Good Practice and Resource Guide

Community Needs Assessments

Community Needs Assessments and Service Evaluations in Military Family Resource Centres

Canada

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MILITARY FAMILY SERVICES PROGRAM

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A Division of the Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency

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Acknowledgements

The Director of Military Family Services (DMFS) is pleased to present this good practice and resource guide on community needs assessments and service evaluations in Military Family Resource Centres.

We recognize and thank the members of the project advisory committee and the people in MFRCs across Canada who provided valuable input into what and what would not be helpful to include in the guide. We did our best to incorporate these suggestions. Thank you to all those who took the time to speak with us!

The guide was put together by the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services (CREHS), a non-profit, social research organization located in Kitchener, Ontario (www.crehs.on.ca). CREHS has had over 20 years of experience conducting evaluation and needs assessment with organizations and community groups in a way that is both participatory and action-oriented. The guide draws from these experiences and from CREHS' own Evaluation Handbook that was developed together with the Ontario Community Support Association.

Introduction

Why this Guide?

The Directorate of Military Family Services (DMFS) initiated the guide to help Boards of Directors and Advisory Committee members, staff and volunteers of Canadian/Military Family Resource Centres (C/MFRCs) to conduct community needs assessments and evaluations of services within Canadian Forces communities. Generally, it is the MFRC Board or CMFRC Advisory Committee that determines a specific research project (community needs assessment or service evaluation) and establishes terms of reference for the research steering committee.

Needs assessments and evaluations are ongoing activities of C/MFRCs. This guide is a tool to help you through the process as you develop, monitor, evaluate and shape services within your C/MFRC to be responsive to your community. It also helps C/MFRCs meet Department of National Defence (DND) research expectations and be accountable to DMFS, their primary funder.

Because a guide is only useful if it resonates with the people who use it, the development of this guide acknowledged the distinctive culture of the Canadian Forces in general and of Military Family Resource Centres in particular through two strategies.

An advisory group guided the project, giving their ideas about what the guide should look like – the content to include, the style in which it should be written, ideas for how it could be most useful, etc. The advisory group consisted of people who represent different perspectives within the Military Family Services Program (MFSP), including staff and board members of MFRCs, a researcher connected with DMFS, DMFS staff and a representative from Director Human Resources Research and Evaluation (DHRRE) (See Appendix B).

Second, five telephone interviews with staff and board members of diverse MFRCs were held. (See Appendix C). The purpose of these interviews was to understand what type of guide would best meet the needs of C/MFRC staff, board and advisory committee members, and to learn about existing needs assessments and evaluation "best practices" in MFRCs. There are several MFRC stories throughout the guide. These stories are included to provide concrete examples of evaluation and community needs assessment experiences from peers across Canada.

The guide is *not* intended to be an exhaustive overview of evaluation and needs assessment. There are many good, detailed and generic evaluation and needs assessment resources available for community groups today and there is no need to reinvent them. This relatively short guide outlines a participatory action research framework that Canadian/Military Family Resource Centres can apply and shape to fit their own unique needs.

However, this guide makes frequent reference to two companion evaluation resources. Using these two additional resources will give you a fuller understanding of how to carry out your service evaluations and needs assessments. In particular, these resources will provide more detailed information about choosing and designing research tools, and analyzing data. These companion guides are:

Finding Our Way: A Participatory Evaluation Method for Family Resource Programs / Une methode d'evaluation participative pour les programmes de resources pour la famille (1998). Diana Ellis, Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada).

Keeping on Track: An Evaluation Guide for Community Groups / Maintenir le cap: guide d'évaluation pour les groupes communautaires (1990). Diana Ellis, Gayla Reid, and Jan Barnsley, The Women's Research Centre.

How is this Guide Organized?

The guide is organized into four main sections. These sections coincide with the four phases of a participatory action research approach. These include:

Phase 1 – Laying the Foundation
Phase 2 – Planning the Needs Assessment/Evaluation
Phase 3 – Gathering and Analyzing Information
Phase 4 – Acting on Findings

Each phase has a number of steps that should be completed before moving on to the next phase. There are a total of 11 steps over the four phases, presented as a cycle. (See Appendix A for an overview of the steps and the tasks within each step.) Please note that the 11 steps of this guide do not correspond to the numbered steps of the companion guide, *Finding Our Way*.

Each step answers the following questions:

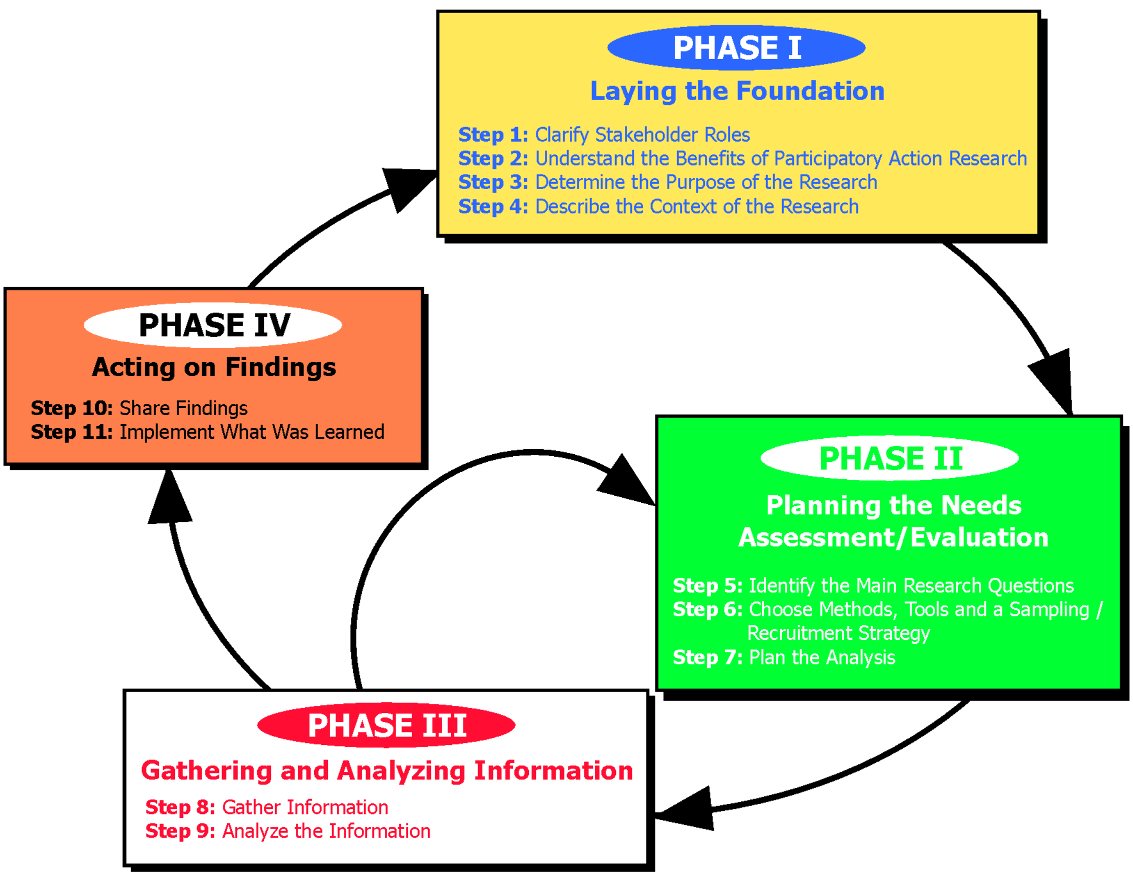
What does this step mean?
- offers a general overview of what the step entails and what it tries to achieve

What lies ahead?
- lists concrete activities to complete the step

How to apply this step in the C/MFRC?
- gives specific suggestions to help you complete the step within your C/MFRC

Throughout the guide, information is given about where to find further information about a topic in the companion resources. As well, stories from MFRCs highlight how they have met particular challenges. By including them, C/MFRCs can learn from each other.

The final section of the guide includes things to consider if the C/MFRC chooses to hire an external consultant to help with the evaluation and/or needs assessment work.



Based on: Taylor, A.R., & Botschner, J.V. (1998). Ontario Community Support Association: Evaluation Handbook. Kitchener, ON: Centre for Research and Education in Human Services. www.crehs.on.ca .

Why Do Needs Assessment and Evaluation?

Every day we gather information that helps us make decisions in our daily lives. This is a kind of research. It could be as simple as looking at your car's gas gauge and noticing that it is near empty, noting where you are in the city relative to your destination, double-checking your day timer to see when your next appointment is and glancing at your watch to see exactly what time it is now. Once considered together (analyzed), these four pieces of information can help you decide whether it is best to change your existing plans and fill up with gas, or to carry on as originally planned.

As people who offer services to community members, you too need to gather and analyze information to help you know what you should do next. Gathering this information and analyzing it in a planned and structured way is formal research. While there are many types of formal research, the type in this guide falls under the category of applied research. Applied research gathers and analyzes information in order to help address real life issues and problems. Community needs assessment and service evaluation are two examples of applied research.

As the name suggests, **community needs assessments** gather information to learn about the main issues that people face within a community. The purpose is to understand the challenges people experience in order to get a sense of what might address these challenges, or to determine the extent to which community members expect to use already existing services. Sometimes needs assessments also consider the resources already available through other groups and organizations within a community, so as to build on these strengths and not duplicate services. Needs assessments are the "front end" of research in community settings, helping to check assumptions before planning services. A needs assessment is an exploratory journey that assists people to create and tailor services and supports that make sense within their unique community context.

Service evaluation is another example of applied research. Service evaluation is a systematic approach to asking and answering questions about services provided (as opposed to other types of "evaluations" a C/MFRC might do such as board self-evaluations, evaluations of internal operations, employee performance appraisals, etc). Although service evaluation follows a set of steps, it is not a rigid, structured process. Instead it is about a set of activities, "methods, skills and sensitivities"[1] that are "partly social, partly political and only partly technical."[2]

Evaluation research can be very extensive and complex but it doesn't have to be. The ability to ask some basic but important questions can help you either conduct an evaluation of your own, or more effectively hire and manage someone who is conducting an evaluation for you. Even small-scale evaluations that are well-designed and carefully carried out can help you make better management decisions, ensure the continued support of funders, donors and volunteers, and optimize the quality of the service that you offer to program participants.

C/MFRCs undertake community needs assessments and service evaluations for the same reasons as other family and community-serving organizations.

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1. Posavac, E.J., & Carey, R.G. (1989). *Service evaluation: Methods and case studies*. Third Ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, p. 3
2. Herman, J.L., Morris, L.L., & Fitz-Gibbon, C.T. (1987). *Evaluator's handbook*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, p. 11

Main reasons people do community needs assessments[3]

1. to inform service planning

Planning involves making priorities. A needs assessment gives planners the information they need to prioritize the types of services to offer in a community. In this way, information from a needs assessment helps match services with needs – needs that are demonstrated to be real and not just those based on intuition or assumptions, or that happen to be a current issue.

2. to increase accountability

Funding bodies want to know if what they are funding is worthwhile. Needs assessments help establish that dollars are being spent where they are needed most. This is particularly important during times of limited resources.

3. to highlight the opinions of community residents

A needs assessment promotes citizen participation. It allows people within communities to give their opinion on the community's current situation and on what they would like it to be in the future. Community members have direct input in suggesting the types of supports they think are needed. Needs assessment also gives equal weight to people's voices. Too often it is only "the squeaky wheel that gets the grease." The systematic research of needs assessments gives all citizens equal opportunity to express their opinions.

Main reasons people do service evaluations

1. to be accountable to various stakeholders

These days, many funding bodies require grant recipients to be accountable for the funds they receive. A Centre's agreement with a particular funding body may require that you justify the provision of services, or assess the services you offer according to various standards or criteria. In particular, the Centre needs to demonstrate that MFSP-mandated services comply with the evaluation expectations of DMFS.

Service evaluations also demonstrate to all stakeholders that the services offered are worthwhile. Some of the most widely-used methods of evaluation research can help you make these kinds of judgements.

2. to plan and improve services

Information about what your services achieve (outcomes) can be used to make sure that the services are operating as planned. Collecting information about how the program operates (processes) can help to "fine-tune" established services. Information about anticipated changes in participants' needs can help with long-range planning and build support for program changes among stakeholders. Finally, ongoing commitment to

3. Edmonton Social Planning Council (1993). *Doing it right!: A needs assessment workbook*

collecting evaluation information can help staff to participate in a process of continuous learning. As a community changes, the Centre and its services also need to change and adapt. Thus, evaluation makes sense as a tool to help effectively plan and improve services.

3. to market a service

Evaluation can help the Centre capture ways it is successful. This can be a useful marketing tool to reach out to more community residents in need, and to try to attract new volunteers and donors. People are more likely to use and support services when the effectiveness of the services is clearly documented.

What Are the General Expectations for Doing Needs Assessments and Service Evaluations?

Director Military Family Services (DMFS) and Director Human Resources Research and Evaluation (DHRRE) have three general expectations of C/MFRCs as related to community needs assessment and service evaluations. Specific expectations are included in the appropriate sections later on in the guide. The general expectations listed below give insight into the participatory way research is to be carried out. They also outline how the research findings support application for public funds provided through DMFS, and how to comply with DND expectations about when and how research is conducted.

Keep in mind that, in part, the community context determines how these research expectations are met. In addition, DHRRE and DMFS periodically review their own requirements related to conducting and reporting on research, and may give further guidance.

1. to follow *MFSP: Parameters for Practice*

MFSP: Parameters for Practice contains a philosophical framework that supports community development and a participatory approach. This framework relates to the work of C/MFRCs in general and also applies to how Centres do research.

MFSP principles recognize “the inherent resources, skills and capacities of Canadian Forces families.” MFSP goals and the community development approach include the expectation that C/MFRCs will promote the involvement of community members in all aspects of their operations, including the identification of community needs and strengths, and the evaluation of services.

Parameters for Practice discusses the rationale for undertaking needs assessments and service evaluations, and notes that C/MFRCs may use a variety of methodologies. It also contains service policies for all MFSP-mandated services, including goals, objectives and indicators for each service component. These should be reviewed when planning your needs assessments and service evaluations (See Step 3). DMFS will provide specific guidance concerning how evaluation data on selected service indicators should be collected and reported on.

As part of the funding application process outlined in *Parameters for Practice*, C/MFRCs are expected to indicate how the activities they intend to provide reflect the findings of their community needs assessments and how the proposed activities reflect the findings of their service evaluations.

2. to follow the Memorandum of Understanding or Service Level Agreement

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between each MFRC and the Department of National Defence has several general provisions that relate to community needs assessments and service evaluations.

In accordance with the MFSP philosophical framework, it is expected that MFRCs will facilitate the participation and input of members of the Canadian Forces community in the identification of community needs and resources, and the evaluation of MFRC services. MFRCs are also expected to conduct community needs assessments at least every three years and undertake periodic service evaluations. The Service Level Agreement (SLA) with CMFRCs outside Canada contains similar provisions.

The MOU/SLA also requires C/MFRCs to assess opportunities for partnerships and make efforts to cooperate with other local agencies and community service providers to avoid duplication of services. As a result, an assessment of existing community supports and resources should form part of the needs assessment process.

Access to a reasonably complete and accurate nominal roll significantly impacts on the ability of the C/MFRC to use some research methodologies, such as a community survey. Accordingly, the MOU and SLA state that the local Commanding Officer will provide the C/MFRC with an up-to-date nominal roll of all Canadian Forces members following the active posting season and will update this information as required for off-season postings and any significant deployments.[4]

3. to submit research plans to DMFS as required and to follow this Guide

As part of applications for funding, C/MFRCs are required to submit to DMFS a template outlining annual plans for needs assessments and service evaluations. (The template is provided in the MFSP Funding Application and the accompanying Guide provides instructions for completing it.)

These annual plans should clearly indicate whether the C/MFRC intends to conduct a survey (i.e. a questionnaire that is mailed to CF families or administered by phone) targeted to all or a significant portion of the CF community, and/or research focused on a specific deployment. If this is the case, a detailed research plan must be submitted through DMFS to Director Human Resources Research and Evaluation (DHRRE) for review as required by CANFORGEN 145/02 ADMHRMIL 079 UNCLASS DEC 02. The process to submit proposed research plans for approval is described in Appendix D; the form that must be submitted with the research tool(s) is provided as Appendix E. These research plans and tools must be approved by DHRRE, the Base/Wing Commander, and in the case of deployment-related research, the unit commander. The

4. See CANFORGEN 098/00 ADMHRMIL Aug 00

recommendations in this guide will assist C/MFRCs to plan research directed to CF families that is acceptable to DHRRE and that provides useful information for C/MFRC service planning and evaluation.

If your C/MFRC wishes to undertake research for purposes other than service planning and evaluation, or is approached by third parties (such as students or academics) who wish to undertake research, the C/MFRC must contact DHRRE through DMFS for further guidance.

C/MFRCs should not conduct research with CF members and their families on the issue of family violence, given the sensitivities associated with this issue and the complexities of conducting the research. To assess needs and evaluate their services in this area, C/MFRCs may approach other community service providers, such as social workers, chaplains, military police and emergency housing providers.

Summary of expectations

Since the inception of the MFSP in 1991, C/MFRCs have been expected to do community needs assessments and to evaluate their services. However, there was limited guidance given to C/MFRCs as to how they could go about doing needs assessments and service evaluations. In particular, what was missing were suggestions about how to do evaluation and needs assessment in ways that encourage community participation and input, while complying with DND research standards.

As well, C/MFRCs are now responsible for determining which MFSP-mandated services are required in their communities, and what activities should be offered to meet MFSP service objectives. Thorough community needs assessment will provide answers to these questions.

This guide details how C/MFRCs can go about doing needs assessment and service evaluation in a participatory and action-oriented way, and in a way that meets DND research standards. The guide also assists C/MFRCs to demonstrate accountability for public funds by assessing the need for services and evaluating service outcomes.

Specific MFSP expectations for evaluation and community needs assessments will change over time. Stay in contact with DMFS regional staff to be kept up-to-date on changes that may affect your Centre’s research.

Phase I

Laying the Foundation

The first phase in this eleven-step process includes Steps 1 through 4. These steps explain how to begin to focus on and get organized for a community needs assessment and/or a service evaluation. Although people frequently miss or rush through Steps 1 to 4, they are critical to laying the foundation for successful work.

In some cases, the order of these steps may need to be changed so that they fit with the Centre's context. For example, the MFRC Board of Directors or CMFRC Advisory Committee may play the main role in determining the purpose of the research (Step 3), which would in part determine the makeup of the steering committee (Step 1).

The following steps are included in Phase I:
Step 1: Clarify Stakeholder Roles
Step 2: Understand the Benefits of Participatory Action Research
Step 3: Determine the Purpose of the Research
Step 4: Describe the Context of the Research

STEP 1

Clarify Stakeholder Roles

What does this step mean?

Step 1 helps you to decide who should be involved in an evaluation or needs assessment and what role they should play.

The heart of this step and key to participatory research is to set up a research steering committee made up of representatives from all of the groups involved with the services you are focusing on (e.g., staff, program participants, board/advisory committee members). This stakeholder committee is what distinguishes a participatory evaluation/ needs assessment from one based on the perspective of an individual. Input and guidance from participants enhance the perceived (and real) trustworthiness of research, improve the likelihood of buy-in from those involved, and increase the likelihood that research findings will be used to generate positive change within the organization or community. It's a concrete way to ensure that evaluation/needs assessment is something you do *with* people, rather than "for" or "to" them.

Encouraging stakeholders to get involved in an evaluation/needs assessment project has two main benefits. First, stakeholders feel empowered. By encouraging their participation, people feel that their unique perspective is heard, identified and understood. They are also more likely to feel that they can have an impact on the life of their community as they contribute their knowledge,

The importance of clarifying stakeholder roles is further reinforced when you consider the high turnover rate of staff, board/advisory committee members and other volunteers in C/MFRCs due to postings and other factors. It is important for all stakeholders to have the same understanding of the research process and of the importance of their participation in the research. Without this common understanding it can be very difficult to move the evaluation or needs assessment forward.

The Kingston MFRC highlights this point: *"Our experience has been that the lack of continuity with Executive Directors and the Board of Directors at the MFRC has made evaluations and needs assessments very difficult to carry out. Just when we decide to do it one way and the staff starts to implement the work, there is a change in the ED or in the Board, and the way to do evaluation and needs assessment changes. This is because each person has their own way of doing this work or their own approach to it."*

Thus, each MFRC Board/CMFRC Advisory Committee may want to develop a policy on how the Centre conducts needs assessments and evaluations so that there is continuity in the approach.

skills and abilities. Second, involving stakeholders mobilizes support for the evaluation/needs assessment. Having a real say in the process of planning and carrying it out strengthens stakeholder commitment to do something with the research findings. Building ownership for the evaluation/needs assessment may also strengthen commitment to the C/MFRC and to the community.

The MFRC Board/CMFRC Advisory Committee should establish terms of reference for the research steering committee and may also want to determine the focus of the research (see Step 3). Since needs assessment and evaluation are ongoing activities of the Centre, consider whether the research committee should be a standing committee (permanent), with some members changing according to the research project(s) being undertaken. It might make sense for the steering committee to guide both needs assessments and evaluations since there can be overlap between these two types of research (e.g., questions in a community survey could evaluate existing services as well as explore unmet needs). Alternatively, each needs assessment and evaluation could be seen as a stand-alone project, with membership on the committee determined at the start of each project.

What lies ahead?

1. Identify the groups with a stake in the service(s) and in its (their) evaluation/needs assessment
2. Invite representatives from identified stakeholder groups to form a research steering committee
3. Build a common understanding of expectations among steering committee members
4. Ensure that steering committee meetings are accessible to all members
5. Ensure that every steering committee member has an equal voice
6. Build buy-in from stakeholders and steering committee members

How to apply this step in the C/MFRC?

1. **Identify the groups with a stake in the service(s) and in its (their) evaluation/needs assessment**
   - Take into account the multiple groups involved in both providing and using the service(s) (e.g., staff, volunteers, Canadian Forces members, civilian spouses, children, other community members, board or advisory committee members, staff and members of other organizations who do similar work).
   - Consider whether you need to include representation from more than one language group in the community.
   - When doing community needs assessments, consider whether to involve PSP (Personnel Support Program) Community Recreation staff, since their services complement those offered by MFRCs.

See also:

- "Evaluation using a participatory method." *Finding Our Way*, p. 7
- "Who should be involved." *Finding Our Way*, p. 27-28

2. **Invite representatives from identified stakeholder groups to form a research steering committee**
   - Once a committee forms, brainstorm about who else should be at the table. (e.g., Who isn't here and why not?)
   - Identify a committee member to be responsible for reporting the committee's progress to the MFRC Board of Directors/CMFRC Advisory Committee (usually this is the committee chairperson).

See also:
- "Decide who should be involved in the evaluation." *Keeping on Track*, p. 11

3. **Build a common understanding of expectations among steering committee members**
   - Be explicit about the time commitment required, the committee members' roles and level of participation, as well as the specific activities they will engage in.
   - Build a shared sense of purpose between all committee members. Ask "Why are we here?"
   - Develop mutual understanding, respect and trust in each member's ability, regardless of their previous experience on committees or with evaluation/needs assessment.

See also:
- "Negotiating for an evaluation method." *Keeping on Track*, p. 14-18
- "Evaluation committee terms of reference." *Finding Our Way*, p. 85-86

4. **Ensure that steering committee meetings are accessible to all members**
   - Think about the time you are holding meetings. Can all members attend? Is it during times when some members have other work commitments?
   - Is child care offered if required?
   - Are meetings held in a location that is easy to access for all members via public transit routes or through car-pooling?
   - Are meetings of a reasonable length?
   - Is the language used during the meeting clearly understood by all committee members? Some committees may need to accommodate English and French speakers. Also, keep in mind that jargon alienates those who are unfamiliar with it, restricts their full participation in the meeting, and may cause feelings of not being good enough or smart enough to take part.

5. **Ensure that every steering committee member has an equal voice**
   - Note that rather than being a discrete step, this is an ongoing part of the research process.
   - Make a conscious effort to decrease power differences between staff, board/advisory committee members and volunteers, Canadian Forces personnel and civilians, youth and adults. Give each committee member a chance to speak and be listened to.

- Ensure that each member on the steering committee is *actively involved* in the work of the committee. For example, having youth on the committee who are not asked to carry out tasks and not asked for their input is merely having youth present, not participating and involved.
- Listen to committee members' stories and experiences. Recognize them as valid contributions to the committee's work. Remember that a young person's perspective is just as important as that of a CF member.
- Provide training and support for members who have less experience or are more vulnerable. Take the time to do this well. This helps build trust and buy-in from the committee members.
- Develop ground rules for how the steering committee will function:
  - How will we make decisions?
  - What will be our basic method of work?
  - How will we raise and discuss concerns in a respectful manner?
  - How will we handle differences?
  - How can we ensure that work gets done?
  - How will we change things that are not working effectively?

6. Build buy-in from stakeholders and research steering committee members

- Prepare for potential resistance to the initiation of the research process. Talk about why evaluation/ needs assessment is important to the work of the Centre. How might the evaluation/needs assessment findings be used? How might the research findings benefit those involved in the Centre's work?
- It is also helpful to discuss and anticipate any resistance that might lie ahead. How will the research impact staff workload? Are there any concerns about confidentiality? Is there defensiveness about how things are currently done and/or willingness to be open to change?
- Research steering committee members are the ambassadors for the research process. The committee will revisit the issues around the importance of evaluation and needs assessment many times during the course of the work. This role becomes more comfortable with each phase and step.
- Part of the process for building buy-in also comes from Step 2, which reinforces why a participatory action research approach is important.

STEP 2

Understand the Benefits of Participatory Action Research

What does this step mean?

Step 2 helps the steering committee come to a common understanding of a participatory action approach to research and the benefits of doing research in this way.

There are many approaches to service evaluation and needs assessment. The approach described here is designed:

- to make sure the insights and concerns of all stakeholder groups have a chance to be heard;
- to optimize the usefulness of research findings; and
- to foster know-how about needs assessment and evaluation within the C/MFRC.

This approach is called participatory action research. Participatory research is a process of learning and decision-making that involves those who have a stake in a program. Action research contributes to positive changes in the problem-solving abilities of stakeholders, and in the wellness of communities.

In Step 2, the steering committee needs to pause before beginning the research to talk about what people think is “good” research. Everyone has assumptions about how best to learn about the world. Exploring these assumptions encourages people to be up front about the way they look at things. This discussion helps guide the steering committee as it plans its research and helps it identify the kinds of information that will be most meaningful to generate. In short, it is important that the stakeholders in the C/MFRC are convinced of the benefits of adopting a participatory action approach.

Below is a list of potential benefits of using a participatory action research approach in your C/MFRC:

- It involves service stakeholders so that they feel “in the loop” and not threatened by the research.
- It empowers various stakeholders who have different needs and experiences.
- It allows services to be seen in a variety of different and informative angles.
- It creates a shared understanding about the services and their outcomes.
- It reflects important cultural differences in your community.
- It increases the likelihood that research information will be seen as relevant and useful to different people (decreasing the likelihood that the report will collect dust on a shelf).
- It offers a reservoir of creative approaches to defining and solving problems.
- It allows the findings to speak to a wider audience.
- It stimulates learning and guides future action.
- It fosters volunteer leadership and community involvement—essential contributions in supporting and maintaining family health and well-being, and a goal of the Military Family Services Program (MFSP).

Volunteer Leadership

Volunteering leads to personal growth and development, and to community engagement, both of which are key MFSP goals. Opportunities exist throughout the MFSP for meaningful volunteer involvement – on Boards of Directors and Advisory Committees of Canadian/Military Family Resource Centres (C/MFRC), at the service delivery level, and in service design and evaluation. C/MFRCs support this volunteer leadership involvement through sound volunteer principles and practices incorporated into their services, including recruitment, screening, training, orientation, evaluation and recognition. *MFSP: Parameters for Practice*, 2004, p. 24.

Community Involvement

When members of a community are actively engaged in the life of their community, the community as a whole benefits. Since members of a community are often in the best position to know their own needs, true community involvement engages family members in planning, designing, delivering and evaluating services. The MFSP supports communities to meet their changing needs and encourages community members to take advantage of opportunities for personal growth and development. *MFSP: Parameters for Practice*, 2004, p. 24-25.

What lies ahead?

1. Discuss the benefits of participatory action research
2. Brainstorm ways to make the research participatory and action-oriented

How to apply this step in the C/MFRC?

1. **Discuss the benefits of participatory action research**
   - Calling an evaluation or needs assessment participatory and action-oriented doesn't make it so. Designate a portion of your first steering committee meeting to talk about and record what

Encouraging people to contribute to the evolution of services enables multiple perspectives to be heard, identified and understood. It also offers participants the possibility of impacting their community. Service users are better able and more inclined to participate in the evaluation of services when they have a say in creating and maintaining them. For example, youth at the Halifax MFRC are very involved in the services designed to meet their needs.

"We have a youth council established where youth ages 12-18 can come together and plan programs and we very much use the philosophy that youth map out what their desires are in cooperation with the youth coordinator. Then it becomes the ownership component. They do everything from having a speaker come in to talk about bullying to going for a ski trip. There is a range of activities there." – Halifax MFRC

people see as the benefits of using a participatory action approach to research. Constantly revisit this discussion as you plan and implement the evaluation/needs assessment.

2. **Brainstorm ways to make the research participatory and action-oriented**
Here are some suggestions.
Throughout the research process:
- Keep in mind that not everyone may have the interest or time to devote to being an ongoing member of the steering committee. Invite individuals to take part in steering committee meetings when appropriate. For example, include more youth if it is thought that an issue affects them.
- Provide feedback and solicit input from various stakeholder groups whenever possible. Have informal discussions with the users of services during programs or at social events. Make use of newsletters, bulletin boards and websites to update people on what is going on with the evaluation/needs assessment.

In Step 1:
- Form a steering committee comprised of multiple stakeholders.
- Talk about expectations and assumptions of research.
- Break down barriers to participation in the steering committee.

In Steps 5 – 7:
- Provide multiple ways for stakeholders to provide input into the planning stages through informal and formal means.

In Step 8:
- Provide multiple ways for stakeholders to provide data for the evaluation/needs assessment. For example, consider doing key informant interviews or focus groups to obtain valuable input from staff members, young people and people from other community organizations that do similar work to the C/MFRC.
- Train and support steering committee members and other volunteers to gather information.
- Gather information from people who have different perspectives and represent multiple stakeholders.

The Halifax MFRC has a culture of continually gathering various perspectives before making decisions about programming. The participatory and action-oriented approach is embedded in their everyday work.

"We have a program team [that includes] all the players involved in programming (child, youth, and adult programming) and the prevention and intervention counsellor/social worker. All those players come together every two weeks for a meeting. In those meetings we do a lot of analysis and problem solving and trying to figure out what is good here. So through several meetings and dialogue, we decided to try the focus groups. [The] quality of life and education co-ordinator... is heading that up in cooperation with [2 others] plus community members." – MFRC Halifax

In Step 9:

- Provide opportunities for program participants and others who participate in the research to hear and react to preliminary findings.

In Step 10:

- Feed back information from the final report to the stakeholders and participants in numerous ways (e.g., newsletter, fact sheets, email bulletin, community pot-luck, presentations, etc.).

In Step 11:

- Ask program participants and others who participated in the research to suggest what should be done in the future.
- Support the creation of a committee to work on implementing changes stemming from the findings.
- Provide opportunities to create changes in services.
- Start with small changes and small gains to increase confidence and inspire stakeholders to become more active and to stay involved.

See also:

- “What is participant focused evaluation?” *Keeping on Track*, p. 6-8
- “Applying the Evaluation Model: Making it Work.” *Finding Our Way*, p. 133

STEP 3

Determine the Purpose of the Research

What does this step mean?

Step 3 helps you decide the specifics of what to investigate in the evaluation or needs assessment.

The MFRC Board of Directors or CMFRC Advisory Committee may decide the focus of the research in a given year (i.e., which service categories or service components should be assessed and/or evaluated) and may include this in the terms of reference for the research steering committee. If so, the Board or Advisory Committee should consider the guidelines below and complete task #1 in this step. If the decision about research focus and scope has been delegated to the research steering committee, the committee should review these guidelines before completing the first task:

Keep in mind that DMFS' general expectation is that the purpose of evaluation and needs assessment is to generate research findings that can be used to inform service planning, thus assisting the C/MFRC to be responsive to community needs. However, for each evaluation and needs assessment the Centre undertakes each year, a specific purpose will define the scope of the research. Sometimes this purpose may be *comprehensive*, so that the evaluation or needs assessment broadly addresses all of the four MFSP service categories. It is more likely that the purpose will be *focused* and will consider in-depth only one or two of the service categories or several service components.

Note that DMFS requires the need for services to be assessed only once every three years. Thus, it might be wise to think ahead over a three-year time period (even though DMFS only requires C/MFRCs to submit an annual research plan with the MFSP Funding Application). For example, the Centre may decide to do needs assessments that focus on one-third of the service components each year; this would yield a full and comprehensive assessment done in a three-year cycle.

Similarly, the Centre will likely not want to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of all MFSP service components each year. However, statistics on service usage and participant feedback on services should continue to be collected. This helps with service planning and monitoring, and is useful data to summarize for the MFSP Funding Application.

Once the focus of the research has been determined, the research steering committee develops a "logic model" for each service component being assessed or evaluated. This is a powerful tool to help visualize the links between the service goal, objectives and activities. Developing a logic model at this stage in the research deepens understanding about what you want to get out of the evaluation or needs assessment. Later on, the specific research questions you ask draw on this logic model.

The steering committee also develops and agrees on a statement of purpose for the research. This is an important landmark for the committee. This statement helps keep the evaluation/needs assessment project focused, useful and manageable. Coming to consensus on a purpose statement builds common ground and brings singular focus to a steering committee with diverse perspectives and interests.

What lies ahead?

1. Identify the focus of the research
2. Develop a logic model to visualize the service(s) being assessed and/or evaluated
3. Brainstorm what main achievement you hope the evaluation/needs assessment will accomplish
4. Summarize the discussion by writing a purpose statement all steering committee members agree on

How to apply this step in the C/MFRC?

1. Identify the focus of the research

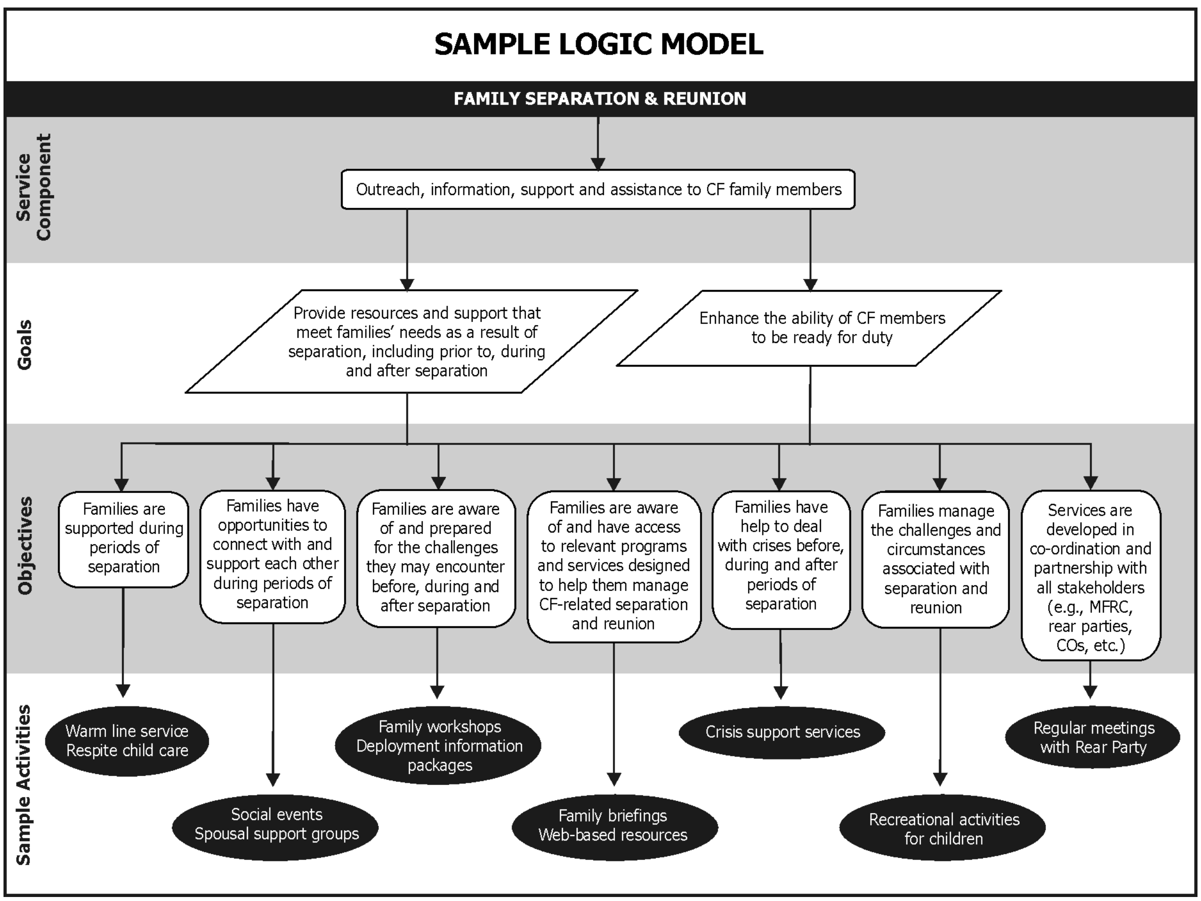
- It is wise to start small and build. Make the initial evaluation/needs assessment project a smaller one that provides a sense of accomplishment for participants and gives the research committee a sense of the entire research cycle.
- Use the following table outlining MFSP-mandated services to identify the focus of the Centre's research in a given year. If you are not clear which C/MFRC activities fall under each service component, complete task #2 below.
- In developing a plan, add site-specific services if required.
- In making a decision about the research focus, keep in mind recent changes in community circumstances and CF family demographics, and recommendations from C/MFRC staff.

MFSP Service Category	Service Components
Personal Development and Community Integration	• Welcome and Community Orientation • Information and Referral • Employment and Education Assistance • Personal Growth and Development • Second Language Services
Child/Youth Development and Parenting Support	• Activities and Initiatives for Children and Youth • Parent/Caregiver Education and Support • Emergency Child Care • Emergency Respite Child Care • Casual Child Care
Family Separation and Reunion	• Outreach, Information, Support and Assistance to CF Family Members
Prevention, Support and Intervention	• Education and Prevention • Self-Help Groups • Assessment and Referral • Short-Term Intervention and Crisis Support

Special care should be taken when conducting research that focuses on services provided as a result of a specific deployment. When large deployments take place, other parties may be conducting research on deployment-related matters so the C/MFRC should ensure that its research plans do not conflict. It is also vital that C/MFRC planning take into account sensitivities regarding family stress and family functioning related to the impact of the deployment. As a result, research plans must be approved by the local Commanding Officer, the unit commander and DHRRE (See Appendices D and E).

2. Develop a logic model to visualize the service(s) being assessed and/or evaluated

- A logic model can be a powerful tool both to help clarify what the Centre does and why, and to communicate this to others. The steering committee needs to be very clear on what is being evaluated or assessed – what are all the activities included in the service(s) and what do these activities intend to achieve? A logic model basically links together two kinds of information: the objectives of the service, and the day-to-day activities that make up the service.
- Logic models for MFSP-mandated services should be based on the service component goals and objectives found in the service policies in *MFSP: Parameters for Practice*.
- Review the sample model provided for the Family Separation and Reunion service category to see how to develop a model for the service(s) you are focusing on.
- You will need to insert into the model the activities actually offered by your Centre. Consult with C/MFRC staff to ensure you have a complete picture.
- The model can also be adapted to visualize the goals, objectives and activities of site-specific services.
- If you are doing a needs assessment with a comprehensive focus, you will need to develop a logic model showing all your Centre's services.



See also:

- "How to prepare for an evaluation." *Keeping on Track*, p. 9-13
- "Goals and objectives." *Keeping on Track*, p. 62
- "What are the goals and objectives of the program, project or organization being evaluated?" *Finding Our Way*, p. 28
- "What do you want to learn from doing the evaluation?" *Finding Our Way*, p. 29

3. Brainstorm what main achievement you hope the evaluation/needs assessment will accomplish

- If doing an *evaluation*, consider how you want a process and outcome evaluation to co-exist.
  If you are doing an evaluation, the purpose statement will reflect both of the two main types of evaluations: process and outcome. Process evaluations ask "how" questions about service structure, standards, implementation and process – questions about the form a service takes. A process evaluation can be used as a planning tool to help decide whether a service is operating in the way it was intended and to shape the service's future.
- Outcome evaluations ask "what" questions about whether a service is achieving its goals and objectives. Thus, an evaluation that looks at service outcomes summarizes the performance of the service. In order to be both fair and valid, an outcome evaluation should only be done when a service is up and running as intended. All evaluations should have elements of both a process and outcome evaluation.
- For the process part of an evaluation, start by asking what you would like to know about how the services function. For the outcome part, specify what you want to know about what these services have achieved.
- For a *needs assessment*, don't worry about distinguishing between the process and outcomes. Rather, the purpose statement will clearly state what you wish to learn about the community. For example, the statement might emphasize that you want to explore and understand how the Centre can better respond to the various issues of families living within the community (i.e., in order to create new site-specific services or adapt existing mandated services). Or it might emphasize that you want to determine how existing services match the needs of community residents (to determine anticipated use of these services).
- Keep in mind that DMFS requires that you assess opportunities for partnerships and make efforts to cooperate with other agencies and community service providers in the local area to avoid duplication of services. As a result, an assessment of existing community supports and resources should form part of the needs assessment process.

See also:

- "Find the evaluation focus." *Finding Our Way*, p. 135

4. Summarize the discussion by writing a purpose statement all steering committee members agree on

- Write a purpose statement. This statement acts as a beacon to help keep you on course if your thinking starts to get fuzzy. A well-thought-out purpose statement supported by the committee is one of the most important evaluation/needs assessment tools. Consider the sample purpose statements suggested below.

See also:

- "What are you evaluating, why, and who is the evaluation for?" *Finding Our Way*, p. 25-27
- "Find the evaluation focus." *Finding Our Way*, p. 91-92
- "Preparing for the evaluation." *Keeping on Track*, p. 13

Sample Purpose Statements

Evaluation Purpose Statement #1

The purpose of this evaluation is to understand how successful the C/MFRC is in supporting Canadian Forces families through separation and reunion. We also want to understand what has helped or hindered the effectiveness of Family Separation and Reunion services.

Evaluation Purpose Statement #2

In this evaluation we want to assess the impact of our services in Child and Youth Development and Parenting Support. We also want to understand how participants feel about their experiences in using these services.

Needs Assessment Purpose Statement #1

This year's needs assessment will focus on understanding the extent to which our Prevention, Support and Intervention services match what community residents say they need offered.

Needs Assessment Purpose Statement #2

The purpose of this needs assessment is to explore the unmet needs within our community and to understand what these unmet needs mean for the services offered through the C/MFRC. Of particular interest is to understand what new site-specific services we might need to offer, in addition to the MFSP-mandated services already offered.

STEP 4

Describe the Context of the Research

What does this step mean?

Step 4 helps the research steering committee develop an understanding of the situations and circumstances it faces as it begins an evaluation/needs assessment.

The research context includes the sources of support and barriers that may be encountered during an evaluation/needs assessment (e.g., staff and volunteer time, budget) and the raw materials available for the work (such as existing documentation, past research reports, etc). It also includes anticipated events and circumstances (such as a deployment) that may impact on the timing of research activities. The context also includes the audience(s) for the evaluation/needs assessment. In other words, who will use the information and how will the information be used?

Typically, all the activities in this step are linked through an ongoing dialogue between the steering committee, other stakeholders and the evaluators (if you have hired an external consultant).

What lies ahead?

1. Identify the people and other resources that support the research
2. Review and become acquainted with all relevant service documentation and potential sources of information
3. Discuss any anticipated events or circumstances that may impact the research
4. Identify the audience for the evaluation/needs assessment

How to apply this step in the C/MFRC?

1. **Identify the people and other resources that support the research**
   - What people are potential sources of information about services and the needs of the community?
     - For example: staff, the Executive Director/Director of the C/MFRC, board or advisory committee members, volunteers, CF personnel, and spouses and youth who use the services. Consider also DMFS regional staff and other community members who are in contact with your C/MFRC.
     - Are there other community organizations that provide similar supports to stakeholders?
   - Consider how much money and time there is to complete the evaluation/needs assessment. For example: staff time, volunteer component, level of Board/Advisory Committee activity, etc.
   - Given the answers to the above questions, make a decision about whether to carry out the evaluation/needs assessment internally, or contract the help of an evaluation consultant. This decision can be made on a case-by-case basis by the Centre. You may decide to use an external evaluator for some evaluations/needs assessments and not for others. The section, “Choosing a Consultant” at the end of this guide offers more information to help Centres make this decision.

See also:
- "Review the context within which the work is taking place." *Keeping on Track*, p. 25-27
- "Context." *Keeping on Track*, p. 51-52

2. **Review and become acquainted with all relevant service documentation and potential sources of information**
    - This review helps to ensure that your committee builds on current strengths rather than "re-inventing the wheel." Ask yourselves:
    - What kind of information is on file about the service(s) to be assessed/evaluated? (i.e., descriptive/ statistical)
    - What demographic information is available about CF families in the community?
    - What information is available about the language profile (English/French) of CF families?
    - What kind of information and statistics does the Centre gather on a regular basis that might be helpful? For example, information on who uses the services, numbers of people attending, numbers of welcome packages sent out, phone calls logged, participant feedback forms, numbers of people attending social events, numbers of requests for information, numbers of people who register with the C/MFRC upon arrival in your community, numbers of information pamphlets distributed, etc.
    - Ask: "What kind of informal information can/do we gather?" Brainstorm informal ways you collect and receive information about services and the needs of the community:
        - Staff self-reports based on their experience in the community and providing services.
        - Observational information and self-reports from volunteers.
        - Informal conversations with community members (e.g., calling to express thanks for service, package, referral, etc., and spontaneous feedback, questions, comments and concerns voiced at social events or other meetings).

3. **Discuss any anticipated events or circumstances that may impact the research**
    - Identify the general timeframe for conducting and completing the research. (You will develop a specific schedule in Steps 6 and 7.) Remember, if you are planning to conduct a community-wide survey or research focused on a specific deployment, the DHRRE review process could take up to one month. (See Appendix D)

    - What major events are planned by the C/MFRC during this period? What other significant events will be taking place in the community?

The *Centre de la famille Valcartier* readily acknowledges the diversity among the military family population for whom they provide services. All programs, social events and research initiatives are therefore purposefully conducted in both official languages, English and French.

- What community circumstances (such as a deployment or posting season) might impact on the research?

4. Identify the audience for the evaluation/needs assessment

- As you answer the questions below, keep in mind the purpose of your research.
- Who will use the information?
  - e.g., staff, volunteers, Executive Director/Director of the C/MFRC, DMFS, Canadian Forces personnel, youth, spouses, other community members (reservists, lodgers).
- How will they use the information?
  - e.g., to make funding decisions, modify services, access services, participate in committees, volunteer with the C/MFRC, tell their friends about the C/MFRC, create site-specific services, provide or not provide MFSP-mandated services.

Staff at the *Centre de la famille Valcartier* are in constant communication both with the chain of command and with the people who use the Centre’s services. Such communication occurs before, during and after the implementation of needs assessment or evaluation research. In doing so, personnel are aware of who will be using the information generated from the research.

Centre de la famille personnel ensure that representatives of the chain of command are always involved in the research process. Exchanges of information and collaborative meetings occur on a regular basis. Such communication and collaboration increases the likelihood that the research results can be used in meaningful and effective ways to improve services for primary stakeholders.

Phase II

Planning the Needs Assessment/Evaluation

Phase I helped lay the foundation for an evaluation/needs assessment. During this phase, you formed a steering committee, developed a clear description of the service or services being assessed or evaluated, and got a sense of the resources and obstacles you may face in the research. Most importantly, you developed a clear evaluation/needs assessment purpose statement. The purpose statement serves as the starting point for more detailed research questions to be formulated in this next phase.

This planning phase involves three more steps:
Step 5: Identify the Main Research Questions
Step 6: Choose Methods, Tools and a Sampling/Recruitment Strategy
Step 7: Plan the Analysis

STEP 5

Identify the Main Research Questions

What does this step mean?

Step 5 helps you use the information generated in previous steps to fine-tune your research questions.

Once the steering committee has agreed on the basic purpose of the evaluation/needs assessment, you can translate the purpose statement(s) into a set of research questions. These questions should have the support of your stakeholders and be feasible, given the state of the service(s) and available resources. Research questions are not necessarily the exact questions you ask research participants. They are rather questions you hope to be able to answer once the evaluation/needs assessment is complete. Most research is limited to five to ten research questions, although some large studies have many more.

No evaluation or needs assessment can be all things to all people. The steering committee needs to agree on a fairly small number of key questions for the evaluation/needs assessment to answer in order to fulfill its purpose. The research questions describe the kind of useful information you have agreed to try to generate.

In specifying research questions, use the same care that you applied to writing a purpose statement. These questions form the basic framework for the evaluation/needs assessment. Steps 6 and 7 will address the tools, methods and overall plan for putting things together and actually carrying out the evaluation/needs assessment.

What lies ahead?

1. Brainstorm about the main questions you hope the evaluation/needs assessment answers once completed.
2. Develop a list of research questions
3. Identify indicators relevant to the research questions

How to apply this step in the C/MFRC?

1. **Brainstorm the main questions you hope the evaluation/needs assessment answers once completed**
   - When brainstorming, it is important to consult stakeholders and negotiate specific research questions. The quality of the questions and their perceived credibility in the eyes of those identified as the audience of the final report have a large role to play in the quality of the data, and the extent to which the information is ultimately used.
   - The research questions should fall within the scope and purpose of the evaluation or needs assessment. In other words, if you chose to focus on a specific service category in a given year, the research questions should relate to that category. The breadth of the research within these boundaries is determined by a number of things, including how many staff and volunteers are available to help, how actively involved the steering committee will be, anticipated time lines and available funds.
   - For evaluations, consider the two main kinds of research questions that correspond to the main types of evaluations: *Outcome questions* focus on the differences a service has made to families and the

community. The service objectives and indicators in *Parameters for Practice* suggest desired outcomes for MFSP-mandated services.

- *Process questions* focus on the degree to which a service is functioning the way it was intended to (implementation) or are designed to generate detailed information about how satisfied people are who participate in the service. For an evaluation, you may wish to assess the extent to which the service meets selected MFSP Program standards outlined in section three of *Parameters for Practice*.
- For needs assessments, consider whether you want to gather information about community needs and issues (i.e. to *identify new services*), or whether you are trying to determine *anticipated use of existing services* (or both).
- Consider whether it makes sense to conduct a joint MFRC/PSP needs assessment since both organizations offer complementary services to CF families.

See also:
- "Meet to clarify the evaluation focus and assumptions of success." *Keeping on Track*, p. 20-24
- "Identify measures, name success indicators and decide how to gather information." *Finding Our Way*, p. 136-137

2. Develop a list of research questions

- These questions:
  - are clearly worded
  - fulfill the purpose of the evaluation/needs assessment
  - reflect the interests of all stakeholder groups
  - provide useable information
- If you are evaluating or assessing the need for MFSP-mandated services, use the service policies in *MFSP: Parameters for Practice* as a guide to develop and organize research questions. The policies outline the mandated service components in the four service categories and include service goals, objectives and indicators.

3. Identify indicators relevant to the research questions

- Indicators are signs – things that you can see or hear – that provide evidence about whether you are, or are not, reaching your objectives.
- Ask the following questions while determining the indicators you want to look for:
  - How would I know the service is reaching its objective?
  - What would have to happen for me to know?
  - What would constitute reasonable evidence?
- If you are conducting research on MFSP-mandated services, review the indicators found in the service accountability frameworks in *MFSP: Parameters for Practice* to identify indicators that are relevant to your research questions.
- Many of the MFSP service indicators found in *Parameters for Practice* can be used in both community needs assessments and service evaluations, particularly those that refer to accessing "information,"

"resources," "services," or "opportunities." For example, an indicator such as "Parents report that their children have opportunities for social interaction and learning" can be used to evaluate a C/MFRC service. It could also be used in a needs assessment to determine whether such opportunities are readily available or if the C/MFRC should provide such opportunities.

- If you are planning an evaluation, you may wish to incorporate specific indicators that DMFS requires C/MFRCs to report on. Consult DMFS regional staff for more details.

See also:

- "What is to be measured?" *Finding Our Way*, p. 32
- "What are the success indicators for each measure?" *Finding Our Way*, p. 33
- "Measures and Success Indicators for the XYZ Toy Lending Library." *Finding Our Way*, p. 33

Linking Purpose Statements, Research Questions and Indicators		
Sample Purpose Statement	**Related Research Questions**	**Associated Indicators**
The purpose of this evaluation is to understand how successful the C/MFRC is in supporting Canadian Forces families through separation and reunion. We also want to understand what has helped or hindered the effectiveness of Family Separation and Reunion services.	Are families who have used our services more aware of and better prepared for the challenges they may encounter before, during and after separation?	Families self-report they are more aware of the challenges that they may encounter before, during and after separation. Families self-report they felt more prepared for challenges related to separation.
	Do families better manage the challenges and circumstances associated with separation and reunion after using our services?	Families self-report they have managed separation effectively. CF senior leadership reports a relatively low number of repatriations for family reasons.
	Do families feel more supported during periods of separation after using our services?	Families self-report they felt more supported during periods of separation. C/MFRC staff and volunteers hear program participants speak about feeling more supported.
	Do families have opportunities to connect with and support one another?	Families self-report that they have had opportunities to connect with and support one another. Staff report on the opportunities offered by the C/MFRC.
	Are all stakeholders satisfied with the extent of cooperation in the development and implementation of services?	Stakeholders (MFRC, rear parties, COs, etc.) express satisfaction with the extent of cooperation in the development and implementation of services.
	Have volunteers been effectively incorporated into the services?	Volunteers, staff and program participants report ways that volunteers have been effectively incorporated into the service. Volunteers and staff report ways that volunteers have been supported.
	What has helped or hindered the effectiveness of services?	Families and other stakeholders self-report reasons for the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of services.

Note: A comprehensive evaluation of services related to family separation and reunion would likely examine service components across several service categories and could include emergency child care and emergency respite child care, activities for children and youth with deployed parents, and selected Prevention, Support and Intervention activities.

Sample Purpose Statement	Related Research Questions	Associated Indicators
In this evaluation we want to assess the impact of our services in Child and Youth Development & Parenting Support. We also want to understand how participants feel about their experiences in using these services.	What do participants think has changed the most about themselves or their families (i.e., outcomes) as a result of accessing Child and Youth Development & Parenting Support services?	Self-reports from family members of changes in their lives.
	What outcomes aren't being achieved that we expected to achieve?	Opinions of steering committee members after reviewing preliminary data on outcomes and comparing with the service objectives and indicators in *MFSP: Parameters for Practice.*
	What are program participants most satisfied about with these services?	Self-reports from family members of satisfaction with services.
	What do program participants say could make these services better?	Self-reports from family members of ways to improve services.
	How can we provide services in a way that is more complementary and streamlined within this service category?	Opinions of staff, steering committee, board/ advisory committee members and volunteers after reviewing preliminary data on outcomes.

Sample Purpose Statement	Related Research Questions	Associated Indicators
This year's needs assessment will focus on understanding the extent to which our Prevention, Support and Intervention services match what community residents say they need offered.	What kind of workshops on general health issues and lifestyle stress do community residents say that they need?	Self-reports from family members and volunteers on their needs related to general health issues and lifestyle stress
	What issues do community residents face that they think could be addressed in a mutual support group setting?	Self-reports from family members and volunteers on issues relating to health, lifestyle and family well-being that they would like to address in using a self-help group setting.
	What kind of assessments and referrals do residents say that they need in terms of prevention, crisis support and intervention services?	Self-reports from family members about the types of referrals they need in terms of prevention, crisis support and intervention services.
	What kind of crises do community residents face for which they would like short-term support?	Self-reports from family members and volunteers.
	To what extent is our C/MFRC already providing services for the above identified needs?	Self-reports from family members. Opinions of staff, steering committee, board/ advisory committee members and volunteers after reviewing preliminary data on outcomes.

Sample Purpose Statement	Related Research Questions	Associated Indicators
The purpose of this needs assessment is to explore the unmet needs within our community and to understand what these unmet needs mean for the services offered through the C/MFRC. Of particular interest is to understand what new site-specific services we might need to offer, in addition to the MFSP-mandated services already offered.	What are the main challenges that community residents face in promoting their own well-being and improving their quality of life? What are the main challenges that community residents face in raising a family? What are the main challenges that community residents face that keep them from feeling part of the community? To what extent do our existing services meet these challenges? What additional services might we need to offer?	Self-reports from family members and volunteers about their challenges in promoting their own well-being and improving their quality of life. Self-reports from family members and volunteers about their challenges in raising a family. Self-reports from family members and volunteers about their challenges in feeling part of the community. Opinions of C/MFRC staff /volunteers, and board/advisory committee members after reviewing preliminary data on the challenges faced by community residents and comparing the data with the logic model of C/MFRC services. Opinions of C/MFRC staff /volunteers, and board/advisory committee members after reviewing preliminary data on the challenges faced by community residents.

STEP 6

Choose Methods, Tools and Sampling/ Recruitment Strategy

What does this step mean?

Step 6 will help you lay out how you plan to gather information within your evaluation/needs assessment—methods and tools to use to ask questions, who to ask, how to recruit participants and ethical considerations.

This Step is the "nuts and bolts" of evaluation/needs assessment planning. Mark Twain once said that every problem looks like a nail when the only tool you have is a hammer. In evaluation and needs assessment, this tendency shows itself when people decide to use a survey before they have really thought about why they are doing the research and what tool makes the most sense.

Because you have taken the time to describe the service(s) clearly, craft a purpose statement, and list research questions and indicators, you are now ready to develop effective and efficient data collection tools with which to conduct the research.

This section presents some of the issues to consider when deciding whether to use surveys, focus groups, interviews, archival data (written materials about the service, previous evaluations, etc.), or some combination of methods. Choosing methods or tools also involves considering ethics, research questions, available resources and sampling issues.

What lies ahead?

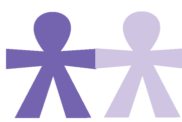
1. Understand the importance of using multiple methods from multiple perspectives to collect data (triangulation)
2. Review the different options that provide sources of information
3. Choose and create information-gathering tools
4. Develop a sampling and recruitment strategy
5. Consider ethics

How to apply this step in the C/MFRC?

Tools are much easier to design when you draw from clear objectives, indicators and evaluation/needs assessment questions. In this step, a number of tools are described that can be combined in different ways to answer the most typical research questions that you would face when evaluating or determining the need for the services of a Military Family Resource Centre.

1. **Understand the importance of using multiple methods from multiple perspectives to collect data (triangulation)**
   - Triangulation is an *approach* to understanding an issue. It involves collecting information about the same question from different sources or by using different methods. Reaching the same conclusion from information generated from different methods and sources strengthens the plausibility of interpretation. Triangulation also allows you to see an issue from different perspectives. This can be important if you are trying to have the evaluation speak to different stakeholder expectations and experiences or if you want your needs assessment to reflect the needs of different stakeholders within the community (e..g., youth vs. civilian spouses vs. Canadian Forces personnel). Each of these stakeholders may require a different data collection tool, or the tool may have to be administered in a different fashion for each stakeholder group.

The *Centre de la famille Valcartier* has had success using multiple methods of data collection in their research. No research method is favoured over another. Rather, the value of each data collection technique is highlighted through different yet complementary methods. For instance, some evaluations conducted by *Centre de la famille* staff used semi-structured, open-ended interviews, or focus groups with small numbers of individuals. They also use quantitative, empirical surveys administered to a larger group of families through phone interviews.



The Dundurn MFRC, located in a small, semi-isolated community, found that certain tools do not work well in their context and found innovative approaches to use in their community.

"We have found that focus groups don't work really well in a small setting. In a smaller setting there is always the concern about confidentiality and in focus groups all these people know each other very, very well. They all live in a fish bowl. So to try and get a small group of them together we have found that it is not as effective as we would like it to be. They either don't say anything or they won't come. Therefore, we have gone to the more anonymous survey approach. Rather than doing a once a year type of mail-out we have started doing needs assessments when we have special functions where we have large numbers of people here. We have a detachment 'meet and greet' that we are a part of and we hand those out then. I think we have much more success doing it that way than doing a one-time mail-out.

So when we have special events, functions, (e.g., we have the 'meet and greet', the children's day, a coffee break) we actually hand out these needs assessments and ask people to fill them out and leave them. And then we do draws and that kind of thing to try and increase the return rate. And we get a fairly good response rate back because they do fill them out when they are sitting there."

2. Review the different options that provide sources of information

- Be sure to consider methods that provide both breadth (a small amount of information from many people), and depth (detailed information from a small number of people). Some of the most effective ways of obtaining information of both kinds include:
  - Archival materials and documentation (any documents written about services in the past)
  - Observations from staff and volunteers who work at the C/MFRC
  - Opinions from staff, board or advisory committee members, volunteers
  - Self-reports from those using the services
  - Service utilization data

3. Choose and create information-gathering tools

- Choosing what kind of tool to use in your research is based on determining what is most efficient and effective for the Centre. Different tools could include:
  - Individual interviews (face-to-face or telephone)
  - Questionnaire (survey)
  - Focus group
  - Participant feedback form
  - Journal or log
  - Community forum
- The tool(s) chosen for the evaluation/needs assessment will be unique to the Centre. The most important thing to remember when creating tool(s) is to keep them consistent with the main research questions.
- Keep in mind that if you decide to conduct a survey targeted to all or most of the CF community, you must have the permission of the local Commanding Officer and must submit the survey tool to DHRRE (See Appendices D and E).

See also:

- "Evaluation Tools: How they work, positive points and things to watch for." *Finding Our Way*, p. 45-49
- "Tools for measuring how well the group is achieving its objectives." *Keeping on Track*, p. 33-35
- "Choosing the appropriate data-gathering tools." *Keeping on Track*, p. 35-38
- "Choose and design the evaluation tools." *Finding Our Way*, p. 100-114
- "Gather the data." *Finding Our Way*, p. 115-123
- "Choose and develop the evaluation tools." *Finding Our Way*, p. 139-146
- "XYZ Toy lending library's chart of potential questions and respondents to ask." *Finding Our Way*, p. 52-54

4. Develop a sampling and recruitment strategy

- Once you have decided on the tools you would like to use, decide how many people to interview or survey, and which individuals to choose. Questions to consider when developing a sampling strategy include:
  - How important is it to gather information from as many different stakeholder groups as possible (breadth)? How detailed do you want this information to be (depth)?
  - How important is breadth or representativeness (the confidence with which you can say the information describes everyone in the service/community)? For example, if the research questions

focus on level of participant satisfaction, it's important to feel confident that you know everyone's position.
- How important is depth of information? If you want detailed case studies or to understand a complex issue in depth, choose a sample that provides rich detail. Small samples in which people are purposely selected based on general criteria may be most useful for these kinds of research questions.
- Do you need to include community members from both official language groups in your research sample?

See also:

- "Who has the information?" *Finding Our Way*, p. 35-36
- "Which groups of people are going to be asked which questions?" *Finding Our Way*, p. 51
- "Who and how many people should receive evaluation tools?" *Finding Our Way*, p. 55-57

5. Consider ethics

- Note that rather than being a discrete step, this is an ongoing part of the research process.
- Below are the most important features of ethical evaluation/needs assessment. These issues are represented in various ways in a number of different principles and guidelines published by the Canadian and American Psychological Associations, the Canadian Evaluation Society, and other professional and academic organizations:
  - Respect for individuals and communities
  - Open and honest communication
  - Informed consent and voluntary participation
  - Privacy
  - Training and supervising people who are involved in the evaluation
  - Anticipating and controlling for unanticipated consequences
- Keep in mind that the MFRC evaluation/needs assessment research must comply with the MFSP Privacy Code contained in *MFSP: Parameters for Practice*. This Code establishes the standard under which MFRCs in Canada collect and use personal information about CF members and their families. CMFRCs outside of Canada must follow the federal *Privacy Act*.
- Your research tools and methods should avoid collecting information that would identify the research participants (e.g., those responding to surveys or participating in focus groups). If such data is collected it should be treated as confidential information. Information that could be used to identify individual respondents should not be included in research reports.

See also:

- "Confidentiality in evaluation." *Keeping on Track*, p. 61

"We used focus groups with about 100 families. This was really good information that we received – probably the best information we ever received in terms of the depth of information. The focus groups gave us a depth of information that we didn't receive from the surveys. Unfortunately, the down side of doing focus groups is that it is very time consuming and it was very costly. But it was also the way that we got the best stories from military families that they needed access to health care and physicians."

– Kingston MFRC

The Dundurn MFRC used multiple strategies to collect information and is aware of the trade-offs and the costs associated with different tools.

"We had one quite successful year in getting responses back and that is when we did telephone interviews for needs assessment. We got a high number of responses back (e.g. ~50%). But we went through four volunteers (real strong volunteers for the Centre who didn't know each other and all came back and said 'I never want to do that again'). People don't like being interviewed. It was also not a very rewarding experience for our volunteers but we did get a good proportion of returns. So the staff had to finish the interviews. They were also very costly and very time-consuming."

MFRC stories about planning an evaluation

In 1997, the Calgary MFRC was interested in finding out what sort of services CF families wanted, how satisfied families were with the services that were currently being offered, and whether they were even aware of the Centre, given that Calgary no longer has Permanent Married Quarters (PMQs). The Centre also wanted to find out from newly-posted CF families what types of successful services were being offered through other MFRCs they had been involved with and what they would like to see implemented in Calgary.

Since the MFRC served a small population, the staff decided that a feasible way to conduct a needs assessment and quality assurance survey was through telephone interviews. In both 1997 and 1998, MRFC staff made phone calls to everyone on their nominal rolls. The response rate was extremely high – 83% and 75% – in 1997 and 1998, respectively. Such high response rates were most likely due to the fact that MFRC staff could easily connect with a large percentage of their population by phone.

Similarly, the *Centre de la famille Valcartier* reported a very high participation rate when conducting both qualitative and quantitative surveys by phone. In the Centre's experience, very few potential respondents refused participation in telephone interviews.

In past experiences with evaluation and needs assessment, Halifax MFRC found large-scale mailed-out surveys challenging. *"We have done a massive mail-out to about 3,000 [people] with the self-addressed, stamped envelope to return it to us. The return rate is sometimes 5%, other times it has been 10%. The challenge is getting the survey back as anybody in the survey world knows, I am sure; especially because our population is so dispersed."* In addition to low response rates, they were concerned about the financial costs of mailed-out surveys. They are now exploring the use of an online questionnaire on their website to improve their response rate by making it easier for all family members to answer the survey.

"Last week we put up a survey, [in which] we wanted to hear from all fathers in/of military families. We had a survey created for that particular component of the population to respond to, because it has been identified that there [are too few programs for adult males of military families]. We now have 60 replies through our website."

STEP 7

Plan the Analysis

What does this step mean?

Step 7 helps you make basic decisions about how to make sense of and analyze the information you plan to gather.

It's important to think about what to do with the information you plan to collect *before* it starts to accumulate. Thinking about analysis at the design stage helps to improve the data collection tools, and ensure that anyone involved in analysis understands what is expected of them. One of the most important things to think about as you develop an analysis plan is credibility or rigour. What kind of evidence will your audience require to be convinced of your conclusions?

What lies ahead?

1. Trust the original design and questions
2. Plan the data analysis
3. Build in flexibility – leave time for reflection
4. Put together an evaluation/needs assessment work plan
5. Assess the soundness of the research plan

How to apply this step in your C/MFRC?

1. **Trust the original design and questions**
   - Your job now is to fulfill the terms of the research purpose statement. You and other stakeholders may wish to revise the purpose of the evaluation after some preliminary analyses. For now though, stick to the original aim, and devise a plan that keeps things simple, efficient and of good quality. Think about what you would need to know in order to feel that each of the evaluation questions has been answered in a credible way.

2. **Plan the data analysis**
   - Whenever possible, plan how to analyze the data at the same time as you decide how to collect it. Describe what will be done with the data once it is gathered. How will it be summarized? Who will be responsible for analyzing it? Will they require training?
   - Consider a number of appropriate ways to analyze the kinds and amount of data you would like to collect. At the beginning, however, keep it simple.

3. **Build in flexibility – leave time for reflection**
   - Build some flexibility into the time line to reflect on unexpected events, findings and emerging themes. In other words, be kind to yourself as a researcher and respect the process of action research.

See also:
- "Analysis of data during evaluation." *Keeping on Track*, p. 42-43
- "Analyze and interpret the data." *Finding Our Way*, p. 124-138

4. Put together an evaluation/needs assessment work plan

- By the time you reach the end of Phase II, you will have a plan for the data collection and analysis phase of the evaluation/needs assessment. Use the templates below (the Research Design Planning Chart and the Research Work Plan) to document the research plan. This increases the credibility of the methodology by laying out the approach in detail and serves as a useful guide during implementation.
- Information from the work plan will help you complete the section in the MFSP Funding Application that asks about plans for community needs assessment and service evaluations in the coming fiscal year.

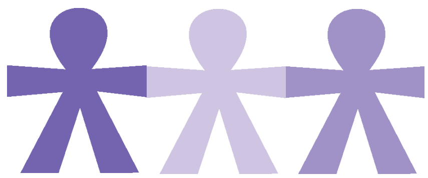
See also:
- "Identify measures, name success indicators, decide how to gather information." *Finding Our Way*, p. 95-99

5. Assess the soundness of the research plan

- The list of guidelines below will help you conduct research in a way that ensures quality and rigour:
  - Take time to understand the context of what you are studying
  - Provide opportunities for members of the research team to challenge and debrief one another
  - Ensure that those collecting and analyzing data are properly trained
  - Record data accurately
  - Ensure that qualitative information is rich and detailed enough to ensure that key themes have not been missed
  - Establish an 'audit trail' to track where you drew data from in order to reach conclusions (see Step 9)
  - Support findings by using multiple methods involving multiple stakeholders
  - Feed back and validate findings to participants

Research Design Planning Chart				
Research Questions *Focused or comprehensive; based on MFSP: Parameters for Practice and your Logic Model*	**Relevant Indicators** *Things you can observe that will help answer this question*	**Where will we get the information?** *Who will you speak to? How would you access existing information?*	**What, specifically, will we ask?** *How will the questions be worded?*	**What data collection tools will we use?** *Given what is written in columns to the left, what tool is most efficient and effective?*
Sample Evaluation Research Question: Do families feel more supported during periods of separation after using our services?	Families self-report they felt more supported during periods of separation. C/MFRC staff and volunteers hear program participants speak about feeling more supported.	Ten selected spouses while CF spouse is deployed C/MRFC staff and volunteers	Have [name specific activities] helped you to feel more supported while your spouse/partner is deployed? If so, in what ways?	Confidential individual interviews with spouses Focus group with staff and volunteers
Sample Needs Assessment Research Question: What kind of workshops on general health issues and lifestyle stress do community residents say that they need?	Self-reports from family members and volunteers on their needs related to general health issues and lifestyle stress	All family members who use the prevention, support and intervention services (within a specified time period) Ten family members who use other C/MFRC services Community members	What would you like to learn more about to help you feel more healthy? What would you like to learn more about to help you manage stress in your life?	Survey of family members who use the prevention, support and intervention services Focus group with family members who use other C/MFRC services Electronic survey on the Centre website

A Research Work Plan						
List data collection strategies	**How will data be documented?** *(Will interviews be taped or will you take notes? Will surveys be mailed in or collected by a home visitor?)*	**Who will gather data?**	**Days required**	**How will data be analyzed?**	**Who will analyze data?**	**Days required**
Confidential individual interviews with spouses	• telephone interviews or face-to-face interview • tape-recorded • notes taken • transcribe interview	• staff • external evaluator • 2 evaluation committee members	21	• compile quantitative data (numerical, rating information) and determine the mean response • look for codes and themes by reading through open-ended questions and interview transcripts	Staff and volunteers	21
Focus group with staff and volunteers	• notes will be taken during the focus group	• staff	2	• look for codes and themes by reading through the notes from focus group	Staff and volunteers	21



Phase III

Gathering and Analyzing Information

Phase III provides guidelines for managing the practical issues that arise during the process of actually collecting and analyzing the information identified in earlier steps. Because of the back-and-forth nature of action research, the ability to deal with such things can make or break the entire process. Moreover, the way information is collected and communicated sends a message about values to research participants and other stakeholders.

Take a thoughtful approach to how information is collected, handled, analyzed and communicated. This demonstrates respect for various stakeholders and participants, and invites more participation of a higher quality than might be the case with a less considered approach.

The steps to complete Phase III are:
Step 8: Gather Information
Step 9: Analyze Information

How you implement a plan is as important as designing a good plan

A participatory action research approach to evaluation and needs assessment helps you to continually improve your services. Even if interviews or surveys produce very little useful data, the very act of going out and listening to people's opinions (if it is done in a respectful, ethical way) can create positive change within a service.

STEP 8

Gather Information

What does this step mean?

Step 8 helps you manage the basic practical aspects of gathering information for evaluation and needs assessment. It also teaches you to recognize and deal constructively with potential problems along the way.

Each step of data collection should be carefully planned to ensure that it is conducted properly and efficiently. A poorly-planned and poorly-supported process of data collection can result in cost and time overruns through mistakes and duplicated efforts. It can also undermine the goodwill of participants and others involved in the research.

The practical issues covered in this step include implementing tools (such as questionnaires, focus groups) as well as the logistics of managing incoming data, and communicating with interviewers and committee members in ways that maintain enthusiasm and support. In short, this step helps keep the plan on track, and helps you respond to the unexpected.

What lies ahead?

1. Pre-test, pilot test and fine-tune research tools
2. Train any staff and volunteers who will be involved in the data collection
3. Monitor progress to ensure quality control
4. Identify and deal with unexpected problems

How to apply this step in the C/MFRC?

1. Pre-test, pilot test and fine-tune research tools

- If you use a needs assessment questionnaire or a survey for an evaluation, or have written out interview questions, ask a few volunteers or service users to complete the questionnaire when they are in the C/MFRC. You could also interview a few volunteers, staff, board or advisory committee members, Canadian Forces personnel and family members while they are at the C/MFRC.
  Get feedback from these people on:
  - the length of the interview/survey/questionnaire
  - the number of questions included in the interview or the questionnaire
  - the wording of the questions
  - the amount of time it took them to complete it
  - how well they understood the purpose of the questionnaire/interview
  - how well the instructions were worded
  - how they felt while answering the questions

  - their suggestions for other questions to ask, ways to reword existing questions and other ways to improve the questionnaire or interview
- Remember that it is important to ensure that questions about family stress and family functioning are asked in a sensitive manner.

See also:
- "Gather the data." *Finding Our Way*, p. 62-63

2. Train any staff and volunteers who will be involved in the data collection

- Be sure that people who are going to gather data feel competent to do so. Before you begin your data collection, have a training session with those who will be gathering data. Have them run through the interview questions or focus group questions with each other and reflect on the process while their team members offer feedback.
- Training will help to ensure that data is collected in a consistent manner. This is also an opportunity to review any concerns about privacy and confidentiality.
- When developing your research work plan, ensure that training sessions are included.

See also:
- "Facilitating a focus group" and "skills for interviewing and/or administering questionnaires." *Finding Our Way*, p. 119 – 123

3. Monitor progress to ensure quality control

- Keep everyone on the steering committee informed about data collection.
- Build in opportunities to look over the data collected to ensure you are receiving the information you want to collect.
- If you do not receive the quality of information you want, rework the questions and data collection methods. For example, a written survey may not be the best way to access the information you are looking for – face-to-face meetings with people may work better; perhaps volunteers need to be around to answer questions about the questionnaire, or a staff member or volunteer may need to be available to answer phone calls about the questionnaire.

4. Identify and deal with unexpected problems

- In general, be aware of changes in your environment that can influence your service evaluations and community needs assessments. Remain in contact with DMFS regional staff, read the DMFS Update Newsletter, stay involved in the community, and ensure the nominal roll information is up-to-date. For example, changes might include:
  - Changes in the role or function of the Base/Wing/Station
  - Deployments

  - Critical events that impact the community
  - Time overruns
  - Staff, volunteer or board/advisory committee member turnover
  - Changes in participant attendance or utilization of services
  - Changes in the needs of the community
  - Changes in requirements related to conducting DND/CF surveys
  - Changes in DMFS reporting requirements
- In order to deal with these changes:
  - Be flexible in your data collection timetable.
  - Meet with the steering committee to discuss how these changes affect the work and how to continue to work and accommodate these changes.
  - Consider involving more stakeholders to gather data, to participate on the steering committee or to volunteer in the C/MFRC.
  - Represent the needs of the community or the status of the service at the time the research was conducted, and make note of any changes that occurred during the research.
  - If necessary, add an addendum to the report outlining the changes that occurred and how you dealt with them in ways that responded to the new community context.

STEP 9

Analyze the Information

What does this step mean?

Step 9 helps to break down the process of analyzing data into manageable steps.

This step reviews some of the things to keep in mind while analyzing and interpreting data. It may be frustrating but it can also be rewarding. It is here that you can begin to answer the questions that led you on this journey in the first place.

The process of analysis can be time-consuming and labour-intensive, especially for qualitative data. However, the time you take pays off with rich, useful findings. A team approach is very effective during data analysis and is almost essential for larger projects. It is difficult to identify themes when working alone. The best way is often a small group of people working together. Once this group has developed some preliminary conclusions or themes, they can be shared with a larger group of people, such as the steering committee or readers of the Centre's newsletter, in order to develop them further.

Both qualitative and quantitative analyses follow the same sequence of activities (outlined below), although the details within each main activity differ for each approach. For each case, you need to break down the data into manageable units that are logically related to the questions you asked about the service(s). In practice, data collection and data analysis phases often overlap; it may be useful to begin the process of organizing the data and identifying patterns as the data is being gathered.

What lies ahead?

1. Organize the data in a way that makes sense
2. Review the original research questions as a reference point for the analysis
3. Begin to summarize and code the data
4. Identify overarching themes and relations between the data
5. Begin to draft an evaluation/needs assessment report
6. Gather feedback to verify findings

How to apply this step in the C/MFRC?

1. **Organize the data in a way that makes sense**
   - The first step in analyzing data, whether qualitative (words, pictures) or quantitative (numbers), is to organize the information collected. Chances are there is a lot of information to sort through. It's easy to panic because it's hard to imagine how to ever make sense of it all. The important thing is to take it a step at a time.
   - Begin by reading over all the data. Make notes as they occur to you, but don't try to interpret or analyze. Simply look everything over and get familiar with what is there.

- Decide how best to organize the information. Will it be more helpful to have all the survey data summarized in one place, or to have survey, interview, and focus group data from each stakeholder group (e.g., youth, civilian spouses) lumped together? Will it be more helpful to keep all the negative comments in one file and all the positive ones in another?
- Break the information down into more manageable chunks in ways that seem most useful.

See also:
- "Manage the returned data." *Finding Our Way*, p. 64-65
- "How to analyze the data." *Keeping on Track*, p. 43-44
- "About analysis and interpretation of data." *Finding Our Way*, p. 66-67

2. Review the original research questions as a reference point for the analysis

- Refresh your memory about the questions you originally planned to answer through this evaluation. Reflect on the evaluation questions. Now that you have carried out the evaluation and reviewed the data, chances are you will have a different perspective on the services or the needs of the community. The old questions may seem simplistic or off-track. However, keep in mind that these were the questions you planned to address. Although you may now be able to go beyond them, the analysis should not lose track of them.

3. Begin to summarize and code the data

- Re-read all the data one more time. It's important to be as familiar as possible with the information you are drawing on before trying to interpret it. This may be a good time to invite someone else to review some or all of the data (without violating confidentiality).
- As you review the data, try to identify important points, ideas that are mentioned many times, or other information that appears important. Writing ideas in the margins of each set of notes or survey might be helpful.
- This may be overwhelming and may seem like the data will never make sense. Take the process bit by bit. Focus on one type of data at a time and try not to worry too much about major themes.
- For quantitative data, summarize the responses to each question, calculating averages, or listing how frequently each option was chosen.
- If there is data from respondents who have significantly different characteristics (e.g., those living on or off base; those with or without children) analyze their responses separately to see if there are significant differences in the findings.

See also:
- "Analyzing quantitative data." *Finding Our Way*, p. 127-130

- For qualitative data, make notes in the margins, or try to develop a summary of each focus group or interview. As you write, develop a list of codes – individual units of ideas that you think capture the important points being made. This list of codes will evolve as you increasingly understand the data.

See also:
- “Analyzing qualitative data.” *Finding Our Way*, p.124-126

- Develop a system to keep track of where each quotation or number came from (an “audit trail”). First, assign a number to each interview or survey that was completed (e.g., Int1 or S1). Then link that number to a respondent (R1) if doing so does not violate the confidentiality of participants. Make sure that each page of the questionnaire is numbered and that each page of the interview transcript is also numbered (Pg1). Number the questions in both the interview and the survey (Q1). This way you can always explain conclusions by following the trail back to the original data source. For example, it can be Int1, R1, Q2, Pg2, – the response came from Interview #1, Respondent 1, for Question #2 on Page 2.
- By the end of this step, you should have a fairly concise summary (1 to 3 pages) of each of the “chunks of data” identified above. These summaries should be very descriptive – figuring out what it all means comes next.

4. Identify overarching themes and relations between the data

- Look at the codes and summaries developed for each type of data, and begin to identify larger themes that seem to link them together. For example, compare what people said about their satisfaction with the service in interviews and on surveys. Compare what staff, community partners and program participants said were the service’s best features.
- Focus on contradictions and unanswerable questions, as well as on answers that are clear and occur regularly. Both are useful and both can be positive. This phase of the analysis process can be challenging, rewarding, creative and fun.
- Remember that a theme is broader than a code. It is an idea or issue that helps you understand the overall situation you are studying. For example, in data related to family separation as a result of deployment, an individual code might refer to “loneliness,” “identity loss,” “financial stress” or “parenting burdens.” A corresponding theme might be “multi-dimensional issues faced by spouses during family separation.”
- Once you think you have uncovered a theme, double check to be sure you can identify the data that supports this theme. Go back to the raw data and make sure the theme fits with what people actually said.

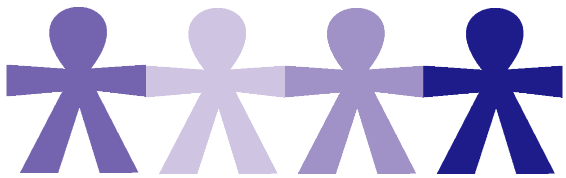
See also:
- “Interpret the data: What are the learnings and impacts?” *Finding Our Way*, p. 69-70
- “Interpreting data into learnings and impacts.” *Finding Our Way*, p. 73

5. Begin to draft an evaluation/needs assessment report

- Plan the overall structure of the report, using both the original evaluation questions and the set of themes. There is more about report writing in Step 10. The point is to begin to think about the findings in a way that mirrors the organization of the final report – thinking in a "report-like" way. Remember that the draft report will develop and change when you share it with stakeholders – it does not need to be perfect at this point! The job now is to identify the most important strengths, learnings and recommendations.

6. Gather feedback to verify findings

- Involving some stakeholders in a preliminary feedback session at this point can have a number of benefits:
  - This informative experience allows you to "test" and get immediate feedback on a number of your conclusions, thereby building the credibility of the findings. If participants of the evaluation or community needs assessment agree with the findings, this increases their credibility and reinforces your understanding of what community members want and how they feel the services are working.
  - This is an opportunity to teach people how to do evaluation/needs assessments.
  - Working with stakeholders to analyze the information collected helps to forge strong relationships.
- Share themes and findings with steering committee members and other stakeholders in order to ensure that the findings reflect their experiences accurately. This step may take place before, during and/or after the report-writing step. Think again about the purpose of the evaluation/needs assessment and make sure that the conclusions to date speak to the original reasons you conducted the research.



Phase IV

Acting on Findings

It is frustrating when a report sits on a shelf once it is complete. Most of us have read reports that conclude with impractical recommendations or that don't seem to reflect the reality of the services they describe. Phase IV includes some strategies for making sure that your evaluation/needs assessment is useful.

Usefulness has a lot to do with thinking ahead. If you laid a solid foundation for the research, involved key stakeholders and developed clear questions, chances are you will end up with a very useful final report. Step 10 describes some strategies for communicating findings. Step 11 offers some guidelines for making sure that the findings, once communicated, are acted upon to produce constructive change:

Step 10: Share Findings
Step 11: Implement What Was Learned

STEP 10

Share Findings

What does this step mean?

Step 10 helps you organize the evaluation/needs assessment report and to consider additional ways in which findings can be communicated.

Depending on the diversity and interest of the potential audience (e.g., funders, program participants, family members, other community members), you may decide to prepare one main report (e.g., to the funder(s)), and one or more alternative communications (e.g., a news bulletin to families, a project fact sheet or a community forum). This step describes some of the most common forms for these communications.

As well as identifying the intended audience of the report, you must also consider the best way to communicate findings. Consider what information your main audience needs. For example, funders may require information about how efficiently the services use their resources, or which services produce the biggest impact for the lowest cost.

What lies ahead?

1. Write a report
2. Consider alternative formats to share findings

How to apply this step in the C/MFRC?

1. Write a report

DMFS does not have a required reporting format. However, there are some general points to consider when writing a research report:

- Written reports should be as brief as possible but as detailed as required, according to the information needs of the audience. Long, rambling reports discourage action.
- If the report is directed at a wide range of stakeholders, avoid complicated language and terminology whenever possible, and give explanations for unfamiliar terms or procedures (e.g., statistical analyses and concepts).
- Consider whether the report should be available in both English and French. If not, perhaps a summary of key findings should be translated.
- Ensure that steering committee members provide feedback on a draft of the final report.

Contents

The written report has four important components:

- describes clearly the service(s) being evaluated or assessed, and the actual or potential users of the service
- tells the story of the process of why and how the evaluation/needs assessment was done – purpose, rationale, and methodology

- describes what was learned by doing the evaluation/needs assessment – results
- leads to action by making suggestions about what to do next in the areas of service planning and evaluation – recommendations

Format

The structure of a research report can take different forms, depending on the audiences and possible uses for which it is intended. For example, if the report is intended only for internal use, organize it in a way that is most meaningful to your organization and local group of stakeholders. However, if you are preparing a final report, most likely it will be sent to funders and other stakeholders beyond your immediate group. If this is the case, organize the report in a way that is familiar to a wider audience.

There are different forms that an evaluation/needs assessment report can take, but the form that probably best suits a C/MFRC is the investigative format. The investigative format describes the process of asking and answering specific questions about the service or community. This format typically includes a description of the questions asked, the method(s) used to answer these questions, a description of the results, and what the findings may mean for the service or community.

The investigative format is most commonly used when writing a final report at the end of a funding period. An important benefit of this format is that it leads the reader through the research process in a straightforward and logical way. This helps the reader understand the reasons for the evaluation/needs assessment and its design, and puts the results of the investigation into a form that makes sense within this rationale.

Keep in mind that you will be using excerpts from the report(s) in the MFSP Funding Application, which asks about research findings from community needs assessments and service evaluations. These findings will help justify why you are offering or not offering MFSP-mandated service components, and why you have chosen specific activities to meet MFSP service objectives.

See also:

- “Reporting on evaluation findings: A sample outline of an evaluation report.” *Keeping on Track,* p. 44-47
- “Use the evaluation results: Basic outline for preparing an evaluation report.” *Finding Our Way*, p. 74-76
- “Tips on report writing.” *Finding Our Way*, p. 131-132

2. Consider alternative formats to share findings

Besides the standard written report, there are a number of other ways to reach intended and potential audiences with the research information gathered. The possibilities are limitless; communicating findings has become somewhat of a creative art (e.g., popular theatre, multimedia).

When choosing your intended audience and how to communicate findings, keep in mind the focus of your research and the sensitivity of the research findings. You may wish to limit distribution of findings on sensitive topics related to family stress and family functioning.

Some common alternatives to communicate findings:

- *Feedback Forums*
  Oral presentations to stakeholders present excellent opportunities to provide feedback to stakeholders and to reflect, as a group, on the information for service planning. This also lets everyone involved renew their commitment to the service(s). Arrange to make a presentation during a scheduled social event and have refreshments and snacks available for community members. This is also a great way to get more community members into the C/MFRC and to familiarize them with its work. If time and financial resources allow, hold a larger feedback forum and invite organizations and employers from the community at large to increase the C/MFRC's profile and build a stronger and wider sense of community.
- *Internal Memos*
  These are a concise and effective way to provide staff and volunteers with an update on ongoing evaluation/needs assessment activities. They can also be used to prepare stakeholders for upcoming group meetings. However, for important announcements, oral presentations and group discussions (if feasible) are preferable.
- *Fact Sheets and C/MFRC Newsletters*
  These offer an effective way to keep all current and potential stakeholders, particularly members of the community, informed about the progress, successes and services of the Centre. Both are good promotional tools when used in conjunction with regular informational brochures and special press releases. Use them to send out a summary of research report findings with welcome packages for new community members. Use the Centre's website to post the summary of findings. Encourage people to come to the Centre to read the full report or to obtain a copy.
- *Journal Articles/Conference and Workshop Presentations*
  If time and resources permit, and if you have used an innovative evaluation plan or have some interesting findings, consider presenting at a community, professional or academic conference, or at a regional conference attended by other C/MFRCs. Also consider writing an article for publication in professional or scholarly magazines and journals, or in the C/MFRC *In Focus* newsletter. These means of communication help other interested parties learn from your successes, and potentially provide the community with valuable feedback and publicity. If you plan on making presentations or publishing in academic or professional media/forums you may wish to consult DMFS and DHRRE, particularly if your results are based upon a tool approved by DHRRE.
- *Press Releases*
  A clearly-worded press release, containing exactly the information you want to make available to the public is a very valuable promotional tool for C/MFRC services and helps raise the profile of the C/MFRC in the community at large. It also helps link to potential employers in the community and to other community organizations that provide services to CF families. Similarly, a written statement provided to a journalist can help to minimize the likelihood that you will accidentally be misquoted. Be sure to consult the on-base Public Affairs officer. This officer will be able to assist with getting your message out to the media and can help the C/MFRC keep the Commanding Officer informed about how the media may interpret publicized survey results.

See also:
- "Share the evaluation results with others." *Finding Our Way*, p. 77-78

STEP 11

Implement What Was Learned

What does this step mean?

Step 11 helps you become more knowledgeable about ways to use the findings generated so that they contribute to further growth and know-how within the organization and the community.

Ideally, completing an evaluation or needs assessment report is not the end of the process. Action research is about participating in constructive change – within communities and organizations. There are additional ways to use the information and recommendations generated within the C/MFRC and the community that contribute to further growth and education. Two important ways to do this are through planning and continual learning.

What lies ahead?

1. Find ways to make evaluation/needs assessment findings more useful
2. Create a culture of learning within the organization

How to apply this step in the C/MFRC?

1. **Find ways to make evaluation/needs assessments findings more useful**
   - Discuss the uses of the report that were planned during the design phase. Think again about why the evaluation/needs assessment was carried out.
   - Involve as many stakeholders as possible in discussing the results of the research, and how findings should be implemented.
   - Support the creation of a committee to work on implementing changes stemming from the findings.
   - Provide opportunities to create changes in services. Start with small changes and small gains to increase confidence and inspire stakeholders to become more active and to stay involved.

See also:
- “Uses of the evaluation findings.” *Keeping on Track*, p. 46-47

Learning from an Evaluation or Needs Assessment Process

At the close of the evaluation project, it may be useful for those involved to discuss the major lessons you think were learned together. Ask the following questions:

- What would we do the same?
- What would we do differently? Why?
- How can we build on the momentum that we created to:
  - ensure findings are acted on
  - ensure we don’t forget the lessons learned about how to conduct research within our organization

Take time to celebrate. Once the project is complete, find ways to thank those who were involved. Take time at the final committee meeting to congratulate yourselves.

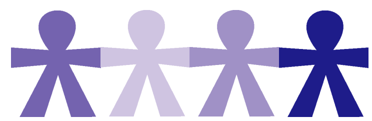
2. Create a culture of learning within the organization

- Recognize that the evaluation/needs assessment *process*, as well as the *product*, is useful. What have you learned about doing research? How can you ensure that these lessons are incorporated into the next research project?
- If there are program participants whose voices have not been traditionally heard, the research process may have given them a chance to have input into services. How can you continue to provide opportunities for feedback from program participants?
- Think about the members of the research committee and others who participated in the research. Would some of them like to become involved in other volunteer opportunities or leadership roles?

The Centre de la famille Valcartier, in Courcelette, QC, has made evaluation an everyday part of their work. As a result of findings from a 1993 survey conducted with military reservists and their families, the *Centre de la famille* implemented a successful social support and educational program, Op Oasis.

Op Oasis offers several support networks to military personnel and their families, particularly around the time of deployments. Adults can participate in educational workshops before, during and after deployment. Youth are invited to weekly youth dinners and are invited to participate in workshops designed to familiarize youth with important aspects of military life. During deployments, Op Oasis volunteers call spouses of deployed military personnel to offer social support and to inquire about whether they need any assistance or information.

These social programs were developed and implemented collaboratively with representatives of the chain of command on the basis of the information, feedback and comments generated through the needs assessment and program evaluation processes conducted at the *Centre de la famille*. *Centre* personnel realize that the military climate constantly changes, and therefore are flexible in the programs and services they offer so as to better meet the needs of their service recipients.



"From our needs assessment with military families we found out through both focus groups and surveys that in moving from base to base it is hard to find a physician. You just manage to get a physician in your community and then you are posted to another base. Children are not getting the continuous health care that they need and things fall through the cracks. It is also difficult to get a referral to a specialist because usually a clinic won't give you a referral.

Therefore, in response to the identified need from our focus groups and survey we developed a site specific program – a medical centre for military families. If the family does not have a physician in the area they can access one on the base through our medical centre... We felt that since we are here to improve the quality of life for military families, this was one way we could act on the findings from our needs assessment and implement a program to fill that need." – Kingston MFRC

Choosing a Consultant

Depending on the amount of time and money available for the evaluation/needs assessment, previous experience with this type of research, and level of technical skills, the Centre may decide to hire an outside evaluator. Here are some points to consider when choosing an evaluator.[5]

Start by deciding whether or not to hire an outside evaluator, to internally evaluate services, or a combination of the two. Both outside and internal evaluators add value to evaluation/needs assessment work.

- External evaluators bring a fresh perspective and evaluation/community needs assessment expertise.
- Internal evaluators (staff, board or advisory committee members, or other volunteers) have an in-depth understanding of the services and the C/MFRC and may be more familiar with the project stakeholders.
- Consider the following when making a decision about an outside evaluator:
  - The purpose of the evaluation or community needs assessment
  - Do you need someone with expertise in community needs assessment in communities that are spread out over a large area making communication difficult?
  - The research questions
  - Do you need someone who has experience with Family Resource Centres or community services for children and adults?
  - The organizational and situational context of the C/MFRC
  - Do you need someone who has experience with your stakeholder groups and the Canadian Forces?

5. Denham & Gillespie (1996). *Guide to Project Evaluation: A Participatory Approach*. National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, Population Health Directorate, Health Canada

- The fit between the evaluator's working style, communication style and research approach and the C/MFRC's participatory action research approach
- The type of relationship preferred between the evaluator and the research steering committee
- The type of relationship preferred between the evaluator and the C/MFRC staff, board or advisory committee members, and volunteers.

• Look for these important skills in an evaluator:
  - The ability to listen
  - The ability to bring together different perspectives from multiple stakeholders
  - The ability and willingness to adapt to changes in the situation as they arise
  - The ability to work effectively and respectfully with a stakeholder evaluation team to design and carry out the evaluation or community needs assessment.

• If the C/MFRC hires a consultant, the contract should include the following provisions:
  - use of the nominal roll only for the purposes set out in the agreement
  - prohibition on the use or release of the research findings by anyone other than the C/MFRC (that is, C/MFRC 'owns' the resulting product and data).

Here's how the Calgary MFRC went about hiring an external consultant for their work.

"Our request was fairly in-depth. We had four candidates respond in the time line we gave them and we interviewed them and got references. We managed to find a consulting group with two consultants that would be doing the hands-on work that seemed to really fit. None of the consultants we tapped into had experience with the... military community but the ones that we ended up with were just very open and approachable and... had a thirst for getting a real grasp of what the lifestyle involves. It was a good fit for our community and everyone certainly found them approachable." – MFRC Calgary

See also:
- "Choosing and working with a consultant." *Finding Our Way*, p. 82-83

Appendix A

Overview of Steps and Tasks

Phase I: Laying the Foundation

Step 1: Clarify Stakeholder Roles

1. Identify the groups with a stake in the service(s) and in its (their) evaluation/needs assessment
2. Invite representatives from identified stakeholder groups to form a research steering committee
3. Build a common understanding of expectations among steering committee members
4. Ensure that steering committee meetings are accessible to all members
5. Ensure that every steering committee member has an equal voice
6. Build buy-in from stakeholders and steering committee members

Step 2: Understand the Benefits of Participatory Action Research

1. Discuss the benefits of participatory action research
2. Brainstorm ways to make the research participatory and action-oriented

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Based on: Taylor, A.R., & Botschner, J.V. (1998). Ontario Community Support Association: Evaluation Handbook. Kitchener, ON: Centre for Research and Education in Human Services. www.crehs.on.ca .

Step 3: Determine the Purpose of the Research

1. Identify the focus of the research
2. Develop a logic model to visualize the service(s) being assessed and/or evaluated
3. Brainstorm what main achievement you hope the evaluation/needs assessment will accomplish
4. Summarize the discussion by writing a purpose statement all steering committee members agree on

Step 4: Describe the Context of the Research

1. Identify the people and other resources that support the research
2. Review and become acquainted with all relevant service documentation and potential sources of information
3. Discuss any anticipated events or circumstances that may impact the research
4. Identify the audience for the evaluation/needs assessment

Phase II: Planning the Needs Assessment/Evaluation

Step 5: Identify the Main Research Questions

1. Brainstorm the main questions you hope the evaluation/needs assessment answers once completed.
2. Develop a list of research questions
3. Identify indicators relevant to the research questions

Step 6: Choose Methods, Tools and Sampling / Recruitment Strategy

1. Understand the importance of using multiple methods from multiple perspectives to collect data (triangulation)
2. Review the different options that provide sources of information
3. Choose and create information-gathering tools
4. Develop a sampling and recruitment strategy
5. Consider ethics

Step 7: Plan the Analysis

1. Trust the original design and questions
2. Plan the data analysis
3. Build in flexibility – leave time for reflection
4. Put together an evaluation/needs assessment work plan
5. Assess the soundness of the research plan

Phase III: Gathering and Analyzing Information

Step 8: Gather Information

1. Pre-test, pilot test and fine-tune research tools
2. Train any staff and volunteers who will be involved in the data collection
3. Monitor progress to ensure quality control
4. Identify and deal with unexpected problems

Step 9: Analyze the Information

1. Organize the data in a way that makes sense
2. Review the original research questions as a reference point for the analysis
3. Begin to summarize and code the data
4. Identify overarching themes and relations between the data
5. Begin to draft an evaluation/needs assessment report
6. Gather feedback to verify findings

Phase IV: Acting on Findings

Step 10: Share Findings

1. Write a report
2. Consider alternative formats to share findings

Step 11: Implement What Was Learned

1. Find ways to make evaluation/needs assessment findings more useful
2. Create a culture of learning within the organization

Appendix B

Project Advisory Committee

Peter Gabor
DMFS Consultant, University of Calgary in Lethbridge

Laurie Johnson
Member and Past-Chair, Winnipeg Military Family Resource Centre

Genella Macintyre
Executive Director, Shilo Military Family Resource Centre

Major Rob Morrow
Research Officer – Social Policy, Director Human Resources Research and Evaluation

Pam Willis, Eva Marks MacIsaac and Madeleine Lafleur
Regional Representatives, Director Military Family Services

Alla Ivask
Senior Manager – Policy & Program Development, Director Military Family Services

Maureen Kellerman
Program Coordinator, Director Military Family Services

Appendix C

List of Key Informants

The following MFRCs kindly shared their stories of evaluation and community needs assessments:

- Calgary MFRC (Calgary, AB)
- Dundurn MFRC (Dundurn, SK)
- Kingston MFRC (Kingston, ON)
- Centre de la famille Valcartier (Courcelette, QC)
- Halifax MFRC (Halifax, NS)

Appendix D

Process for DHRRE Approval of C/MFRC Research Plans

Note: *as outlined on pages 7 – 8 of this guide, Director Human Resources Research and Evaluation (DHRRE) must approve C/MFRC plans to conduct a community-wide survey questionnaire or research related to a specific deployment.*

Identify your intent to conduct a community-wide survey questionnaire or research related to a specific deployment

When the C/MFRC completes the MFSP Funding Application, the Centre will identify its annual plan for community needs assessments and service evaluations. If the C/MFRC intends in the upcoming fiscal year to conduct a community-wide survey or research related to a specific deployment, this must be clearly identified on the Plan template. When the local Commanding Officer (CO) signs the MFSP Funding Application, discuss with him/her the purpose of the research and proposed timing, noting that the MOU/SLA requires C/MFRCs to conduct needs assessments and service evaluations.

DMFS review and local CO approval

Once the C/MFRC research steering committee has completed a draft of the research tool(s), forward copies to your DMFS Field Operations Manager. DMFS staff can offer a valuable perspective gained from the experience of working with numerous other C/MFRCs.

Once DMFS staff have provided input and your committee is satisfied with the research tool(s), send copies back to your Field Operations Manager along with the completed DHRRE Research Approval Form. (See Appendix E)

You will note that the Approval Form requires the approval of the local Commanding Officer (CO). Ensure that the chairperson of the MFRC Board of Directors/CMFRC Advisory Committee or Executive Director/ Director provides the CO with a copy of the research tool and details about the purpose of the research, the timing, and how it will be conducted. In the case of research related to a specific deployment, the approval of the applicable unit CO is also required.

DMFS staff will ensure that your completed Approval Form, research tool(s) and other attachments are promptly forwarded to Director Human Resources Research and Evaluation (DHRRE).

DHRRE approval

DHRRE will review the research tool(s) and provide feedback only on items that must be changed to make the tool(s) acceptable for delivery to the military community. Once DHRRE has provided your C/MFRC with the feedback, you will be expected to provide your amended research tool(s) back to DHRRE for final approval. Plan on the entire DHRRE review and approval process taking about four weeks for completion.

Appendix E

DHRRE Research Approval Form

Proposed C/MFRC Research Plan for Community-wide Surveys or Deployment-related Research

C/MFRC:

Contact Name:

Email:

Phone:

The following outline will guide the proposal. You must address all sections. Length should not exceed 3 pages (plus attachments) and may be shorter.

Research title (provide in both English and French if available)

Purpose of the research
- Why is it important? What are you looking for?
- Start and end dates proposed/desired (for data collection)
- Proposed date for completed research report
- Benefit to DND/CF of this research

Sponsor: DMFS

Base Commander approval/ECS information
- Please attach certification that the Base Commander has approved proceeding with this research.
- If the research is related to a specific deployment, please attach certification that the unit CO has approved proceeding with this research.
- DMFS will advise the ECS that you will be proceeding with this research, once approved. Which ECS would you like DMFS to contact?

Notes: 1. This is a showstopper. If Base Commander approval is not granted, DHRRE cannot proceed.
2. Final approval for C/MFRC to proceed includes requirement for both Base Commander approval and DHRRE technical approval.

Participants
- How many? (also identify Regular Force, Reserve Force, civilian spouses of CF members, DND employees, etc)
- How selected (random, certain ranks, etc…)?
- Locations (s)? (specifically)

Instrument(s) (Attach copy of survey, interview guide, etc.)
- Describe research tool(s) (What does it measure, how long is it, etc?)
- Is this a new or previously-used instrument?

Procedures
- Explain *exactly* how this research will proceed (questionnaire, electronic questionnaire, phone interview, focus group, etc?)
- Are there Official Language requirements?
- Explain what analysis will be conducted.

Ethical Considerations
- What are they?
- Will this research cause anxiety? If so, how will you deal with this?
- How will you ensure participants' anonymity?

Attach:
- Copy of ethics statement (If your Board/Advisory Committee or research steering committee has developed an ethics statement please include it as an attachment.)
- Copy of informed consent form (This may not be a separate form, rather, a statement that the survey participant signs as part of survey completion)
- Copy of confidentiality statement (This may not be a separate form, rather a statement that the survey participant signs as part of survey completion.)

Appendix F

Additional Resources

Guide to Project Evaluation: A Participatory Approach. Donna Denham & Joan Gillespie, National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, Population Health Directorate, Health Canada, 1996. (Available in English and French)

To order this resource:
Tel: 1-800-267-1291
To download this resource:
English version: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence/html/1project.htm
French version: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/violencefamiliale/html/fvprojetevaluation_f.html

Doing It Right! A Needs Assessment Workbook. Edmonton Social Planning Council, 1993. (Available in English only)

To order this resource:
Tel: (780) 423-2031; Fax: (780) 425-6244; Email: edmspc@interbaun.com
Website: www.edmspc.ca

Pathways to a Healthy Community: An Indicators and Evaluation Tool Kit. Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, 1999. (Available in English only).

To download this resource:
www.healthycommunities.on.ca (under publications choose Pathways to a Healthy Community)

The Evaluation of Family Resource Programs: Challenges and Promising Approaches. Peter Gabor, Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs, 2003. (Available in English and French)

To order this resource:
Tel: (613) 237-7667; Fax: (613) 237-5515; Email: info@frp.ca
Website: www.frp.ca (under publications, choose The Evaluation of Family Resource Programs)

Know Your Community: A Step-by-Step Guide to Community Needs and Resources Assessment. Family Support America, 1998. (Available in English only)

To order this resource:
Tel: (312) 338-1522 Fax: (312) 338-0900 x 155
Website: www.familysupportamerica.org

MFSP
MILITARY FAMILY SERVICES PROGRAM

Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency
1600 Star Top Road, Ottawa ON K1A 0K2
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