



Network Project Retrospective

Rock Your Data ECB NetLab Series

Program Overview

Evaluation and continuous improvement support strategic decision-making. Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies (The Network) [NetLab Series: "Evaluation Capacity Building \(ECB\): How to Rock Your Data"](#), led by a team of consultants from [McClanahan Associates, Inc.](#) (MAI) and [ImpactED](#), helped to support 10 agencies learn how to develop core evaluation questions about a program, gather new data or identify existing data to answer those questions, and use data to inform program decisions. The *Rock Your Data* (RYD) series also explored the role of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in evaluation, including analyzing data and information about race and ethnicity, understanding disparities and why they exist, and looking at root causes, problems, and solutions through an equity lens.

The series was presented by The Network's Center for Innovation & Research and made possible with support from [The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation](#). Findings in this report emerged from the voices of the leaders and staff from participating agencies.

Program Components

Rock Your Data NetLab Series This NetLab series ran from December 2022 to April 2023 and included the following components:

- **December 2022- Series Launch and Culminating Event.** an opportunity for agencies to begin to think about their evaluation capacity-building needs and hopes and form relationships with one another. Agencies considered what information they needed to:
 - Understand what parts of their program work best and what can be improved so they can respond to the needs and goals of the individuals they serve.
 - Understand if their programs and services are accomplishing what the individuals and communities they serve want from them.
 - Determine what type of information will help them do their job more efficiently and effectively.
- **Winter 2023- Group Learning Sessions.** Two 3-hour sessions were offered: Planning for Data Collection and Data Use. Group learning sessions provided an overview of evaluation best practices and included individual and peer learning opportunities. Breakouts in the group learning sessions afforded opportunities for deeper inquiry. Together, participants explored **how** to answer the questions they have - who they will capture data from, and how they will go about capturing that data. In this step,
 - The cohort dug deep into the evaluation planning tool.
 - Discussed various qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods for gathering data.
 - Planned for how to gather that data including equity considerations such as training in culturally responsive methods, ensuring data collection approaches resonate and will work for the individuals and communities the organizations serve, and ensuring that data collection timelines provide time for gathering diverse perspectives.



The cohort also dove deeper into the following **four data collection methods** - surveys, administrative data, focus groups and interviews, and observations- and spent time brainstorming what data collection methods they wanted to use and finalized them after the session.

Finally, the cohort moved to **"data use"** - where agencies planned for how they will use the data they gather. The cohort discussed balancing what we know from prior beliefs and what we know from data for decision-making, explored some common myths about data, and brainstormed ways that agencies can use data, including:

- Improving existing programs
- Responding to constituent needs
- Revising logic models and
- Other things like influencing policymakers, sharing findings back with the communities they serve and/or planning new programs.

The cohort discussed the importance of identifying the audience for their data and findings and took a deeper dive into data visualization, data-to-action planning, and storytelling with data.

The RYD series culminated in April 2023 where participating agencies had the opportunity for reflection and to share their learnings with their peers.

- **Jam Sessions (a.k.a. Office Hours).** Between group learning sessions, the RYD team offered jam sessions or office hours to provide participating agencies with the opportunity to meet with the RYD team who provided individualized support to advance participants' evaluation and goals. Four separate days were offered (2 after each group learning session) for the jam sessions.
- **Resources.** Participating agencies were provided with evaluation resources throughout the series, for example, an evaluation planning guide that provided reference materials, best practices, and tools for implementation throughout and beyond the series.

Participating Agencies

The Network invited all members to participate in a competitive application to determine fit and readiness. Applications were reviewed by The Network's Grants & Opportunities committee. Ten member agencies were selected for participation. Each agency, came to the session with one program to work with, and was represented by a core team of their staff dedicated to using data to respond to the needs and goals of their constituents.

[Hamilton Jewish Family Services](#)
[Jewish Family & Children's Service, MetroWest Boston](#)
[Jewish Family & Children's Services of Northern New Jersey](#)
[Jewish Family Services of Metropolitan Detroit](#)
[Jewish Family Services of Northeastern New York](#)

[Jewish Family Services of Western New York](#)
[Jewish Family Service Association of Cleveland](#)
[Jewish Family Services of Greater Kansas City](#)
[Jewish Immigration Aid Services, Toronto](#)
[Jewish Vocational Service, MetroWest NJ](#)



Program Evaluation & Learnings

Evaluations were completed after select group learning sessions to gather participants' perspectives on the value of the session, questions that remained based on the session content, supports needed, and feedback on what could make the sessions better and more effective. Surveys were also used to gather more information about participants' current evaluation capacity.

At the end of the series, a final comprehensive survey was administered to evaluate the overall series in terms of the quality of the sessions and resources and participants' perceptions of the impact of the series. Aligned with equitable evaluation practice, the RYD team randomly selected five raffle winners for completing the survey.

Fifteen individuals (of 29) across nine agencies completed the survey. Below, we highlight the key findings.

Overall, the NetLab Series, "Evaluation Capacity Building: How to *Rock Your Data*," was a positive experience for the participating agencies. It provided them with knowledge and tools to enhance their evaluation practices, make informed program decisions, and address equity considerations effectively. The series successfully catered to the diverse needs of participants, offering them a comprehensive toolkit and opportunities for collaboration, resulting in a valuable learning experience. The RYD series garnered strong recommendations, showcased improvements in participants' understanding and confidence levels, and successfully addressed the importance of equity in evaluation and learning efforts. The feedback provided suggests several areas where there is an opportunity for improvement. Optimizing time management, refining session structure, enhancing networking opportunities, and making adjustments to better accommodate participants' attention spans and scheduling constraints would be beneficial.

- **Series Quality.** Overall respondents had a positive experience with the RYD evaluation capacity-building series. 100% of the participants agreed that the series was **well-organized and conducted in a professional manner**. Similarly, the group (100%) acknowledged that the series **equipped them with practical tools and strategies** that they could directly apply to implement their evaluation plans. Furthermore, a vast majority (80%) of participants expressed satisfaction with the networking opportunities provided during the RYD series, as they were able to **establish valuable connections with their peers** in the series.
- **Quality of Series Resources.** The vast majority of survey respondents (93%) found the **evaluation planning guide** to be highly beneficial in the series. Its comprehensive and informative content resonated well with participants, offering them valuable guidance throughout the process. Furthermore, 80% of respondents expressed that the **peer-to-peer discussions on specific topics** proved to be an exceptionally helpful



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component of the series. These discussions allowed for the exchange of insights, experiences, and best practices among participants, fostering a collaborative learning environment. Additionally, more than half of the participants positively responded to the other series components. The series worksheets, evaluation plan template, organizational teamwork time, small group breakouts, and jam sessions all contributed to their learning experience and evaluation journey. The evaluation planning guide and peer-to-peer discussions emerged as the most favored components, while the other elements also garnered appreciation from a majority of the respondents.

Series Impact. The majority of survey respondents (86%) expressed their willingness to **recommend the RYD series to their peers**. This positive response reflects the satisfaction and value derived from the series. Furthermore, we observed that participants entered the RYD series with a solid foundation of confidence in their ability to develop a data collection approach tailored to their agency's evaluation needs. They also held a positive belief in the value of an evaluation plan for their agency's efforts. These initial baselines indicate a strong starting point for participants. Following the RYD series, participating agencies reported modest yet notable improvements in several key areas. The series demonstrated its effectiveness in increasing participants' knowledge of **embedding equity in their agency's evaluation and learning efforts**. A majority of respondents (71%) agreed that the series contributed to their understanding of how to incorporate equity considerations into evaluation practices.

- Firstly, there was an increase in the level of understanding regarding the **development of prioritized learning areas**, such as context, implementation, and outcomes evaluation questions. This growth indicates that the series provided participants with valuable insights and strategies to enhance their evaluation approaches.
- Secondly, there was an enhancement in participants' confidence in **developing a data collection approach aligned with their agency's evaluation needs**. Through the RYD series, participants gained knowledge and tools to effectively implement surveys, interview protocols, and other data collection methods.
- Lastly, participants' belief in the **value of an evaluation plan** for their agency's evaluation efforts experienced a positive shift. This highlights the impact of the RYD series in emphasizing the significance of an evaluation plan as a valuable tool for organizational evaluation endeavors.

Conclusion & Next Steps

Overall, the NetLab Series, "Evaluation Capacity Building: How to *Rock Your Data*," was a positive experience for the participating organizations. It provided them with knowledge and tools to enhance their evaluation practices, make informed program decisions, and address equity considerations effectively. Overall, the series successfully catered to the diverse needs of participants, offering them a



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comprehensive toolkit and opportunities for collaboration, resulting in a valuable learning experience. The series garnered strong recommendations, showcased improvements in participants' understanding and confidence levels, and successfully addressed the importance of equity in evaluation and learning efforts. The feedback provided suggests several areas where there is an opportunity for improvement. It is clear that optimizing time management, refining session structure, enhancing networking opportunities, and making adjustments to better accommodate participants' attention spans and scheduling constraints would be beneficial. Taking these suggestions into consideration would help create an even more effective and inclusive learning environment for all participants.

“The most valuable aspects were the breakout rooms where we could have conversations with other organizations. Learning and collaborating with others is a really useful and interesting tool. The choose your own breakout room sessions were also great as it gave an opportunity to focus on the skills I specifically needed. I really appreciated having the Rock you Data team as a resource to help me, even outside the Jam sessions, to answer questions and help develop my survey and evaluation plan.”