A Time for Reflection and a Time for Learning

I've always liked the thought of New Years resolutions as a form of accountability. I set goals, evaluate my own success and determine whether my efforts have had the desired impact. For organizations, it works similarly. As organizational leaders we owe the groups an honest accounting of our efforts and their impact. We also owe ourselves the opportunity to reflect fully on our successes and limitations and to consider ways in which we can improve our performance.

Reflect and Improve: *a Tool Kit for Engaging Youth and Adults as Partners in Program Evaluation* can help your organization conduct its own evaluation.

Reflect and Improve allows facilitators to identify and capitalize on the skills of the people around them. Both youth and adults gain new skills while engaging in reflective activities that lead to improvements in their program, project, or activity. *Reflect and Improve* helps take the mystery out of conducting an evaluation by including practical activities, handouts and explanations on involving youth and adults in planning, implementing, analyzing and sharing the results of evaluation.

The benefits of program evaluation are well known, but what do organizations stand to gain by integrating young people into this process?

 Better Evaluation Design: Youth can provide important input on designing evaluation tools. They bring a fresh on-the-ground perspective to the process that enriches the final product

 More Useful Results: When you include the ideas and perspectives of young people as well as adults, you wind up with a more comprehensive analysis and more information that you can use to strengthen your organization, interact with stakeholders and improve your community

 Sound Youth Development: Youth can directly apply new skills through the process of learning to build community relationships and understanding real-world experiences. Programs can actively involve young people in designing evaluation tools, pilot testing

them, collecting data, reviewing evaluation results, and making suggestions for modifying practices.

Youth Leadership for Community Change: Youth can practice real-life community leadership through data collection, reflection, and action.

So, consider starting the New Year off right by involving young people in assessing your program or organization's performance. You will be glad you did.

You can read more about _Reflect and Improve_ by going to the "Tool kits and Resources" section of our website, http://www.theinnovationcenter.org/r_toolkits.asp.

For everyone here at the Innovation Center, I wish you all the best in the New Year.

Wendy Wheeler
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