

# Using Data to Tell Your Community's Story



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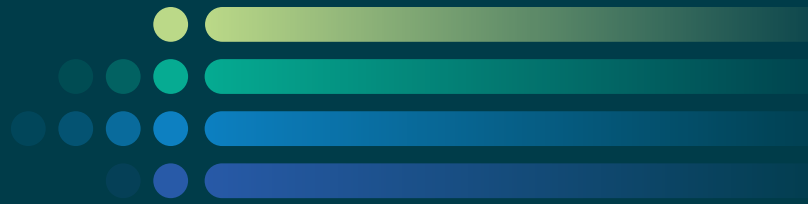
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# Preface



Thank you for your interest in using Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) principles to improve health equity in your community. ABCD is a methodology that communities can use to build on their existing strengths, resources, and potential. It acknowledges the simple truth that community members are empowered, active, and autonomous participants in the process of improving their own lives.

This workbook series (*Improving Health Equity through ABCD and Using Data to Tell Your Community's Story*) was developed over the course of a peer-learning initiative sponsored by Data Across Sectors for Health (DASH) in 2022. Our goal is to help you improve health equity in your community by recognizing data as an important asset, and by using the ABCD approach to use data to your advantage. These workbooks highlight the importance of data and provide guidance and tools to build powerful communities.

DASH is a national initiative that helps communities share data to bring about health equity. DASH is co-led by the Illinois Public Health Institute and the Michigan Public Health Institute. Together, the two institutes make up the DASH Program Office, which is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.\*

DASH provides funding, resources, and tools to help organizations in the public health, social services, and health care sectors share data. The initiative is built on the understanding that sharing data across different sectors can contribute to better health, well-being, and equity.

Ultimately, multi-sector data can support better practices, inform policy, identify how current systems reinforce inequity, and challenge dominant narratives. Additionally, we believe that people represented by data must play meaningful interpretative and decision-making roles in the data-sharing process. When ABCD organizers understand the importance of data, powerful community-driven initiatives can result.

**\* The views expressed in the publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. This publication is not copyright protected, and you do not need to obtain written or verbal permission to reproduce and disseminate this resource.**

## Acknowledgements

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# Welcome!



This workbook has been created to help you in your health equity work because data is a powerful tool in telling your community's story, and that story is essential to understanding your community's truth.

We know that evaluation planning and data collection can be intimidating—so our goal is to help simplify these things, offer ways to bring a greater focus on equity in these processes, and help you find ways to involve local residents and community members in accurately and effectively telling your community's story.

Regardless of your role in community-building or health equity work, we hope that this workbook will be useful in your efforts. Maybe you're a resident leader, agency staff, or a coalition member. Regardless of your role, we've designed this workbook to help you effectively collect and use data to support your efforts to create greater health equity. Combined with Asset-Based Community Development process described in the companion workbook, data gathering can contribute to a self-sustaining way to build power in community.

## Why Data Matters

Data, in its most simplest form, is factual information that can contribute to telling the story of a community. Data describes community conditions, assets, and residents.

Data can lead to knowledge and knowledge holds power. A community that is equitably involved in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data has the power to tell their own story.

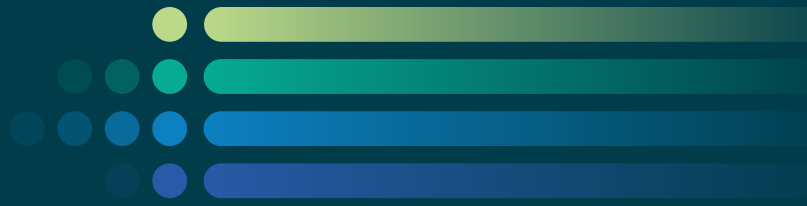
Community-based evaluation is about collecting data and sharing the real stories of the community. When we do this, communities are able to own the data and help others to understand and take action. This approach is often called "equitable evaluation" because it values all voices, especially community members, in defining, designing, implementing, and interpreting the evaluation.

We know that historically, data collection has been controlled by outsiders or institutions with resources, power, and access to funding. If data is only being collected, analyzed, and interpreted by outsiders, then there is a good chance that the story told about the community will reflect the interests of those outsiders rather than the interests of the community itself. Sometimes evaluators have gotten a community's story wrong, and then amplified that story and created harm in the community.

In this workbook, we look at how community members can gather or collect their own data while engaging others in the process of collection, design, implementation, and analysis of data.

We invite you to use the tools in this workbook to tell your community's story from the inside. It is essential that community-led health equity efforts include community-led evaluations, where residents are co-authors of the data.

# Lessons from the River Garden Neighborhood



**Here is an example about how young community members gathered data to tell their story and change the narrative about their local park when City experts missed the mark.**

One city's parks department had a plan to improve the two baseball fields at a neighborhood park. There had been complaints about drug use and drug deals there. Believing that increased park usage by the community would decrease the use by drug dealers, city staff reviewed permit data and they found that very few people were using the park. They drove by the park several times over the course of a month, polled local recreation clubs and found that baseball and softball league leaders did not have practices there because the fields were in bad condition. So, they planned to improve the baseball fields and upgrade the picnic facilities, assuming that would increase park use and make it a less desirable place for people selling or using drugs.

When the teens who lived in apartments across the street from the park found out about the plan they were confused. They didn't know anyone who played baseball, but they knew lots of members of their community who traveled to another park to play on soccer fields. They also knew that the local Mom's group drove to another park for play groups because that park had bathroom facilities while their park did not.

The teens met with the parks department staff and explained that replacing the deteriorated baseball fields with soccer fields and adding bathrooms near the lot would do more to increase usage than improvements to the fields and picnic facilities. City staff acknowledged that the teens had a good argument, but there was not enough data to back up their suggestions.

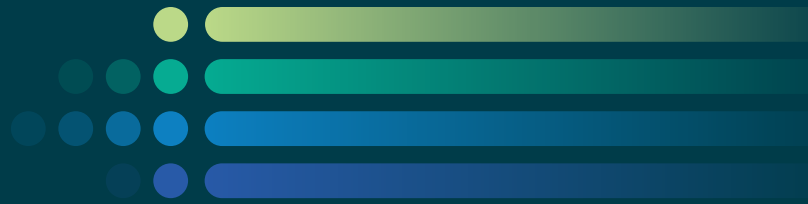
So, the teens set out to collect data about how the park was currently used and what would cause people to use the park more. They set a schedule to observe the park at various times of day weekdays, weeknights, and weekends. They developed a form to record their findings, so everybody's data was collected and recorded the same way. They observed how many people were in the park each hour, what their approximate ages were and what they were doing while there. Then they surveyed residents within two blocks of the park to find out what they wanted at the park. They asked people to share their thoughts about the park, if they used it and how, and what would cause them to use the park more.

After a month of observation and surveys the teens presented a plan that included two soccer fields, a new play structure, picnic tables, bathrooms, and landscaping changes to remove the areas where drug deals and drug use happened.

When the local councilmember asked city staff why the teens' data seemed so different than what was in the staff report she learned that the staff report was based entirely on surveying people who used the park permit system. This was skewed heavily toward baseball and softball organizations and clubs that held events. The staff observations of park usage were also only conducted during weekday working hours. Based on the new data collected and interpreted by neighborhood residents, the city redeveloped the park using the teens' suggestions and the park became a well-used jewel of the neighborhood.

**The original story of the park was driven by the city staff's interpretation of what data was needed and what it showed. When the community decided to tell its own story, the data to be collected and how it would be collected was expanded to give a more complete picture. When data is gathered and shared by the community, it can drive powerful change.**

# Evaluation Design



What is evaluation design? It's the plan of the steps we take to collect data and tell our community's story. Whether you've never done an evaluation before or you've done them a bunch of times, we'll give you lots of ideas and tools to help you learn about your community and tell your community's story.

Remember to check your asset map for trusted partner expertise and skills in the area of gathering data. You may find others who can help with data collection, cleaning, analyzing, presenting, and taking action. These partners can provide helpful support through the steps below.

## 1. Choose your outcomes

It's important that we start at the end and work backwards. This means that we first determine our outcomes. Outcomes are the change you are seeking or want to see in your community. Outcomes often look like:

- "Our community is safe and healthy"
- "Our neighborhood is vibrant and people like living here"
- "Young people have opportunities in our community"
- "People feel empowered here"

Before thinking about what data you want or need, gather other community members and leaders and discuss what outcomes might matter for your own community or neighborhood. After we choose an outcome, we need to define our indicators.

## 2. Choose your indicators

Once the community has agreed on priority outcomes, we need to think about how you'll tell if you're starting to reach your outcome, have reached your outcome, or are actually moving in the opposite direction of your outcome. These are your indicators. Every outcome has indicators which we can study, ask about, or observe over time.

Think about the first outcome example listed above: "Our community is safe and healthy." What things tell us that we're safe and healthy? How do we know if we're safe and healthy? What does safe and healthy look like to us? Although you may come across traditional standards of indicators, the answer to these questions—your indicators—can vary from community to community.

**What outcomes did you think of for your community? What might be some of their indicators? Write your thoughts here:**



Maybe you thought of some of these examples...

People are outside at night, adults exercise, families have access to groceries or fresh food, neighbors get together for cookouts or potluck, kids eat at least three meals a day, sidewalks are maintained and usable, neighbors talk to each other, heart disease or other health conditions aren't common. Maybe you thought of other examples! There are a variety of things that people would say make a safe and healthy community and therefore lots of indicators that can help us measure how we are working towards our outcomes. We can figure out if we have the right indicators by:

1. Asking if the community agrees that there is a strong connection between the indicator and the outcome we want.
2. Being able to count, read about, observe, or ask about the indicator.
3. Choosing an indicator that stays consistent or means the same thing over time.

### 3. Figure out what you could study, measure, or observe to learn more about the indicators

1. **Study:** What can we learn from people who already have collected some data? This usually involves looking at documents, articles or data from local government sources or the US Census. Often our institutional community partners have access to these data sources.
2. **Ask:** What can we learn from asking people through surveys, focus groups or interviews.
3. **Observe:** What can we learn from watching and observing – either places in the community or people or groups.

### 4. Choose data collection method(s) for each indicator

You'll find more information about each of these methods later in this workbook.

- **Surveys.** Asking a representative group of people a standard set of questions.
- **Observations.** Viewing and recording people's actions or how a place is used or not used.
- **Focus Groups.** Holding a small group conversation with preset questions.
- **Interviews.** Individual conversations with many preset questions.
- **Secondary Data.** Data already collected by someone else—like school data, census data, crime rates, event attendance, and rent prices in different neighborhoods or cities.

### 5. Plan for understanding the data

All the work in steps 1–4 is to learn about our community, so we need to build in time to review, analyze and interpret what the data mean. This usually involves a process of bringing community members and partners together to look at results and discuss what they say and what they mean.



Below is a sample evaluation design plan. We start by choosing our outcome, then our indicators, and lastly the data collection methods we'll use.

What story do we want to learn more about?	Community Safety	
OUTCOME Benefit or change we want to learn about.	INDICATOR What will tell us these outcomes are happening?	DATA COLLECTION METHOD What evaluation tool would best measure the indicator?
our community is safe	People say they feel safe	Survey
	People walk in the community at night	observation
	Public spaces are well used and clean	observation
	Crime rates are going down	Secondary Data: Crime data from local police department
	Teens want to stay in, or return to, community as adults	Interviews



Below is a sample evaluation design plan. We start by choosing our outcome, then our indicators, and lastly the data collection methods we'll use.

<b>What story do we want to learn more about?</b>		
<b>OUTCOME</b> Benefit or change we want to learn about.	<b>INDICATOR</b> What will tell us these outcomes are happening?	<b>DATA COLLECTION METHOD</b> What evaluation tool would best measure the indicator?

# Surveys



Surveys are a way of collecting information from individuals using a standardized questionnaire. They are used to collect data from a lot of people in a way that those people can represent the whole community. They are great for asking a lot of people the same questions and for getting a sense of what the whole community thinks about something. They also are useful when privacy is important (they are confidential). Responses to questions can be organized by multiple choice or short answer.

The challenge of surveys is that they require a lot of work to be representative of the community. A survey that is only administered at the grocery store on weekends will have lots of bias towards weekend shoppers, the people in a household who do the shopping and the rush they are in at the time. It will also collect data from people who do not live in the community but happen to shop there similar to what we saw with the River Garden Neighborhood park example. To eliminate these biases, it is important to survey a random sample of households. There are lots of ways to build a random sample using the resources at the back of this workbook.

It's important to use neutral questions in surveys. Survey questions should not imply our own opinions, influence which response to choose, or give unbalanced response options.

Compare the two questions below, which is the neutral question?

Example A

**How bad is crime in this neighborhood?**

- Really bad
- Pretty bad
- Bad
- Not bad

Example B

**How safe or unsafe do you usually feel in this neighborhood?**

- Very safe
- Somewhat Safe
- Somewhat Unsafe
- Very unsafe

**What differences do you notice about these two questions?**

If you chose Example B, then you are correct! Example A assumes crime is already bad, and three of the response options say it's bad, so the responses won't accurately tell you how neighbors personally feel about crime (or safety) in their neighborhood.



We can analyze that data to learn what percentage of residents feel a certain way compared to another way. Surveys also create the option to analyze two responses at the same time and see how they may be related. This is called cross tabulation and means that we look at one data point across another one. For example, we can look at how people answered the safety question and what part of the neighborhood they live in to learn about any geographic patterns of safety. Or we can cross tabulate safety data with age or gender or housing status to see if any particular groups feel safer than others.

### Survey Decisions for Your Community Group

As a group, you will need to make important decisions about your survey. Each decision will be better when at least four different stakeholders develop them together.

- Who should we survey? (youth, seniors, park users, new neighborhood residents, moms, etc.)
- What questions will help us understand the story?
- How will we distribute and collect surveys from who we chose to learn from? (for example, at events, online, text, email, knocking on doors, etc.)

#### CAUTION!

It might be tempting to post an online survey on social media for anyone to answer. Know that when surveys are shared openly on social media, survey results often include responses from people outside of the neighborhood or a bias towards groups that are more likely to be online. When that happens, it is not representative and defeats the whole reason for doing a survey.

- Who will be involved in designing the survey?
  
- What do we want to know? What are the main questions?
  
- Who can answer these questions? Who will we survey?
  
- Who will write the questions?
  
- Who will test the survey to make sure it makes sense?
  
- Who will help pass out and collect the survey?
  
- How will we share the survey in our community?
  
- How will we make sure the survey is representative and reduces bias?
  
- When will we distribute the surveys?
  
- When will the surveys be due by?
  
- How will we analyze the data?
  
- Who will help analyze the survey results?
  
- Who will help interpret the results?
  
- What other data is being collected that should be considered alongside our survey results?

# Observations



Observations are like surveys but instead of asking people their opinions we observe their behavior. Observations can also be used to collect data about things, like parks, housing conditions, availability of healthy food, safe exercise spaces, etc.

The benefits of collecting data by observation is that it is inexpensive and easy, does not require special expertise, and can capture changes over time that might not otherwise be noticed. Sometimes by simply counting what we observe over time we can detect changes in our neighborhood. For example, if we notice an increase in the number of children using the park every day that may tell us something about park safety.

The challenge to observation is that observers need to be trained and use a common set of standards rather than their personal opinions. It is not useful to just send a bunch of people out into the neighborhood to record their thoughts about whether public spaces are safe and useful without any guidelines. The observers need to use a common set of criteria such as number of people using the park, activities of people using the park or number of broken pieces of equipment. This data can then be analyzed along with survey data about how residents feel about the parks, safety or healthy spaces.

Below is a sample observation design plan.

<b>Who will design the observations?</b>	Blue Tree residents, including at least 2 seniors and 2 teenagers; teachers from the neighborhood school; staff from Yellow Sky After-School Program		
<b>Who will conduct the observations?</b>	Everyone above + students from the Yellow Sky After-School Program		
<b>Who will analyze the data?</b>	The people designing the observations		
WHAT ARE WE OBSERVING?	WHAT THINGS ARE WE LOOKING FOR?	WHEN WILL WE OBSERVE?	WHAT SUPPLIES DO WE NEED?
Park Usage at Blue Tree Park in Blue Tree Neighborhood	<p>How many people are using the park?</p> <p>Are people alone or in groups?</p> <p>What are people doing in groups or individually?</p> <p>What are the ages of the people? (using our best guesses)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under age 4</li> <li>- Elementary Age</li> <li>- Middle or JR High Age</li> <li>- High-School Age</li> <li>- 20-30</li> <li>- 30-40</li> <li>- 40-50</li> <li>- 50-60</li> <li>- over 60</li> </ul>	<p>*June 1 to July 15</p> <p>Weekdays 3-5pm</p> <p>Weekdays 5-7pm</p> <p>Weekdays 7-10pm</p> <p>Weekends 8am-Noon</p> <p>Weekends Noon- 6pm</p> <p>Weekends 6pm-10pm</p>	<p>Writing tools</p> <p>observation sheets with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- People counts</li> <li>- Individual or group categories</li> <li>- People ages</li> <li>- Times of observations</li> <li>- Space for comments</li> </ul> <p>2-person teams for each shift</p>

<b>Who will design the observations?</b>			
<b>Who will conduct the observations?</b>			
<b>Who will analyze the data?</b>			
<b>WHAT ARE WE OBSERVING?</b>	<b>WHAT THINGS ARE WE LOOKING FOR?</b>	<b>WHEN WILL WE OBSERVE?</b>	<b>WHAT SUPPLIES DO WE NEED?</b>



# Focus Groups



Focus groups help us dig deeper into issues and learn how diverse groups of people feel about those issues and why they feel that way. By sitting down with a small group of people, we can deepen or broaden our understanding of other data that has been collected. For example, if our survey says that people feel safe in one park but not another, then a focus group can help us understand what is happening at the park that feels safer. Once we understand those differences, then we might be able to make similar changes to improve the other park. Focus groups can explore sensitive and or complicated topics that are hard to understand through survey answers. Focus groups can help us learn more about observation data we don't understand.

Focus groups can be easy to use and inexpensive, but they do require an experienced facilitator to effectively guide the conversation. They also need a group of participants with diverse experiences who are interested in sharing their views on the topic. If your team is able, it is best to provide participants some compensation for their time. Below are a few of the tasks you'll need to consider when you prepare.

## Suggested Focus Group Tasks

Write the purpose statement	6-8 weeks prior
Select a facilitator	4-5 weeks prior
Develop the questions	4-5 weeks prior
Arrange and reserve session site	4 weeks prior
Recruit and identify participants	3-4 weeks prior
Follow up with phone calls	2 weeks prior
Place a reminder call to participants	2 days prior
Gather session materials	2 days prior
Conduct the focus group	Day of
Provide incentives like gift cards to participants	Day of
Transcribe notes from the session	Day of
Analyze and interpret sessions (with process participants)	Within 2 weeks
Write up and communicate findings (first with process participants and then additional audiences)	Within 1 month



## Tips for Great Focus Groups

### 1. Use a Facilitator

- Use a skilled facilitator who can manage the discussion and allow you to feel confident in the results.
- A good facilitator involves everyone evenly, keeps the group on task and doesn't let the conversation get steered away from the focus.
- Determine up front how to capture the conversation – notes, flip chart, or recording.
- Use an assistant facilitator to welcome people, coordinate logistics, and help with recording/note taking.

### 2. Keep the Size Manageable

- 6-12 participants
- Do 2-3 focus groups to find common themes in responses. This also makes it more possible that all the participants you identify can participate which will ensure representation.

### 3. Invite and Encourage Participants Strategically

- Aim for a mix of participants.
- Provide incentives for participation.

### 4. Script the Questions

- 4-5 questions, open-ended to encourage conversation
- 20 minutes of set material – opening, questions, closing

### 5. Choose the Right Location

- Beware of bias and choose a neutral, comfortable, easily accessible location.
- Participants need to be at ease in expressing their opinion.

### 6. Keep a Time Limit

- 1-2 hours maximum
- Serve refreshments.
- Have necessary materials ready.

### 7. Summarize and Analyze

- Summarize each focus group session, then combine them together.
- In the summary, include the purpose for the focus group, results, and conclusion.

# Interviews



We can collect valuable data from interview-style conversations. This is especially true when we want to dig deep into a topic or collect information about the outcome we're focused on. To do this in a way that results in comparable data, we can use interviews (sometimes called key stakeholder interviews) with community members.

Interviews require a list of open-ended questions, and those questions are used in the same order for each interview. It's best to hold at least 8-12 interviews, with people representing diverse experiences in the community. Consider small business owners, teachers, mail carriers, librarians, park and recreation staff, real estate agents, local elected officials, health care providers... the options are endless.

Interviews follow a similar timeline as focus groups but can be a little easier because not everything has to be coordinated around one session. Although they are typically scheduled, in some cases it may work to do more impromptu interviews like approaching people at a community event to see if they have 10 minutes to share their perspective on the topic. Below are a few of the tasks you'll need to consider when you prepare for scheduled interviews. Venue-based impromptu interviews do not require advanced scheduling, but you do need to gather contact information so you know if the interviewees live in the community or are visiting.

## Suggested Interview Tasks

Write the purpose statement	4-6 weeks prior
Identify the participants	4-6 weeks prior
Gather contact information on participants	4-6 weeks prior
Develop the questions	4-5 weeks prior
Schedule interviews with participants	2-4 weeks prior
Place a reminder call to participants	1 week prior
Interviewers conduct interviews	Over 2-week period
Write up notes from interview	Day of
Send thank-you note to people interviewed	Within 1 week
Analyze and interpret sessions	Within 2 weeks
Write up and communicate findings, make sure to share with participants too	Within 4 weeks
Analyze and interpret sessions (with process participants)	Within 2 weeks

# Understanding the Data



## Analysis and Interpretation

Now that you've collected the data you listed in your Evaluation Design Worksheet, what do you do with it?

You analyze and interpret it. Analysis and interpretation

are critical stages for resident and community involvement. Interpretation without residents often leads to inaccurate interpretations and can perpetuate the very inequities you are trying to address.

Analysis is the process of looking at all the data and determining what it says. To analyze the data, we first separate the quantitative and qualitative data.

**Quantitative data** is information that can be counted and given a number value. For example, if you add up all the people who were surveyed and answered the question “What do you like best about this neighborhood?” you can count those responses and use numbers to total the responses. You can also figure out the percentage of people who gave the same answer. Like the chart shows, quantitative data is helpful for comparing differences and figuring out which options people chose the most.

**Qualitative data** is information that uses language instead of numbers.

Think about our survey question above. After asking that question,

you may want to learn more about why they chose their response by adding an open-ended question. Open-ended questions or comment boxes give people a chance to provide more detail. So after asking “What do you like best about this neighborhood?”, we might add “Please share 1 reason why you chose your answers.” Then we can collect more information to learn from. Open-ended responses include all types of styles—long responses, one-word responses, no punctuation or lots of it, names of people or places, and sometimes responses have nothing to do with the question asked.

### Analyze:

What does this data say?

### Interpret:

What does this data actually mean?

#### WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT THIS NEIGHBORHOOD?

Total survey responses = 50

Response Option	Number of People	Percentage of People
My neighbors	36	72%
Convenient Location	32	64%
Park	23	46%
Schools	19	38%
Access to public transportation	9	18%

#### PLEASE SHARE 1-2 REASONS WHY YOU CHOSE YOUR ANSWERS.

- School is important for my son's future.
- Carlee keeps an eye out for me and lets me know what's going on.
- I work down the street.
- When is the city going to put up a new stop sign?? I started calling 2 months ago and call them every Tuesday and Wednesday.
- My next door neighbor helps with my kids. And she is so helpful to me and really great with them. I don't know what I'd do without her.
- Friends
- Mr. William fixes my car!
- Nothing
- Sister lives nearby.

In the examples above, our analysis could state that people and location are the strongest assets of our neighborhood. Qualitative data analysis could reveal that what residents like about their neighbors is that they can count on each other to help when needed, and that the children in the neighborhood play together.



## Engaging Community Members in Analysis

Some analysis can be done by the people involved in the data collection. A small group can run the numbers from surveys and observations and read and highlight the interview or focus group notes. The key to good analysis is to have more than one person look at each data set. Different people will notice or question different results, even with quantitative data. Consider putting together a small team of 4–5 residents, then:

1. Provide everyone the same data set (survey results, interview notes, focus group highlights, or observation notes).
2. Ask the team to review their data and organize what they find. At this step it is important that team members do not yet state what they think the data means, but just what it says.
3. Bring the team together and have each member present what they learned.
4. Combine these learnings so you have a full analysis of what the data says.

Once we have done our initial analysis and recorded what the data says, we need to interpret what the data means. Interpretation is where community stories emerge, and we discover which stories are most important to our community.

### Engaging Community Members in Interpretation

Gather residents and other stakeholders to share the types of questions you asked and the data you collected. Lead them in a discussion focused on three primary questions:

- What stories do we see in the data?
- What confirms what we thought?
- What surprises us?

After these questions have been discussed, invite the group to identify which story is the most important to tell. Most groups will settle on two or three stories but asking them for one gets the process going.

- How would we like to analyze the data?
  
- Are there groupings of data we think will be interesting or useful to understand?
  
- Are there combinations of data we should look at together?
  
- Who would be valuable to have on the data analysis team?
  
- Who should be in the room to interpret the data and discover the stories?
  
- When and where will we meet?
  
- What data from our analysis is important to share with them to discuss?
  
- How will we visually share the data so participants can review it? (for example, flipchart stations, handouts, slides, etc.)
  
- What questions will we ask to guide their conversation about the data?
  1. What stories do we see in the data?
  
  2. What confirms what we thought?
  
  3. What surprises us?
  
- How will we ask participants to prioritize the most important story (or stories)?
  
- Who needs to know the most important story (or stories)?
  
- How will we communicate the stories?

# Capturing and Telling Your Story



Once we know what the data says and what it means we are ready to tell our story. Remember, the data is not the story. The story is the story. Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? Power comes from the story. Data is there to help us, and others, understand the story.

Stories go beyond narrative. They include the voice of the participants.

Data helps others understand how the story is about the whole community and not just one person or one event. For instance, in the story at the beginning of this workbook many people would say “no one uses the park because of drug activity.” And then they would talk about a time they saw someone selling drugs. The story the youth told was “more people will use the park if there are soccer fields and bathrooms near the tot lot.” They told the story with data – 60% of residents report that they would use the park more often if there were soccer fields with goals and 83% of parents of children under 10 surveyed said they would use the park more often if there were bathrooms near the tot lot. This changed the story the community told itself and how they developed solutions. They changed strategies from asking for more police presence to pressuring the city to redesign the park so it would meet the goals of more nearby residents.

There are lots of ways to tell a community’s story. Most follow a basic story-telling model, which is taught to 3rd graders and graduate film school students alike.

1. **Main Characters:** Who is this story about? Who are we rooting for? Who else is involved? What do they say about themselves and their story?
2. **Setting:** Neighborhood? Town? Who lives there? Ages, backgrounds, how long people have lived there? What does the data say about who lives there?
3. **Plot:** What does the data tell us about the main characters? What are the challenges and obstacles the characters face? What is happening in the area? What do residents say? What do other stakeholders say? What changes are happening or happened?
4. **Call to Action:** How do we move forward? What action should the audience or listener take? What needs to happen now?



**Who is our audience?**

**How will we communicate our story?**

<b>Main Characters</b>	
<b>Setting</b>	
<b>Plot</b>	
<b>Call to Action</b>	

# Finding Evaluation Support



Many state universities have *Extension Departments* that help implement community-based research. Some even offer online resources you can read, watch, download, or use. If you want to locate an extension department near you, get online and type “university extension [insert local college or university]” in your browser.

Check out the University of Wisconsin’s extension page as an example:

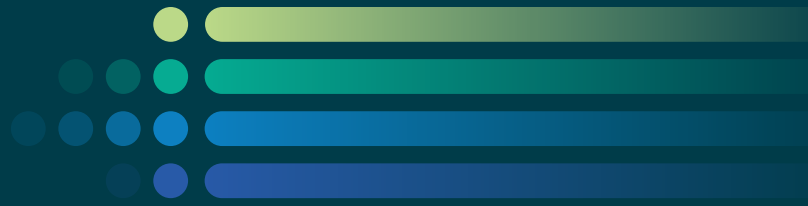
<https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/programdevelopment/evaluating-programs/>

You don’t have to live in Wisconsin to access these valuable tips and tools. After you click the link, you can click on “Methods” and/or “Analysis and Use” for lots of helpful information (tools, handouts, tips, articles) about the data collection and analysis methods discussed in this workbook.

Other help might be found at local community foundations and other philanthropic organizations. Many of those organizations have evaluation departments, often called *Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)* departments. People in these departments are experts on how to conduct an evaluation and can help you design and implement yours.

Remember, when you reach out to universities, foundations, or health agencies, while they can provide useful expertise in data collection and health policy, they cannot provide expertise in understanding your community. Residents and the businesses and organizations that make up the community are the experts. They know what it is like to live, work, play and pray in your community.

# Resources



## Evaluation Resources

Better Evaluation offers great resources for all kinds of evaluation efforts: <https://www.betterevaluation.org/>

University of Wisconsin-Madison offers a variety of tools to download and education to learn more:

<https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/programdevelopment/evaluating-programs/>

Community Tool Box is a free resource for those working to build healthier communities and bring about social change:

<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/evaluate/evaluation/participatory-evaluation/main>

Data Jargon Decoder makes things easier: <https://react-data-decoder.vercel.app/>

Statistic How To explains why random samples matters:

<https://www.statisticshowto.com/probability-and-statistics/statistics-definitions/simple-random-sample/>

## Storytelling Resources

Storytelling for Good connects you to a suite of tools and a growing community that can help you leverage the power of narrative to increase your reach: <https://storytelling.comnetwork.org/>

Tips on how to tell a story: <https://nieman.harvard.edu/stories/how-to-tell-a-story-the-moth/>