

# The Evaluation

of the  
Youth Driven  
Service Learning Center



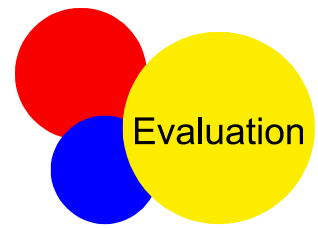
What have you accomplished?

# The Basics:

- Program evaluation gathers information to measure, understand and show achievement levels of a programs' goals
- The YDSLCL is a program with *specific* outcomes that can be evaluated.
- In program evaluation or assessment, the information gathered serves to improve the Center and inform others of what outcomes have been achieved.
- Center evaluation should start at the beginning of the year, or even the prior year. Not at the end.
- It can be helpful to have a small team of students who will serve as the evaluation "team". Their job is to always be thinking about gathering information and data. They will be the ones to think ahead and build in evaluation, as the Center evolves new programs. Serving on the evaluation team is a great way to sharpen academic standards in math, research and technology while building organization, communication and critical thinking skills.
- **A good way to generate evaluation questions for your Centers goals is to look at the "question words".**
  - **Who?**
  - **What ?**
  - **When?**
  - **Where?**
  - **How?**

# Identify

Exactly what do you want to accomplish?



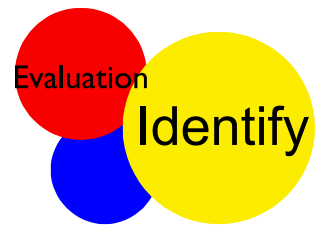
## 1. IDENTIFY THE PROGRAM'S ACTIONS

What are the activities of the Center? What are you doing? Your activities may include; training students, outreach to parents, service projects, mini-grants and others.

## 2. IDENTIFY THE PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Objective statements are measurable - they contain clear criteria for program success. For more information on objectives, check out

Note: Program objectives are basically the outcomes of your Centers' actions. For example: *The center conducts teacher trainings (action) in the expectation that the teachers will then use the training to start a service learning project in their classroom (objective – increased service learning use by teachers).* The goal of the first step of IDENTIFY is to clarify what the objectives are. Objectives Objective statements should be measurable and very specific. In the previous example a well written objective would be; "Teachers implementing service learning projects will increase by 20%)



### 3. IDENTIFY A DEFINITION OF THE PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Note: Sometimes our objectives are not clear, their definition is open to some interpretation. We can't all agree what it looks like when we achieve our objective. For example, if we state that the Center wants to help students in the Resource Room acquire leadership skills, what does that mean exactly? What will the leadership look like, so we know what we are trying to achieve? If the Center wants and needs to evaluate some concepts which are not innately clear, a group of students will need to IDENTIFY and define what actually is being studied.

### 4. IDENTIFY THE AUDIENCE FOR YOUR EVALUATION

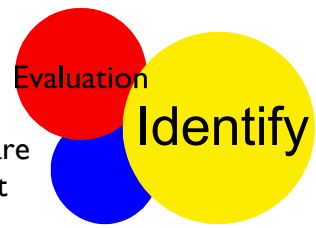
The type of evaluation/assessment is sometimes created by "who" wants to see the evaluation. You want your evaluation to be useful and to be used, so you must consider to whom you will send your evaluation.

These are a few people that might be audiences for your assessment report;

- School Board
- School Administration
- Parents
- Teachers
- Community Agencies
- Community Members
- Funders (Who gives you money!)

Many Centers are funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Education as part of the Learn and Serve America grant program. Because they fund the Center they have certain expectations of evaluation that must be met. Each year, these expectations are somewhat different, so your Center Teacher and the evaluation team should discuss how the required Learn and Serve data/information can be collected.

Note: Not every activity of the Center has to be evaluated. Hopefully there is a lot going on at your Center and you there is not time to evaluate everything. Look at the overall goals of the your Centers, talk to teachers and administrators and look to guidance from any grants that your Center may have, to decide what to evaluate.



5. Identify the questions. After you have identified and defined the program objectives. It is helpful to write them out as a question. Here are some questions about a Youth Driven Service Learning Center to get you started. What other ones can you think of?

### **Outreach**

Who uses the Center?

What kinds of information do visitors to the Center need?

### **Needs**

What are the community needs being addressed at the Center?

Why did/does the administration feel the needs of the school are?

### **Students**

How do students hear about the Center?

How are students using the Center?

When do students most often use the Center?

What do students want when they come to the Center?

### **Community**

Who in the community knows about the Center?

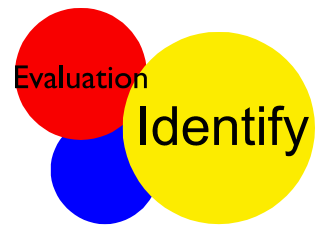
How do community members use the Center?

### **Teachers**

What kinds of materials and resources to teachers need from the Center?

How did teachers hear of the Center?

When teachers come to the center for information, do they follow it up with actual service project implementation?

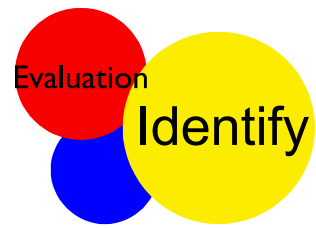


### Survey Questions

Dr. Jeff Singleton developed the following questions that may help you in designing a survey about your own Center, or for ideas of what to ask other Centers if you visit other schools.

### Planning/Start-Up

1. What concerns, problems, or issues caused you to start a YDSLCL?
2. What were the important people involved in the start-up phase of your Center?
3. How much time would you say you spent getting the program off the ground?
4. What resources did you need to get the Center started?
5. Did you prepare any planning documents, project descriptions, proposals or documents of any kind in the early stages of the development of your Center?
6. What "mandates" had an effect on your work in creating your Center?
7. How did these mandates affect the availability of resources for your Center?
8. Which "stakeholders" [people inside or outside your guiding/district who have an interest in your project – clients, partner organizations, school district personnel] had the most important positive
9. Which stakeholders had the most important negative effect?
10. How did your Center respond to the interests/concerns of your various stakeholders?
11. What would you say were the core values or the philosophy of your Center when you started?
12. What would you say was the mission of your Center when you started?
13. What were the most important strengths and weaknesses of your school and/or district when you launched your Center?
14. How did your Center build on or maintain these strengths
15. What were the most important external [that is, outside of your Center, school, or school district] threats and opportunities facing your new Center?
16. How did you take advantage of the opportunities?
17. How did you minimize or overcome the threats?
18. Who participated in the review of your proposal to start a YDSLCL [aside from the Learn and Serve review of your grant proposal]?

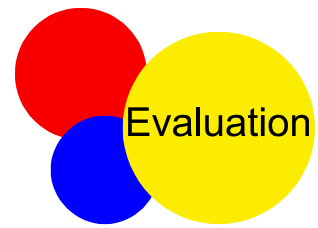


Survey Questions continued  
**Implementation**

1. How did you coordinate the various aspects of your project?
2. How did you ensure that all required work was completed?
3. How are your project's "deliverables" divided into smaller, more manageable components?
4. How do you control changes in the scope of your Center's work?
5. Do you have enough resources to accomplish the goals of your Center? If not, what do you need?
6. How do you work with other organizations, departments, people to accomplish your goals.
7. Do people who work at the Center have specific roles? What are they and what are they responsible for?
8. How did you acquire the staff that is required to operate the Center?

# Collaborate

## Who will help you evaluate?



Just like anything else, in evaluation, it is better to work with others and to get help when you need it. There are people who work with evaluation frequently and have skills and expertise to share with you and the Center. Think about the following collaboration partners who can help you a great deal with your work.

### Higher Education Institutions

Contact local Colleges and Universities to see if any students or Professors could help you with your evaluation. It is often good to look to Educational Psychology or Math/Statistics Departments at the Colleges or Universities.

### Administrators

Administrators of schools need to be well versed in program evaluation and assessment. Ask if there is a grant writer or evaluator in the administration that would be willing to help.

### Parents

Put a call out to the parents in the school for help. You never know who may be ready, willing and able to help you.

### Technology

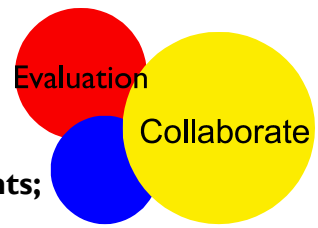
You may want and need to use technology to track information and to put it in formats that can make an impact. Work with your school's technology/computer teachers and students to help you. Also, there are many resources on the web about evaluation and assessment measures.

### Evaluation Work Integrated with Course Content

Students working as evaluators can do so as part of their academic course work. Meet with teachers from a broad range of academic disciplines to see if they would be interested in an evaluation component to their classroom, or possibly giving academic credit to students completing the evaluation work.

### Language Arts courses (English, Speech, Writing):

Written skills, data collection knowledge and skills; observation/note taking skills; oral presentations of information; interviewing and writing summaries; reading/analysis skills; critical thinking through written and oral approaches; writing reports; citing references.



■ **Social Studies courses (History, Sociology, General Social Studies, Culture and Society; World Cultures; Current Events; Psychology):**

Reading and analysis of information; observations/note taking; social interaction analysis; interviewing and summarizing; reading and summarizing; differentiating between opinion and fact; understanding social, political, and governmental policy; writing and research reports; understanding different age groups in terms of their needs and functions; writing reports.

■ **Math courses (Basic math, Algebra, Statistics, Applied Math):**

Computing averages; mean, mode, and median; basic math skills (adding, subtracting, multiplication, and division); compiling statistics; organizing data sets; collecting and using numerical facts; quantifying goals and outcomes..

■ **Science courses (Basic Science, Physical Science, Behavioral Science, Cultural Geography):**

Observing and recording data; analyzing data; generating hypotheses; conducting an experiment; reporting results; generating and testing theories; conducting case studies.

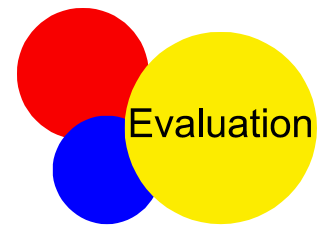
■ **Personal Development/Consumer Sciences (Personal Development, Child Development, Family Studies):**

Analysis of values and moral structures; conducting case studies; understanding child development and behavior; writing reports; observing and recording data; understanding family structures; understanding parent-child relationships; understanding role of authority in family structures/programs.

There are many more courses and examples that can be found in regular courses that connect the work of evaluators to the academic and skill content of courses. It only takes a creative mind to come up with the specifics!

# Act

## Collect, record and analyze the data



There are many ways to conduct evaluation and assessments. You have to decide which method is most appropriate to your Center and to the questions you want to have answered. You can find information about how to conduct any of the following methods from the resources at the back of this Chapter or from the Collaboration partners listed previously. In general you can use any of the following;

There are essentially two kinds of information collected in evaluations: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data are things that can be counted, measured, or represented in numerical forms. Qualitative information includes almost everything else, from observations, interviews, documents, and media representations, to complete the stories about the program and/or people studied. Qualitative information is usually reported in words, pictures, sounds, and other manners that affect the human senses.

**Quantitative data:** Examples include number of people involved, kind of people involved, number of hours involved, number of times people meet, percentages of impact made, number of things accomplished.

**Qualitative data:** Examples include description of an event/activity, written report of an interview/discussion/observation; history of program; video of a discussion; picture and explanation of an event/object.

### I. What methods will you use to collect and record your data?

#### Oral methods

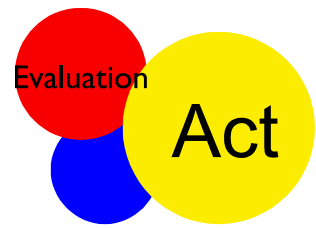
- Interviews: with participants, with community members, with youth, with teachers/adults involved in the initiative
- Group discussions: community meetings, focus groups; dialogues
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#### Records

- Journals from participants
- Journals from community members/parents/
- Tests/reports
- Attendance records
- Disciplinary records
- Professionally produced reports
- Previous year evaluation
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#### Surveys/Questionnaires

- Survey of participants
- Survey of secondary level personnel
- Surveys of all stakeholders (people with an interest in the project)
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Observations/documentation of experience

- Observations of school personnel (teachers/administrators), program staff, local personnel, community members, government staff.
- Observations of specific program activity
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Media presentations:

- Digital photographs
- Videos
- Audio tapes
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The Joint Committee on Educational Evaluation developed “The Program Evaluation Standards”. It is basically a list of what a “good research” project looks like. The following list is an adaptation of that list and will help you conduct your evaluation effectively and ethically.

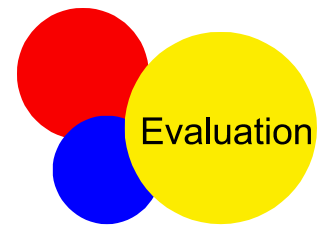
1. Consider all the individuals that will be affected by the evaluation. Think about those giving the evaluation, those receiving the evaluation and those who might use the results.
2. Make sure the evaluators know what they are doing. Make sure everyone has been trained to do their part of the evaluation and seek out help and expertise in areas that need additional assistance.
3. Gather all the information that is needed, but don't gather unnecessary information. Be clear on what information you need to specifically answer your question. Don't clutter things up by asking a bunch of extraneous questions you really don't need.
4. Evaluations are impacted by values and biases. Try to be aware of any biases which might be affecting your research.
5. Be clear! Through the whole evaluation process make sure that you are giving others enough information to really understand the total context of the program and the evaluation.
6. Sharing really important information when you can. Sometimes an evaluation process finds out information that should really be shared sooner rather than later. Evaluation reports do not always have to come at the end of an evaluation process, share when its important!
7. Conflict of interests. Think about whether students working on the evaluation can be objective. If they have been the leader of a specific project or initiative, they perhaps should not be the evaluator of their own project.
8. Be careful with money. If the evaluation process is requiring a financial commitment, make sure to track the money very carefully.

*Note: Not every activity of the Center has to be evaluated. Hopefully there is a lot going on at your Center and you there is not time to evaluate everything. Look at the overall goals of the your Centers, talk to teachers and administrators and look to guidance from any grants that your Center may have, to decide what to evaluate.*

# Reflect

What does the data show?

How will it be used?



Use your evaluation results to change and adapt the work of your Center. You will find information that may indicate that your Center is not exactly working the way you had hoped it would. **Don't panic!** That's not a negative, it means the Center can make changes to adapt and be the type of Center that the community needs and the students want.

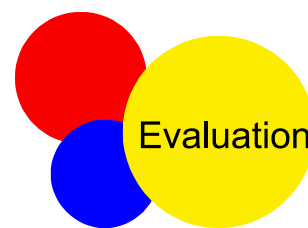
If the results aren't what you expected take time to figure out "why"? Bring together individuals who may have some insight in to the area of concern to discuss what the evaluation results mean and what could change.

It is also possible that the results of your evaluation are "skewed", meaning they didn't really gather the information that you wanted or needed. Perhaps the evaluation didn't ask the right questions, or it didn't ask the right people, or the questions that were asked were not understood by the respondents, etc. Sometimes you need to reassess the results and the methods used to gather the results. This is a good point to discuss with your Collaboration partners.

1. What did we learn about our Center from the evaluation process?
2. Did our evaluation show we were meeting the objectives of our Center?  
If not, how should we change?
3. What does our research suggest we evaluate next?
4. Were our evaluation methods sound?

# Encourage

Share what you have learned.



Information that is gathered in your research process has to actually be used! A bunch of numbers sitting on a piece of paper, won't help your Center to improve or convince others of the good work the Center is conducting.. Before, during and after gathering data, keep asking yourself?

- 1. Who will we share this information with?**
- 2. How can we share it so that others will listen?**

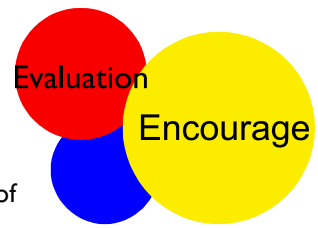
Work with your collaboration partners to develop a dissemination plan, which is a plan for how to share your information with others. Think about what type of format is needed so that the people you want to see the information and who need to see the information receive what they specifically need.

There are many ways to write an evaluation report. The format will be determined in a large part by the audience to whom you are sharing the report with. Some audiences, parents and other students may want an informal report, in which students talk to them about what they have found. Other audiences, like grantors (people who have given the Center money) may need more formal, precise and written reports. An official, formal report often has the following parts;

- Cover page
- Table of Contents
- Executive Summary – A short summary of each of the sections of the report. Usually 1 page or less.
- Introduction – Background of the Center, why the research was conducted and methods used to gather the data.
- Findings - What you actually found out by conducting your research/evaluation.
- Conclusions or recommendations – After looking at your data and information, what does it mean? What did you learn about the Center? What do you think should be changed?
- Appendix – Include any pertinent documents.

Hopefully, by the end of the year and all the evaluative processes that have occurred in your Center, you will be ENCOURAGED! You will see what you have done well, and will have gathered some ideas as to what you can and should do better!

No matter what your results show, good and/or poor, feel encouraged that you were responsible enough to gather information to help you improve your program and your work.



## ADDITIONAL EVALUATION RESOURCES

There is a great deal of information on program evaluation that you can access. Many of these sites are especially helpful when you need specific evaluation “how tos”; how to write a questionnaire, how to conduct a focus group, etc.

- Community Tool Box: Evaluation Chapter  
[www. http://ctb.ku.edu/](http://ctb.ku.edu/)  
This guide is a wonderful resource for anyone wanting to know how to connect effectively with a community to achieve goals. The Tool Box provides over 6,000 pages of practical skill-building information on over 250 different topics. Topic sections include step-by-step instruction, examples, check-lists, and related resources.
- Educators Guide to Service Learning Program Evaluation <http://www.servicelearning.org/filemanager/download/37/>  
Includes specific information on service learning research and substantial “how to” information on evaluation procedures
- <http://gseweb.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/resources/issuebrief1.html>
- Online Evaluation Resource Library  
<http://oerl.sri.com>  
  
A large collection of sound plans, reports, and instruments from current project evaluations in several content areas Guidelines for how to improve evaluation practice using the Web site resources OERL's resources include instruments, plans, and reports from evaluations Also included are alignment tables that contain criteria and a glossary to help you develop your own plans, reports, and instruments.
- Users Guide To Evaluation – Tools for National Service Project  
<http://www.projectstar.org/star/Library/toolkit.html>  
Though designed primarily for the evaluation of Americoprs programs, publication includes a great deal of helpful information and examples.
- [www.zoomerang.com](http://www.zoomerang.com)  
Zoomerang.com is a user-friendly online survey site. It is an exemplary program for conducting surveys online. They have recently made the free version rather limited and the paid version expensive. It is still, however, one of the most user-friendly online survey sites.
- Student Evaluators  
<http://www.studentsasresearchers.nexus.edu.au/>  
This is a program from south Australia, but has interesting insights and a chance to read students real accounts of conducting research.



# **We need YOU to help improve the YDSLCL manual!**

- Do you have ideas or suggestions about how this manual could be improved?
- Do you have materials or resources you use in your center that could be shared with others?
- Do you have questions or concerns about service-learning centers that you feel should be addressed?

*Please let us know! Contact the Pennsylvania Service-Learning Alliance to contribute materials for the next addition of the YDSLCL Manual:*

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