IDEAS HUB WORKSHEET

Beginning Evaluation with a Data Justice Lens

The best time to rethink an evaluation process is at the beginning. This is the ideal moment to identify specifically why you are collecting information, tweak your line of questioning to avoid bias, and to trim out unnecessary data collection by following data justice principles.

Here are 8 steps to start off your evaluation journey:

Step 1: Identify your "why" statement.

Identify how the data you plan to collect will be useful to both individuals and communities, the organization, and how it will be part of a specific utilization plan.

Step 2: Limit the size and scope of your evaluation process.

Recognize that data has financial and human costs. Do not collect data that do not serve participants and their communities (for example, collecting info 'just in case'). After trimming down your evaluation, what is the crucial data that you want to collect?

Step 3: Have sensitivity in evaluation design, questions, and purpose.

Review materials for biases and potential to cause harm. Elevate diverse voices and perspectives. Prioritize accessibility and inclusion. Prioritize evaluation that contributes to program improvement, equity, access, and organizational learning. What considerations have been made to avoid biases and the potential to cause harm?

Step 4: Have a plan to treat all collected data with care.

What is your plan to securely and privately store collected data?

Step 5: Share the evaluation engagement expectations with participants.

At the start of your time together, give potential participants the option to opt-out without threat of losing funding or other support/activities.

Step 6: Cross-check collected data with partners and participants.

After collection, cross-check narratives and information about communities and individuals; these should not be fabricated or assumed. What is your plan to cross-check collected data?

Step 7: Consider the balance of power in situations in which data is shared.

Consider the position of the participant as you are requesting and collecting data. Where might the participant feel pressure to answer or submit particular information due to systemic power relationships and hierarchies? List observations here, and adjust accordingly.

Step 8: Make a plan to give data back to the community.

The data you collect from the community should eventually be returned to them as a usable tool, potentially advocacy. What is your plan to format and return the data for their use?