

Methods for Evaluating Rural Food Access Initiatives



Method	Techniques	When this method is useful
GIS Mapping	Creating digital maps with local assets and opportunities for improving food access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs assessment • Outcome evaluation • Typically used in conjunction with other types of evaluation methods
Most Significant Change (MSC)	Collecting stories from people engaged in all phases of food access and identifying where the greatest impact occurred.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process evaluation • Outcome evaluation • Gains an understanding of where stakeholders place value • Identifying promising practices • Typically used in conjunction with other types of evaluation methods
Storytelling	Using disciplined inquiry to collect stories from multiple individuals who benefit or do not benefit from food access initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathers contextual details around the initiative and its impact • Identifies unintended consequences • Allows participants to be engaged in evaluation • Advocacy • Typically used in conjunction with other types of evaluation methods
Case Study	An intensive examination of one or several cases rather than a broader study of many. Usually includes qualitative and quantitative data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process evaluation • Outcome evaluation • Showcases an example of a method being implemented • Captures the attention of audience members and are memorable • The information is usually not generalizable
Photovoice	Community-based data collection method that allows community members to provide photographic evidence of their day-to-day lives. Can be conducted pre-post.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs assessment • Advocacy • Outcome evaluation • Allows participants to be engaged in evaluation • Typically used in conjunction with other types of evaluation methods
Developmental Evaluation	Occurs simultaneously and constantly alongside programming and informs the course of the implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During pilot programs • Useful in complex, non-linear environments • Requires flexibility on methods and open-mindedness in findings • Relies heavily on the context in which the initiative is occurring

The Rural Food Access Toolkit can be found at www.ruralhealthinfo.org/community-health/food-access

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