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Insider Knowlege

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Top 7 Tips to Building Evaluation Culture

Building a strong evaluation culture requires attention across all levels of the organization, open communication, acknowledging the promise of the future, and ongoing supports.

1 Engage Board, Leadership and Staff

Cultural transformation occurs across all facets of the organization, involving board members, executive directors, organizational leaders, staff and volunteers. Include all parties in evaluation planning, addressing fears and concerns, as well as hopes and aspirations.

2 Adopt a Philosophy of Continuous Improvement and Accountability

Every organization has room for improvement. Program evaluation enables nonprofits to track progress and move forward. Collecting data that you do not or cannot use to make decisions is an effortful activity that frustrates teams.

3 Shift the Perspective to Realistic Possibilities

Program evaluation is sometimes perceived as a threat to or critique of existing programs. In reality, sound evaluation creates opportunities for positive change that can improve client service and organizational sustainability.

4 Identify Key Audiences

Evaluation addresses questions from key audiences, such as board members, funders, donors, staff, and community partners. By identifying the most important parties that require information, you can then plan to deliver what they need to know.

5 Clarify Key Outcomes

It's likewise critical to become clear on the story you want to tell and thereby identify data needs that may support it. Converse with staff to hear stories of client success and identify important indicators that demonstrate positive change.

6 Maintain Evaluation Conversations

Evaluation is not a one-time event. Rather, it should become a systematic initiative across the organization. To ensure that evaluation remains on the radar as a priority, consider incorporating focused discussions about data and evaluation efforts at regular intervals, such as at staff meetings or scheduled check-ins.

7 Celebrate Successes

As with any transformational change, it's important to acknowledge and celebrate successes, large or small. Such reinforcements are an important part of integrating evaluation as a positive organizational advancement.

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