

Engage Stakeholders in Program Evaluation: Throw Them a Party!

Abstract

A data party is an engaging way to involve stakeholders in program evaluation. We explain the use of a data party for engaging 4-H program stakeholders (e.g., staff and volunteers) in data interpretation and helping them understand, embrace, and use program evaluation information to make data-driven decisions about their programs. We present two tools that can be used for presenting data in a clear and meaningful way: data place mats and gallery walks. We also provide information on the process we used, our lessons learned, and the utility of data parties in Extension programming.

Keywords: [data](#), [evaluation](#), [4-H](#), [engagement](#), [stakeholders](#)

Kendra M. Lewis

4-H Academic
Coordinator for
Evaluation
University of California
Agriculture and
Natural Resources
Davis, California
kelew@ucdavis.edu
[@ca4hresearch](#)

Timothy Ewers

Extension 4-H Youth
Development
Specialist
University of Idaho
Moscow, Idaho
tewers@uidaho.edu

Marianne Bird

4-H Youth
Development Advisor
University of California
Cooperative Extension
Sacramento, California
mbird@ucanr.edu

Tamekia Wilkins

Youth, Families, and
Communities Data
Analyst
University of California
Agriculture and
Natural Resources
Davis, California
twilkins@ucanr.edu

Background

Engaging stakeholders in program evaluation can be difficult but is critical for rendering better and more useful evaluations. Program evaluation is too often a one-way flow of information. It is not commonly looped back into the program where stakeholders provide an "insider's insight" to evaluators about what the data may mean and where stakeholders can use evaluation feedback to improve programs.

A creative way to loop back and engage stakeholders in program evaluation is to hold a "data party" (Franz, 2013, 2018). This is a form of participatory evaluation (e.g., Bhattacharyya, Templin, Messer, & Chazdon, 2017) but is limited to stakeholder involvement in data analysis, review, and interpretation of study results. While participatory evaluation approaches are common in many areas of Extension, they are not as well employed within 4-H. We used data parties to develop a fuller interpretation of program data and promote more engagement in program evaluation with 4-H stakeholders. We focused specifically on the data interpretation phase of evaluation (for data analysis examples, see Franz, 2013, 2018).

Data Party Structure

Lewis, K. M., Ewers, T., Miller, J. C., Bird, M., Borba, J., Hill, R., . . . Trzesniewski, K. (2018). Addressing retention in youth programs: A survey for understanding families' experiences. *Journal of Extension*, 56(3), Article 3TOT3. Available at: <https://joe.org/joe/2018june/tt3.php>

Miller, J., Lewis, K. M., Bird, M., Borba, J., Ewers, T., Hill, R., . . . Trzesniewski, K. (2016, October). *The all important first impression: Parent & guardian perceptions of their first year in 4-H*. Paper presented at the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents, New Orleans, LA.

Pankaj, V., & Emery, A. K. (2016). Data placemats: A facilitative technique designed to enhance stakeholder understanding of data. In R. S. Fierro, A. Schwartz, & D. H. Smart (Eds.), *Evaluation and Facilitation: New Directions for Evaluation*, 149 (pp. 81–93). <https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.20181>

Titcomb, A. (2010, September 30). Allison Titcomb on gallery walks [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://aea365.org/blog/tag/gallery-walk/>

Copyright © by Extension Journal, Inc. ISSN 1077-5315. Articles appearing in the Journal become the property of the Journal. Single copies of articles may be reproduced in electronic or print form for use in educational or training activities. Inclusion of articles in other publications, electronic sources, or systematic large-scale distribution may be done only with prior electronic or written permission of the *Journal Editorial Office*, joe-ed@joe.org.

If you have difficulties viewing or printing this page, please contact [JOE Technical Support](#)