Section 5: Evaluation
Notes, key learnings and tips

Program evaluation is often viewed as important mainly for its role in gaining further funding. This is because funders typically base funding decisions on evaluation results or program outcomes. However, a meaningful program evaluation process can also be an invaluable tool you can use to increase the effectiveness of your training program.

The importance of evaluations

Evaluations are the way we learn how to do our work better. They are critical for internal project and program planning. Feedback from those who participated in training is the only real way to understand what worked well and what needs to be changed.

> **TIP**: Try to avoid seeing program evaluation as only a bureaucratic exercise! Information that comes out of an evaluation is important for planning purposes. It helps you learn from the training.

> **TIP**: Make sure your project does not end with a report and an evaluation. Build a mechanism for sharing findings into your work plan.

How to evaluate a program

There are a variety of evaluation strategies available. The one you select should be determined by what you are trying to measure or evaluate. Different evaluation strategies fit different aspects of the training.

> **TIP**: The range of evaluation models available corresponds to different stakeholder and user needs. Funders are usually interested in quantitative information; participant numbers, for example. But you may be more interested in learning about the training's impact on participants.

> **TIP**: If a number of partners are involved in a project, it can be important to come up with some common evaluation tools to collect core information from a variety of sources. For example, the common data collection forms developed by the Connecting Communities initiative collect core information from each Connecting project.

Once you have determined your evaluation needs, there are several methods you can use to gather the information:

- online surveys
- paper surveys
- exit (in-person) surveys or interviews
- follow up phone calls
- focus groups with training participants

Approaches to evaluation

The following chart identifies a number of approaches to evaluation. Each collects different kinds of information to be used in different kinds of situations.

Type of evaluation	Definition	Relevance to Connecting Communities
Outcomes Includes: Quantitative Qualitative	Evaluation which measures the extent to which the intended program outcomes are achieved • Compare actuals to targets • Quantitative and qualitative • Unintended outcomes	Individual Connecting projects could focus on evaluating the outcomes of their projects. Since the Connecting Communities model is not fixed it would not be appropriate to try to measure outcomes of the model.
Process	A process evaluation is used to measure the effectiveness of program activities, processes and systems. Other synonyms for the same term are "performance indicator", "process indicator",	A process evaluation could be used to learn more about certain aspects of the model such as proposal development and the support of the

	"standard", or "criterion."	Secretariat. Even though the model is not fixed, it seems that certain elements will be consistent throughout.
Developmental	Supports innovative development as a way to guide adaptation to emergent and dynamic realities in complex environments	This could be used to guide and document the model as it evolves throughout the duration of the funding agreement.

1. **Quantitative evaluation or data** is easily measurable information assessing impact on **a group of people**. For example, the number of attendees at training, or the number of people helped. This is the type of evaluation that funders often rely on greatly, sometimes exclusively.

2. **Qualitative evaluation or data** is experiential information and anecdotal stories assessing impact on **individuals**. This is gained, for example, from interviewing the people involved in the project. This type of evaluation can be extremely useful in learning how well the project has worked to date, and help in setting future goals.

3. **Developmental evaluation or data** collects information that assesses the impact of the *process* underneath a project. These offer a description of the process and enable a project to follow the process as it unfolds.

TIP: Consider looking at any needs assessments you have conducted related to the project. Although they are not evaluations per se, a needs assessment can be very useful in contributing to an evaluation.