NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT COALITION
Resource Sharing Project

Evaluation Toolkit

MODULE THREE

Planning for TA Evaluation

Resource Sharing Project

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Module Three: Planning for TA Evaluation

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INTRODUCTION

When we first think of evaluation, we think of a set of findings or a report that lets our funders know whether we did what we set out to do. However, there are many other important uses for evaluation that we want to be front of mind.

Evaluation is an intentional effort to capture the meaning and results of our TA. What we gather through the evaluation process can help others in their efforts to end sexual violence and support survivors' healing. Evaluation is also a way of thinking about and questioning our assumptions and ideas to keep us ethical, design solutions that work, and adapt quickly and effectively to the changing needs of the communities we work in.

In this module, we are going to turn our attention towards designing and planning for evaluating TA in a way that reflects our values.

Mainstream practices of evaluation generally leave the design work up to "the experts." This model reinforces existing power structures that allow those in charge of the evaluation and programming—often white, middle class, temporarily abled, and cis-gender—determining what is valued by low-income, differently traumatized, differently abled communities of color. Evaluation approaches, like participatory and empowerment evaluation, go further to counteract this model, but often not far enough.

Our goal for evaluating TA is to engage in a co-created evaluation process. To reach this end, evaluation planning and design needs to include an intentional focus not just on what methods we use to evaluate, but who will do the evaluation, who will inform the evaluation and how we will use the evaluation. It also needs to ensure the building of capacities of everyone involved to actively engage in evaluation practice.

This module begins by exploring how our model of TA aligns with mainstream frameworks as a starting point and how it differs. We then look at how to plan for an evaluation that is co-created by those who have the largest investments (not just financial!) in the results—from creating a roadmap for how TA is delivered through our values to prioritizing the evaluation questions to planning for data collection and meaning-making. In modules 4-6 we will look more specifically at tools and how to use them in a way that is culturally affirming.

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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FRAMEWORK

Frameworks provide a base for understanding the core components of a general concept like TA. A framework is a good place to start co-creating a shared understanding of what is trying to be accomplished. A common framework for thinking about TA, training and support involves four levels of learning.*

Kirkpatrick's model or framework starts from the assumptions that all TA is directed at these same goals and if we evaluate to these levels of learning we will know the effectiveness of our TA. We know that in our work, it is important that we focus our evaluation on more than just these four levels of learning. Our evaluation design and tools also need to emphasize two additional considerations that are important to our values approach.

* The four levels represent what is commonly referred as the Kirkpatrick Model. It was developed by Donald L. Kirkpatrick, a Professor Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin, Madison

The Kirkpatrick Model of TA

Reaction: understanding the perspectives on how TA delivered (e.g. satisfaction, quality)

Learning: understanding what skills and knowledge were gained

Behavior: determining whether and how what was learned was applied

Results: exploring the connections between changes in behavior and program outcomes

Two Additional RSP Levels

Environment: the connections between learning environment and the healing process

Relationships: the dynamics that exist between learner and delivery of TA

The Learning Environment

Requests for coalition TA occur in a context shaped by history, dynamics of oppression and privilege, knowledge of what TA is and what the coalition does, and various aspects of the program-coalition relationship. We confront this by first building trust, and trust is built on clarity and accountability. The way in which TA is delivered and evaluated needs to reflect and reinforce this trust and accountability. TA and its evaluation:

- Must have clearly defined values and ethics (see module 2),
- Support a safe and predictable environment for learners
- Set clear expectations
- Provide room for learners to make mistakes without judgement

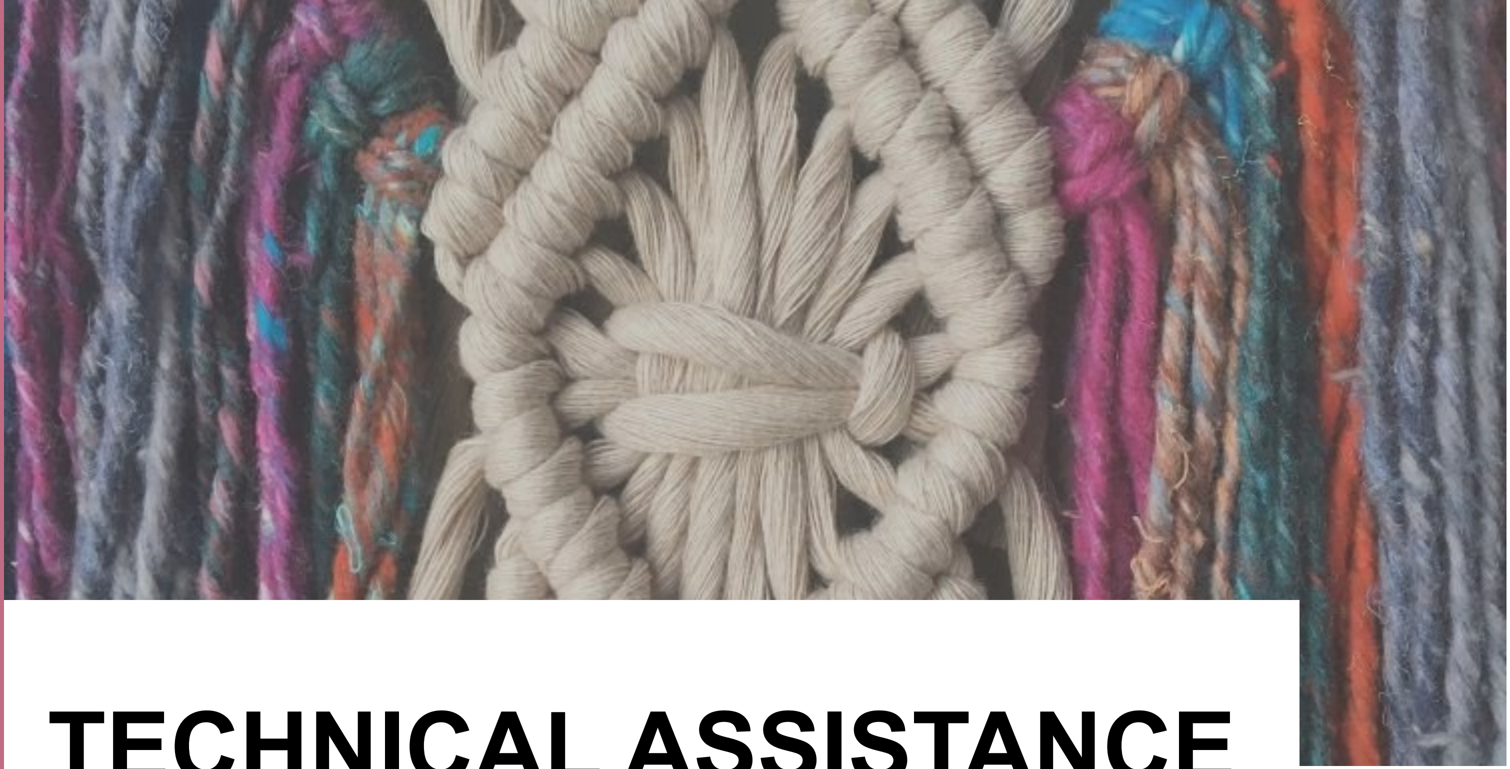
Evaluation of TA needs to consider how the learning environment and data collection for evaluation supports or detracts from the healing process and how learning and evaluation activities are designed to challenge learners to reflect on their experiences, present a more hopeful worldview, and serve as tools to adopt anti-oppression practices.

Relationships

The relationship between a coalition and program can affect the implementation and thus the impact of the TA. For example, the coalition's relationships with state/ territorial government offices can affect a program's willingness to trust and be vulnerable. This can impact whether they seek out TA and their willingness to participate fully in the TA and its evaluation. This can be especially true where funding streams have a high level of oversight or if local programs have members on the coalition's board. These dynamics can make it hard for the coalition to deliver feedback that contradicts the program's perception of their service quality. Furthermore, coalitions often have relationships with several people from one program, which can lead to triangulation (using a third party rather than direct communication), mixed messages in TA, and potentially miscommunication or misunderstanding.

The relationship between TA providers and those receiving TA is a key driver of success in the learning. Supportive and collaborative relationships that include professional development and problem-solving delivered through an empowerment approach lead to stronger implementation and outcomes of the learning. In order to understand the impact of TA in our context there is an even greater need to attend to the relationship between the learner and TA provider even before learning needs can be assessed. For example, it is important for us to understand not just who is seeking TA but who is not and why.

The relationship between TA providers and those receiving TA is a key driver of success in the learning.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE THE RSP WAY

Technical assistance, as defined by RSP, is a central pillar of partnership between coalitions, local programs, and allies. TA, broadly speaking, is providing a deep dive understanding and support around knowledge and practice to help advance specific project goals or needs. While models and usage of TA vary by coalition, we all provide some form of general TA to our partners and communities.

Providing TA to address the complex needs of individuals and communities surviving sexual assault does not have a clear and concrete set of solutions. It is not our role as providers of TA to fix problems or rescue programs; rather, through TA we offer options and information on different strategies and resources available. Because of the nature of our work, we ground our TA first in trust and respect, and practice with active listening, curiosity, competence, and direct and ethical communication.

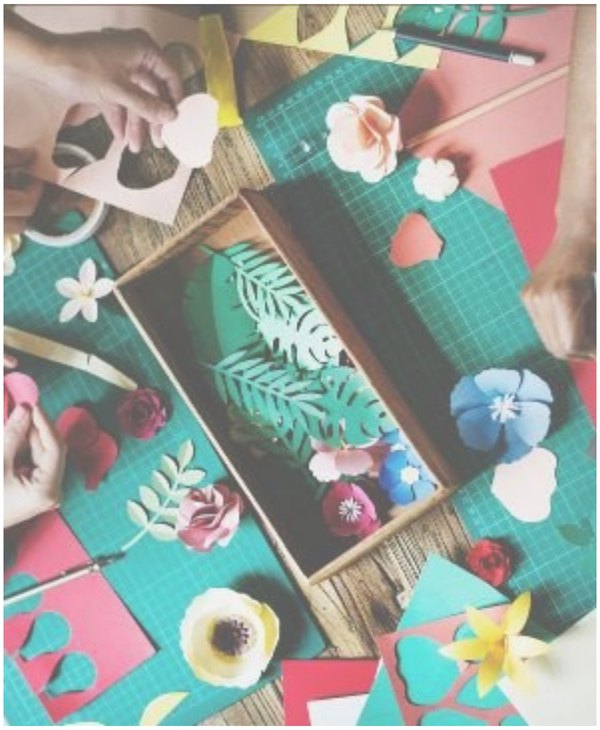
In order to set a framework for evaluating TA, we need to ground that evaluation in a common understanding of the goals and strategies that guide our approach to TA.

Goals of Our Technical Assistance Approach

Understanding the goals of TA are important to shape the type of information we would want to gather about how well we are doing TA, what is coming out of the TA we are providing, and how we need to adapt TA to respond to changing needs and conditions. TA is delivered not only from RSP to coalitions, but also coalitions to programs as well as at the community level.

RSP identifies two primary goals for TA:

- **Address needs** RSP and coalitions are well-suited to serve as information hubs to help respond to specific questions from members of the public or local programs. RSP and coalitions have the capacity to research practices, policies, and protocols on a wide range of issues and consolidate solutions in a single resource for efficient distribution. When one question is resolved for a single program or coalition, we can ensure all partners have that same useful information.
- **Learn and explore to impact the field** TA for programs is most effective when it focuses on attitudes, knowledge, and skills to support building evidence or implementing evidence-based implementation of solutions. As we deliver TA to meet needs, we can track emerging regional issues, systems breakdowns and gaps, and aggregate learnings to inform and improve the field of sexual assault survivor support.

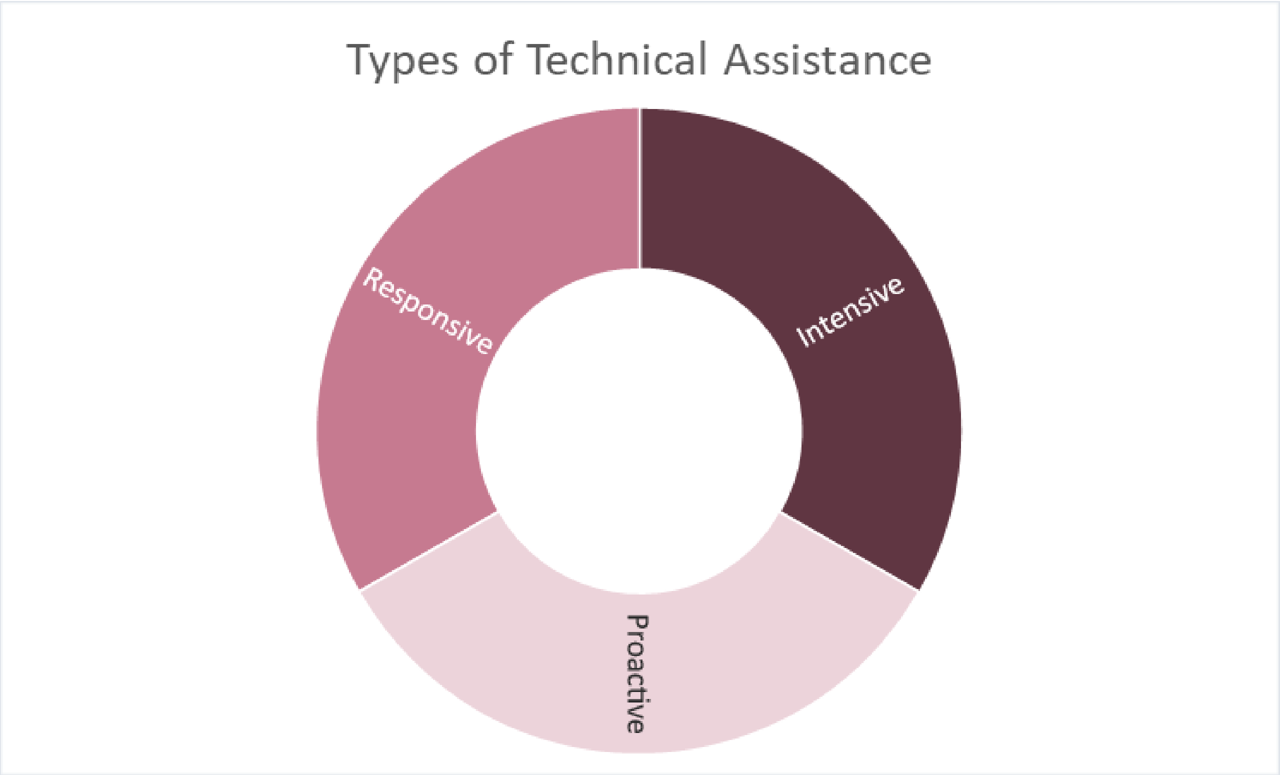


Types of Technical Assistance We Provide

The TA we can deliver is endless. Not all TA addresses the same needs or will have the same impact. However, we can base evaluation on some types of TA delivered to help us know which types of TA are best suited to meet our goals. The types of TA can also inform us whether TA is being delivered in a way that advances the principles and values we believe are most important in ending sexual violence, and help us understand what people and perspectives we need to engage, the methods and approaches for gathering those perspectives, and how we will make meaning of the data through evaluation.

Although we know there are many examples of TA, we have identified the following common types of TA to help guide our TA implementation and evaluation.

RSP has developed a guide, The Coalition’s Role as Technical Assistance Provider, to further communicate its framework for technical assistance. In evaluation planning for TA, this guide can be used to help set the table for a broader discussion of what meaningful TA looks like to other programs and communities.



Responsive	Answering **simple, specific questions**
	Referrals to other organizations that may have more information
	Connections to **resources** or programs that may have interest in
Proactive	**Learning track** on a specific topic
	Capacity building around how to understand and use data
	Providing **specific counsel** after an external event (e.g. new legislation)
	Quarterly check-ins with coalitions to see how things are going
Intensive	**Support provided after challenging event** (e.g. financial mismanagement, board transition)
	Crisis support after natural disaster, major media attention, or trauma to the organization
	Often includes **frequent phone calls and visits** to provide emotional support and guidance.

DESIGNING TA EVALUATION

Our TA framework provides a shared understanding of generally what it is we do when we deliver TA. To get to evaluation, we need to first link the framework to what the behaviors and practices look like that demonstrate our values. A meaningful evaluation requires having something meaningful to evaluate.

The first step in that process is designing a roadmap for delivering TA.

> *A good roadmap can be read and followed by everyone who needs it.*

Creating a Roadmap

A roadmap helps guide where you want to go and how you want to get there. It can be the first opportunity to co-create with programs meaningful TA. A roadmap for TA allows us to plan what we can accomplish and what success will look like when we get there. A good roadmap can be read and followed by everyone who needs it.

In the evaluation speak, we call this roadmap a [theory of change] or a [logic model]. Essentially these tools are living documents that surface our assumptions, beliefs and values that underpin TA, the resources committed to TA, the types of activities put into TA and the various ways you think the TA is going to work.

A roadmap for TA does not need to be complicated. We already have a couple important elements of our roadmap:

- Our beliefs and assumptions that TA and support need to be delivered in a way that reflects our anchor values
- An understanding of the condition's TA needs to respond to the types of activities that make-up TA ("RSP framework")
- Our primary goals of TA to address needs, learn and expand the field

What we are missing at a coalition level are the specific activities and practices that lead to the result. These "testable" links get created as we shape our strategy and become the basis for what we want to evaluate or understand about TA.

If you are having problems getting started with a roadmap, one place to begin is understanding what makes TA meaningful from the perspective of programs. A focus group or short workshop with programs and community could engage around the question of meaningful TA. On the next page is a portion of a focus group dialogue on this topic. We spent about 20-30 minutes on this conversation with 5-8 people. The outcomes of this conversation can serve as a basis for generating your roadmap.

Spark Policy Institute's quick guide to building a theory of change is attached to the webpage.

Focus on one or two recent experiences with receiving technical assistance (e.g. training, accessing resources, mentoring or coaching experience, etc). It does not matter if you focus on an experience with us or someone else.

First, to get us started, I am going to ask each of you to share, if you are willing, a little bit about the TA (what it is was for and how it was delivered) and ask you to rate it on a scale from one (negative experience) to five (positive experience). You don't have to tell me who you received the TA from.

- What contributed to this rating? (prompt on how content was designed, way it was delivered, timing, interactions with others, application of material to day to day work)
- What was missing (or needed) from the TA that would have made all the difference?
- How did the TA influence or change the way you worked?
- One of the things we are very interested in understanding is the value of the relationship between TA provider and learner. What attributes of the TA provider most significantly influenced your assessment of the TA? (e.g. Trust – Support – Communication – Validation – Identification – Empathy)
- When thinking about technical assistance to help shape people's understanding of sexual assault and domestic violence, what do you believe needs to be in place to make progress on changing mindsets and practices in working with survivors?
- What lets you know if you have helped change thinking or made progress on a policy or practice change to support survivors?

Planning the Evaluation

Once we have a roadmap that outlines how what we do with our TA will lead to certain outcomes, we can begin to design an evaluation that links the ways in which we deliver TA to what we think the results will be. To do this we need to determine what the questions are we want to answer, what the best way to gather information to help answer those questions is, and how will we use that information.

At a basic level, we know we want to be able to talk about our TA and support in terms of two questions. One focuses on *reach*—the what, where, when, and how the TA is delivered (i.e. "how much TA we are delivering, to whom and how well"), and the other on *results*—the overall impact of the TA being provided (i.e. "did it work"). Answering these two questions generally satisfies most people who invest in our work and allows us to continue to refine our TA.

Reach Evaluation of our reach helps us understand ***when***, ***where***, and ***to whom*** our TA is being delivered and its ***quality***. Gathering this information on a regular basis will help us decide where we need more resources for TA and help us be accountable to ensuring we're meeting the needs of our partners in a manner true to our values. This information also lets us see trends and patterns in the needs of our partners so that we can better tailor support.

Results Evaluation designed to get at results looks at the changes that happen for individuals, programs, coalitions or communities as a result of TA. This level of information gathering helps us understand how TA is getting used. Over the long term, it lets us know how coalitions and programs are improving their capacity to support survivors and whether we are making the intended changes we sought to make.

In addition to these two summary forms of evaluation, we want to look at aspects of the TA that tells us whether our TA and support is getting at our core values:

Learning Environment Is part of a process evaluation to understand how the learning environment supports or detracts from the

Evaluation provides a window into how relationships impact learning, perspective shaping, and application

healing process and how learning activities are designed to challenge learners to reflect on their experiences. In addition, we want to understand ways in which the learning environment challenges existing assumptions and affirms culture and experience.

Relationships and Power The relationship between a coalition and program not only determines who accesses TA but also who does not. Evaluation provides a window into how relationships impacts learning, perspective shaping, and application. Power analysis in planning and evaluation acknowledge (real and perceived) differences in power between the TA provider and the program staff AND where the staff member is situated in their agency. Understanding these dynamics helps us reflect on how TA may be experienced differently across program staff of a different identity or background.

Evaluation questions are inherently driven by the types of TA we provide, how we provide it (roadmap) and an understanding of which types of questions from the four areas mentioned previously we want to learn about. A good evaluation design combines approaches so that we can understand how what we do produces the types of results we want to see.

The document *Technical Assistance Types* has a table on each of these four areas of learning from evaluation and the types of questions an evaluation might ask at each level based on each type of TA and support we provide (e.g. responsive, proactive, intensive).

Prioritizing Evaluation Questions

It is good to blend multiple evaluation questions into your overall design. What is important is that you know what it is you want to be able to answer through the evaluation, so that you can pick the right tools to answer the question (Module 4 will help you decide which tool to use. For now, let's just explore how you determine your question.)

Using Your TA Evaluation

Start with the end in mind. The first step in picking good evaluation questions is to know how we are going to use it. This is especially important when the goal of your evaluation is to create a safe, culturally affirming and positive experience with evaluation. We want evaluation practices that promote healing as opposed to fear and apprehension. Starting with the end in mind also ensures that you are using resources wisely and not wasting time or exhausting people with unnecessary data collection.

Starting with the end in mind means thinking first about what it is we want the evaluation to help us with right now. Evaluation can help us:

Communicate our impact Motivates us and lets others know that TA is important in advocating for and supporting survivors and communities. Although we know this intuitively, others may need to be convinced.

Learn Evaluating intentionally towards a set of questions and on a regular basis provides continuous, timely feedback that can inform the way we provide TA. This learning leads to better services and better outcomes. We want to establish that we do not only create impact but are committed to our own growth and improvement.

Reinforce our values Through our TA approach and values we are saying that trauma-informed, survivor-centered and anti-oppressive actions are necessary to helping individuals and communities heal. Not everyone believes what we believe but if we can show them how it can be done, we can help move others this direction.

Likely we want our evaluation to do all these things at some point but given our roadmap they all are not necessarily important at the same time or for the same users of the evaluation. So, we also need to ask:

- Who does this information belong to?
- Who needs this information?
- What types of evidence will these groups or individuals find most credible?
- How do we intend to share what we learned?
- How do we intend to act on what we learned?

We want evaluation practices that promote healing as opposed to fear

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TA Evaluation Resources

A common tool used to document this information is called a *Stakeholder Profile Worksheet*. It is helpful to revisit this tool often throughout the evaluation to ensure all audiences are being considered. Using this tool will also help you think about what questions each of these audiences might have and whether they speak to reach, result, learning environment or relationships and power.

There are two mistakes that often get made at this stage of the design. First, groups often think that prioritizing the use of the evaluation is best done behind closed doors by the individuals with expertise in leading evaluation. That is not the case. It is efficient but not effective. Second, we believe that if we have a diverse set of perspectives around the table that we are being inclusive; which also is not the case. The best way to ensure that our values appear in all aspects of the evaluation design, including how the information gets used, is to not work in isolation. Throughout the evaluation design process, it is important to pause and ask the question, "*who are we not hearing from*" and then "*how do we bring their voice to the process*."

Finalizing Your Evaluation Questions

Now that we know what we are evaluating, what types of questions are relevant to the TA and support we are providing, and the ways in which the information will be used, we want to narrow in on the highest priority questions. It is important in prioritizing that we ask ourselves, Why this question?

Evaluation that is values-driven isn't designed only to address the needs of funders or program designers. Our evaluations should ask questions relevant to survivors and communities. One mistake evaluation often makes is asking the questions that are of greatest interest to the most important or powerful groups. This can lead us down the path of reinforcing status quo. However, the questions we most likely need to ask are evaluation questions that reflect the interests of those who sit outside of the circle of influence. This is where learning occurs.

Evaluation can be resource intensive—it takes time and energy (not to mention financial support). Often, we have more good questions than we can reasonably answer. Although it's hard to walk away from a good question, there are some questions you can ask to help determine which the right questions are to ask right now.

- Who benefits from having this information?
- Are we in a position to act on what we learn? Will it improve what we do?
- Do we have the resources to answer this question right now?
- Are we ready to hear the answer? If no, what do we need to do to get ready?
- Are there any risks to having this information?

There is no "right" answer in prioritizing your evaluation questions. Some will be standard practice to ask and answer throughout the life of your TA. In other cases, an evaluation question will surface in response to a need and once answered will lead to another question. As we get better at using evaluation for learning, we will know when a good time is to evaluate and when we have enough information to inform our next step (We will discuss this more in Module 6).

Although many coalitions will have a basic plan for evaluation, designing evaluation questions in the moment is a positive way to engage people in the evaluation process and demonstrate our commitment to our values. It communicates "*what is important to you, matters to me*". A good opening dialogue for an TA interaction is "*what do you hope to get out of this experience*" and a good closing dialogue is "*this is what we said we hoped to accomplish—where did we succeed and where is there more work to do*." These questions can then serve to help inform an evaluation approach to that TA interaction.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS IN EVALUATION DESIGN

Now that you have your list of questions, you are ready to determine how you are going to collect the information to answer your question and “test” your assumptions.

This means we need to think about ways we can collect information about those questions. In Module 4 we will review specific tools and methods you can use in your evaluation. Here we will generally present some basic considerations about implementing evaluation and collecting data.

There are three primary considerations in planning the evaluation. We developed a brief resource guide for each one. These issues are so important we suggest revisiting these one-pagers often and sharing them with staff and others involved in evaluation activities.

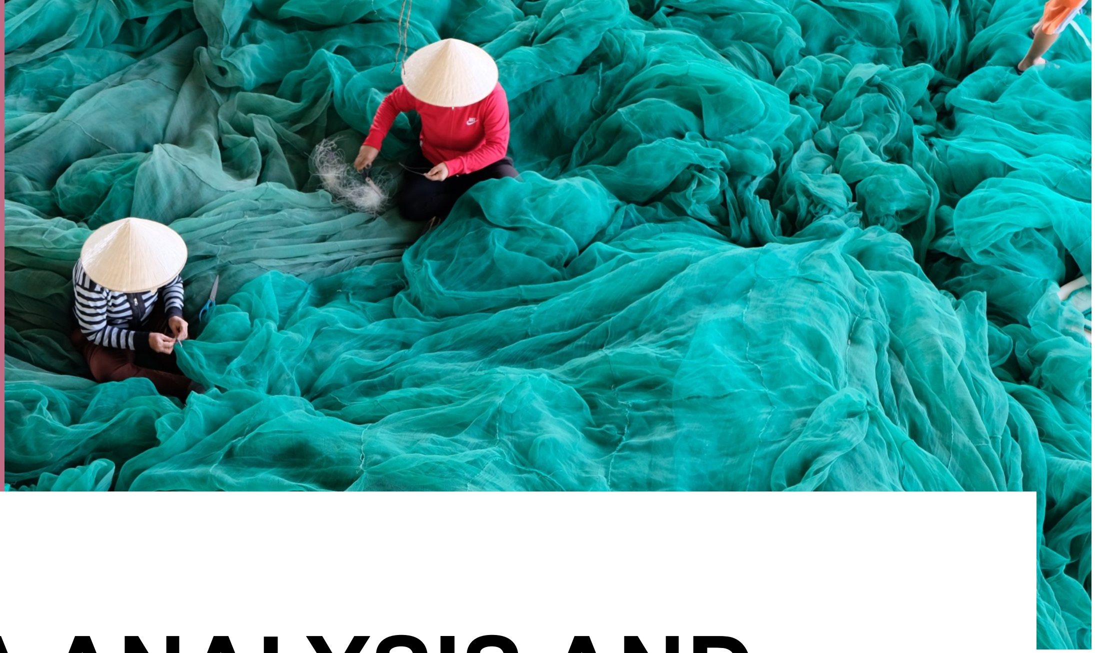
Types of data that can be collected One of the ways we practice anti-oppression is by thinking carefully about the questions we choose and the data collection measures we use. Good evaluation uses both quantitative (counts and measures) and qualitative data (stories and personal experience). This resource guide provides a brief overview of these two types of data and when to choose them.

Timing of data collection During the evaluation design phase, it is important to think about how often data needs to be collected to tell a meaningful and accurate of our TA efforts. Collecting data too infrequently might mean we end up with answers that are not very meaningful or sufficient. On the other hand, we want to avoid collecting so much data that it becomes too cumbersome to use and for the people we collect it from. This resource briefly describes the types of data that might be collected more consistently, and the types of data collected to address a specific evaluation need.

Demographics, Consent and Privacy Practices around identity, privacy and confidentiality are especially important in our work. Getting the data is less important than providing choice around evaluation including choice about participation to the types of question we ask to consent to share what we learn. No one should feel pressured to participate in evaluation. There are three worksheets sheets with more considerations around demographic data, consent, and privacy:

- Considerations in Demographic Data Collection
- Considerations for Consent
- Considerations Around Privacy

Because we are often providing TA to programs, many of our demographic, consent and privacy considerations run the risk of identifying a person or program because they are easily identified by their state or region, a type of program (culturally specific, dual/multi-service, stand-alone, tribal, etc), or job category (advocate, preventionist, manager, etc). Our practices need to consider the additional risks and benefits to asking this type of identifiable information and whether we have been clear and transparent about our practices on confidentiality and anonymity. Sometimes there are such a limited number of people involved in the evaluation that having them identify in one of these categories would compromise their confidentiality. In that case it may simply be better to have a direct conversation about their feedback and how they would like that information considered then to try and design a larger scale evaluation.



DATA ANALYSIS AND MEANING MAKING

In mainstream practice of evaluation, involving multiple perspectives in data analysis and meaning making is inconsistent at best. Even co-creating an evaluation design does not necessarily ensure that those perspectives will be heard when it comes time to make sense of the evaluation findings unless we are intentional about this practice.

It is important that we remember that programs and communities are our partners in learning. Our evaluation intends to not be extractive of experience. This translates into:

- Intentional planning around the convenience of programs and community
- Getting comfortable with our own discomfort so that those that sit outside circles of influence and power direct the activities
- Provide fair benefit for helping us do our work better
- Flexibility in our evaluation approach and design

- Affirming rather than discounting an individual perspective in favor of the group
- Choosing affirming tools and methods to collect and to report data
- Creating space for dissent
- Consciously and compassionately disaggregating data so that we do not overgeneralize someone’s experience while at the same time being accountable to the appropriate use of that information.

Spark Policy Institute has designed a toolkit around engaging nontraditional voices that provides resources for authentically engaging perspectives throughout the evaluation design process including meaning making. We recommend reviewing this resource when beginning to think about planning for the evaluation and in choosing data collection tools (our next module!)

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