

EVALUATION

Your organization exists to make the world a better place. The process of evaluation is learning whether you're succeeding in doing that.

Step 1 in your evaluation process is to be very clear about why your mission matters (for operating support applicants) or why your project matters (for project support applicants). Why should there be gender equity in athletics? Why should people know the history of the place they live? Why should kids experience the best music in the world? (Is there data or research that helps you build the answer to that "why"?)

Step 2 is to recognize that evaluation is about CHANGE. You have articulated your "why." Now think about the "what" – what are the changes that need to happen for things to be made better?

Ask yourself these questions – while you are in early program planning mode:

- Who will be changed (ie, what is your "target group" or groups)?
- What will be the nature of the change?
- What will you notice to help you know that the change has happened for that group of people? Specifically, what will change in terms of
 - Condition (black/white things like, "Didn't have any shelter, now do") and/or...
 - Skill and/or...
 - Knowledge and/or...
 - Behavior and/or....
 - Attitude and/or
- How many, or what %, of your target group will be changed?
- What method will you use to know that the change has happened for this group?

Step 3 is to build in the process for collecting observations from the very beginning.

Step 4 is to learn from these observations, and use what you learn to improve your program for next time.

FIVE TYPICAL EVALUATION ERRORS

- Not thinking up the evaluation goals and process of collecting information up front when you start to plan your program
- Starting with the program idea, not the issue, need or demand (ie, we say "Wouldn't it be great to create a tennis league!!" rather than starting with the "Why.")
- Equating evaluation with the procedure you're using to find things out, rather than the change in the target population
- Using the wrong method to find out what you need to learn
- Failing to identify what you've learned from past evaluations.