

Participatory Evaluation

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What is participatory evaluation?

Often people may think of evaluation as an activity that occurs after a program has been completed. Evaluation is actually best when it is planned from the very beginning stages of program planning until the program's completion.

Participatory evaluation is an approach that involves many stakeholders such as: organizations, community members, funders, and program decision makers. The approach requires that the stakeholders play an active role from the beginning stages of program implementation and seeks their input and feedback on the program's evaluation process at multiple time points.

Stakeholders may participate in various activities, including the following:

- Identifying relevant questions.
- Planning the evaluation design.
- Selecting appropriate evaluation measures and methods of data collection.
- Gathering and analyzing the data.
- Reaching consensus regarding the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
- Disseminating results and creating an action plan to reassess program in the future.ⁱ

Pros and Cons of Participatory Evaluation

Prior to using participatory evaluation, it is important to consider possible pros and cons, as outlined in the table below. It may be a useful approach for some projects and not others based on available funding, resources, timeline, relationships and commitment.

Pros	Cons
Builds knowledge, skills, and relationships among community members/stakeholders.	Time consuming because the process often involves training stakeholders.
The needs of the community are addressed with the inclusion of local knowledge.	Limited staff availability or projects conducted in rural areas may require a more flexible plan than what was originally conceived.
Responsibility is shared between evaluator(s) and stakeholders.	Community support for evaluation may be difficult to obtain in a timely manner.

See Also: the [Community Tool Box](#), from the Workgroup for community health and development at the University of Kansas. The Community Tool Box is a free, online resource for anyone who is interested in working within communities to improve health and create social change.

ⁱ Community based public health policy & practice (2002). Participatory Evaluation: What is it? Why do it? What are the challenges? Retrieved from the internet on December 16, 2013 from http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/Evaluation.pdf