

# EVALUATING REFUGEE PROGRAMS



CENTRE FOR  
COMMUNITY  
BASED RESEARCH



EVALUATION  
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## HOW TO EVALUATE REFUGEE PROGRAMS VIDEO TRANSCRIPT



# How to Evaluate Refugee Programs

Community-based evaluation involves four main phases:

- 1) Laying the foundation
- 2) Evaluation planning
- 3) Information gathering and analysis, and
- 4) Acting on findings

## Laying the foundation

The purpose of this phase is to negotiate with stakeholders the goals that will guide and direct the following phases.

- Organize a stakeholder steering committee and clarify everyone's roles
- Consider the different assumptions, expectations, and requirements that each stakeholder might have, and how these might influence the evaluation process

First task of the committee:

- To determine the long-term goals of the evaluation, and the actions needed to achieve them. This is called a ***theory of change***.

## Evaluation planning

This phase involves building out the evaluation process. Here, the steering committee must:

- Form guiding questions to drive the evaluation
- Select and develop appropriate methods to collect information
- Create a plan for analyzing the gathered information

## Information gathering and analysis

In the third phase, the evaluation plan will guide the process of information gathering. When analyzing the feedback:

- Opportunities for reflection with the stakeholders are needed
- Identify patterns and trends
- Form interpretations about the feedback
- Create a summary of findings

## Acting on Findings

The final step is to share these findings with the broader community, in order to:

- Educate the public
- Initiate an active response

The stakeholder committee develops a dissemination strategy, and works towards sharing information in a way that is relevant and useful to groups that each stakeholder represents. Be creative in your dissemination methods! Examples of tools for sharing evaluation include:

- Written communications (e.g. reports and articles)
- Visual pieces (e.g. infographics and videos)
- Oral methods (e.g. community forums and storytelling)

Remember: The purpose of this phase is also to engage the greater community in discussing how these findings can be used to inspire positive change.

### Example

A non-profit agency runs a support group for mothers who came to Canada as refugees. The goals of the agency are to:

- Establish a safe, supportive place for these women to discuss the challenges of being newcomers and mothers
- Practice their English
- Build social networks
- Share strategies and coping techniques with one another

While some mothers participate regularly and show signs of positively adapting to their new lives, other women don't seem to benefit from the program, or have stopped attending the support group. Noticing the different ways that participants seem to respond to the program, the agency decides to evaluate it.

#### 1) Laying the Foundation:

- First, the agency forms a stakeholder steering committee. Representatives from groups who have contributed to or are affected by the program are invited to join the committee. These include mothers who are currently part of the program and past participants, agency staff who administer the program, program funders, and staff from other agencies who refer their clients to the program.
- The committee decides that the purpose of the evaluation is to determine what is and isn't working within the support group in order to make it a more effective resource for a greater number of mothers arriving in Canada as refugees.

#### 2) Evaluation Planning:

- The committee develops three guiding questions:
  - What are the strengths of the support group?
  - Do the agency goals align with the needs and priorities of mothers arriving in Canada as refugees?
  - In what ways can we change the goals or activities of the agency to improve outcomes for these mothers?
- After discussing the qualities of different evaluative methods, the committee chooses to use interviews and questionnaires to collect information.

#### 3) Information Gathering and Analysis:

- The committee circulates their questionnaires to stakeholder groups. Afterwards, they review the questionnaire responses, and identify patterns and major findings.

- Using this information, they create interview questions, which will be used to better understand the questionnaire responses. The committee proceeds to interview mothers who are currently a part of the group, mothers who stopped attending, staff members who refer clients to the group, and group facilitators.
- The committee then analyzes the interview findings together, and summarizes main outcomes from both the questionnaires and interviews
- With these findings, the committee can now answer their evaluation questions
  - They discover that one of the major **strengths** of the support group is its facilitation of English learning opportunities, which builds confidence for mother's seeking employment.
  - The committee also identifies a **gap** between the agency's goal to build social networks and the real needs of mothers, who desire meaningful long-term relationships

#### 4) Acting on Findings:

- The stakeholder committee is now responsible to share these learnings with the evaluation participants, their stakeholder groups, and the greater community.
  - They create summary posters for their staff, funding organizations, and referral agencies
  - They engage the broader community through presentations at community halls across the city
  - Finally, they task the agency to create a working group that will address the identified gaps

This agency has now completed a successful evaluation of its support group and is building its capacity to improve services!