WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN EVALUATIONS

MESI Conference, 3.6.2013
AGENDA

Tips from colleagues
Ice-Breaker
Why attending to the specific and unique needs of youth matters
The 4 simples rules of leadership
Youth Participatory Evaluation
Nuances of engaging youth in crisis
An evaluator’s experience
Questions
So what/Now what?
TIPS FROM COLLEAGUES

Share tips, strategies & questions at:

ICE BREAKER
ATTENDING TO YOUTH’S UNIQUE NEEDS
YOUTH PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION
YOUTH PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

Participatory Evaluation (PE) serves the same purposes as all evaluations.

The word ‘participatory’ adds the dynamic that trained evaluators are working in partnership with non-trained evaluation stakeholders.
YOUTH PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

- Believed knowledge is a **constructed phenomenon**.

- Youth have **unique** ways of constructing knowledge.
Two streams of PE are Practical Participatory Evaluation (P-PE) and Transformative Participatory Evaluation (T-PE).

In their purest forms:

- P-PE is utilization-oriented and focused on problem solving
- T-PE is empowerment-oriented with a democratic and emancipatory focus
- But in reality, there is a continuum
In additional to the traditional challenges, youth-led evaluation also requires:

- helping youth acquire the requisite knowledge and skills to engage in the evaluation
- collaborative identification of critical issues, agencies, or institutions
- time for youth and adults co-planning and conducting research projects
- youth working in intergenerational teams with shared power

Others?

Bottom line: More time and money
BENEFITS FOR EVALUATION

Youth are best situated to collect data from other youth.

Youth participation in research has demonstrated the ability to bring issues and concerns to the attention of adults and/or outsiders questions, information and perspective that would have been otherwise unseen or unexplored.

Youth voice is increasingly recognized as an important component of the broader struggles for social justice.
The growing field of Positive Youth Development (PYD) is based on the belief that all youth possess the latent resources for positive development. PYD claims that it is critical for youth to have opportunities for leadership, skill building, and sustained youth/adult partnerships.

Sabo (2004, pg. 10) summarizes the range of benefits that youth might be able to expect when participating in the PE process:

- social competencies
- civic competencies
- self-confidence
- social capital
- identity exploration
Young people need to be informed about the rights and responsibilities involved in "human subjects" research both as subjects and/or evaluators.
HELPFUL THEORIES & FRAMEWORKS
• Systems thinking and complexity theory provides a perspective that emphasizes the patterns of interrelationships between parts and the whole rather than the parts in isolation (Trochim et al. 2006; Parsons 2007; Hargreaves and Parsons 2009).
WICKED PROBLEMS

Wicked problems:

1. are complex and serious
2. are a challenge to define- different stakeholders have different truths because they see it from different perspectives
3. have interdependent causes and influences
4. can’t be solved with simple solutions
5. are not the responsibility of any one organization
6. require collaboration across systems, cultural norms, policies, etc. (Briggs, 2007)
## Systems Inquiry Framework

Simple inquiry framework that allows the researcher to uncover complex dynamics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System Concept</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boundaries</td>
<td>Boundaries determine who or what will benefit from a particular intervention and are ultimately about values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>Different people within the system often pose issues of competing and conflicting goals, making divergent but equally plausible interpretations of an issue likely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-relationships</td>
<td>Relationships are defined as the connections that occur within and across system levels and that change in unpredictable ways over time.</td>
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TIPS FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH
TIPS

1. Understand nature of existing youth/adult relationships in the environment they are

2. Articulate in youth friendly language the purpose, responsibility, interest, motivation and commitment to project

3. Who will you work with: What does that quiet one have to say?

4. Obtain buy-in to increase and create consistent access

5. Integrate opportunities to have immediate impact on project when has a bigger and longer term scope

6. Creative strategies such as photo, voice, and video can transcend boundaries created by language, literacy, culture, etc.
NUANCES OF ENGAGING YOUTH IN CRISIS
1. Youth as service recipients — need to address potential power dynamic and impact on how they engage and participate.

2. Youth in crisis creates logistically participation challenges — anything can happen and sound like a good idea in that moment. You want to be clear as to what “in crisis” means.

3. You are receiving a gift - the opportunity to learn more than others would be asked to share.

4. If training is required and/or significant amount of time commitment — consider incentives and/or payment for participation (opportunity to address basic needs).

5. Spend time learning more about participatory evaluation models.
AN EVALUATORS’S EXPERIENCE
TWO EXAMPLES

Search Institute’s Big Tent Conference

Otto Bremer Foundation’s Youth Homeless Initiative
BIGTENT CONFERENCE
The Call to Action

"We believe the world is better when...
...youth have a voice,
...people lead and live with love and respect,
...and we work together toward a common vision.

Therefore, we must...
...unite to engage in intergenerational, shared leadership;
...boldly build bridges across differences;
...abolish violence and bullying, and invest ourselves in growing and learning — in mind, body, and spirit."
OBF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS INITIATIVE

Challenges

The identification and implementation of best practice models or effective practices as yielded limited results.

We need new ways to understand the interrelated causes of homelessness and strategies for improving outcomes for young people experiencing homelessness.

Successful solutions do not lie within individual organizations but within collaborations across systems. Little is known about how evaluation can help organizations do this well.
PRINCIPLES-FOCUSED DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION

- harm reduction
- trusting relationships
- positive youth development
- trauma-informed care
- non-judgmental
- journey-oriented
- strengths/assets based
- collaborative
- holistic
RESEARCH DESIGN

**DEFINE AND DESIGN**

- Develop research questions
- Design data collection protocols with individual & systems level questions
- Select cases for success, maximum variability, and systems perspective

**COLLECT, PREPARE & ANALYZE**

- Conduct key informant interviews
- Conduct case studies #1 through #14
- Write individual case reports #1 through #14

**CONCLUDE AND TEST**

- Write up systems case report
- Draw cross-case conclusions using grounded theory and systems inquiry questions
- Write case study report
- Reality test
- Revise case study report
“We are asking your permission to tape record your interview. The tape will be used to be sure that we get your story in your own words and don’t miss anything important. The tape recording will be used to write your story with direct quotes from you. You will have a chance to read your interview write-up and make changes to be sure it is accurate and says what you want to say. You will approve your story. The full report may include quotes from your files, agency staff, or others who know you. You will not be able to change those quotes but you will have the opportunity to comment on them.”
WHAT I’VE LEARNED
PATIENCE

Success

what people think it looks like

Success

what it really looks like
BOUNDARIES

What will/won’t you do?
What can/can’t you do?
Friendly but not friends
Deep listening but not a counselor
This can be confusing for you and for them.
QUESTIONS? OBSERVATIONS?
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?
SHARE TIPS, STRATEGIES & QUESTIONS

RESOURCES


http://fyi.uwex.edu/youthadultpartnership/

http://www.actforyouth.net/resources/n/n_yap-eval-guide.pdf

www.youthandcommunity.org