

# Ways to make your evaluations more culturally sensitive

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1. Examine your own biases and attitudes and their probable origins.
  2. During the early stages of planning the evaluation, take time to explore the cultures and any cultural issues that might affect your evaluation.
  3. Educate yourself about the cultural groups involved in your program and/or evaluation. Listen to people tell their stories, ask questions, read, and learn. Consider an activity where people bring in crafts/recipes/artifacts from their cultures to share, and share your own.
  4. Engage members of the cultural groups to participate in the design and implementation of the evaluation or in an evaluation advisory group. Incorporate diverse perspectives and opinions.
  5. Be flexible in your choice of evaluation design and data collection methods.
  6. Use multiple sources of information and data collection methods.
  7. Remember that evaluation may take more time if you need to build trusting relationships with new groups.
  8. Reject the myth of color blindness. Everyone is touched by race. It shapes how others see you and how you see yourself.
  9. Recognize that the culture you belong to – your own identity group – affects your perspectives and behavior. Culture is who you are. This is true for everyone you meet, including program participants and stakeholders.
  10. Work with others who differ in race, ethnicity, orientation, abilities, etc. in order to broaden and develop our own perspectives.
  11. Engage in self-reflective thinking and writing to better understand your own culture in order to better understand others.
  12. Don't assume that one way, or your way, is better.
  13. Always be respectful.
  14. Avoid jargon and exclusive language and behaviors.
  15. Demystify evaluation.
  16. Other strategies:
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Adapted from Preskill, H., & Russ-Eft, D. (2005). Activity 12: Cultural sensitivity in evaluation. In *Building evaluation capacity: 72 activities for teaching and training* (p. 66). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. and Cowles, T. (2005, Summer). Beyond basic training: 10 strategies for enhancing multicultural competency in evaluation [Electronic version]. *The Evaluation Exchange*, Vol. XI, No. 2. Retrieved August 4, 2008 from <http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange/issue-archive/evaluation-methodology/ten-strategies-for-enhancing-multicultural-competency-in-evaluation>

## Is a written questionnaire culturally appropriate?

### Things to consider:

- Literacy level
- Tradition of reading, writing
- Setting
- Not best choice for people with oral tradition
- Translation (more than just literal translation)
- How cultural traits affect response – response sets
- How to sequence the questions
- Pretest questionnaire may be viewed as intrusive



## Are interviews culturally appropriate?

### Things to consider:

- Preferred by people with an oral culture
- Language level proficiency; verbal skill proficiency
- Politeness – responding to authority (thinking it's unacceptable to say "no"), nodding, smiling, agreeing
- Need to have someone present
- Relationship/position of interviewer
- May be seen as interrogation
- Direct questioning may be seen as impolite, threatening, or confrontational



## Are focus groups culturally appropriate?

### Things to consider:

- Issues of gender, age, class, clan differences
- Issues of pride, privacy, self-sufficiency, and traditions
- Relationship to facilitator as prerequisite to rapport
- Same considerations as for interview



## Is observation culturally appropriate?

### Things to consider:

- Discomfort, threat of being observed
- Issue of being an "outsider"
- Observer effect
- Possibilities for misinterpretations



## Cultural issues related to use of existing data/records

- Need careful translation of documents in another language
- May have been written/compiled using unknown standards or levels of aggregation
- May be difficult to get authorization to use
- Difficult to correct document errors if low literacy level

## Culturally appropriate informed consent

How can we be culturally sensitive and respectful and ensure the protection of those involved in our evaluations?

- Children
- Marginalized, "less powerful" participants