Evaluation: Start Here Please!   Using Logic Models to Bring Together Planning, Evaluation and Action   Framework, Instruments, Forms and Directory

Building Blocks: Community Health Worker Evaluation Case Studies   Grant-Writing Tips to Help You Sustain Your CHW Program   Bibliography, References and Glossary

River of Program Life Group Exercise

The Community Health Worker Evaluation Tool Kit

A Project of The University of Arizona
Rural Health Office and
College of Public Health

Sponsored by
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*Adapted in part from the River
of Life personal change exercise*

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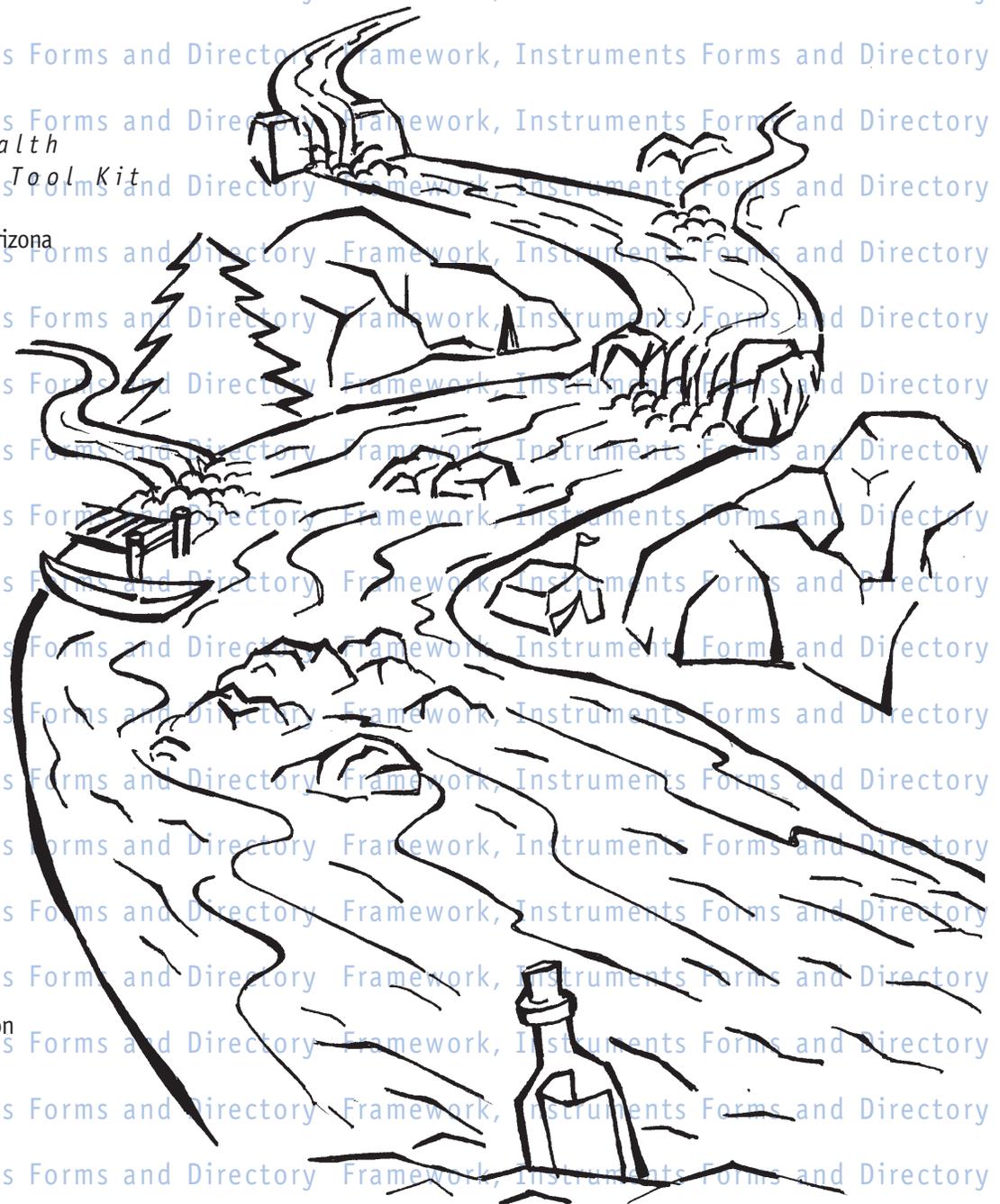
River of Program Life Group Exercise

Purpose:

This exercise is designed for COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER PROGRAM STAFF to provide you with an opportunity to reflect collectively on: 1) the positive forces that helped to shape your program, your program's role in promoting individual and community health and your other related goals and objectives, 2) the blocks and barriers that have prevented your program from promoting individual and community health and from achieving your other related goals and objectives, and 3) the successes you have had in your program. In the process of doing this exercise your program can explore its past, its present and its future. The River (or another symbol if you choose one) represents the journey of your program over time.

First Steps:

Working with imagery

The RIVER is a meaningful symbol in many cultures. In some groups other images, such as a highway or path, may be a more appealing symbol of the journey of life and work. Your group should select an image that you feel can help you retrace and explore the journey of your CHW program. Once the image is selected, the group creates a large picture to represent your efforts to promote improved health and access to services and/or any other goals of your program. Multiple symbols representing the factors that have helped and hindered the program in accomplishing its goals should be selected to accompany the image you choose. For example, with the River image, positive influences can be represented in the drawing as brooks leading into the River. Blocks or barriers can be depicted as dams, troubled times can be depicted as rapids, successes can be represented as lakeside picnics. Beaches, boats, and even a fishing pole and bait can be creatively used to help tell the story of the program, its staff, and those served by the program. You will need to answer questions such as, "Are the CHWs in your program each traveling in their own boats or are you all in one boat? Is the boat a small tippy canoe or a speedboat with a motor or maybe even a large ferryboat?" The theme image and the symbols you choose to accompany it are intended to give your group a starting point for dialogue. Choose an image that inspires your imagination.

Before you begin the drawing, create a symbol key in which you identify the symbols for items that will appear in several places in your drawing. An example of a symbol selected by one group was a message in a bottle for health education material. It was interesting to see how that message ended up-lost on shore at first and then, later, floating along with the current of the river. With a number of symbols identified before you begin your drawing, the group will be free to stay focused on the story you are trying collectively to create in your drawing.

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Uses of the exercise:

▶ **Looking Back:**

This exercise can be used to look back on the history of your program for a selected period of time, such as the past year. The exercise can help programs to better understand the origins of their accomplishments and struggles. Such a retrospective use is a recommended first step for a program already in progress. Much can be learned about the present and even the future from understanding the past.

▶ **Looking Ahead:**

The exercise can also be used to look ahead, again, for a specified period of time that you select. Utilized in this way, the exercise can help your group envision the goals you have for the future and examine the opportunities available and the potential barriers you must overcome to achieve success.

▶ **On-going Use:**

This exercise can be utilized at regular intervals to explore program progress. The original drawing can be revisited or a new one can be made.

▶ **Documenting the Program's Story:**

Once the group drawing has been developed, it can also serve as a tool to help program staff develop and/or refine evaluation strategies to assure that they fully capture your program's story. To do this, the group, perhaps in partnership with a program evaluator, looks at the drawing to identify the outputs, outcomes, and impacts (see Logic Model in the Tool Kit) of their program across the four levels of the Tool Kit evaluation framework (individual and family, CHW, program, and community/systems). As a part of the evaluation work, program staff should first work together to assure that all staff have an orientation to evaluation. Both the Introduction to Evaluation and the W.K. Kellogg Logic Model included in the Tool Kit are intended to give you the needed orientation.

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Group Exercise**

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Creating a River of Program Life

Planning Meeting

Step 1:
The facilitator (a program staff member or director) explains/reviews the purpose of the exercise.

Step 2:
The group selects its image and related symbols, noting these preliminary symbols in a key that will guide the artist. The time period the exercise will cover is identified (e.g. the past year, the next two years). The group also selects one or several group "artists".

The River of Program Life Drawing

Step 3:
The facilitator welcomes the group and asks each participant to take a few minutes before the group begins to work as a team to individually make notes on paper about their thoughts about the time period they will be discussing. Specifically, each participant should make a list of 1) the positive forces (+) that have helped them achieve their goals and objectives in their work as a CHW; 2) the barriers (-) that made it difficult for them in their work as a CHW; and 3) any notable achievements (*) they have personally had or they have been a part of in their work as a CHW.

Step 4:
After the group has made their individual lists, the facilitator leads a discussion with the CHW program staff about the history, the present, and/or future goals of the program. Participants are asked to share from their personal lists. During this 10-15 minute discussion, the group artist should make notes that will later help in creating the group's drawing.

Step 5:
After the discussion breaks the ice for the group, the group artist(s) begins to draw while the group continues to explore 1) the positive forces that have helped the program reach its goals, 2) the barriers that have prevented the program from achieving its goals, and 3) important achievements, large and small, of the program. The discussion continues throughout the drawing process, with the facilitator probing the group to talk about their experiences in the program and the sequencing of important events. The symbol key the group generated guides the artist. Symbols should be added to it as needed throughout the process. Remember the focus is the drawing, not the symbol key. Something new can go into the drawing that does not appear in the key.

Step 6:
After the drawing is complete, the group reflects together on the drawing and discusses how to proceed in the future to continue to meet program goals.
In the drawing the group will see the positive forces they may encounter and the barriers they may face as they move ahead. Past successes and future plans can be examined to assure that they contribute to achieving the overall goals of the program.

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Using the Drawing to Review Evaluation Strategies

After you have made your drawing, if you have not already done so, the group should learn about evaluation methods. The Introduction to Evaluation and the Logic Model in the Tool Kit can help. In particular, there are a few basic important concepts for the group that will aid in using the drawing to review evaluation strategies. First, the group should understand the four levels of the Tool Kit's evaluation framework. These levels represent changes in (1) individuals and families (clients); 2) CHWs; 3) program/agency, and 4) community/systems. The group should also become familiar with the three types of results highlighted the Logic Model as 1) outputs, 2) outcomes, and 3) impacts. When your group is comfortable with these evaluation concepts, return to the drawing to discuss your program's evaluation.

Step 1:

Revisit your drawing, thinking about the evaluation methods being used by the program and/or about developing evaluation methods. Work to link the symbols in your drawing to the CHW Evaluation Framework's four levels. At the same time, work to place the symbols along the results continuum of outputs, outcomes and impacts. To some extent the outputs will be at the beginning of your drawing, the outcomes will be in the middle, and the impacts will be at the end, maybe even anticipated in the future.

To help with this process, use the CHW Evaluation Indicators Worksheet (worksheet attached). Fill in this grid, identifying which items depicted in your drawing fit into the different cells on the worksheet. You may want to enlarge the worksheet on a flip chart to facilitate the whole group working together on this task.

Step 2:

Once this worksheet is filled in, explore whether your current evaluation methods have allowed you to capture the story your drawing tells. Do current methods help to identify factors that have helped your program achieve success? Do your evaluation methods identify blocks to success? Are successes, large and small, evident in the evaluation data being collected?

Step 3:

As gaps are identified in current evaluation strategies, and as new program goals are identified, new evaluation measures should be generated. The group can work together to identify what should be measured to more fully capture your program's story. If something in your drawing is important to you as a measure of your success, find a way to document it.

Step 4:

Once you identify what should be measured that is not currently being measured, look through the Tool Kit to see if a tool measuring what you want to look at has already been developed. The tools are organized around the four level evaluation framework. To find appropriate tools in the Tool Kit you need to identify the level of the Tool Kit's framework this item falls within. For example, is it about change in the individuals and families you serve (level 1) or is it changes in you-the CHWs (level 2)? Hopefully, the tools in the Tool Kit will meet your needs. If not, a local evaluator may be able to help you find an existing tool not contained in the Tool Kit or can work with you to create a new tool. (In either case, if you find or create a new tool that works well, don't forget to share your new tool with the Tool Kit team.)

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Materials for Exercise:

- ✓ Large paper for drawing (approx 3' x 8')
- ✓ Markers, crayons
- ✓ Stickers-fish, stars, smiley faces, etc.
  (these really provide a nice boost to the artist)
- ✓ Masking tape

Time: estimated

1) 45 minutes to select the timeframe that will be the focus of the drawing, and to select your image and develop a preliminary symbol key

2) 90 minutes for drawing and early processing; consider an additional session to process the drawing in terms of basic program goals and objectives

At this juncture if you have not already done so, have the group learn together about evaluation approaches- see the Tool Kit's Introduction to Evaluation and the Logic Model

3) 90 minutes for analyzing evaluation processes

River of Program Life/Evaluation Tool Kit
Community Health Worker
Key Evaluation Indicators

INVENTORY WORKSHEET

RESULTS OVER TIME			
	➤ OUTPUTS	➤ OUTCOMES	➤ IMPACT
T O O L K I T F R A M E W O R K E V A L U A T I O N L E V E L S Individuals & Families			
Community Health Worker			
Program Performance			
Community/ Systems			

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Please Let Us Know What You Think

Your feedback will help us improve the value of future versions of this report and develop effective training workshops. Please fax or mail this sheet to:

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University of Arizona Rural Health Office
2501 East Elm Street • Tucson, AZ 85716
Tel. 520-626-7946 • Fax 520-326-6249

Or e-mail your comments and suggestions to: eleer@uswest.net.

1. Was this exercise helpful? (Circle answer)

Not helpful   Extremely helpful
1   2   3   4   5

2. What would you change or add to the exercise to make it more useful?

_____

_____

3. Would you be interested in participating in an evaluation training featuring (Circle one)

YES   NO

4. Would you be willing to share your experiences conducting this exercise with our team? (Circle one)

YES   NO

<u>If you answered yes to question 3 and/or 4, please fill out:</u>

5. Your name: _____

6. Program Name: _____

7. Program Address: _____

_____

8. E-mail address:

_____

9. Phone   (_____) _____ **10. Fax** (_____) _____

Thank You!

River of Program Life

Community Health Worker Evaluation Tool Kit