

# Partying with a Purpose: How Data Parties Can Promote Participation in and a Culture of Evaluation in Extension



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EXTENSION

## INTRODUCTION

Program **evaluation is critical in Extension**, not only for purposes of **accountability**, but also for **measuring program outcomes** and **amplifying community impact**. Evaluation findings are important for various stakeholders, including Extension personnel, who are working to offer meaningful programs in a way that makes sense for their constituents, program participants, who hope to achieve one or more outcomes, and funders, who want to be sure that the funds spent are worthwhile. Even as the number of Evaluation specialist positions increase, **there is still a need to increase organizational evaluation capacity as well as create and sustain a culture of evaluation within Extension systems**. **Data parties** (Franz, 2013) are a **methodological tool** that Extension systems can use to engage stakeholders in participatory data analysis to **increase participation in evaluation** and **build an organizational culture of evaluation**.

## HOW TO THROW A DATA PARTY

- Data parties can take place in-person or online
- Send out party invitations to diverse stakeholders
- Prepare effective and attractive data visualization for **data décor** (posters and placemats), which participants will react to during the event
- Create **stations** for **participatory activities** where participants will respond to, reflect on, and/or provide evaluation data
- **Train facilitators** and **notetakers** to assist
  - Send out party **reminders**
  - Plan to take **photos of artifacts** for **coding/data analysis**
  - Consult with your **IRB** for human subjects **research determination**.

## EXAMPLE: OSU EXTENSION DATA PARTY

Oklahoma State University (OSU) Extension hosted a **statewide data party** at their Biennial Conference in January 2020. They employed the following activities to engage participants in **participatory data analysis** (of data collected at community forums across the state) and **conference evaluation**:

**Thrive Tree**: Tree elements are assigned constructs; participants write ideas on elements and add them to the tree. A facilitator guides discussion about participant ideas.

**Gallery Walk**: Participants provide written/ verbal reactions to **data décor** (posters and placemats featuring visualized data)

**Meaning Map**: Participants add to a collective concept map

**Photobooth**: Participants write responses to prompts on small dry erase boards and have their photos taken

**Feedback Wall**: Participants provide evaluation data by responding to prompts (*I liked*, *I wish*, *I wonder*, and *I realize*) on chart paper posted around the room

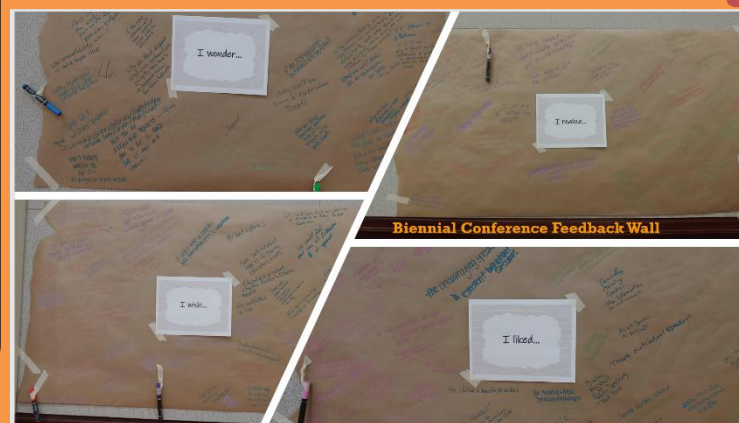


Thrive Tree Station

## TIPS FOR PARTYING RESPONSIVELY

- Be mindful of contextual, organizational, and **cultural responsiveness** when deciding on format, location, and stations/activities
- **Acknowledge the Indigenous land** your land-grant/grab institution occupies
- **Center community member and educator voices**, not specialist or “expert” voices
- Work to *not* perpetuate **-isms** (i.e., racism)
- Aim for **representation**
  - Over-invite those who are typically underrepresented/minoritized
  - Don’t assume they are not interested; recognize sociohistorical barriers to participation, as well as equity issues
- **Accessibility**: Physical, technological, literacy
- Be **open to new ways of knowing and doing**

• Data parties are an **interactive way to engage stakeholders** in program evaluation and can help promote a **culture of evaluation** in Extension.



## DISCUSSION

Data parties (in-person or online) are a useful **methodological tool** for engaging stakeholders in **participatory data analysis and evaluation**. Extension systems can employ data parties to increase participation in evaluation, to gather thoughtful community input, and to foster a culture of evaluation.