

Evaluation and Beyond: Advocating For Equity Through Our Work

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At Taylor Newberry Consulting (TNC), we often work on projects which serve vulnerable and equity-seeking communities. In this poster, we highlight our work with these communities and describe how we have tailored our evaluations to better serve them during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Through snapshots of our projects, we suggest three ways in which evaluators can respond to the changing needs of their clients (and larger communities) to ensure their work is carried out as equitably as possible.

Understanding community-identified needs and offering flexibility

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION INFORMATION GATHERING

TNC works with BGC Canada to explore successes and challenges in Club partnership-building with First Nations, Metis, and Inuit organizations and effective approaches for incorporating Indigenous worldviews into BGC programming. Findings are being used to create a national strategy for Truth and Reconciliation across the BGC membership.

CHALLENGE: Many First Nations communities living on reserve are facing heightened food security issues, difficulty accessing medicine, covid outbreaks, and isolation which have led to additional secondary challenges.

OUR APPROACH: As evaluators, we have a responsibility to **understand the new context in these communities and design evaluations that are sensitive to the needs and lived realities.** As part of this approach we have:

- Adapted the way data was collected on First Nations reserves during the pandemic by conducting qualitative interviews with service providers, rather than obtaining feedback from youth or community members.
- Advocated to the funder about the challenges of survey collection when communities are facing other crises.



SHARING DANCE EVALUATION

Sharing Dance is a program by Canada's National Ballet School (NBS) which provides accessible community-based dance and creative movement programming to diverse groups across Canada. TNC has worked with NBS to complete a comprehensive, multi-year evaluation.

CHALLENGE: In-person programming and related data collection was put on hold or cancelled due to the COVID-19 related public health restrictions.

OUR APPROACH: Our team **adapted the evaluation methodology to work with the data that was available, and find creative alternative methods to assess outcomes.**

- We conducted virtual site visits and Zoom interviews with participants as alternative methods of collecting feedback
- We offered busy program facilitators (e.g., school teachers) the option of providing written feedback instead of doing interviews

Assisting partner organizations through capacity building & development

COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM GRANT PROGRAM

United Way Greater Toronto (UWGT), in partnership with the General Mills Foundation and Greater Twin Cities United Way, is piloting a grant stream intended to strengthen Mississauga's food system. They do this by providing financial investments to organizations/programs, building capacity of the grantees, and gathering key stakeholders to develop a unified approach to address food security.

OUR APPROACH: In response to shift to virtual programming during the pandemic, our team **coached clients in alternative forms of data collection (e.g., electronic surveys, virtual focus groups)** to help them collect useful participation, process and outcome related data. This was done with the long-term goal of making clients more confident and capable of sustaining evaluation activities beyond the grant duration.

LEAD UP

Lead UP is a national youth-led community service learning program being delivered at 28 Clubs across Canada. Youth co-develop and implement initiatives to meet the needs of their community. Our team collaborated in the design of the program, provided training on youth leadership and engagement, and evaluated the program nationally.

OUR APPROACH: As part of the evaluation, we involve youth directly in the data gathering process. To do so, we **provide training to staff program facilitators and youth to enable youth to collect data** which both reflects on their program experience and provides data that is authentic and genuine. Additionally, we train youth researchers to lead photovoice projects. During these projects participants take pictures and write captions that describe the thoughts, feelings and emotions that they experience in the program. (See one Club's examples to the right)



Advocating on behalf of partner organizations & their communities

THE SEED GOOD FOOD WORK EXPERIENCE

The SEED champions for food security issues. They offer a youth work experience program called Good Food Work Experience. TNC carried out a 3-year evaluation of this program.

CHALLENGE: This program was paused indefinitely due to the pandemic. All staff and resources were completely sidelined to provide emergency food relief for the community. Nearly one year remained in a three-year evaluation. As evaluators, we were accountable to the funders as much as the client was, but we suddenly found ourselves with no year-3 data, and questions that the existing data did not answer.

OUR APPROACH:

- We worked with the funder to gain approval to produce a less rigorous final evaluation report that focused more heavily on the few qualitative anecdotes that could be collected.
- Our team pivoted to provide different products to the client in lieu of a formal evaluation report from the year 2020. For example, we developed a local system map to understand the collaborations and connections between various local food system organizations.