Participatory Evaluation in a Remote Environment

Elizabeth DiLuzio
What is Remote Participatory Evaluation?

Participatory evaluation is a way to meaningfully include stakeholders in the questioning of their environment; in the identification of challenges, issues, and patterns; and the generation of collective action based on their findings… while engaging through video conferencing, email, chat, and other virtual collaboration platforms.
What is Participatory Evaluation?

“on”

Information Extraction
Evaluator is in the driver’s seat of the evaluation plan and makes all of the decisions, community provides the data.

Relationship between evaluator and community: “On”
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“for”

Consultation
Evaluator does all of the work and makes most if not all of the decisions, community provides the data and helps to identify the issues and research questions.

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“with”
Cooperation
Evaluator works with the community to determine priorities and to create an evaluation plan. Evaluator is responsible for leading the process.

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“with/by”

Co-Learning
Evaluator and community share their knowledge and skills, both groups work together to create and implement the evaluation plan.

Relationship between evaluator and community: “With/By”
What is Participatory Evaluation?

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- **Information Extraction**
  - Evaluator is in the driver's seat of the evaluation plan and makes all of the decisions, community provides the data.
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- **Consultation**
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**“with”**
- **Cooperation**
  - Evaluator works with the community to determine priorities and to create an evaluation plan. Evaluator is responsible for leading the process.
  - Relationship between evaluator and community: “With”

**“with/by”**
- **Co-Learning**
  - Evaluator and community share their knowledge and skills, both groups work together to create and implement the evaluation plan.
  - Relationship between evaluator and community: “With/By”

**“by”**
- **Self Mobilization**
  - Community is in the driver’s seat of their own evaluation plan and makes all of the decisions, evaluator is a resource for knowledge and skills along the way.
  - Relationship between the evaluator and community: “By”

Adapted from Harris (2017) and Burns, Cooke, & Schweidler (2011)
Cultivating a Participatory Mindset

Tips from *Why am I Always Being Researched?* by Chicago Beyond

- Design research to serve the community purpose
- Refuse to participate in research that perpetuates the researcher as “brains” and the community as “brawn” stereotype
- Insist that the discussions about the community happen with the community
- Gain consent through transparency
- Learn what the organization wants to learn, and why
- Shape research so producing value for the community is central
Cultivating a Participatory Mindset

Tips from **Liberating Structures**

- Include and Unleash Everyone
- Practice Deep Respect for People and Local Solutions
- Build Trust As You Go
- Emphasize Possibilities: Believe Before You See
- Engage In Seriously-Playful Curiosity
- Never Start Without Clear Purpose(s)
Why engage in Participatory Evaluation Remotely?

- Can increase participation
  - Eliminates the barrier of travel
  - Reduces the barrier of time
  - Participation can be asynchronous

- Can create a safer environment
  - Allows stakeholders to participate in a setting that is comfortable to them
  - Individuals can choose to not be seen
Factors to Consider When Choosing a Remote Engagement

- Technological challenges
  - Skill
  - Access
  - Comfort

- Traditional values of the stakeholder groups
  - Value communing
  - Value breaking bread together
The Evaluation Cycle

Today, we will consider the evaluation cycle to consist of 4 phases:

1. Ideation + Design
2. Data Collection
3. Data Analysis
4. Action Planning

By intentionally incorporating participatory methods into each phase, we can grow towards a more participatory evaluation.
Phase 1: Ideation + Design
Why incorporate participatory methods in the Ideation + Design phase?

- Better alignment with critical issues faced by the community/program
- Increased acceptance of the project
- Increased motivation to be involved in subsequent stages of the evaluation
Ideation + Design

Ways to include stakeholders remotely:

- Locate the people who should be participating in the evaluation
- Help the group get to know each other and connect on common ground
- Clarify how elements of a program are related to the bigger picture
- Clarify the purpose and importance of the evaluation
- Identify the evaluation questions
Phase 2: Data Collection
Why incorporate participatory methods in the Data Collection phase?

- Enhanced recruitment and retention of data providers
- Increased reliability of data collection tools and results
- Increased ability to properly address sensitive issues
Data Collection

Ways to include stakeholders remotely:

● Lean on the untraditional evaluation approach to collect data from stakeholders untraditionally

● Train stakeholders to administer surveys

● Be sure to include synchronous and asynchronous data collection methods so that more and more diverse people can be involved
Data Analysis
Why incorporate participatory methods in the Data Analysis phase?

- Increased validation of results
- Increased accuracy of the interpretation of the results
- Enhanced ability to translate the results into appropriate action
Data Analysis

Ways to include stakeholders remotely:

- Include synchronous and asynchronous methods of analysis and reflection
- If hosting a live event, share the data to be analyzed ahead of time
- Use only one collaboration platform per meeting
Action Planning
Why incorporate participatory methods in the Action Planning phase?

- Increased ability to sensitively report on results
- Increased likelihood of sustainable and desirable change
Action Planning

How to incorporate stakeholders remotely:

● Facilitate the generation of actionable ideas

● Foster strategic planning

● Encourage reflection on progress to date and deciding what adjustments are needed
Resources

- **Participatory Evaluation: Theories + Methods for Remote Work** (quick guide)
- **AEA365** (a blog-a-day for evaluators), search for keyword “participatory”
  - **Level Up: Growing Your Approach to Participatory Evaluation** (AEA365 blog)
  - **Where Do I Begin?: Using Best Practices in Culture Change to Incorporate Participatory Evaluation Into Your Work** (AEA365 blog)
- **Liberating Structures**
Resources

- Why am I Always Being Researched? (Chicago Beyond)
- Designing Participatory Meetings and Brownbags (USAID)
- Stakeholder Engagement and the Work of SEI: An Empirical Study
Questions?
Contact Information

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