Practical Strategies for Culturally Competent Evaluation

EVALUATION GUIDE

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Acknowledgments

This guide was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in a collaborative effort between the Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention's Applied Research and Evaluation Branch and the Division of Environmental Hazards and Health Effects' Air Pollution and Respiratory Health Branch, National Asthma Control Program.

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PURPOSE OF THIS EVALUATION GUIDE

CDC provides its funded programs with a wide range of evaluation resources and guides. State health departments, tribal organizations, communities, and partners working in a variety of public health areas may also find these tools helpful. The resources provide guidance on evaluation approaches and methods, relevant examples, and additional resources. The guides are intended to aid in skill building on a wide range of evaluation topics.

Practical Strategies for Culturally Competent Evaluation is designed to complement the other evaluation resources offered by the Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention (DHDSP) and the National Asthma Control Program (NACP) in the Division of Environmental Hazards and Health Effects.

INTRODUCTION

If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.

—Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa

CULTURAL COMPETENCE IS...

"...a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables effective work in cross-cultural situations."[1]

Purpose

CDC's NACP and DHDSP developed this guide as an introduction and resource for state partners to use to promote cultural competence in the evaluation of public health programs and initiatives. Designed for program staff and evaluators, this guide highlights the prominent role of culture in our work. It provides important strategies for approaching an evaluation with a critical cultural lens to ensure that evaluation efforts have cultural relevance and generate meaningful findings that stakeholders—individuals who are invested in the program or potentially affected by the evaluation—ultimately will value and use.

Throughout this guide, aspects of cultural competence in evaluation are discussed within the context of CDC's *Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health*[2] to highlight opportunities for integrating cultural competence during each of the six steps of the evaluation process. A list of related resources and tools and an abbreviated version of this guide, titled *Program Evaluation Tip Sheet: Integrating Cultural Competence into Evaluation,* are available as an appendix.

Background

According to the Office of Minority Health[3] at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, culture and language may influence

- Health, healing, and wellness belief systems.
- How patients, consumers, and health care providers perceive illness, disease, and their causes.
- The behaviors of patients and consumers who are seeking health care and their attitudes toward health care providers.
- The delivery of services by providers, who view the world through their own particular values, which can compromise access for patients from other cultures.

Incorporating cultural competence in public health systems enables professionals to adapt their approaches to benefit individuals and groups from varying cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, improving cultural competence among public health practitioners could help reduce health disparities and improve the quality of care and health for everyone.

Over the years, public health professionals have expanded their approaches to preventing disease, as evidenced by the growing number of practice and translation models designed to meet the needs of multiple cultural groups. Incorporating a thoughtful and consistent emphasis on cultural competence when performing all essential public health functions, including evaluation, creates a necessary foundation for efforts to reduce health disparities. The National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care (the National CLAS Standards) serve as the cornerstone for advancing health equity through culturally and linguistically appropriate services.[4]

The Importance of Cultural Competence in Evaluation

CDC acknowledges that cultural competence in evaluation is necessary and important for evaluators of all backgrounds.[5] When we conduct an evaluation, everything we do reflects our own cultural values and perspectives—from the evaluation purpose, the questions we develop, and the methodologies we select to our interpretation of the findings and the recommendations we make based on those findings. Because culture is influenced by many characteristics (i.e., race, ethnicity, language, sex, age, religion, education, and experience), it is important that we stop and reflect on our own culture before embarking on an evaluation. To conduct culturally competent evaluations, we must learn and appreciate each program's cultural context and acknowledge that we may view and interpret the world differently from many evaluation stakeholders.

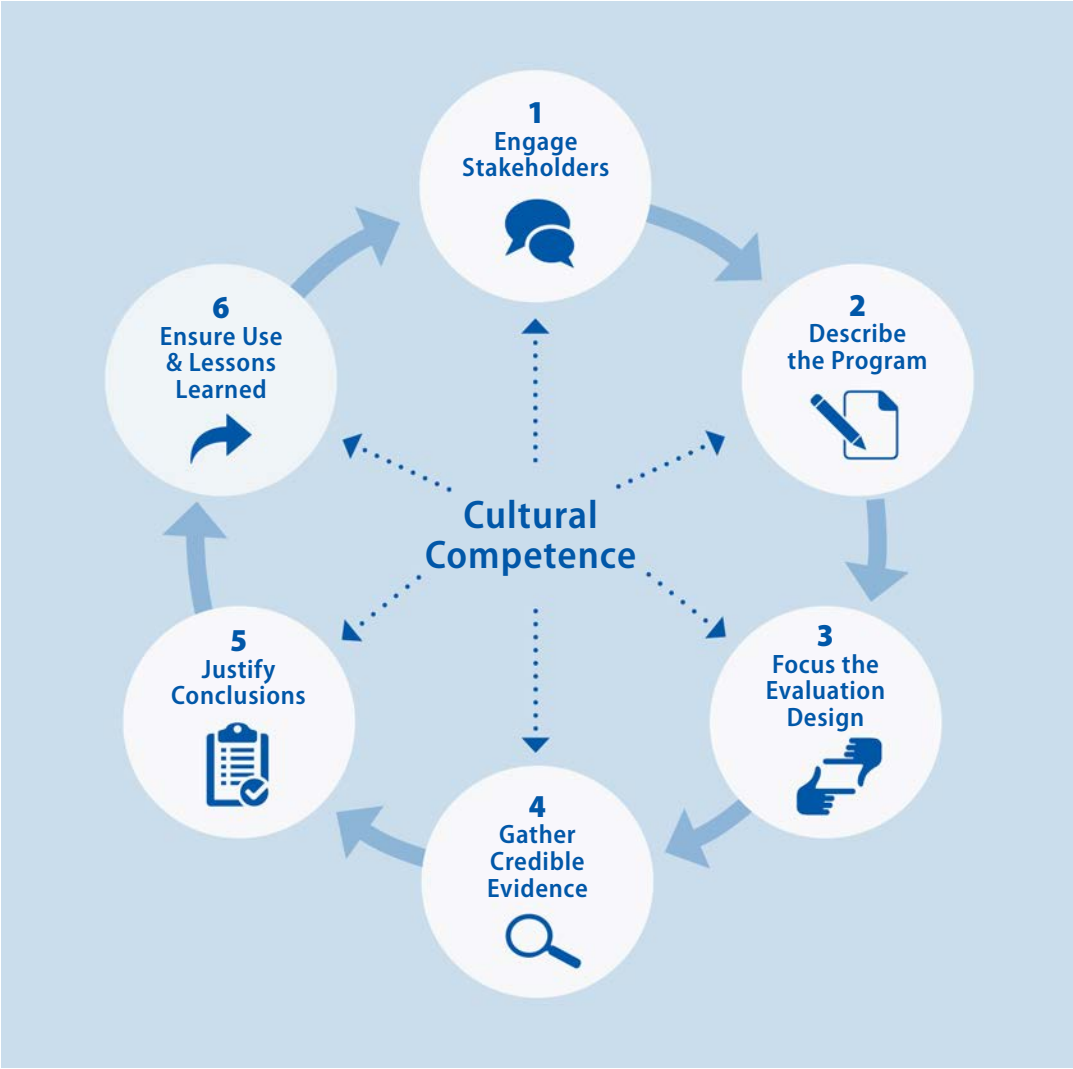
With its emphasis on stakeholder engagement, this version of CDC's *Framework for Program Evaluation* (see Figure 1) emphasizes an even greater commitment to cultural competence than do less participatory evaluation approaches. Evaluations guided by the CDC framework actively involve engaging a range of stakeholders throughout the entire process, and cultural competence is essential for ensuring truly meaningful engagement. As evaluators, we have an ethical obligation to create an inclusive climate in which everyone invested in the evaluation—from agency head to program client—can fully participate. At the same time, significantly engaging stakeholders, particularly in the planning stage, will enhance the evaluation's cultural competence.

The "Program Evaluation Standards," which are benchmarks used to address the quality of an evaluation effort and endorsed by most professional evaluation organizations, provide guidance throughout the evaluation process and reinforce the importance of cultural context in each step of the evaluation. Appendix A presents the 30 evaluation standards and provides strategies to increase cultural competence in their application.

CULTURE IS . . .

"The integrated pattern of thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions associated, wholly or partially, with racial, ethnic, or linguistic groups, as well as with religious, spiritual, biological, geographical, or sociological characteristics."[4]

Figure 1: CDC's Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health[2, 6]



As illustrated in the six steps of the evaluation framework, which are described in detail in this report, the use of a culturally competent evaluation approach will likely lead to better evaluations and greater use of the evaluation findings.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN PUBLIC HEALTH EVALUATION

Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.... I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

In working through the six steps of CDC's *Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health,* this guide gives examples of the roles that culture plays in each step and offers strategies for promoting cultural competence in the particular tasks associated with each step. These strategies, first conceptualized by an expert panel[7] and guided by the American Evaluation Association's Public Statement on Cultural Competence in Evaluation,[8] require the evaluator to implement the framework's steps through a cultural competence lens. Intrinsic to the framework and the NACP- and DHDSP-supporting materials is the active involvement of a diverse group of stakeholders throughout the course of the evaluation. Thus, while stakeholder engagement appears as Step 1 in the framework, it should remain a prominent aspect of the entire process.

Step 1: Engage Stakeholders

Engaging the participation of stakeholders invested in a program serves as the foundation for an evaluation that potentially will produce credible and useful information. However, challenges typically arise when encouraging stakeholders to participate fully. The following strategies may help us as evaluators to communicate more effectively, build a climate of respect among participants, and promote more inclusive evaluation practices.

Assess cultural self-awareness. The first step toward conducting culturally competent evaluations is to know ourselves and recognize those whom we might view as different from us. We can begin this process by taking the time to reflect on our own background and life experiences, all of which shape our thoughts and behaviors and consequently influence how we conduct an evaluation. Thinking about our personal history challenges us to uncover our biases or prejudices as well as our assumptions about others. How often do we find ourselves assuming that other people think the same way we do? See the world in the same way? Share the same values? These thoughts are not unusual, but we must continually remind ourselves that what we might consider "normal" may be anything *but* normal for someone else.

AMERICAN EVALUATION ASSOCIATION

"Cultural competence is a stance taken toward culture, not a discrete status or simple mastery of particular knowledge and skills. A culturally competent evaluator is prepared to engage with diverse segments of communities to include cultural and contextual dimensions important to the evaluation. Culturally competent evaluators respect the cultures represented in the evaluation."[8]

During this ongoing reflection process, we should acknowledge that all of us belong to many cultural groups, and these groupings are not static. We can identify a number of personal characteristics that might influence our perceptions (see the text box "Self-Reflection Questions for Evaluators"). The role of evaluator comes with its own language and values. In addition, discipline-specific training (e.g., in anthropology or epidemiology) brings its own particular culture. Furthermore, if we come from a "dominant" culture vis-à-vis that of any of the evaluation stakeholders, we must realize that we may be perceived as occupying a privileged social position and may, in fact, have rights and liberties that others do not possess.

Finally, we should consider our ability to interact genuinely and respectfully with evaluation stakeholders from the community without making judgments. We must ask ourselves

- Are we addressing or raising issues with community members in a culturally appropriate manner? If we are unsure, asking them will show respect and our desire to learn more and understand better.
- Are we open to learning from others regardless of status or role?
- Do we value community members' expertise regarding their community and how best to interact with these members?

The community members with whom we work are experts in their own right and must be acknowledged as such. Recognizing and respecting their wisdom can be crucial to a successful evaluation.

Self-Reflection Questions for Evaluators

As the saying goes, where we stand depends on where we sit—or are situated. To understand the impact of culture in our own lives and others', we can look directly at how we are situated and the ways in which it might influence our perspectives and behaviors.

To help us explore our own identity, we can ask ourselves the following self-reflection questions:

- Where am I from (nationality, region, and heritage)?
  - What are my beliefs, values, and religious and political orientations?
- What is my biological sex ?
  - What is my age group?
- What is my social class?
  - What are my vocations and avocations?
- What life events have greatly affected me?
  - Which of the above factors are significant to me?
- What do I see as resources I can use in this evaluation?
  - What do I see as potential opportunities, challenges, or conflicts for this evaluation?
- What stereotypes do I hold?

People Have Multiple Social and Cultural Identities

To evaluate a pilot asthma education program for young inner-city girls with asthma, Program X hired an external evaluator who had extensive experience working with schoolchildren in City H, 100 miles north of the program. With a graduate degree in evaluation, "Janice" (not her real name) and the funders assumed her extensive experience and familiarity with children would facilitate interactions during the group interviews with the girls. After reading extensively about the asthma program and familiarizing herself with the epidemiologic data (e.g., school absenteeism, hospitalization rates), Janice found herself surprised at the challenge she faced getting the girls to open up during discussions. She later learned that they had perceived her as an outsider who, although she "knew children," had a "different way of speaking and acting." Janice was an upper-middle-class professional. In this context, the evaluator's social class played a more dominant, critical role than sex.

Engage stakeholders that reflect the diversity of the community. Identifying diversity among a public health program's intended beneficiaries and other stakeholders is an essential starting point in the evaluation process. Cultural differences of program participants go beyond traditional demographic characteristics, such as race or ethnicity. Differences may exist in beliefs, ideologies, knowledge, institutions, religion, and other factors that influence what people do, how they think, and how they understand and interact with others.

Cultural competence is essential to fostering meaningful stakeholder engagement.

Talking to community leaders can help us become familiar with the community and assess the community's readiness and willingness to address the issues that the evaluation may raise. The community leaders can share history or attitudes, such as distrust of the program or health department, that may affect the level of stakeholder buy-in. For example, community representatives may think that past efforts to which they contributed ignored their input in favor of supporting the views of agency leaders. In this situation, we must build relationships and establish ways to assure participants that their perspectives will be respected and that their participation goes beyond mere tokenism. As evaluators, we need to familiarize ourselves with the cultural context and setting of each program we evaluate. We should ask ourselves

- What is the community's history?
- What traditions and norms exist in the community?
- What are the community demographics and trends?
- What are the community's specific interests, needs, and assets?

During this planning stage, we should know what factors are relevant to the evaluation and do additional homework to gain greater insight into how those factors might influence the evaluation. Simply being familiar with or having a good working relationship with a particular cultural group does not make an evaluator culturally competent in all settings. In fact, a person could be a member of that group but not necessarily share the same "culture."

Working with a co-evaluator from the community can help build trust and improve communication with stakeholders. For instance, we may have certain expectations about meetings, communications, and the temporal flow of processes, yet stakeholders from other cultures may have different norms and may be less likely to participate fully in uncomfortable settings. A co-evaluator can help incorporate community norms into the procedures so that all stakeholders experience moments of the familiar and unfamiliar during the evaluation. A co-evaluator also can help articulate our expectations for and of all the stakeholders. In addition, the co-evaluator can influence the design and implementation of the evaluation and share critical information with stakeholders and the community at large. When no obvious or appropriate person can serve as co-evaluator, we may need to train a willing person to take on that role.

Lay clear ground rules for participation to establish equality. Power imbalances often are entrenched in our behaviors. Occasionally, we need to use our facilitation skills by regularly "checking in" with all participants to elicit their perspectives on the evaluation process. During meetings, take notice of who is talking, who is silent, who is interrupted or interrupting, who is present but was not invited into the discussion, and who restates what others are saying. If several people say the same things, take notice of whose ideas are ignored and whose ideas are taken up by the group. Take note if one person or group consistently makes decisions on how meetings are conducted, such as when to start and end the meeting and other time considerations, moving an idea to a decision, or revisiting a decision. It may be helpful to consider alternative strategies to ensure full engagement, such as holding separate meetings with different groups within the community or using methods that allow anonymous input.

Teach basic evaluation skills along the way. Some stakeholders may have little or no experience with evaluation; others may bring different needs or expectations that are not appropriate to the evaluation given the context. For some people, the word "evaluation" may have a negative connotation (refer to CDC's *Learning and Growing Through Evaluation: State Asthma Program Evaluation Guide—Module 2: Implementing Evaluations*). Assessing the attitudes and skills of the stakeholder group and tailoring training in evaluation early in the process will help stakeholders engage better. To facilitate communication, actively limit the use of evaluation and program jargon.[9] Also, clearly define the stakeholders' roles so that participants know what is expected of them and of other people involved in the evaluation. If working with stakeholders who have different language preferences, the evaluation process must be equally understandable to all participants. We may need to translate documents, such as the evaluation plan, and offer translation services during meetings. The co-evaluator may be tapped for ideas on appropriateness and fit.

Create a diverse advisory team to help with planning, implementing, and interpreting findings from the evaluation. Engaging all stakeholders at all points in an evaluation is typically overwhelming to both the evaluator and the stakeholders. A smaller advisory group often can be created from among the stakeholders to help with many aspects of the evaluation, including advising us on when the larger group's input is needed. When creating an advisory group, be sure to consider and value cultural diversity within the team. Have the co-evaluator help select members. This advisory team also may be a good way for different cultural groups within the community to have a voice on decisions.

Build trust. Stakeholders must trust that the evaluation information will not be used against them if they are to be expected to move beyond initial introductions and engagement. Trust develops from positive relationships, and building relationships takes time. Throughout the evaluation, it is important to talk with community leaders and members openly about the evaluation, why it is being done, and how the community can expect to benefit from it. Listen to their interests and concerns, and invite their feedback and input. To build trust, you must acknowledge that some degree of conflict is to be expected and establish resolution processes. Ensure that stakeholders understand that staying involved throughout the evaluation is important, and explicitly address the implications for the budget and timeline with the evaluation sponsors and funders.

Guiding Questions to Help Engage Stakeholders

- Does the stakeholder group fully represent the diversity of the program's participants and others affected by the program?
- Are meaningful roles planned for stakeholders throughout the evaluation?
- Have I paid attention to the distribution of power among stakeholders? To other distinctions related to status and social class?
- Has the stakeholder group developed a process to work together with established ground rules?
- Have I included multiple voices in planning, implementing, interpreting, and decision making?
- Have I assembled an evaluation advisory team whose collective experience is appropriate to the context?
- Have I identified and inventoried the skills and traits of the members of the evaluation advisory team so that I can tailor my approach based on these resources or augment them if necessary?

Step 2: Describe the Program

Evaluators are responsible for ensuring that the program description reflects the diverse perspectives of the community. To do so requires a conscious and continuous effort using potentially different strategies to describe the program, the program needs, and the context.

Clarify the stakeholders' perspectives of the program. A given public health issue may not be a priority in some cultural settings, or some cultures may believe that illness is outside their control. For example, many public health programs are grounded in the biomedical model, and the locus of control tends to focus on the individual. In some Eastern cultures, however, the cause of disease is considered to be outside an individual's control. Different perspectives and models of health and disease might shift how health professionals provide treatment and how patients participate in treatment. Different perspectives affect how the program is perceived, and thus they will influence how the evaluation is received.

Affirm what is known about the social and historical context of the program. In addition to identifying the standard elements that comprise a program (inputs or resources, activities, outputs or products, and outcomes), we should understand the program's social, cultural, and historical contexts as well as the culture of the program itself. While clarifying the stakeholders' perspectives of the program, we should reflect on what we actually know about the program and what additional contextual information might be needed to implement the evaluation. Information may have been gathered before the evaluation, but engaging community representatives builds trust and credibility and might reveal a different scope or different relationships between the program and other contextual factors. Pay attention to how race, power, inclusion, politics, and privilege may be affecting the context, and discuss their relevance to the program. A participatory approach with community representatives will help create a more complete, valid depiction of the program that is accurate, respectful, and reflective of community perspectives.

Highlight community strengths and assets, including the talents and expertise of the members. When describing the community needs that the program addresses, take care to ensure that the data—demographic, epidemiologic, cultural, or otherwise—are perceived as appropriate to the community and not potentially stigmatizing or stereotyping. Even within subgroups or local communities, we should remember that there is always some degree of natural diversity. For example, it may be insensitive or disrespectful to apply the term "Navajo" or "Diné" when referring to individual cultural groups within the Nation. Similarly, clarify that the program description is culturally appropriate and does not use externally assigned labels. As part of the process, seek out and highlight community strengths and assets among the inputs in the program description. While identifying community strengths, we may find the need to solicit perspectives from the broader community and discover that additional stakeholders are essential to engage in the evaluation.

Use models that resonate with the community. The evaluator might engage program staff in a lively discussion of the program and then create a graphic depiction or logic model. A similar activity might be conducted with program participants where stories and personal experiences may describe a different perspective of the program. Logic models, as graphical depictions of a program's theory of change, are often great tools to illustrate how perspectives can be missed. While boxes and arrows often are used for logic models, some stakeholders may not engage with such symbols. Depending on the norms of the community, a nonlinear logic model may resonate with the community members' views.[10] Use stories, direct experiences, pictures, drawings, documents, and/or any other materials that make sense to the stakeholders to articulate or illustrate the program's activities and expected outcomes.

Guiding Questions to Help Describe the Program

- Are the stakeholders' perspectives appropriately reflected in the program description such that relevant contextual factors are included?
- What types of conceptual models resonate with and are useful to the stakeholders?
- Does the program description identify intended beneficiaries?
- Does the description sufficiently resolve differing views on the program?
- Does the context provided with the program description include community or participants' strengths?
- What is known about the strengths, assets, challenges, and barriers of the community, including the talents and expertise that individual community members or organizations bring?
- Are there "gatekeepers of knowledge" within the community that can help us understand the social and political context of the program or community?

Engaging and Entrusting the Community to Describe the Program

Evaluators of a heart disease program in a rural community interviewed community health workers (CHWs) to better understand whether home visits were implemented according to the procedure outlined in the CHW manual, were accomplished in the prescribed period, and received positive reactions from community members. The evaluators learned through their interviews that the primarily agrarian community responded more positively to home visits that exceeded the prescribed period of time. CHWs explained the importance of taking as much time as needed to connect with community members. The evaluators understood the importance of having members of the community describe the program. Thus, when the evaluators presented their results and recommendations, they included suggestions to modify the CHW manual to better reflect the needs of the community.

Step 3: Focus the Evaluation Design

After completing the program description, the next step of the CDC evaluation framework requires working with the stakeholders to focus the evaluation design. Understanding the purpose of the evaluation is critical to determine the evaluation's focus. During this phase, gather information from stakeholders about the program's perspectives, values, and goals and how they would measure and define "success." Stakeholders will champion the evaluation when their values and input are represented in the evaluation questions and design. Discussing with the stakeholders the eventual benefits of the evaluation to the community will facilitate the stakeholders' involvement and shared understanding.

Ensure that the evaluation questions reflect the stakeholders' values. The choice of evaluation questions should reflect the knowledge gained during the first two steps of the process. The questions also must reflect the community's perspectives on the program and be phrased in a respectful manner.

As mentioned previously, clearly articulate to the stakeholders how the evaluation will "give back" to them and the community. As an evaluator, recognize that the community may have certain information needs and plans for using the information that are not obvious or considered as valuable by other people. Discussing these issues with the stakeholders at this stage can build buy-in and support for the evaluation.

Consider how aspects of culture might influence an evaluation's design and implementation. When considering the type of evaluation design that will answer the selected questions, take into account cultural assumptions and norms. In some situations, social, political, and cultural values might supersede concepts of scientific rigor. Because the goal of any evaluation is to provide useful information to the program stakeholders, understanding what types of information they respect and trust is critical.

Demonstrating Respect for Local Culture May Prevent Implementation Challenges

When planning an evaluation of school-based interventions to address asthma triggers, the evaluators scheduled several stakeholder meetings in April to scope and focus the effort. During data collection in June, problems with locating respondents quickly became obvious, and unforeseen issues emerged. The evaluators were puzzled by the poor response rate until a local school nurse provided an explanation that resonated: The stakeholders from the schools had overlooked details in the scheduling of events; data collection was occurring in the midst of widespread "high-stakes" testing, so the timing of the data collection did not reflect consideration of school events. Apprised of stakeholder priorities, the evaluators modified their data collection plans, demonstrating respect for the school culture, and said that they would verify the school event calendars in future planning.

Although many stakeholders may understand the concept of evaluation in an academic sense, other stakeholders will not have this type of background. Explain the evaluation design options in such a way that all stakeholders understand the choices and the implications. For example, the concept of comparison groups, as typically defined in some traditional research, may be considered unethical to those people who would prefer that the entire community participate in the program or intervention. Create an environment that is open to differing ideas for evaluation designs to ensure that the findings are valid, reliable, and credible among the stakeholders. A co-evaluator can help immensely to determine what types of designs will produce what the program stakeholders will consider credible evidence.

In addition, when considering possible evaluation designs, ensure that the type of design selected will provide for consent and confidentiality procedures that are consistent with the community's values. The cultural power dynamics explored in Step 1 can help provide direction. Although evaluations typically are exempt from institutional review boards, requesting a review may be beneficial to further strengthen procedures that protect participants' rights. Finally, to prevent potential misunderstandings or disagreements, clarify to the stakeholders early on in the process the issues of data ownership, rights, and responsibilities of all persons involved and how the data will be disseminated.

Guiding Questions to Help Focus the Evaluation Design

- Whose values and perspectives are represented in the evaluation questions?
- Is the design appropriate to the evaluation questions?
- Does the evaluation design fit the cultural context and values of the community?
- How will I obtain multiple perspectives on how the evaluation will be implemented?

Step 4: Gather Credible Evidence

The CDC framework makes the distinction between "collecting data" and "gathering credible evidence." The framework encourages evaluators to hold focused discussions with key stakeholders to determine what "credible" means to them. As part of our role, we should think broadly about possible data sources and collection methods and how they will "fit" with the norms and values of the community.

Ensure that multiple perspectives are represented when determining "what counts as credible evidence." Stakeholders often have varying opinions of the most important aspects of the program. Obtaining multiple perspectives of credible evidence can increase the chances that key stakeholders' values and opinions will be represented. Some stakeholders may want "hard numbers," whereas other stakeholders may want to understand processes better. In some settings, storytelling and talking circles can be used to gather credible evidence. In other settings, reviewing documents or observing or photographing the program in action (with prior permission or consent) may be appropriate. Our role is to balance the different stakeholder needs and ensure that the evaluation questions are answered in a valid and appropriate way within the context of the public health program.

Select data collection instruments that are culturally appropriate. Although standard evaluation practice typically involves reviewing existing data collection instruments, selecting standardized instruments may be inappropriate for a given evaluation. Most instruments only have been "normed" with a dominant cultural group; therefore, we cannot assume the instruments' accuracy or appropriateness for other populations. If planning to use standardized instruments, allow sufficient time for testing the instruments to be sure that they are valid for the community. If different languages or dialects are spoken in the community, ensure that the instruments are translated accurately and appropriately. This task usually involves having the instruments professionally translated and then back translated. Then pilot-test the instruments with community members to ensure the translations make sense and are sensitive within the community context. Cultural nuances, language proficiencies, and community connotations can all affect meaning and quality beyond obvious language issues.

Factor in cultural and linguistic distinctions when planning data collection. Culture, ethnicity, language, political experience, age, class, sex and other potentially distinguishing cultural factors are important considerations when creating data collection methods. Medical anthropologist Arthur Kleinman emphasizes the importance of eliciting the client's perspective.[11] In other words, understanding how a person perceives, understands, and treats illness can help illuminate real or potential challenges that can occur in a health care encounter (see Appendix B). For practitioners, this culturally competent approach requires a shift from acting as an authority figure to being a good listener and learner.

Planning the data collection design and methods requires a similarly client-centered approach. For example, if an evaluation involves focus groups, carefully consider the cultural characteristics of participants when making group assignments to ensure that everyone can speak comfortably and candidly. Skilled moderators create a setting in which participants feel comfortable opening up and sharing. In addition, skilled moderators do not make assumptions about the participants or favor one experience over another. Because the goal of focus groups is to obtain thoughtful, candid responses from participants, different variations may need to be tried to see which groupings elicit the most helpful information with the least possibility for conflict.

Considering cultural factors is also important for other data collection methods, such as observations or surveys. If conducting an observation of a public health program, consider having community stakeholders review the observation protocol to provide insight on cultural elements, practices, and norms with which you may be unfamiliar.

Similarly, when conducting surveys, recognize that the language and tone used will affect how the stakeholders perceive the questions. If applicable, explain what is meant by "anonymous" or "confidential" and who will have access to the data collected.

Adapt data collection processes to the stakeholder context. Different communication styles can affect what information can be gathered. For some data collection methods, such as interviews and focus groups, the style of communication can have a major effect on the quality of the data collected. Also, when tailoring the data collection plan to the cultural context, consider issues like nonverbal communication, appropriate attire, and the importance of small talk. Food and eating among the community, for example, may be an important consideration in certain situations. Knowing to accept an offer of food or drink regardless of whether we are hungry or thirsty may be critical when the relationship between an interviewer and community member is forming. The concept of time is another issue that could differ tremendously among persons from different parts of the world. Build these cultural teaching moments into training for data collectors and into the overall evaluation plan.

Here are a few suggestions to consider when adapting evaluation methods to the stakeholder context:

- Allow sufficient time for training in the methods and established protocols.
- Consider issues of potential or perceived biases or concerns for confidentiality when hiring within a community. When persons outside the community are collecting data, ensure that they demonstrate respect for cultural norms.
- Provide cultural sensitivity training and education about the community culture in addition to general protocol training.
- Consider cultural norms when selecting data collectors—for example, in some cultures, matching sex of interviewers to participants is important.

Ensure That Data Collection Instruments Are Culturally Appropriate

An existing validated instrument was piloted as part of an evaluation that assessed risk factors related to heart disease and stroke. Some of the items in the instrument dealt with sensitive issues (e.g., cultural eating practices, cultural perceptions of attractive body images, cultural views on prescribed medications). Respondents were offended by some of the items, which they viewed as racial stereotypes. The inappropriate items led evaluators to conclude that participants would be reluctant or refuse to complete the evaluation protocol. Consequently, the evaluation team members discussed these issues, which resulted in a revised protocol for culturally appropriate communication and the subsequent revision of the data collection instrument.

The power dynamics explored with stakeholders in Step 1 also may manifest when planning data collection. For example, even if the evaluation focuses on a program for youth, we may need to consult with community elders, because they may act as gatekeepers to access the youth of the community. Similarly, in some cultures, we may need to inform and ask husbands or male relatives before engaging women in an evaluation.

Finally, consider infrastructure capacity (e.g., physical logistics, technological feasibility, appropriateness) when selecting methods for gathering evidence:

- Is a private space available for conducting interviews?
- Does everyone have a cell phone?
- Do some people live in remote areas where cell phone reception may be unavailable?
- Could such differences facilitate or create barriers for evaluation participants?

Based on the answers to these questions, alternate options for collecting data may need to be considered.

Guiding Questions to Help Collect Credible Evidence

- Whose perspectives are accepted as credible evidence? Credible to whom?
- Are the language, content, and design of the instruments culturally sensitive? Have the instruments been validated with their intended audiences?
- Am I taking into account both verbal and nonverbal communication?
- Have I carefully trained data collectors in both technical procedures and relevant cultural factors?
- Would eliciting potentially different perspectives on heath and illness (see Appendix B) enhance my data collection methodology?
- Are procedures used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data responsive to cultural context? Have I informed community stakeholders of the security of the data and the confidentiality of respondent information?

Step 5: Justify Conclusions

Justifying conclusions involves analyzing the collected data, interpreting what the data mean, making judgments based on the data, and making recommendations for using the findings. Engage stakeholders representing different cultures in each of these processes to ensure that the conclusions reflect the community's cultural values and perspectives of the program's quality and effectiveness.

Recognize potential cultural implications during data analysis. Justifying conclusions is a comprehensive approach that starts with data analysis. Data analysis involves organizing and classifying the collected data; tabulating them; summarizing them; comparing the results with other relevant information; and presenting the results in an appropriate, easy-to-understand manner. Culture serves an intrinsic role in influencing how we define categories for organization purposes, classify and interpret data, and determine which comparisons have meaning. Therefore, engaging stakeholders during the analysis is essential.

Demonstrating Cultural Competence When Interpreting Negative Findings

In a recent evaluation of an asthma program, higher rates of emergency department visits for asthma were found among African-American children compared with their white counterparts. Some of the stakeholders interpreted this finding as a lack of motivation by the parents to schedule doctor appointments for appropriate asthma care and treatment. Stakeholders also believed that perhaps the finding suggested that the parents of the children with asthma did not prioritize health and preventive care. An alternate interpretation by other stakeholders was that this could be evidence that the health care system (e.g., policies, institutional factors) was failing to provide affordable insurance coverage for African-American children.

Because knowledge of data analysis methods will vary among stakeholders, the stakeholders need to understand which data analysis options can be used and what the possible implications are for such analyses. As evaluators, we must ensure that all data collection methods are weighted in an equitable manner (e.g., they do not automatically prefer or weight quantitative data over qualitative data).

Involve diverse stakeholders in interpreting data. After analyzing the data, the next step is interpreting or finding meaning in the results. It is best to seek stakeholders' interpretations before offering our own perspective. The stakeholders' values, perspectives, and expectations that we learned about early in the evaluation will serve as the foundation for discussion and for achieving consensus on how to interpret the data. Stakeholders' interpretations might vary in part because some terminology or expressions may have different meanings, depending on the cultural context. Active engagement of stakeholders will help to balance and ensure accuracy of the interpretations before drawing conclusions.

Ensure that many stakeholders' voices are heard when making judgments. Judgments are statements about a program's effectiveness, efficiency, merit, or worth when comparing findings against one or more selected targets, benchmarks, or program outcomes. Stakeholders may reach different conclusions or make conflicting judgments, which often indicates that they may be using different targets, benchmarks, or program outcomes. It also might reflect the fact that stakeholders have different values for different outcomes. These differences should prompt us to clarify the stakeholders' diverse values and perspectives and facilitate reaching a consensus on how to judge the program.

Not all judgments from an evaluation will be positive for all program stakeholders. Carefully consider any implications that negative judgments may have on stakeholders, and discuss any concerns with them. Present any negative judgments with particular sensitivity to the cultural context, and phrase them to reflect the program and its operations, not the program participants or community. Evaluation judgments should consider local capacity, especially community strengths, and highlight the opportunity to learn and improve.

Guiding Questions to Help Justify Conclusions

- How are different stakeholders' perspectives and values addressed in the analysis and interpretation of the evaluation findings? Are conclusions validated by participants?
- Are conclusions balanced with culturally appropriate recommendations and community capacity?
- Are findings meaningful to the group or community of interest?
- Have I made a concerted effort to consider alternative explanations of findings?

Step 6: Ensure the Use of Evaluation Findings and Share Lessons Learned

Stakeholders will not use evaluation results that they do not know, understand, or value. Our responsibility as evaluators is to ensure that the community uses the evaluation findings and to share the lessons learned during the evaluation. Consequently, we will need to engage a wide range of stakeholders when we make recommendations based on the findings, communicate and disseminate the results, and conduct a follow-up to ensure that the community is implementing the recommendations.

Ensure that recommendations are generated through an inclusive process.

As evaluators, we must ensure that recommendations are relevant to stakeholders. In addition to being grounded in data, recommendations from an evaluation need to be grounded in the program's context to reflect cultural sensitivity and relevance. Use an agreed-upon process to select a representative set of stakeholders who should be integrally involved in shaping the evaluation recommendations. This process can help stakeholders "own" the recommendations and see a path to achieving them. Furthermore, anticipate any unintended consequences that may result from the evaluation's findings. For example, better targeting of services to those in a community most in need may reduce services to other people in the community.

Sharing Findings Through Culturally Appropriate Posters to Reinforce and Promote Evaluation Use

To disseminate findings that indicated the need for more widespread adoption of self-monitoring, one heart disease prevention program developed a series of posters supporting self-measured blood pressure monitoring. The posters were a collaborative effort between the program and several volunteers from a program aimed at older, inactive adults in County D. Together, they created eye-catching, culturally appropriate posters, which they displayed in prominent areas frequented by senior adults, like bingo halls, assisted living facilities, and health clinics. The posters were later used in a larger educational campaign designed to inform seniors on the program's ongoing effort to prevent cardiovascular events.

Tailor the dissemination of evaluation results to stakeholder needs.

Dissemination, or the communication of the evaluation results to stakeholders, is an integral component of an evaluation's success. No evaluator wants to develop documents that end up on people's shelves instead of being read and used. The ways in which we disseminate our evaluation results can determine how they are received, read, and put into action. Listed below are some principles to consider in disseminating evaluation findings and recommendations:

- **Work with stakeholders to find out what they need to be able to act on the information presented.** Be flexible and creative in presentation style, language, tone, and graphics to convey the findings in a way that resonates with the stakeholders. This might even include the use of photographs and audio. How we present the findings will depend on many factors, including language, education and literacy levels, and community preferences. Expect to use several different types of formats and communication approaches when disseminating evaluation information.

- **Make sure that the messenger fits the message and the audience.** Do not assume that the evaluator is the best person to communicate the findings to every audience. Perhaps a community member who has played an active role in the evaluation would be more suitable than and preferable to the evaluator to present the evaluation findings. Consider the options, staying mindful of community dynamics, relationships, empowerment issues, and any factors relevant to the cultural context.
- **Pilot your presentation.** It is often a good idea to conduct a trial run of our presentation to understand the conclusions that key audiences may draw based on how we have displayed or grouped the data on a page and supplied the accompanying information. Focus groups, one-on-one discussions, and even informal meetings with persons whose experiences are reflected in the outcome data are helpful. Besides providing evidence of how disparate outcomes might have come about, be sure to highlight solutions addressing the underlying factors producing the disparities.
- **Ensure that uses and action steps are culturally appropriate and draw on community strengths.** An evaluation does not end after we present the conclusions and recommendations to the community. The evaluation process must bridge the gap, resulting in the actual use of the information by the community. Work with the stakeholders to develop plans for them to use the information and implement any recommendations. Community values should guide all action planning, and the community strengths identified in the earlier steps of the evaluation should be optimized.
- **Identify lessons learned.** Explicitly recognizing what has been learned throughout the evaluation process will help us sustain the knowledge and provide us with important information for conducting future evaluations.

Encourage the use of evaluation information. Acting on the recommendations is the ultimate reason for conducting the evaluation in the first place. Therefore, guiding stakeholders in creating concrete action plans is critical to guide program improvement and guarantee program effectiveness. Engage stakeholders in ways that resonate with them, reminding them of the lessons learned during the potentially political and complex decision-making process at the end of an evaluation.

Guiding Questions to Help Ensure Use and Share Lessons Learned

- Are communication mechanisms culturally appropriate?
- Does the reporting method meet stakeholder needs (both the message and the messenger)?
- Are the data presented in context, with efforts made to clarify issues and prevent misuse?
- Has the community benefited as anticipated? How?
- How has cultural responsiveness increased both the truthfulness and utility of the results?
- Do the action plans draw on community strengths and capacity? Are the action plans consistent with the purpose of the evaluation?

"Wrapping Up" the Evaluation

To ensure lessons learned are fully captured, it is important to follow the evaluation with a reflections stage. "Wrapping up" doesn't *quite* capture the activity, because an evaluation should be an ongoing, iterative process. However, it is important for evaluators to pause after each evaluation project and take time to reflect on the process. In other words, evaluate the evaluation with a particular emphasis on the role that culture played or might have played. This reflective process should include the following activities:

- **Review the evaluation results and action plans developed to assess the benefits and any unforeseen harm to the community that may have resulted.** Highlight the positive effects on the community to promote the benefits of and encourage future evaluation. Acknowledge any negative effects on the community, and ensure that they are appropriately addressed and mitigated by involving community members.
- **Complete documentation of the evaluation.** Clearly document how decisions were made and how they affected the overall outcomes. Document and apply lessons learned with respect to engaging the community in the future. Elicit the community's perspectives and feedback on the evaluation experience as a whole.
- **Assess the evaluation capacity built among all the stakeholders during the course of the evaluation.** Help the stakeholders articulate the new knowledge and skills gained from the evaluation. Highlight any valuable relationships that were built through participating in the evaluation.
- **Conduct a review of the evaluation itself.** Whether through internal or external processes, reflect on how adopting a stance of cultural competence affected the evaluation. Highlight the benefits and lessons learned, as well as the challenges and how they were overcome.

Guiding Questions to Help Wrap Up an Evaluation

- Has the evaluation team documented the effects of culture on the evaluation?
- Has the evaluation team reflected on the community benefits of the evaluation? On how the cultural responsiveness influenced the truthfulness and utility of the results?
- Has the evaluation team reflected on the evaluation process with an eye to lessons learned about the role culture played in the evaluation?

CONCLUSION

Tolerance, intercultural dialogue, and respect for diversity are more essential than ever in a world where peoples are becoming more and more closely interconnected.

—Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations

To ensure cultural competence in evaluation, remember to

- Engage stakeholders and keep them involved throughout the evaluation process.
- Be aware of personal culture and biases.
- Highlight community strengths and assets, including the talents and expertise of the members.
- Consider how aspects of culture might influence an evaluation's design and implementation.
- Ensure that multiple perspectives are represented when determining what counts as credible evidence.
- Recognize potential cultural implications during data collection, analysis, and interpretation.
- Tailor the dissemination of evaluation results to stakeholder needs.
- Promote use of evaluation information for community benefit.

Finally, let us all continue to remind ourselves that simply being competent in one evaluation does not fully prepare us for our next experience—that cultural competence is "a stance toward culture," not something that we can master by attaining knowledge or skills.[1] As evaluators, our backgrounds and other life experiences can serve as assets or limitations when we conduct evaluations, so we must strive to continually hone our skills, build trusting and respectful relationships with those whom we engage, and remain self-aware at all times.

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APPENDIX A: PROGRAM EVALUATION STANDARDS

Evaluation standards are the benchmarks used to address the quality of an evaluation effort. As professional evaluators, these standards are the foundation of our work. Since 1975, the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation has established standards that are endorsed by most evaluation professional organizations. CDC's *Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health* embraces these standards by literally placing them at the center of the evaluation steps. While stakeholder involvement always has been a cornerstone of the standards, the third edition further advances the need to understand the cultural context in which the evaluation occurs. Applying the principles of this guide will help us meet these standards. Below are listed the standards and possible strategies that can increase cultural competence.

Standards	Strategies to Increase Cultural Competence
Utility	
U1. Evaluator Credibility—Evaluations should be conducted by qualified people who establish and maintain credibility in the evaluation context.	• Assess yourself and the fit between your skills with culturally different groups and the evaluation context. • Engage a co-evaluator and/or an evaluation team to enhance credibility with stakeholders.
U2. Attention to Stakeholders—Evaluations should devote attention to the full range of individuals and groups invested in the program and affected by its evaluation.	• Actively recruit and engage a range of stakeholders, including program participants or those affected by the program. • Ensure participation for affected groups that are typically overlooked or excluded.
U3. Negotiated Purposes—Evaluation purposes should be identified and continually negotiated based on the needs of stakeholders.	• Use communication norms appropriate for the stakeholders to ensure that the purposes are understandable and meaningful. • Ensure that evaluation purposes address diverse needs of stakeholders. • Use inclusive practices to resolve conflicts among purposes proposed by different groups of stakeholders.
U4. Explicit Values—Evaluations should clarify and specify the individual and cultural values underpinning purposes, processes, and judgments.	• Take time to learn what different stakeholders value about the program and its evaluation. • Communicate clearly about these values through the evaluation process, and address important conflicts.
U5. Relevant Information—Evaluation information should serve the identified and emergent needs of stakeholders.	• Encourage stakeholders to think broadly about what constitutes relevant data sources and collection methods; discuss competing viewpoints.

Standards	Strategies to Increase Cultural Competence
U6. Meaningful Processes and Products—Evaluations should construct activities, descriptions, and judgments in ways that encourage participants to rediscover, reinterpret, or revise their understandings and behaviors.	• Teach evaluation principles and skills to establish common ground for understanding and using evaluation processes and products. • Adapt activities and processes to incorporate cultural norms. • Ensure evaluation products are understandable to diverse audiences.
U7. Timely and Appropriate Communicating and Reporting—Evaluations should attend to the continuing information needs of their multiple audiences.	• Tailor information sharing to meet cultural needs: Ensure that information is shared through appropriate translation, formats, and channels as well as comfortable venues.
U8. Concern for Consequences and Influence—Evaluations should promote responsible and adaptive use while guarding against unintended negative consequences and misuse.	• Anticipate possible ways in which evaluation information can be used or misused within the program's cultural and operational context. • Protect information so that it is not misused in a manner harmful to vulnerable populations.
Feasibility	
F1. Project Management—Evaluations should use effective project management strategies.	• Build in sufficient time and resources to address contextual and cultural needs: time for stakeholder interactions, translation, appropriate data collection staff, and diverse communication needs.
F2. Practical Procedures—Evaluation procedures should be practical and responsive to the way the program operates.	• Respect the organizational culture of the program itself. • Recognize diversity of perspectives within the program's operations. • Select processes and methods that are responsive to the organizational culture and the cultural background of participants.
F3. Contextual Viability—Evaluations should recognize, monitor, and balance the cultural and political interests and needs of individuals and groups.	• Understand the cultural, political, and economic context of the program; engage stakeholders to ensure understanding among diverse perspectives. • Foster and monitor communications to ensure balance among stakeholders throughout the evaluation.
F4. Resource Use—Evaluations should use resources effectively and efficiently.	• Recognize different perceptions of costs and benefits. • Be careful not to prioritize the needs of one stakeholder group over another on the basis of cost alone.
Propriety	
P1. Responsive and Inclusive Orientation—Evaluations should be responsive to stakeholders and their communities.	• Include a wide range of stakeholders, including program participants and those affected by the program, and substantially engage them throughout the evaluation. • Consider power relations within the program when determining the breadth and depth of stakeholder involvement. • Optimize the benefits of stakeholder involvement by focusing on the unique assets and strengths of individuals and their cultures rather than on their deficits. • Acknowledge the contributions of all stakeholders to the evaluation.

Standards	Strategies to Increase Cultural Competence
P2. Formal Agreements—Evaluation agreements should be negotiated to make obligations explicit and take into account the needs, expectations, and cultural contexts of clients and other stakeholders.	• Take advantage of formal agreements to clarify differences in culturally based assumptions. • Use the writing process to educate stakeholders about evaluation. • Limit the use of jargon, and instead use community communication norms and requirements when writing agreements.
P3. Human Rights and Respect—Evaluations should be designed and conducted to protect human and legal rights and maintain the dignity of participants and other stakeholders.	• Understand the relevance of certain rights and how they vary across the cultures within the community. • Recognize that vulnerable groups may need specific protections. • Only select evaluation methods that respect cultural sensitivities. • Use the co-evaluator or evaluation team to monitor the evaluation to ensure respect is maintained.
P4. Clarity and Fairness—Evaluations should be understandable and fair in addressing stakeholder needs and purposes.	• Actively engage less powerful or less vocal stakeholders in decision-making processes. • Think through and avoid ways that the evaluation can contribute to inequities.
P5. Transparency and Disclosure—Evaluations should provide complete descriptions of findings, limitations, and conclusions to all stakeholders, unless doing so would violate legal and propriety obligations.	• Maintain open lines of communication with stakeholders holding diverse cultural perspectives. • Use culturally appropriate ways to share information about the evaluation and to disseminate findings. • Explain and disclose information in an understandable manner. • Avoid jargon and build evaluation knowledge and skills among participants.
P6. Conflicts of Interests—Evaluations should openly and honestly identify and address real or perceived conflicts of interests that may compromise the evaluation.	• Acknowledge that stakeholder values and interests may conflict and build an open process to resolve conflicts. • Ensure that the perspectives of less powerful participants are respected.
P7. Fiscal Responsibility—Evaluations should account for all expended resources and comply with sound fiscal procedures and processes.	• Ensure that evaluation costs take into account activities and processes necessary to meet cultural and community needs (e.g., translations, additional meetings and trainings, appropriate dissemination to community audiences).
Accuracy	
A1. Justified Conclusions and Decisions—Evaluation conclusions and decisions should be explicitly justified in the cultures and contexts where they have consequences.	• Reflect on how different or conflicting values may affect the way that evaluation findings are viewed or justified. • Ensure that less powerful stakeholders are engaged in drawing conclusions and making decisions. • Accept that accuracy is defined differently among different stakeholders.

Standards	Strategies to Increase Cultural Competence
A2. Valid Information—Evaluation information should serve the intended purposes and support valid interpretations.	• Identify when key evaluation terms have different meanings for different stakeholder groups and build understanding between these perspectives. • Learn and use key terms as they are understood by the communities involved with the program. • Reconcile how stakeholders understand the meanings of key terms; guard against giving precedence to the way in which they are understood by the most powerful stakeholder groups.
A3. Reliable Information—Evaluation procedures should yield sufficiently dependable and consistent information for the intended uses.	• Remember that reliability is dependent on who and what is being tested; do not assume reliability across cultures or contexts.
A4. Explicit Program and Context Descriptions—Evaluations should document programs and their contexts with appropriate detail and scope for the evaluation purposes.	• Tap diverse informants to describe the program and its context. • Recognize that perspectives and descriptions change over time and the evaluation process itself may affect the program and its context. • Avoid the use of meta-evaluation and other jargon when communicating with stakeholders.
A5. Information Management— Evaluations should employ systematic information collection, review, verification, and storage methods.	• Work with stakeholders to select methods that they feel to be credible and of which they can take ownership. • Be open to a variety of methods and sources of data. • Select information storage procedures that protect the rights of the individuals providing the information.
A6. Sound Designs and Analyses— Evaluations should employ technically adequate designs and analyses that are appropriate for the evaluation purposes.	• Help stakeholders to understand how different designs and analysis may be viewed in a different cultural context. • Select designs and analyses that will be credible to the stakeholders.
A7. Explicit Evaluation Reasoning— Evaluation reasoning leading from information and analyses to findings, interpretations, conclusions, and judgments should be clearly and completely documented.	• Engage stakeholders in developing findings from data, interpreting findings, and drawing conclusions. • Recognize that stakeholders may have different ways and styles of reasoning and that logic is contextual. • Clearly articulate all assumptions involved with the reasoning process.
A8. Communication and Reporting— Evaluation communications should have adequate scope and guard against misconceptions, biases, distortions, and errors.	• Build in checks early in the evaluation to ensure shared understanding of evaluation results among stakeholders. • Create and implement a communication plan that meets audience preferences and ensures that different language needs are met. • Ensure that key concepts are not "lost in translation."

Standards	Strategies to Increase Cultural Competence
Evaluation Accountability Standards	
E1. Evaluation Documentation— Evaluations should fully document their negotiated purposes and implemented designs, procedures, data, and outcomes.	• Be explicit in documentation about decisions made to increase cultural competence and justify why the values of certain stakeholder groups were given precedence over those of other groups. • Ensure that all documentation is clear and understandable to all stakeholders. • Fully record the contributions made by all of the stakeholders within the process.
E2. Internal Meta-Evaluation— Evaluators should use these and other applicable standards to examine the accountability of the evaluation design, procedures employed, information collected, and outcomes.	• Build capacity within the evaluation team to enable team members to apply evaluation standards to assess the quality of the evaluation over time; help them reflect on their own worldview and culturally based assumptions.
E3. External Meta-Evaluation— Program evaluation sponsors, clients, evaluators, and other stakeholders should encourage the conduct of external meta-evaluations using these and other applicable standards.	• Clarify cultural competence as part of the purpose and standards for the meta-evaluation. • Seek out persons from diverse cultural backgrounds to serve as reviewers.

APPENDIX B: KLEINMAN'S EXPLANATORY MODEL OF ILLNESS

To aid health care professionals in practicing culturally sensitive care, Arthur Kleinman proposes that the practitioner ask the questions listed below to learn the patient's perspective. He believes that it is critical to discover how patients perceive their health issues in the broader context of their lives, given their background, experiences, and other concerns. This stance requires a shift on the clinician's part from authority figure to open learner from the patient in cross-cultural interactions:

- What do you think caused the problem?
- Why do you think it happened when it did?
- What do you think your sickness does to you? How does it work?
- How severe is your sickness? Will it have a short course?
- What kind of treatment do you think that you should receive?
- What are the most important results that you hope to receive from this treatment?
- What are the chief problems that your sickness has caused for you?
- What do you fear most about your sickness?

As evaluators, we can apply this approach to virtually any public health setting where we engage culturally diverse persons in evaluation activities. Consider ascertaining the following issues when planning and conducting an evaluation:

- In what way(s) does the program affect the program recipients?
- How serious is the public health issue that the program recipients are dealing with? Is the concern temporary or potentially long term?
- How do program recipients think the public health issue should be addressed?
- What are the most important results or benefits program recipients hope to receive from this program?
- What are the chief challenges or problems the program poses for program recipients?
- What do program recipients fear most about the public health issue that they are dealing with?

APPENDIX C: RESOURCES AND TOOLS

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Program Evaluation Tip Sheet: Integrating Cultural Competence into Evaluation

This Tip Sheet contains important excerpts from the *Practical Strategies for Culturally Competent Evaluation,* an evaluation guide designed for programs and partners funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention and Division of Environmental Hazards and Health Effects' National Asthma Control Program. The guide highlights the prominent role of culture in the work of evaluators and provides important strategies and guiding questions for enhancing cultural competence in evaluation.

What Is Cultural Competence?

Cultural competence is "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables effective work in cross-cultural situations."[1] Cultural competence is an essential and ethical obligation for all evaluators.

Applying a critical cultural lens to evaluation will ensure that efforts have cultural relevance and will generate meaningful findings that stakeholders ultimately will value and use. This Program Evaluation Tip Sheet contains tips and guiding questions aligned with the six steps of CDC's *Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health.*[2]

Self-Reflection Questions for Evaluators

To help explore your own identity, ask yourself

- Where am I from (nationality, region, and heritage)?
- What are my beliefs, values, and religious and political orientation?
- What is my biological sex?
- What is my age group?
- What is my social class?
- Which of the above factors are significant to me?
- What do I see as potential opportunities, challenges, or conflicts for this evaluation?
- What stereotypes do I hold?

Ensuring Cultural Competence in Evaluation

Tips	Guiding Questions
Engage Stakeholders • Assess cultural self-awareness. • Request that stakeholders who reflect the diversity of the community be included throughout the evaluation. • Lay clear ground rules for participation to establish equality. • Build trust by talking openly with the community about the evaluation.	• Does the stakeholder group fully represent the diversity of the program's participants and others affected by the program? • Are meaningful roles planned for stakeholders throughout the evaluation? • Is there a distribution of power among stakeholders? To other distinctions related to status and social class? • Are there multiple voices in planning, implementing, interpreting, and decision making?
Describe the Program • Conduct key informant interviews to clarify stakeholders' perspectives of the program. • Hold an information-gathering session for stakeholders about the social and historical context of the program. • Use models that resonate with the community.	• Are stakeholders' perspectives appropriately reflected? • What is known about the strengths, assets, challenges, and barriers of the community, including the talents and expertise that individual community members or organizations bring? • Are there "gatekeepers of knowledge" within the community that can help describe the social and political context of the program/community?
Focus the Evaluation Design • Engage an experienced facilitator familiar with the community who can guide the development of evaluation questions that reflect stakeholders' values. • Develop a visual chart that describes evaluation design options in such a way that all stakeholders understand the choices and the implications.	• What/whose values and perspectives are represented in the evaluation questions? • Is the design appropriate to the evaluation questions as well as the cultural context and values of the community? • Is the evidence considered credible by the community and stakeholders?
Gather Credible Evidence • Select culturally appropriate data collection instruments. • Develop data collection methods that factor in cultural and linguistic distinctions. • Adapt data collection processes to the stakeholder context.	• Whose perspectives are accepted as credible evidence? Credible to whom? • Are the language, content, and design of the instruments culturally sensitive? Have the instruments been validated with their intended audiences? • Have verbal and nonverbal communication been addressed?
Justify Conclusions • Prior to developing final conclusions, discuss cultural implications during data analysis. • Involve diverse stakeholders in interpreting data. • Ensure that many stakeholders' voices are heard when making judgments.	• How are different stakeholders' perspectives and values addressed in the analysis and interpretation of the evaluation findings? Are conclusions validated by participants? • Are conclusions balanced with culturally appropriate recommendations and community capacity? • Are findings meaningful to the group or community of interest?
Ensure Use and Share Lessons Learned • Generate recommendations through an inclusive process by providing a role for various stakeholders to implement the evaluation findings. • Tailor dissemination of evaluation results to stakeholder needs. • Encourage the use of evaluation information by holding an inclusive meeting about developing an action plan for evaluation use.	• Are communication mechanisms culturally appropriate? • Does the reporting method meet stakeholder needs (both the message and the messenger)? • Are the data presented in context, with efforts made to clarify issues and prevent misuse? • Has the community benefited as anticipated? How?

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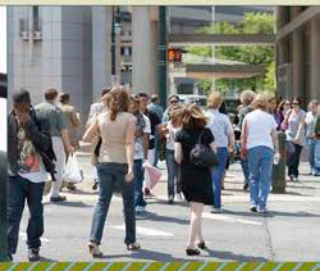

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