

1d.TS1 Why do an evaluation?

Consider evaluation as a tool in the work - as a way to:

- Expand engagement through information sharing
- Reflect on and refine what is being done
- Celebrate and publicize accomplishments and successes

A group may evaluate its work for one or more of the following reasons:

- To document what was done
- To examine how well it was done
- To learn what difference the strategies and activities made
 - in the short term
 - in the long term
- To provide information to help decide what should be done in the future. For example, the results from an evaluation are often used to help a group decide
 - How funds should be distributed among various activities - depending on which ones seem to yield the most benefits or benefit the people you most care about
 - Whether or not the group should change what it is doing, depending on what seems to be working best
 - What kinds of new strategies or activities should be added to those already being done, because they are needed to take results to the next level
- To meet funder, partner, public accountability requirements

The above tips were adapted from *We Did It Ourselves: An Evaluation Guide Book*, (pages 2-3, page 173), Sierra Health Foundation, 2000.

In addition, groups that want to pay careful attention to privilege, power, oppression and racism may also choose to evaluate their work for the following reasons:

- To hold the group accountable to the constituency most affected by the changes being sought -- those whom the work is supposed to benefit

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- To understand unintended effects/perverse effects - to make sure that the strategies and activities of the group “do no harm”
- To uphold inclusiveness principles - sharing power by sharing all of the information available about what is intended and what really happens
- To allow people to judge for themselves the results of the work
- To share information with people who may be doing similar things so that they can avoid “reinventing the wheel”
- To inspire others
- To contribute to setting realistic expectations for anti-racism and inclusion work

Clarifying why an evaluation is being conducted and what information is expected to come from an evaluation are important first steps in designing an evaluation. The work to do this is valuable in and of itself. It provides an opportunity to review how the group’s work is expected to contribute toward long-term goals for community change.