Qualitative Evaluation Methods

Pediatric Obesity Mini-CoIIN
September 21, 2017

WELCOME!

While you are waiting, please use the webinar "chat" box to briefly tell us about your team's experiences with focus groups, interviews, and other qualitative approaches.

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Learning Objectives

1. Explain what qualitative methods can add to program evaluation and identify situations/reasons when qualitative methods may be appropriate.

2. Identify different types of qualitative evaluation data collection and analysis and list steps involved in doing them.

3. Apply best-practices for qualitative methods in relation to program evaluation.

Qualitative Data

Information that is difficult to measure, count, or express in numerical terms.

Qualitative Evaluation Methods

Open-ended questions in structured questionnaires

Semi-structured and in-depth interviews

Focus groups

Document analysis

Workshops - table-based/group exercises

Go-along interviews - shadowing

Photo-elicitation - photovoice

Mental models- mind maps

Participant diaries, logbooks, recordings

Observation

Why use Qualitative Data?

Provides contextual data to explain complex situations

Complements quantitative data by explaining “why” and “how” to “get at the story” behind quantitative findings

May be the most appropriate approach with small samples, early formative evaluation & pilot testing - times when a quantitative evaluation question is premature

Allows for discovery of unintended consequences

Provides an “insider” perspective

Adds a human voice with richness, depth, and meaning

Makes reports more interesting to read

Limitations of Qualitative Data

Limited generalizability

Can be time consuming and costly to do with rigor

Can be challenging to analyze and interpret

When to use Qualitative Data?

When they are the best way to answer evaluation questions.

Evaluation questions:

- Based on how you think that your program may progress (theory of change)
- Developed as program is being designed, in consultation with stakeholders, with dissemination in mind
- Can be about –
  - Process – How is implementation going? Why does it seem to be going that way?
  - Outcome – What impact have we had? Have we had different impacts on different groups of people?

Mini-CoIIN Evaluation Model

Funding Committed; Applications Submitted

How did the application process go?

How useful were information packet materials?

What are project goals?

- *Interviews*
- *Document review*

Project Implementation Underway

How is progress toward goals?

What barriers and facilitators exist?

How are teams developed and functioning?

How useful is training and TA?

What other TA and support do teams need?

- *Interviews*
- *Document review*
- *Electronic surveys*

Looking to the Future – Sustainability

- What is project reach and impact?
- How are efforts embedded in ECE systems?
- Will project last after funding ends? Why or why not?
- What state-level benefits are attributable to participation in the Mini-CoIIN?

- *Interviews*

Choosing Your Data Collection Methods

Purpose of evaluation: what method seems most appropriate for purpose and questions you want answered?

Users of evaluation: will method allow you to gather credible and useful information for stakeholders?

Respondents from whom you will collect data: Where and how can respondents best be reached? What is culturally and linguistically appropriate? Do data already exist?

Resources available: time, money, volunteers, travel expenses, supplies

Degree of intrusiveness: will method be disruptive or be seen as intrusive?

Type of information: do you want representative information or do you want to examine the range and diversity of experiences, or tell a story about the target population or a program component?

https://www.cdc.gov/std/Program/pupestd/Selecting%20Data%20Collection%20Methods.pdf

METHODS	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Surveys	• Anonymous completion possible • Can administer to groups of people at same time • Can be efficient and cost effective	• Forced choices may miss certain responses • Wording may bias responses • Impersonal
Interviews	• Can build rapport with participant • Can probe to get additional information • Can get breath or depth of information	• Time consuming • Can be expensive • Interviewing styles and wording may affect responses
Focus Groups	• Can get common impressions quickly • Can be an efficient way to get breadth and depth of information in short time frame	• Need experienced facilitator • Can be difficult and costly to schedule a group • Time consuming to analyze responses
Observation	• Can view program operations as they occur	• Difficult to interpret observed behaviors • May influence behaviors of program participants • May be expensive and time consuming to record each individual event
Document Review	• Can document historical information about your program • Does not interrupt program routine • Information already exists	• May be time consuming • Available information may be incomplete • Gathering information is dependent on quality of records kept

How To Do Qualitative Evaluation

Please us the webinar “chat” box to submit any questions you have about doing qualitative evaluation

Developing your questions

1. Look at your program model – do questions reflect what you expect to happen as result of the program?
2. Review your goals.
3. How will you USE these data? If they won't be used to improve, defend or sustain your program, you don't need it.
4. Will the data help you answer your evaluation question?
5. Consider – "do I really need to know the answer to this or will it burden the participant?"

Guidelines for choosing words and forming questions

1. Make sure the question applies to the respondent
2. Ask one question at a time
3. Use simple and familiar words
4. Use specific and concrete words to specify the concepts clearly
5. Use as few words as possible to pose the question
6. Use complete sentences with simple sentence structures
7. Make sure “yes” means yes and “no” means no

Data Collection Method 1: Surveys

1. Consider open-ended vs closed-ended question formats
2. Create your survey tool – write your questions
3. Pilot test your questions (ideally with target audience)
4. Invite participants to complete survey
5. Thank participants for their time; provide incentive (if applicable)

Best Practice: Increasing survey response rate

1. Choose an appropriate survey length for your audience
2. Make sure the survey is easy to take and return

Do this….	…..instead of this
• Choose the most effective and reliable method to reach your participants • Include at least a personalized greeting • Use minimal number of questions • Vary the format • Keep phone surveys short and to the point!	• Neglecting to personalize materials • Squeezing more questions onto a page to save costs • Using identical formatting for every mailing • Designing long-winded telephone survey questions

Best Practice: Increasing survey response rate, cont'd.

3. Contact participants multiple times
4. Choose the right delivery method

Survey Type	Advantages	Disadvantages
Web Based	• Fast – many who will respond to email invitation will do so within a few days • Multi media options and graphics are available • You can adjust which questions participants see • Low data entry costs • More accurate answers to sensitive questions	• Many dislike unsolicited email - be sure to adhere to anti-spam regulations • Web surveys don't reflect the population as a whole • People can easily abandon in the middle of questionnaire • Potential response rate problems in lower education or low-literacy populations
Paper/Mail	• Least expensive • Can include diagrams, graphics • Respondents can answer at their leisure – doesn't feel as intrusive • High accuracy when forms are scanned	• Response time is usually longer than other methods • Response rates are often low or are unpredictable and may result in biased results

Survey Example

Post training evaluation surveys

1. Mix of open and closed-ended questions
2. 3-5 questions or more
3. Captive audience at the end of the training session; Provide certificate for training once evaluation survey is completed and returned

Data Collection Method 2: Focus Groups

1. Determine what you want to learn from the focus groups
2. Develop your question guide
3. Find a facilitator
4. Schedule time and place that is convenient for participants
5. Advertise focus group, invite participants
6. Hold focus group – facilitator, note taker
7. Thank participants; provide incentive – could be food

Categories of focus group questions

Opening: participants get acquainted and feel connected

Introductory: begins discussion of topic

Transition: moves smoothly and seamlessly into key questions

Key: obtains insight on areas of central concern in the study

Ending: helps team determine where to place emphasis and brings closure to the discussion

Krueger. The Focus Group Kit: Developing Questions for Focus Groups. 1998 Sage Publications, Inc.

Focus Groups in Ohio

EMILY TORRES

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH | EARLY CHILDHOOD OBESITY PREVENTION PROGRAM

EMILY.TORRES@ODH.OHIO.GOV

QRIS Recommendations

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Domains		Recc's for ECEs: Caring for Our Children, 3rd Edition, or American Academy of Pediatrics Expert Recommendations			
2			One Star	Two Stars	Three Stars	Four and Five Stars
3	Learning and Development	Interactions and Environment	Program selects a self-assessment tool (s) that addresses the quality of nutrition and physical activity practices in program and staff/child interactions.	The program completes an annual self assessment tool(s) that addresses the quality of nutrition and physical activity practices in program and staff/child interactions.	Each lead teacher completes a self assessment plan based on achieving a minimum of two goals that address the quality of the nutrition and physical activity practices in program and staff/child interactions.	Each lead teacher documents progress on nutrition and physical activity action steps and readjusts goals as needed based on the annual self-assessment.
4		Interactions and Environment	Children under two years are not permitted to use screens, computers, videos, etc. unless needed for adaptive technology.		Limit sedentary screen time (e.g., TV, DVDs, computers) to no more than 150 minutes/week for preschoolers, including children with special needs, with an emphasis on educational programming or physical activity (under CFOC3). Do not exceed 30 minutes sedentary screen time/day.* *does not apply to adaptive technology or time required for online	Limit total screen time (e.g., TV, DVDs, computers) to no more than 30 minutes for preschoolers, including children with special needs, per week with an emphasis on educational programming or physical activity.* *does not apply to adaptive technology or time required for online assessments.
5		Interactions and Environment	Teachers allow all children (after they have been served), including infants, to decide when to stop eating. Program does not serve concentrated sweets such as candy, or sweetened drinks including but not limited to fruit punch, soft drinks, lemonade, sports drinks, sweet tea.	Adults are important models for children and therefore avoid behaviors, in front of children, that do not promote a healthy lifestyle.	Policy in place that teachers and other adults do not eat foods that do not meet the same nutrition standards as the children's meals or sweetened beverages in front of children, whenever they are on site with the children present. Teachers encourage positive social interaction and conversation at mealtime.	At meal and snack times, children participate in family style dining and developmentally appropriate dining activities including pouring beverages, passing food to one another, serving themselves, readying the table or meal, and cleaning up after the meal or meal preparation.

First Steps

1. Decided what we wanted feedback on
2. **Created moderator guidelines**
3. **Created a reference document**
4. **Created an invitation template**
5. Started recruitment and scheduling

During focus group

1. Introductions
2. Focus Group set up
3. Background on project
4. Ease into questions
5. Gather essential feedback
6. Allow for any other comments
7. Give thanks

Hiring a Facilitator

Helped make the process more objective

Expert at

- Defining scope of work
- Understanding what works with participants
- Administrative set-up
- Collating and presenting feedback

Outcomes

March – July 2017

9 focus groups, 66 participants

- Center providers, center administrators, family child care providers, school administrators, licensing specialist/QRIS monitors, and others

Not a single category without comment

Team is about to embark on revisions

Unintended information

Lessons learned

Budget time for administrative back and forth

Think about the utility of a hired facilitator

Make moderator guidelines adaptable for group size and time length

During focus groups

- Ask for permission at the beginning to keep things moving
- Be aware of hot button topics

Use a template to record notes

Understand the limitations of your work

Data Collection Method 3: Semi-Structured Interviews

1. Draft and test interview questions
2. Determine setting – in-person vs phone
3. Send questions to participants in advance
4. Schedule interviews
5. Conduct interview – recording, transcription, or notes
6. Thank participants; provide incentive

The Interviewers

The interviewer is an active part of the research process

Interviewers

- should be aware of his or her biases, paradigms, and belief systems
- should not lead participants to desired or preconceived conclusions
- should not use non-verbal language to reinforce or discourage certain responses (e.g., nodding, rolling eyes, etc.)

Ideally, interviewers

- Do not know participants personally
- Are not staff who are designing or implementing the program
- Are competent in the language and culture of the participants

The Questions

Use open-ended questions or conversational prompts - “Tell me about your experience participating in this program.”

Use probes when needed

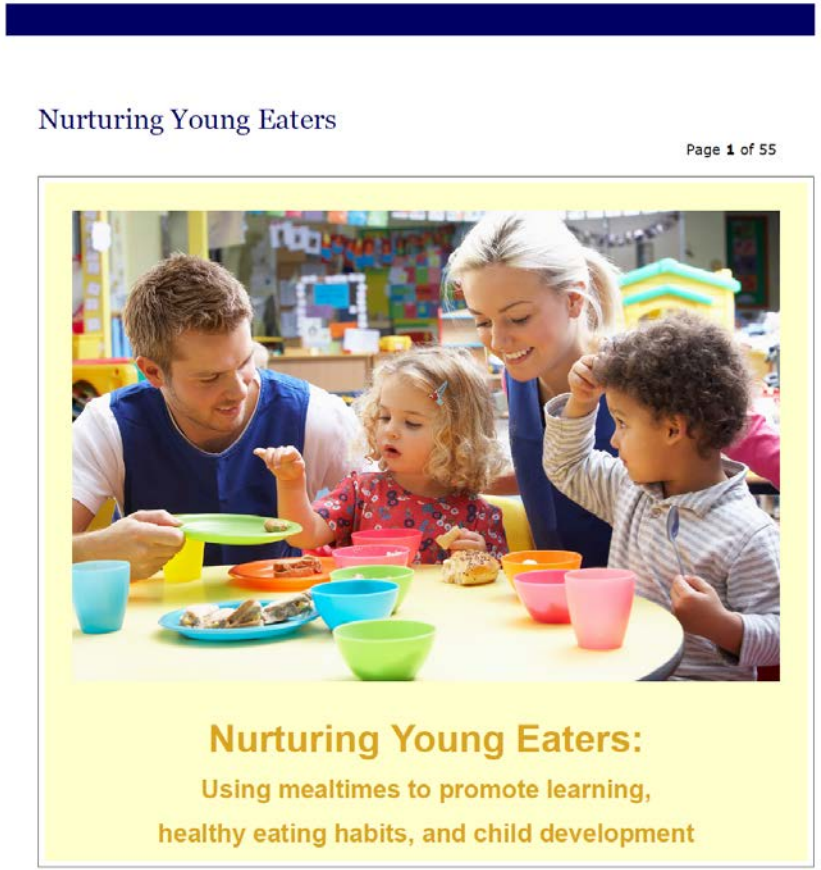
Pilot test with practice-runs

- Try to choose 5-10 people from your target group
- Try to use an interview setting where respondents are asked to explain reactions to question form, wording and order

Interview Example

Pilot-testing training materials

1. Develop interview guide
2. Recruit participants – have them complete the training
3. Schedule phone call
4. 10-15 minutes, use online form to help manage data
5. Send $10 giftcard



WANTED:

THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

CENTER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITION IS LOOKING FOR

EARLY LEARNING PROFESSIONALS

TO TEST AN ONLINE STARS TRAINING COURSE...

Nurturing Young Eaters:

Using mealtimes to promote learning,
healthy eating habits, and child development

This NEW course provides information and ideas for early childhood professionals on providing engaging and healthy mealtime environments and shows how mealtimes are excellent opportunities to promote learning and child development.

The training is **free** and takes about one hour to complete. Afterwards, an interviewer will ask you about your experience with the training. The interview will take about 15 minutes on the telephone.

In return for your valuable feedback, you will earn **1 STARS credit** in Health, Safety & Nutrition and a $10 Target gift card.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Tori Bradford at the University of Washington Center for Public Health Nutrition
Email: toribrad@uw.edu Phone: 206-616-1179

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Hello,

Thank you for participating in the Nurturing Young Eaters training pilot project. The valuable feedback you provided will ensure that this training is the best it can be. Enclosed is a $10 Target gift card in appreciation of your time.

Please feel free to contact me in the future if you have any questions or comments about the Nurturing Young Eaters training.

Sincerely,

Tori Bradford

Tori Bradford, MPH CHES
Research Coordinator
Specialist STARS Trainer
Center for Public Health Nutrition
University of Washington
toribrad@uw.edu | 206-616-1179

Now I am going to ask you several questions about the training we sent you to take.

What was your overall impression of the training?

Really like it

willing to take it - taken some of our others and have found them helpful

Expand

How useful was this training to you overall? Would you say not at all useful, somewhat useful, very useful?

- ○ Not at all useful
- ◉ Somewhat useful
- ○ Very useful
- ○ Not sure

reset

What about the training made it useful (or not useful) to you?

answer two ways
personally - really good information, trying to get some others at work to get excited about it

not at all - don't get to decide how they do meals

Expand

Do you feel healthy mealtimes can help you earn Early Achievers points?

- ◉ No
- ○ Yes
- ○ Not sure

reset

In what ways? How do healthy mealtime environments connect with Early Achievers?

hadn't thought about it
guess it would if they were observing during mealtime

haven't looked at the book to know what they

Expand

So we have these data, now what: Analysis

1. Read text, then read it again
2. Code text – inductive vs deductive or by question
3. Summarize themes
   - Find typifying quotes
4. Think back to your goal and purpose
5. Discuss as a team and decide how to apply this information

Analysis Principles

Let your objectives guide the analysis

Don’t get locked into one way of thinking

Questions are the raw material of analysis

Effective analysis goes beyond words

Computers can help – or hinder

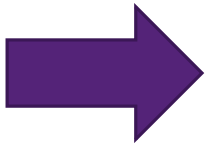
Analysis must have the appropriate level of interpretation

Analysis must be practical

Using the data: Pilot Test Example

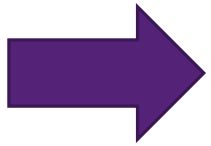
Quotes:

- Probably some ideas about kids with allergies would be helpful
- Would be helpful to add something about one year olds - considered toddlers...



Theme: Barriers to family style dining not addressed in the training

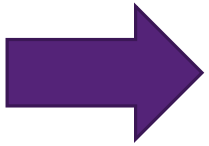
- Allergies
- Younger children lacking fine motor skills



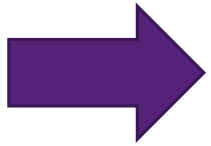
Action: Added content and two new resources about these topics to the training

Quotes:

- Took over 75 minutes, 90 minutes max
- Took a little over an hour
- Over 2 hours
- About an hour and half
- A little less than an hour
- Around an hour



Theme: Training is too long to be completed in one hour



Action: Trimmed content and several questions to make it shorter

Best Practice: Incentives – factors to consider

1. Budget – what can you afford?
2. Incentive type – will everyone get it or will they get entered into a lottery for a chance to win?
3. Your audience – be sure the incentive is something they want and will value (cash incentives offer the highest response rates..but difficult to administer)
4. Delivery method – be sure it's easy to deliver and redeem!
5. When to offer it – surprisingly, incentives offered up front are most effective
6. Anonymous surveys – trickier. One way is to create a redirect action at end of survey that sends respondent to a second survey that will collect their contact information.

https://www.surveygizmo.com/survey-blog/affordable-survey-incentives-that-motivate-your-respondents/

Assuring Rigor in Qualitative Evaluation

Sample

Questions

Interviewers & data collection/analysis

Trustworthiness & Credibility

The Sample

Best method: continue to collect data until no new information emerges (data saturation)

Depends on the evaluation purpose and questions

- Breadth of experience across variation in population = larger sample
- Exploration of a narrow phenomenon in depth in specific group = smaller sample

Purposive sampling can reduce sampling bias

- Example: WA state breastfeeding policy study with goals for 15 home-based & 15 center-based ECE spread between rural and urban; 20 hospitals; 20 community clinics; 20 community coalitions; 20 businesses.

Questions

Pretest, pretest, pretest to assure that questions are worded so that you get the information you really need

Invest in Data Collection & Analysis

All interviewers, observers, focus group leaders, etc. should be as well trained and supported as possible:

- Practice with groups and individuals similar to program participants
- Include possible challenging situations in simulations
- Emphasize participant safety
  - confidentiality
  - non-judgmental approaches

Provide consultation and oversight during data collection

All equipment should be frequently tested; use duplicate equipment

More than one person should be involved in data analysis

Trustworthiness & Credibility

Triangulation: cross-checking data from multiple data sources, methods of data collection, data collectors, and/or using a mixed-methods approach to explore and understand inconsistencies

Participant Feedback: checking with participants concerning the accuracy of the data and interpretations

Alternative Explanations: think about other possible stories the data may be telling

Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ): a 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups. Tong et al.

- https://academic.oup.com/intqhc/article/19/6/349/1791966/Consolidated-criteria-for-reporting-qualitative

Summary: Qualitative Methods

Are often the best approaches for answering evaluation questions about “how” an initiative is going and “why” it is going that way

Can be especially useful early in a project when there is uncertainty

Are supported by thoughtful planning for data collection & analysis that pays off in quality results

Resources

A brief introduction **- Qualitative Program Evaluation Methods:** https://projects.ncsu.edu/ffci/publications/2011/v16-n1-2011-spring/vaterlaus-higginbotham.php

A more detailed primer: **Qualitative Research Methods in Program Evaluation: Considerations for Federal Staff**: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/acyf/qualitative_research_methods_in_program_evaluation.pdf

Kruger & Casey. **Focus Groups - A Practical Guide for Applied Research**. https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/focus-groups/book243860

Dillman et al. **Internet, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method.** https://www.amazon.com/Internet-Mail-Mixed-Mode-Surveys-Tailored/dp/0471698687

Tong et al. **Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ): a 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups.** *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, 19(6), 2007. https://academic.oup.com/intqhc/article/19/6/349/1791966/Consolidated-criteria-for-reporting-qualitative