TOOL | EVALUATING ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Evaluation is an important part of community work to assess the effectiveness, quality and performance of your programs and activities.   In community-based evaluation, everyone is involved in collecting data and sharing the real stories of the community. This helps the community to own the data and help others to understand and act. This approach values all voices, especially community members, in defining, designing, implementing, and interpreting the evaluation. The key to ABCD is to start with what is already in the community, your assets, and use them to build the future you want to see. When it comes to evaluating ABCD it must start with and come from community

HERE ARE FOUR WAYS TO EVALUATE ABCD WORK:

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Connections and Social Capital	Action Outcomes	Attitude change	Community Participation

Connections and social capital – Count connections among people and count the actions that come from the relationships. Who is now connected who wasn't previously? How have relationships formed and grown? Another way is counting connectors (they help build affinity and place-based relationships).

Ways to track connections:

- Track the number of people organizing initiatives, number of people participating, number of partners (businesses, nonprofits) involved etc.
- Measure the strength of relationships - two or more connections, positive or negative relationships
- Ask survey questions about the number of neighbours they could ask a favour of etc., sense of belonging, sense of connection to neighbourhood, feeling that they belong in the community.
- Make lists, keep track of attendance, log activities.

Example ABCD evaluation questions:

- Who is doing the work? How do they work together?
- How are the individuals' skills and contributions found and mobilized?
- How many groups were formed and what did they contribute?
- How many connections were made in the community and what did they produce with their assets?
- What differences were made by having local people and the groups at the centre of the process?

Action Outcomes - Tracking what happened as a direct result of the connections. To document these outcomes, it's necessary to follow up on each outcome so that the actions can be identified and quantified. Using an outcome diary can help to keep track of the outcomes of the relationships. For example, after individual dog walkers were connected, over time they supported each other, then they worked together to build a dog park.

Tracking Outcomes:

- Track the number of grants submitted, the number of activities implemented
- Track the impact of network engagement on goal achievement and life satisfaction
- Document the level of engagement
- Track and document local stories

Change attitude - Making connections with people that result in actions may create a change in the attitude of people. You can measure attitude change by asking a series of questions at the beginning of the activity and then ask again following the activity, or after a period of time has passed. Make sure you ask the same questions to determine whether there has been a change.

How to gather data on attitude:

- Pre and post questions around trust and belonging
- Personal interviews
- Participation feedback

Example questions:	←→ 1= Very Low 3=Moderate 5= Very High				
How connected do you feel to the people in this community?	1	2	3	4	5
How aware are you of the different experiences & perspectives of people in this community?	1	2	3	4	5
How interested are you in working together to strengthen your community?	1	2	3	4	5

Community participation - Creating connections and local activity can lead to more community participation and a sense of purpose. This can lead to an increase in people attending meetings, participating in local community associations as well as greater presence at the meetings of city council or its committees. Using observational analysis, counting the change in the meetings can be useful in demonstrating more participation in local democracy.

Ways to track participation:

- Tracking the attendance of meetings
- Tracking municipal voting by communities
- Participation of those who speaking at council
- Tracking the number of community event permits

EXAMPLES OF INDICATORS

Indicators are from the Quality of Life Framework

- If communities foster social connection and people are connected they live, they will have a better quality of life.
  - o Indicator - Someone to count on
- If people participate in community life and are invested in solutions to challenges they will feel a sense of purpose and meaning
  - o Indicator - Sense of meaning and purpose
  - o Indicator - Confidence in institutions and government
- If people are connected we will have stronger and safer communities
  - o Indicator - Personal safety
- If we have communities that embrace culture, health and wellbeing they will be healthier and happier.
  - o Indicator - Life satisfaction
  - o Indicator - Sense of belonging to local community

EVALUATION RESOURCES

- CASE STUDY | Evaluating Community Efforts: A Vivo Story
- Tool| Sense of Community Index
- Tool| Getting to Impact: Outcome Diary
- Resource| What Counts
- Resource| 4 Essential Elements of an Asset-Based Community Development Process
- Webinar| Evaluating your ABCD efforts