

## **STEP 6: DETERMINE HOW TO USE AND COMMUNICATE THE RESULTS**

Now that you have determined your assessment findings, you need to decide what to do with them. If you have been strategic from the beginning of the planning phase about what your assessment products and who the intended audiences are for the assessment findings, then your assessment will reach the right people with the right message when the time comes.

⇒ Step 6 has three activities, which are reflected in the *Step 6 Planning Worksheet: Ways to Report Results to Target Audiences* (following page 5-66):

- 1.1 Identify Assessment Products
- 1.2 Identify Target Audiences
- 1.3 Present Your Findings
- 1.4 Determine Next Steps
- 1.5 Celebrate and Acknowledge Your Work

### ***6.1 Identify Assessment Products***

Once you have developed your assessment findings, it is important to develop products that effectively communicate those findings to internal and external audiences. These products may take the form of:

- Written reports
- Report summaries or Executive Summaries
- Presentations
- Community Forums
- Recommendations
- Fact sheets
- Policy briefs
- Newspaper articles

First, develop a written report, which provides the foundation for other assessment products. This report is the full product with all the important findings you can give your intended audiences. It also provides background for the recommendations you make.

What do you usually do with reports you receive? Put them on a shelf and never look at them again? However, you want your report to be read and used. You can do that by making it:

- **Concise** – Make it short and to the point. Make it easy to find information.
- **Interesting** – Take the time to sort through all of your assessment findings, and present and discuss those that are new and compelling.
- **Responsive** – Consider your target audiences. Keep them in mind while writing the report.
- **Useful** – Write clear conclusions and recommendations. They are more usable. If the reader knows what to do with the information, they will be more likely to do it.
- **Attractive** – Spend a small portion of your budget to print bound reports in color to distribute to your important target audiences.

Here are some helpful instructions for writing a report:

### 1. Get community input and make the necessary modifications

- Community residents, community groups, and community leaders should always be your primary audience, so be sure to report the findings to them first and incorporate their feedback into the report.
- Multiple perspectives and feedback always benefit your final product, by ensuring that everything is correct and verified.

### 2. Pull out key points

- Key Findings and conclusions:
  - ⇒ What you learned
  - ⇒ Make a bulleted list, with one finding or conclusion per bullet
- Recommendations:
  - ⇒ Practical advice you can give your report audiences on what should happen next
  - ⇒ If controversial or complex, include the pros and cons of each recommendation
  - ⇒ Make a bulleted list, with one action item per bullet, beginning with who should carry out the action

### 3. Decide carefully how to present data to back up your findings and conclusions

- Use multiple ways of presenting data and different kinds of data to keep your audience interested and engaged.
- Use color printing and attractive formatting, as the more professional your data looks, the more seriously you will be taken by your target audiences.

This can be very important when you are trying to get the attention of funders, policymakers, and other decision-makers.

⇒ **Quantitative data:** data is best understood when one graph or table is used to depict each major concept or finding from the data. The more findings that are combined into one depiction, the harder it is for your audience to understand.

- Be sure to avoid any marks that don't help to depict the data, such as graph gridlines, frames, hatch marks, or extraneous graphics which distract the reader from understanding the data. Simplicity is best!
- Never use three-dimensional graphs, as these distort the data for the observer, and make it very difficult to understand.
- The ratio of graph height to width should be around 1 inch tall to 1.3 inches wide. Anything significantly taller or wider is difficult to read.
- Be sure none of your data points are hidden behind any others. All of the points you want to highlight should be visible and clear.
- Start graph x- and y-axis both at zero. Use a scale that is simple, such as 10, 50 or 100.
- Don't forget to describe what's in the graphic—and anything else about the data—in narrative.

⇒ **Qualitative data**—presenting qualitative data in some ways can be much more difficult than quantitative data, as the main findings cannot be reduced down to numbers or percentages. However, since the main findings from qualitative data include categories, themes, quotes, or anecdotes, they are easier to weave into a very interesting narrative. You may still want to use a graphical depiction of the data which can take the form of:

- A table summarizing your main categories, themes and summarized findings. This is an excellent way to demonstrate the relationships between different themes or ideas discussed by interview respondents and focus group participants. Below is an example from a qualitative study of influences of self-management of type 2 diabetes among African American women (From: Samuel-Hodge CD, Headen SW, Skelly AH, Ingram AF, Keyserling TC, Jackson EJ, Ammerman AS, Elasy TA. Influences on day-to-day self-management of type 2 diabetes among African-American women: spirituality, the multi-caregiver role, and other social context factors. *Diabetes Care*. 2000 Jul;23(7):928-33).

Table 3—Summary of emergent themes

Psychosocial issue/code category	Emergent themes
Spirituality/religiosity	Spirituality and religiosity as significant factors in coping and emotional support
Diabetes Impact	Impact of diabetes expressed as fear of suffering, deprivation (diet-related), and a physical and emotional "tiredness"
Multi-caregiver role	Care-giving responsibilities to multiple family members as a significant stressor and potential barrier to self-management
Stress	General life stress as a major barrier to diabetes self-management Stressors were related to life stage, a multi-caregiving role, and health (including fear of diabetes-related suffering)
Coping	Several styles of coping used, with reliance on God and prayer as the most significant
Social support	Significant emotional and instrumental support from daughters God as a source of emotional support

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- Story boxes that highlight quotations or stories that are particularly illustrative of the findings being discussed. These boxes should be in a different color and font, in order to draw attention to them on the page. You will want to spend a good amount of time selecting the quotations and stories for these boxes. Even though many quotes and anecdotes may seem very important and interesting to you, only select the ones that appropriately and colorfully illustrate the main themes or findings you are discussing. Below is an example of how specific quotes can be highlighted in a story box.

Community safety and security is a very real and prevalent concern for many of the mothers who participated in the three focus groups, particularly when it comes to neighborhood gang violence and drug activity. It is one that affects not only their own stress levels, but is associated with their ability to take their children to local parks, or to allow their children to play safely outdoors. Below are some quotes from these concerned mothers:

“...about a month ago, on the corner by my house there was a gang shooting and my children were outside. I was going to go out with them to the park ...when I went to get my children's sweaters I started to hear the gunshots and I ran outside to get them because they had stayed outside waiting for me.” [participant from Focus Group 1].

“Well my concern is the safety of the children, because I live in a mobile home park and there are a lot of people that are on drugs around there. They speed through our mobile home park. There are mothers that are hooked on dope. They can't properly take care of their children. They are out there barefooted with a diaper on not being supervised. A 16 month old walking up over the levy... that baby gets caught in the muck, it's gonna drown.” [participant from Focus Group 2]

“You know what, when we were kids we had all kinds of activities: we had dances, we had things that we were doing, we didn't get in trouble like they do nowadays. Because the children don't have nothing to do with their lives and all they can do is stand around on the corner and get in trouble.” [participant from Focus Group 3]

- ⇒ **Maps:** use maps that contain only the necessary geographical information—avoid unnecessary details as it is difficult to see the main points you want to make. If you can't get an electronic map of your community, then find a good print map and photocopy the right areas in the right size. Be sure to include a clear legend to indicate how you have coded the areas or points on the map.
- ⇒ **Photographs:** when presenting photographs collected through a Photovoice method (see *Appendix A: Data Collection Methods*), select pictures to present much like you choose your quotations and anecdotes. You first want to eliminate unclear or fuzzy pictures. If your audience cannot determine what is in the picture, then it doesn't make any kind of impact. You also want to select the pictures that best highlight or illustrate the findings you will be discussing. Also be sure to reproduce the pictures into print or slide format with care. You do not want to use black and white or photocopying unless the reproduction is extremely clear, otherwise your wonderful pictures will have been reduced to a fuzzy graphic that may not elicit the response from your audience you desire.

#### 4. Putting the report together

Now that you have your main findings and key points, and have thought about how to best present your data, you're ready to put them all together in a written report. You should consider this written report the source material for any other product you develop and distribute, so you want to make sure it is complete and well constructed. Research reports are usually written in the following way:

- a. Cover page: title of the report, preparer(s), organization(s), date
- b. Executive Summary: one or two page summary of main findings, conclusions, and recommendations
- c. Table of Contents
- d. Introduction: includes information about your agency, your partnership, your community, the assessment goals and objectives, primary questions, and the public health needs/problems this project aims to address.
- e. Methodology: includes information about the particular details of the assessment project and the assessment methods used.
- f. Main findings: a presentation of findings by category or theme; includes graphical depictions of data.
- g. Discussion: an opportunity to discuss your interpretation of each of the findings, as well as their importance to your community's health. If you think there were any major limitations or weaknesses of your community public health assessment, then use this opportunity to address them here. This makes it harder for any critics or opponents to find faults with your assessment later.
- h. Conclusions: concise conclusions that summarize the major findings.
- i. Recommendations: what you would like your community assessment audiences to do next, such as program, policy, or other recommendations.

#### 5. Design tips for easy reading

- Use a clear, readable, and large font. Some good suggestions are Times New Roman, Arial, Palatino, Garamond, and Tahoma.
- Develop clear, uniform heading formats in bold or bold italic
- Leave plenty of "white space" between paragraphs, graphics and bullet points
- Include page numbers

## ***6.2 Identify Target Audiences***

It is critical in the planning phase that your partnership identifies the intended target audiences. These are the ones with whom you wish to share your assessment findings and products. They could include internal audiences, such as community partners and other stakeholders identified in Step 1 of the planning process. They could also include external audiences, as you may decide as a group to use the findings and products from the assessment to increase awareness regarding your particular health issue, or the state of health in your community. Sharing products may also serve to “open the door” to work with new stakeholders or community partners on implementing any recommendations or next steps.

### **External target audiences may include:**

- Community members and patients
- Hospitals, clinics, or other health centers
- Local businesses and employers
- Health insurance plans
- Other local, regional or statewide advocacy groups
- Legislators and policymakers
- Elected officials
- Funders or private foundations

Discuss the following questions with your partnership:

- Who will want to hear your findings?
- Who needs to hear your findings?
- What do you think each target audience most wants to hear?
- Can you tailor your assessment products to be responsive to what each target audience wants to hear?
- If you have too many target audiences for your report to accommodate them all while still being concise, then can you develop multiple products that highlight different assessment findings and recommendations for each target audience? (Such as policy implications for policymakers or health service implications for health care providers)

### ***6.3 Present Your Findings***

Plan your presentations for each audience. Formulate your argument and anticipate opposing arguments. Counter opposing arguments using data and findings. Focus your message around common health care values:

- Cost
- Quality
- Access
- Equity
- Rights

**EXERCISE 6.3: ARGUMENT/ COUNTER-ARGUMENT**

This exercise is provided to help organize your focus, assessment findings, and arguments when you get to the point of presenting them to your target audiences. Focus and tailor your arguments to each audience and you have a better chance of convincing them.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your findings?</li> <li>• What data supports your argument?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What will your critics argue?</li> <li>• What data might you expect from them?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your response?</li> <li>• What data supports your response to opponents?</li> </ul>

#### ***6.4 Determine Next Steps***

Discuss the possible next steps for your partnership. Obviously these will probably change depending on your results and the experience of the assessment. However, identifying some of these next steps during the planning phase helps your assessment be more strategic. Some possible next steps are to:

- Identify additional stakeholders, allies, or partners
- Seek funding
- Identify program or service needs
- Identify necessary policy changes
- Engage in policy change or advocacy efforts
- Mobilize leaders and residents around an issue
- Identify needed research or program evaluation activities
- Develop an on-going collaboration with your partnership
- Develop a longer-term work plan with your partnership

Once you have achieved your community assessment, the possibilities for future action are endless!

#### ***6.5 Celebrate and Acknowledge Your Work!***