**Good Evaluation Data Practices:   
Tip Sheet**

# Define Clear Objectives

* Know Your Purpose: Understand why you're collecting data and how you’d like to use it. Align your data collection with your organization’s mission and the specific goals of your program or project. Your purpose could be to:
  + Understand who is accessing your program by collecting participant information such as age, gender or other demographic information
  + Understand participant interests or needs to improve programs or adjust offerings
  + Get feedback on experience to ensure participants feel understood, safe and respected
  + Track changes in awareness, skills, knowledge or behaviours and understand how programs are supporting these changes – understand what difference programs are making for participants
  + Collect participant stories that can be shared with funders or donors

# Ensure Ethical Data Collection

* Obtain Consent: Always get informed consent from participants, explaining how their data will be used, stored, and protected.
* Protect Privacy: Anonymize data wherever possible and ensure that personally identifiable information is stored securely and accessed only by authorized personnel. Consider developing a privacy policy.

# Ensure Data Quality

* Train Your Team: Ensure that everyone involved in data collection is properly trained to minimize errors and biases. Support the staff who are involved in data collection by ensuring they feel comfortable explaining to participants why the data is being collected, how the data will be used, and responding to other questions about the data collection (such as explaining questions or terms used).
* Have Clear Processes: Develop and follow procedures for data collection to maintain consistency and reliability.
* Develop a Data Management Plan: Create a plan for storing, organizing, and maintaining your data.
* Document Everything: Keep detailed records of your data collection process, including any changes made along the way.

# Choose the Right Tools

* Select Appropriate Methods: Make sure your data collection methods (surveys, planned observations, interviews) align directly with your objectives, your participants, and your program’s context to ensure you’re measuring the right thing in the right way.
* Leverage Technology: Consider using digital tools and software to streamline data collection and management, especially for larger datasets. Explore the use of new tools to assist with analysis to speed up the process of deriving insights from data collected. These may include things like transcription tools, online survey platforms, or Artificial Intelligence tools that automate parts of the process.

# Ensure Inclusivity

* Engage Diverse Voices: Make sure your data collection methods are inclusive and consider the perspectives of all participants, especially marginalized communities.
* Be Culturally Sensitive: Be aware of cultural differences and ensure that your data collection tools are culturally appropriate.
* Consider Participative Approaches: Explore opportunities to include participants in the evaluation process, from establishing what you want to learn together, to collective sensemaking to inform recommendations for improvements or action.

# Respect Participant Time

* Be Efficient: Design your data collection process to be as efficient as possible, respecting the time and effort of your participants.
* Offer Incentives: Consider providing incentives for participants, especially if data collection is time-consuming, like focus groups or formal interviews.

# Monitor and Evaluate Continuously

* Regularly Review Data: Periodically review the data you collect to ensure it meets your objectives. Adjust your methods if necessary.
* Identify trends and patterns: Look for meaningful connections within the data. Look at data over time, or if possible, across different programs, or different participant groups.
* Use Data for Decision-Making: Apply the insights gained from your data to make informed decisions and improve your programs.

# Communicate Findings Clearly

* Share Results with Others: Present your findings in a clear, accessible manner to all interested parties, including participants, funders, and community members.
* Use Visuals: Utilize charts, graphs, and infographics to make complex data more understandable and engaging.
* Include Stories: Using stories and quotes can help deepen understanding and complement the numbers or charts presented.

**Remember:** Good data practices not only improve the quality of your evaluation but also build trust with your participants and community.