Appendix D. Evaluating the Mpowerment Project

These materials provide guidance on conducting a project evaluation. Topics covered include:

- What an evaluation is and why is it important
- Three types of evaluation methods
- Tips on conducting basic evaluations

Please note: The materials on the following pages have been reproduced from the Mpowerment Project Replication Package. References to pages, figures, modules, or appendices refer to the Replication Package modules, rather than this document.

Evaluation

Objectives

To give you: 1 a basic overview of evaluation and explain why it is important to evaluate the Mpowerment Project; 2 some basic evaluation tips and three types of suggested evaluation methods; 3 the Mpowerment Project's Program Logic Model and corresponding initial, early, and ongoing activities and outcomes. These activities allow each community to tailor the program for its unique needs and characteristics.

Evaluation strategies are most successful when they are integrated into every Project activity instead of being seen as a separate component. To help your organization develop and implement a successful and integrated evaluation plan, we have created a Program Logic Model for the Mpowerment Project. This Model can be found on pages 14 and 15 of this module, and it serves as a map for the entire Project. More specifically, it is intended to provide a larger picture of what early, intermediate, and long-term effects the Project hopes to achieve when the different parts of the Project are implemented. For each activity that is listed, you are directed to a specific section(s) of the Training Manual where more is written on that topic. When appropriate, you are also directed to specific tools and methods for evaluating that activity. These tools can be found in the ten figures in the appendix to this Module. Our hope is that the Program Logic Model will help you gain an understanding of when to conduct various activities, what the intended outcomes are, and how to measure these outcomes.

Why is it Important to Conduct Evaluations?

The Mpowerment Project was carefully designed and tested in several different communities to see if it was successful in reducing sexual risk behavior among young gay / bisexual men. The intervention's success has been well established through carefully controlled scientific studies. However, every community and community-based organization is somewhat different, and each community and organization that decides to adopt the intervention will need to adapt or tailor the intervention for its own unique characteristics. With this in mind, it then becomes crucial to know if the way you have tailored the intervention is in keeping with the basic theories and methods of the intervention. Other questions will also be addressed in your evaluations *(see below)*.

We have heard that CBO staff sometimes feel intimidated, and are reluctant about the prospect of conducting evaluations. Here are some common concerns people may have when contemplating conducting an evaluation:

"I don't know a thing about evaluation." Evaluation is a learned skill. It takes time to develop an understanding of what specifics are involved in conducting good evaluations, so try not to feel anxious if you don't know where or how to start. We will do our best to make this as user friendly as possible.

"Only experts can conduct an evaluation." Retaining the help of an evaluation expert can be of great help to you and your organization, but by no means is it impossible to conduct an evaluation without their assistance. We will do our best to provide you with as much information as you need in order to conduct an evaluation of the Mpowerment Project in your community on your own. But sophisticated evaluation efforts may require outside assistance.

"Evaluation activities are too costly and time consuming...they take precious time and resources away from delivering needed services." To those without direct experience with the benefits of evaluation work, it may seem like this is true. However, the information gained from conducting evaluations helps streamline efforts and helps to avoid risky guess-work.

The information gained through evaluation helps streamline efforts and avoid risky guesswork.

"The language of evaluation is unfamiliar and intimidating to me." While it may be true that you will learn some new terms in order to communicate more easily about evaluation, we will provide you with as much of the information as we can.

The practice of evaluation should NOT be a strictly "top down" endeavor, with the program manager saying "YOU MUST" and the front line staff resisting this directive. It is a good idea to include everybody in the evaluative process. This is not to say that the Core Group and other volunteers need to be directly involved in the more technical aspects of conducting the evaluations, such as compiling the data. However, it should be explained to the Core Group why certain data are collected, and the Core Group should be provided with the results of any and all useful data analysis.

Basic questions your evaluations will attempt to answer

1. Does the tailored intervention include all of the core components and key characteristics of the Mpowerment Project?
2. Was something left out or changed from the Mpowerment Project that may make the intervention more or less effective than originally demonstrated?
3. What Mpowerment Project components are actually being delivered and to whom?
4. How well are Mpowerment Project components being implemented?
5. Is the intervention making a difference?
6. Are you obtaining the necessary information you need to satisfy your funder?

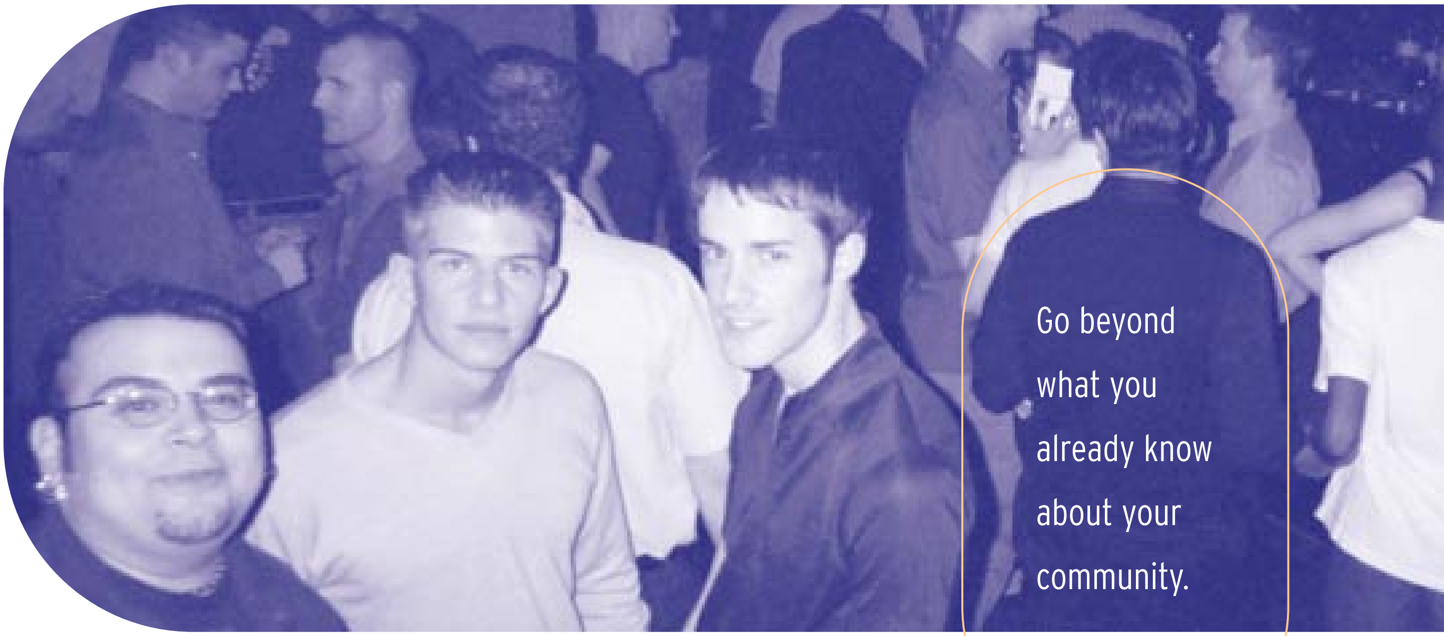
A well thought-out evaluation can:

- Help determine if the Mpowerment Project is reaching young gay/bisexual men or if it is missing important segments of the community.
- Help determine if the Mpowerment Project is promoting safer sex, building a healthy community, and empowering volunteers.
- Determine if the Mpowerment Project's activities are fun, appealing, sex-positive and gay-positive.
- Help determine if the Mpowerment Project is culturally sensitive.
- Guide the Mpowerment Project and keep it from becoming stagnant, thus allowing the Mpowerment Project to evolve as the young gay/bisexual men's community evolves.
- Help garner stronger community support for the Mpowerment Project.
- Help establish more stable funding sources and hopefully greater longevity for the Mpowerment Project.
- Establish more efficient program planning by taking out much of the guesswork.
- Reduce staff turnover by providing opportunities for job growth and skills acquisition.

We will mainly be concerned with three types of evaluation:

- Formative Evaluation
- Process Evaluation
- Outcome Evaluation

We will talk about what these types of evaluations are in general, and how they relate to the Mpowerment Project.



Formative Evaluation

Formative evaluation is a type of evaluation that is done before a program is implemented. It tells you how a prevention program should be conducted so that it meets the needs of and is appropriate for the target group you are trying to reach. A great deal of formative work was conducted early on in developing the Mpowerment Project to ensure that it met the needs of young gay / bisexual men. In conducting formative research, we discovered that young men have strong social needs and that HIV prevention needs to be combined with meeting those needs. Additional formative work will need to be done by you as you tailor the program to your own community. Module 2, which outlines the community assessment process, is basically a description of some of the formative evaluation that should be done to start up this project in your community. In order to know what life is like for the young gay / bisexual men in the community you live in, you will need to answer many questions, such as:

- What are the different groups of young gay/bisexual men in your community?
- What issues do that these men grapple with?
- Where do they socialize or congregate?

The answers to these questions (and more) will help you modify and tailor the program to the specific needs of the men who live in your community. This can be accomplished through the use of spot interviews with young gay / bisexual men, direct observations, individual interviews, or focus groups. To learn more about doing formative research, you might want to check out the following URL for a short manual on the subject developed by our colleagues at CAPS: www.goodquestions.ucsf.edu.

As stated earlier, in the community assessment module we talk at length about the importance of getting to know your community. This point bears repeating. The formative work accomplished during the assessment process allows you to go beyond what you already know about your community and the young gay / bisexual men who live there. The information gathered during the community assessment will be invaluable to you throughout the life of the Project, and you may want to consider adding on-going community assessments to your program's evaluation plan just in case the characteristics of your community change over time. Updating your community assessment allows you to identify new developments in your area such as new outreach venues or media outlets.

Process Evaluation

Process evaluation is the second type of evaluation, and in many respects it is the most basic type of evaluation. It answers the questions "What services are being delivered?" and "Who is being reached through our services?" Even the smallest agency has the capacity to conduct process evaluation. In general, process evaluation requires few additional resources in order to implement, though time probably needs to be set aside to review and analyze the results from your process evaluation.

Process evaluation can provide important data on the number of individuals reached by a program. Process evaluation can detail the number of service units delivered and can tell you how many young men attended an M-group, a video night, or a barbecue. It can tell you how many pieces of an outreach material were distributed, when, and to whom. What it cannot do is tell you what changes occurred in attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, or knowledge among the men targeted. Process evaluations cannot tell you if programs are effective.

Process evaluation also involves an effort to describe some of the details of program planning or service delivery. Understood in this way, process evaluation can function as a form of basic quality control. It cannot tell you how successful the Project is, but it can tell you what is being done and by whom. Basic monitoring of the Mpowerment Project can be tracked by asking specific questions such as "Who is responsible for designing the outreach materials?", "Who will assemble the materials?" or "How will the event be publicized?". The answers to these questions are vital to determine if you are implementing the Project with fidelity to the program's guiding principles. For example, if one Project Coordinator is designing every outreach material, planning the themes of every outreach event, and publicizing every event single-handedly, then the Project volunteers are not being empowered and may not buy into the outreach program. Process evaluation is particularly important in implementing the Mpowerment Project, because it will give you a sense of whether or not the program is being implemented in accordance with the underlying theories and methods of the original intervention.

Process evaluation can tell you what is being done...and by whom.

Outcome Evaluation

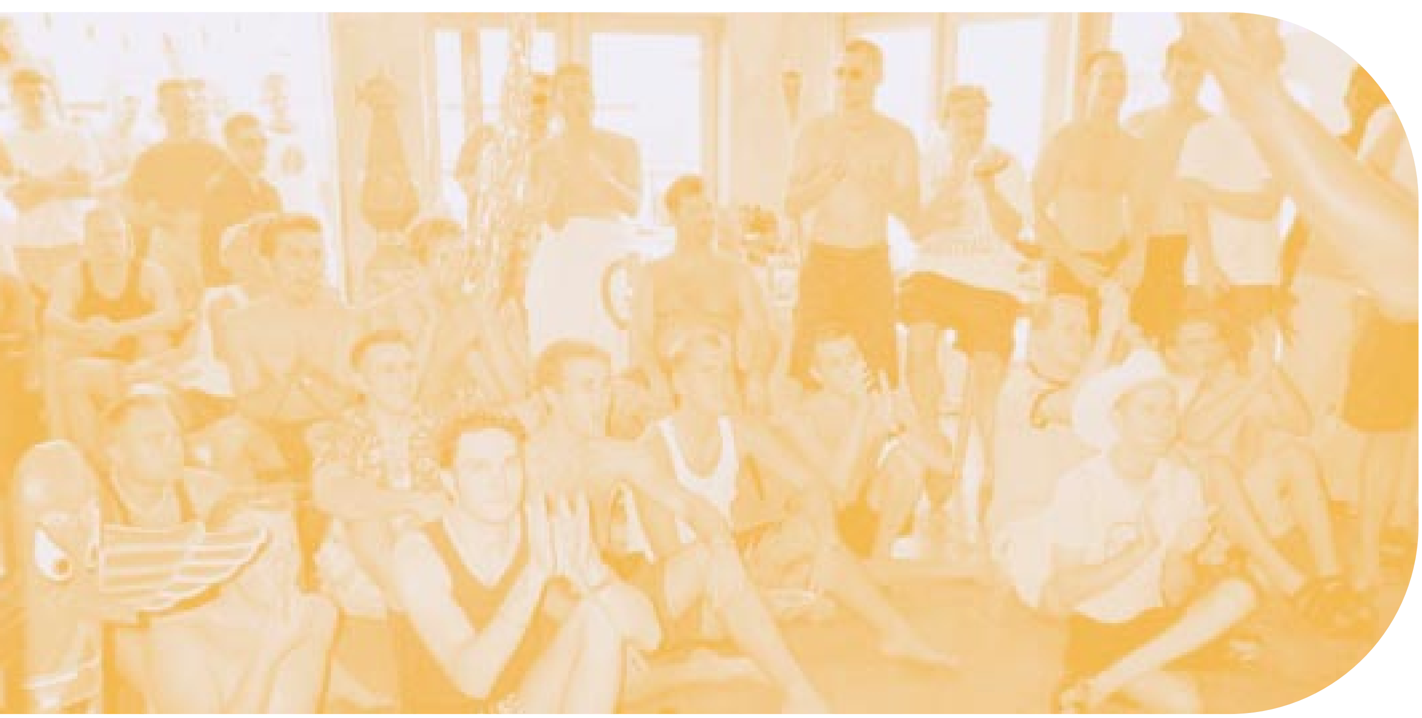
Outcome evaluation (sometimes called "impact evaluation") measures the effect or impact that your activities have on the target population, in this case, on young gay / bisexual men. For example, outcome evaluation will help you determine if the Mpowerment Project helped change the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and / or behaviors of men who directly participate in the program. Outcome evaluation will also help you determine if informal outreach is occurring among young gay / bisexual men in the community (when friends talk with and encourage friends to be safer). While process evaluation often relies on information that Coordinators and Project volunteers record, data for outcome evaluation come directly from the participants or young gay / bisexual men in the community.

Sample outcome evaluation topics

After being involved in the Project for awhile:

1. Are young gay/bisexual men more likely to talk to their friends about HIV/AIDS prevention and safer sex?
2. Are young gay/bisexual men more likely to practice safer sex?
3. Are young gay/bisexual men more likely to know more about ways to eroticize safer sex?
4. Are young gay/bisexual men more able to negotiate safer sex?

Ultimately, the intended long-term outcome of the Mpowerment Project is to reduce the transmission of HIV among young gay / bisexual men. However, measuring HIV transmission rates among young gay / bisexual men and linking those measurements to the Mpowerment Project would require methods that are beyond the capacity of most community based organizations. Because of the extraordinary difficulties in conducting this sort of evaluation, we do not recommend attempting to link HIV



transmission rates to the work being conducted by the Mpowerment Project.

However, there are several ways to collect information that help you determine if the changes you see in young gay / bisexual men are, most likely, the result of the program. Some of the methods you can use include observation, individual interviews, focus groups, and self-administered spot surveys. These can help to measure the impact of your Project on young gay / bisexual men.

There are ways to determine if the changes you see are the result of the program.

There are some important issues to take into consideration when thinking about doing an outcome evaluation of the Mpowerment Project. The first issue is that the Mpowerment Project is comprised of a number of different components (informal outreach, formal outreach, publicity, M-groups, and the Project space). Together they create a synergy, in which the sum of all the activities cause a greater impact together than would occur if only single components of the program were implemented. Therefore, the overall program should be evaluated to determine its impact. But it may be very difficult to evaluate the overall program and instead you may need to evaluate only components of the program. Measuring the outcomes of some components of the program may be easier than others may be. It may be easier to assess the M-groups than the overall program. Yet we do not claim that the M-groups alone are what result in the overall effectiveness of the program.

To be able to examine the outcomes or impact of the overall program, you will be examining change that you can attribute to the Mpowerment Project, that is, that you can say was caused by the program. In order to do this, you will need to look at what is occurring among young gay / bisexual men in the community before you implement the program and after the intervention has been going for awhile. This is called pre- and post-intervention, although here “post” just means after the intervention has been implemented for awhile. It is also sometimes called the “baseline” and subsequent (or follow-up) evaluations. To look at “pre” (or baseline) intervention issues (e.g., behavior, attitudes, knowledge) you need to conduct the first assessments before you implement the program! So you really need to plan ahead. If you intend to conduct an outcome evaluation, then before you proceed in the program very far, you have to conduct an assessment of some sort. Then you will need to decide when you will do the post-intervention or subsequent assessments. These can be 6 months or one year or two years after the program starts, or simply periodically (e.g., every year). Be sure that enough intervention activities have been implemented and there has been enough time for the news of the program to filter through the community before conducting a post- or subsequent evaluation assessment. So you will then be examining the differences in whatever the thing you are measuring (behavior, knowledge, etc.) from one time to the next and assuming that change is from the impact of the program. We believe the Project is effective when all the components are implemented together.

The second issue is that to be able to examine the outcomes of a particular component of the Mpowerment Project, you could look at a shorter span of time and could do it when someone new enters into the project. For example, if you are going to evaluate the M-groups, you could evaluate the young men before they go to the groups and then at some point later. This would then be pre-intervention (pre-M-group) and post-intervention. In any case, whether you are conducting an outcome evaluation on the entire project or a component, decide how much time you need between the pre- and the post-test for the resulting data to be worthwhile.

There is a third issue that needs to be considered when trying to conduct an outcome evaluation. You are trying to say that a certain change (in sexual behavior or knowledge or attitudes) is due to the program's impact. However, it is possible that what causes change, or lack of change, is not related to the Project at all. For example, there could be a major news event or AIDS-related development that impacts the community. Therefore, it is optimal to look at another community that does not have the Mpowerment Project for a comparison (in scientific research, the other community without the program would be called the "control" or "comparison" community). You can't really look for a comparison within your community since this is a "community level" intervention—it tries to reach all men in the community. So there is no logical comparison group within the community itself. When we conducted the program in Albuquerque, we found that there were no statistically significant differences between pre- and post-intervention rates of unprotected anal sex. As you can imagine, this was very unsettling! But we then looked at two other communities that we had been studying, Austin and Phoenix, where we weren't implementing the program at the time. We found that during the same period we had been implementing the program in Albuquerque, there were huge increases in risky behavior happening in these other two "comparison" communities, where the intervention was not taking place. Similar reports started appearing in scientific literature and in the news, that there were huge increases occurring in unsafe sex among gay / bisexual men, and young gay / bisexual men in particular. So although the Mpowerment Project appeared at first to have had little impact in Albuquerque, we realized that indeed it had staved off huge increases in risky behavior that were occurring elsewhere. If we had not implemented the Mpowerment Project in Albuquerque, it too would likely to have had big increases in sexual risk behavior. Therefore, we could conclude that the program was indeed effective. We recognize that looking at another community when trying to evaluate your own program is a problem, since there is virtually no chance that community based organizations can afford the costs of looking at comparison communities. We raise this issue because we need to caution people that without a comparison community, you really cannot say with absolute certainty that the change you get—or lack of change—is all from the Project. Therefore, you need to be thoughtful about your evaluation approach.

Without a comparison community, interpreting the results from your outcome evaluation involves considerable guesswork. For example, let's say that you conduct a baseline assessment prior to starting your Project and you learn that 40% of the young gay men in your area report unprotected sex. Then, if you re-survey the community one year later (after implementing the Mpowerment Project) you learn that only 30% of the men surveyed engaged in risky sex. Can you conclude that your Project was a success? What if at your follow-up assessment, you had only been able to survey the most motivated men, and the highest-risk men just didn't return the surveys? Another scenario might be that at your follow-up assesment you discovered that 50% of the men reported risk. Does this mean that your Project was a failure? Not necessarily. What if you had just recently started new outreach activities that were attracting young men who practice more risky sex and this was all you had surveyed? They might not have had enough exposure yet to the program activities for it to affect their risk behavior. So, while it's possible to document behavior change in the community over time, it is NOT possible to conclude with total certainty if or how your Project contributed to (or failed to contribute to) the change.

We bring up all these issues because sometimes community based organizations feel that they need to do outcome evaluations, but don't think through the difficulties of doing them. As described below, we suggest emphasizing process measures more than outcome assesments.

Without a comparison community, interpreting the results of an outcome evaluation involves guesswork.

Use process evaluations to make sure that the Project is being implemented correctly.

A Note About Your Funders Regarding The Need For Outcome Evaluation

Through the use of very rigorous and costly scientific research, the Mpowerment Project has been shown to be effective at reducing the rates of unprotected anal sex (or holding them stable in the face of increasing trends) among young gay/bisexual men. The outcome evaluation methods that were used in conducting the research about the Mpowerment Project were far more comprehensive—and expensive—than any community based organization can do. We were able to observe comparison communities in our research, to study what trends were occurring in communities that did not implement the Mpowerment Project. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reviewed all the scientific studies on HIV prevention interventions that have been done to decide which approaches have "evidence of effectiveness." The CDC then wrote up a document called *The Compendium of HIV Interventions with Evidence of Effectiveness* in which they describe each intervention approach. The CDC suggests that health departments and community based organizations should consider implementing these programs when they want to use programs that are proven to work. At the time of this writing, the Mpowerment Project is the only program in the Compendium expressly for young gay/bisexual men.

Oftentimes, funders say that they want outcome evaluations to be conducted. We recognize that conducting an outcome evaluation of the overall program is difficult, especially considering the issue that the ideal evaluation is one in which you also assess a totally separate community that does not have the program. We would like to suggest that you consider discussing the need for outcome evaluation given the abundant evidence of the effectiveness of the Mpowerment Project and of the CDC's independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention. Instead, we feel that the most time and effort should be put into formative research to make sure that you appropriately tailor the program for your own community and then extensively use process evaluations to make sure that the program is being implemented with fidelity to the original intervention. In our conversations and research findings, many of them have expressed the view that they think this is the most reasonable approach to take.

The following table shows how process information can combine with short descriptive paragraphs to report Project events to your funders.

Outreach Event Name	Date	Attendance	Interest Sheets completed (for M-group & volunteer recruitment)	Safer-sex promotion/comments
Oscar Party	3-21-99	53	15	Condoms, lube, and written safer sex materials were placed in bowls throughout the house and were given to all men in attendance. White: 50%, Latino: 40%, African-American: 10%, Asian: 0%, Native American: 0%.
Spring Fling	4-18-99	120	91	Outreach team led tours of the house to promote the program. During the tour, the team spoke about safer sex practices and distributed condom and lube packs with safer sex tips at the end. White: 50%; African American: 10%; Latino: 30%; Asian: 10%; Native American: 0%.
Cinco de Mayo	5-5-99	45	18	Condoms, lube, and written safer sex materials were placed in bowls throughout the house and were given to all men in attendance. White: 50%; African American: 15%; Latino: 30%; Asian: 5%; Native American: 0.
Lava Luau	6-13-99	200	80	The outreach team handed out leis with safer sex kits attached, and spoke to the guys about the importance of safer sex. Kelly Kline (transgender celebrity) spoke about HIV, safe sex, and the need for gay men to support each other. White: 60%; African American: 5%; Latino: 35%, Asian: 0%; Native American: 0%.
Gay Games	8-1-99	120	69	Safer sex guidelines were announced and the "first date kits" containing condoms, lube, safer sex written materials were distributed. White: 60%; African American: 20%; Latino: 20%; Asian: 0%; Native American: 0%.
Hip Hop Party	8-28-99	98	10	Huge success. Better than I originally thought. People had an opportunity to see the house and meet the Coordinators. White: 60%; African American 17%; Latino 20%; Asian 20%; Native American: 0%.
Homecoming Dance	9-11-99	85	50	A singled out type skit was done with safer sex categories. White: 70%; African American: 5%; Latino: 25%; Asian 20%; Native American: 0%.
Diez y Seis Party	9-16-99	27	7	White: 50%; Latino: 50%. Event did not turn out as well as we had hoped due to problems in collaborating with another organization and exchanging info for flyers and materials. The attendees had fun and socialized well; the games we played (loteria and the piñata) helped to involve the guys and get them to interact. New guys were informed about AMP in conversations with Core Group members. Safer sex packets and promotional materials were distributed in the gift bags.

The idea is that if you are including all of the core elements and key characteristics of the program, then the program is being implemented with fidelity to the original design and should be effective. By "core elements," we mean Informal Outreach, Formal Outreach, Publicity, M-groups, Project Space, Core Group, Volunteers, Coordinators, and Community Advisory Board. By "key characteristics," we mean that the program follows the guiding principles: it diffuses the message through the community, is peer led and run, empowers young gay/bisexual men, and focuses on fun social activities as a means of reaching young men.

Communicate with your funders and explain to them why focusing on process evaluation in particular makes sense. You can show them the Mpowerment Project Logic Model (described below) and together decide on specific measures that both you and your funder would find acceptable. This approach gives you the opportunity to show your funders how the program builds upon itself and how you will eventually get to the point where you can measure early, intermediate and long term outcomes (if the long term outcomes are necessary to document).

You may also want to look at who you did NOT reach. How could you target them?

Determine clear goals and objectives!

The tools and methods provided in the appendix can be modified to suit your own needs, but keep keep the phrase above in mind. It is a very important rule and make it your "mantra" when creating or modifying existing evaluation tools.

To figure out clear goals and objectives, you must first understand the difference between goals and objectives. Goals are the big, overarching ideas to shoot for (reducing the frequency of unprotected anal sex among young gay/bisexual men, for example). Objectives are the small steps taken along the way that hopefully lead to fulfillment of the goals (implementing outreach events with safer sex promotional materials, for example). Goals are not always measurable. Objectives, on the other hand, are easier to measure.

Second, make sure the goals and objectives make sense. For example, if you are attempting to evaluate a one-time outreach event, it may not make the most sense to try and measure its impact in terms of long term behavior change, although that may be one of the goals for the Project. Instead, you may want to look at more process-related information, like when the outreach episode actually happened and to whom. You may also want to look at who you did not reach (What groups of young gay/bisexual men were not present to receive that outreach? How could you successfully target them?). You may want to look at how well the outreach episode was received, or how effective it was in advertising a particular upcoming event. What was the safer sex component of the activity or material like? Was the activity designed to help diffuse safer sex throughout the community of young gay/bisexual men? How did the outreach event help to empower Project volunteers? Was the event sex and gay positive? This is what we mean when we say that the goals and objectives of the evaluation must be clear and reasonable. In short, goals and objectives need to match the actions you are taking.

It is not uncommon to have grandiose goals and objective written because the organization thinks that this is what they ultimately want to accomplish or it is what the funders want to hear. For example, a goal could be "95% of the MSM involved in the Project will report reductions in unprotected anal sex among casual partners." Problems occur when trying to evaluate the program based on those enormous goals and objectives because these goals and objectives are unreasonable to achieve and difficult to measure. It is better to have small, readily measurable goals and objectives than sweeping, unrealistic goals and objectives that may sound good in theory or in a proposal you are submitting in response to a funding announcement (a Request for Proposals or "RFP"). For example, setting a goal to increase awareness of safer sex among young gay/bisexual men is fine when coupled with an objective to have at least one major outreach event each month. It should not be difficult to document if the events happened which makes the objective readily measurable. Remember that when it comes to goals and objectives, it is best to think small. Baby steps are good.

Also, be sure to develop a realistic plan to analyze the data you collect. Making sure that someone at your agency has the time to collect, organize, analyze, and draw conclusions from your evaluation is vital. It's often helpful to ask yourself how you will analyze the information from your survey, before you collect the data.

It is better to have small, measurable goals and objectives than sweeping, unrealistic ones.

Make sure that reflection is built into the process of evaluation

This phrase is your second "mantra" for you to add to the earlier one. In other words, make sure you think about what you want to measure, how you plan to measure it, why you want to measure it, and how you'll know if you achieved the desired outcome or not. Make sure that everything makes sense to you. Chances are, if what you seek to measure, how you plan to measure it, and how you'll interpret the results don't make sense, something is wrong and the evaluation process will be frustrating. Most likely, the information you get (or don't get) won't be very useful. Then once you collect the information, make sure to think about it, and use it. There are two major reasons for doing evaluations: for you and your agency's needs in thinking about the program, and for use in obtaining funding. Although obviously the second reason is important, the first reason—so that you can make good decisions about your programming, is of utmost importance. So don't simply collect information and use it on reports without reflecting upon it. It can tell you what is working well and what needs improvement.

The Mpowerment Project
Program Logic Model

A Way to See How Everything Fits Together

The Mpowerment Project weaves together many individuals to work on common goals using several different program components. Due to the complexity of the Project, there are many factors that can affect its success. In order to provide you with a visual tool that will help you see what activities should happen in the Project, when these activities might take place, and possible evaluations or checkpoints along the way, we have devised the Mpowerment Project Logic Model. This is basically a fancy term for a series of statements that link the activities that together form the intervention to the expected results or outcomes of these activities, which are then put into a chart so that you can more easily visualize them.

To become familiar with the chart, take a look at it now. Notice that along the side there are three different categories: Young Gay / Bisexual Men, Community, and the Implementing Agency, which is the organization that runs the Mpowerment Project. These categories represent the different areas where the Project hopes to achieve particular outcomes through conducting the various types of activities. For example, there are initial activities (what needs to be done to begin implementing the program), such as locating or identifying a space for the program. There are also early activities that must be done to move the Project into full action, such as convening a Core Group and developing a publicity plan. Once the program is established, intermediate activities help to get things up to speed, and then there are the on-going activities that occur while the program is fully implemented. The on-going activities include implementing the publicity plan, conducting outreach at community venues, running M-groups and so forth. After systems are in place to conduct these activities, the program can operate smoothly and efficiently.

In addition to initial, early, intermediate, and ongoing activities, there are also corresponding early, intermediate, and ongoing outcomes for your program to achieve. For example, an early program outcome is that individual young gay / bisexual men would begin hearing about the program and become interested in joining it. An intermediate outcome that is intended to result from intermediate activities would be that increased friendships would be formed, which is an aspect of community-building. Of course the program's prime long-term outcome is that the rates of unprotected anal sex will decrease.

On the Program Logic Model, directly next to each activity and outcome you will find a reference to a specific module where you can find out more about this activity. If the activity involves using an evaluation tool, you are directed to a figure in the appendix of this module where that tool is located along with helpful information concerning how to use the tool. We also indicate if the tool and method suggested is a formative, process or outcome evaluation.

Each level of the Mpowerment Project Program Logic Model builds upon the progress made when completing the earlier activities, as well as information collected while conducting evaluations. This process continues throughout the life of the Project until eventual measurement of long-term outcomes is possible. By laying out the initial, early, intermediate and on-going Project activities and early, intermediate and long-term outcomes in this manner, it becomes easier to see the Project in its entirety. Not only can the Mpowerment Project Logic Model help management, Coordinators, and volunteers to understand the Project more fully, it can be used as a tool to explain the Project to community stakeholders and prospective funders, and even to prospective Core Group members and volunteers.

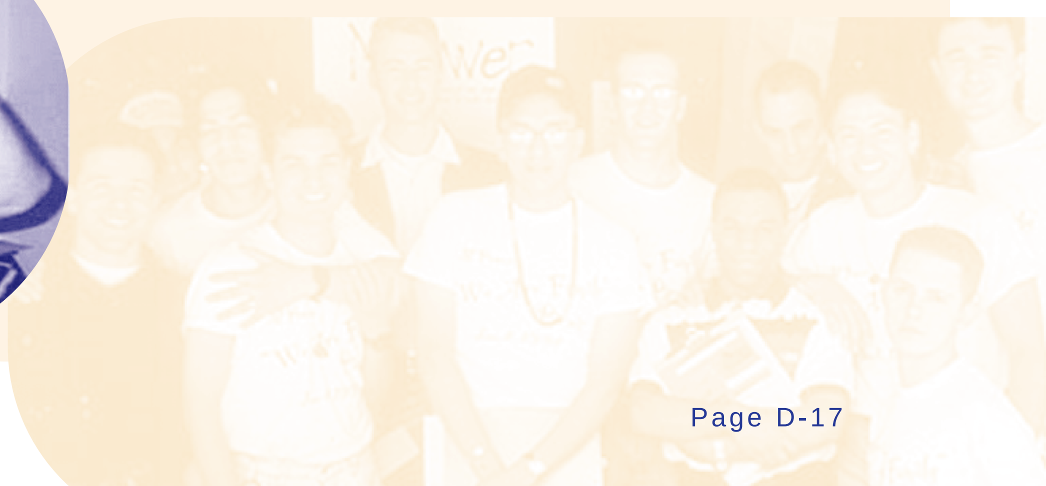
Keep in mind that part of your program evaluation will focus not just on what your program accomplishes, but how it achieves its effect. Successful programs will reflect the Mpowerment Project's guiding principles. These principles are the result of years of careful research, hands-on experience in many communities, prevention science, and experience. We have tried to incorporate each of these principles into the Logic Model's activities and outcomes, yet sometimes assessing the extent to which each principle is embodied into a program is an ambiguous task. Therefore, we urge each staff member and volunteer involved in setting the direction of the program to carefully reflect on each principle and ask himself if each finds full expression in the Project.

Your program evaluation will focus on what your program accomplishes and how it achieves its effect.

The following exhibit is a reminder of each of the Project's guiding principles:

Guiding principles

Peer-based	❊ Peer influence is very powerful ❊ The Mpowerment Project mobilizes peers to act as agents of change within their social networks
Diffusion of innovations	❊ Young gay/bisexual men talk with and encourage their friends to be safe ❊ They spread this message throughout the community ❊ A norm of safer sex is established and reinforced
Social focus	❊ Address young gay/bisexual men's social needs ❊ Link HIV prevention to fulfillment of these needs ❊ Infuse HIV prevention into all activities
Community-building	❊ Create healthy community ❊ Promote supportive friendship networks ❊ Disseminate a norm of safer sex throughout the community
Multi-level/ Multi-component	❊ Young gay/bisexual men engage in high-risk sex for a variety of reasons - individual factors (e.g. perception that safer sex is dull) - interpersonal factors (e.g. unable to negotiate safer sex with partner) - societal factors (e.g. lack of support for safer sex) - environmental factors (e.g. "risky" venues, no targeted programs for young gay/bisexual men) ❊ The Mpowerment Project operates at all these levels and addresses multiple predictors of risk
Sex- and gay-positive	❊ Enrich and strengthen young gay/bisexual men's sexual identity and pride in being gay/bisexual ❊ Eroticize safer sex – not just focused on condoms ❊ Images reflect diversity of the community
Empowerment	❊ Behavior change is most lasting when we're actively involved in creating and implementing solutions to our own problems ❊ Young gay/bisexual men are the decision makers of the Project ❊ It is their own Project



Four Evaluation Methods

Four evaluation methods that can be used at different phases of the intervention to assess various topics are: 1 spot interviews, 2 direct observation, 3 spot surveys and 4 focus groups. Not only can these evaluation methods work across different time points of the Project, they can also be used to gather different types of information regarding formative, process, and outcome evaluations. A general description of the four methods follows. Suggestions concerning when to use these different methods can be found in the Program Logic Model. Information concerning how to specifically use these methods can be found in the appendix.

Of course, it is not expected that you use each and every form of measurement suggested by the Program Logic Model to gauge the progress of your Project. You must decide what you want to measure and when, based on the needs of your community, your organization, and your funder. Again, ask yourself what you want to know. You might also try out different methods at different times. For instance, if you have satisfactorily demonstrated that your M-groups are achieving your desired outcome, maybe you could re-direct your evaluation resources to a different question at some point. It all depends what you want to know and the level of resources you have available at any given point in time. These tools and methods are suggestions and may be used and adapted according to the needs of your specific community and organization.

You must decide what you want to measure and when, based on the needs of your community, your organization, and your funder.

Spot Interviews

Spot interviews are brief interviews (10-15 minutes in duration are good) that are done "on the spot"— wherever you find young gay / bisexual men, such as at gay bars, cafes, gay student unions, gay organizations and so forth. Spot interviews could even be done with participants before or after a Core Group meeting or other Project activities. Spot interviews involve the collection of "qualitative" information. Qualitative means that words (as opposed to numbers) are used to draw conclusions. Organizing qualitative information (the words) by topic provides the needed information. For example, if through spot interviews you hear again and again that a certain coffee shop is a popular gathering spot for young gay / bisexual men, you would conclude that it is worthwhile to check and see if it would be a good place to conduct outreach for the Project.

Spot interviews can be incredibly useful throughout the Mpowerment Project. Project staff and the Core Group can use this information to make more informed decisions about the program to gauge the impact the Project is having or to create more effective programming. Spot interviews can be used for many different evaluation needs and can be used at any time to get quick input from the young men that the Mpowerment Project serves (or tries to serve). For example, spot interviews can provide reactions to potential names for the Project, suggestions for Project events and locations, ideas about how to make the Project space the most inviting to the community, or information about where to publicize Project activities. They can also help to gauge interest in proposed activities, to identify the various groups of young gay / bisexual men in the community, and to gain a deeper understanding of each group. They can also yield information about the needs of young men in your locale. Additionally, you can conduct brief interviews with young gay / bisexual men in your community to see how inviting and welcoming they perceive the Project to be, how gay / sex positive they think Project materials and activities are, whether or not they think the Project adequately addresses the needs of your diverse community, and reasons why young men may or may not participate in Project events.

Spot interviews are a great way to involve Core Group members and other Project volunteers in evaluation activities. As mentioned in Module 5, we often recommend that Core Group members interview their friends or guys they see in the community to gauge their level of interest for a large outreach event that has been suggested at a Core Group meeting. This way, you can get a better idea about how interested diverse segments of the community are in an event before you spend lots of time and money on organizing it. Plus, you get the added bonus of involving your volunteers in Project decision making—thus facilitating an empowerment process.

Spot interviews should be conducted in a relatively private place, such as at a corner of a bar, or at a table that is a distance away from other tables in a café or in a space in a bar or café where no one else can hear. This way, young men will feel free to say whatever they want to the interviewer without feeling embarrassed that others might overhear them. If the topic is of an extremely personal nature, however, such as about one's sexual behavior, then it is preferable to arrange to conduct these interviews in a more private place. Since spot interviews are short, one rarely would need to pay someone to answer a few questions.

It is critical that you interview diverse young gay / bisexual men in the community. For example, your interviews should include students and non-students, men of different ethnic / racial groups, social crowds, ages, and vocations. You should interview at least 20-35 young men to get a range of reactions on a topic. As long as you continue to hear new information or opinions, continue interviewing. Once you begin hearing much of the same information over and over, however, you can stop the interviewing process, providing you have interviewed a number of diverse young men.

When you approach a young man for an interview, explain its purpose. Remember not to refer to the Mpowerment Project as "an HIV prevention program." The Project is always described as a program to build community, and the HIV prevention aspects of the program are then woven into that framework. When you conduct this type of evaluation, you are also sparking interest and excitement in the Project.

Interviews should include men of different ethnic/racial groups, social crowds, ages, and vocations.

When conducting each interview, have a pen and paper ready so you can take notes. By writing down what the person says, you ensure that when the interview is over, you have an accurate, detailed record of what was said; this also demonstrates to the young man you are interviewing that you respect his opinions. Be careful not to make interviews too lengthy or else you can end up with too much information to be able to analyze.

To analyze spot interview "data"—these are the responses people give—you can create a running list of responses to the questions. Then after you have written down all the responses, you can classify them according to similarity of response. For example, if you are asking about "issues affecting young gay / bisexual men in my community," you would write down all the responses men gave to the question. You could then lump together the responses that are similar. Many men would be likely to give similar responses regarding a lack of places to gather to be with each other outside of a bar. Another category of responses might be about young men being uncaring at times towards each other. You could then count up how often the different categories arise in the responses to the questions, and how many men mention the different categories. Alternatively, you might want to classify responses by people groups. For example, you might want to see what kinds of questions come up for one ethnic group vs. another ethnic group of young gay/bisexual men to see if different or similar topics come up. Summarizing this kind of information can take a great deal of time, more than spot surveys for example. So, keep the interviews short. You don't want to collect so much information that you just won't have time to analyze it.

You should survey at least 20 - 35 young men to get a **range** of reactions on a topic.

Spot Surveys

Spot surveys are brief surveys also conducted "on the spot" like spot interviews. Again, they can be done whenever you find young gay/bisexual men, such as at gay bars, cafes, gay student unions, gay organizations and so forth. Spot surveys are questionnaires of one to two pages in length. Spot surveys can include questions about age, race or ethnicity; how the young men describe their sexuality (i.e., gay, straight, bisexual, or other); their sexual risk behavior; attitudes toward enjoyment of safer sex; feelings about the gay community; self-esteem; social support from gay/bisexual friends; how often they talk to their friends about safer sex; how often their friends talk to them about safer sex; whether or not they have seen Project materials and publicity—and if so, how attractive, appealing, and informative the materials and ads are; whether or not they have sufficient diversity; whether or not they provide reminders about the norm of safer sex in the community, and so forth. As with spot interviews, in spot surveys it is critical that you survey diverse young gay/bisexual men in the community. You should survey at least 20-35 young men to get a range of reactions on a topic. The more men you can get to complete the surveys, the better—as long as you have the resources to look at the data from large numbers of surveys.

You might also try conducting spot surveys to assess "customer" satisfaction with a variety of program activities. For example, you could prepare a brief survey to give to Core Group members periodically asking them if they think the Core Group is the right size to carry out Project activities; if they are empowered to make important Project decisions; if they critically reflect on the decisions they make; if they represent the diversity of the community; if they meet frequently enough or too frequently; if the committee structure is effective; if the meetings are fun, productive, and social; if they prioritize HIV prevention throughout the course of the Project; and if they engage in informal outreach with their peers—encouraging each other to be safe.

You might survey men who come through the Project space to see if the space: is safe, accessible, comfortable and appealing; promotes safer sex; has condoms readily available; is decorated in an appealing manner for young gay/bisexual men.

Young gay men in the larger community as well as those who attend large outreach events can be asked about how welcome they feel at the events; whether or not the events provide social opportunities for young gay/bisexual men; how effectively safer sex messages were promoted at the event; to what extent they think that their behavior might be affected by the event or activity; if the events/activities are fun and appealing; how motivated they are to get more involved in the Project because of the event; how effective they think the event was at attracting new and diverse groups of young men into the Project; how empowering the events are for young gay/bisexual men; to what extent the event created a sense of community, encouraged the development of friendships, and facilitated supportive interactions among young gay/bisexual men; how appealing and informative the safer sex materials were. Of course, you probably wouldn't want to include all of these questions on a spot survey, nor would you want to do an extensive evaluation of every event—the guys are coming to the event to have fun, not to fill out surveys—so be selective in your questions and the frequency of such evaluations.

Spot surveys are used to collect "quantitative" information. Quantitative means that numbers, as opposed to words, are used to draw conclusions about the questions that are asked. For example, you can determine average response to certain questions, or see if the average response for some groups is different than for others groups (averages are sometimes called "means"). Some people may shy away from questionnaires that involve using numbers to reach conclusions, but numbers can often be easier to manage than words because they can be simpler to summarize. Quantitative information (numbers) can be analyzed using a relatively simple data base software program on a computer (for example, Microsoft Excel). Alternatively, the information you collect can be given to others to analyze, such as an evaluation specialist or a university student or professor interested in providing technical assistance.

Observation

Observation (sometimes called "participant observation") is just what it sounds like: you go out and watch what is happening in your community. Coordinators, Project supervisors and managers, Core Group members and other Project volunteers can go out into the community and notice where young men congregate, what they do, and with whom they socialize. By observing and discreetly taking notes, they can begin to understand young gay/bisexual men's lives in a way that will help them plan Mpowerment Project activities, recruit participants, and forge useful alliances. For example, you can use it when trying to determine what groups of young men hang out at various places such as a particular bar or café or who attends various community events. You might notice, for example, that men of some racial/ethnic groups do not attend gay community events or that young men do not attend particular bars. The thing that makes this different from just watching men is that you do it systematically. You make sure to watch at different times, not just when you happen to go somewhere. Or you make sure to go to all the potential places, not just the ones you personally like.

When an organization is conducting outreach with gay/bisexual men, it can be extremely informative to notice how young gay/bisexual men respond to these outreach efforts. For instance, in the past, we have observed that when a lesbian and gay student union sets up a booth at a university-wide function, many students go out of their way to avoid the booth so as not to be seen expressing interest in it by fellow students. This observational research will help you decide at what events you may or may not want to promote the Mpowerment Project. If you observe that young gay/bisexual men avoid gay-related booths in mainstream environments, for instance, you would likely conclude that this would not be a productive way to promote the Project. Similarly, you can use observation extensively in conducting process evaluation for the Mpowerment Project. You can have someone discreetly observe when your outreach activities are occurring, watching for reactions among other observers of the outreach activities.

Making observations as systematic as possible is both helpful and important. Therefore it is important to take notes (unobtrusively), observe numerous different people, watch over a period of time or at different times, and so forth.

Observation is just what it sounds like: you go out and watch what is happening in your community, but you do this systematically.

Focus Groups

An additional way of gathering information on topics of relevance to your Project is through the use of focus groups. A focus group is a discussion among a carefully selected group of people that explores a specific topic. It is usually guided or facilitated by a trained moderator. Focus groups are most suitable for topics that become clearer through group discussion and the reflection it generates. They often work well when trying to get individuals to express widely held beliefs or practices, or you want to see how young men react to others' thoughts and feelings on a topic. For example, if you wanted to know what young gay/bisexual men thought about advances in HIV treatment and how this affects their decision making processes about safer sex, you could convene a focus group. The group discussion could help inform subsequent community forums.

Focus groups are good at generating preliminary information quickly. You can conduct four two-hour focus groups of ten individuals in each group in two days. By comparison, it would be difficult to hold 40 two-hour interviews in the same amount of time. On the other hand, it does take effort to locate 40 individuals willing to participate in focus groups, and it may be necessary to pay people to participate in two-hour groups.

In addition to generating information during initial planning, focus groups can provide ongoing feedback that will help you avoid failures and come up with successful approaches. They can be used to develop new materials such as questionnaires, flyers, and advertisements, or to plan events. They can help you to formulate better questions for your future interviews and surveys by seeing how many men respond to them. By asking focus group participants about how they interpret survey items and how they feel about various issues, they are also a good resource to help you interpret your program's evaluation results. If your evaluation shows that you are missing important segments of the population, a focus group with members of that community can tell you why. Additionally, focus groups of community experts might also provide an interesting perspective. Listening to a group of young gay/bisexual men talk will teach you about the language they use, and may provide insight into what things they believe contribute to or prevent them from enjoying satisfying social lives. Inevitably, focus groups will provide clues to more effective ways of attracting young gay/bisexual men to Mpowerment Project events.

It is important to think through if you should do individual spot interviews or focus group to get at the information you are trying to determine *(see box)*. Keep in mind that it is possible to explore the same topic using both focus groups and individual interviews. Sometimes you will get a more complete picture by using both approaches.

Focus Groups or Individual Interviews?

1. Is the topic one that is not especially sensitive or personal, and so lends itself to group discussion or is the topic one that you will learn more by having people privately consider and answer the question?
2. Do you want to learn about commonly held beliefs in the community (which is what usually is expressed in focus groups) or do you particularly want to hear about opinions that people may be reluctant to express in a group setting?
3. Is a focused discussion on the topic likely to yield better information than one-on-one interviews?
4. Does the topic involve discussing information that is personal or highly sensitive?
5. Are the people you want to speak with likely to be willing and able to attend a group and do you have the ability to organize a focus group of 8-10 young men fairly quickly?
6. Can the topic be covered in the relatively brief time of a spot interview?
7. Can you organize enough interviews to get a sufficient number of responses in the time available?
8. Do you have space for the focus groups?
9. Can the data from the focus group be summarized and analyzed within your budget?

An important question to ask is who should participate in a particular focus group. Each time you form a focus group, you will need to define the personal characteristics you are seeking in potential participants. For example, in discussing factors that contribute to or detract from a satisfying social life, things such as what crowds guys hang out with, ethnicity, and being out of the closet may matter. You must use your instincts and any data that you already have to determine how to compose a group that will speak freely and offer new and possibly diverse opinions on a topic.

The moderator is the group's host, guide, and timekeeper. You can hire a trained moderator—or better yet, get a professional from the gay/lesbian community to volunteer his or her time (if it is a sensitive topic, it might be best to have a gay man be the moderator). Or you can train a staff member. No matter which arrangement you make, because the moderator's role is a challenging one, select a skillful person to facilitate the group.

The moderator must feel comfortable leading the group, be a good listener, and readily pick up on verbal and nonverbal cues. He must understand that his role is to solicit information from the group rather than to give it. He must be able to manage people who dominate the conversation and draw out those who tend to hang back. While the moderator must be comfortable with the topic and the participants, he must also be able to probe for a deeper understanding of the topic. The moderator needs to ask clarifying questions and make clarifying statements in order to make explicit any points that may be understood by the group but have not been voiced directly. Say things like "so what I hear you saying is…(then include a statement that best fits the situation). Is that right?" or "It sounds like you're saying (then include a statement that best fits the situation). Is that correct?" This is for the benefit of others who, later on, may listen to the tapes if you record the group or read the transcripts if you hire someone to type up the tapes. Often it is helpful to have two moderators since they can assist each other if the discussion bogs down at any point, and they can work together to draw out information in the discussion.

Before you conduct a focus group, it is important to consider all the topics that you want to cover in the group. Then for each topic, write up some questions that would be helpful to ask regarding that topic. This is the focus group guide. It is often most helpful to limit the number of topics to cover, but to have plenty of questions written down on each topic. A detailed focus group guide helps ensure that the discussion goes deeper on a topic rather than staying superficial, which can happen if there are too many different topics to cover. If you have too many topics to cover, it would be better to organize an additional focus group rather than have a focus group talk superficially about many topics.

> In attempting to document changes in sexual risk taking behavior that might be attributable to the Mpowerment Project, you must first document these behaviors BEFORE the Project is up and running.

When to Conduct Evaluations: Once or More Often Over Time

If you desire to assess change that might be caused by the Mpowerment Project, you need to conduct assessments at different points of time—before the program has been implemented and later. As discussed in the section about outcome evaluation, we urge you to measure the sexual risk-taking behaviors among the young gay/bisexual men in the community before the Project is up and running if you will be trying to document the effects that the intervention has had on young gay men's sexual risk behavior. Without measuring the sexual risk-taking behaviors of young gay/bisexual men before the Project has been implemented, there can be no way of documenting changes in the sexual risk-taking behaviors of the young gay/bisexual men in the community over time. Again, keep in mind though that without a comparison community, your ability to attribute any behavioral changes to your program is extremely limited. The Program Logic Model suggests several times when conducting spot surveys would be appropriate. The appendix lists the specific tools and methods to follow when conducting spot surveys. Similarly, if you want to evaluate the M-groups, which is the easiest component of the program to assess, you will want to conduct pre- and post-M-group assessments.