

RECRUITING EVALUATORS

Most community-change efforts will benefit from an outside evaluator to document the lessons and stories that arise from the group's work. Evaluators help group members reflect on and disseminate the information they gather, and by doing so, provide valuable feedback to inform future leadership-development work. Any evaluators you hire should be truly independent. That means they should not be employees of the lead agency on a project. Independent evaluators should be well versed in community-based research or part of another research and evaluation organization. They should exhibit a strong connection to the lead agency and as well to the community, though this connection can be the result of other community-change efforts. Evaluators don't necessarily need a PhD to be effective in a community; however, they must be flexible, open minded, able to observe and to give candid feedback.

Every social-change effort can conduct some type of evaluation. If your budget won't stretch to cover outside evaluation, don't worry; self-evaluation can be a powerful part of any project. If members of your team will be your evaluators, whoever leads that effort should be able to see the work with a measure of objectivity.

Evaluators who work on efforts that emphasize youth-adult partnerships, collective leadership, and social justice should be...

- Eager to partner with young adults in the development, implementation, and reporting of the evaluation process;
- Interested, open, and capable of learning new skills and approaches to evaluation;
- Flexible, respectful of others, and effective in establishing trust and rapport with a network of evaluators and a group of leadership fellows;
- A self-starter who can initiate and follow through on the project in a timely manner;
- Excited about being part of a community of learners and aware that all members have something of worth to contribute to the group;
- Comfortable giving feedback to the organizing team in a timely and effective manner; and
- Receptive to feedback themselves and willing to adapt their approach to the needs of the community, the team, and the lead agency.

Evaluators must also have a skill set that includes...

- A philosophy of evaluation. They must be able to make the evaluative experience a dynamic and learning process that supports decision-making. They must also be willing to be co-learners and teachers and facilitators for the work of the group.
- Flexibility for fieldwork. They must be open to participatory and other alternative methodologies of collecting evaluative data.
- Cultural responsiveness. They should use a culturally responsive and sensitive evaluation process and ensure that all voices are heard during this process.
- Writing skills. They should write clearly and have the capacity to write for different audiences (including different languages) in a variety of formats.
- Communication skills. They should exhibit strong communication skills and be able to relay complicated information and concepts in an easy-to-understand manner. They also should have strong listening skills and be skilled observers of nuance and dynamics.

- **Assessment skills.** They should have the knowledge and the skill to collect quantitative and qualitative local data, and analyze the information, and present it in varying formats for varying audiences. Evaluators should also be able to develop data-collection instruments and ensure the reliability and maintenance of data quality and integrity.
- **Experience.** They should have previous evaluation experience and understand the potential of evaluation as an empowering leadership tool that integrates learning with doing.

For a more complete treatment of evaluation, including activities and tips to use during the evaluation process, see Section 7 of this tool kit – **Keeping Healthy: Strategies to Sustain Your Group.**

ISSUES INVOLVED WITH FAMILY MEMBERS ON TEAMS

Community-change work builds on existing relationships and opens avenues to new ones. You will be recruiting long-time friends to get involved and reaching out to those who have never crossed your path. Family members can be a great source of new people who not only have strong personal connections with those already on your team but may also have strong shared values to bring to your work.

Here are some tips to keep in mind when you're recruiting and working with family members on teams:

- Family involvement can help boost participation in your group. For instance, to attend meetings, older youth may need to bring younger relatives in their care. Those younger members can turn out to be active participants.
- Parents and young people who are involved in the program together can help support and encourage one another's participation.
- Both parents and young people need to give one another space to speak their minds, be independent, and be themselves; however, it's often difficult to step out of family roles. Be aware of these dynamics. Perhaps adults are accustomed to greater degrees of power or control; perhaps young people are accustomed to obeying without question. In a collective leadership context, both partners need to step back (or forward!) to allow for equal participation.
- Relationship-building activities and youth-adult partnership activities can help family members move beyond their normal patterns of interaction – to move out of traditional family roles – and acknowledge everyone's gifts and strengths. In your group's work, incorporate activities that invite young people and adults to listen and learn from one another and activities that prompt family members to communicate and work together in new ways. The activities in **Section 2, Youth-Adult Partnership Skills**, can help you do this.