



## Participatory Evaluation Primer

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*This introductory primer of is designed to provide the PLDI Impact Evaluation Committee with common knowledge on the proposed approach of Participatory Evaluation for this project.*

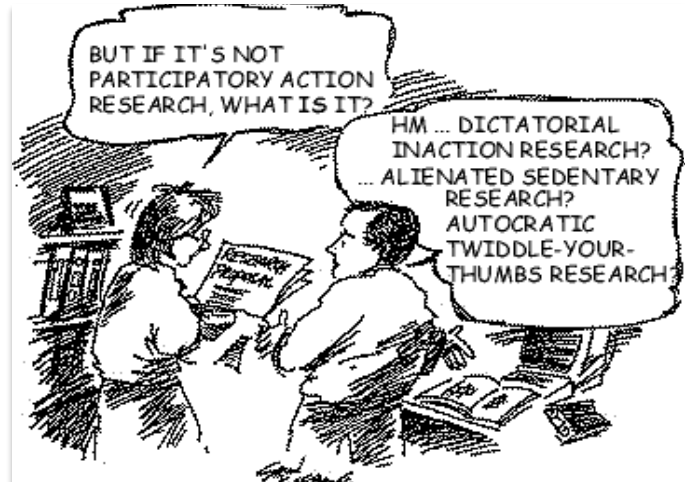
To start us off: **what is evaluation?**

**Evaluation** is the systematic assessment of the design, implementation or results of a program or process for the purposes of learning or decision-making (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2014). The term “evaluation” can often be intimidating to novice evaluators, but the purposes of evaluations are quite simple: they tell us what is important, what is working or what isn’t, and how we can make changes to improve a process or program.

### Participatory Evaluation

Participatory evaluation is one of many forms of evaluation. It creates opportunities for all organizational partners to contribute to the evaluation process, as well as the application of findings to make improvements (Community Tool Box Team, 2015). This type of evaluation values insiders’ knowledge, subjectivity, the empowerment of stakeholders, and community centered approaches (Chouinard, 2013; Datta, 2013; Zukoski & Luluquisen, 2002).

Specifically, **Participatory Evaluation** is “*about sharing knowledge and building the evaluation skills of program beneficiaries and implementers, funders and others*” (Zukoski & Luluquisen, 2002, p. 4). It is a collaborative approach to evaluation in which trained evaluators (either from inside or outside the program) work with program implementers and stakeholders to achieve the many stages and goals of the evaluation. Program staff and users have the opportunity to become the evaluation co-pilots and play an active role in all parts of the evaluation.



### Peer Evaluators

We’ve been using the terms **participant evaluators**, **peer evaluators**, and **stakeholders** almost interchangeably thus far... But who are they?

**Stakeholders** are the individuals most immediately involved with the project or program at hand. They are the ones that most likely know the ins and outs of such a project, and will consequently be most impacted by the project. Because of this, these individuals are very valuable participants in evaluation processes. There are many ways we engage stakeholders in an evaluation but one of these ways is on an evaluation committee that helps lead and direct the evaluation process. Depending on the focus, funding, and the intended outcomes of the project, stakeholders may be:

- Program/project participants or people most impacted by the program/project
- Staff or volunteers
- Outside evaluators
- Funders
- Community officials
- Members from community organizations & services

A **Peer Evaluator (or participant evaluator)** in our context is a person living with HIV -- a person who belongs to the community or population being evaluated -- who is trained and supported to participate at any or all levels of an evaluation. These are the people “doing” the evaluation. This role is very similar to a Peer Researcher or a Peer Research Associate but with a focus on evaluation methods and content.

Early in the evaluation planning stage, peer evaluators will develop relationships with expert evaluators and learn the skills necessary to participate in the evaluation process. **The bottom line is that participation in the evaluation process is viewed as a means as well as the end.**

Here are some opportunities for participant evaluators to be involved in each stage of the evaluation process:

Steps in the evaluation process	Potential Participant/Peer Evaluator input
Describing the program, engaging key stakeholders, and identifying the evaluation questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create a strategy for stakeholders’ participation based on their levels of commitment</li> <li>- Define evaluation priorities and goals</li> <li>- Lead stakeholder engagement</li> <li>- Help facilitate the evaluation committee</li> </ul>
Planning the evaluation design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support the development of a program logic model</li> <li>- Develop indicators to measure program change and progress</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
Selecting measurement tools and data collection methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop questionnaires and interview guides</li> <li>- Conduct interviews</li> <li>- Help record interviews and observations</li> </ul>
Gathering and analyzing data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Help define major themes and codes</li> <li>- Help make sense of collected data</li> </ul>
Reaching consensus about findings, conclusions and recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set forth recommendations for decision-making and program improvements</li> </ul>
Disseminating results and preparing action plans to improve program performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decide how results of the study should be presented and what actions should be taken</li> </ul>

(Zukoski & Luluquisen, 2002; KU Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2015).

*“The issue in participatory evaluation is not about which methods to use, but whose voices to include, how to include them, and determining who will speak for whom” (Greene, 2000).*

## When to use Participatory Evaluation

PAN works within a participatory and community-based evaluation framework. This means that we work to build strong partnerships with key stakeholders including people with lived experience, community-based organizations, health system decision-makers, and academics across the HIV and HCV sectors.

The Community Tool Box Team (2015) has identified a list of cases in which a participatory approach would be best applied:

- When you’re committed to a participatory process for your project.
- When you have the time, or when results are more important than time.
- When there may be issues in the community or population that outside evaluators are not likely to be aware of.
- When you need information that it will be difficult for anyone outside the community or population to get.
- When part of the goal of the project is to empower participants and help them develop transferable skills.
- When you want to bring the community or population together, working on a collective goal.

Motivations/Advantages for Participatory Evaluation	Challenges of Participatory Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participatory evaluation is rooted in social justice and strives to promote democratic inclusion, empowerment, and liberation</li> <li>- Participatory evaluation promotes diverse forms of knowledge</li> <li>- Strengthens the usability of evaluation results</li> <li>- Promotes better program support</li> <li>- Empowers stakeholders to take control and develop a sense of ownership over a project</li> <li>- Builds evaluation capacity and skills that can be applied in other settings and on different projects</li> <li>- Participatory evaluation promotes collaborative inquiry that builds a greater sense of community</li> <li>- Improves accuracy of evaluation results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Time and levels of commitment</li> <li>- Having sufficient resources and being able to allocate them realistically</li> <li>- Conflict may arise when evaluation participant don’t see eye-to-eye</li> <li>- Inability of expert evaluators to translate the processes of evaluation into understandable forms</li> <li>- In many of the stages of participatory evaluation, participants are required to have a certain level of literacy (read and write)</li> <li>- Some of the administrative, logistical and managerial tasks of evaluation may not be interesting or relevant to all participating members</li> </ul>

## Other Resources:

**“Participatory Evaluation: What Is It? Why Do It? What Are the Challenges?”** by Ann Zukoski and Mia Luluquisen, from *Community-Based Public Health Policy and Practice*, Issue 5, April, 2002, retrieved from [https://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf\\_files/Evaluation.pdf](https://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/Evaluation.pdf)

**Better Evaluation** provides a comparison of different types of evaluation. This website also provides an extensive example in order to apply information. <http://betterevaluation.org>

**Community Tool Box – Chapter 36, Section 6. Participatory Evaluation** – a useful toolkit with an introduction, checklist, tools and PowerPoint on participatory evaluation. <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/evaluate/evaluation/participatory-evaluation/main>

**Participatory Program Evaluation Manual** is a handbook that provides information on participatory program evaluation approaches. Retrieved from [http://www.coregroup.org/storage/Monitoring\\_Evaluation/PartEvalManualEnglish.pdf](http://www.coregroup.org/storage/Monitoring_Evaluation/PartEvalManualEnglish.pdf)

A **Participatory Evaluation** learning module written by Mandakini Pant, retrieved from [http://www.unesco.org/education/aladin/paldin/pdf/course01/unit\\_09.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/education/aladin/paldin/pdf/course01/unit_09.pdf)

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**Cartoon:** Simon Kneebone and Yoland Wadsworth – from “What is Participatory Action Research?” *Action Research International* online journal, 1998.