

MEMORANDUM

TO: Discovery Communities

FROM: Maria Mojica, Senior Program Officer
Laura Downs, Capacity Building Broker
Manuel Gutierrez, and Sally Leiderman, Evaluation Team

DATE: May 2, 2005

RE: TA Sessions on Evaluation and Data Collection Techniques

One of the Discovery legacy goals is to build community capacity for self-evaluation. GMF wants to ensure that communities have skills that they can continue to utilize even after the Discovery Initiative is over. The first technical assistance (TA) sessions on evaluation and data collection techniques will be held during the July cohort meetings on July 13-14, 2005 (see capacity building calendar). Each session will involve presentations as well as small group breakouts in order to maximize learning opportunities.

The specific sessions will be designed in response to community interest and need. The enclosed list contains potential topics. Some are introductory and some are intermediate level sessions. Please review the attached session descriptions with your collaborative and prioritize the topics in terms of relevance for your community. Please submit your priorities to your community liaison by **June 1, 2005**.

Given the time limitations, we will be able to present only one topic at each of the Cohort Meetings in July. Each cohort meeting may have a different topic based on feedback and will be able to participate any session. Communities will be able to bring up to five (5) members of their community to the session and may decide to participate in multiple sessions.

The Discovery evaluation team will be the technical assistance providers for the evaluation sessions. If you have any questions about the session descriptions, please contact Tania Tasse Tania@omgcenter.org, 215-732-2200, ext. 234. If you have questions about the logistics or the topic selection process, contact your community liaison or Laura Downs.

INTRODUCTORY LEVEL SESSIONS**1. Data Collection Methods & Choices**

This training will provide an introduction to different ways communities can collect data to answer questions that they have about their Discovery work. For example, if a community wants to assess the quality of child care in their town, they could conduct on-site observations at child care facilities, or use parent or provider surveys, or conduct focus groups or interviews. Participants attending this session will learn about different data collection methods to use in their Discovery work, and considerations to take into account when choosing and using various methods.

Participants will learn:

- How to decide what method to use to collect different types of information
- The advantages and disadvantages of each method
- Decisions to make when using each method, and
- The basic steps to conduct each method

2. Survey Design

Surveys (administered in person, over the phone, or via mail or internet) are one way that Discovery communities can gather information about experiences, attitudes or needs in their town. For example, a team might survey kindergarten parents about their experience with early child care providers in the town, or about their need for after school programs. This session will provide an introduction to designing surveys, and to analyzing and using survey results.

Participants will learn:

- When to use a survey (for what types of research questions)
- What to think about when deciding how to conduct the survey (i.e. in person, over the phone or via mail), including incentives for participation
- How to write survey questions
- Layout and formatting tips, and
- Options for determining survey results

3. Focus Groups and Interviews

Focus groups and in-person or phone interviews are other methods that Discovery communities can use to collect information about a particular topic. These methods are especially good for capturing people's perceptions of an issue or to get more information about community needs. In this session, participants will learn the basics of organizing, conducting and using the information from focus groups and interviews.

Participants will learn:

- When to use focus groups and interviews
- How to select and invite people to participate
- How to design the questions
- Tips for conducting focus group and interviews, and
- Ways to analyze and use the information collected.

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL SESSIONS**4. Measuring the Outcomes of Discovery Strategies**

This training we will help communities determine what data collection strategies to pursue to measure the anticipated outcomes of their Discovery project work. The training will cover how to ensure that the Discovery Action Plan outcomes are reasonable given the community's strategies and resources, and how to assess progress toward the outcomes. This session is for participants who already have some familiarity with different data collection methods.

Participants will learn:

- How to assess the feasibility and utility of different outcomes
- How to determine appropriate measures for the outcomes
- How to determine the most appropriate methods to use to collect the measurement data
- How to build an evaluation plan to track outcome progress over time

5. Survey Design

The session will include a brief overview of the content from the introductory survey design session and will focus on ways to increase the precision of your surveys by discussing sampling (who will receive the survey) and how to write questions to improve the validity and reliability of the responses. Validity means that the question measures what you intend for it to measure. Reliability means that your question will be interpreted consistently so that if the survey were to be given again it would yield similar results. This intermediate session assumes that participants have some experience with designing and administering surveys.

Participants will learn:

- Basic sampling concepts
- Considerations in deciding how to administer the survey and participation incentives
- Question design, considering the validity and reliability of the measures
- Methods for analyzing your survey results.

6. Analyzing and Using Data

This session will provide participants with an overview of how to analyze and present data relevant to their Discovery work. The session will focus on how to reduce and summarize data from various sources, such as focus groups, interviews, surveys and administrative data (data already being collected by a public or nonprofit agency). This session assumes that participants already know what data they need and are collecting it.

Participants will learn:

- Coding and grouping open-ended responses from surveys, interviews, and focus groups
- Analyzing registration forms and other documentation data
- Understanding and using administrative data
- Translating data from different sources into findings
- Tips for graphing data
- Presenting information in useful formats

COMMUNITY SELECTION FORM

Community Name: _____

Person Completing Form: _____

Community Cohort: _____

Indicate what topic your community collaborative would like training on in July 2005 by placing a number 1 next to the session topic. Please rank order the remaining topics for future sessions by placing the numbers 2-5 next to the session topics.

Community Preference (1-7)	Evaluation Technical Assistance Session Topics
	1. Data Collection Methods & Choices (introductory)
	2. Survey Design (introductory)
	3. Focus Groups & Interviews (introductory)
	4. Measuring the Outcomes of Discovery Strategies (intermediate)
	5. Survey Design (intermediate)
	6. Analyzing and Using Data (intermediate)
	7. Other (please describe the topic)