



Aligning Local Evaluation Strategies to Community Readiness Model Dimension Scores

Local Performance Assessment

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) states that grantees must periodically review the performance data they report to SAMHSA, assess their progress, and use this information to improve management of their grant projects. Native Connection (NC) Grantees will be required to report on progress achieved, barriers encountered, and efforts to overcome these barriers in a performance assessment report submitted annually. NC Grantees should use this progress assessment to find out:

- Whether the goals outlined in the grant are being met.
- Whether the grant is having an impact in the community.
- Whether Community Readiness Model (CRM) scores are rising in key dimensions.
- Whether grantees need to adjust project activities.

The CRM is central to grantee local performance assessment. It is important to consider when developing other evaluative measures for local performance assessment.

Indigenous Evaluation

One purpose of evaluating the grant activities is to measure performance outcome; determine what is working or not working to change or adapt activities. Another purpose is to share stories, successes, and lessons learned with the community and tribal leadership. In Years 2 through 5, NC grantees will work with SAMHSA's



evaluation contractor to conduct an evaluability assessment. This assessment will include community member interviews, focus groups, and community surveys.

These types of evaluation strategies are necessary but to make them meaningful and useful to the community, they should align with both Indigenous evaluation principles and the community's CRM dimension scores.

The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) developed an Indigenous Framework for Evaluation, which synthesizes Indigenous ways of knowing and Western evaluation practice. AIHEC views evaluation as a process, "an invitation to reframe evaluation practice by centering it through Indigenous ways of knowing and aligning it with core Tribal values."¹

Some factors that make evaluation "Indigenous" are:

- Involving the community from the beginning and throughout the entire evaluation process
- Honoring the community's goals
- Respect for individual and tribal sovereignty
- Respect for individuals participating in the evaluation
- Empowering the community using culturally valid measures such as oral measures, elder review, and community contributions
- Approaching evaluation from a strengths-based perspective, not a deficit-based perspective

Community Readiness Dimension Scores

Dimensions of readiness are key factors that influence your community's preparedness to take action on suicide prevention. The six dimensions identified and measured in the CRM are comprehensive in nature. They are an excellent tool for diagnosing community needs and for developing strategies to meet those needs. Below is a review of these dimensions:

¹ *The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* Vol. 23 No. 2 Pages 13–31, ISSN 0834-1516 Copyright © 2010 Canadian Evaluation Society, Reframing evaluation: defining an indigenous evaluation framework.



- A. **Community efforts:** To what extent are there efforts, programs, and policies that address suicide prevention?
- B. **Community knowledge of the efforts:** To what extent do community members know about local efforts and their effectiveness, and are the efforts accessible to all segments of the community?
- C. **Leadership:** To what extent are appointed leaders and influential community members supportive of suicide prevention?
- D. **Community climate:** What is the prevailing attitude of the community toward suicide prevention? Is it one of helplessness or one of responsibility and empowerment?
- E. **Community knowledge about the issue:** To what extent do community members know about or have access to information on suicide prevention, consequences, and understand how it impacts your community?
- F. **Resources related to the issue:** To what extent are local resources (people, time, money, space) available to support the prevention efforts?

NC Grantees will choose grant activities based on the CRM dimension scores. Most grantees will focus on activities that target the dimensions which scored the lowest on the CRM. Just as activities offered by the NC Grant should be appropriate to the CRM dimension scores, evaluation strategies and methods should also correspond to CRM scores.

Aligning Evaluation Methods with CRM Dimension Scores

When considering evaluation methods to employ, think about both the aspects of Indigenous evaluation detailed above and the CRM Dimension scores. Some methods of evaluation strategies to consider include:

- Attendance counts
- Surveys
- Focus groups
- Interviews with participants



- Pre- and post-surveys for youth participants

Now let's think about measuring progress on one of the CRM Dimensions using one of these methods. For example, if the community scored low on "Dimension B. Community Knowledge of the Efforts," you might choose to conduct a survey of community members asking specific questions about what community members know about the issue of suicide, where they get their information about the efforts, and where they would like to get their information.

Another example, if the community scored low on "Dimension E: Community Knowledge of the issue" and the grantee subsequently held various education events, attendance counts and a brief pre- and post-survey assessing new knowledge would be appropriate evaluation tools for a community that scored low on this dimension.

Another example, if the community scored low on "Dimension D. Community Climate," you may want to conduct a focus group of youth and elders on the topic of suicide. A focus group might be appropriate to tease out the differences in climate between groups in the community, the accuracy of what is known, and the extent of what is not known.

If used in a way that is aligned with an Indigenous world view, that is, strength- and culture-based, the story of your NC Grant can work the way many teaching stories work. It can instill knowledge about the topics that are being targeted. In the example above of the focus group, the results of the focus group could be presented to the Tribal Council, which may serve to raise the CRM "Dimension C. Leadership" score.

If your annual performance assessment -- the story of your grant -- is to be an effective tool for communicating with the community and assessing merit and worth in ways that "tells our story in our place²," it makes sense that the story aligns with the CRM dimension scores and Indigenous evaluation principles.

² Lafrance, J., Brief 02- Indigenous Evaluation & Native Student Success. Retrieved from <http://indigenouseducationtools.org/bf/02> 2/22/2017.