



## Evaluation Consultants Get the Job Done Right for Community Interventions

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Consultants that provide high quality evaluation and other services can help communities design, implement, and evaluate effective community interventions. When these services are

provided by evaluation consultants who are sensitive to the needs of community members and respectful of their power, there is a

greater chance that community outcomes will improve over time.



*Figure 1 Photograph by Margo Wright. Public Domain*

“Communities are complex, requiring the evaluation consultant who chooses to work in them, to possess a unique set of personal qualities and professional competencies.”

Evaluation consultants often work with community-based nonprofit, government, education, health care, and other organizations. If the specific setting of the evaluation is a community, evaluation consultants need a mix of both personal qualities and professional skills.

### Highlights

**Consultants can assist communities to design, implement, and evaluate effective interventions.**

**Evaluation consultants with a Community Psychology perspective are particularly valuable as the principles of the field align with what many communities need.**

In our longer article linked below, we describe the qualities and skills needed for evaluation consultants working in communities. They are based on our professional experience, the experiences of other consultants, and professional competencies for community psychology, public health, and social work. Here are some highlights:

- **Personal qualities** that are helpful include being able to handle uncertainty and complexity; patience; having good social skills; understanding organizations; being able to work with people with strong personalities; comfort with strong emotions; and understanding local context.
- **Cultural humility** is important as is being aware of how history, politics, privilege, and power affect communities. Being able to look closely at yourself, fix power imbalances, and develop partnerships with people and groups who advocate for others are steps toward cultural humility. Good evaluation consultants can step back from their own experience and be open to seeing things the way community members do.
- Effective evaluation consultants **demonstrate a commitment to justice and equity**. Evaluation consultants are guests in the community and there to support the community's advocacy and agenda. They should not shy away from discussions of racism, sexism, and other forms of systemic oppression.
- In addition to evaluation skills, **other skills** are needed including:
  - understanding ecological perspectives,
  - the ability to build community inclusion and partnerships,
  - a lens of health promotion and prevention,
  - knowing how to work with small and large groups,
  - consultation and organizational development skills,
  - knowledge about coalition and collaborative models and measures, community empowerment, and
  - having the skills to conduct a public policy analysis as well as knowing how to evaluate advocacy initiatives.

## HOW DID A COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE INFORM YOUR WORK?

As community psychologists, the values of the field are the foundation of our work. This article highlights the skills need for practitioners working in communities and who wish to promote social change. The skills we review in this article, such as cultural humility and commitment to equity and justice, are grounded in community psychology values.

## What Does This Mean for Evaluation Consultants with Respect to:

**Research and Evaluation:** If you are doing research and evaluation in communities, you need skills beyond technical research and evaluation methods. Effective evaluation consultants practice cultural humility and engage community members throughout the evaluation process.

**Practice:** Being aware of the personal qualities outlined in this article can help evaluation consultants and aspiring Community Psychologists determine if practicing within communities is a good fit. Understanding the skills needed to work in communities can help provide insight into appropriate professional development opportunities.

**Social Action:** When you are working with a community that is not your own, exercising cultural humility and being committed to equity and social justice are important. Always remember that you are a guest in that community and be aware how you use your power and privilege.

**Similar Settings:** Consulting and conducting evaluation with communities is hard, and often frustrating work, but also very rewarding. It requires the skills developed through training, experience, mentoring, and continuous personal awareness and development.

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