

SNAICC

**Participatory Action Research
Evaluation**

Learner's Guide



Workshop 1 - Planning the evaluation

Name:.....

Phone number:.....

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The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Inc. (SNAICC) is the national non-government peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The SNAICC Resource Service (SRS) works across the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family and children's services sector to produce and distribute practical resources and information.

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Resources

SNAICC and CCRE For Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health, *SRS Participatory Action Research Evaluation Learner's guide 1*.

Couzens, Tina. 2007. *General Reflections about Sharing the Learning, an Early Years Literacy Program, Aboriginal 3 Year Old Resource..* Unpublished report.

To the participant,

In this first Learner's guide and workshop we will help you prepare an evaluation plan. This will include:

- Looking at the competencies covered by this course
- Discussing what evaluation is
- Hearing evaluation stories from the field
- Helping you select a project to evaluate
- Discussing the goals, objectives and strategies of your project
- Selecting outcome indicators for your project
- Looking at some of the tools you may use to evaluate your project
- Selecting some tools for your project
- Looking at some ways for storing your information once you start your evaluation
- Planning your evaluation, action research project

This learner's guide is a backup for Workshop 1 on *Participatory Action Research Evaluation*. Its content will be covered through interactive face-to-face sessions. The learner's guide contains the content of the sessions including the activities and assessment tasks.

The activities and assessments for this Learner's guide are summarised in the Chart on pages 12-13.

This Guide will be adapted after each workshop to incorporate material produced by the participants of the workshop.

We wish you well in your journey into the world of Participatory Action Research Evaluation!

Competencies covered in this short course

From *Certificate IV in Indigenous Research Capacity Building*

Learner's Guide 1/Workshop 1- red

Learner's Guide 2 – blue (between workshops)

Learner's Guide 3/Workshop 3 – brown

UNIT CODE: ICBRES401A

UNIT TITLE: Plan Research for Capacity Building

Unit Descriptor

This unit describes the competencies required to plan research projects for capacity building, incorporating information which may be gathered by the researcher or by other workers in the community

1. Determine ownership of research material

- 1.1 Permission is obtained from the community to undertake the research
- 1.2 Key people are consulted about the purpose and outcome of the research
- 1.3 Funding policy and / or organisational guidelines regarding ownership are reviewed and noted
- 1.4 Ownership of research data and documents is negotiated
- 1.5 Ownership is acknowledged on documents, as required by funding, policy and / or organisational guidelines

2. Use *community processes* to assess capacity building needs of the community

- 2.1 *Key people* are identified and contacted
- 2.2 The purpose and scope of research is identified and recorded
- 2.3 Appropriate processes of community consultation are identified and implemented

3. Decide research *methodology* using community processes

- 3.1 Requirements of report are negotiated
- 3.2 *Information* items relevant to research are identified and developed
- 3.3 Options for community consultation are outlined
- 3.4 Evaluation processes are incorporated throughout research techniques / consultations processes

UNIT CODE: ICBRES402A

UNIT TITLE: Undertake Research for Capacity Building

Unit Descriptor

This unit describes the competencies required to carry out research projects for capacity building, incorporating information which may be gathered by the researcher or by other workers in the community

1. Carry out capacity building research

- 1.1 *Action plans* are developed
- 1.2 *Information* is received and recorded
- 1.3 Information is analysed
- 1.4 Methodology is evaluated with key people

2. Gather information

- 2.1 Permission to gather information is obtained from the community
- 2.2 Information needed to ensure community capacity building issues are addressed, is identified and sources located
- 2.3 *Key people* are consulted
- 2.4 Information is gathered and *recorded*

3. Compile information

- 3.1 Information is compiled in *appropriate systems and formats*
- 3.2 *Reports* are developed
- 3.3 Emerging trends and issues are analysed and documented
- 3.4 *Coordinator / researcher* is consulted to ensure information is compiled appropriately

4. Feedback information to key people and / or supervisor

- 4.1 Key people are *advised of the outcomes of the research*
- 4.2 Information is presented to researcher / coordinator / supervisor in agreed format

5. Finalise capacity building research

- 5.1 Report is completed and based on consultations
- 5.2 Recommended actions are developed
- 5.3 Findings are tested and confirmed
- 5.4 Report is referred to appropriate agencies
- 5.5 Liaison is undertaken with appropriate agencies on report findings
- 5.6 Methodology is evaluated

UNIT CODE: ICBAPP501A

UNIT TITLE: Evaluate research findings to develop continuous improvement strategies

Unit Descriptor

This unit covers managing the continuous improvement of practices of the organisation through research and capacity building.

Element

1 Obtain, analyse and document information relevant to the needs of indigenous community services and communities

- 1.1 Identify and describe issues of concern
- 1.2 Other research is conducted as appropriate
- 1.3 Relevant information is synthesised into forms appropriate for communicating with, and providing to, relevant agencies, communities and stakeholders

2. Work with communities, service users, services and other stakeholders to develop strategies to address identified needs

- 2.1 Close working relationships / networks are developed and maintained with communities and other relevant stakeholders
- 2.2 Formal meetings, community forums, working groups and other activities are organised to develop action plans, projects, and programs to address identified needs
- 2.3 Meetings, working groups and other activities aimed at developing relevant strategies are participated in
- 2.4 Strategic / action / project plans are prepared in forms that are appropriate to the needs and roles of relevant stakeholders

3. Facilitate the implementation of strategies developed to address continuous improvement

- 3.1 Relevant opportunities for communicating formally and informally about the needs of clients and communities are identified and pursued
- 3.2 Best practice and comparison data is gathered and used to identify potential areas for improvement to respond to changes and trends

- 3.3 Submissions for resources to implement continuous service delivery improvement are prepared
- 3.4 Communities and other stakeholders are worked with to implement relevant projects and action plans
- 3.5 Opportunities are pursued and comments provided on policy documents, legislation, project plans and other relevant documents regarding the needs of clients and communities
- 3.6 Appropriate quality assurance procedures are developed and routinely applied and are reviewed for continuing relevance

4. Refocus the organisation/service

- 4.1 Information is regularly collected on changing client and community needs and used to review the continuing relevance and effectiveness of services provided
- 4.2 Where there are indicators that service delivery, practices and directions need to change to reflect changing client or community requirements, a full range of options are explored to ensure that revisions are culturally appropriate and meet needs
- 4.3 Where appropriate, alterations are made to strategic plans and organisational objectives and priorities, to reflect changing directions in service delivery
- 4.4 Consultative processes are routinely used to ensure staff, client, community and other stakeholders support changes
- 4.5 Appropriate training is provided for staff and community to enable maximum outcomes from continuous improvement processes

Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

You may already have some knowledge and experience of the contents of these elements.

The list above will help you think about the skills, knowledge and attitude you already have which relate to the learning outcomes or elements of this Learner's guide.

If you can already do these elements talk to your lecturer about Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), instead of studying what is in this Learner's Guide.

RPL means that work experience, previous study and personal experience can be taken into account. It means that you do not have to learn things over again if you have already done them.

Competency information

The aim of ***Participatory Action Research Evaluation*** is to assist you to develop the knowledge and skills that will enable you to conduct a small evaluation project of relevance to you work.

Overview

This Learner's guide is set out in 8 topics. Each topic covers some elements of the competencies ICBRES401A, ICBRES402A, and ICBAPP501A

Time taken: It will take approximately two & a half days of workshop to cover the contents of this Learner's guide and then some time in the community to collect your data.

Assessment

Your assessment for this workshop about *Participatory Action Research Evaluation* has several parts:

- Attendance and participation at the workshop
- Contribution to group activities
- Notes from class discussion, provided by facilitator
- Activity Sheet notes
- Fulfilment of your part in the evaluation of your project

Fulfilment of each part, or its equivalent, is required in order to complete this section of the course.

See the chart with activities and assessments on pages 12-13 of this Learner's Guide.

How to use this Learning Guide

The primary method of teaching the content of this course will involve a face-to-face workshop with the facilitator, guest speakers and students participating in inter-active presentations and discussion. This Learner's guide contains:

- each topic of the workshop
- each activity of this part of the workshop, and
- the worksheets you must complete
- a guide for proceeding with your project evaluation

The Learner's Guide is intended to be a reference book for you to refer back to after the workshop.

Activities

In each topic there are activities to do.

These activities are important. They will make you stop and think about what you have read and discussed and will add more information to what you will read, like ideas from other students, friends, family and community members. These activities will also help you prepare your major assignment.

Group discussion and participation in workshops

Your facilitator will help you organise your travel for the block release workshops. The Workshop will be held across two and a half days. This Learner's guide covers the entire workshop and the information you will need to conduct your evaluation project.

Your participation in the discussion and activities during the workshop are very important and will contribute to your overall assessment.

Work based assignment

Your major assignment for this whole course is made up of a number of smaller assignments and these together form your project. Your project will be of your own choosing. You will

1. begin with a project of your choice to evaluate
2. conduct a search for relevant literature and other programs of relevance to your program to find out what others have found and done
3. gain permission from the appropriate people to do your evaluation project
4. attend to all the appropriate ethical and cultural protocols while conducting your project
5. design and plan your evaluation project
6. gather all the data (information) needed for your project
7. store the data securely and in a way you can access
8. analyse that data
9. assemble findings in answer of your research question
10. propose recommendations
11. compile a report
12. report back to the stakeholders about your findings
13. incorporate this whole process into your strategic plan to begin continuous improvement

Learner's Guide 1 Assessment and Activities

WS Day	WB Topic	Activity	Assessment	ICB RES 401A	ICB APP 501A
1	1	1. Group work and discussion: What is evaluation	• Participation in discussion	3.1	4.1
	2	2. Discussion of ethics • What is ethical research • Ethical principles of research	• Participation in discussion • Group notes	1.1, 1.2, 1.3 1.4, 1.5	
	3	3. Things to consider when listening to guest speaker			
	4	4. Discussion of guest speaker's project: goals, objectives, strategies & indicators	•Participation in discussion •Group notes	3.2	
	4	5. Group summarises their own project	•Participation in discussion •Group notes	1.1	1.1 4.1
2	5	6. Groups draft goals & objectives of their own project	•Participation in discussion •Group notes	2.2	1.1 4.1
	5	7. Group work identifying strategies used for project	•Participation in discussion •Group notes	2.2	4.1
	5	8. Group discussion identifying outcome indicators	•Participation in discussion •Group notes	2.2	4.1
	6	9. Group conducts an interview about the workshop, with an observer taking notes	•Triangulation •interview, notes •Participation in discussion	3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4	
	6	10. Group conducts an observation of this session of the workshop	• Participates in observation •Participation in discussion	3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4	
	6	11. Group constructs and administers a questionnaire about the workshop	•Construct small questionnaire •Participation in discussion	3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4	
	6	12. Group conducts an audit of the workshop	•Conduct an audit of this workshop •Participation in discussion	3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4	

	6	13. Group does a case study of an aspect of the workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •As a class compile a case study around data already collected •Participation in discussion 	3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4	
	6	14. Group conducts a demographic analysis of workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Construct a demographic profile of class •Participation in discussion 	3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4	
	6	15. Groups report back to the workshop about their experiences with each of the methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting back 		
	7	16. Groups make an evaluation plan & critique of methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Participation in discussion •Written plan 	2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4	RES 402 A 1.1
3	8	17. Groups present plans to large group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Contributes to presentation 		
	8	18. Discussion of how information can be stored: interview, survey, pictures,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Participation in discussion • 		
	8	19. Groups decide on how they will store the information collected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Participation in discussion •Written plan 		
Your homework is described in Learner's Guide 2					

1. Evaluation

What is evaluation?

We are evaluating all the time, for example when we make judgements on the value of an activity, a book, a meal or a movie –was it good, bad, useful, boring, too hard, too simple, and so on. “Every time we choose, decide, accept or reject we have made an evaluation.”

(Wadsworth 1997, p. 5)

Workshop Activity 1

Understanding evaluation

As a class group we will discuss what we understand evaluation to be.

Facilitator records key points on whiteboard.

Formal evaluations help us to see whether a program is achieving what it set out to achieve and if not why not and whether it was reaching the people it intended to reach.

- *Evaluation is the use of research methods to assess the value of something. Is it working? Is it meeting its goals?*
- *Action research is evaluation followed by action to improve the value of a project or program. It can be ongoing and lead to continuous improvement of a program.*

We can evaluate our own projects as an insider or contract an outsider to do the evaluation.

An evaluation judges a project as to whether it has achieved its goals and objectives.

For this course, you will be evaluating a project of your choice, recommending improvements if needed and then implementing those recommendations leading to continuous improvement where possible.

Reference

Wadsworth, Y. 1997. *Everyday Evaluation on the Run*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin

2. Ethics & research

Introduction

By ethical we mean doing the research in ways that are respectful of Aboriginal people and of benefit to Aboriginal people.

The long term aim is for Aboriginal people to direct and undertake research involving their own people.

Many Aboriginal communities have established cultural and ethical protocols which guide processes of consultation and information sharing.

Recognising ethics as an issue in Aboriginal health research has resulted from many Aboriginal people campaigning over many years.

Ethical research is conducted with Aboriginal people and communities in ways that respect the Aboriginal people and their values.

Table 1 provides explanations of important terms.



Table 1

Some key terms:

Ethics:

Ethics refers to the beliefs and values that people hold. It refers to people's ways of behaving, in terms of fair and unfair, good and bad, justice and injustice.

Human Research Ethics:

This term refers to principles that guide researchers to pursue their research work in ways that are safe, respectful and responsible with regards to people, whoever they are, and also in a way that the research is of high quality.

Ethical Human Research:

This is where the research is conducted in a way that protects the human rights of research participants. This is especially an issue for less powerful members of the community. Many Aboriginal people feel that over the years research with their people has not respected their rights. In such cases the research has not been ethical.

By Glenn Giles from *Workbook 4, IRCB course, AHCSA*, p. 11, 2007

There have been widespread negative feelings among Aboriginal peoples about research. Research has commonly been undertaken by non-Aboriginal researchers on Aboriginal people, usually without respect for the Aboriginal people and with no benefit seen by the Aboriginal people. Another issue of concern to Aboriginal people has been the lack of acknowledgement by non-Aboriginal researchers of the knowledge provided by the Aboriginal people and community that have been involved in the research.

Conducting research in an ethical way involves more than simply following a set of rules and procedures.

Developing trust and relationships between Aboriginal people / organisations and researchers requires time. Establishing ongoing relationships between researchers and the people being researched is something that researchers need to accommodate in their work-plans.

Your organisation will most probably have guidelines for ethical conduct within the organisation. After the workshop, you will be asked to find out if your organisation has a policy on consultation and ethical practice.

Homework Activity 1

Your organisation's policy on consultation and ethical practice

Find out if your organisation has a policy on consultation and ethical practice. If so copy the bits that are relevant to your project evaluation and include it in your portfolio.

Workshop Activity 2

Group discussion of research ethics

- What is ethical research?
- Each group selects a principle from Table 2 to discuss.

Research ethics requires that you seek permission from the participants after informing them about what you aim to do and how. This is called **informed consent**.

It is also important to ensure that you respect the participants' **confidentiality**. This means that you respect each person's privacy and do not identify a particular person with a particular comment or view at any stage, including in the final report. It is important not include people's real names in your notes or interview transcripts. The notes you collect need to be kept secure in a locked filing cabinet throughout the evaluation and for five years after.

Table 2 summarises these ethical issues for you to consider when you conduct your evaluation.



Table 2

Evaluation and Action research require consideration of the following:

- ethical principles and cultural protocols

- the necessary consultations with your community and service organisation, clients and other organisations
- the selection of your project to be evaluated
- the gaining of informed consent from the participants in your study
- the protection of the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants of your evaluation
- the research method you use in your evaluation
- the way that you conduct your research
- the need for a practical benefit to the community from your research
- feeding back to all the relevant stakeholders what you found
- the secure storage of the data from your evaluation

Reference

Giles, G. and Malin, M. 2007. *Ethics - Workbook 4*, from the Certificate IV, Indigenous Research Capacity Building. Norwood: Aboriginal Health Council of S.A.

The Australian Health Ethics Committee. 2005. *Exploring what ethical research means: Resource package for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations*. Canberra: NHMRC -

- Keeping research on track: A guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about health research and ethics
- Values & ethics: Guidelines for ethical conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health research.

21/02/2008

3. An example of early childhood evaluation

Introduction

Tina Couzens from Kura Yerlo Children's Centre has directed and evaluated an *Early Years Literacy Program* for three year olds at the centre. The project, ***Sharing the Learning***, was funded by DECS for three years and provided a .8 extra staff position allowing for more intensive staff interaction with the children.

The program was considered successful for many reasons. The evaluation found that **the children** involved in the program when they entered school at age 5, demonstrated:

- A positive disposition particularly around confidence, risk taking, questioning, thinking, knowing, problem solving
- Enhanced literacy understandings, awareness and articulation
- A positive self-concept (this is inclusive of a strong cultural understanding of self and others and their community).

The staff:

- Were inspired to think about their own literacy knowledge and perceptions
- Sought new knowledge about literacy research
- Collected data on their program and the children's responses
- Shared this knowledge with the families

The program involved the following:

- Reducing child:staff ratio
- Building upon the learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 3 year olds
- Providing additional professional learning and research opportunities

- Recognition of current effective practices
- Development of sustainable teaching and learning approaches to support the literacy learning of Aboriginal children

Consultation

Stakeholders of the program were consulted for example:

- Families for what they believed important regarding their children's literacy.
- Local schools, via Aboriginal Education Workers, regarding
 - how to make the transition 'seamless'
 - types of literacy programs

After listening to Tina, you will have a clearer idea of what child behaviours were identified as indicating literacy learning and how the staff measured those behaviours.

Workshop Activity 3

Things to consider when listening to the guest speaker

- What were the aims of the project?
- How did they assess whether the aims were achieved?
- What research methods did they use - interview, observation, document analysis, audits?

Workshop Activity 4

Discuss the following questions

- What were the aims of the project?
- How did they assess whether the aims were achieved?
- What research methods did they use - interview, observation, document analysis, audits?

Reference

Couzens, Tina. 2007. *General Reflections about Sharing the Learning, an Early Years Literacy Program, Aboriginal 3 Year Old Resource..* Unpublished report.

4. Selection of group projects

Introduction

In the next two activities, we will revisit the projects people have decided to evaluate and then examine their goals and objectives.

An evaluation looks to see if the goals and objectives have been achieved and also whether there have been any other positive or negative outcomes which were unexpected.

Workshop Activity 5

A summary of your project

Divide into groups, one group for each project. Pretend that it's the end of your project. You have been asked to explain the project in 5 minutes to someone who knows nothing about it using a map or picture. How will you draw it so the person understands:

- What you did
- Who was involved and
- What was achieved
- How was the community involved

Someone from the group notes the ideas on butchers paper

You have 20 minutes to do this.

.....

Report back to the large group about this

Facilitator records key points on whiteboard.

5. Evaluation Terms

You will have already come across relevant evaluation terms from the previous activities. These terms are

- **project goals,**
- **project objectives,**
- **project strategies** and
- **outcome indicators.**

Once you have decided what each of these are for your project, you will be well on the way to drafting your evaluation plan.

Definitions of each are presented below. After discussing them, you will be asked to select these for your own project plan.



Table 3

Project goals

These are an overall statement of what you want to achieve in the long-term. Any project has at least one main goal. Some have more.

To develop a goal, begin by deciding on the long-term outcomes you want. Be as specific as possible. You are looking at things over a 1 to 3 year time span, perhaps longer.



Table 4

Objectives

An objective is a focussed statement of what you want to achieve in the short-term that will contribute to achieving the goal.

Break your goals into smaller parts. Be as specific as possible. Some may be achieved early whereas others may be relevant across the whole project. [We will be asking you to think about how you will measure or judge whether each objective has been achieved. These are 'outcome indicators' - see below.]

Workshop Activity 6

Reviewing the goals and objectives

Spend about 10 minutes looking over the notes that the facilitator took from your discussion about your project. From this and from your knowledge and experience of the project list:

- *The project aims*
- *The project objectives*
- *The stakeholders of the project*

As a class, report back what you found.

Facilitator records key points on whiteboard.

The next task will be to work out how you plan to achieve those aims and objectives through your project. These are the strategies that you will use to make your project work in the way that it was intended.



Table 5

Strategies

Strategies explain **how** you are going to achieve your goals and objectives. They describe what you will **do** during the project. Many strategies may be needed for each objective. Some strategies will apply to more than one objective.

(These definitions were developed by Kathleen Stacey, 2003)

Workshop Activity 7

Identifying the Strategies you will use

Again, split up into groups according to project. Select a scribe and discuss

- *How you will achieve the aims and objectives for your project*
- *How will you involve the community in evaluating the project*

These are the strategies for your project.

Report back to the class.

Facilitator records key points on whiteboard.

The next task is to think about how you will assess whether those strategies are working. If they are working, they will be producing outcomes or results but you will need to decide what those outcomes might be.



Table 6

Outcome indicators

These are benchmarks you can use to measure how well you have achieved both your goals and your objectives. They help you design your evaluation plan. They need to be clearly linked to the goals and objectives. They help you decide:

- What you need to find out about the project
- What this information looks like, and
- What questions to ask of which people

They are not limited to things you can measure with numbers.

They can also describe positive personal experiences. You develop them by looking at each goal and objective and then asking yourself:

- How will I know that this has been achieved?
- What would I see happening/not happening?
- What would people be saying/not saying?
- What would be documented/ not documented?
- What difference would I / other people experience?

Workshop Activity 8

Identifying the Outcome indicators

Again, split up into groups according to project. Select a scribe and list your project's

- Outcome indicators - these are the things that show how the project is working
- How will you involve the community in deciding these
- Report back to the class

Facilitator records key points on whiteboard.



Table 7

Other possible issues to consider about how the project was conducted:

- Did the people who needed or wanted to be in the project get involved? Why or why not?
- Were people satisfied with how the project was organised? Why or why not?
- Were people satisfied with what they got to do in the project? Why or why not?
- Were all the strategies implemented? Why or why not?

- Were all the strategies effective? Why or why not?
- Were the project materials used of good quality? Why or why not?

References

Malin, M. 2007. *Evaluation and Action Research – Workbook 8* from the Certificate IV, Indigenous Research Capacity Building. Norwood: Aboriginal Health Council of S.A.

Patton, M.Q. 2002. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods. 3rd Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Stacey, Kathleen. 2003. *Evaluation tools and processes*. Unpublished papers. mobile: 0438 336 636 email. kathleen@beyond-kathleenstacey.com.au

6. Evaluation tools and strategies

Evaluation can draw on the same research methods as other research projects. The most commonly used are explained below.

Personal interviews¹

Personal interviews are very useful in evaluation studies.

Workshop Activity 9

Class splits into 6 groups and selects one of the 6 data collection methods.

Interview Group: Constructs interview schedule. Splits into groups of 3. One person conducts an interview with another group member about the Workshop. The third person is the observer and notes what is said. At end, observer summarises what was said.

Qualitative interviews are similar to a conversation only there is more emphasis on the interviewer listening than speaking. In qualitative interviews the interviewer generally uses a list of topics to guide the conversation. It is important for the interviewer to remain open to new ideas raised by the interviewee (the person being interviewed) throughout the interview. There are three basic types of qualitative interview.

¹ This section is from Malin, 2007 *Data Collection: Qualitative Research Workbook 6*

Types of interview

Semi-structured interviews are probably the most common technique in qualitative interviews. They are partly structured by a list of topics that need to be covered. Then, if the interviewee drifts off the topic for a long time or repeats the same things over and over again, the interviewer then subtly and respectfully directs the topic of conversation back to the more relevant issues. The interviewer must balance the need to have certain questions answered with the need to be open to new ideas presented by the interviewee.

During the interview, spontaneous probing questions can be used to delve deeper into the issues. This might entail questions such as:

- Oh, that's interesting, could you tell me more about that?
- Before, you said that you found the person really helpful, what sorts of things did she do that were helpful to you?
- When you said ..., did you mean that ... or was it something else?

Structured interviews are more similar to the oral questionnaires conducted in a survey. A set list of questions is used with every participant. However, unlike in a survey, the questions are open ended. This is explained below.

Usually these types of question are used later in a research project once all the important issues have been raised by interviewees through the unstructured or semi-structured interviews. They are useful because they are more efficient and less time-consuming to conduct than semi- and un-structured interviews. And they can be used with a

larger number of people to determine the prevalence or popularity of a point-of-view, for example.

Informal, unstructured interviews are the most like a conversation. They are spontaneous and the questions flow from the immediate situation. They can be useful in the early stages of a project in order to uncover issues which are relevant to the people concerned. This type of interview can be conducted during ordinary daily activity as normal conversation seeking to understand people's needs and situations. The data or information gathered from every informal interview will be different. These types of interview "go with the flow" (Patton 2003: 343).

Types of questions

It is important that you **ask the questions in a way which will be comfortable to the interviewee**. For example, Aboriginal people often feel that non-Aboriginal people ask questions in a blunt and impolite way. You will know how it is best to ask questions with your own community and it is important that you go with your 'gut instincts' when talking with and interviewing people of your own culture. Some Aboriginal researchers have said that they like to talk about their own experiences in the interviews as this helps the interviewer to be at the same level as the interviewee and lessens the distance between researcher and researched (Ngaritjan-Kessarlis 1992).

In qualitative research, **open-ended questions** are the most useful as they allow for unexpected answers and also for detail that is important for the researcher to understand. They allow people to give information that is important to them. Examples of this type of question are:

What do you think about the child care centre?

What do you like about the centre?

What do you think needs to be changed?

Closed questions which ask for set answers such as 'yes' or 'no' or the ticking of boxes are not as useful in qualitative research. They are used in survey questionnaires such as the census and will be discussed later.

Focus groups

A focus group is an interview with a group of about 3 to 12 people on a specific topic. It usually runs for one or two hours. It gives people the opportunity to present their own ideas and then build on those ideas in response to what the others in the group are saying.



Table 8

Tips for running a focus group

Ensure:

- People are comfortable with one another
- People feel safe about saying what they really think

Your role as moderator requires:

- helping the conversation flow
- supporting the group members rather than interrogating them
- Providing snacks and drinks
- Providing a sheet of paper listing the main few questions with a space below each question.
 - *The sheet of paper can be used for*
 - For doodling
 - For reminder notes
 - To jot down thoughts which a person might not want to say in front of the group.

Interviewing children

Children can be quite challenging to interview and sometimes it is useful to interview them in pairs such as with a close friend or a trusted relation. Using story telling or pictures to capture what a child is thinking or feeling may be useful.

Listening and responding

It is important to be a genuine, attentive listener and to give the interviewee constant feedback in a way that shows that you are interested and respectful. Some interviewees may feel that you want them to answer in a particular way and so not give you their honest answer. It is important **not** to give leading questions such as “*Why are children so happy at this centre?*” Equally, it is important to keep your body language neutral when asking for their opinions so you don’t influence their answer.

Interviewing someone you know well

If you are interviewing somebody who knows you, they may not give you information in their answers which they think you already know. This will result in incomplete data. Ask them to speak to you as if you know nothing about the situation so that all relevant information is recorded for the research.

Attending to body language

Be sensitive to the body language of the interviewee so you can anticipate when they are tired of talking, or if a topic is too sensitive, or if they are not being totally frank about the situation. Sometimes actions speak louder than words, and occasionally it will be appropriate to record in your notes the body language of the interviewee.

Recording the interview

The most accurate way to record an interview is with an audio-recorder accompanied with written notes taken during the interview. Audio-recordings allow you to present the interviewee’s point-of-view **in their own words.**

If the person does not want to be audio-taped then hand notes will be necessary but unless you can write very fast and in shorthand, they are less accurate. Usually, hand notes paraphrase what is being said. Different words are used to capture the meaning in a concise way. Paraphrasing requires interpretation and sometimes the interpretation of the listener is not what the speaker intended. Because of this, hand written notes may not be accurate or may only capture part of what was being said.

When using audio or video recordings, there are a number of steps that need to be taken to ensure an ethical process.



Table 9

Ethical considerations with interviews

- Not writing the name of interviewee on the tape
- Not including the name in the interview transcript
- Keeping the tape in a locked cabinet for 5 years after the interview & then destroying it or giving it back to the interviewee
- Asking the interviewee to read the written transcript and change anything that they feel does not reflect what they intended to say
- Showing the interviewee the excerpts of the interview transcript that will be included in the final report
- Ensuring that the interviewee's identity remains confidential

at all stages of the research including in the final report

Observation

There are many reasons for using observation in an evaluation, for example:

- To see what people do in certain situations
- To see how often certain behaviours occur
- To understand what may influence what a person thinks or does
- To understand what it might be like to be in another person's shoes and therefore, better understand the challenges they face
- To help develop different ideas for tackling the issues a person faces

Workshop Activity 10

Observation groups: Conduct an observation of this session of the workshop, takes notes of what is happening for 10 mins, reports back to group, summarise what they all found.

Types of observation

There are two types of observation:

- participant observation - where you are participating in the situation and observing at the same time, and
- non-participant observer where you are observing, listening and watching very carefully and taking notes at the same time or shortly after.

Some trainee researchers feel uncomfortable and as if they are spying when observing a situation from the sidelines. However, if you are doing the research because there is a need for improved services for improved childcare, then it may be necessary to gather data by observation. If you attend to all the ethical protocols of observation then no-one should be harmed by your research and hopefully they will benefit. *Anonymity and confidentiality are important ethical issues in observation research.* In our everyday lives, we rely on watching people and events in order to understand what is happening and how we should behave but we do it subtly without staring. You can also do your research observation in a discrete way.

Often videotape is used to record people's actions within a setting with transcripts being made afterwards. This provides very valuable and rich information.

Observation notes

When taking observation notes always include:

The date, the time of day, the place in code, a map of the setting, who is present (in code), including relevant characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, role.

Do not include people's real names, or the name of the centre but code these for your own information and in a way that preserves the person's confidentiality.

Describe what you see as in a photograph with as little inference as possible. For example, in the following description, have any inferences been made?

The worker picked up the baby from its crib and placed him gently on the bed. She undid his nappy and put the dirty nappy into the bin. She was angry that the mother had not changed the baby earlier.

The last sentence in this description is inferring that the worker is angry with the mother. You need to **provide evidence** which shows how you know she is angry. Did she say she was? Does she look angry? If you are relying on her looks, you need to describe them as well. For example,

'She was frowning as she put the nappy in the bin' or 'She muttered under her breath and appeared to be angry'.

How do you know what she is angry about? Is it because the mother had not changed the nappy earlier, or is it that the worker's been working for hours and doesn't want to be changing nappies when she has many other children to attend to.

You need to have evidence to support everything that you state in your notes.

Below is a sample of some observational fieldnotes. Pay attention to how they are set out and the kind of information they contain.

Fieldnotes	Page No.	Coding themes
<p>Date: 6th July 2001 Place: The Centre's School bus taking a teacher to catch up with families in a particular town camp on the edge of the large regional town. Person of interest: Female teacher with long experience at the centre, non-Aboriginal, in mid thirties.</p>		
<i>House 1</i>		Locating

<p>10:25 a.m. Bus stops at house 1. Bus driver asks Bt where her daughter is who comes to the course. Bt has very painful feet can't walk properly. Teacher and she 'sign' to each other with hand signals. Teacher gets out of bus and walks over to her to chat and asks if she's going to come in to do some Art. Teacher and Bt talk about where her daughters are and how they're going and if they'll stay with the Adult Education Course.</p> <p>Bt talks about her kidneys and how they want her to go on dialysis.</p> <p>Teacher talks about options in dialysis care and about the girls going with Bt when she goes to the doctor to ask questions which will help Bt understand what's wrong with her and what her options are. Bt has an appointment with the doctor today.</p> <p>10:35 <i>Bus drives in direction of House 2</i></p> <p>We see Bt's sisters who are in Adult Education Course. Two women come up to talk with teacher who is out of bus talking to a woman who lives in the house.</p> <p>Woman A. asks if her 10 year old son can enrol at the centre. He is standing next to her.</p> <p>Teacher asks her what school he is at now & the boy names the state school. Mother asks him which school he'd rather be attend. Boy says the centre.</p> <p>Teacher says "But if you're at a mainstream school you should stick at it" ... "You're probably like your mother!"</p>	<p>students</p> <p>Interest in course</p> <p>Health information</p> <p>Knowing where people live</p> <p>Giving information</p> <p>Giving advice on schooling options</p>
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This observation did not need a great deal of detail about what people were doing or saying because its purpose was to gain an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of that particular teacher. In your observation, you would only include as much detail as needed for your particular research question.

Notice the column down the right hand side of the fieldnotes, this is kept blank for the analysis when you put categories (or theme labels) alongside relevant segments of your notes.

Questionnaires or surveys

Questionnaires or surveys are often used in evaluation. Because they require experience and knowledge to design, it may be better to adapt

an existing questionnaire to your own use rather than design your own from scratch.

Workshop Activity 11

Questionnaire survey groups: construct a small questionnaire to be used to evaluate this workshop. Decide on 10 topics the wording of the 10 questions and select a variety of responses eg closed, open, multiple choice and scaled questions.

Questionnaires usually contain different types of questions:

- **Closed** questions where the answer is usually Yes, No, or Don't know. For example,

Are you satisfied with the food provided to your child by the centre:

Yes, its useful No, it's not useful Not sure

- **Multiple choice** questions where a list of options is provided and people *circle* one or more of the answers. For example:

What places do you go for further training opportunities?:

TAFE	WEA	University	Workplace training
Community workshops		Private training providers	
Other - please describe _____			

- **Scaled questions** where you are asked to rate (with a tick) something on a scale of **1** to **5**, **none** to **a lot**, or **very ...** to **not very ...**. For example,

Overall, how do you rate this workshop in meeting your learning needs?

Terrible Poor Average Good Excellent

- **Open-ended** or **short answer** questions where people can describe their answer in their own words. These questions are often included along with scaled and closed questions. For example,

What do you think about the new centre? _____

Surveys can be a quick and easy way for finding out what people think about an issue.

There are two ways of doing questionnaires or surveys. People may be asked to respond in writing where they read and then answer the question. They may be asked to respond verbally where an interviewer asks the questions then writes down the answers. The information may be used to identify common themes and highlight specific issues or experiences.

Planning a survey requires a lot of thought and planning because the way you ask questions can affect the kinds of answers people give. How you deliver it can affect the *response rate*, or the number of people who respond. It can be delivered:

- door-to-door,
- by post,
- phone,
- email,
- internet, or
- leaving a paper copy in a convenient location.

A questionnaire that was used in the SRS evaluation is copied onto the following page.

Men and Parenting Posters Feedback*

Agency name:

Contact person:

Phone: ()

Email:

Best time to contact:

1: When did you receive the posters?

2: Do you have any general comments about the posters?

3: Can you say whether or not the posters are useful or is it too early days yet and you are not sure? *Please tick the best option.*

Yes, its useful

No, it's not useful

Not sure just yet

*(If it is too early and you are not sure, please indicate if you are **NOT** happy for us to contact you down the track to talk about the resource.)*

4: How do you think you will **use** the posters? *Please say briefly.*

5: How well do or will the posters work for your particular community? *Please say briefly.*

6: Do the posters give you any other ideas for projects and activities that you may run in your agency? *If so please list a few here:*

7: Do you have any suggestions for the SRS to improve the posters or the process for its development and delivery?

8: Any further comments?

Please make a copy of this feedback sheet for your own records and send this copy in the reply-paid envelope to SNAICC.

Thanks for your time and contribution!

**This is a copy of the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) SNAICC Resource Service (SRS) resource feedback survey*

Audits

An audit can be useful to an evaluation for providing information about an event, for example National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day but they do not tell you whether the event was successful or not.



Table 10

Audits

An audit can be done on any project and involves going over the information that was recorded to see who was there, what was provided and what happened.

If it was the *children's day*, you might check

- a list of all the activities that occurred
- a count of the number of people who attended
- a list of all the stalls that were there
- a list of all the food and drinks that were provided

Audits are often used for checking on the quality of the service or the event. They can provide you with basic percentages on what was provided and to whom. Audits do not tell you anything about how effective the event or service was or what people thought about it.

Workshop Activity 12

Audit groups: Conduct an audit of this workshop. Select categories to document, for example, participants, staff, activities, resources, materials, content, etc. Compare your tools and select one to show to the large group.

Case studies

A case study provides a detailed description of one case of what is being looked at. It might be one child in a centre who is representative of several children. It might be one childcare worker or one play group. You may provide two or three case studies which represent the diversity of the group, for example

- A boy and a girl, or
- A child with a disability and a child without a disability, or
- A child in long day care and a child who attends part time
- An infant, a two year old and a four year old

A case study is useful to provide a detailed picture of for example, how one child responded to a program, or the circumstances and life story of a parent who is representative of other parents. It might be the story of a child with a particular disability which describes the kinds of issues that arise each day for such a child.

Case study can be used with other methods. For example, after interviewing several parents, you might provide

- the detailed holistic story of one parent, alongside
- a summary of the details of all the parents which captures the variety in their situations as well as their similarities

Workshop Activity 13

Case study groups: select an aspect of the workshop for a case study; select aspects of the case study to investigate; summarise the different types of cases being studied and the issues they looked at to report back to the large group.

Demographics

The use of demographics in evaluation is described in the following table.



Table 11
Demographics

In order to create an overall picture of the people with whom you are working, demographic information is collected according to categories which you choose because of their usefulness for your project. These categories may include:

- Age
- Gender
- Where people live
- Level of education
- Socio-economic status (or social class)
- Type of employment

- Cultural identity
- Type of problem experienced

Some of these data are very sensitive and will embarrass people if they are asked directly about them. Employ a cultural consultant to advise you about their appropriateness and how it is the best to find out the information that is important for your project.

Usually, this information from all the participants is collected together, without people's names, and analysed using statistics.

Workshop Activity 14

Demographic groups: Construct a demographic profile of the class looking at such categories as:

Gender, age, occupation, region of service, and any other relevant categories. Report back to groups and summarise all the different ideas into one large profile to present to the large group.

Workshop Activity 15

Reporting back to large group on methods

Groups report back to the class on their particular evaluation method as it was used to evaluate this workshop.

Interview, Observation, Questionnaire, Case Study,
Demographics and Audit

Do the following

- Discuss what you did and how you did it
- Why you decided to do what you did
- What you found
- What were the difficulties and strengths of the different methods

Facilitator notes main points and gives copy to participants.

Reference

Malin, M. 2007. *Collecting the Data - Qualitative Research - Workbook 6* from the Certificate IV, Indigenous Research Capacity Building. Norwood: Aboriginal Health Council of S.A.

7. Planning your evaluation

Workshop Activity 16

Groups revise evaluation plans

Consider which of the above methods would be the best to evaluate your project. In small groups, select from these methods and plan an evaluation of your project.

- Interview
- Observation
- Questionnaire
- Case Study
- Demographics
- Audit

Do the following

- State all the information you will collect
- How you will collect it
- What are the strengths of these methods?
- What are the weaknesses of these methods?

Report back to the class and summarise the plan and the critique for the class.

Lecturer notes main points and gives copy to participants.

8. Organising and storing information

After you have gathered your information (data) you will need to organise it and store it in a safe place that you can find easily when you begin your analysis.

Computer data bases are useful for storing information if there is a lot of it. Excel and access are often used for brief bits of information. The software used for interviews can be quite complicated so for this course, it will be quite adequate to keep paper copies of all the interviews. They can be safely stored in manila folders with a label. Label them so you see at a glance who the interviewee is, or the topic of the interview or whichever label is most relevant to you.

Workshop Activity 18

Storage and organisation of information

As a large group discuss ways that the data from the various methods can be organised and stored.

- Interview
- Observation
- Questionnaire
- Case Study
- Demographics
- Audit

Lecturer notes main points and gives copy to participants.

The final part of your evaluation plan is a description of how you will store the information that you will be collecting.

Workshop Activity 19

A Plan for Storage and organisation of your data

In your evaluation teams discuss and note down how you will store the data from your particular project and how you will index (label) it so it can easily be found.

Give a copy of your plan to the facilitators.