Using the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale University’s EVOlutions (EVO) program as a guide, Jonah presented on the evaluation process and the steps conducted by evaluators. While evaluations may be large or small, take place in brief or extended periods of time, or be conducted by internal staff or external evaluators, the process is generally the same. PERG represents this as a cycle because they believe that the process and results of evaluations have most value when they become part of an ongoing cycle that fosters reflection and informs improvement.

EVO was an afterschool program that begun in 2005 that initially involved approximately 40 low SES/minority students. The program goals were to prep students for post-secondary education, learn about careers in science, develop transferrable skills for the future, and develop student’s science literacy.

PERG developed a logic model and a theory of change that was grounded with the basic idea of considering what “success” would look like. PERG identified the activities, direct outcomes, and long-term objectives that worked toward the program success. Data was collected through observation, interviews/focus groups, surveys, and document/artifact review. When collecting data it is important to make sure your plan is doable given the time and resources available. Design instruments to focus your data collection to ensure consistence and avoid balance, like an evaluation matrix.

After the first year, the evidence of the program’s success could be seen in EVO’s high retention rate, engagement levels, and the positive changes in the students’ view of doing science and scientists. PERG’s evaluation impacted EVO by helping the program be more focused with clearer objectives.
Q&A with Judah Leblang

How do you help prepare a program for evaluation?
It’s important to step back and get a clear idea of what the program is trying to do and why. For the most effective results, it is important to remain diplomatic so that programs do not see the evaluation as a threat or challenge to their work. Also, keep in mind that there are differences when dealing with programs internally vs. an external evaluator.

What are ways to use the logic model?
The logic model can be used as an ongoing guide for program development. It serves as a tangible road map. Depending on the funder, the logic model can be useful to include in the appendix of a proposal. It can also be turned into a 1-2 page narrative that goes to various other departments (i.e. development, marketing, etc.) to develop a unified vocabulary throughout the organization.

Interested in learning more about Program Evaluation?

PERG will have a 4 part workshop series that has a more in-depth coverage about program evaluation. Click here or the flyer for more information. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Judah Leblang at jleblang@endicott.edu or 978-816-7636.

Planning for 2015

Do you like lecture-style, or workshop style? What topics would you like to see? What topics are of less interest to you? Please fill out this survey and let us know what types of sessions you would be interested in attending in 2015.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BPLCNMJ