

Reaching People with Disabilities through Healthy Communities

Phase Five – Evaluation

Evaluation Activities and Tips

[Karma Harris] Rhonda your specific role and vantage point as the State's Expert Advisor, talk to us a little bit about your perspective with completing some of the activities in your state expert advisor role.

[Rhonda Rosenberg] Sure. So, like yourself Karma, I really consider myself to have amateur evaluation experience. So when it, when I came on board, I was really pleased to find that the evaluation tools that were provided to both the State Expert Advisors and the community included really detailed directions and specific definitions, an example of how to document these policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes. So, it really made it fairly easy to update and track all of our activities. And like Yochai mentioned, these reoccurring online progress report really kept the communities, and myself, on track with meeting our milestones.

So, this let our communities re-evaluate their action plans. Really pretty much frequently, more frequently than they would normally do, maybe, and really revise their action plans and rethink their work when it when it was necessary.

[Karma Harris] Now what was your experience like with your two communities and their activities?

[Rhonda Rosenberg] To be honest with you, we were really fortunate that both of our communities already had extensive experience with implementing PSE change and evaluation.

It really also helped that the evaluation team in this project was frequently reviewing and giving feedback on those PSE spreadsheets. So, my technical assistance activities were really rather limited during this phase. Most of my assistance activities really revolved around working with my communities, and best how to calculate the reach of specific projects in their action plan, and really ensuring that policies were written and adopted that would support the systems changes or environmental changes that had taken place, so that we could really be sure that sustainability was going to happen.

And again, as Yochai mentioned, another critical piece where I provided technical assistance was really working with my community, so that we could record any barriers or facilitators as they were working on the changes so we would have best practices recorded to reference in the future, if we wanted to work on accelerated PSE changes again.

[Karma Harris] So, Rhonda, thinking about all that, thinking about what you did as a State Expert, and hearing a little bit more about what your communities did, and how you kind of worked with them, I

know one of the questions I'm asking through each of these podcast segments is, "What advice would you give to other states or communities who are listening to this about conducting this type of healthy community evaluation activities?" So, in other words, I know we've talked a little bit about what we've done, but is there any other advice you would give to our listeners that might be helpful to them?

[Rhonda Rosenberg] Sure. I'm reiterating somewhat some of the things that you and Yochai have already mentioned, but I did want to re-state, that remember, what does not get measured does not get accomplished.

So be mindful when you design your evaluation. You really want to ensure that something that's considered an incidental activity can be captured. Sometimes these really small-scale activities can really have a great impact, and with planning and collaboration your evaluation activities can truly be designed in a cost and time efficient way. Again, I can't stress enough that information from key informant interviews should be incorporated at every stage in the process from planning and implementation to evaluation.

It's really important that you have a clear, concise, well thought-out action and evaluation plan. But, keep in mind that you need to keep it flexible, as well, as you get your feedback from your evaluation team, or local trends are happening, or your local needs change or your funding opportunity changes. You may find that you need to kind of re-scope that work in your action plan, and that's okay as long as you remain flexible.

And timing is everything. So really take a look at when your municipality, or the organization that you're working with, are scheduled to review and adopt any policy changes or ordinances. You really will achieve greater success if you propose and measure change when policies and ordinances are already going to be scheduled to be reviewed.

[Karma Harris] Yochai, in thinking about everything that Rhonda just said, what final advice would you have for state and community listeners who might be trying to embark upon inclusive healthy communities work, if you had just a final pep talk, what would you say?

[Yochai Einsenberg]

Sure. Thanks, Karma. So yes, I think Rhonda had some great points in terms of what you could follow. I guess restate what I said earlier: making this a collaborative effort and actually starting out as early as possible, so you don't want to have your project done, or midway through, and then say, "Oh, you know, we should evaluate this, we should evaluate that." You really want to start off early, start off before you implement it, as you're thinking about implementing it, involving your partners, involving those local stakeholders, bringing it to the local coalition that you formed, to make sure that the evaluation is relevant and to make sure that people with disabilities are involved too, providing local feedback and ideas.

This is some complex stuff, and you know we're still kind of working out some of the science for it, in terms of understanding how we measure and understand the impact of the PSE changes. So, you're

getting a sense for how different PSEs will affect different populations in different ways and setting up that evaluation in the beginning can help make sure that you're getting that information appropriately, and that your impact is actually relevant for the local stakeholders.

And so, I think, you know, in terms of resources and funding, obviously, a lot of times there isn't those for evaluation, so you know, you do what you can, right? And I think in this case, there's some very valuable resources developed by NCHPAD and NACDD that can be used in local communities. So, the CHII was talked about, as well as some other tables and tools, and questions that can be replicated to help in terms of monitoring and evaluation overall.

So, you know, look to, look to, those resources. Look to those national centers that, that's, there. That's their role, is to help be that resource and technical assistance center for local implementation. So, seek those out. They're there, and they're there to help in terms of your evaluation, and the important piece that that plays in your project implementation.

[Karma Harris] Great, Yochai. That's really good advice. The only thing I'd like to add too is really encouraging those that might be sitting at the state level, to reach out to your state Disability and Health program if you don't currently work in that particular program.

And also, for our communities to reach out to their state Disability and Health program, if they have one. Because what we've learned is that those folks are really good resources on the Disability and Health side, but also are really good at providing state-based resources, and serving as a state liaison, sometimes between these national groups and the local-level work. So, I think that's important to consider.