

UFF-DA!

Useful Facts and Figures - Data for Affiliates!

June 2011

You asked for it! And here it is... Program Evaluation

During the annual review of its Strategic Plan in 2011, HFH-MN conducted a survey investigating current affiliate challenges and support needs. Program evaluation emerged immediately as a high priority area of need for Minnesota affiliates. 23 percent of respondents reported an interest and need for support in program evaluation!

Habitat affiliates are not alone in this need! In these times of economic austerity, non-profits are turning to program evaluation more and more to help them improve their programs and demonstrate their impact to funders. In this UFF-DA Report, we will share some ideas and examples of how your affiliate can use program evaluation techniques to **MAKE YOUR CASE!**

Get Informed! *What is Program Evaluation and how can it help my organization?*

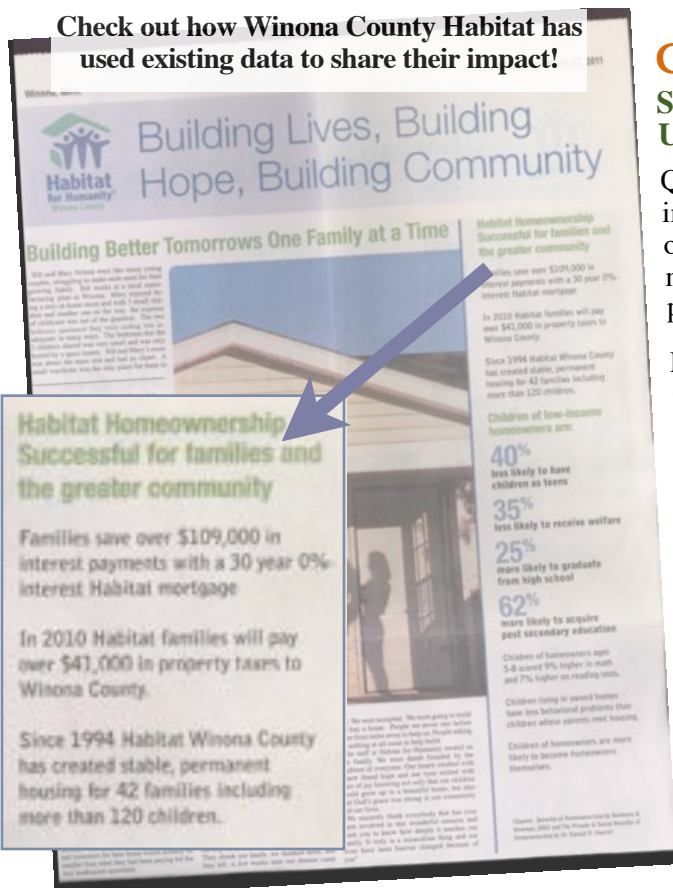
Program evaluation is the systematic assessment of the processes and outcomes of a program with the intent of furthering its development and improvement.

Questions that might come up in a program evaluation include:

- What are the goals of our program? Are we achieving those goals?
- What impact does our program have on its participants?
- What changes occur in people's lives as a result of participation in our program?
- What things are working in our program?
- Where is there room for improvement?

Program evaluators use tools such as surveys, interviews, and existing data to find answers to these questions. Program evaluation can help your organization improve its programs and gather concrete evidence of your program's impact to share with funders and other important audiences.

Check out how Winona County Habitat has used existing data to share their impact!



Get Started! *Easy Steps to Start Sharing Your Impact Today!*

Step 1: Finding Your Quantitative Data Using what you already have to start sharing those numbers!

Quantitative evaluation data shares the “hard numbers” of your program’s impact. It can be some of the hardest kind of data to obtain, but also some of the most attractive to funders and the public. The good news is that many affiliates already possess loads of quantitative data about their programs!

Examples of data that affiliates are currently collecting include:

- number of volunteers mobilized by Habitat programs
- number of children in stable homes because of Habitat programs
- Dollar amount of real estate taxes paid into communities by Habitat homeowners
- Dollar amount of utilities expenses saved by Habitat homeowners in sustainably built homes
- Partner Family satisfaction level with Habitat programs

Hint! If you are participating in the HFH-MN Loan Program, CRV, or the Federal Home Loan Bank Program, you may already be collecting many of these figures above! Here are some places where you can start sharing your data:

- Ask Letters
- Grant Applications
- Newsletters
- Website
- Thank You Letters
- Flyers
- Other Marketing Materials

Step 2: Getting Some Qualitative Data

Documenting the stories!

Powerful anecdotes can often be the most effective and compelling way to share the full impact of Habitat's work on families and communities. Qualitative data shares "the story" of your program's impact, in words rather than numbers.

Examples of qualitative data that affiliates are currently collecting:

- "Family stories" that share the journey of Partner families in their own words
- Video interviews and documentaries about Partner Families and the work of the affiliate
- Quotations from Partner Families about the impact of Habitat homeowner on their lives

Check out this great video posted online by Lakes Area Habitat that shares their impact through interview: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bLncoxS5rQ>

Here are some ideas to help you get started on collecting on your stories of impact:

- Ask your Board or Family Selection Committee members to brainstorm and compile a summary of their favorite "family stories" from their time at your affiliate. Arrange interviews with Partner Families and send out Board members or other volunteers to ask the questions
- Host a "get together" event where Partner Families can eat, socialize, and share their stories

Here are a few suggestions for interview questions:

- Tell me about your family and how you got to be where you are today.
- How has Habitat for Humanity impacted your life and the lives of your children?
- What's your favorite memory from your Habitat experience?
- What do you like most about being a homeowner?
- What are your dreams for the future?

Get Involved!

Announcing the HFH-MN Homeowner Impact Pilot Study

This summer Habitat Minnesota will be launching a pilot study to evaluate the impact of Habitat homeownership on the quality of life of our Partner Families.

Central Minnesota, Goodhue County, Itasca County, Northwoods, and West Central Minnesota have been selected as pilot sites!

If your affiliate is interested in future participation in this on-going study, please contact Sara Wessling at 612-331-4439 ext 2.

Get Free Evaluation Help! *Pro-Bono Evaluation Assistance Opportunities*

Universities and college are a great resource for free research and evaluation services! Many students and professors in sociology, public policy, non-profit management, and other fields are looking for opportunities to use their research skills to help their communities!

Check in with your local university for opportunities or visit the Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute at the University of Minnesota website: <http://evaluation.umn.edu/evaluation-services>.

Also, many research and evaluation firms accept applications from non-profits seeking free or reduced-fee program evaluation assistance. Visit the Non-Profit Yellow Pages at the Minnesota Council of Non-Profits website and select Program Evaluation Consultant for a list of consulting organizations by region or try the Minnesota Evaluation Association's Find an Evaluator page: <http://www.mneval.org/3301.html>

Get Resources! *Check Out These Online Resources*

Visit some of these websites for more information on Program Evaluation:

- **Evaluation Handbook** (Kellogg Foundation) – outlines a blueprint for designing, conducting and utilizing an evaluation.
- **Planning a Program Evaluation** (University of Wisconsin Extension) – includes work sheets to help focus an evaluation, collect data and manage an evaluation.
- **User-Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluation** (National Science Foundation) – is an excellent introduction to what evaluation is, steps in the evaluation process, developing culturally-sensitive evaluations and additional resources.
- **What is program evaluation: A beginners guide** - basic guide handouts designed as introduction to evaluation for those without technical backgrounds.

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