



Building Community Capacity With Evaluation Activities That Empower



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INTRODUCTION

At Rainbow Research, we didn't start off doing "empowerment evaluation." Instead, we came to it after discovering that evaluation done in the traditional style did not have the impact we hoped our evaluations would have.

Our purpose as a nonprofit organization is "to assist socially concerned communities and organizations in responding more effectively to social problems." Already one can see an activist bias: We hope our findings are to be acted upon in ways that improve community viability and vitality.

The projects we choose to evaluate are those that have a purpose of "building community capacity." To us, *community capacity* is "the sum total of commitment, resources, and skills that a community can mobilize and deploy the address community problems and strengthen community assets" (Mayer, 1994). We consider building community capacity fundamental to the concept of empowerment.

We prefer to involve ourselves with programs that intend to build capacity because we feel they represent the best use of the scarce public, private, and philanthropic resources, and the best hope for communities. We're eager to learn how they work so that we can communicate the lessons learned to other communities. Our purpose is to get valuable information about what works into the hands of people who can use it.

Not all projects have capacity building as a purpose. Indeed, far too few of the projects conceived building as a purpose. Indeed, far too public sectors have much capacity building going on, and as a result communities too often do not show an increment of strength after receiving and spending scarce resources. The paradigm of development is not only just beginning to shift from the "needs or deficits model" to the "strengths or assets model" in which capacity building has a more explicit purpose (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

Just as projects vary in their potential for building community capacity, so too does evaluation. We believe that evaluation can assist capacity building, especially when it gives the intended beneficiaries of a project the opportunity to get involved in its

evaluation. Evaluation that allows the project's intended beneficiaries to get involved in the evaluation process in ways that give them more commitment, resources, and skills could be said to fit the description of "empowerment evaluation" (see Fetterman, 1994a, 1994b).

We think that empowerment evaluation is consistent with empowerment theory (Zimmerman, in press). At a minimum, this means, in our views, that we must listen to, respect, and act on what the project's intended beneficiaries have to say about how they are benefiting from efforts allegedly in their behalf.

Not all evaluation includes the simple act of listening to the intended beneficiaries in the community. As a result, it is very easy and possibly the norm for evaluation results to be ignored. As stated at the outset of this publication, Rainbow Research did not start off intending to do empowerment evaluation. Instead, we discovered that, for evaluation to be useful and used, certain voices have to be included.

Traditional evaluation tends not to pay much attention to the real voices of real people, preferring to seek the alleged precision that counting or scoring events that form a dependent variable allegedly provides, and testing a quantitatively formulated hypothesis using the principles of inferential statistics and the scientific method. Unfortunately, the scientific method was designed for use in situations under the scientist's control, and most humans and communities don't meet that condition.

As a result, except in extremely unusual circumstances, evaluations done in the allegedly scientific manner tend to be (a) costly, typically as a result of attempts at scientific control; (b) unsatisfying to audiences, typically because only a very few dependent variables are used; (c) problematic, typically because actions taken to achieve the necessary scientific control can easily be offensive or injurious to humans or communities; (d) useless, typically because the scientist's victory — rejection of a null hypothesis at a statistically significant level — provides communities with no information on how to proceed with their task of strengthening themselves. (For a further critique of the limitations of the application of traditional scientific approaches, such as experimental design, to evaluation, see Conrad, 1994; Fetterman, 1982).

The people who could most benefit from reading or hearing an evaluation report are *not* typically other evaluators or social scientists, so it is not necessary to design evaluations that conform to their expectations. The people who could benefit most are those who are already involved in the program being evaluated, those similar to them in other parts of the community near and far, and those who work with and support them directly.

It is these groups, who are in a position to heed the findings and adopt the ideas and recommendations suggested in an evaluation. It is these groups, then, whose curiosities and sensibilities ought be included in the evaluation process, and thereby in the community-building process itself.

What can evaluators do to involve intended beneficiaries in evaluation, so that they gain in commitment, resources, and skills — the basic ingredients of community capacity? The basic perspective here is the communities are strengthened when their capacities are developed, that is, when their commitment is increased, when their resources are increased, and when their skills are increased. If evaluation is to help in this endeavor, the evaluation process too should provide opportunities for community strengthening.

This position suggests that communities are strengthened when they can build upon their strengths and assets rather than be made to focus on their needs or deficits. Evaluation, too, can be constructed from this perspective. We suggest three key features that can ally evaluation with the tasks of community capacity building.

1. HELP CREATE A CONSTRUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE EVALUATION

A constructive environment is one conducive to action that helps the community use the evaluation process to develop its commitment, resources, and skills.

Codiscoverers. Minimize the distance between evaluator (as expert) and program participants (as ignorant). We like to engage program participants in ways that let us say that we are “codiscoverers” with them in efforts to learn about the merits of their program.

Risk Containment. We recommend a policy in which negative findings from an evaluation should not lead directly to punishment by program funders or directors. Negative consequences can be made to happen if a remedial plan drawn up to fix revealed shortcomings is not followed.

Partnership With Funders and Other Supporters. The intention of an evaluation should be to strengthen community responses, not punish. The evaluation should not be about fault finding but should identify opportunities for improvement and constructive roles for stakeholders, including funders. (It may be legitimate to undertake evaluation with the intent to decide if a program’s support should be cut off, but such an evaluation could not be called empowering or capacity building.)

2. ACTIVELY INCLUDE THE VOICES OF INTENDED BENEFICIARIES

Capacity-building projects are to lead to improvements in the systems for serving communities. It stands to reason, then, that the voice of community members should be included in the evaluation process.

Include their Sense of Legitimate Inquiry. Intended beneficiaries of a program should have a meaningful voice in deciding the purposes of evaluation (how findings are to be used and by whom), the styles of inquiry, sources of information, and interpretation of findings. If the evaluation process does not pass muster with those who are supposed to benefit, findings can be dismissed as illegitimate.

Include their Experience, Wisdom, and Standards of Excellence. Intended beneficiaries of a program can be considered the ultimate source for assessing the merits of a program as well as the standards on which programs are judged. Without their considerable input, findings could be dismissed as merely hearsay.

Include Those Not Normally Included. For the most part, programs are still operated by a somewhat-professionalized class of “helpers” who tend not to look very much like those they say they want to help. This “disconnect” typically extends to the evaluators as well. It is easy, therefore, for an evaluation to overlook or discount the more marginalized of the community, yet it is they who are typically designed to be intended beneficiaries of community programs — people of color, the older and younger, and the less-abled.

3. HELP COMMUNITIES USE EVALUATION FINDINGS TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY RESPONSES

My organizer friends remind me that you cannot give people a voice — they already have a voice, thank you very much — but if you want to be helpful, you can give them an ear, or help others hear their voice. This means evaluators and others wanting to help communities build capacity can help make sure that community voices are heard, not just in designing and conducting the evaluation but in helping communities and other audiences (such as policymakers) move forward with the findings.

Help Spread the Lessons Learned. Evaluation findings that stay on the shelf unread and unheeded are worthless, no matter how legitimate the process for discovery. All media should be considered for disseminating worthwhile findings — print, broadcast, workshops, storytelling, and electronic bulletin boards.

Help Create Links Among People Who Can Use the Information. For various reasons, community-building work has been compartmentalized into systems, regions, agencies, and professional groups. Evaluations, if done well, may have implications across these boundaries. Evaluators and their colleagues should consider their audience broadly, and help findings penetrate boundaries that normally separate worthwhile efforts.

Help Communities and Their Organizations Build on Grains. Recommendations should be written that allow community organizations to mobilize and strengthen the commitment they bring to their work, increase the financial and other resources usable for strengthening their work, and further develop the skills needed to make their work effective.

EXAMPLES

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT LOGBOOKS

A program that works with mothers trying to get off welfare asked us to help them evaluate their program in a way that would educate themselves and public officials about life on (and getting off) welfare. As part of this, we developed a way for mothers to notice and journal their daily efforts to overcome barriers to greater self-sufficiency. These journals will be used to help educate county welfare officials on difficulties faced by women on welfare as well as small, manageable opportunities for overcoming those difficulties, as actually experienced. They'll be used by program staff to help other mothers notice and take advantage of opportunities to make gains. And they'll be used by mothers themselves as they continue to educate themselves and each other in support groups about what works for them.

The Acts of Empowerment Evaluation Logbook is presented in Appendix A. Citing the empowerment features presented above, we installed these mothers as the voice of authority on successful efforts at getting off welfare and helped them notice and evaluate the effectiveness of their own behavior. We also invited in policymakers, staff, and each other to be their audience.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING EVALUATION TOOLBOX

A nonprofit housing developer asked us to develop tools that their developments' residents and boards could use to assess their quality of life (and housing). These tools come as ready-to-administer surveys, instructions for conducting focus groups, and sample report outlines for reporting outcomes. Administrators can use them to monitor costs and problem areas. The field can use them to guide housing and human development efforts.

A large section of one of the toolboxes, including instructions and several of the ready-to-administer tools, is presented in Appendix B. In this case, we helped residents and owners form a partnership in strengthening the quality of life in "their" affordable housing development. Inquiries are conducted in areas known to be of concern to both residents and owners, and inquiries involve the participation of both parties. The tool is meant to minimize conflict and maximize mutual understanding, and can be used by the entire field.

LEADERSHIP PROGRAM FOR COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

The purpose of the leadership program evaluation was to discover the ways in which a select group of community foundations grow and develop when given a fairly sizable infusion of financial, technical, and nontechnical support. The point in discovering this was to formulate findings and principles that the rest of the community foundation field could learn from. After five years of codiscovering with the various stakeholders of 18 different community foundations and frequent communications on preliminary learnings, we wrote a book for distribution to the field. And because the work of community foundations touches on the work of so many other institutions, distribution efforts focus on getting the book into these other networks.

The introductory letter we sent to participants struck the tone of codiscovery and set up expectations for site visits and the evaluation workbook itself. In this case, we created a safe environment for the mutual discovery of common and unique lessons on the dynamics of growth, insisting there is no “one way” to grow, and then created a permanent form for sharing the lessons with the community foundations and adjacent fields.

CRIME PREVENTION ASSESSMENT

A highly evolved neighborhood organization undertook a substantial community crime prevention program in partnership with the city’s police department. The evaluation was charged with evaluating how such a partnership works (for possible replication in other parts of the city) and with learning what gains were being made in crime prevention in the perspective of community residents. We spoke with people with all kinds of stakes in the community: homeowners, renters, absentee landlords, street residents, business owners, workers, police, and other city officials. Special efforts were made to listen to those not frequently heard from or found (including minority business owners and tenants) but with a voice that can speak to the quality and effectiveness of this partnership, allegedly undertaken in their name, as they experienced it.

In this case, we worked to present the project as well as the evaluation as jointly owned by all possible stakeholders, and to include people in the evaluation that are normally hard to include. The report presented conditions we believed important for successful replication elsewhere, allowing other neighborhood groups and other cities’ police departments to consider this model. The availability of the report was announced in law enforcement circles and neighborhood development circles.

DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION ASSESSMENT

A rural community of 10,000 had mounted a comprehensive, school-based drug abuse prevention program. We orchestrated an evening-long “prevention forum” that showcased the findings of a committee of concerned citizens who sought a variety of evidence on the merits and demerits of the program. Presentations included results of interviews with school personnel; surveys of parents of schoolchildren; a review of pertinent literature including what other communities had discovered; and testimony by the policy, state drug officials, and local recovering celebrities. The forum played to a packed high school gymnasium on a weekday night, well attended by parents in both their public and their private roles.

In this case, we worked to create local ownership of the evaluation, built and strengthened links among different kinds of community participants (schools, parents, and state officials), helped them develop their critical abilities and perspective on drug abuse as a local issue, and created a basis for them to build further on the gains made from this evaluation.

Evaluation done with the intent of contributing to community capacity is not easy to do. It presents its own challenges, not only of design but also of implementation. Each of the three features of empowerment evaluation, actively including key voices, and helping communities use findings — requires regular vigilance and attention to issues of integrity and fairness, as does the larger issue of striking the right balance between compassion for activists’ intentions and dispassionate inquiry and analysis.

Yet the rewards are greater, we find. Because this approach intends to listen to beneficiaries and those who work on their behalf, we are accorded trust and rewarded with access to the heart and soul of community-building work. And if it’s obvious that we’ve listened well, our analyses are more likely to be heeded, and communities are thereby rewarded.

APPENDIX A:

WE NEED: WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT GROUP ACTS OF EMPOWERMENT EVALUATION LOGBOOK

ACTS OF EMPOWERMENT

There are actions a group member might take —— as a result of her participation in the empowerment group —— that indicate self-sufficiency: a willingness or capacity to take control of her life, improve her life.

HOW TO USE THIS LOGBOOK

1. Individual participant progress. Keep an Empowerment Logbook for each participant. Update periodically (e.g., every two weeks, or after every group meeting, or after every contact).
2. Total program impact. Total up the check marks in each category for all participant to describe impact on participants overall.

Participant: _____

Dates Involved in Empower Group: From _____ to _____

A. Academic/Career Education

_____ Conduct a self-assessment to prioritize educational needs
_____ Use resource to help do this (e.g., discussed in group, met with outside consultant, took aptitude or interest or competence tests): _____

_____ Investigate educational resources (e.g., called schools, visited schools, talked to school representatives, talked to knowledgeable friends or other consultants/resources): _____

Enroll in educational program:

_____ Pre-GED _____ Post-secondary: _____
_____ Other: _____

Financial aid and scholarships

_____ Investigate availability, eligibility
_____ Earn eligibility for merit grants and scholarships
_____ Apply for

Participate in educational program:

_____ Attend class
_____ Do homework
_____ Take exams
_____ Pass courses
_____ Obtain certificate or diploma

B. Mobility

Learner's permit

_____ Take test to obtain learner's permit
_____ Pass test, obtain permit

Driver's license

_____ Enroll
_____ Participate
_____ Complete driver training
_____ Practice driving on her own
_____ Take driver's license exam
_____ Written
_____ Driving
_____ Pass exam, obtain license

Car management

Learn about

___ Car maintenance. Describe: _____

___ Smart ways to shop for car, insurance, maintenance.

Describe: _____

___ Do own car maintenance tasks. Describe (before and after):

___ Use improved car consumer expertise. Describe examples of
smarter shopping/bargaining for car services: _____

___ Increased use of public transportation

How often: Before (when): _____

After (when): _____

C. Increased Engagement in the World

Use of

___ Child care

Type (e.g., friend, relative, baby-sitter, day care at home, co-op
exchange, day care at center): _____

How often: Before (when): _____

After (when): _____

___ Improvement/enrichment classes (e.g., exercise, cooking,
household management, parenting): _____

___ Increased volunteer activities/responsibilities: _____

___ Register to vote for the first time

___ Voted. When: _____

___ Decreased use of food shelf:

Before: ___ times per quarter in ___ (time frame)

After: ___ times per quarter in ___ (time frame)

___ Skills bartering: _____

D. Parenting

___ Do things with child(ren): _____

___ Attend child's activities (e.g., school plays or concerts): _____

___ Enroll child in enrichment/development activities (e.g., dance lessons,
recreation programs, Scouts, Sunday school)

____ Take steps that enable child to participate (e.g., provide transportation, bag lunch): _____

E. Economic Empowerment

____ Apply for Food Stamps
____ Apply for other financial or health benefits: _____

____ Apply for a job (what, what pay, where, when): _____

____ Get a job, or a better job (what, what pay, where, when): _____

____ Start or expand a business (describe business and steps taken): _____

Banking, credit, and personal financial management:

____ Open an account. Checking: ____ Savings: ____

____ Apply for a loan. Amount and purpose: _____

____ Pay back loan on time

____ Responsible use of credit cards (describe “before” and “after” use): ____

____ Pay bills on time

____ Prepare family budget

____ Spend within budget guidelines

F. Home and Household

____ Increased stability of housing. Describe: _____

____ Improved housing. Describe: _____

____ Improved maintenance of household

____ Cleaner: _____

____ Less breakage and wear and tear: _____

____ Increased self-sufficiency in maintenance (do own repairs): ____

____ Increase energy efficiency of home: _____

___ Improved diet and nutrition: _____

___ Participate in community or private garden: _____

___ Increased canning of homegrown produce

G. Individual Acts of Empowerment in the Group Setting

___ Take an additional responsible role(s) beyond “group member” (e.g., child care liaison, corresponding secretary, recording secretary, treasurer): _____

___ Initiate or lead group activities or projects: _____

___ Bring, maintain notebook regarding what you’re learning in group

___ Participate in group activities:

___ Role-playing (describe roles): _____

___ Other: _____

Acts on behalf of the group:

___ Help raise funds (describe actions, e.g., draft proposal , edit proposal, practice presentation, make oral presentation to potential funders, organize grassroots fund-raising activity): _____

___ Obtain in-kind assistance for group (e.g., network with agencies, churches, and other external resources for jars, books, produce, training, etc.): _____

___ Recruit additional members: _____

___ Present the program to other potential sites (e.g., other food shelves): _____

H. Legal Empowerment (Use of Legal System Resources)

___ Use Tenants Union: _____

___ Use Legal Aid: _____

___ Attend divorce clinic:

___ Learn/exercise rights as debtor under bankruptcy and collection statutes: _____

Use court system:

- _____ Small claims court: _____
- _____ Divorce: _____
- _____ Custody: _____
- _____ Restraining order: _____
- _____ Make/update will: _____
- _____ Other: _____

I. Self-Image and Interpersonal Skill Development

- _____ Participate in counseling: _____
- _____ Participate in support groups: _____
- _____ Participate in other activities to build self-esteem and interpersonal skills: _____
- _____ Evidence of improved self-image or improve interpersonal skills: _____

ADDITIONAL NOTES, OBSERVATIONS (documenting acts of empowerment the group participant did at least partially as a result of something she got from the empowerment group process):

APPENDIX B: EVALUATION TOOLBOX¹

Resident Services Programs

CONTENTS

INSTRUCTIONS

- A. Introduction
- B. Evaluation Areas and Indicators
- C. Time Line for Implementing Tools
- D. Survey Guidelines
- E. Focus Group Guidelines
- F. Personal and Telephone Interview Guidelines
- G. Guidelines for Selecting Respondents

REPORT SECTIONS

- A. Self-Sufficiency and Quality of Life
 - 1. Staff records on independence
 - 2. Resident's personal interviews on independence and quality of life
- B. Awareness of, Involvement in, and Satisfaction With Resident Services
 - 3. Residents' survey on involvement in and satisfaction with resident services
 - 4. Residents' focus group on involvement in and satisfaction with resident services
 - 5. Staff records on number of residents attending resident services programs and events
 - 6. Staff records on number of residents served individually by resident services staff
- C. Property Management Costs
 - 7. Staff records on costs of property management
- D. Use of Other Human Service Providers
 - 8. Staff records on use of other service providers
 - 9. Service providers' focus group on effective use of services providers and perceptions of residents
- E. Perception of Community Members
 - 10. Community members' telephone interview on perceptions of the housing site

¹ The Evaluation Toolbox was developed for Westminster Corporation Resident Services Programs by Rainbow Research, Inc., Minneapolis, MN 55408 (February 1990).

INSTRUCTIONS

INTRODUCTION

This Evaluation Toolbox has been designed to help Westminster Corporation assess, document, and describe the effectiveness of the resident services programs they provide at affordable housing sites. Each tool has been developed to collect information on the potential outcomes of the resident services programs that were identified by Westminster staff and other interested audiences. The evaluation areas and indicators that correspond to the potential outcomes identified by Westminster staff and other audiences for the evaluation are listed after this introduction.

At this time, the Toolbox is a working draft to be implemented by Westminster Corporation in a field test. The field test will allow Westminster to collect preliminary evaluation data and identify areas where the Toolbox can be strengthened and revised. At the end of the field test, the Toolbox will be finalized and used by Westminster to learn about the outcomes of their programs.

The Toolbox has been divided into three sections:

1. The guidelines present overall directions for implementing the tools — how to arrange for a focus group, how to select a sample of respondents, and how to administer a survey.
2. The report sections are examples of the type of evaluation statements that can be made based on the information collected by each tool.
3. The attachments contain the individual tools — surveys, focus groups, telephone interviews, and other data collection instruments — along with directions for implementing each tool, samples to include, and suggested time lines.

To begin working with the Toolbox, select which tools to use, identify an individual to coordinate the data collection and analysis for each tool, and set a time line for each tool. During the field test, we recommend that each tool be used at least once — even if it is only with a small sample of respondents. We have attached a possible time line for using each of the tools during the field test.

The Toolbox has been created to provide Westminster with a variety of tools from which to make selections. In using the Toolbox, Westminster can decide which tools to implement and whether to make any modifications in those tools. To reduce the magnitude of the evaluation, Westminster can:

1. implement only some of the tools within an evaluation section;

2. eliminate some of the questions from a particular tool; or
3. combine several tools to collect more information from each respondent.

For example, within the self-sufficiency evaluation area of the Resident Services Toolbox, staff records could be used to collect evaluation data without the personal interviews. If the personal interviews were implemented, some of the questions on independence could be left out. Or the focus group on residents' satisfaction with resident services could be combined with the focus group on resident's satisfaction with the board in the Owner Services Toolbox.

EVALUATION AREAS AND INDICATORS

EVALUATION AREAS	INDICATORS
Greater Resident Self-Sufficiency and Improved Quality of Life	Income Employment Use of public assistance programs Use of emergency/nonemergency funding programs Self-report of changes in independence/self-sufficiency/quality of life
Involvement in and Satisfaction With Resident Services	Attendance at social gatherings and resident service programs Satisfaction with resident services Number served by resident services staff as an individual client
Reduced Costs of Property Management	Vacancy rates Operating cost for property management Replacement and maintenance costs Operating cost for resident services
Effective Use of Other Human Service Providers	Service providers used Types of services provide Number of residents service Report of service providers on effective use by Westminster Changes in service providers' perceptions of affordable housing residents
Community Perceptions	Community members' perceptions of the housing site

FIELD TEST TIME LINE

EVALUATION TOOL	IMPLEMENTATION TIME LINE
1. Staff Records on Independence	Baseline data collected on a sample of 30 units in February and July
2. Residents' Personal Interviews on Independence and Quality of Life	Five personal interviews in June
3. Residents' Survey on Involvement in and Satisfaction With Resident Services	Sample of 10 respondents with surveys in March
4. Residents' Focus Group on Involvement in and Satisfaction With Resident Services	One focus group in May
5. Staff Records on Number of Residents Attending Resident Services Programs and Events	Attendance sheets completed continuously with summary in July
6. Staff Records on Number of Residents Service Individually by Resident Services Staff	Staff records completed monthly with summary in July
7. Staff Records on Costs of Property Management	Begin collecting baseline data in February with summary in July
8. Staff Records on Use of Other Service Providers	Begin compiling data in February with summary in April
9. Service Providers' Focus Group on Effective Use of Service Providers and Perceptions of Residents	One focus group in April
10. Community Members' Telephone Interviews on Perceptions of the Housing Site	Five interviews in May (same interviews used for owner services)

SURVEY GUIDELINES

To use the surveys in this Toolbox, we suggest taking the following steps, in order:

- Select the sites and the individuals at each site from whom you would like to collect information (see the guidelines on selecting respondents).
- Review the survey and make any revisions or additions that are necessary. For example, you will need to add a list of issues considered by the boards at each

- housing site to the survey on the relationship between the board and the residents in the Owner Services Toolbox.
- Send each individual a postcard notifying them of the upcoming survey (optional).
 - Send each individual the survey along with a return envelope and a cover letter indicating whom to contact with questions. If the survey is to be returned by mail, be sure to stamp the return envelope.
 - Send each individual a postcard reminding him or her to complete the survey (optional).
 - Send each individual who has not returned a survey a follow-up cover letter with another copy of the survey and a return envelope. If you have not coded the surveys to track who has returned a survey, you will need to send this mailing to everyone (optional).

Because the individuals who do not return the survey may differ from those who do return the survey, it is generally best to make a special effort to encourage everyone to respond. Some suggestions for increasing the number who respond include the following:

1. Offer those who return the survey some type of incentive.
2. If you mail the survey, use stamps rather than a postage meter.
3. Use personalized letters.
4. Stop at their homes to pick up the surveys.
5. Complete the optional steps listed above.

FOCUS GROUP GUIDELINES²

These guidelines have been prepared to help you prepare for a focus group, facilitate the discussion, and analyze the data collected through the focus group.

What is a focus group?

“A focus group is a carefully planned discussion, with five to ten participants, designed to obtain perceptions about a specific topic in a permissive and nonthreatening environment” (Krueger, 1994).

² The information presented in the Focus Group Guidelines section is from *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research* (Krueger, 1994).

Whom should you include?

The people you invite to the focus group should be, in some way, similar to each other. For example, the focus groups in this Toolbox bring together groups of residents or groups of service providers. Typically, you would not invite both residents and service providers to the same focus group.

You should, however, invite people with a range of experiences and perspectives so that you can discover the range of possible responses to your questions. For example, in a focus group of residents, you may want to invite residents from different sites with different types of resident services programs.

In some situation, you may not want to invite people to the focus group who know each other. People may be reluctant to answer certain types of questions or provide honest responses if there are others in the group that they know.

What type of information will you collect?

Focus groups are generally used to discover the perceptions, feelings, or thinking of respondents about a particular topic. The purpose of the focus group is to find out about the range of possible responses and identify common patterns in the responses. The focus group discussion should not be used to reach consensus, provide specific recommendations, or make decisions. Focus groups product qualitative rather than quantitative information.

How do you moderate a focus group?

The moderator of the focus group provides a permissive, open environment and asks questions to guide the discussion. It is important that the moderator listen carefully to responses without giving his or her opinions, answers, or values.

For each of the focus groups in this Toolbox, a brief introduction and list of focus group questions have been provided. In all focus groups, the moderator should briefly review the purpose of the focus group, ensure participants that their comments will remain confidential, and remind participants that different perspectives are important and consensus is not necessary.

What preparations are needed before the focus group?

Extend a telephone invitation to participants approximately 10 to 14 days before the focus group meeting. Describe the purpose of the focus group and the types of questions that will be asked. This will help participants to prepare for the questions.

Send a personal letter to each participant, after the initial telephone call, confirming the date, time, and location of the focus group. The letter should also indicate the purpose of the focus group and key questions that will be asked. The day before or the day of the focus group, give each participant a telephone call reminding him or her of the time and location of the focus group.

The focus group should be held in a neutral setting where respondents can freely state their answers without being overheard by others who are not participating in the focus group. Participants should sit around a table or in a circle to encourage everyone to participate.

In addition to taking notes, the focus group should be tape-recorded. In the introduction, the moderator should indicate that the focus group is being recorded, but that all comments will remain confidential.

If possible, you may want to send each respondent a brief letter after the focus group, thanking him or her for participation.

PERSONAL AND TELEPHONE INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

These guidelines have been provided to help you prepare for and conduct the personal interviews and telephone interviews included in the Toolbox.

Whom should you include?

There are two ways to select individuals to participate in a telephone or personal interview:

1. Select a random or systematic sample as described in the Guidelines for Selecting Respondents, below.
2. Select individuals whose comments will be representative of a group of individuals you would like to hear from. For example, you might interview the president of the local Chamber of Commerce to learn the business community's perspective.

What type of information will you collect?

The personal and telephone interviews in this Toolbox will generate primarily qualitative information, although some quantitative information will also be collected. In many cases, qualitative information can be strengthened by using follow-up questions (otherwise called “probing questions” or “clarifying questions”).

Follow-up questions can be used to encourage the respondent to elaborate on or clarify an answer. They can also be used to help focus the interview. Some examples follow:

1. "Tell me more about [some aspect of the respondent's answer]."
2. "Could you describe [some aspect of the respondent's answer] more fully?"
3. Simply repeat the respondent's answer as a question. For example, "So you felt that [repeat respondent's answer]."
4. Allowing for a moment of silence before asking the next question often leads the respondent to further elaborate on his or her previous answer.

What preparations are needed?

Begin by reviewing the questions to be used in the telephone or personal interview. Make any modifications or additions to the questions that are necessary. You might also want to highlight any key follow-up questions to ask respondents.

For personal interviews, contact each respondent in advance to describe the purpose of the interview and arrange a date, time, and location. If the interview involves sensitive topics, it is best to find a location where the respondent will be able to talk freely without being interrupted or overheard by others. You may also want to send each respondent a letter confirming your arrangements and describing the type of questions that will be asked.

For telephone interviews, contact each respondent and ask whether or not this would be a good time for the interview. If not, set up another time to call that would be more convenient for them.

Other suggestions

Other suggestions that you may want to consider in conducting telephone and personal interviews:

1. Establish a comfortable, friendly rapport with respondents so that they can enjoy the interview.
2. Be completely neutral in your comments and questions.
3. In making phone calls, consider what the best time would be to reach respondents.
4. If possible, you may want to send respondents a brief thank you letter after the interview.

GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING RESPONDENTS

These guidelines are designed to help you identify the housing sites and the individuals at each housing site to select as respondents when implementing a particular tool.

- ❑ Select which housing sites to collect information from. Depending on the purpose of the tool, you may decide to include:
 1. sites with both resident services and owner services programs;
 2. sites with only resident services or only owner services programs;
 3. sites with specific types of resident services programs or specific owner services training; and
 4. sites with residents that have particular characteristics.

Most of the tools within this Toolbox have been designed for family sites with resident services programs and/or owner services programs.

- ❑ Identify any important subgroups within the sites selected. Comparisons can be made between these subgroups later in the analysis. By identifying these subgroups ahead of time, you will ensure that they are included in the sample. Important subgroups may include:
 1. sites with and without certain types of resident services and/or owner services programs;
 2. sites with programs that are just beginning and sites with established programs; and
 3. sites that have residents with certain characteristics that may affect the analysis and sites that have residents with different characteristics.
- ❑ Decide how many individuals to select from each site. We recommend the following:
 1. For sites with a large number of units, the goal should be to collect information on 30 residents.
 2. For sites with only a few units, the goal should be to collect information from almost all of the units.

If the evaluation tool asks you to collect information more than once from the same respondents — possibly to examine changes during the evaluation period — select a larger sample to allow for attrition. For example, if you want a final sample of 30

respondents and you expect that one third of the units will have a turnover in resident, select a sample of 40 rather than 30.

- ❑ Identify which individuals to select from each site. In general, you will want to select individuals in two different ways:
 1. For some tools, you will want to select individuals with certain characteristics. For example, you may want to select individuals who have received “case management” assistance through the resident services programs. Once you have identified the important characteristic, you can either select everyone with that characteristic or select a sample of individuals with that characteristic (see below).
 2. For other tools, you will want to select a random or systematic sample.
 - a. A random sample can be selected by attaching an ID number to every individual in a particular housing site and drawing random numbers.
 - b. For a systematic sample, divide the total number of residents in the housing site by the size of the sample. If a housing site contains 20 residents and you would like a sample of five, divide 20 by five or obtain four. Then use that number to select every fourth (or whatever number you arrive at) resident.

REPORT OUTLINE

TOOL 1

EVALUATION AREA:	Greater self-sufficiency of residents
INDICATORS:	Income, employment, use of public assistance, use of emergency funding programs
DERIVED FROM TOOL:	Staff records on independence

INTRODUCTION

Although the resident services programs at each site differ, their common goal is to increase the independence and quality of life of residents. This section of the evaluation report examines the extent to which residents' independence and quality of life have, indeed, changed. The indicators of independence and self-sufficiency used include income, employment, use of public assistance, and use of emergency funding programs.

For each of the indicators, information is provided from across all the units at Westminster housing sites. Because these measures may be influenced by turnover in the residents rather than changes in independence or quality of life, a sample of residents who have remained in the housing site throughout the evaluation period has also been used to generate a second set of measures.

Income

1. The average household income of resident (increased/decreased/stayed the same) from \$— to \$— during the evaluation period. This represents an (increase/decrease/remained constant) of —%.
2. For the sample of residents who have remained in the housing site throughout the evaluation period, their average household income (increased/decreased/stayed the same) by —%.
3. The percentage of Westminster residents with household income at or below the poverty level changed from —% to —% during the evaluation period or — percentage points.
4. For the sample of residents who have remained in the housing site throughout the evaluation period, the percentage with household income at or below the poverty level has (increased/decreased/stayed the same) by — percentage points.

Employment

5. The percentage of households where one or more persons is employed (increased/decreased/stayed the same) from —% to —% during the evaluation period or — percentage points.
6. For the sample of households who have remained in their housing site, the percentage of households with one or more persons employed (grew/fell/remained constant) from —% to —% during the evaluation period.
7. The percentage of income that Westminster households receive from employment (increased/decreased/stayed the same) from —% to —% during the evaluation period.
8. For the sample of households who have remained in their housing site, the percentage of income received from employment (increased/decreased/remained constant) by — percentage points.

Use of Public Assistance

9. The percentage of Westminster households who receive public assistance (increased/decreased/remained constant) from —% to —% during the evaluation period.
10. For the sample of residents who have remained in their housing site, the percentage of households who receive public assistance (increased/decreased/remained constant) from —% to —% during the evaluation period.
11. The percentage of household income that Westminster households receive from public assistance (increased/decreased/remained constant) from —% to —% during the evaluation period.
12. For the sample of residents who have remained in their housing site, the percentage of household income received from public assistance (increased/decreased/remained constant) by — percentage points.

REPORT OUTLINE

TOOL 2

EVALUATION AREA:	Greater independence/sufficiency Improved quality of life
INDICATORS:	Self-report of changes in independence and quality of life
DERIVED FROM TOOL:	Residents' personal interviews on independence and quality of life

INTRODUCTION

Westminster Corporation provides and coordinates resident service programs at — % of its housing sites. Although the programs and services available at each site differ, their common goal is to increase the independence and the quality of life of residents. We have identified 12 key areas where residents may experience a change in their independence and quality of life. These areas include:

1. Income
2. Employment
3. Education/training
4. Self-esteem/emotional health
5. Physical health
6. Budgeting/financial management
7. Family/parenting issues
8. Interpersonal relations
9. Volunteer activities/responsibilities
10. Transportation/mobility
11. Daily household activities
12. Safety

To assess the extent to which residents at the housing sites managed by Westminster have experienced a change in their independence or quality of life, we completed personal interviews with a sample of residents from each site who have participated in resident services programs.

In the interview, we asked residents to (a) report the areas where they have experienced a change in their self-sufficiency or quality of life, (b) give examples or evidence of the changes they have made, and (c) indicate any ways that living in the housing site and/or participating in its programs contributed to the change. A total of — residents were interviewed.

The next section of this report presents findings from the interview.

FINDINGS

Improvements in Independence or Quality of Life

1. Approximately —% of the respondents were able to cite at least —— areas where they experienced an improvement in their independence or quality of life and provide support evidence. Over —% of the respondents indicated —— or more improvement and supplied supporting evidence.
2. Respondents were most likely to cite improvements in ——, ——, and ——. Examples of their increased independence or quality of life included ——, ——, and ——. The areas where respondents were least likely to cite improvements included ——, ——, and ——.
3. Over —% of the improvements in quality of life or independence cited by respondents were linked to their housing site.
4. Of the respondents who reported an improvement in one or more areas of their quality of life or independence, respondents with an improvement in —— were most likely to credit their housing site with contributing to that improvement. They stated that living in the housing site help them by ——, ——, and——.
5. Improvements in —— were linked to programs offered at the housing site by —% of the respondents who reported an increase in this area. They stated that the resident services programs on —— gave them ——.
6. Although many residents felt that their —— had improved, only —% indicated that their housing site had contributed in some way. Resident service programs in this area currently operate in only —— of the housing sites with resident services programs.
7. Over —% of the residents from housing sites with resident services programs reported that their use of emergency funding programs had (increased/decreased/stayed the same) since moving into the housing site.

Reductions in Independence or Quality of Life

8. Close to —% of the respondents were able to cite at least —— areas where they experienced a reduction in their independence or quality of life and provided supporting evidence. Approximately —% of the respondents indicated —— or more areas where their quality of life or independence had decreased and supplied supporting evidence.
9. Respondents were most likely to cite worsening conditions in ——, ——, and ——. Respondents were least likely to cite worsening conditions in

—, —, and —. The example they provided of decreased independence or self-sufficiency included —, —, and —.

10. Approximately —% of the reductions in quality of life or independence cited by respondents were linked to their housing site.
11. Of all the respondents who reported a reduction in one or more areas of their quality of life or independence, respondents with reductions in — were most likely to indicate that their housing site results in —, —, and —.
12. Although —% of the housing sites offer programs in —, close to —% of the respondents cited a reduction in their independence or quality of life in this area.
13. Over —% of the respondents cited a reduction in —, an area where Westminster currently does not offer resident services programs.

REPORT OUTLINE

TOOL 3

EVALUATION AREA:	Involvement in and satisfaction with resident services
INDICATORS:	Awareness, participation, and satisfaction with resident services
DERIVED FROM TOOL:	Residents' survey on involvement in and satisfaction with resident services

INTRODUCTION

For residents to benefit from the resident services programs, they must be aware of and actively participate in the programs that are available at their housing site. Beyond awareness and participation, the satisfaction of residents with the resident services programs is critical to the overall success of the programs.

We conducted a survey of the residents at ———, ———, and — housing sites to learn from answers to the following questions:

1. How aware are residents of the services and programs available at their housing site?
2. What percentage of the residents participate in the services and programs?
3. How satisfied are residents with the services and programs available at their site?
4. How could the resident service programs be strengthened?
5. What additional services or programs, not currently available, would residents find useful?

Approximately — residents returned the survey. This represents —% of the total number of residents living at those housing sites. The next section of this evaluation report presents findings from the survey.

FINDINGS

Awareness and Participation

1. Overall, a (high/low) percentage of respondents were aware of the ———, ———, and ——— programs available at their housing site, while a (low/high) percentage of respondents were aware of the ———, ———, and ———.

2. Respondents had the highest rates of participation for the —, —, and — programs. The —, —, and — programs had relatively low rates of participation.

Satisfaction

3. Among those who had participated, most respondents reported being somewhat or very satisfied with the —, —, and — programs. The —, —, and — programs had the highest rates of dissatisfaction among respondents.

Outcomes

4. The program outcomes for respondents varied with different programs. As a result of the — program, several respondents reported that they were able to —. The — program led some respondents to...

Strengths and Limitations

5. Respondents appreciated being able to attend the programs without arranging for child care and transportation (example). They found the programs to be an important way to meet other people living in their housing site and the surrounding community (example).
6. Respondents felt that the programs needed more —. Some respondents indicated that the programs kept them from —.

Recommendations

7. Respondents suggested that more programs be offered in the evening hours and that child care be arranged for the programs most highly attended (example).
8. Additional programs that respondents would find useful include...

REPORT OUTLINE

TOOL 4

EVALUATION AREA:	Involvement in and satisfaction with resident services
INDICATORS:	Participation in and satisfaction with resident services
DERIVED FROM TOOL:	Residents' focus group on involvement and satisfaction with resident services

This focus group and the survey in this evaluation area are interchangeable (see directions for using the tool).

INTRODUCTION

For residents to benefit from the resident services programs, they must be aware of an actively participate in the programs that are available at their housing site. Beyond awareness and participation, the satisfaction of residents with resident services programs is critical to the overall success of the programs.

We conducted a series of focus groups with residents of the housing sites to discover the following:

1. In what ways have residents benefited from the resident services programs?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the resident service programs?
3. How could the resident service programs be more effective?
4. What additional resident service programs, not currently provided, would residents find useful?

This section of the evaluation report presents findings from our focus groups with residents of the housing sites.

FINDINGS

Use of the Resident Services Programs

1. (Each/most/a few) of the respondents reported that they had used one or more of the resident service programs provided to their housing site. The most frequently cited programs included —, —, —.

2. (A few/none) of our respondents indicated that they had participated in the _____, _____, _____ programs.
 - a. When asked whether they were aware of these programs, (most/several/a few) of our respondents indicated that they did not know about the _____, _____, _____ programs.
 - b. (Most/several/a few) of the respondents were aware of the _____, _____, _____ programs. They stated, however, they were unable to attend these programs because _____.

Outcomes of the Resident Services Programs

3. (Most/several/a few) of the respondents who had participated in the _____ programs reported that the program helped them to _____, _____, _____.
(Most/several/a few) other respondents felt that the programs had _____, _____, and _____.
4. (Most/several/a few) respondents stated that, although they had participated in the _____ programs, the programs had limited results for them.

Strengths of the Resident Services Programs

5. (Most/several/a few) of the respondents enjoyed the resident services programs because _____ and _____. They appreciated the programs for their _____.
6. (Most/several/a few) respondents felt that they were more likely to use the _____, _____, _____ programs because _____.
7. (Most/several/a few) respondents praised the individuals brought in for the _____, _____, _____ programs as being _____, _____, _____.

Weaknesses of the Resident Services Programs

8. (Many/some/a few) respondents felt that the programs could be more useful. They stated that the programs could be improved by _____, _____, or _____.
9. (Many/some/a few) respondents felt that the _____ programs were not at all useful. They stated that the programs _____. They did not, however, have any suggestions for increasing their usefulness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

10. (Most/several/a few) respondents felt that the resident services programs could be improved by offering...
11. (Most/several/a few) respondents also suggested that...
12. (Most/several/a few) of the respondents felt that additional resident service programs could be developed to address —, —, and —.

REPORT OUTLINE

TOOL 5

EVALUATION AREA:	Participation of residents in resident service programs
INDICATORS:	Number of individual residents served by resident services programs and attendance at resident services programs
DERIVED FROM TOOL:	Staff records on number of residents attending resident services programs and events

INTRODUCTION

The active participation of residents is necessary for resident services programs to be effective. The number of residents attending the events and programs available at their site services as a sign of the interest and involvement of residents.

FINDINGS

1. On average, the social events held at the housing sites during the past year were attended by —% of the residents of that housing site. This percentage (increased/decreased) from —% to —% during the evaluation period.
2. The resident services programs on — were highly attended by residents. On average, —% of the housing site residents attended the programs on —.
3. Resident services programs on —, —, and — were also highly attended. On average, —% of the residents of the housing site attended the programs on —, —% attended the programs on —, and —% attended the programs on —.
4. The resident services programs on —, —, and — were attended by a relatively low percentage of the housing site residents. The programs on — were attended by —% of the residents while the programs on — and — were attended by —% and —% respectively. The relatively low attendance at these programs could be explained by —, —, or —.
5. In addition to serving residents of the housing sites, several of the resident services programs also served other residents of the local community. The resident services programs on — were attended by an average of — local community residents. This number has (increased/decreased) by —% during the evaluation period.

REPORT OUTLINE

TOOL 6

EVALUATION AREA:	Involvement in and satisfaction with resident services
INDICATORS:	Number served through individual contacts by resident services staff members
DERIVED FROM TOOL:	Staff records on number of residents served individually by resident services staff

INTRODUCTION

The resident services staff at Westminster provide assistance to individual residents at the housing sites where resident service programs are available. The staff is available on-site regularly and is available “on call” as needed by residents. In individual meetings and phone conversations with a resident, staff members assess the resident’s needs, provide information, make referrals to other service providers, and monitor the resident’s ongoing status.

FINDINGS

1. During the past year, the resident services staff provided assistance to —— residents on a continuous basis or approximately —— residents per site.
2. In addition, the resident services staff worked with an additional —— residents on a “one-time contact” or approximately —— residents per site.
3. A majority of these residents received assistance with ——, ——, or ——.
Over ——% of these residents received assistance with ——. Close to ——% of these residents were provided help with ——.

REPORT OUTLINE

TOOL 7

EVALUATION AREA:	Reduced costs of property management
INDICATORS:	Vacancy rates, operating costs for property management, replacement and maintenance costs, operating costs for resident services
DERIVED FROM TOOL:	Staff records on costs of property management

INTRODUCTION

By increasing the quality of life and the independence of residents, the resident services programs may also reduce the vacancy rates, the cost of replacement and maintenance, and the cost of property management at the housing sites with resident services programs. This cost reduction must be considered along with the additional cost of providing resident services programs.

This section of the evaluation report presents information on the vacancy rates, the cost of property management, the cost of replacement and maintenance, and the cost of resident services programs at Westminster housing sites.

FINDINGS

Unit Vacancies

1. The percentage of potential rent revenue that was lost due to vacancies (increased/decreased) from —% to —% per year across all the Westminster housing sites during the evaluation period.
2. At housing sites where the resident services programs were initiated or expanded during the evaluation period, the percentage of potential rent revenue lost due to vacancies (increased/decreased) from —% to —% per year during the evaluation period.

Cost of Property Management

3. The average cost for property management at the Westminster housing sites was approximately \$— per unit per year. The cost per unit ranged from a high of \$— to a low of \$— per year.

4. At housing sites where the resident services programs were initiated or expanded during the evaluation period, the average cost for property management (increased/decreased) from —% to —% per year during the evaluation period. This compares with a —% increase for housing sites managed by other property management providers.

Replacement and Maintenance Costs (to be revised)

5. The average cost of replacement and maintenance due to vandalism, destruction, and negligence by residents at the Westminster housing sites was \$— per year at the beginning of the evaluation period and \$— per year at the end of the evaluation period.
6. At — housing site, where the resident services programs focusing on — was implemented during the past year, the cost of replacement and maintenance due to resident vandalism, destruction, and negligence fell from \$— to \$—.

Cost of Resident Services

7. On average, the resident services programs cost approximately \$— per unit per year. This cost includes Westminster staff time and direct expenses. It does not include the dollar value of services from outside providers.
 - a. Because each site has a unique set of programs for residents, the expenses of each site vary. The cost for an extensive resident services program is approximately \$— per unit at a housing site with programs in —, —, and —.
 - b. The cost for a smaller resident services program is around \$— per unit at a housing site with programs in only —, —, and —.

REPORT OUTLINE

TOOL 9

EVALUATION AREA:	Effective use of other human service providers
INDICATORS:	Effective use of other human service providers, changing perceptions among service providers and an opportunity assessment for increased effectiveness
DERIVED FROM TOOL:	Service providers' focus group on effective use of services providers and perception of residents

INTRODUCTION

As part of the resident services program, Westminster develops linkages with other service providers in the communities where their housing sites are located and arranges for those service providers to work with residents of the Westminster housing sites. As a result, residents gain access to services that may otherwise be unavailable to them. In addition, Westminster gains access to the expertise and resources of other service providers.

We conducted a series of focus groups with service providers working with the residents of Westminster housing sites to discover the following:

1. To what extent are outside service providers being used effectively by Westminster?
2. What opportunities exist for strengthening the types of services that are provided and how services are provided to residents at Westminster housing sites?
3. In what ways, if any, has working with residents of the Westminster housing sites changed the perspective that outside service providers have of affordable housing residents?
4. Have changes in the perspectives held by outside service providers results in any changes in the types of services provided or the way services are provided to residents of the housing sites?

This section of the evaluation report presents findings from those focus groups.

FINDINGS

Outcomes

1. Respondents reported that as a result of their work on-site at the Westminster housing sites, residents have been able to —, —, and —.
2. Other respondents stated that their work with residents of the Westminster housing sites has results in —, —, and —.

Strengths

3. (Most/several/a few) respondents felt that their services were particularly effective at the Westminster housing sites because —.
4. Other respondents indicated that their work with residents of the housing sites has been effective because —.
5. (Most/several/a few) respondents stated that their working relationship with Westminster has benefited the housing residents by —. They appreciated Westminster's —.

Limitations

6. (Many/some/a few) respondents indicated that the effectiveness of their services at the housing site and with its residents was limited by —.
7. (Many/some/a few) respondents stated that their working relationship with Westminster limited the effectiveness of their work by —.

Changes in the Perspectives Held by Outside Service Providers

8. For (many/several/a few) respondents, working at the Westminster housing site or with Westminster residents has changed their —. Prior to working with Westminster residents, they felt that —. But now, after working with Westminster residents, they feel that —.
9. (Many/some/a few) respondents stated that they are providing more – services to Westminster residents and less – services as a result of changes in their perspective on the residents and the needs of residents.
10. (Some/A few) respondents also indicated that they had changed – in their service provision as a result of changes in their perspective of Westminster residents.

Opportunities for Strengthening Effectiveness

11. (Several/a few/one) respondent(s) suggested that, in addition to the current services provided to residents, services in —, —, and — would be beneficial.
12. (Several/a few/one) respondent(s) felt that they could increase the effectiveness of their services by —.
13. (Several/a few/one) respondent(s) suggested that – services be provided through — rather than the current method of service provision.

REPORT OUTLINE

TOOL 10

EVALUATION AREA:	Perception of community members
INDICATORS:	Community members have a positive perception of the housing site
DERIVED FROM TOOL:	Community members' telephone interviews on perceptions of the housing site

INTRODUCTION

Westminster strives to build strong connections between each housing site and its local community. This linkage allows residents of the housing site to benefit from and contribute to their surrounding community and allows the community to benefit from and contribute to the housing site. As a key aspect of this linkage, Westminster asked community members about their awareness and perception of the housing site located in their community.

Telephone interviews were conducted with approximately (number) community members in (list of communities), where the (list of housing sites) were located. Of these housing sites, Westminster provides both resident services and owner services to (list of housing sites), while only property management services are provided to (list of housing sites). For the telephone interviews, we selected community members who are (groups of community members). The next section of our evaluation report presents the findings from our interviews with community members.

FINDINGS

Community Member Awareness

1. Overall, —% of our respondents indicated that they were aware of the housing site located in their community.
 - a. In communities where Westminster supports both owner services and resident services, —% of the respondents were aware of the housing site.
 - b. In contrast, —% of the respondents were aware of the housing site in communities where Westminster provides only property management services.
 - c. In communities where Westminster has added or substantially increased owner services and resident services during the past year, the percentage

of respondents who reported being aware of Westminster (stayed the same/jumped/fell) from —% to —%.

2. Respondents were most likely to be aware of the housing sites through —, —, and —. Table — provides the percentage of respondents that reported that they were aware of the housing site in their community through various information sources.
 - a. Respondents from the communities where Westminster supports both owner services and resident services were more likely to be aware of the housing site in their community through —, —, and — than respondents from communities where Westminster provides only property management.
 - b. In communities where Westminster has added or substantially increased owner services and resident services during the past year, the percentage of respondents who reported that they were aware of the housing site through — (stayed the same/jumped/fell) from —% to —%.
3. In communities where Westminster provides resident services and owner services, —% of the respondents were aware of one or more of the services or programs available to residents. Respondents were most familiar with the — programs.

Overall Perceptions, Strengths, and Limitations

4. Approximately —% of the respondents reported that their overall perception of the housing site in their community was somewhat or very positive while —% reported that their overall perception was somewhat or very negative.
 - a. Of the respondents from communities where resident services and owner services are provided, —% reported that their overall perception was somewhat or very positive.
 - b. In contrast, —% of respondents from communities where resident services and owner services are not provided reported having somewhat or very positive perceptions.
 - c. While —% of the respondents from communities where resident services and owner services are provided reported that they had neither a positive or negative perception, —% of the respondents from communities where only property management is provided had neither a positive nor a negative perception.
5. In the communities where residents services and owner services have been added or substantially increased during the past year, most respondents reported that their perception of the housing site in their community had

- (stayed the same/become more positive/become more negative). They attributed this change primarily to —, —, and —.
6. Overall, —% of the respondents reported that they were happy that the housing site was located in their community while —% stated that they would prefer that the housing site was located elsewhere.
 - a. Close to —% of the respondents from communities where resident services and owner services are provided stated that they were happy that the housing site was located in their community.
 - b. Approximately —% of the respondents from communities where only property management is provided indicated that they were happy that the housing site was located in their community.
 7. When asked to indicate the strengths of the housing site in their community, respondents most frequently cited the —, — and — of the housing sites.
 - a. Respondents from communities where Westminster provides owner and resident services were highly supportive of —, —, and —.
 - b. Respondents from communities where Westminster only provides property management tended to cite — and generally did not include —.
 8. When asked to indicate the limitations of the housing site in their community, respondents most frequently cited —, —, and —.
 - a. Respondents from communities where Westminster only provides property management tended to report more — and — than respondents from communities where owner services and resident services are provided.
 - b. Respondents from communities where Westminster provides property management and owner services also indicated that —.

Suggestions

9. Respondents reported a wide variety of changes they would make to the housing sites in their community. The most frequent responses included —, —, and —. Other respondents are listed below by site.

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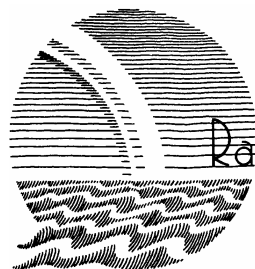
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- **New Genres for Communicating Evaluation Findings;** Rainbow Research, Inc.; *9 pages (1992); #302 – \$5.00*
- **Common Barriers to Effectiveness in the Independent Sector;** Steven E. Mayer; *6 pages (1992); #308 – \$10.00*
- **Guide to Conducting Focus Group Research;** Becky Swanson Kroll; *38 pages (1995); #172 – \$5.00*



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