From a Web Series: Youth Work in the Time of Covid-19: Measuring What Matters Most

Planning Guide For Real-Time Data Collection for Young Programs During Covid-19

DRAFT

Developed by Deborah Moore, Youth Work Learning Lab, and the Youth Studies and Youth Development Leadership Departments
at the University of Minnesota - School of Social Work

In partnership with St. Paul Sprockets, Minneapolis Afterschool Network and Ignite Afterschool

October 2020

A CALL TO SHIFT EVALUATION EXPECTATIONS

Nothing during a pandemic can be thought of in the same way, including evaluation. Youth programs and those that support and fund them must find new ways to run programming as well as document, learn, and respond in an entirely different landscape. This guide begins with the premise that appropriate outcomes to expect pre Covid19 may need reduction and revision. Programs could and perhaps should, focus on the most critical questions that they need answers for so they can continue to adapt, revise and respond to how the world has changed.

A call to shift evaluation expectations is also beginning to emerge from field experts. According to Michael Quinn Patton, "our first priority in evaluation during Covid-19 is to adapt evaluation plans and designs now." He urges evaluation to "detach from rigor as an absolute standard" because answers and responses are needed quickly and change happens often in turbulent times. Instead, evaluation in a pandemic requires different ways of thinking and includes what Patton calls "real-time data rules."

Instead of traditional evaluation efforts, real-time data rules focus on developmental measures, quick and up-to-date data that can document what's happening, flag emerging issues, and document how needs are changing. Programs can use this data to respond with more immediate and fluid options. Patton also urges us to conduct evaluations that go deeper to sort out the complexity of what is happening. but with a much smaller sampling. It may not be the best time to use longitudinal type measures to track academic or other youth outcomes. Instead, measures should capture the right now, more informally and frequently. How this looks in practice might include a small number of interviews versus conducting full group surveys, or weekly reflective conversations with youth, captured on paper and discussed at a staff meeting to inform shifts needed.

Patton is voicing what we hear from Minnesota's youth workers in the midst of the changes facing young people and their families. But not all youth organizations are able to respond with quick adaptation. There are many possible reasons why, such as staffing changes, funding reductions, fear, or lack of knowledge of what and how to change. For these reasons, the Youth Work Learning Lab created the first series of support around how to refocus our work with young people, by returning to our most core purposes. Using youth work principles and practices, we provided web sessions titled, "What is Youth Work During the Time of Covid19" with a companion *"Planning Guide For Refocusing How You Support Young People during Covid-19"* and a library of supporting resources. These efforts were meant to remind practitioners of why youth programs exist, the purpose, and how to redesign focused on the most relevant and pressing needs of our young people.

Given, we are clearly in a significant and ongoing pandemic cycle, this next guide on evaluation is designed to reinforce the same youth work principles. The guide advocates for a shift in evaluation efforts. It supports practitioners to make that shift through a guided planning process to decide what, how, and for what purpose they will evaluate. It also includes steps to engage with key funders and stakeholders to align and negotiate for sensible adaptations around evaluation and reporting during Covid19.

We have designed this guide to give youth workers permission to measure differently and help them make their case with stakeholders. It fosters conversations with staff and young people about evaluating what is most critical to understand and then gets practical about how to put the ideas into action. The guide, as Patton suggests, is not perfect, but a "real-time data" process to support new idea generation. It is also meant to take some of the pressure off youth workers to design and evaluate programs when it is easy to feel overwhelmed. It is our hope that it provides simple steps to take that leave youth workers feeling supported to take on evaluation plans that best fit what they need to know in a challenging time.

With Care and Respect,

Deborah Moore – Youth Work Learning Lab – University of Minnesota

OVERVIEW OF THE GUIDE

This Guide includes three key sections for ease of use.

Section One - includes four key recommendations for how to shift youth program evaluation and an articulation of the evidence and resulting stance for what, why and how we are encouraging programs to adapt their measures during Covid19.

Section Two – includes a step-by-step process to move through and determine your Real-Time Data Cycle

Section Three – An Issue Brief for use in discussions with staff and funders, stakeholders, as well as links to a curated set of literature to use for advocacy, education, springboards and planning. The Link to the materials is here: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1xrNfa7qB6Z32kkLH7zWFh4TKrQ8G6uDg?usp=sharing

Section One - Recommendations For Measurement In Youth Programs During Covid19

The following recommendations are drawn from the perspective of three main areas of knowledge; youth worker on the ground experiences from local listening sessions, author practice expertise and existing literature and research from comparative times. These recommendations are intended to serve as an evidenced stance from which to advocate for and create pathways to a partnership between youth programs and their funders and stakeholders.

1. **Let go of the expectations for measuring what should be measured and evaluated before Covid19.**

Discussion:

Experts in evaluation and youth work are beginning to call for rethinking our expectations for evaluation and reporting given the changes around us. For example, Michael Quinn Patton's first recommendation is to "adapt evaluation plans and designs now," (Social Science Space, Sage, 2020). The Denver Afterschool Alliance recently published a guide, COVID-19 School Year Program Toolkit A resource for Denver's Out of School Time Program Providers and included a "Cheat Sheet: Measuring the Impact of OST Virtual Programs." The Cheat Sheet gives ideas to programs about how to quickly adjust to the kinds of measures programs might find more useful in these stressful environments. Ideas include using staff outreach data, informal web-based polls and click rates for email and other documents sent to young people. At the Youth Work Learning Lab – we created a series of web sessions, planning guides, and supportive documents to encourage youth programs to smartly refocus how they work with youth based on core principles and practice strengths, such as building relationships, connections, youth-adult partnership and mental health and wellness.

While youth programs are responding in a spectrum of ways, all seem to understand that major shifts are happening in their work. As the year comes to a close, programs know they face reporting to funders and other stakeholders about what they accomplished. Given the pandemic, what we are hearing from youth workers and the relevant literature guidance, expecting programs to report on the same measures should be reconsidered. Simply reasoned, the majority of youth workers are providing programs in very different ways and it should follow that adapting reporting expectations for programs as set in earlier funding agreements. Instead, funders and stakeholders should give programs the opportunity to shift to what Patton terms "real-time data collection" to learn, reflect and act on what young people need, and the changes programs will continue to face throughout the year.

2. **Shift measurement focus on the most critical challenges that givedata to adapt and document.**

Discussion:

In the literature, common themes are found to support significant shifts in what services and support is provided when communities are hit by significant events, like Covid19. In poll data collected from more than 400 youth workers by the Youth Work Learning Lab, 20% of youth programs already significantly shifted and added new roles and activities to support their young people. These included things like access to resources such as food, additional mental health supports, and technology support. According to past research, the first step is to support young people in very specific and often different ways. National Parks and Recreation (Thompson, 2015) recommends shifting to different supports during disasters including:

- Educate young people on the situation
- Take on roles with others in the community to make sure basic needs (food and housing, etc) are being met
- Serve as a safe space to check-in and discuss mental health
- Create support for young people to take action on addresses the issues in the community related to the pandemic
- Support youth gaining access to needed technology and internet

Given, new focuses for programming, relevant measures that capture the data staff need also look different. Measures more useful in this time include youth and community needs assessments, mental health and wellness assessment and program design and practice assessment. This data will better support reflection and adaptation for staff roles and program design, as well as inform and advocate about the needs and experiences voiced by young people. Further, while schools are and should remain focused on academic outcomes (although perhaps also adapted), youth programs should lean into their strength and focus on knowing the young people they work with and co-creating the spaces they need during a pandemic.

3. **Use less formal and more frequent data collection.**

Discussion:

In May web sessions, we heard stories from youth workers about how food insecurity, lack of access to things needed to learn during the school day, and anxiety and mental health were major and immediate concerns. In Minnesota, programs like PCYC, Minneapolis YWCA, and A.C.E.S., delivered groceries to homes, provided daily meals, organized and distributed supplies as a major part of their youth programming work. By September, however, we began to hear stories from youth workers about drop off and Zoom fatigue with young people. What worked in the spring may be the exact opposite of what young people need during the coming winter months. And again, as the pandemic cycle continues spring will bring different challenges.

Youth programs are anxious about collecting and reporting data. It's difficult to determine what should be measured. There is no precedent for measuring outcomes in the current environment. Data collection and measurement shouldn't be wholly disregarded, but it also shouldn't be an additional barrier to successful program delivery. To put into play a more sustainable and timely cycle of measurement, many experts are calling for less formal and more frequent data (Josephson, Emergence Collective, 2020). This could include informal conversations and reflection time with youth each week, polls on a web session, or weekly calls with questions for youth to share their insights. Data collected and themed in simple qualitative ways, will keep tabs on what is shifting, and better identify the specific needs of each particular young person.

4. Capture what is shifting and how the responses to the shift are working.

<u>Discussion:</u>

From anecdotal evidence, we know youth programs are shifting in many ways during Covid19. In conversations across youth networks, we are hearing stories of incredible responses to the needs of families, sensible reductions of less important activities and even innovation around programming. We will eventually be on the other side of the pandemic, and we already suspect that certain aspects of life will not be the same. During this worldwide experience, there is an opportunity to capture how we adapt and that should include youth programs. Even in natural disasters in the last decade, information was captured and codified the important ways youth programs and other human services responded to the time. However, with the limited resources and infrastructure in the youth work field, this seems a nearly impossible task without some outside support. This could be an opportunity for funders and stakeholders to fund research and historical records that find ways to add up the collection of data that might teach us lessons for the future.

At a minimum, it is the hope at the Youth Work Learning Lab, that if we encourage programs to capture contextualized, relevant data frequently, it will assure better and more immediate responses to the changing needs of young people this year. After all, it is much easier to capture data from a small group of young people who have strong personal relationships with youth workers. The school systems are certainly less able to be nimble enough to capture the kind of data that can be imagined here, because of their scope, scale and accountability systems. The stories of what changed, and what worked in response to those changes, however, may be valuable as we move into a world increasingly likely to face more changing weather patterns and indeed new pandemics.

Section Two - Planning A Real-Time Data Cycle – A Process To Help Programs Create And Use The Data Most Useful To Your Program

Introduction:

What follows is a step-by-step planning process to help programs self determine what they should evaluate. While these steps are hardly innovative, we hope they are at least practical. We have taken seriously what youth workers have articulated in the last six months, as well as the newly emerging guidance from experts in the field. We have also taken seriously that most youth programs have many funders and stakeholders that support their work, and they must also be considered in the equation. Decisions, ultimately, will be in the hands of those partners. However, it is our stance that those closest to the issue can offer the best insight about what is needed if given support, guidance and the freedom to do it. With a spirit of belief in partnership, collaboration, unique knowledge sets and shared commitments to young people, we hope it creates clarity and unity around one area of stress this year for programs – measurement and reporting.

Step One: Get Ready To Advocate For Shifting What And How You Measure

Discussion:

Many youth programs have made significant shifts in what they are doing each week. Even if programs have not added significant new roles like food distribution, to the routines, Youth Work Learning Lab polls show 50% of youth programs have shifted their programming to all online and close to 40% of programs are providing a mix of some online and some in-person support. Given the seismic shift in how youth programs are redesigning their work, it is sensible to adapt what is measured and reported.

While, some funders have already connected with grantees about shifting expectations around evaluation, others have not. We recommend that youth programs advocate for what they want to measure during the pandemic. Then, when that becomes more, clear programs can build a sensible case and plan for how they will collect what Patton termed, “real-time data”.

To support how programs will advocate for what they need, the Youth Work Learning Lab created an issue brief to frame and give you simple communications points to help make your case. There are also additional resources to beef up the evidence you can use to negotiate an evaluation shift.

Resources:

- Samantha K Brooks, Rebecca K Webster, Louise E Smith, Lisa Woodland, Simon Wessely, Neil Greenberg, Gideon James Rubin. (2020). The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: rapid review of the evidence. The Lancet, Rapid Review. Vol 395, March 14, 2020. https://www.thelancet.com/article/S0140-6736(20)30460-8/fulltext

- Michael Quinn Patton. (2020). Evaluation Implications of the Coronavirus Emergency. Social Science Space, Sage Publishing. March, 2020. https://www.socialsciencespace.com/2020/03/evaluation-implications-of-the-coronavirus-emergency/

- Sprang, Ginny; Clark, James J.; Silman, Miriam; Leigh, Phyllis W.; Jackson, Candice M.; and LaJoie, A. Scott. (2014). "Evidence-Informed Guidelines for Pediatric Pandemic Planning and Response" (*Center on Trauma and Children Reports*. 3. https://uknowledge.uky.edu/ctac_reports/3.

Process:

An easy way to make your case to a funder is to prepare an advocacy pitch. Some programs may have one for funder visits during a site visit, but this pitch is specifically around evaluation. However, it may be useful to draw in some of the language about your program if you have existing pitches. Steps include:

1. Review the Issue Brief (Attachment A) and the resources above for tips on how to frame your conversation with funders and other stakeholders.

2. Create a short elevator speech with a clear ask for time to revise your evaluation plan. This could be used either in an email or on a short phone or Zoom call you schedule with your funder. Elements to include in your elevator speech are as follows:

    - Say your name and youth organization/program. Remind the funder of what your program does in one sentence.

    - Briefly share the key problems for your program because of the pandemic. Give an example to make it relatable to the funder. (Use your own examples and the evidence from experts or data here to support how things changed)

    - Make the case that because you have shifted what you do at your program, you would like to negotiate a new focus for evaluation and reporting to gather more useful data.

    - Briefly describe your solution to the challenges around evaluation (i.e. more time to create a team to refocus evaluation plan, new measures if you know them, a small increase in resources to help pay for outside evaluation help, or an extended reporting timeline, or whatever else you need).

- Next share how your possible solution(s) might be better or more applicable than the existing evaluation.

- Explain your progress/achievements to date to show you are still focused on doing great youth work.

- End by thanking them for considering your request and ask if they have any questions.

When you have this written, double-check your statement with these questions:

- Does the pitch talk about those things of most interest to the target audience—prospective donor or partner?
- Does the pitch say what your organization can still do to support the intentions of the grant?
- Does the pitch tell a story, not just list facts?

Finally, if you need more in-depth support in putting together an elevator pitch, check out "Going The Distance: Step-By-Step Strategies To Foster NGO Sustainability." https://www.ngoconnect.net/sites/default/files/resources/Part%203%20-%20Connecting%20with%20Donors.pdf

Step Two: Connect With Funders To Explore Possible Evaluation Shifts

Discussion:

The purpose of Step One is to get clear about what you have committed to measure and then work with funders to determine more useful evaluation and reporting expectations for the year. Below are some nonprofit management resources on how to negotiate with your funders and stakeholders around critical issues like adapting an evaluation plan, as well as easy steps to prepare for a conversation with your funders.

Resources:

- Ospina, Sonia & Diaz, William & O'Sullivan, James. (2002). Negotiating Accountability: Managerial Lessons From Identity-Based Nonprofit Organizations. Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly - Nonprofit Volunt Sect Q. 31. 5-31. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242295245_Negotiating_Accountability_Managerial_Lessons_From_Identity-Based_Nonprofit_Organizations

- Lyons-Newman, B. (2020). Negotiation Is a Part of Nonprofit Life. 8 Strategies for Acing Your Next One. https://arizonanonprofits.org/news/485066/Negotiation-Is-a-Part-of-Nonprofit-Life.-8-Strategies-for-Acing-Your-Next-One.htm

Process:

1. Review and capture all evaluation requirements, including specific targets or outcomes, measurement methods/processes and timelines in one document.

2. Review stakeholder/funder websites to see if they already acknowledge or are communicating revised expectations for evaluation.

3. Set up a time for conversation with key funders to give them the pitch and come to an agreement about how to proceed.

4. Make sure you follow-up in writing (email is fine) to capture the agreement for later reference. The funder may also have additional forms or information they need for documenting any changes.

Step Three: Create A Working Group To Plan, Design And Conduct The Evaluation Process

Discussion:

Given this year is filled with many additional roles, we recommend a small cross-section of staff to serve as the key working group. For example, you could include a key manager/coordinator, a staff who works directly with youth and a decision-maker for the program. If at all possible, consider asking a few youth to join the team. However, because this guide recommends that your evaluation plans include more frequent and informal data collection, it will be important to engage a much broader range of people to help with the informal data collection as "evaluators". This includes all staff, maybe volunteers and even young people. This evaluation working group, however, will be in charge of planning, designing, conducting analyzing, etc. and taking the lead on making that happen.

One side note, when asking staff to take on this task, have a serious discussion about what work will need to be put on hold, on taken off staff plates to be on this team. Do not expect this role to be added as a new component of a staff member's job this year. Things added require things removed to help support a healthier balance during the pandemic. Take staff mental health and wellness as seriously as you do with your young people.

Process:

Give staff information on the Evaluation Work Group to help them decide if they can join. Information should include:

- Purpose of the group
- Goals for group
- Expected products (plan, set of tools, reports, etc.)
- Timeline/deadlines for group
- Regular meeting times
- Makeup of group

When the team is in place and work responsibilities have shifted to give space for this work, set up regular meeting times to ensure a quick move through the process. This could be done at various paces, but weekly might be the most efficient to keep the efforts within a certain time frame and meet a reasonable deadline to produce the plan.

Step Four: Engage With Staff And Young People To Learn About What They Think are The Critical Questions to Answer

Discussion:

In a variety of reports and studies on what supports young people during pandemics and natural disasters, there is a consistent call to include youth in taking charge of the issues in their community. This can aid in healing from trauma, feelings of empowerment, self-control and hope. It also can better assure that programs are focused on evaluating what young people tell us is most important. How you engage young people and staff can look various ways, but it is critical to be mindful that in times of constant change, more regular data points are better. Thus, less formal ways of engaging all youth may fit better.

Resources:

- Sabo Flores, K. (2008). Youth Involvement in Evaluation and Research. Youth participatory evaluation: Strategies for engaging young people. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons. http://actforyouth.net/youth_development/evaluation/ype.cfm

- Josephson, L. (2020). How Can We Use Evaluation To Support Decision-Making And Reflection In This Time Of Community Crisis? Emergence Collective. Apr 7, 2020 at: https://www.emergencecollective.org/post/crisiseval

Process:

1. Determine how youth will be engaged in evaluation.

One of the aspects that should be included in your evaluation plan is how, when and in what role you will engage young people in the processes you undertake. Even in the best of times, to engage youth in evaluation may seem daunting, but in many places, Youth Participatory Evaluation (YPE) and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) is already used to gain knowledge and make decisions. There are many resources available (a few are included in the Google Files to go along with this guide), but given these times add more stress and challenge to learning something new, we recommend you engage young people in ways that seem most doable in your environment. It may, or may not be the time to move full steam ahead with a YPE process where the youth work alongside the staff to determine how to shift what you measure and report.

However, if you engage young people in places where staff already connect with them regularly, you should be able to gain plenty of data by asking them about what us happening in their lives or in the program. The following continuum from Kim Sabo Flores gives you a quick picture of the range of involvement to be considered when working with youth and evaluation. We suggest using this as a point for conversation with staff and young people to gauge their capacity and interest in the work beyond the Evaluation Work Group members.

A Continuum of Youth Involvement in Evaluation and Research

Youth Involvement	Process
Highest	Youth-led research/evaluation is part of organizational planning cycle; experienced youth act as peer trainers and are paid
High	Youth participate in research design, data collection, and analysis; youth report findings, implement change
Medium-High	Youth design and administer research instruments; adults analyze results, develop findings, implement changes
Medium-Low	Youth give input on process
Low	Youth collect data

Very Low	Information is collected from youth
None	Outside adult conducts research without collecting information directly from youth

Sabo Flores, K. (2008). Youth participatory evaluation: Strategies for engaging young people. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.

2. Determine simple questions about what is happening to help focus your areas of measurement.

In a staff meeting and a session with youth, come up with some basic questions that will guide the evaluation team around the purpose of the evaluation during the pandemic year. This will help the Evaluation Work Group shape the key questions your program will design the evaluation around. Some examples of questions include:

- What has changed for you since the pandemic? Why?
- How are you affected by the pandemic in your daily life?
- What are some of the things that are most challenging for you since the pandemic?
- What has changed in our program since the pandemic and why?
- What are some challenges for you in the program?
- What are some things you need or want from the program during this time?

*Adapted from "How can we use evaluation to support decision-making and reflection in this time of community crisis?" (Emergence Collective, 2020).

3. Collect and analyze data to inform your evaluation.

The Evaluation Work Group should prepare a very brief script for using questions like those above in a single 30-minute session. Then, the group should plan what youth can be asked, when, and who will serve as interviews and write up the data. When data is collected, the group should review the answers to find themes that can help guide 3-4 areas they might focus evaluation questions on for the year. This will serve as direct guidance for Step Five. Again, do not get fancy, but have each Evaluation Work Group member read the responses from the questions and come up with themes from what they read on their own. Then, share themes in a meeting and come to an agreement about which the team will focus on based on this input.

Step Five: Create a Simple Plan for Evaluation

<u>Discussion:</u>

Some programs will have a robust set of measurements they are using during a typical year. For example, in the Twin Cities, the M3 program quality improvement process is used in youth program networks like Sprockets, Minneapolis Afterschool network and Ignite Afterschool, to support multiple data collection, reflection and analysis. For programs with existing measures, you could take the current evaluation plans and compare what you have learned about existing funder expectations with your youth responses in Step Four. In the process, you may find sensible places to continue as usual, places where you may need to alter and adapt measures planned, or eliminate or add measures. We suggest using a sorting activity to spur healthy conversation about what measures would be most useful to inform regular decision-making. Again note, this will depend on the earlier Step One and Step Two agreements and negotiations with your funders.

For programs with few or no required evaluation reports, you have more freedom to choose without the lens of funder expectations. However, the same sorting process may also aid your group in determining the most critical things to measure. Remember, all programs are facing dramatic shifts in work roles, learning formats and more.

Process:

1. Compare and contrast measures planned and measures needed**.**

Start with both the list of measurements you expected to do (pre-Covid) and the list of possible questions that you discovered most critical to answer in the responses from young people.

-On a large piece of paper list out the expected measures on one side and the questions deemed most critical from youth on the other, as two separate columns. Next, facilitate a discussion with the workgroup about which measures are clearly related to the critical questions. Draw lines between questions and measures that seem to fit.

-Next, review what measures are not connected to any of the critical questions. Then, list any questions that have no measurement attached to it. Come to an agreement about which, if any, current measures, should be delayed for the year. Make sure to talk through what would not happen as a result of not measuring this indicator. Take the questions that are not connected to any measure and do a quick brainstorm to see if you have any data that might help that question get answered. If not, hold these questions, as they will filter into the next step.

-Finish, by capturing all ideas about the rationale for letting go of any measures you would like to delay. This will be important to use in conversations with funders.

2. Select measures that are doable and fit your needs

First, and as a reminder, according to trauma-informed practices, we should consider adding to trauma during evaluation and measurement processes (Emergence Collective, 2020). Given, the additional stresses on mental health, the possible trauma due to deaths or illness inside families, what we measure and how we measure should be viewed through the lens of trauma-informed practices. We should not measure, or use a method that will add to the stress, anxiety or anger for young people, nor the staff, but open opportunities to share, vent, and explore. At the same time, youth work programs and staff are often safe and trusted places for young people and create more possibilities for real conversations. They know the adults inside these spaces have limitations on the type of support they can give, but it's very informality and care is often what is needed. For more info on equity and youth work go to: https://www.childtrends.org/publications/embedding-racial-equity-perspective-positive-youth-development-approach.

Next, review and consider types of measurements that could be useful for the questions most critical to your program. To help sort out and expand what measures may work for your program during the pandemic, consider a much broader set of qualitative and quantitative measures and less formal methods. Start by reviewing your critical questions developed and then looking at what measures already exist that could help you more easily use them. We suggest that given the pandemic, programs should consider one or more of the following measures; youth and community needs assessments, mental health and wellness assessments, or program quality improvement measures. There are a number of resources for each kind of measure available for review in the Google File documents.

Spend time at an Evaluation Work Group Meeting reviewing the critical questions – looking at the available collection of measures and see what the team thinks matches best. This will reduce the time you spend developing the measures and could also strengthen the validity of the data you collect. But again, do not use measures that do not get at what you need merely to use an existing measure. There may not be a relevant set of questions for what you want to know and we cannot expect programs to develop gold star measures during a pandemic. Lean on what is most useful and possible for you to do. The following measures are all available in the Google files at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1xrNfa7qB6Z32kkLH7zWFh4TKrQ8G6uDg?usp=sharing

Youth and Community Needs Assessment Measures:

- McCawley, P. F., & University of Idaho. (2009). Methods for conducting an educational needs assessment: Guidelines for Cooperative Extension System professionals. Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho Extension. https://www.extension.uidaho.edu/publishing/pdf/BUL/BUL0870.pdf

- Deck, S. (2007). Opportunity Youth Needs Assessment. Spalding University, School of Social Work. December 1, 2017. http://www.connectlouisvilleyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/CSYA-Opportunity-Youth-Needs-Assessment-Final-Report-12-1-17.pdf

- City of Airdrie Youth Needs Assessment. Submitted to Social Planning. Submitted by Objective Research and Evaluation Inc. April 25, 2017. https://publicmtg.airdrie.ca/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=3053

Mental Health and Wellness Measures

- Carver, C. S. (1997). You want to measure coping but your protocol's too long: Consider the Brief COPE. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 4, 92-100. https://local.psy.miami.edu/people/faculty/ccarver/availbale-self-report-instruments/brief-cope/

- Treat Yo'Self!: Promoting Self-Care For Our. Powerpoint slide. Roles, Relationships, & Relevance In The Changing Landscape Of Adolescent Health. Cornell University. Healthy Teen Network's 37th Annual Conference, Las Vegas, NV. 2016. https://www.coursehero.com/file/53027588/Luc-Treat-YoSelf-slides-and-handoutspdf/

- Teen Wellness Self Assessment. Eight Constructs that measure aspect of teen wellness. SamaritanFamilyWellness.org. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b54fe275ffd2051be834f8c/t/5c5c9e8c9140b77d1c907638/1549573784643/Teen+Self+Assessment.pdf

- The Wellness Evaluation of Lifestyle (WEL) measures 19 dimensions of wellness. WEL-TJ, J.E. Myers & T.J. Sweeney, 2001. http://apjcn.nhri.org.tw/server/your-health/programs/wellness/WELinstrument2.pdf

Program Quality and Practice Measures

- Preparation, Interaction, Reflection and Logistics (PIRL) Tool. *An adaptation of the Weikart Center's School Age PQA for Denver's Virtual Youth Programs. https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/713/formsanddocs/DAA_PIRL_May2020.pdf*

- Search Institute. (2020). Building Developmental Relationships During the Covid-19 Crisis. Minneapolis, MN. https://www.search-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Coronavirus-checklist-Search-Institute.pdf

- Search Institute. (2020). Developmental Relationships. Minneapolis, MN. https://www.search-institute.org/dev-relationships-framework

- Denver Afterschool Alliance. (2020). COVID-19 School Year Program Toolkit - A Resource for Denver's Out of School Time Program Providers. https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/713/documents/youth-programs-(covid-19)/DAA_SchoolYearProgramToolkit_COVID-19_2020.pdf

3. Determine method of measurement

Resources:

- Kabir, S.M.S. (2016)Methods of Data Collection. Curtain University. See Google File.

- Using Qualitative methods to elicit young people's perspectives on their environments: some ideas for community health initiatives. Virginia Morrow. Health Education Research, 2001. https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Using-qualitative-methods-to-elicit-young-people%27s-Morrow/8aff692d2b517d56618e5055b48d159bb82e3f0d

As Patton and others recommend, the pandemic should cause us to move towards more real-time data collection methods. These can be quantitative or qualitative measures, but with an emphasis on less formal measures. For example, staff could capture weekly reflections on key questions during an online reflection with youth, in Instagram posts, or by 15-20 minute phone check-ins with young people. This is all legitimate data.

The key is to write it down in one place, then to spend some time reviewing what you see and hear in the data. Don't get caught up in being an expert in analysis, look for themes across the responses, what sticks out, what doesn't make sense to you. If you need to have a bit more support on looking for themes, look at the document in the General Evaluation Folder titled, Techniques to Identify Themes. If more formality is needed (make sure you have a rationale for why this is true), also consider brief online surveys using some of the tools in the Google File, and get them on a simple platform like Survey Monkey or Google Forms.

Consider the methods of data collection noted below in your plan, and review them based on ease of use, and the complexity of the questions you are asking. For example, if you need to go deep and get rich data for a question on what a typical day looks like for a young person, an interview might fit. If you want a sense of what is causing the most stress for young people or what is their favorite part of the program time, you could do a poll or put an Instagram question to the group. These methods will provide rich and often more insightful data, than surveys, as long as you don't ask a yes or no

question. For some tips on good question writing, go to:
https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/programs/spha/docs/constructing_survey_questions_tip_sheet.pdf

Informal Methods for Data Collection

- Individual Interviews
- Focus Groups
- In Session Reflection Captures
- Polls
- Social media question posts
- Observations
- Surveys
- Case-studies
- Diaries
- Activity Sampling

Some considerations to review as you explore methods include:

-Staff capacity
-Resource limitations
-Specific needs of the evaluation target group: For example, a written survey may not be suitable for groups with English as an additional language or age
-Cultural appropriateness:

Once you have selected the focus for your measurement and the method, the next step is to get it on paper.

3. Create a simple draft of the evaluation plan

Resources:

- Smart, J. (2020). Planning an Evaluation: Step by step. Australian Institute of Family Studies. Victoria, AUS. https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/sites/default/files/publication-documents/2006_planning_and_evaluation_step_by_step.pdf

Using the template below, create a draft of your plan with the framing of the most critical questions you have already determined in the steps above. There are additional resources around creating this and other evaluation plans, but to reduce time spent planning, we offer this simple framework.

Evaluation Plan Template

What is your evaluation purpose and evaluation audience/s?

For example, is the key purpose for your data to adapt and improve how your run sessions with youth during the pandemic? Or is it to create simple ways to ensure staff and youth are connecting and getting support around their mental health and wellness? Is it to document the shifts you are making in what you do? Or to capture what works best in the new environment? Once purposes are clear, who is the audience? Funders? Staff? Youth? Families? Policymakers? Without this clarity, measures often miss the target or do not get used. This template, adapted from J
Planning an Evaluation: Step by Step, (Smart, J, 2020), is an easy way to connect and link from your questions – through reporting.

Questions	Key indicator	Data Collection Methods?	Sample and recruitment	Ethics and consent process	Who will collect data and when?	Who will analyze data and when?
	The things you hear, read or observe that you will measure to demonstrate progress on your outcome.	Survey? Interviews? Observation? Mixed methods? Reflection journals? Outline what method/s you will use here.	Outline how many people you intend to collect data from and the characteristics of this group. Describe how you will recruit them.	Outline the ethical considerations for the project, including how you will obtain consent from participants.		
*This template is included as a single page for copying and use at the end of the guide.						

Step Six: Capture Data, Analyze and Plan for Improvements

Discussion:

If the organization implements a real-time data collection, then the evaluation team will need to set up regular times to review and analyze data together. They will also need to consider how to collect and analyze sets of data over time and use that for more formal reports. In this step, the evaluation team will focus on writing up findings from the measures to share with the primary audiences, such as staff and young people. These data collection timelines as noted in your plan should follow with sharing times with your first audiences. The purpose of the sharing time is to review what the team is finding in the data, reflect on how that relates to the experiences of those in the group and determine some simple places for improvement or other uses of the data.

Process:

1. Create Informal Reports

In this step, the focus is to engage staff in regular improvement processes. For staff, these informal data "reports" could happen at regular standing staff meetings/calls. Here is an example of what could be included in the informal regular reports to staff that could lead to conversations about program design and improvement actions.

Informal Report Elements

- Key purpose and question for the evaluation
- Who was involved and how the info was collected
- Three themes across the responses
- Two things the team is concluding
- One thing that was puzzling
- Possible recommendations from the data (This could be used as a starter list and then have additional brainstorming with staff in the report sharing time)

2. Use Monthly "Take Action" Plans to Foster Adaptation and Improvements

After a conversation on the data, the team should work with staff to create simple take action plans with a short timeline. For example, perhaps a take action plan is created to explore a variety of existing resources and curriculum staff to foster using art for healing and mental wellness. The action is based on feedback from youth about higher stress levels. The actions should be short and directed towards one small achievable goal. It should be clear to staff and the evaluation team, that these plans will be a part of regular discussion each month to check on progress and solve any problems in connections to the actions. Also note, keep copies of these plans and progress made, to use in the formal reports for funders in the next step.

The following Take Action Plan is an example of a template that could be used. The plan is also attached at the end of this guide for copying and use.

Critical Question Focus	Data Finding	Take Action Step	Who will be involved?	What is needed to make it happen?	When will it be done?	How will we learn about how it worked?

Step Seven: Report and Share with Funders

Discussion:

Writing up a report on your data is perhaps more challenging than more typical years. There may not be simple percentages to tally or scores to share. However, the elements of the report should remain similar to what you are used to including in a report. In this step, the evaluation team will draw analysis across a variety of data sets from the reporting period and use the same simple analysis processes used for improvement purposes. As an additional step, the team will look for triangulating data if possible, and when helpful, connecting the findings to any literature that is relevant to what you were trying to understand. Finally, this step will offer some specific tools and resources to help create reports that are more interesting and impactful. This part of the process, while it could be reviewed for feedback with should be taken on by the team to reduce other staff time needed.

Resources:

The World Health Organization. (2013). Evaluation Practice Handbook. Geneva, SWI. https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/96311/9789241548687_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Process:

1. Analyze across data sets collected over time.

Start this step by gathering the multiple set of data collected over time on similar questions. Begin by reading the key findings reports created for staff meetings. Use the same theming process used for the informal reports, but now looking across all the data collected over time.

As a second look, consider all the action steps and what they added up to during the year. Here are some questions that could be used to reflect on data:

- Were there certain types of actions that worked best?
- What did not work well?
- How many actions did staff follow through with in the program?
- What were some of the barriers discovered?
- What did you learn about the key questions that framed your evaluation?
- What questions are now emerging about what you learned for future evaluation?

Elements to Include In A Formal Evaluation Report

- Background Information on the issue or need addressed by the program
- The purpose and objectives of the program
- A clear description of how the program is organized and its activities
- The methodology – how the evaluation was conducted and an explanation of why it was done this way.
- This should include what surveys or interview questions were used and when and how they were delivered
- (and a copy should be included in the appendix)
- This should also include sampling – or how many people participated in the evaluation, who they were and how they were recruited
- A brief explanation of who and how data was analyzed
- A description of how consent was obtained and how ethical obligations to participants were met
- Findings – what was learned from the evaluation (and what it means for the program) and how do the results compare with your objectives and outcomes
- Recommendations – detailed and actionable suggestions for possible changes to the program or service that have come from the findings
- Limitations to the evaluation and how future evaluations will overcome these limitations

Evaluation Plan Template – Attachment B ____ (Program)

What is your evaluation purpose and evaluation audience/s?

Questions	Key indicator	Data Collection Methods?	Sample and recruitment	Ethics and consent process	Who will collect data and when?	Who will analyze data and when?

Adapted from: Smart, J. (2020). Planning an Evaluation: Step by step. Australian Institute of Family Studies. Victoria, AUS.

ATTACHMENT C – Take Action Plan

Program/Site:

Staff:

Date:

Critical Question Focus	Data Finding	Take Action Steps	Who will be involved?	What is needed to make it happen?	When will it be done?	How will we learn about how it worked?