Drive Evaluation studio

"Off the Beaten Path" Methods to Evaluate Efforts, Improve Programs, and Inform Decision Making

Hartford Foundation for Public Giving - Nonprofit Support Program

OVERVIEW DECK

To Conduct Evaluation

Specify learning and evaluation question(s)

Develop an evaluation design

Collect and analyze data

Summarize, share, and use findings

Data Collection Methods

Interviews

One-on-one discussions with participants to understand their experiences and perspectives.

Focus groups

Facilitated discussions with a small group of participants to uncover insights.

Observations

Watching participants to understand behaviors or characteristics of a setting.

Record review aka document analysis

Reviewing existing internal or external documents, records, and artifacts to gather context.

Surveys

A series of structured questions, often with discrete choices

Considerations Before Data Collection

- Who will you collect data about?
- How will you use the information?
- How do we make this as easy as possible for the participants?
- What instruments do you need?
- Are there any existing or pre-tested instruments that make sense here?

"Off the Beaten Path" (Nontraditional) Methods

PhotoVoice

- Participants take photos documenting their experiences or community changes
- Often paired with written narratives or group discussions
- Great for youth programs, community development, or health initiatives

e.g., Program participants were asked to photograph "places in our community that make me feel healthy/supported"

PhotoVoice

1 | Provide participants with cameras (phones work well)

2 | Give specific prompts like "Show us your biggest challenge/success" or "Capture something that still needs to change in our community"

3 | Hold group sessions where photographers share their images and stories

4 | Document both images and narratives systematically

5 | Create exhibitions or digital galleries

(Interactive) Community Boards

- Physical or digital board where people post thoughts and feedback
- Can use prompts (e.g., "I used to... Now I....")
- Use color as an organizer
- Can be displayed permanently and updated regularly

(Interactive) Community Boards

Physical Setup:

Large boards in accessible locations

Clear sections for different topics/ questions

Provide colorful post-its or cards, markers, and stickers to vote

Regular photography to document changes

Digital Options:

Padlet or Miro for virtual boards

Include comment sections and voting features

Social media walls with specific hashtags

QR codes linking to feedback forms

Prompt Examples

"Before our program _____ / After our program _____"

"I dream that our community will _____"

"The biggest change I've seen is _____"

"One thing I learned is _____"

Community Journey Maps

- Large visual timelines where community members plot their previous or planned experiences
- Good for developing a shared and representative history
- Can build empathy for people's experiences
- Help track collective progress and challenges over time and can inform future efforts
- Can be displayed permanently and updated regularly

Community Journey Maps

Setup Process:

Create large timeline on wall/paper

Mark key program milestones

Use different colors for different types of change or different experiences

Include space for both challenges and successes

Elements to Include:

Key events/interventions

Successes

Challenges - current and overcome

Future goals

Personal growth moments

Emotions

Relationship changes

Ideas and recommendations

Story Circles

- Small group sessions where participants share personal stories about impact
- Stories are themed for patterns
- More intimate than traditional focus groups
- Great for capturing qualitative data and building community
- Can be one-off or ongoing

Story Circles

Structure:

6-8 Participants per circle

Each person gets equal time (5-7 mins)

No interrupting during sharing, no advice giivng

Optional: Recording or note-taking

Follow-up reflection round

Example Prompts:

"Share a moment when you felt things changing"

"Tell us about a challenge you overcame"

"Tell us about the best moment of your experience"

"What has surprised you the most?"

Video Diaries

- Participants record short regular updates about their journey
- Can be individual or group recordings
- Especially powerful for long-term programs
- Great for sharing at events or with funders

Video Diaries

Implementation:

Provide simple recording guidelines

If appropriate, set recording schedule (e.g., monthly)

Offer prompt questions

Create safe stoage system

Optional: Editing into impact stories

Format Ideas:

Selfie video

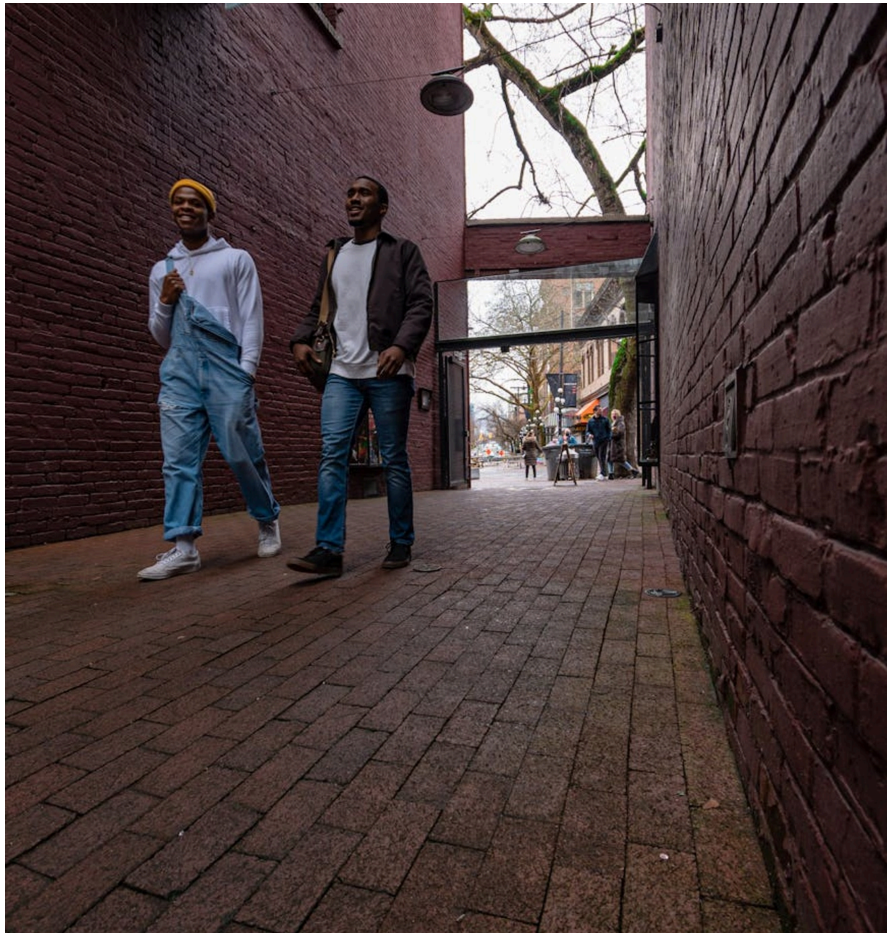
Interview style with peer

"Day-in-the-life" documentation

Before/after comparison of experience or task

Walking Interviews

- Conduct interviews while walking through the community or a specific location
- Participants point out physical changes, important locations, or key spots
- Record observations about impact
- Great for place-based initiatives



Walking Interviews

Planning:

The participant chooses the route & leads the walk

Note points of interest and stops (document the route with photos, video, or notes)

Consider weather and accessibility

Discussion Topics:

Physical changes observed

Memory spots

Struggles & future improvement areas

Gathering spaces

Program impact locations

Participatory Budgeting

- Community members vote with tokens/stickers on priorities
- Visual tracking of resource allocation
- Shows what people value most
- Helps inform future programming

Participatory Budgeting

Setup:

Visual display of budget categories

Voting tokens/stickers for participants

Clear explanation of process

Documentation method

Process Steps:

Present budget options visually

Provide equal voting power to all

Allow discussion time

Conduct voting rounds

Display results transparently

Document decision rationale

Tips For All Methods

- Make participation voluntary
- Think about privacy/consent
- Provide clear instructions
- Consider accessibility needs
- Work toward community ownership
- Use resources efficiently
- Ensure consistent documentation
- Plan for data analysis

Implementation

Start small

Pilot with one method

Get feedback

Adjust as needed

Scale gradually

Build capacity

Train staff/volunteers

Create simple guides

Document process

Share learning

Share results

Create exhibitions

Share on social media

Include in reports

Present to stakeholders

What is an Infographic?

An infographic is a visual representation of information or data. It presents complex information in a clear, concise, and visually appealing way, making it easier for the audience to understand and retain the key points.

Creating Effective Nonprofit Infographics

What Are Infographics?

Visual representations that combine:

- Graphics and images
- Data visualization
- Text
- Icons and symbols

Why They Matter

- Capture attention quickly
- Make complex issues clear
- Increase social sharing
- Show impact visually

Recommended Tools

Beginner	Intermediate	Professional
Canva	Adobe Express	Adobe Creative Suite
Piktochart	Tableau Public	Flourish
(Free for nonprofits)	(Great for data viz)	(Advanced features)

The best infographics tell a story that resonates with your audience while advancing your mission

Steps to Create an Infographic

Gather Information About the Topic

Collect, aggregate, and analyze your data.

Create a Hierarchy & Structure

Organize your content into sections or key points. **Understand the key points and main messages you want to convey.**

Select a Tool & a Layout

Tools like Canva, Piktochart, Adobe Illustrator, Lucidchart, and even PowerPoint can provide good templates. Pick a layout that works for your data. Remember most infographics include headings, icons, charts, and (a little) text.

Design with Simplicity

Structure the information in a logical and easy-to-follow manner. Arrange the content, visuals, and data in a way that guides the viewer through the key points. Use consistent fonts, colors, and shapes. Include white space.

Add Visual Elements & Compelling Text

Incorporate icons, charts, and illustrations. Then write concise and informative text to accompany the visuals. Use clear and compelling language to explain the information and highlight the main takeaways.

Review and Refine

Proofread the infographic, ensure the information is accurate, and make any necessary adjustments to the design and layout to enhance effectiveness. Have others review it to ensure it makes sense and the flow seems reasonable to them.

Reflection Using Evaluation Findings

"Now that we know _____, we will do _____."

- **Questions to ask:**

  What am I seeing that I already knew?

  What is something new I learned?

  What are some possible explanations for what I'm seeing?

  What could/should we do differently as a result?

- **Possible steps to take:**

  Create a document of key findings; consider variations by stakeholder group

  Share document(s) with stakeholders and have a sensemaking and action-oriented brainstorming discussion (strategize and plan)

  Try a new strategy and then re-examine (measure and monitor)

Consider natural opportunities for communicating findings such as in regular meetings, events, and annual reports.

Evaluation Mini-Series Components

1. Attend Session 1
2. Complete organizational homework
3. Attend Session 2
4. Schedule 1:1 consultation

Method assessment resource available online

Thank you!

Elena Tamanas Ragusa, Psy.D.
Drive Evaluation Studio

elena@driveevaluation.com

856.869.3382

www.driveevaluation.com