the evaluation planning section of this document and follow the steps shown there!

Use Case Scenario

Agency X was pleased with the information they learned through their evaluation efforts and knew they needed to share it with their stakeholders. Agency X wrote a few findings statements based on themes in analysis, including that local communities had previously felt unheard related to permitting processes and that participants in this PPCE felt somewhat respected. The advocacy organization they had worked with appreciated learning these findings, as they were able to use them to target further engagement and advocacy efforts.

After reflecting on the findings statements, Agency X decided that they had made progress with building public trust, but that there were more opportunities to continue developing trust, especially in local communities. Based on the finding that they only connected with a small number of respondents who spoke English as a non-primary language, they determined that they should do engagements in different languages to better engage this important group. They made a brief table describing their findings and the decisions they had made based on them and posted it on their website. They also made sure the advocacy organizations, community navigators, and other partners they worked with throughout the process were aware of the decisions so they could share them with their networks.

After sharing their decisions, Agency X met one more time to reflect on their process. Overall, they were happy with how the PPCE and evaluation went, but they remembered their challenges with registration data and wondered about how they could continue to make participants feel respected. This led them to a few more ideas for PPCE, including more small group engagement and working more closely with local community organizations. As they adjusted their logic model to include these new activities, Agency X realized they would also like to understand how their relationships with community organizations are changing through PPCE. With this new question, they began the evaluation planning process again, feeling confident about their next steps and their ability to continue using evaluation to learn and improve.

How to...

Public Participation and Community Engagement Toolkit

How to…

Phase 1: Evaluation Planning

How to do stakeholder analysis

Identifying stakeholders and their perspectives could be a simple process or a more engaged one; the stakeholder analysis matrix below shows the key points to think through as you consider interested parties and how to involve them in the evaluation. To validate and expand your thinking, complete the matrix together with a group, or have others check your work if you complete it individually.

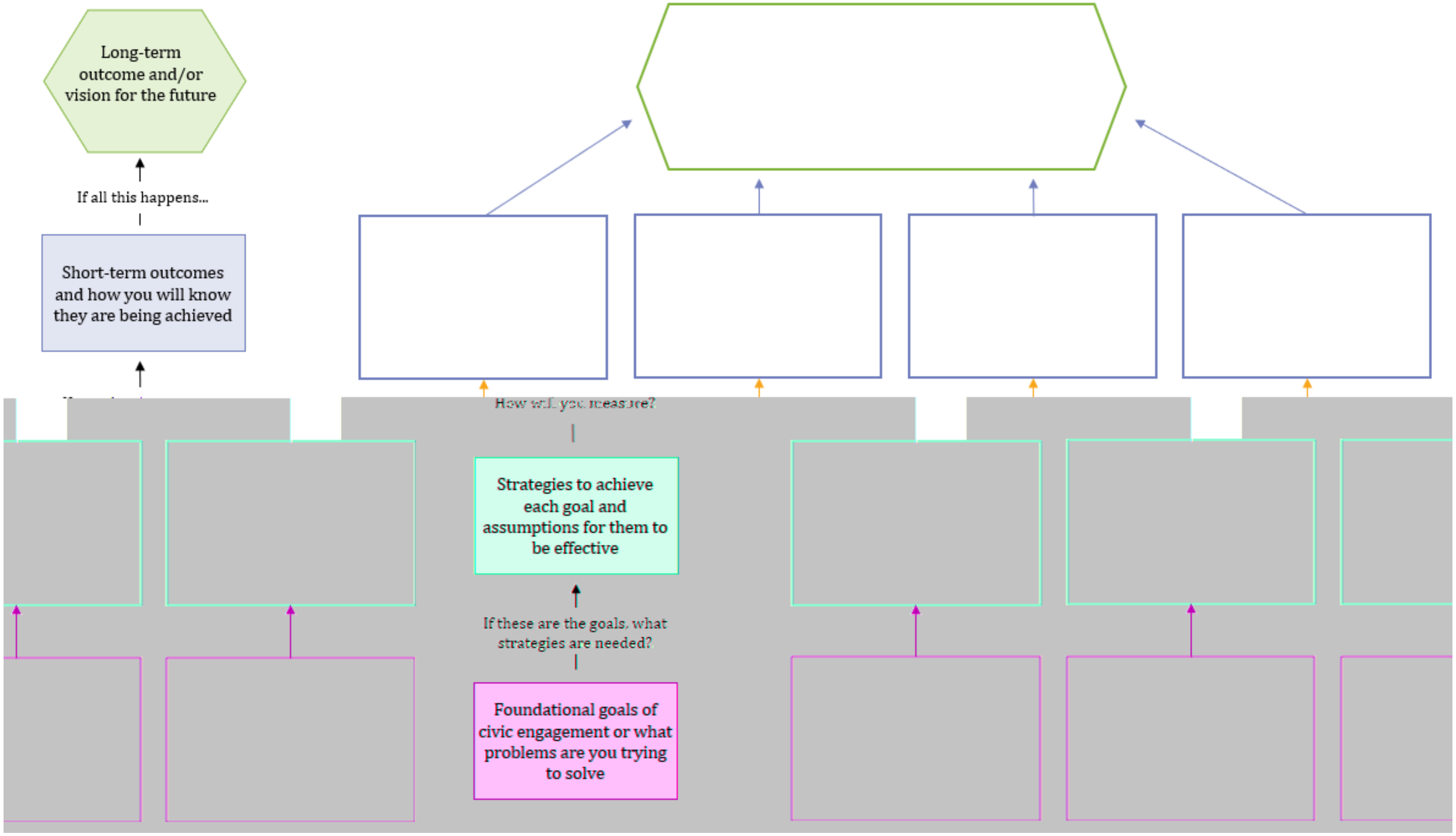
Stakeholder group	**Interest**	**Why should they be engaged?**	**How should they be engaged?**	**How can they be included in the design?**	**What do they need to know about the results?**
Name and description	*What interests do you think they have in your work or how will they be affected by it?*	*How will their engagement benefit them and the PPCE?*	*What methods do you think will be effective in engaging them?*	*What assumptions do you have that need to be tested?*	*What information from the results is important to share and how you will do it?*

Back to identifying stakeholders and their interests.

How to develop a theory of change

A theory of change articulates why your work is needed, what you want to achieve through your work, and what steps must be taken to realize the work's goals. It also includes a forward-thinking vision to define success. To create your theory of change, answer these key questions, and write your responses in the template on the next page:

1. What changes is PPCE trying to create or what problems is it trying to solve (i.e., foundational goals – blue level)
2. What are your strategies for how you will realize these changes? Why are these strategies the ones to invest in (i.e., strategies – orange level)?
3. What would be the outcomes of these strategies and how will you know they are achieved (i.e., short-term outcomes – purple level)?
4. What is the ultimate long-term outcome for your civic engagement (i.e., long-term outcome – green level)?



Back to articulating your PPCE model.

How to create a logic model

Logic models include a set of five core components: a goal or vision, inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes.

- **Goal or vision:** What the engagement hopes to accomplish. The goal or vision reflects the engagement's priorities and provides a clear direction for action.
- **Inputs:** The resources that the engagement has that are essential for the engagement's activities to occur. Common resources include funds, human resources, space, equipment, technology, or other needed materials.
- **Activities:** The actions, strategies, or approaches that are needed to implement the engagement and support the mission and vision. Activities are what the engagement does with inputs to achieve outcomes and, ultimately, the goal or vision.
- **Outputs:** The quantified descriptions of accomplishments from activities. Outputs characterize the application of activities. Often, outputs help to inform the scope or scale of components of PPCE, such as the number of meetings held, number of attendees, or number of website views. Outputs help to describe whether engagement activities have been implemented as planned, but without a judgment on the value of those activities or the resulting changes.
- **Outcomes:** The results or impacts that occur because of activities. Organizations with diverse missions and services share common categories of outcomes, because outcomes are about change: changes in learning, changes in action, or changes in condition. Outcomes reflect the core achievements you hope for in the short-, medium-, and long-term.

The tool on the next page shows a simple logic model with each key component and a primary question to ask to fill out each section. Notice that the components are numbered—and the order may look different than what you expect. It is often easier to start with your goal and desired outcomes and then work backward. When completing this tool, do so in the numbered order.

1. Goal/Vision: What is our goal? Why are we doing this?

2. Outcomes: What do we want to be different or changed because of our work?
Short-term:
Intermediate:
Long-term:

3. Activities What do we need to do to make the changes?

4. Outputs What can we count that shows we did the work?

5. Inputs What resources do we need to make these changes?

Back to articulating your PPCE model.

How to define evaluation purpose

The simplest way to get clarity on the purpose of your evaluation is to reflect on the goals and needs for the evaluation. The tool below includes several questions that prompt you to consider your evaluation goals and needs, such as problems to be resolved, upcoming decisions to make, or reporting requirements. First, start by jotting down some answers to each question—you could do this collaboratively in a group or have individuals fill out their own and then combine them later. After you've answered all the questions, review each item and align them to one of the evaluation purposes described above (evaluating design, implementation, or outcomes).

This will help you understand how your needs align with the evaluation and will set you up for writing evaluation questions (the next section). Note that these questions are just prompts to get your ideas flowing. You do not need to come up with something new for each one. If you find yourself repeating something—great! That means that you have a high priority need. If you have many different ideas, you may need to work with your partners to prioritize them.

Questions and notes	Aligned evaluation purpose
What do you want to be able to say at the end of this evaluation?	
Example: How effective online workshops are at getting input from college students	*Design*
Example: How many college students attended the online workshop	*Implementation*
Example: How informed college students felt after the online workshop	*Outcomes*
What problems or uncertainties are you trying to solve with your evaluation?	
What decisions do you need to make that evaluation could inform?	
What are you required to report on or share?	

Questions and notes	Aligned evaluation purpose
How do you see the results of this work contributing to your mission or agency impact?	
What do your stakeholders want or need to learn from the evaluation?	

Back to defining evaluation purpose and use.

How to write evaluation questions

Feel free to use a few of the sample evaluation questions above or take them as a starting point and modify them to your needs. If they don't quite fit, though, you can write your own from scratch using the guidelines described above. For inspiration, go back to your ideas about evaluation purpose and use and see what themes or patterns emerge. Other sources for inspiration could be:

- Your agency's mission, vision, or values
- Your program/project/PPCE goals
- Your engagement model (logic model or theory of change)
- Grant proposals or reports
- Stakeholder interests or goals
- Upcoming program decisions

Generally, beginning evaluation questions with "how well" or "to what extent" is a good place to start. You likely want to stick with 2-4 evaluation questions—the more evaluation questions you have, the more data you will need.

Back to creating evaluation questions.

How to select evaluation methods

The following section describes a multi-step process for selecting evaluation methods. First, you will use the table below to map out the data sources and data collection methods you will use to answer each of your evaluation questions. To start, copy your evaluation questions into the first column. Then, in the column headers under "*Data Sources*," write the sources of the information that will inform your evaluation. To identify data sources, ask yourself the question "who holds knowledge that can address the evaluation question?" Data sources might be people such as homeowners, community members, or program staff, or might be program data or other secondary data. Try to think outside the box about what data can inform your evaluation questions. Finally, determine which evaluation questions each data source can help you answer. Make an "X" in the box that corresponds with the evaluation question that each data source will inform. Each question may be informed by multiple sources, and each source may be able to help inform multiple questions.

Evaluation Questions	Data Source 1: *Example: PPCE participants from rural communities*	Data Source 2: *Example: Staff from rural advocacy organization*	Data Source 3: *Example: US Census data*
Example: To what extent have the PPCE methods we chose to implement met our goals around access and inclusion?	*X*	*X*	*X*
Example: How well did we succeed in engaging the people we needed to engage?	*X*	*X*	*X*
Example: How well did we build trust with participants?	*X*		
Add remaining evaluation questions			

Now that you have mapped your evaluation questions to your data sources, copy the data sources you identified in the table above into the "*Data Source*" column in the table below. Then think about the data collection method(s) that will work best for each data source. To do this, skim the table that describes different data collection methods and pros and cons of each. Then choose one or more data collection methods for each data source, and write them in the table on the next page.

Data Source	Data Collection Method(s)
Example: PPCE participants from rural communities	*Example: 3-minute online survey*
Example: Staff from rural advocacy organization	*Example: 30-minute phone interview*
Example: US Census data	*Example: Download from website*
Add remaining data sources	

Finally, bring this information together by combining your ideas into the table below. Start with a copy of your evaluation question to data source table, then replace each "X" with the data collection method that you identified above for each source. When you're done, review the table to confirm the data collection method is appropriate for the type of information needed to inform the evaluation question. If you end up with a lot of different data collection methods, or one data collection method that will inform several evaluation questions, that's ok—as long as you have the resources to carry out the methods in a way that will answer the evaluation questions.

Data sources and methods for evaluation questions

Evaluation Questions	**Data Source & Method:** *Example: PPCE participants from rural communities*	**Data Source & Method:** *Example: Staff from rural advocacy organization*	**Data Source & Method:** *Example: US Census data*
Example: To what extent have the PPCE methods we chose to implement met our goals around access and inclusion?	*3-minute online survey*	*30-minute phone interview*	*Download from website*
Example: How well did we succeed in engaging the people we needed to engage?	*3-minute online survey*	*30-minute phone interview*	*Download from website*
Example: How well did we build trust with participants?	*3-minute online survey*		
Add remaining evaluation question(s)			

[Back to choosing evaluation methods.]

Advantages and disadvantages of different data collection methods

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Surveys Highly structured, and usually contain close-ended questions	• Can survey many respondents with relatively low added cost or time for each respondent • Relatively inexpensive per person if the sample is large • Everyone gets the same instrument • Interpretation of data is fairly objective	• Difficult to get much detail • If using a long instrument should control the circumstances in which respondents use it • Response rate can be affected by (1) setting; (2) commitment to organization; (3) how well respondent understands questions • Can't control how respondents will interpret questions
	Additional considerations: group-administered surveys	
	• Can observe how well respondents are answering questions	• Researcher conducting survey will have to avoid biasing results
	Additional considerations: telephone surveys	
	• Able to ask for more detail when needed	• Sometimes difficult reaching respondents—accurate telephone numbers are becoming harder to get • Costs for each additional survey can be high • Lack of anonymity

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
	Additional considerations: electronic surveys	
	• Can control how respondents answer questions and avoid invalid responses • Costs for each additional survey are very minimal	• Not a great method for all populations • Set-up costs may be higher (including staff time learning software)
Image Grouping (hybrid survey – focus group) Mixed-methods data collection tool that helps increase participation, used primarily to overcome literacy barriers	• Can get 15 respondents at a time • Group memory processing can increase validity in thinking back over longer time periods • Mixed methods provides some quantitative metrics as well as qualitative insight • Many cultures dislike direct questions about themselves or family members; this allows for accurate responses while being culturally sensitive	• Is a 3-hour process • Paper and document-heavy, often creating extra costs • Coordination and logistics may be more difficult as people travel to central location • Best practice requires pilot testing and local review to ensure appropriate imagery, adding time
	Additional considerations:	

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
	• Best with a group of people who know each other • Group dynamics need to be sensitive to cultural norms (e.g. genders separated, elders and youth in different groups)	• New tool for facilitators and translators so would need extra training time • See considerations with surveys and focus groups
Interviews Typically conducted by 1 interviewer asking questions of 1 interviewee, and occasionally, a group	• Researcher can know how respondents are interpreting questions • Able to ask for more detail when needed • Respondents can provide detailed data about areas of interest • Can get interesting stories or anecdotes that illustrate points & make connections • Respondents may feel comfortable sharing detailed stories with interviewer	• Time-consuming – can only get one respondent's data at a time • Because of time, can limit sample size • Interpretation of data is fairly subjective • Can be expensive • Can be difficult to identify common themes or findings among respondents
	Additional considerations: ***electronic***	

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
	• Relatively low burden for both respondent and researcher • Can send same questions out to multiple respondents and then follow-up as needed	• Response rate may be low without an existing relationship between researcher and respondent • Respondents will likely have concerns about anonymity and privacy • Not a great method for all populations
Focus Groups A facilitated conversation with a relatively homogenous group of people	• Researcher can know how respondents are interpreting questions • Able to interview multiple respondents at one time, thus, more cost-effective • Can get interesting stories or anecdotes that illustrate points • Comments from one respondent stimulate discussion among other respondents—creating a deep understanding of an issue	• Group setting may inhibit some respondents from providing information • Strong facilitation skills are sometimes necessary if there are dominant or reluctant respondents • Sometimes hard to coordinate multiple schedules • Comments from one respondent stimulate discussion among other respondents—biasing results
	Additional considerations: ***electronic***	

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
	• Can keep questions “open” for multiple days so respondents can continue to add thoughts • Electronic format is more comfortable for some respondents that may be shy in person	• Respondents will likely have concerns about anonymity and privacy • Not a great method for all populations • Set-up costs may be higher (including staff time learning software)
Workshops A facilitated session with a group	• Respondents not only share information, but generate ideas • Researcher can know how respondents are interpreting questions • Can break into smaller groups about specific issues • Able to interview multiple respondents at one time, thus, more cost-effective • Comments from one respondent stimulates discussion among other respondents	• Risk of selection bias because most interested respondents are most likely to attend • Complex roles for everyone – researcher and participants are both giving and gathering information • Ideas that are generated need to be validated by non-participants
Observations Watching people or situations to get a deeper understanding of behaviors	• More objective interpretation • Low burden for respondents providing data	• Time-consuming • Some items are not observable • Can be expensive • Participant behavior may be affected by observer presence

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Program Records Documents used regularly in a program	• More objective interpretation • Low burden for respondents providing data • Relatively inexpensive • Uses what is available	• May not correspond to exactly what researcher wants • May be incomplete or require additional interpretation • May have restrictions about how data can be used if respondents were guaranteed privacy • Reliant on program documents available, potential for inconsistent information
Ripple Effect Mapping Participatory tool that helps visually collect the untold stories and behind-the-scene activities that can ripple out from a specific program or activity	• Collects stories and impacts • Group validation of results • Captures impacts of complex or evolving work • Useful when total impact of program is difficult to conceptualize and measure with other evaluation methods • Participatory approach that engages stakeholders • Operates around positive inquiry • Displays emerging patterns and trends • Can bring diverse stakeholders to the same discussion • Can capture social capital built – which is often missed	• Requires several hours of participant time • May be hard to follow up with participant if more context is needed on a story • Quantification is not generalizable to a larger population • Does not show causation or magnitude of program effects, rather, contribution • May demonstrate impacts or effects that are not aligned with program goals • Risk of bias in participant selection and data collection • Participants may not have complete information about a program or its outcomes • Potential for inconsistency in implementation

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
	Additional considerations	
	• Requires large groups of people to come together for several hours • Best used mid or post program	• Best/easiest practice is to use mind mapping electronic software
Most Significant Change Generating and analyzing personal accounts of change and deciding which of these accounts is the most significant – and why	• Qualitative • Participatory • Based on outcomes (not activities or outputs) • Provides intentional feedback loops • Learning and sharing-focused • Highlights unintended consequences • Minimizes extractive methodology • Measures bottom-up approaches • Can capture early changes in a program	• Requires extensive staff training • Intended to be done between program staff and participants • Implementation is time consuming • Without trust, stories won't be as rich • Can be hard to decide what is "most significant" of changes

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
PhotoVoice Photojournalism process, structured community dialogue (most often using SHOWeD method), and community showcase/viewing to document needs and strengths in a community or initiative	• Qualitative/mixed methods • Participatory • Provides intentional feedback loops • Learning and sharing-focused • Measures bottom-up approaches • Can gauge community perceptions of success and validity of an initiative's approach	• Requires training in photography, ethics with images and data collection, and power dynamics • Implementation and analysis can be time consuming • Without quality facilitation, stories won't be as rich • Needs technology for photoproduction
Actor Mapping/Power Mapping Visual depiction of organizations and/or individuals who influence a policy/topic/initiative	• Qualitative/mixed methods • Can be used for power analyses and agenda building • Introduces systems thinking by naming individual pieces • Can be used for documenting relationships between various actors in a system • Can inform strategic action for systems change • Can be participatory	• Having a healthy balance of mapping participants is critical • Key organizations and individuals can change over time

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Participatory Playback Theatre Utilizing Boal's concept of "SpectActor" to facilitate dialogue, information sharing, and action about a social issue	• Utilizes local codes of communication, traditions, and cultural expression simultaneously • Tool for data discussion across conflict, power, and oppression • Participatory • Action and data-use focused	• Needs quality facilitation • Can produce complex themes difficult to capture in multiple reporting formats

Back to the data sources and methods table in this section.

How to write an evaluation plan

An evaluation plan can take many different shapes but is often simply a written document. The following table shows an easy structure and important content to include in your evaluation plan. Note that a few sections will use content from later sections—for now, leave those blank and come back to them later.

Section	Content	Relevant sections in this toolkit

Context	Include any contextual information that is relevant to the evaluation to "set the stage". This could include:
	• Agency context - background, history, and/or description of agency
	• PPCE context - background history, and/or description of the engagement being evaluated
	  ○ Logic model
	  ○ Theory of change
	• Other factors affecting engagement context – historical, political, organizational, programmatic, community
		How to create a logic model
		
		How to create a theory of change

Section	Content	Relevant sections in this toolkit
Evaluation purpose	Be explicit and transparent about evaluation goals and use to help guide and connect pieces of the evaluation process from design to reporting/use. This includes: • Purpose(s) of the evaluation: Why is the evaluation being conducted? • Scope of the evaluation ○ Evaluation questions • Identify stakeholders – list key individuals or groups that have a stake in the evaluation; why are they relevant. • Identify intended uses and users – list key individuals or groups who will use the results and their evaluation interest; explain who will have access to the results (e.g. will they be publicly shared or will the report be for internal use only?).	How to define evaluation purpose How to write evaluation questions How to do stakeholder analysis
Evaluation design	Describe how you will get data and from where, including: • Data sources (who or what will provide the data needed to answer the evaluation questions) • Data collection methods (how you will collect the data) You can also include some logistical information about how and when the data collection methods will take place.	How to select evaluation methods

Section	Content	Relevant sections in this toolkit
Analysis	Describe process for analysis and interpretation. • What process will be used for analysis and identifying results/findings? • How will data be presented (e.g. data tables, themes, etc.)? • How will others be included in interpretation/meaning making (e.g. emerging findings meeting, preliminary results presentation, etc.)?	How to make an analysis plan
Use and sharing of results	Describe the plan for using evaluation results. • How will the results be disseminated? • Where will results be shared? • Who will receive or have access to results? • Who will use results and how?	How to define evaluation purpose

Back to documenting your evaluation plan.

Phase 2: Tool Design

How to identify indicators

The central point of your evaluation design is understanding what you want to measure and why – and this is the work you did in Phase 1: Evaluation Planning! By thinking through your theory of change or logic model, clarifying the purpose of your evaluation, and developing your evaluation questions, you have laid the groundwork for deciding what to measure and creating your indicators. This section walks you through how to use the planning you did in Phase 1 to create indicators that will guide what you measure in your evaluation, and presents a list of potential indicators by evaluation phase that you can draw from or use as inspiration in creating your own.[1]

As introduced in Phase 1: Evaluation Planning, there are multiple ways to evaluate civic engagement. We categorize them into three major ideas:

1. **Evaluating design:** This is about understanding how well the design (i.e., plan) for your PPCE matches your stated goals and the context.
2. **Evaluating implementation:** This is about understanding how well your carried out your plan for PPCE and whether your assumptions about your PPCE efforts were accurate. This might also measure the extent to which participants engaged were representative of all stakeholder groups, and/or the extent to which engagement efforts were responsive and accessible to members of all stakeholder groups.
3. **Evaluating outcomes:** This is about understanding the changes that occurred because of your PPCE (including what decisions were made based on what you learned through PPCE) or the impacts of your PPCE.

In addition, you can also evaluate your **agency capacity,** which is about understanding how well your agency learns from your PPCE work and improves over time.

Here are some key elements to consider when developing indicators for civic engagement evaluation:

- Indicators should answer your evaluation questions, and this will determine the data you collect.
- Indicators should be relevant to civic engagement goals – the evaluation purpose and use you

[1] This section and the indicator bank draw from "A Guide to Evaluate Civic Engagement," by The Improve Group, 2018, p. 24-29. Minnesota Department of Human Rights. https://mn.gov/mdhr/assets/rFinal_2018CivicEngagementUserGuide_t-opt_1.18.19_tcm1061-361141.pdf

developed during the evaluation planning phase will drive many of your indictors.

- Indicators should be observable – indicators should focus on action and/or changes.
- Indicator data should be feasible to obtain – resources are scarce in the civic engagement world. Focus on indicators where data is relatively easy to collect.

Start by reminding yourself of the purpose, use, and evaluation questions you crafted in the evaluation planning phase. Then, read through the bank of potential indicators below to find indicators you would like to use, modify, or use as inspiration for creating your own. It is a good idea to have multiple indicators for each evaluation question.

Evaluation purpose
What is our evaluation purpose? Are we evaluating design, implementation, outcomes, or all three?

Evaluation use
What are our planned evaluation uses? Are we trying to prove our PPCE model, make things better, create a learning community, or other uses?

Evaluation questions
What are our evaluation questions?

After reviewing the bank of indicators below, either select from the bank or craft your own indicators that will inform each of your evaluation questions, and write them in the box below.

Our evaluation questions	Our indicators that will inform each evaluation question
1. *Example: To what extent have the PPCE methods we chose to implement met our goals around access and inclusion?*	1. *Example: At least 95% of participants found the design of the engagement sensitive to community context.* 2. 3.
2. *Example: How well did we succeed in engaging the people we needed to engage?*	1. *Example: Collected participant demographic data is representative of community profiles.* 2. 3.
3. *Example: How well did we build trust with participants?*	1. *Example: At least 95% of participants reported that they felt respected during the engagement process.* 2. 3.
4.	1. 2. 3.

Bank of potential indicators

The following bank of potential indicators is intended as a starting place - some of these indicators may work for you and others will not. Remember to stay grounded in your evaluation questions and ask yourself what will help you answer those questions. It is a good idea to have more than one indicator per evaluation question. Use this bank as a starting place for ideas, and either borrow indicators from this list or use these indicators to generate your own that better fit your context and needs.

Design

This is about understanding how well the design (i.e., plan) for your PPCE matches your stated goals and the context.

Who are the stakeholders and how will they be engaged in design?

- Have you completed a civic engagement stakeholder analysis?
- Have you developed a community demographics profile of the issue or project area?
- Have you sought input about community context or background of the engagement work from community stakeholders?
- Have you tested your assumptions about the work with community stakeholders?
- Have you sought advice about your engagement's design, such as establishing goals for the engagement, event logistics, event agenda, clarity of language, etc., from community stakeholders?
- Have you piloted any engagement tools (surveys, interview questions, event facilitation plans, etc.) with community stakeholders?

How well did the engagement align with your goals for civic engagement?

- At least [set target percentage] of participants found the stated purpose of the engagement relevant to community context.
- At least [set target percentage] of participants found the design of the engagement sensitive to community context.

How well was the engagement designed for accessibility and cultural responsiveness?

- Were all parts of your engagement designed to be accessible to people with various disabilities and 508-compliant?
- Were all parts of your engagement designed to be culturally responsive to the different stakeholder groups identified through your community profile?

Implementation

This is about understanding how well your carried out your plan for PPCE and whether your assumptions about your PPCE efforts were accurate. This might also measure the extent to which participants engaged were representative of all stakeholder groups, and/or the extent to which engagement efforts were responsive and accessible to members of all stakeholder groups.

How well do participants understand the purpose of our engagement?

- At least [set target percentage] of participants understood the purpose of our engagement.
- At least [set target percentage] of participants understood their role in the process.

How well are we reaching targeted stakeholders?

- Collected participant demographic data is representative of community profiles.
- At least [set target percentage] of participants reported that the information provided by the agency was clear.

How well did our design function during implementation?

- At least [set target percentage] of participants reported that their voice was heard through the engagement.
- At least [set target percentage] of participants reported that they had an adequate opportunity to participate.
- At least [set target percentage] of participants rated the environment of the engagement as welcoming.
- At least [set target percentage] of requested accommodations being successfully fulfilled.

How well are we retaining participant engagement?

- At least [set target percentage] of participants were willing to provide feedback about the engagement.
- At least [set target percentage] of participants were interested in future engagement efforts.

Outcomes

This is about understanding the changes that occurred because of your PPCE (including what decisions were made based on what you learned through PPCE) or the impacts of your PPCE.

What impact did engagement have on the decision making process?

- Each component of the decision making process was informed by input generated through community engagement.
- The ways that community input informed the decision making process and final decisions was

documented to support internal and public communications.

How did engagement build relationships?

- Develop external communication plan that is matched with stakeholder analysis.
- The agency followed up with participants summarizing what was heard through the engagement.
- The agency followed up with communities summarizing how participant input was used in decision making.
- At least [set target percentage] of participants reported that they received feedback of the engagement results.
- At least [set target percentage] of participants reported that they felt respected during the engagement process.
- Responses to public inquiries are made within [set target number working days] of the day of receipt.
- Ongoing relationship building is conducted with stakeholders who participated in the design process.
- Diversity of participants increased over time.

Agency capacity

This is about understanding how well your agency learns from your PPCE work and improves over time.

Is agency capacity for civic engagement improving and is it culturally responsive?

- Review process and documentation for completing and archiving engagement project wrap-up forms.
- Review process for evaluation reporting to ensure learnings are being disseminated.
- Track staff training as it pertains to civic engagement skill development.
- Review summative report data to understand trends in cultural responsiveness.

What internal stakeholders need to receive final reports and how will they be communicated?

- Develop internal communication plan to inform practitioners and leadership of lessons learned, outcomes, and resources that may be needed.
- Develop good CRM databases practices to maintain communication with stakeholders over time and to support relationships being shared within the agency.

Back to identifying your indicators and data collection questions.

How to identify data collection questions

Congratulations! You now have indicators that align with your evaluation questions. The next task is to identify questions to place in your survey, interview, workshop, or other data collection method(s) that will inform your indicators. You may find that your indicator is about a broad concept, and you need to ask more than one specific question to inform your indicator. It is great to have multiple questions informing each indicator, just remember to balance that with not burdening people by asking them too many questions (long surveys are less likely to be completed than short ones).

Review the sample data collection questions in the bank below. You can use and modify these questions or write your own. To learn more about how to write your own questions and tips for modifying existing questions, you can see the "How to write a survey" and "How to write an interviewer guide" sections below.

After reviewing the list of data collection questions below, either select from the list or craft your own questions for each of your data collection methods, and write them in the box below.[2]

Our **evaluation questions**	Our **indicators** that will inform each evaluation question	Our **data collection questions** that will inform each indicator
1. *Example: To what extent have the PPCE methods we chose to implement met our goals around access and inclusion?*	a. *Example: At least [set target percentage] of participants found the design of the engagement sensitive to community context.* b. c.	a. *Example: Today's event was sensitive to matters important to my community. [Agree-disagree scale with I don't know option]* b. c.

[2] This section and the data collection question bank draw from "Olmstead Implementation Office: A civic engagement evaluation framework," by The Improve Group, p. 23-35. Olmstead Implementation Office.

Our **evaluation questions**	Our **indicators** that will inform each evaluation question	Our **data collection questions** that will inform each indicator
2. *Example: How well did we succeed in engaging the people we needed to engage?*	a. *Example: Collected participant demographic data is representative of community profiles.* b. c.	a. *Example: [Demographics questions to identify level of alignment with the community profile]* b. c.
3. *Example: How well did we build trust with participants?*	a. *Example: At least 95% of participants reported that they felt respected during the engagement process.* b. c.	a. *Example: Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement: "I felt respected by Agency X during today's public engagement event."* b. c.

Bank of potential data collection questions

<u>Design</u>

Who are the stakeholders and how will they be engaged in design?

- How many of our identified stakeholder groups were involved with establishing goals for the civic engagement event?
- How many of our identified stakeholder groups were involved with planning the civic engagement event?
- Describe how our civic engagement event was designed to be responsive to:
    a. Various engagement styles
    b. Various learning and communication styles
    c. Various abilities
    d. People from the cultural backgrounds represented in our stakeholder list for this work
- How many engagement tools (surveys, interview questions, event facilitation plans, etc.) were piloted with stakeholders?

How well did the engagement align with your goals for civic engagement?

- Agency X is conducting community engagement to [insert purpose]. How important do you think this is to your community? [not at all important, somewhat important, very important, I don't know or N/A]
- Today's event was sensitive to matters important to my community. [Agree-disagree scale with I don't know option]

How well was the engagement designed for accessibility and cultural responsiveness?

- Did we make it easy for participants to request accommodations for our engagement, such as an ASL interpreter?
- Did our team think through how to make our engagement accessible in various ways, such as providing supports for people with low literacy, providing multiple ways of engaging, etc.?
- Are all our materials 508-compliant?
- Was your engagement offered in all languages commonly used in the community?
- Did the date/time of your engagement event take into consideration important calendar events (holidays, prayer time, etc.) for the stakeholder subgroups in the community?

Implementation

How well do participants understand the purpose of our engagement?

- It was clear to me that the purpose of today's engagement was [X]. [Agree-Disagree scale with "I don't know" option]
- It was clear to me in today's event that my input would be taken into consideration by Agency X as they [develop policy on XYZ]. [Agree-Disagree scale with "I don't know" option]

How well are we reaching targeted stakeholders?

- [Demographics questions to identify level of alignment with the community profile]
- How clear or unclear were communications about today's event? [Very clear, somewhat clear, somewhat unclear, very unclear, I don't know or N/A]
- How did you first become aware of [insert civic engagement event]? [answer choices list all outreach methods]
- For the event you participated in, we invited people through [insert outreach technique]. How was your experience with that?
- What recommendations would you give Agency X on how they can improve their civic engagement outreach?
- Our civic engagement outreach was modified to better reach people [in stakeholder group X]. [Yes, No, Unsure]
- In what ways was civic engagement outreach modified to better reach people [in stakeholder group X]? Please list:
- How many civic engagement participants identified as being [in stakeholder group X]?
- How many different techniques does the agency use for civic engagement outreach with people [in stakeholder group X]? Please list:

How well did our design function during implementation?

- My input was recognized at the civic engagement event. [Agree-Disagree scale]
- It was easy for me to participate in the civic engagement event. [Agree-Disagree scale]
- I felt welcomed at the civic engagement event. [Agree-Disagree scale]
- Did you experience any barriers to participating in this civic engagement event? If so, please describe.
- Did you request accommodations for this civic engagement? If so, what types of accommodations?
- If you requested accommodations for the civic engagement event, how satisfied were you with how well your needs were met? [satisfaction scale]

- What types of accommodations did people request for this civic engagement event? Please list:
    a. Of these, which accommodations were you able to provide?
    b. How many accommodations were requested in total?
    c. How many of these accommodations were you able to provide?
- How many interactions did agency staff have with leaders of [stakeholder group X] to identify potential barriers to civic engagement participation and preferred ways of mitigating those barriers?
- How many interactions did agency staff have with other federal agencies to learn what they have identified as barriers to civic engagement?

How well are we retaining participant engagement?

- Response rate of participants who took time to provide feedback.
- Would you consider attending another event like this in the future? [Yes, No, Maybe, I don't know or N/A] Why or why not?

Outcomes

What impact did engagement have on the decision making process?

- Over the past [insert timeframe, e.g. one year], how many changes were made in programs and/or policies where people [in stakeholder group X] were participating in civic engagement?
    a. What types of changes were made? Please list:
- What does it mean to you for a federal agency to be transparent?
- If you were in charge of Agency X, what would you do to be more transparent with decisions that affect people?

How did engagement build relationships?

- I felt respected by Agency X during today's public engagement event. [Agree-Disagree scale]
- How would you like Agency X to share information on decisions that affect you?
- Thinking about the civic engagement events the agency has hosted in the past [insert time period, e.g. 6 months] how many times did the agency follow-up with people [in stakeholder group X] summarizing what was discussed at the event and how the agency will use the information?
- Thinking about the civic engagement events the agency has hosted in the past [insert time period, e.g. 6 months] how many times did the agency follow-up with people [in stakeholder group X] explaining why their input was included or excluded in the decision or plan?
- Below is a list of ways [insert agency] communicates with people. Please rate how effective you think each is: [insert communication approach 1] [effectiveness rating scale]

- Agency X's website is helpful to me. [agreement scale including "I do not use the website"]
- Does Agency X have a plan for how often to communicate with people [in stakeholder group X]?
  a. If so, according to the plan, how often should communications occur?
  b. How often is this plan followed?
- In the agency's last email communication to people [in stakeholder group X], what percentage of emails were opened?

Agency capacity

Is agency capacity for civic engagement improving and is it culturally responsive?

- Agency staff regularly reach out to other federal agencies for recommendations when working with people [in stakeholder group X] in civic engagement. [Yes, No, Unsure]
- When working with people [in stakeholder group X] in civic engagement, we have shared "lessons learned" with other agencies.
  a. If so, how many times have you shared "lessons learned" in the past [insert time period, e.g. 6 months]?
  b. What types of "lessons learned" have you shared? Please list:

What internal stakeholders need to receive final reports and how will they be communicated?

- What internal stakeholders would it be helpful to share our learnings and successes with to support increased civic engagement as Agency X builds our capacity?
- What internal stakeholders should we share highlights of our work with to support ongoing resources to support our work?
- Have we recorded a brief summary of our learnings and successes that can be easily shared internally?
- Does Agency X have a shared CRM database for storing contact information for key community stakeholders who provided insight and advice for our engagement work?

Have we made effort to maintain and further build authentic, long-term relationships with community stakeholders who provided insight and advice for our engagement work?

Back to identifying your indicators and data collection questions

How to design responsive and accessible tools

People can only give you input if they can engage with you or your systems (survey, etc.) in a way that works for them. Review your stakeholder analysis table and data source and methods tables from Phase 1: Evaluation Planning, then use the tool below to think through what may be needed to engage the people from whom you're hoping to gather input.

The following is a list of questions you could ask yourself in filling out the below table:

Have we planned for...

- Materials and interactions to be in the languages that people will be using?
- Accommodations to be available for people with various disabilities, and asking people what accommodations they would like?
- Events to be in locations that are centrally located to the communities we're engaging, easy to get to, and accessible?
- Data collection to be conducted by people whom participants will be likely to feel comfortable with (think about shared identities, power dynamics, etc.)?
- Providing the means for people to engage, such as offering bus tokens to reach an event, or offering phone interviews for people who can't or choose not to engage over videoconference?
- Having options so people can engage in ways they are comfortable, such as offering surveys by emailing a URL, texting a URL, posting a QR code, or providing a paper survey with postage-paid return envelope?
- Asking all participants within screener surveys or registration forms what would improve their experience?

Data Sources: What groups of people would we like to engage?	**Methods:** How will we ask each group for input? (Survey? Interview?)	**Considerations:** What do we know about each group that may affect how they might engage through our chosen method?	**Design Solutions:** What should we use in our design to respond to our listed considerations and ensure our data collection is responsive and accessible?
Example: Parents of young children	*Example: Group interviews*	*Example: Participants will be with their children.*	*Example: Have onsite childcare at in-person interview events or consider virtual events, and offer childcare stipends to attend*

Designing for accessibility

It is always important for any materials prepared for the public to be fully accessible. When using software like Microsoft Word or PowerPoint, there are steps you can take to ensure your documents are accessible, such as using alt text for images. See the Section 508.gov website linked below for instructions. If you are using other software such as a survey or whiteboard platform, check the manufacturer's description page for the software to ensure that it is accessible.

Resource on how to create accessible documents: https://www.section508.gov/create/documents/

Back to creating data collection tools.

How to inform people about evaluation and gain their consent to participate

A key part of any data collection is to ensure that the people providing their input understand the evaluation's purpose and how their information will be used, and that they provide their consent to participate (informed consent). Having quality informed consent **improves transparency and relationships and increases equity and trauma-informed approach**.

There are a few pieces of information that should always be communicated to people being asked to provide input into an evaluation, such as:

- the purpose for seeking input,
- how the input will be used, and
- level of confidentiality or anonymity of input provided.

The amount of information you provide and the way that you communicate it should **mirror the formality and level of sensitivity of your data collection.** For example, if the input you are seeking is feedback on a town hall meeting, you could use a very light informed consent process. However, if your data collection asks for any sensitive information or engages vulnerable populations, you would want to include more items in your consent. The standard items to include in an informed consent are described in the **checklist below,** and you can choose the elements to include to mirror the level of formality and sensitivity of your data collection.

You should communicate informed consent information **when inviting people** to participate in data collection (in outreach language or invitations) **and at the start of data collection** (such as at the start of a survey or interview). You can also include a short summary of points at the end of a participant's engagement with you (such as a brief reminder at the end of an interview). Participants can provide consent by simply choosing to participate, or if more formality is needed, you can request verbal or written consent.

Checklist of elements of informed consent and when to use them

Item to communicate	Outreach	Start of data collection	End of data collection
Purpose of the evaluation	✓	✓	N/A
Who is doing the evaluation			N/A
How results will be used			
What participants can expect (format, duration, etc.)			N/A
Level of confidentiality or anonymity			
How and when results will be shared with participants			
Contact person for questions or concerns			
For more formal processes: Participation is voluntary and any anticipated effects of participation (impact on services or relationships, any benefits and risks)			

Sample informed consent for a survey
Thank you for participating in today's feedback event about Program Y. Agency X wants to be sure future feedback events are as open and accessible as possible so that anyone can give feedback. Please take 5 minutes to fill out this anonymous survey to help Agency X improve future feedback events and make sure we are hearing from people across our communities. Agency X will share what we learn about feedback events and Program Y on the URL website after [date]. For questions or help taking this survey, contact info@ProgramY.gov.

Sample informed consent for an interview
Hello! I'm working with Agency X to learn from people how we can improve Program Y. Thank you for attending our event on [date] to provide your feedback about improving Program Y. Is this still a good time to talk about your experiences and opinions of the event for about 15 minutes? Great, thank you so much for making the time to chat today! We're hoping to learn what went well in the feedback event and what can be improved, and Agency X will use what we learn to improve future feedback events to make it easier for more people to give us their input on Program Y. We'll share what we learn on the Agency X webpage after next October [or other date]. We're hoping to talk with about 15 people who attended the feedback event, and all the conversations will be confidential – meaning only I as the interviewer will know who said what. If you would like to skip any of the interview questions or end the interview early, just let me know. I'm putting my contact information in the chat box [or if in person – here's my business card] for if you have questions later. What questions do you have about the interview? Great, shall we begin? [If the interviewee says yes, they are giving their informed consent.]

Back to creating data collection tools.

How to write a survey

Surveys can be administered as web surveys to be taken on a computer or mobile phone, paper surveys, or verbally administered surveys. Regardless of how you administer your survey, you can design your survey to a common structure, described below.

Common survey structure

Structure item:	Explanation:
The introduction	Begin with a short section explaining elements of informed consent in a simple, clear way using plain language. Tip: A common way to obtain consent for surveys is if the person reads the consent language and decides to go ahead and take the survey, they have given consent to participate.
The questions	Survey questions, with the more sensitive questions last. • Tip: If you place sensitive questions at the start of a survey, people will be more likely to quit the survey. • Tip: Ask demographic questions so you can learn how people's responses differ by their identities, if at all, but place demographic questions last in your survey.
The close	Brief thank you for taking the survey.
Incentive	If you are offering an incentive like a gift card, provide that link or information at the end.

Resources

Plain language resources: https://www.plainlanguage.gov/

Reading level checker: https://www.webfx.com/tools/read-able/

Tips on writing effective survey questions

The following table provides tips for how to write effective survey questions.

Tip	Poorly written question	Well written question
Ask one question at a time.	Do you subscribe to and regularly read any magazines?	1. Do you subscribe to any magazines? 2. Do you regularly read any magazines?
Help people interpret your questions consistently by being specific and concrete.	How often did you eat together as a family last week?	How many meals did you sit down to eat at home with others in your family in the last 7 days?
Use simple and familiar words (avoid jargon).	What are your desired program outcomes?	What do you hope to gain by coming to Program Y?
Do not use leading questions.	How much have your eating habits improved after the program?	Have you made changes to your eating habits since the program? If so, describe.
Ask questions that people will be able to answer without having to look up information.	How many times did you visit a doctor's office in the last 12 months?	About how many times did you visit a doctor's office in the last 30 days?

Tip	Poorly written question	Well written question
For write-in answers, show people what type of answer you want within the question and answer space: • Include the unit desired in the question (ex: days) • Include unit labels in the answer space • Include the appropriate size space for the response	In an average week, how often do you cook dinner at home? ___________________	In an average week, how many days do you cook dinner at home? ___ days per week (0-7)
Reduce bias by presenting both positive and negative sides in the question statement.	To what extent do you **agree** with the statement: "It is easier for people to find work in the community than it was 1 year ago."	To what extent do you **agree or disagree** with the statement: "It is easier for people to find work in the community than it was 1 year ago."
Make sure your answer categories are mutually exclusive (check beginning and end points of answer ranges to be sure each possible answer is listed only once).	What is your age? 18 to **25** years old **25** to 40 40 to 55 55 to 65 65+ years old	What is your age? 18 to **24** years old **25** to 39 40 to 54 55 to 64 65+ years old

Tip	Poorly written question	Well written question
Make sure what you ask in the question is reflected in the response options.	**How happy** were you with the services provided? Extremely **satisfied** Very satisfied Moderately satisfied Slightly satisfied Not at all satisfied	**How happy** were you with the services provided? Extremely **happy** Very happy Moderately happy Slightly happy Not at all happy

Back to creating data collection tools.

How to write an interviewer guide

An interviewer can use an interview guide documenting introduction language and interview questions to help them lead the interview. Interviews can be administered in-person or by phone or video conference, and individually or in a small group. Regardless of how you administer your interview, you can design your interviewer guide to a common structure, described below.

Common interviewer guide structure

Part of interview	Description
Rapport building	Begin with a brief greeting and small talk to set a comfortable tone for the interview.
The introduction	Then include a short section explaining elements of informed consent in a simple, clear way using plain language. • Tip: A common way to obtain consent for interviews is to verbally provide the elements of consent using plain language and conversational tone, ask if the person has any questions, then ask if they would like to go ahead with the interview. If they say yes, they are providing their informed consent.

Part of interview	Description
The questions	Interview questions: • Start with **easy questions** to help build comfort and rapport – this is a good time to learn things like what interest the interviewee has in a topic, how the person has engaged in the past, etc. • Then move on to more **specific questions** that will provide data to address your evaluation questions. • It's helpful to make your last question "**what else** would you like to talk about that we haven't covered?" This builds responsiveness by providing space for the interviewee to give input on anything you didn't think to ask about. Tip: People may be less comfortable answering demographic questions verbally, so you can consider having a few demographic questions as a mini survey at the end of the interview. If in person, you could hand the person a half sheet of paper with the questions and ask them to fill it out before they leave, or if you're video conferencing, you could provide a link in the chat to a brief online demographic survey and ask them to fill it out before they leave the call.
The close	Briefly thank the person for participating in the interview. This is also a good time to briefly remind them of informed consent elements, such as how you will use what they just told you and who they can contact if they have questions after the interview is over.
Incentive	If you are offering an incentive like a gift card, provide that information at the end.

Tips on writing effective interview questions

The following list of tips can help you write effective interview questions.

- Make sure you're asking questions that the person can answer.
- Questions that take a lot of thought to answer can be broken into several questions.
- Use clear language with no jargon.
- Make sure questions are not leading.
- When possible, avoid "why" questions, which can lead to defensiveness. Instead, find out "why" by

using words and phrases like, “what led you to..,” “how did…,” “tell me more about…,” or other options.

- Make a list of your personal biases related to the topic of your evaluation, then review your questions to see if and how your biases shaped your interview guide. Revise as needed.

Back to creating data collection tools.

How to evaluate participatory events

There are many different types of participatory events you could use to gather public and community input: town hall meetings and other types of feedback sessions, design or planning-oriented workshops or events, and focus group style events, to name a few. A good way to get feedback on the events themselves is to ask for that feedback before people leave the event. Some possible methods for doing so are listed below:

- Ask people to take a short survey before they leave: you could provide QR codes or weblinks, and/or provide paper surveys and have people leave completed surveys face down on the tables or in a box by the door.
- Post a few questions on a wall and ask people to write answers on post it notes and place them near the questions.
- Place a question with answer choices on large paper and provide dot stickers. Ask participants to place their dot sticker next to their chosen answer.
- For simple yes/no questions, provide a bowl of marbles with two jars (a yes and a no jar), and post the question above the marbles. Ask people to take a marble and place it in the jar corresponding to their answer.

Back to creating data collection tools.

How to use existing data

There is often existing data that can help you answer your evaluation questions. Some ways you may pull existing data into your evaluation are noted in the table below.

Types of existing data and how you might use the data

Potential existing data source	How you might use the data
Census data or other existing secondary data about the communities you are seeking input from	Are you hearing from a representative sample of residents in the communities your program aims to serve?
Administrative data about your program	Are you hearing from a representative sample of the people your program is already serving?
Website analytics	How many people are accessing the information you are posting on your website? For example, if you post information about a feedback event, how many people view that page? How direct is the pathway viewers took to reach that page?

Back to creating data collection tools.

How to make an analysis plan

Use the materials you have created in earlier sections and think through how you will do your analysis, then fill in the following table.

Evaluation question	Indicator	Data source and method	Data collection question	How will we analyze?	Subgroup analysis	What will we be able to say?
Example: How well did we build trust with participants?	*Example: At least 95% of participants reported that they felt respected during the engagement process.*	*Example: Survey of event participants distributed at the end of the engagement event*	*Example: Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement: "I felt respected by Agency X during today's public engagement event."*	*Example: Frequency of each response option*	*Example: Disaggregate by:* • *Race or ethnicity* • *Language used in the event* • *Disability identification* • *[add other groups per plan]*	*Example: Y% of participants felt respected during the engagement process*

[Back to planning your analysis and making tool revisions.]

How to identify potential participants

Maybe you want to invite people from the general public to participate in your evaluation, or maybe you have a specific list of people to invite, such as a list of program participants. Either way, a good place to start is by making two lists: recruitment criteria, and diversity criteria. Recruitment criteria lists all the criteria that everyone you invite needs to have. But among all your evaluation participants you want to have diversity, likely within particular categories that are important to you and your stakeholders. So you can create a list of diversity criteria that itemizes all the different groups that you want to be sure you have among your participants. Reflect back on your stakeholder analysis and other lists you created through your evaluation planning and design activities as you create these lists. See the examples below to help you create lists appropriate for your evaluation.

Equity practice: personal identities

An important thing to always remember when working with personal identities is that everyone has multiple identities and multiple communities that they are members of. Each of these shapes a person's lived experience, privileges, and barriers in unique ways. Do your best to have as much diversity as possible in your evaluation, but remember that each person brings a wealth of diversity of experiences and opinions and is always more than any given identity characteristic.

Recruitment criteria: People we invite need to have each of these criteria
Examples for general public recruiting: • *Need to live within X miles of Y program, or be a resident of city Z* • *Need to be at least 18 years old* *Examples for recruiting from an existing list (such as program participants):* • *Need to have accessed services in Program Y in the last 12 months* • •

Diversity criteria: People we invite should have a range of characteristics in terms of:
• *Race and ethnicity* • *Age group* • *Gender identity* • *Income level* •

Once you have these lists and know who you hope to invite, you can either:

- Plan how you will reach people from the general public who meet these criteria, or
- Identify who you will invite if working with an existing list like program participants.

Back to creating an outreach plan to invite potential participants.

How to make an outreach plan

There is no single correct way to make an outreach plan, the main idea is to simply think through and document your planning so you can use it to guide your work as you move into data collection. You can use the following table as a suggested guide for content you may want to include.

Section	Content	Relevant sections in this toolkit
Potential participants	Describe who you hope will participate in your data collection	How to do stakeholder analysis Recruitment and diversity criteria lists
Outreach strategies	Use what you know about your potential participants to select outreach strategies that will be responsive to how they are likely to best receive information. Draw from advice of community navigators.	Brainstorm grid for designing responsive data collection Partnering with community navigators call out box
Who will conduct outreach	Determine who will be responsible for each outreach strategy.	Partnering with community navigators call out box
Draft communications language	Draft the actual content of newsletter announcements, webpage content, flyers, or other communications language.	N/A
Timelines and task assignments	Establish your timelines for outreach and data collection, including who will do what when.	N/A

Back to creating an outreach plan to invite potential participants.

Phase 3: Data Collection and Analysis

How to conduct an interview

Exciting! Now you get to talk to people about their experience.

Planning

One of the benefits of interviews is how convenient they can be for interviewees. If you are doing an interview in person, find a place convenient for the interviewee but also one that affords the kind of privacy appropriate to the interview. Another consideration is finding a place with limited background noise, both to help you hear one another and to facilitate recording if you will be recording. Make sure you have a plan for how you will take notes that works with the location (e.g. power source, surface to write on).

Preparation

As you prepare yourself or others to do interviews, make sure you refresh your memory about what you are hoping to learn about from the interview (see your Evaluation Questions). This will help you choose prompts or follow up questions, as well as make decisions about prioritizing questions if you are running low on time. Review the interviewer guide to make yourself more familiar with the questions and flow; this will help you move more smoothly through the interview.

Implementation

The qualitative data you get from an interview is richest when the interview feels like a conversation, even though it is a mostly one-sided conversation. The beginning of the interview is a good time to work on building rapport; chatting about everyday things can be helpful as you settle in. Set the stage for the interview by covering the consent process in plain language, ensure understanding and make sure it is comfortable for the interviewee to decline to participate or to answer any question. You do not want to "lead" the interviewee by signaling that an answer is right or wrong, welcome or unwelcome. But, you can and should work to put them at ease by engaging in the "discussion," by

- Showing interest in what they are saying,
- Affirming they are being heard and understood,
- Encouraging detailed responses,
- Making sure they have had an opportunity for them to tell you what THEY think is important about the evaluation issue (be ok with them telling you things related to your topic but not direct answers to your interview guide questions),
- Checking your understanding by paraphrasing what you heard from them on important points; this also gives the interviewee a chance to participate in interpretation,

- Taking notes in a way that helps you remember what is said while still allowing you to engage verbally and nonverbally in the discussion, and
- Thanking the interviewee and reinforcing the value of their contribution.

Resource: Interviewing Tips

Aspects of the interview	Interviewer tips
Set the stage	Welcome, thank them for taking part in the interviews Use a "conversation voice" to relay the information in the introduction paragraph Offer opportunity to ask for clarification before beginning the questions
Actively listen	Use verbal cues such as, "Hmm mmm" Minimize background distractions Be present
Prompt	Use to specify or narrow down the type of information you're looking for Gets at the "more" in that there's more to the story Gives the interviewee a lifeline when struggling with understanding the question
Paraphrase	Use their words and phrases in summarizing their response Confirm that you correctly understand their response Help your memory of what you're hearing in the interview

Aspects of the interview	Interviewer tips
Stay neutral and engaged	Be curious, not judgmental, of responses Show equal appreciation for "positive" and "negative" responses Comments of critiques and approval should cue you to ask about contributing factors to their opinion
Help them focus	Gently route tangents back to the purpose of the interview/question "I don't mean to cut you off, but we have questions left and I want to be sure we can finish on time" Remind the interviewee of the context / time / space / place of the interview topic Allow interviewees to explain topics important to them that are relevant to the interview topic, even if they do not seem to explicitly answer a question
Note-taking	Type as you are listening (unless it's distracting) If the interviewee says something quotable, write it and confirm the quotation by asking for corrections to what was heard Clean up notes immediately after the interview
Wrap up	"Those are all my questions!" Thank the interviewee Wish them a good rest of their day

Resource: Tips for Conducting Interviews
https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/ojp/forms-documents/Documents/Wilder_Program_Evaluation_11.pdf

Back to collecting data.

How to administer a survey

Now it is time to follow through on your thoughtful design and outreach planning to make sure your survey gathers the best insight possible.

Planning

Test your survey to:

1. Make sure the survey technology works
    a. Respondents can skip any question (unless you really need the question for survey functionality)
    b. Make sure any planned routing or skip logic works (for example, If Respondent answers "No" to Question 4, they bounce to Question 8)
    c. Make sure submitted surveys come in as you intend
    d. Check out how the data looks to make any final tweaks (for example, Microsoft Forms will put all your "Choose all that apply" or Multiple Response data in a single cell for each question and you may want to update the question type to make analysis easier); make sure you have the data you need about respondents for analysis (for example, be sure you have the data you need about demographics or engagement participation so you can look at patterns among subgroups)
    e. Test QR codes for survey access
2. Test how long the survey takes. This will help you plan for implementation during an event and/or let survey takers know how long they need to plan for completion.

Preparation

1. Prepare materials, depending on your mode of administration
    a. Print surveys for paper administration, ensuring layout looks ok
    b. Print flyers with QR code or other survey access instruction
    c. Pull together and clean up your email list
    d. Prepare survey invitation language (email, signage at event, etc.)
2. Ensure respondent materials are ready, such as
    a. Provide quiet or private space to complete surveys at an event
    b. Providing pens for paper surveys
    c. Provide a box for respondents to return paper surveys and keep their response anonymous and secure

Implementation

For surveys that you are fielding at an event, you will have the responses back right away. Make note of anything you observe about the administration so you can consider this in analysis. For example, if you note that a whole group got caught up in a discussion instead of doing the survey, that will be important to remember that perspective is missing in analysis. For any paper survey, you will need to do data entry (likely using an online survey tool to duplicate the paper surveys). If you do a survey during an event, a volunteer can begin entering them right away; keep the paper versions (or scan and save them as electronic documents) for future reference in case there is a question about accuracy.

If you have fielded an online survey, start with an invitation to complete the survey and encourage respondents to do that soon so their input can be included in the next stage of planning/implementation. Do regular reminders, such as:

- After a few days,
- After 1 week,
- At two weeks, announce that the survey will be closing in a day, and
- If response rates are not what you want, announce you are extending the deadline for 3 days.

Make note in reminders that you ARE hearing from folks but need to get all perspectives in. This provides some peer/social pressure to take the survey. Continue to remind folks of the larger purpose of the survey and how results will be used, as well as any incentive.

You will need to monitor response rate (rate = number of people who responded ÷ number of people invited).

Remember that different surveys will have different rates or consideration what's a "good" rate. A general community survey will likely have a low response rate (<15%), while you should expect a higher rate of response for participants at an event. If your response rate is lower than you expect, consider:

- Targeted outreach
    - Phone calls or personalized emails to targeted community members if you have that information
    - Asking trusted community leaders to encourage participation
    - Promoting the survey in additional community locations
- Increasing the incentive
    - Offering a lottery prize for all surveys submitted by X date
- Consider other modes of invitation or administration
    - See if community organizations (local businesses, cafes, service providers) can encourage participation through posting flyers and/or verbally encouraging folks to participate
    - Consider leaving paper surveys with community partners for them to offer, collect and return to you

Back to collecting data.

How to manage informal / participatory activities

Planning and Preparation
Make sure you have all the supplies you need (e.g. sticky dots, jars, marbles, video booth set up). Think through the number of participants you may expect to ensure you have enough supplies. Consider where the activity will be located to make sure it is highly visible and not in the way of other activities. Take pictures to record items like final tallies or graffiti walls before moving anything.

Think ahead to analysis. For example, perhaps you want to invite one group of stakeholders (e.g. business owners) to vote first and give them one color of dot or marble. Then, invite neighbors and give them another color. You will be able to differentiate answers by group and all can see emerging patterns at a glance.

Implementation
Ask someone to be available to help orient participants to the activity, answer questions and ensure it is going smoothly. While being available, also make sure to give participants some space and privacy for the activity. Track observations about participation that may help you in analysis (for example, maybe some kinds of attendees were more likely to participate or people often had to leave before finishing).

Back to collecting data.

How to analyze quantitative data

- Clean and organize
  - Keep your original datasets; do your clean up in a second copy
  - Check for absolute duplicates, erring on the side of keeping data
  - Review outliers (e.g. age = 120 years), erring on the side of keeping data
  - Make sure your data is "tagged" with information about the respondent, engagement event you're evaluating or other information that is relevant to understanding the context for people's answers
- Compare who responded to who participated and who you hoped would participate, note any significant stakeholder perspectives not present in your data
- Summarize the data for each questions (e.g. percent answering "agree," average score for quantitative answer choices)
- Look at subgroups of respondents (using pivot tables in Excel, filtering on your survey software, or looking at visual patterns in participatory data)
- Consider "practical significance": instead of worrying about the statistical significance of differences between subgroups, or differences in experiences across different workshops, consider

what differences feel substantial enough to make decisions on.

Resource: Quantitative analysis description (page 41)

Back to analyzing the data you collected.

How to analyze qualitative data

- Clean and organize
  - Make sure your data is "tagged" with information about the respondent, engagement event you're evaluating or other information that is relevant to understanding the context for people's answers
  - Make sure that "like" data is grouped together (e.g. are all answers to question #2 together in one column in Excel, or a single pile of paper, or single section of a Word document)
  - Make sure you are keeping one person's answers all together. For example, one person may have talked for five paragraphs about the same thing while everyone else talked for just one paragraph – those five paragraphs should be grouped as a single answer instead of five answers.
- Theme
  - Name what you are looking for to answer your evaluation questions (e.g. good experiences with virtual town hall and bad experiences with virtual town hall); you can use these to make some initial categories in which to look at data
  - Review all data, noting what seem to be possible themes or common answers in the data
  - Go back through the data to tag content relevant to those themes in all the answers
  - Re-read the data – did you miss any important patterns?
  - Consider the importance of outliers; perhaps only a few people said something, but it is a really important insight
  - Tips:
    - Your purpose is to answer your evaluation questions; you do not need to tag or code all of the material if it does not inform the evaluation questions
    - You should be systematic and able to verify your themes; if someone asked why something is a theme, can you provide enough quotes and examples from the data to justify to someone else that this is a theme?
- Look at subgroups – how do themes differ among subsets of the data (different kinds of stakeholders, different events, different participation levels)
- Summarize your themes, using words like "Most participants felt...", "A majority of participants

felt...", "A significant minority of participants felt...", or "A few participants felt...".

  - While counting up the number of mentions for a particular theme can help check your interpretation about how common a theme really is, remember this is qualitative data and should not be reported by the exact number of mentions.

Back to analyzing the data you collected.

How to host a participatory findings meeting

This step can be done in person or as an online meeting. If in person, you will set up one gallery area per evaluation question. If online, you will set up one breakout room per evaluation question.

Gallery set up for each room

- A large printout of evaluation question
- Printouts of analysis findings (e.g. summary frequencies from relevant survey questions, themes from analysis of relevant interview questions or participatory activities)
- Two pieces of flipchart paper: one labeled "Stood out" and the other labeled "Key takeaways"
- Sticky notes for participants in three colors: red/pink, blue and yellow
  - This can be done on a virtual whiteboard if online
- A facilitator from the evaluation team

Gallery walk implementation (15 minutes/room)

- Individual review and reflection (5 minutes): Participants use colored sticky notes to note their thoughts/reactions to the findings.
  - Pink/red = Where do you have questions? Where do we need to go deeper or clarify? What do we need to look into further?
  - Blue = What feels right? What aligns with your experiences? What made you feel validated?
  - Yellow = Draw an image that represents the findings statement.
- Small group discussion (10 minutes): Facilitator to take notes on flipchart papers
  - What stood out to you about these findings?
  - What are the key takeaways here?

Large group discussion (15-30 minutes)

- Draw: Using the paper on your table, draw a picture or images that represent the connections you are making between or from the findings. All participants at the table share their thoughts and listen to others while drawing. Stick figures welcome! (*optional* 10 min)
- Discuss:
  - What have you learned or what has been confirmed about the project through these findings?
  - What do you want to discuss further with your team or internally?
  - Which of these findings would you most want to share with a colleague, and what advice or conclusions would you add alongside it?
  - What do you want to make sure is captured in the final evaluation report?
  - What recommendations do you have?
- Close
  - Recap insights
  - Discuss when and how participants will hear about how this information will be used

Back to interpreting or making meaning of your analysis.

How to facilitate a findings meeting

Invite those implementing the engagement as well as targeted stakeholders you really wanted to participate to a meeting (virtual or in person). Consider compensation for those attending who are not there because of their job.

AGENDA

Introductions and opening (10 minutes)

- Please introduce your name, role, and county or organization, and tell us one thing you like or dislike about the current season (summer, fall, etc.).

Set context (5 minutes)

- Recap purpose of engagement, anticipated uses of these findings, and project evaluation questions
- Recap the design, data collection and analysis processes

Discuss and interpret the emerging findings (40 minutes)

- Present data analysis points after each evaluation question, suggest your idea of what this means as an answer to the question (15-20 minutes)
- Discuss (20 minutes)
  - What caught your attention?
  - What was surprising or not surprising?
  - What was unclear?
  - To what extent do these findings answer the evaluation questions in a meaningful way? What might be missing?
  - To what extent do the findings (and the process taken overall) reflect an equity

  - approach and lens to the work? How could we increase equity?
  - To what extent do our interpretations of the findings make sense within the context of your work or community? What context could you add to help interpret the findings?
  - What questions did the emerging findings raise for you?

[If people are hesitant to talk, you can have them pair up with someone at the table or in a breakout room to discuss their answers first, also allow them to process on their own a few minutes and/or share answers by chat.]

Next steps and close (5 minutes)

- Present next steps in engagement and how the evaluation results will be used
- What is a word, phrase, or image that describes how you're feeling about the project right now?

[Back to interpreting or making meaning of your analysis.]

Phase 4: Sharing

How to write a findings statement

While some audiences will want to see all of your data, most will want only the key points. Using findings statements is a great way to share evaluation results succinctly but powerfully. Findings statements communicate important takeaways, so the reader of a report understands what is important. They are often one or two sentences that summarize a theme from a dataset; they may also make a concrete recommendation based on the data. A reader should be able to read just the findings statements in a report and understand what they need to know from an evaluation. Good findings statements:

- Use active voice to be clear who or what is responsible for the change.
- Go beyond a data point to synthesize multiple forms of evidence and make deeper meaning of what data showed.
- Answer evaluation questions—or answer questions you didn't think to ask but that are important.
- Address the bigger picture at play, such as systems of oppression and how that affects results.

The process of writing findings statements depends on the project, the types of data, and other factors. However, here is the general process:

1. Review summaries from analysis of each type of data collection. It may also be helpful to review your map of which data answer which evaluation questions.
2. “Triangulate” across each method to see where data from multiple sources point to something similar.
3. For each theme, draft a findings statement that responds to evaluation questions and incorporates context from the data.
4. Share draft statements with stakeholders to add their insights.
5. Finalize findings statements based on input.

Back to reporting back to stakeholders.

How to use data to make decisions

By this stage, you’ve already done the work to analyze and interpret your data. Through that process, some ideas for decisions may have already emerged. If it’s still not clear, though, some simple reflection can go a long way. Ideally, this will happen collaboratively with your team and/or vested partners; you may also want to begin by reviewing your data, findings statements, and/or reports to ground yourself in the data.

Then, consider the following questions:

1. What stuck out from the findings?
2. What was surprising about the findings? Not surprising?
3. What were the key insights or learnings?
4. What should we do differently because of these findings? The same?

While only the last question gets at decision-making, the other questions help call to mind the experiences and learnings from the evaluation and position you to make decisions.

Back to deciding what actions to take based on findings.

How to communicate decisions about data

The table below shows a basic framework for how to simultaneously present evaluation findings and share decisions. First, provide a brief description of how you got input. This should include the methods you selected and information about who participated in the methods (e.g., number, important demographic characteristics). Then, put your findings in the “What we learned” column—you could use the findings statements that you created earlier. Then, for each finding, add in the “What we’re doing with that information” column the direct decision(s) you made and/or action(s) you’ll take because of this. Some findings may not align directly with a decision you can make or an action within your power, which is ok. For those, indicate what you *can* do, even if that’s sharing the input with someone else who has more power or collecting more data. What matters is that you are showing that you have understood the input and that you will do something with it.

How we got input: methods	Who we got input from
What we learned	**What we're doing with that information**

Back to communicating about your decisions.

How to reflect on your evaluation

Reflection can be very simple and, like most aspects of evaluation, is best done collaboratively and by taking into account a variety of perspectives. In a group, discuss your answers to the following reflection questions:

1. Where in our evaluation did we feel successful?
2. Where did we struggle or need more support?
3. What did we learn about conducting evaluation?
4. How can we improve our evaluation practice going forward?

Back to reflect on the process.

How to begin an evaluation

Return to the evaluation planning section of this document and follow the steps shown there!

Contact The Improve Group

The Improve Group is a worker-owned evaluation consulting cooperative. We provide evaluation, planning, and facilitation to support mission-driven organizations to effectively develop more resilient, equitable, and thriving communities. We see community engagement as critical and draw on our engagement skillset across projects. We work with public, nonprofit, and philanthropic clients across Minnesota, the U.S., and occasionally internationally. Over 24 years, we have sustained a healthy organization through learning, growing, and evolving while staying true to our values. Our transition to worker-ownership in 2023 aligned our business structure with our long-held values of participatory leadership.

We are experts in evaluation, planning, facilitation, and community engagement. Our evaluation skillset helps us work with clients in all types of projects to clarify what is most important to learn for deepening their impact. We learn new skills and insightful lessons in each project. Our organizational culture promotes sharing lessons learned to apply them in future projects. We regularly engage with the evaluation field to stay on the leading edge.

We are committed to equity. We aim to work in partnerships where we dare and inspire each other to be more equity focused. The principle of equity acknowledges existing injustice. Equity recognizes the structural factors, such as white supremacy, that have unfairly privileged some at the expense of people who experience inequity. We must work on intentional, thoughtful, and just remedies to ensure we do not perpetuate these harms. To us, equity means operating in ways within and outside our organization—from hiring new employees to planning an evaluation—that work for all the different people we may encounter. Equitable practices result in more accurate, complete data that accelerates clients' work to make the world a better place. See our equity statement here on our website**.**

Interested in working with us? Reach out to us at info@theimprovegroup.com and visit our website for information.

The Improve Group