Evaluation Method: Tracking

HOW-TO-GUIDE

Purpose of Simple Tracking:

- To understand when or how often something specific occurs over a specific period of time.

Simple Tracking's 6 Steps:

1. Decide what you want to know.

What kind of information do you want to know?

Are you looking for evidence of a need in the community? Or are you looking for evidence that your efforts have been successful? In either case, a list of what you want to know will help you be intentional about what you choose to track and for how long.

2. Decide on the location and/or time period for tracking.

When and where should the tracking take place? How often? For how long?

Thoughtful planning ensures the tracking will help you discover what you want to know.

3. Choose an effective method for tracking.

Paper and pencil, digital, or automatic are all options. Paper and pencil is the easiest, but also the least reliable. Apps like "Counter" or "Thing Counter" can help track events digitally. Automatic tracking is available through things like social media where visits, likes, etc. can be tracked without any effort.

4. Implement the tracking plan.

When you have developed a strong plan, it is time to begin tracking. Observe carefully, following the plan. Take additional notes about the setting and time period to help you understand what is happening if you note a shift in numbers you have tracked.

5. Analyze and summarize the results.

Read through the data you collected and reflect on what you observed. What patterns do you see? What do the patterns tell you? Finally, how would you apply what you learned to this situation or another?

6. (Optional) Decide how to tell the "story" of what you tracked.

How do you want to share what you learned through the tracking process? What impacts might you want to build on? Where might more work be needed? Who else should be involved?

Participatory Tracking

Purpose Of Participatory Tracking:

- To involve key stakeholders in monitoring what is occurring over a period of time.
- To increase stakeholders buy-in to (possibly) take action around an issue they are observing.

Additional Steps of Participatory Tracking:

Participatory tracking, for the most part, follows the same basic steps as simple tracking. However, a few additional key steps make it possible to engage stakeholders in the process. During the planning process, add these two steps:

1. Decide who you would like to help with the tracking.

Which stakeholders could help with tracking? Why do you want them to help? What will motivate them to help?

Think through your reasons for wanting stakeholders to help. Then, get some early feedback about what would motivate them to participate. At this point, do not ask them to help. The first few steps are for planning.

2. Prepare the stakeholders to help with the tracking.

What do stakeholders need in order to help with tracking? How can you make it as easy as possible for them?

Providing stakeholders with the tools and skills they need will help them to be effective and accurate in tracking what you want to know. Put yourself in their shoes and think through what they need to be successful.

3. Develop a plan for how to gather tracking data from the stakeholders.

How will you gather the data from the stakeholders?

How you collect it will depend on how you asked stakeholders to track the data. Make the process of gathering the data as easy as possible.

4. Ask the stakeholders to help you.

After you have a solid plan in place, it is time to ask the stakeholders to help. Hopefully if you are clear about why you want them to help and you understand what motivates them, they will say yes. However, people are busy, so be prepared to hear and accept "no" as an answer from some people.

Finally, it is time to implement your tracking plan following the same steps as the simple tracking process on page 1 of this resource. Enjoy what you learn!

Additional Resources:

For more detailed information, click on the following links:

- The Hunger Project, "Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation"
- Better Evaluation, "Participatory Evaluation"