

Working in a low budget program context makes a lot of things more difficult. To ease some of that pressure, here are some helpful tips on how to still provide high quality evaluations to these contexts that need them most.

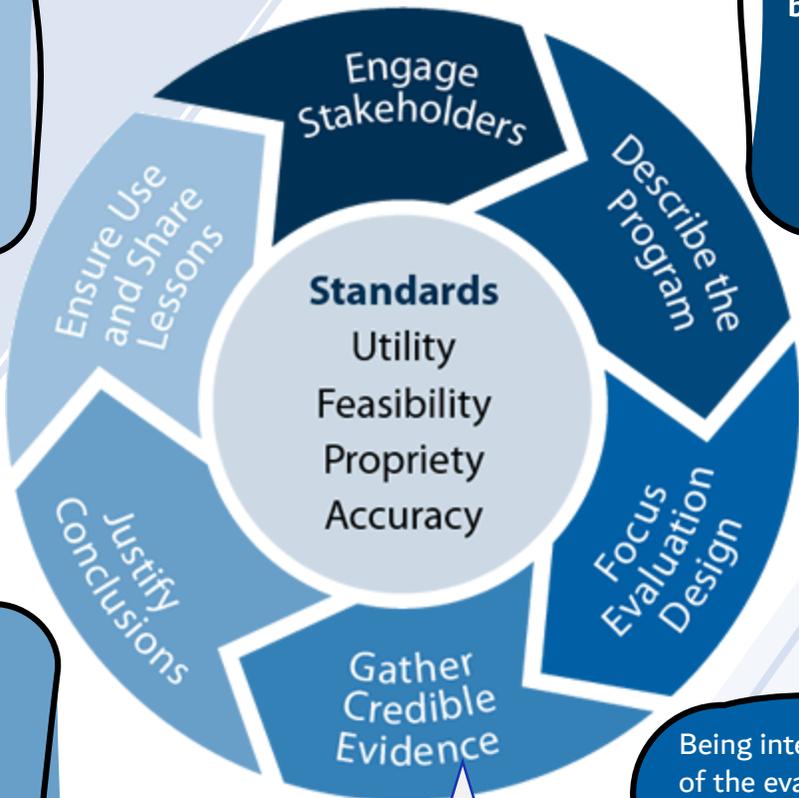
Utilize approaches that maximize involvement of stakeholders (including youth) throughout the evaluation process

- **Participatory methods**
 - Who are the key stakeholders – involve them in the whole process
- **Evaluation Capacity Building**
 - Teach a person to fish
 - Data and eval workshops

Defining the program theory helps to focus on critical info needs.
Make this process cheaper by gathering info from:

- Informal conversations
- Internal and external program documents
- Observing the program in its day to day

Building partnerships with the program allows you the time and space to do small efforts each year instead of trying to fit everything into one year



Big final evaluation reports take a lot of time and money and often aren't read or used. Talk with your client about alternatives to the big final evaluation report that may save time and be more useful to them:

- Snapshot reports
- Final evaluation presentation only
- Data interpretation workshop

Most of the time and resources are taken up in the section of gathering credible evidence. On the next page, we dive deeper into ways to cut your budget while maintaining rigor.

Being intentional about the focus of the evaluation and the prioritization of stakeholders' needs will go a long way in reducing the budget and providing good work.

- Be okay with saying "no"
- Choose the focus based on client information needs (what info can they use right now), stage of the program, information they are excited about and will influence what they do now, what's feasible
- Previous literature may have already answered a question they have – tap into that

Gather Credible Evidence - Cheaper Alternatives

Alternatives to pre-test/post-test RCT

Some researchers conducted a meta analysis on psychological, educational, and behavioral interventions to see effects in an RCT compared to various other non-experimental designs. Estimates from non-experimental designs were more variable BUT the average effect across all the studies were very similar.

Alternatives to pre-test/post-test RCT:

- Post-test only RCT
- Pre-test/post-test project group only
- Pre-test/post-test for project group and post-test only for control group
- Retrospective pre-test

Use existing systems - don't rebuild the wheel

- (1) Previous surveys:** If they have a previous survey, it may not be that great BUT you can take it, tweak it, and use the systems that are already in place to collect it.
- (2) Tapping into other stakeholders:** If you don't have the capacity in your budget to take on tasks like data collection, data entry, recruiting participants, administering surveys, or conducting interviews, then see what stakeholders are available that you can train to do that work instead (i.e., program staff community residents, student nurses, youth participants, interns). *Added bonus:* they will have an insider view, insider access, and insider credibility with the participants.
- (3) Scales from previous literature:** Where possible rely on previous literature in the field or previously created scales to supplement or replace work you would do on your end.

Other cheaper methodological alternatives

- (1) Reducing sample size:** Smaller sample size allows you to not have to collect as many participants. Some ways you can do this would be reducing the type of disaggregation required and using a different form of sampling like stratified sampling, cluster sampling, or quota sampling.
- (2) Cheaper methods:** Some methods are cheaper to conduct than others like observations, non-obtrusive methods (like automatic counters), web surveys (no data entry), secondary data (records from schools, health centers, other public service agencies; project records; census data; records from community organizations; newspapers; other mass media)
- (3) Other alternatives:** **(a)** When conducting interviews or focus groups, utilize phones or video conferencing instead of spending the time and money on travel. **(b)** Skillfully plan things to overlap to better make use of time/resources (i.e., share out findings and conduct a focus group in one sitting). **(c)** Use donated goods as incentives for participation in surveys/interviews/etc. **(d)** Partner with an external organization that may have cheaper services like universities that will do cheaper work in exchange for the ability to publish or for student experience