



# IMPACT: A Practical Guide to Evaluating Community Information Projects

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**KF** John S. and James L.  
**Knight Foundation**  
*Informed and engaged communities.*

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## John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Wachovia Financial Center  
Suite 3300  
200 South Biscayne Boulevard  
Miami, FL 33131-2349

305.908.2600  
KnightFoundation.org

# Introduction

Community information projects share a desire to *inform and/or engage their communities*. Most of these news and media projects take advantage of online, digital forms of communication (e.g., websites, Facebook groups or wikis), which in some cases is also integrate with offline approaches to sharing information and connecting people.

The universe of community information projects includes a wide range of activities, but many focus on one or a few of the following:

- News**      Strengthening credible professional news sources.
- Voice**      Providing places where residents (e.g., youth, educators, the community at large) can share news and information with their communities.
- Capacity**    Building the capacity of individuals and/or organizations to address information needs and use digital tools.
- Awareness**    Creating awareness campaigns about community issues.
- Action**      Providing platforms for civic engagement and action.

In developing your community information project – whether to give voice to underserved communities or supporting an ongoing effort to deliver timely, reliable news and reporting – you may be asking yourself:

- How do I know which outcomes to evaluate?
- What can I learn from analyzing website or social media data?
- How do I make sense of the vast amount of online information that’s available?

- What is needed to answer the question: “Are we having an impact?”
- How can I use evaluation to strengthen our project and communicate its value to others?

This guide provides insight into these questions and others.

## Purpose of This Guide

**This guide aims to help organizations collect useful information about the effectiveness and impact of their community information projects** by highlighting aspects of the evaluation process that are unique, challenging or critical in a community information context. It also describes and includes **relevant and meaningful tools** that can be used to assess community information projects. The guide is not meant to be a comprehensive how-to guide on evaluation; many books and resources on evaluation practice already exist elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

For any of the community information activities described above, this guide is designed to help you chart your progress and achievements toward those goals.

## How to Use This Guide

This guide will take you through the essential steps for designing an evaluation of your community information project. These steps explain what to do and consider at different stages of the evaluation process:

1. **Describe** your project and identify your target audience.
2. **Identify** the evaluation’s purpose and key questions.
3. **Design** the evaluation using effective methods.
4. **Communicate** and report the evaluation findings to make decisions and take action.

We have included tips, tools and examples from community information projects that are currently being implemented by several grantees of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation’s Community Information Challenge (KCIC).<sup>2</sup> Links to the resources described in the guide are located in the Resource section (page 30). The Appendix contains templates that can be applied in any evaluation, as well as examples from KCIC grantees.

The last page of the guide provides a one-page worksheet that you can use to begin planning your evaluation. We hope that this evaluation guide provides a strong basis for beginning to evaluate community information projects or for refining your current evaluation activities.

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<sup>1</sup> For more general information on evaluation, see the Resources section of this guide.

<sup>2</sup> KCIC-funded project examples highlighted throughout this report and in the appendices can be found online at: *The Notebook* (<http://www.thenotebook.org>), *The Rapidian* (<http://therapidian.org>), and *The Florida Independent* (<http://floridaindependent.com>), *Amazing County* (on Facebook), *ACTion Alexandria* (website forthcoming).



## Step 1:

# Describe Your Project and Identify Your Target Audience

Being able to describe basic project activities and the purpose they serve in advancing your goals or mission is essential to creating a meaningful and useful evaluation.

### ***What changes in your community are you hoping to achieve?***

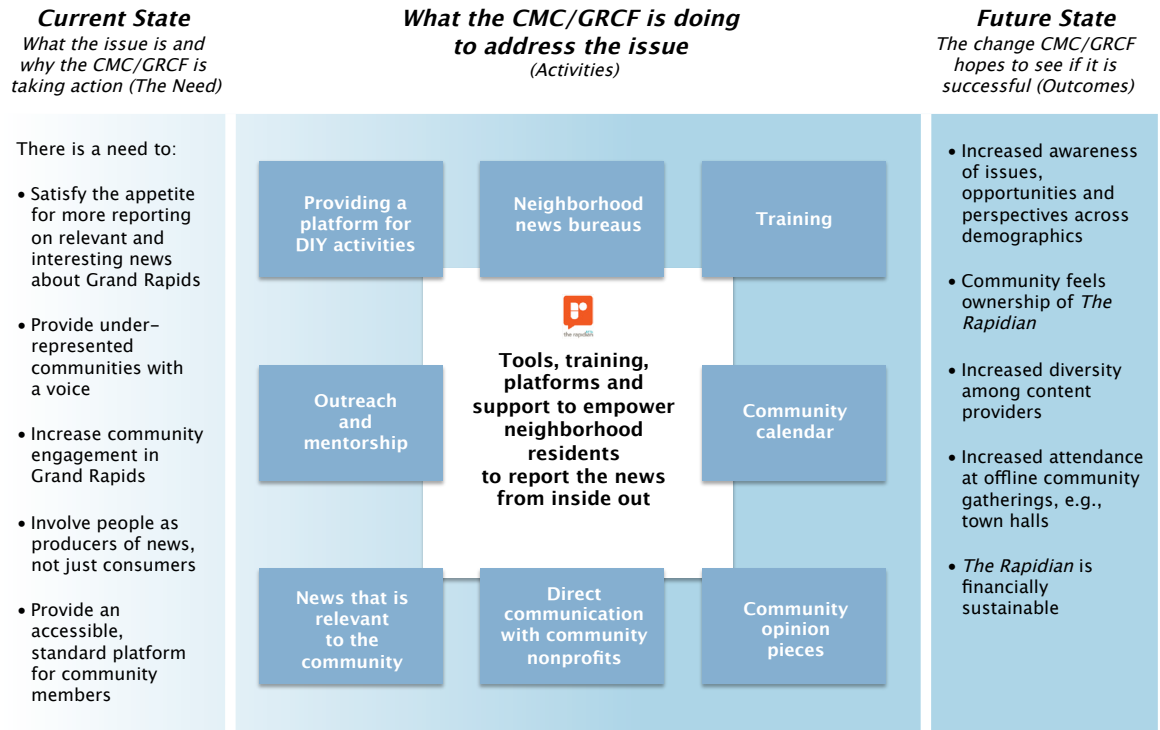
Understanding what your project is and what it hopes to achieve can be facilitated by articulating a Theory of Change (TOC). A TOC is a graphic representation of your assumptions and beliefs about how your project will effect the changes that you hope to see. There are three major elements of a TOC:

1. **Assumptions/Need** – answers the questions, *What is the issue? Who is affected by it? Why are you taking action?*
2. **Activities** – answers the question, *What are you doing to address the issue?*
3. **Outcomes** – answers the question, *If your project is successful, what change, among which members of the community, do you hope to see?*

For example, *The Rapidian*, a project of the Grand Rapids Community Foundation and the Grand Rapids Community Media Center, is a hyperlocal news site. *The Rapidian's* TOC shows that they believe residents are hungry to contribute to local news and information and engage in community issues but lack the tools to do so. It seeks to provide training, platforms and support to residents in order to empower underrepresented voices among the people of Grand Rapids and increase the flow of local news and information (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. *The Raptidian's* Theory of Change

Theory of Change for *The Raptidian*, a Hyperlocal Media Platform Powered by the People of Grand Rapids, Mich.



In addition to articulating your TOC and beginning to identify your target audience (i.e., those community members who are affected by the issue and in whom you seek to effect change), logic models are a useful way to describe the details of a community information project to help focus and inform the evaluation. A logic model typically includes information on each of the following topics:

- **Resources** – *What resources do we have to work with?*
- **Activities** – *What is the project doing with its resources?*
- **Outputs** – *What are the tangible products of our activities?*
- **Short-term outcomes** – *What changes do we expect to occur within the short term?*
- **Mid-term (or intermediate) outcomes** – *What changes do we want to see?*
- **Long-term outcomes** – *What changes do we hope to see over time?*

As part of developing its evaluation, *The Raptidian* staff and other stakeholders developed a logic model (Figure 2) which details key aspects of their project. Creating a logic model helped *The Raptidian* stakeholders focus their evaluation on specific outcomes that they expected to see in their first year of implementation.



A template for creating your own logic model and additional examples are included in the Appendix. After completing your model, you should be able to trace a pathway from the activities and outputs that you may directly influence, to your long-term aspirations. Project teams have found the logic model template to be useful for clarifying the group’s understanding of what is happening with the project and/or communicating this to other stakeholders.

Figure 2. Abbreviated Logic Model Developed for *The Ravidian* (2010)

**Assumptions – What are the underlying assumptions of *The Ravidian*?**

- There is an more of an appetite for reporting on relevant and interesting news about Grand Rapids than the local media can satisfy
- Citizen journalists will add richness and depth to the news and information that the local media provide as well as increasing the breadth of information flow and serve niche audiences
- Access to and participation in hyperlocal news will increase participation in other community activities

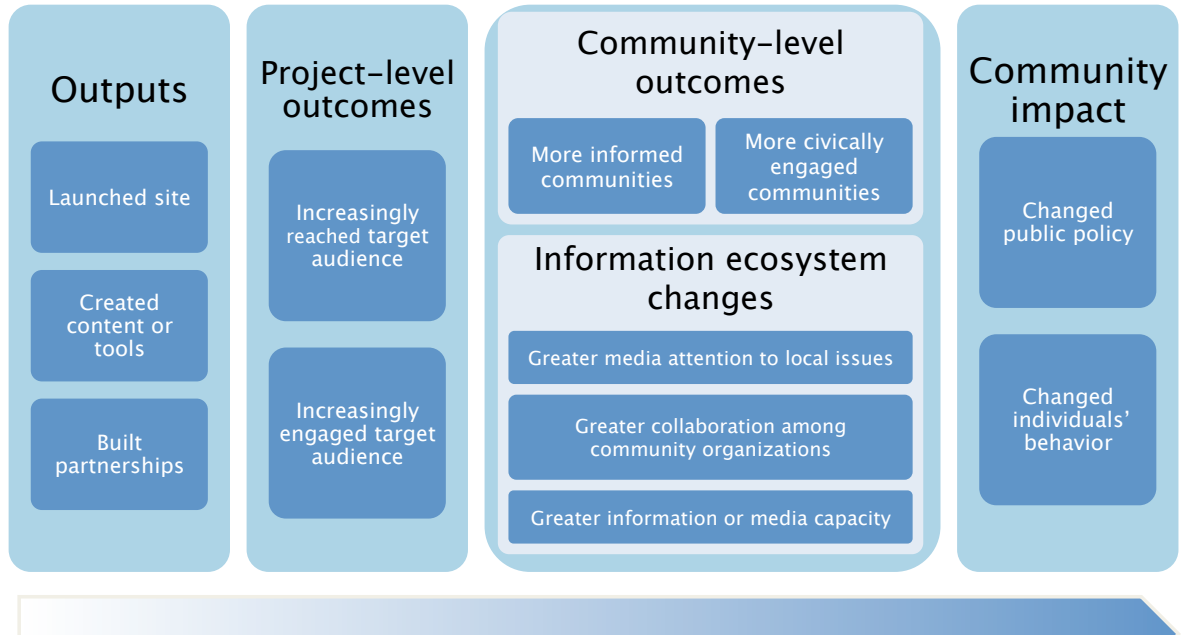


Resources	Activities	Outputs (tangible products)	Short-term Outcomes (1 year)	Intermediate Outcomes (2–3 years)	Long-term Outcomes (4 years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reputation, network and resources of Grand Rapids Community Foundation</li> <li>• Assigned staff</li> <li>• Board support</li> <li>• Community partnerships</li> <li>• Local presence and knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing a platform for DIY activities</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Outreach and mentorship</li> <li>• Neighborhood news bureaus</li> <li>• Community calendar</li> <li>• Community polls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of registered users</li> <li>• Number of reporters</li> <li>• Page views/week and /visit</li> <li>• Visits/unique visitor/week</li> <li>• Stories and community opinion pieces posted/week</li> <li>• Conversion rate from registered user to editor or reporter</li> <li>• Attendance at events</li> <li>• Participation on polls, surveys, Twitter and Facebook</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content is perceived as relevant, interesting and diverse</li> <li>• Increased reporting from diverse community nonprofits</li> <li>• Growth in diversity of citizen journalists</li> <li>• Growth in connections to and from <i>The Ravidian</i></li> <li>• Community leaders are engaged in <i>The Ravidian</i></li> <li>• Raise \$10K in sustainable funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Ravidian</i> has gained credibility, widespread readership</li> <li>• Greater dialogue and offline collaboration between <i>The Ravidian</i>, residents and community nonprofits</li> <li>• Residents exhibit greater civic awareness and engagement in select communities (e.g., greater time and resources dedicated to the community; increased sponsorship of community events)</li> <li>• Diverse funding streams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness of issues across demographics</li> <li>• Community feels ownership of <i>The Ravidian</i></li> <li>• Increased community engagement and attendance at offline community gatherings across neighborhoods (e.g., town halls)</li> <li>• <i>The Ravidian</i> is financially sustainable</li> </ul>
<p><b>External Forces – What external factors may affect the ways in which and the extent to which the program achieves its outcomes?</b></p>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor public access to technology</li> <li>• Seasonality of viewership</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competition from other news and entertainment sources</li> <li>• Low level of English literacy among residents</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic and social conditions in the community</li> <li>• Infrastructure challenges facing participation in the community (relevant for long term outcomes)</li> </ul>	

Identifying the desired outcomes of your project – *what you hope to achieve in the short, intermediate, and long term* – are essential as you begin to develop your logic model. Community information efforts aim to change their local information ecosystem<sup>3</sup> in unique and varying ways, but there are some common outcomes that are shared across multiple approaches. For example, some community information projects are focused on informing their communities by driving traffic to their websites. Other projects aim to more broadly impact the community by changing public behavior or influencing public policy. Yet, at different stages in the project, you might seek to evaluate your progress toward project-level or community-level outcomes, changes in your information ecosystem or impact on your community.

<sup>3</sup> For more information about a community’s information ecosystem, see the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of a Community in a Democracy (<http://www.knightcomm.org>).

Figure 3. Outcomes Framework for Community Information Projects



The outcomes framework in Figure 3 reflects the most common, critical outputs and outcomes of community information projects. The four levels of outcomes shown in this framework reflect objectives that can be used to assess your project’s progress and achievements. Table 1 provides examples of indicators that can be used to assess progress toward various outputs and outcomes. These indicators can be adapted to your specific project and used to fill in the columns of your logic model.

**Tip**

Be clear about where your project seeks to affect change. In most cases, it is important to move beyond outputs and begin to measure outcomes.

In describing the ultimate goals of your community information project, short- and long-term outcomes should emerge naturally. Most projects will wish to effect multiple levels of outcomes. For example, *The Rapidian* seeks to enlist citizen journalists that represent diverse cultures and neighborhoods in the community, especially groups that are typically underrepresented in local media efforts, including African-American and Hispanic residents (a project-level outcome). *The Rapidian* also aims to increase the flow of local news and information, specifically in the East Hills/Eastown neighborhood of Grand Rapids (a community ecosystem change).



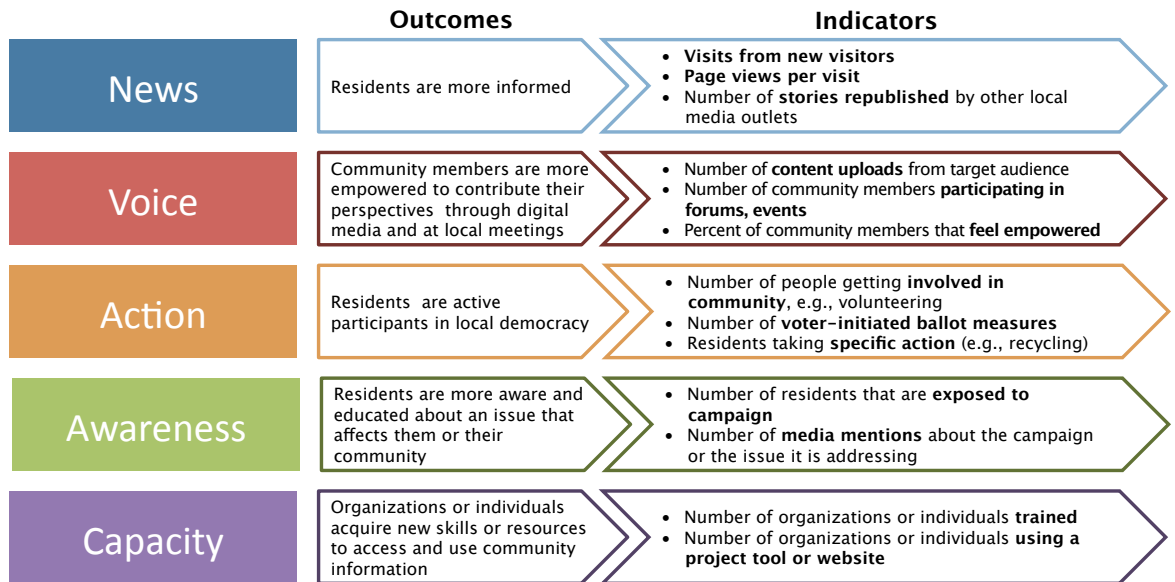
Table 1. Example Indicators for Measuring Progress of a Community Information Project<sup>4</sup>

<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Activities or tactics for your community information project</b>
Launched site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website launched (beta launch, soft launch, hard launch)</li> </ul>
Created content/tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of articles produced per week over time</li> <li>• Number and types of content produced (e.g., photo, video)</li> </ul>
Built effective partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and types (e.g., media, outreach, evaluation, technology) of partnerships developed</li> <li>• Partners' involvement in key project activities</li> </ul>
<b>Project-level outcomes</b>	<b>Short-term goals of reaching and engaging your target audience</b>
Increasingly reached target audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of visits by new visitors over time</li> <li>• Number registered users from target audience over time</li> <li>• Number of people attending project-specific trainings, events</li> <li>• Number of Facebook Fans or Twitter followers</li> </ul>
Increasingly engaged target audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of page views/visit over time</li> <li>• Number of website comments, uploads, or donations</li> <li>• Number of contest entries</li> <li>• Re-tweets, forwards, wall posts, or other social media action</li> <li>• Number of people participating at meetings, trainings events</li> </ul>
<b>Community-level outcomes</b>	<b>Intermediate (or possibly long-term) goal of creating more informed and civically engaged communities</b>
More informed communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater community awareness about and/or knowledge of a specific issue or event</li> <li>• Attendance at community meetings, events</li> </ul>
More civically engaged communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizens get involved in addressing issues that concern or affect them or their community</li> <li>• Sense of empowerment (e.g., perception that your voice will be heard by people in positions of influence)</li> <li>• Public officials' involvement in citizen mobilization and interaction</li> <li>• Voter participation over time</li> <li>• Citizen participation at community meetings, events</li> </ul>
<b>Changes in Information Ecosystem</b>	<b>Intermediate (or possibly long-term) goal of improving the health of your community's information ecosystem</b>
Greater media attention to local issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of local stories published by local/regional media organizations (and as percentage of overall coverage)</li> <li>• Number of local/regional media outlets discussing issues of local interest or concern</li> </ul>
Greater collaboration among community organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequency of communication between community organizations</li> <li>• Number of formal and informal partnerships in activities and community initiatives</li> </ul>
Greater information or media capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of organizations that are using websites or social media to spread information</li> </ul>
<b>Community Impact</b>	<b>Long-term goals of changing policy, behavior, attitudes, norms or affecting other social change</b>
Policy change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies formally introduced, established, or blocked</li> <li>• Funding levels sustained or increased for policies or programs</li> <li>• New standards or guiding principles in organizations developed</li> </ul>
Changes in attitudes or behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in the nature and tone of civic dialogue</li> <li>• Increased community pride</li> <li>• Private or public sector organizations regularly engage community voices in decision-making that affects the community</li> </ul>
Other achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project replicated in other communities</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> The examples in Table 1 represent a range of possible indicators, and are not applicable to every community information project.

Projects pursuing different types of activities to address community information needs (e.g., news, voice, action, awareness and capacity) may find that certain indicators are more relevant for them than others, depending on the approach of your project. Figure 4 highlights some indicators that might be particularly relevant for projects based on their primary project type.

Figure 4. Example Outcomes and Indicators by Project Type



A successful community information project will likely have an effect on individuals, organizations and institutions beyond the project's intended goals. These emergent outcomes are important to consider and document when evaluating your information project as well. A few examples are show in the box below.

**OTHER TYPES OF OUTCOMES TO CONSIDER WHEN EVALUATING INFORMATION PROJECTS**

It is important to note that your logic model might not capture all of the possible outcomes that could be realized from your community information project. It is often difficult to anticipate every single outcome when experimenting with something new. If you begin to see unexpected outcomes emerge, it is important to document these just as you would for those outlined in your logic model. Potential unanticipated outcomes might include:

- Building new skills and capacity related to information and digital media technology within partnering organizations (e.g., community or place-based foundations).
- Creating new partnerships or strengthening previously weak, or informal connections with other organizations.
- Growing interest in using evaluation as a tool for organizational learning.

## Who is your target audience and how do you want to see it engage?

### Tip

Clearly identify and size your project's target audience(s). This is important to help focus the evaluation and identify from whom you will collect data.

Community information projects may seek to inform, influence or engage one or more specific groups of people distinguished by geographic location (e.g., city or ZIP code), age, social status, occupation or interest. For example, the *Philadelphia Public School Notebook* (the *Notebook*), a project funded in part by the William Penn Foundation and a 2008 KCIC grantee, identified parents of students in Philadelphia Public Schools as an important target audience that it wanted to reach online and engage. Understanding your target audience as part of your evaluation will help you understand progress toward your goals and make implementation decisions along the way.

Understanding the number of people in your target audience segment will help you assess your project's **audience reach and penetration**. If you are unable to count or estimate the number of people in your target audience, you will have difficulty determining whether your website is reaching a small or large proportion of the people that you care about. The report *Measuring the Online Impact of Your Information Project: A Primer for Practitioners and Funders* (FSG and Knight Foundation, 2010) provides greater detail about how the *Notebook* could estimate its target audience segments based on public school enrollment data.

In addition to identifying who you want your project to reach, you also want to be clear about what exactly you are expecting **project engagement** to look like. Do you want people to comment, submit ideas or share news and information? The extent of audience online engagement for community information projects can range from merely being a consumer or reader of content to being a creator or generator of content. For example, a **news** site might be satisfied to have its target audience read articles on the site and explore it for related, interesting materials. However, a project that focuses on increasing community **voice** would be interested in evaluating user-generated content and examining audience participation on its website. Identifying what you hope people *do* online and *how* they interact with your project can help to clarify what your project is, how it seeks to effect change, and what indicators might be important to consider in the evaluating outcomes.

Because the *Notebook's* staff and board are interested in parent engagement, a key evaluation question for them has been, "To what extent are parents increasingly visiting our website?" Answering this question has helped them identify the extent to which their marketing and **outreach efforts** are effective in reaching this specific audience.

In addition, defining your target audience can inform the **design (or re-design) of your website**. For example, *ACTion Alexandria* (a KCIC-funded community information project) has incorporated what it wants to know about its target audience into its website design by carefully selecting the registration information visitors are asked to provide. Registration information can be designed to include any of the identifying target audience characteristics; ZIP code is the one most commonly considered and used. Registration information, in turn, can be used to evaluate whether the site's visitors are indeed residents of its city and/or in the age and demographic that it wants to attract.

There is, of course, the risk of getting no registration data and deterring individuals from exploring your site if you ask your visitors to divulge too much information. Working with others in the community, or even members of your target audience, to decide the extent to which you may be able to collect accurate and adequate information about your website's users can be helpful.

## What is your project's stage of development?

Once you've described the short- and long-term outcomes of your project, consider what outcomes are most appropriate to measure given your project's stage of development. There are three broad developmental stage categories that can be used to describe your community information project:

1. Prelaunch
2. Launch and start-up (i.e., first year)
3. Ongoing implementation

A few things to consider when thinking about outcomes to measure based on your project's stage include:

- **Gather baseline data and information on progress before launch.**

Before launch you are probably most concerned about whether the project is unfolding as planned, which may keep your evaluation efforts focused on outputs and indicators of process (i.e., the left-hand column of Figure 3). Outputs, which are commonly considered "evidence of effort," are the easiest indicators to identify and track, but provide little information about project quality or effectiveness. Additionally, there is a unique opportunity during prelaunch to gather baseline data on relevant knowledge, attitudes and behaviors of your target audiences.

- **Better understand your reach and engagement efforts once you have launched.**

After launch, it is often important to know how well you are reaching and engaging your target audience. Community-level outcomes or impact generally take a long time to manifest, and therefore might not be worth the resources it takes to measure in the near term. Intense, short-term community information projects, such as awareness campaigns, are an exception to this, as the goal of the campaign is to quickly impact a specific area of knowledge, attitude, practice, or policy (e.g., influencing a vote in a local election).

- **Make sure to measure long-term outcomes and impact as your project matures.**

Evaluating community-level changes and impact are generally most important for ongoing, mature projects. During the first year, an evaluator of a project aimed at inspiring residents to act more sustainably might ask, *How many people have heard about and used our online resources?* (i.e., a question related to project-level outcomes). However, as the project matures, a more useful question might be, *In what ways has our project influenced community members to act more sustainably?* (i.e., a question related to community impact).

### RESOURCES

*Measuring the Online Impact of Your Information Project: A Primer for Practitioners and Funders* (Resources)

Theory of Change Template (Appendix)

Logic Model Template (Appendix)



## Step 2:

# Identify the Evaluation's Purpose and Key Questions

Focusing the evaluation requires identifying what the evaluation is going to be used for (i.e., the purpose of the evaluative inquiry) and what the key evaluation questions will be. An evaluation of community information projects may prioritize questions that are important for project design, implementation or future strategy, or for external stakeholders, such as funders.

### *What is the purpose of your evaluation?*

An evaluation may be used to advance strategic learning, to refine project design and/ or implementation, or for accountability. Examples of purpose statements from community information evaluations include:

- To improve the quality and usefulness of information and media content produced.
- To determine the composition and diversity of contributors and readers.
- To identify the strengths and weaknesses of a new outreach or engagement strategy in order to modify and refine the strategy.
- To assess the progress a project has made toward achieving its goals and intended outcomes.

The purpose of the evaluation then feeds into the type of key evaluation questions that will be used to guide the evaluation's design. For example, *The Florida Independent* (TFI), funded in part by the Gulf Coast Community Foundation and launched in early 2010, wanted to conduct an evaluation that would help it better understand the progress of its project.

## Tip

Engage stakeholders in developing your key questions to ensure that the evaluation produces information that can be used to improve your project and to inform others of your efforts and successes.

TFI decided to focus its evaluation on “progress,” which could have led to questions concerning organizational performance (e.g., the efficiency and effectiveness of hiring and/or creating content) or to questions about the strength of TFI’s relationships with the American Independent News Network (AINN), a close partner, and other local news organizations. Instead, given limited time and resources, TFI decided to focus on *better understanding its online audience, its readers’ use of the online news outlet and how that has influenced, if at all, those readers’ understanding of, or engagement with, Florida public policy.*

## Which stakeholders are interested in your evaluation findings?

Community information projects tend to engage a variety of individuals and organizations in the communities in which they operate. It is not unusual to find a community information project that is partnering with nonprofits, universities, local government and schools.

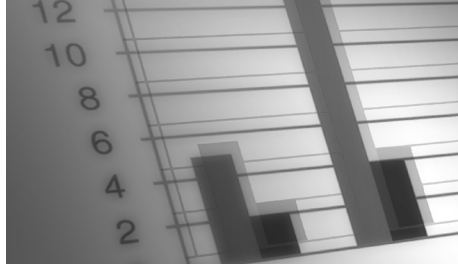
By identifying and engaging stakeholders early in the evaluation process, you can begin to determine how the evaluation findings could and will be used. It is important to acknowledge that stakeholders may have different needs for the evaluation. For example, program staff may want to evaluate at the *project* level, whereas funders or external stakeholders may want to evaluate at the *community* level (refer to Figure 3).

Prioritizing the needs and desires of staff, funders and external stakeholders takes time and patience. Being clear about intended uses and users at the **beginning** of the evaluation will help to ensure that evaluation findings are used (see Preskill and Jones, 2009, in the Resources section for more information on stakeholder engagement).

For example, your evaluation can be used to:

- Help project team members **learn from one another** and jointly improve the content, tools, or services being delivered.
- Inform **decision making** by program staff and management about changes that will improve their own, as well as, overall organizational performance.
- **Engage** your audience in the project’s progress and success. For example, if you are implementing a citizen journalism website, share findings with your contributors and seek their feedback and input on “what’s next.”
- **Influence** external stakeholders or advocate for continued support or social change.
- Build **internal capacities** through learning about the substantive issues and engaging in evaluation practice.





### Step 3:

# Design the Evaluation Using Effective Methods

When designing an evaluation of your community information project, it is important to select methods that will be effective in helping you answer your key evaluation questions (determined in Step 2), and that are feasible given your resource and time constraints.

## *How do you use website analytics to generate insights?*

### Website Analytics

Website traffic data are a convenient source of information that can be used to track indicators of online reach and engagement over time. If you are aiming to evaluate project-level outcomes (see Figure 3) and use a website as a primary medium to achieve project-level goals and objectives, then website analytics are an important method to consider for your evaluation activities.

However, no online metric is perfect. Each online metric has strengths and limitations, and understanding what it means in the context of your community information project is critical to making good decisions based on the data.

*Measuring the Online Impact of Your Information Project: A Primer for Practitioners and Funders* (FSG and Knight Foundation, 2010) provides basic indicators of website performance. For example, you might be interested in measuring:

- **Reach:** Refers to the overall number of individuals using the site, which may be all visits or, more important, visits from intended users (i.e., your target audiences).

Website metrics related to online reach include:

- Visits per week.
- Visits per weekly unique visitor.<sup>5</sup>
- Visits from new versus returning unique visitors.

- **Penetration:** Refers to the share of your target audience that is visiting your website (i.e., a ratio of visitors from your target audience to total size of target audience).

Penetration requires that you have sufficiently estimated or recorded the size of your target audience and have a way to distinguish which visitors to your site are in your target audience. For example, if you want students in your community visiting your website, you could use public school enrollment data to size your target audience (e.g., the number of students in my target audience is 10,000), and then use registration data or website navigation data to provide an indication of how many unique visitors are likely students (e.g., the number of registered students visiting my site in the last week was 1,000; therefore, my penetration rate is about 10 percent).

- **Engagement:** Refers to the intensity of visitors' interaction with your website; that is, how often visitors come back to your website, view more content, and use the site's services.

Website metrics related to online engagement include:

- Page views per visit.
- Page bounce rate.
- Percent of visits that complete a specific action or path on the website.
- Time spent on the website.

## COMMON EVALUATION METHODS FOR INFORMATION PROJECTS

### Website Analytics

Custom download of website performance metrics, usually including data on web traffic and/or click-throughs.

### Social Media Analysis

Analysis of reach, engagement and/or sentiment expressed on social media platforms including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube.

### Online Polls

Questions delivered online to readers or users to gather data on knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors.

### Post-Event Surveys

Questions delivered in print, online, or over the telephone to gather information about knowledge, attitudes, or experiences after an event (e.g., forum, training, participation in online game).

### Interviews

Questions delivered in person or by phone to a specific set of individuals or groups of people to gather information about knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

These metrics are not meant to be examined only at one point in time or in isolation from one another. **To understand the overall trends in growth of your audience reach and engagement, it is best to track those on a monthly or weekly basis to see how the individual metrics highlighted above change or remain steady over time.**

<sup>5</sup> Number of visits and number of visitors may be the same depending on how much you know about the visitor. If visitors are signing in every time they visit your site, then this ratio of visits per visitor will be more meaningful.

Engagement metrics, such as page views per visit and time spent on site, also provide information on recirculation, i.e., how easily users are able to navigate from one story or page on the website to another. Website layout and design has an important influence on engagement and recirculation. Community information projects built on **Word Press** and **Drupal** may be better able to understand keyword-driven relevancy for their users and have found success in increasing these metrics by simply adding recirculation links to the end of a story, article or other web page. **Bit.ly**, a service that allows users to shorten, share and track their links (URLs), is another tool that may help projects improve their ability to track recirculation of their content on the web.

In addition to registration data (with demographic or geographic information, if possible), information on online donations or other actions that you want people to take are important to monitor and track. In many cases, community information projects should be optimizing their website with a “call to action” such as, donating online, becoming a sponsor, buying tickets for an event or clicking on an ad. The “goal and funnel” function in **Google Analytics** can help you set goals in order to know how well you are able to convert casual readers into seriously engaged, invested users.

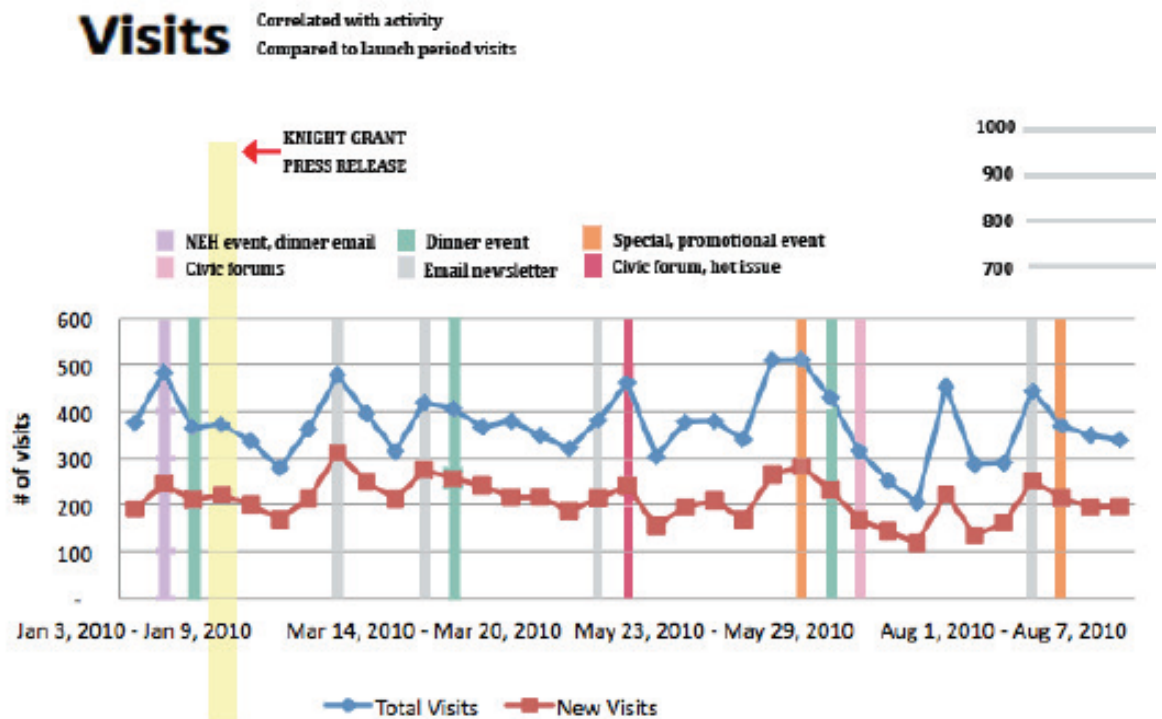
Google Analytics is a free and easy-to-use tool to collect and analyze website data. It will give you the basic, raw data, but even a small amount of additional analysis will give you more useful data for your evaluation. Putting web analytics data into spreadsheets and graphs will yield more insightful and actionable information for your project and help you communicate your progress to stakeholders.

**Tip**

It is best to track website metrics on a monthly or weekly basis to understand growth in online reach and engagement, and to see how indicators remain steady or fluctuate over time.

For example, you can use custom graphs and figures to identify reasons for spikes in website traffic. *The Village Square* (a KCIC-funded project supported by the Community Foundation of North Florida) created a graph (see Figure 5) of visits to the website and inserted vertical bars on days when they had a key event (e.g., a special dinner), sent out materials (e.g., newsletter) or had notable press coverage. They learned that most of the spikes in visitors matched up with those key events. This provided them with additional information on how they might best reach and engage their audience in the future.

Figure 5. 2010 Website Visits to *The Village Square, We the People*, Charted with Events



If you lack the technological expertise or capacity to regularly monitor and track web metrics data, then finding a partner or collaborator to help is essential, especially if much or all of your activity and engagement is online.

### **Do website data sufficiently capture reach and engagement of your target audience?**

Website metrics of reach and engagement may be more informative for projects that aim to influence a larger population and have a constant, steady stream of content updates.

Depending on the design of your website, it might be difficult to customize your web analytics reports to segment website traffic by age, gender, occupation or interest. If you have a very broad target audience, for example, all residents in the state of Minnesota, then web data can likely provide adequate information on visitors from the state.

You can design your website to more easily collect data on specific target audiences. In many cases your target audience is a subgroup of community residents, for example, parents, teachers or policymakers. In the ideal situation, everyone who visits your website will log in and be registered with full and complete data, so that if you are interested in knowing whether your website is increasingly attracting teachers who live in the Philadelphia area, you will have those data. It is no surprise that most website data are less than perfect. Data based on website navigation (i.e., how many people visit the “Educators” section of your website) or comments (i.e., how many responders to articles self-identify as teachers) would, at best, provide a proxy for visits from Philadelphia teachers. Identifying ways to differentiate visitors by characteristics of your target audience will help as you evaluate your project’s achievements.

A list of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in Figure 6 identifies several web metrics that link to common areas of performance that you may want to better understand, and particularly how they change over the long term. “Additional indicators,” shaded in green, could be tailored to your specific community information project, based on your goals.

Figure 6. Useful Performance Indicators for Measuring Online Output and Outcomes

<b>Key Performance Indicators</b> <i>(common across projects)</i>			
<b>Overall Site Trends</b>	<b>Growth and Stickiness</b>	<b>Reach</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Total number of visits</li> <li>▪ Visits per weekly unique visitor</li> <li>▪ Page views per visit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Page bounce rate</li> <li>▪ Visits from new vs. returning unique visitors <i>(total number of visits and page views per visit)</i></li> <li>▪ Percent of zero results from internal searches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of registered members in each audience segment; percent of universe</li> <li>▪ Percent of visits from registered members who sign in when they visit, by segment</li> <li>▪ Visits per week per signed-in member, by segment</li> </ul>	
<b>Additional Indicators</b> <i>(need to be tailored to grantees’ goals)</i>			
<b>Audience</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Engagement</b>	<b>Sustainability</b>
e.g., number of magazine or non magazine readers/subscribers who have registered	e.g., visits/unique page views by topic	e.g., percent of visits that start the idea submission vs. those finishing it	e.g., numbers of donors through site

You may also consider using a more advanced analysis of KPIs that goes beyond simply aggregated metrics and breaks out KPIs for different subgroups of visitors. For example, by comparing indicators of engagement (e.g., page views per visit) by visitors' source of referral (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) you can better understand which referral sources are driving the most engaged visitors to your website. Analyzing this valuable information can contribute to your success in increasing website engagement by:

- Identifying which referral sources are the most effective (in terms of sending the most engaged unique visitors).
- Improving understanding of the quality of website traffic being facilitated by partnerships and your own social media strategies.

For example, if your community information project attempts to increase reach and engagement on your website through referring links from Facebook, you could expect to see Facebook in your top three or four referrers. However, going a step further to analyze the KPIs just among those unique visitors referred by Facebook can tell you whether visitors referred by Facebook are engaging on the site to the extent that you might want or expect. Then you can use this information to tailor your outreach strategies more appropriately (e.g., either by focusing on increasing traffic from Facebook if referrals are high, but engagement KPIs are low, or by rethinking your social media outreach strategy if KPIs from Facebook visitors are low). If data from your website can only provide a proxy for reach, engagement and target audience penetration, you may wish to consider supplementing online methods of data collection by interviewing or surveying your target audience to learn more about how and why they interact with your project.

### *What type(s) of online activity do you want to understand?*

## **Social Media Analysis**

In this era of Web 2.0, what community information project does not have a presence on Facebook or Twitter? Friends, followers and fans can provide valuable insight into key evaluation questions about *who* your project is reaching, *how* people are engaging, and *to what extent they are sharing* your content with others.

Social media also provides such an enormous quantity of data and information that sorting through it all to make meaningful observations can be difficult. When it comes to evaluation, it is important to be very clear about what you are trying to learn from social media analysis; the key is having a well-defined evaluation question that helps you target your efforts. This will allow you to most effectively use social media analytics tools, such as the popular **Facebook Insights** (<http://www.facebook.com/FacebookInsights>), which can provide useful data to track Facebook followers, messages and fans. Despite the increase in number of social media tools, much of social media analysis continues to be done manually in many organizations. Therefore, when thinking about collecting and analyzing social media data, a good place to start is to ask yourself, *so what?* – In other words, how will you know that social media is furthering the ultimate goals of your community information project?

Basic social media analysis might include simply counting the number of comments/posts, retweets, new followers and fans; however, the usefulness of this data to take further action is

quite limited. In addition to these basic counts, you may want to consider how often social media sharing takes place relative to the amount of content your project is generating. You could ask, *What percentage of my articles are shared?* This would begin to reveal what type of user engagement you are getting relative to the amount of content you are producing, which might help you identify patterns in user engagement. For example, users might be sharing articles related to education more than articles on the environment. That is information that you and your program staff can use to make decisions and take action!

### Tip

Focus your online data collection and analysis on information that is most related to your key evaluation questions. Be careful not to get lost or sidetracked by the quantity of analytics or social media data!

Social media analysis can also help better understand the **diffusion** of information about and from your project. Using social media data to determine *who* is spreading information, *how* information is being shared through different networks, and *what tools or topics* most effectively engage different groups to achieve your project's goals. You may use social media analysis to determine which users are most important in driving your content to others (i.e., "power users"). Then, you might use this information to focus your evaluation or outreach efforts on activity among a small number of the biggest influencers in your audience. Or you might choose to collect and analyze content related to an important or highly trafficked topic over a (very limited) time period. **PostRank** (<http://postrank.com>) provides customizable information on tweets, stumbles, Diggs, and FriendFeed all in one place, which could be a great resource for a website that has a lot of content distributed through multiple platforms.

Analyzing social media data can provide information on what people think about your project. Analyzing audience **sentiment** may give you some indication of *why* or *how* your audience engages with your project using social media. To better understand if people have a positive, negative or indifferent view of your project, you can systematically scan website, Facebook or Twitter comments and analyze the data for common themes. You can manually review comments, posts or tweets for signs of positive or negative sentiment. **Social Mention** (<http://socialmention.com>), a free online tool, can help you track and measure what people are saying about a particular keyword through searching multiple social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Digg over the past day, week or month.

A quick Google search will reveal many advanced social media analytics tools that have been developed for marketing and public relations professionals. These show some promise for use in evaluation but have yet to be proven useful in gathering data beyond project-level outcomes and are often quite expensive. In most cases, social media tools will give you bits and pieces of information that you can use to inform broad questions of reach and engagement but require manual analysis to look at custom, targeted content.

In addition, to understand the behaviors or engagement of your target audience offline, other data collection methods will most likely be needed.



## Are your key questions answerable using website analytics alone?

*The Florida Independent* was interested in answering the following evaluation question: “How are readers using *The Florida Independent*?” This question requires data that could not be acquired by running custom Google Analytics queries. In general, questions regarding knowledge and attitudes are only answerable through data collection methods other than website or social media analytics. When evaluating “offline” outcomes and impact, commonly used evaluation methods, such as surveys and interviews, can and should be used to gather information on context and process, supplementing relevant website and social media analysis. A survey administered by *The Florida Independent* took advantage of their website to collect data from their readers with an online poll, rather than a hand-written community survey. Administering the survey online allowed them to easily access readers and the desired source of information; it also streamlined the data collection process by having all responses digitally recorded.

### Tip

Use surveys or interviews to collect data from audiences that are not engaged or to better understand changes in knowledge, attitudes, or behavior.

You may consider using a data collection matrix (located in the Appendix) to determine which online and offline data methods and sources would be most effective.

Figure 7 illustrates the key evaluation questions, data collection methods and sources that guided an evaluation of *The Florida Independent* and its national partner, the American Independent News Network.

Figure 7. Matrix of Questions, Methods and Sources for *The Florida Independent*'s Evaluation

	Key Evaluation Questions	Data Collection Method	Data Source
The Florida Independent	1. What kinds of audience groups are reading <i>The Florida Independent</i> ?	Online survey (n=121)	Florida Independent readers
	2. How are readers using <i>The Florida Independent</i> ?	Online survey (n=121) Telephone interviews (n=5)	
	3. What role has online discussion played in <i>The Florida Independent</i> readers' understanding of and engagement with public policy topics?	Telephone interviews (n=5)	
The American Independent News Network	4. How has The American Independent News Network (AINN) coverage helped to shape developments and outcomes of investigatory news stories?	Telephone interviews (n=6)	AINN staff
	5. How did the AINN's coverage of investigatory news stories influence the impressions, dialogues and actions of its readers and other key stakeholders (e.g. elected officials)?	Telephone interviews (n=4)	External stakeholders (readers, public officials, community/labor organizers)

When determining your data collection methods and designing your evaluation, it is important to consider your project's access to data collection and analysis expertise, the evaluation budget, as well as time and resource constraints. Especially in the startup phase, evaluation can be costly. However, small investments early on (e.g., collecting baseline data that you can use to inform an evaluation of impact later) can provide long-term benefit and save time and money down the road.

### RESOURCES

*Measuring the Online Impact of Your Information Project: A Primer for Practitioners and Funders* (Resources)

A Matrix for Planning Data Collection Methods (Appendix)

Social Media and Website Analysis Tools (Resources)

When you decide to go beyond website and social media analysis, there are survey and interview methods that might be of particular use for evaluating community information projects.

## Surveys

Surveys help to answer key evaluation questions that go beyond wanting to understand how many people have been attracted to your website or to what extent your audience is engaged online to beginning to understand *who is engaging* online or offline with your project, what is motivating them to engage, and *what your audience intends to do in the future*.

Surveys may take different forms in the context of community information projects:

- **Online surveys (or polls) may be used to collect data on audience satisfaction and to inform content development.**

Online surveys with users or engaged audiences can be a quick and easy way to collect data on an audience you care about: people that you have already reached and/or engaged in some way. These online surveys can be sent to registered users via e-mail, and can be posted on your website or social media page. **Survey Monkey** can be used to create surveys with links that can be posted on Twitter or embedded in Facebook.

*The Rapidian* used an online survey in its evaluation to determine the demographics of their readers, how they discovered *The Rapidian*, what they do with content they read on the site, and to what extent *The Rapidian* is connected with its neighborhoods and social networks. Its user survey generated responses from 133 individuals, a small proportion of its overall user base, but provided meaningful insights into gaps in the project's outreach to diverse groups within their communities and ways to incentivize continued participation from citizen journalists.

- **Post-event surveys may be used to assess participants' knowledge, attitudes or behaviors after an event such as a training, community forum, or online game.**

*Amazing County*, an online game (i.e., "treasure hunt") funded in part by the Northern Chautauqua Community Foundation, a 2009 KCIC grantee, decided to use a post-treasure hunt online survey with its participants to answer a variety of questions, from, "How did you find out about AmazingCounty.com?" to "In what ways did your perception of Chautauqua County change because of AmazingCounty.com?"<sup>6</sup> This 20-question survey used a mix of closed and open-ended questions to solicit answers from respondents and provided information that could be used to refine the treasure hunt experience and focus outreach efforts on those engaging (or not) and evaluate the extent to which the project is reaching its goals. Through the use of an online survey, staff members learned that their project was successful in increasing pride among their engaged audience. This finding could then be used to educate and advocate for continued funding and resources to be put toward their initiative and/or to bring new funders on board.

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<sup>6</sup> *Amazing County*, a project funded in part by the Northern Chautauqua Community Foundation, and a 2009 winner in the KCIC.

In addition to the methods described above, community information projects found ways to incorporate specific questions about information and media use into community surveys developed and implemented by other organizations in their communities. This has saved projects time and money, and helped to establish meaningful community partnerships as well.

## Interviews

Interviews are an excellent way to evaluate offline behaviors – *Are people acting differently as a result of our efforts?* When designed and implemented systematically, conversations with your target audience become a powerful source of information. There is no set number of interviews that you must conduct in an evaluation; the number is based on how much data are needed to have confidence in the results, based on your budget, timeline or other resource constraints. Typically, you want to interview several people within each stakeholder group (e.g., parents, students, public officials, business owners).

Interviews have been used in community information projects to collect information about:

- **Reach and influence**

In 2010, the *Notebook* committed to providing the Philadelphia Public Schools community with up-to-date, reliable information about the Renaissance Schools Initiative, an extremely controversial issue. As such, the staff wanted to know: “Which stakeholder groups did the *Notebook* **reach and influence** during the 2010 planning and rollout of the Renaissance Schools Initiative?” Interviews with a small, but specific group of education stakeholders provided an opportunity to more deeply understand who was influenced by the *Notebook*’s efforts, how they were influenced, and why. Because of the purposeful selection of interviewees, the interview findings were not meant to be representative of the larger population. However, these interviews revealed stakeholders that were influenced beyond what was reported in online surveys; for example, interviewees mentioned that the *media* was reached and influenced by the *Notebook*’s coverage.

- **Changes in dialogue, behavior, or action**

The *Notebook* also sought information about “What **changes in dialogue, behavior or action, did** the *Notebook*’s coverage generate within each stakeholder group?” Interviews were not being used to come up with an estimate of the magnitude of change caused by the *Notebook*’s coverage; however it did lead to greater understanding of what types of changes were occurring among whom. Interviews can be especially important when trying to assess changes in behavior of hard-to-reach groups, including audiences such as policymakers or youths, or among a population that is less likely to be reached online.

- **The project’s role in influencing policy**

The *Florida Independent* used interviews with readers to inform the question: “What **role** has online discussion played in The Florida Independent readers’ understanding of and engagement with **public policy** topics?” Interview responses were used to provide context for survey findings dealing with online engagement. Interviewees discussed the extent to which reader comments and discussion was valued and why. Readers also offered suggestions for how the site could be improved in order to facilitate greater online dialogue.

## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What is your position or role with the Philadelphia Public Schools and how long have you been involved with the school district?

How, if at all, has the way you read the *Notebook* changed since the *Notebook* began posting stories online?

How, if at all, has your impression of the *Notebook* changed given its coverage of the Renaissance Schools reform initiative?

What do you think influenced conversations about, awareness of, or behavior during the time of the Renaissance Schools Initiative?

How did you become aware of the Michigan oil spill story?

How would you rate the effectiveness of *The Florida Independent* in covering investigatory news stories?



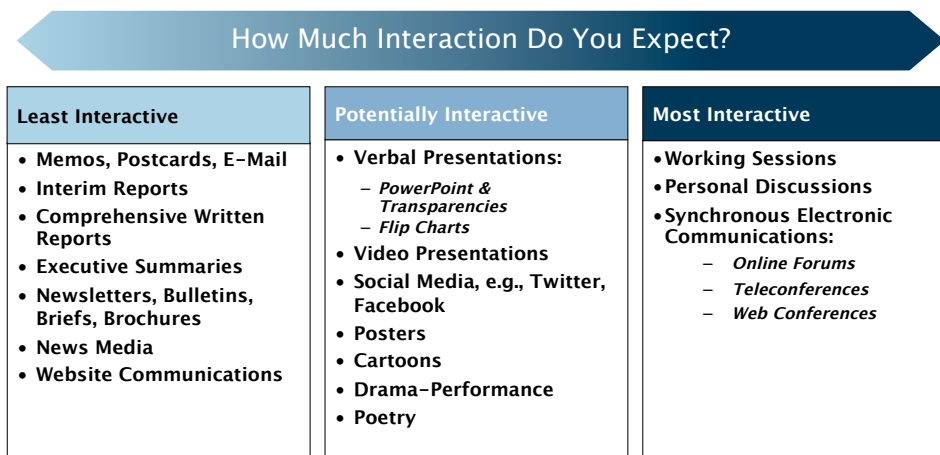
## Step 4:

# Communicate and Report the Evaluation Findings

After all of the hard-earned time, money and effort that have gone into an evaluation's design and implementation, it is critically important that the findings and recommendations are communicated and reported in accessible and meaningful ways to the relevant stakeholder groups. To a great extent, the use of evaluation findings and recommendations depends on the effectiveness of communications and reporting.

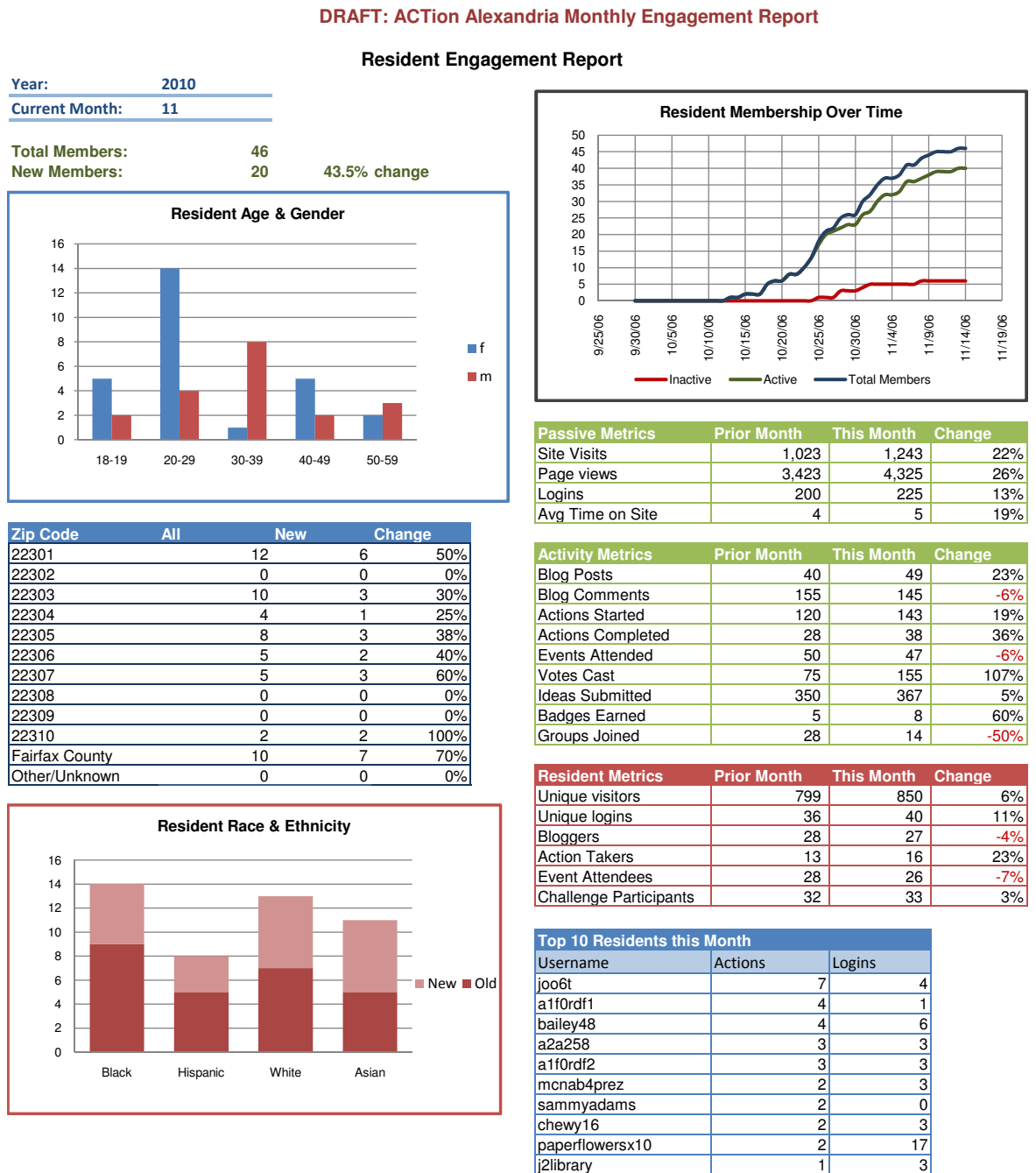
There is no "right way" to communicate evaluation findings. Some formats appeal to certain stakeholders more than others. The communication and reporting format you decide to use for your evaluation may be contingent on your desire for interaction with stakeholders and/or whether you wish to encourage individual or group learning. Figure 8 shows a diversity of communication formats along a spectrum of interaction (Torres, Preskill, Piontek, 2005). Formats considered "least interactive" tend to correspond with formats best for individual learning, while those considered "most interactive" often foster learning in a group setting.

Figure 8. Communication and Reporting Formats by Level of Interaction



There are easy and inexpensive ways to share your evaluation findings, including publishing the evaluation results on your website, summarizing findings into a briefing document for project team working sessions, tweeting key findings or creating info-graphics to help communicate important information. *ACTion Alexandria* developed an evaluation dashboard (a snapshot of the draft dashboard is shown in Figure 9) that they plan to use as a tool to help communicate evaluation findings to their stakeholders. The dashboard will describe important aspects of their audience's engagement on their website, including membership statistics by age and gender, race/ethnicity and ZIP code. The dashboard will also highlight specific actions taken on the website (e.g., blog posts, ideas submitted, votes cast) and most active members.

Figure 9. Sample Dashboard for Communicating Findings on Online Engagement (*ACTion Alexandria*)<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> The data in the dashboard is for representative purposes only and does not reflect real data.



Communicating your evaluation findings with other stakeholders should be well thought out and planned in advance. A guide for developing an evaluation communications plan includes six steps (Torres, et al., 2005):

1. Identify all of your stakeholders.
2. Indicate purposes for communicating with each stakeholder during and after the evaluation.
3. For each stakeholder, identify most relevant stakeholder characteristics (e.g., reading ability, familiarity with program, attitude toward program, role in program decision making, familiarity with evaluation, attitude toward current evaluation).
4. Identify which reporting formats you will use with each stakeholder.
5. Indicate when you might implement this format.
6. Indicate what resources you will need to implement each format.

## Next Steps

While this document provides guidance and initial considerations for designing an evaluation of a community information project, it does not provide tools or tips for *how* to implement an evaluation. The worksheet at the end of this document provides a starting point for developing an evaluation plan that will hopefully incite excitement and energy into what is often an activity met with fear or resistance. Revise your plan as needed and revisit this document to glean additional insight as your project develops.

In writing this guide, we acknowledge that community information projects are emerging and changing as technology changes. For example, at the writing of this report, community information projects are increasingly making use of mobile platforms to reach and engage their audiences. The tools and resources available to organizations to understand web and social media metrics are also evolving. We hope to be able to provide more guidance as we continue to learn about how to conduct meaningful, useful, relevant and credible evaluations of community information projects in the future. In the meantime, we welcome your feedback.

# Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the cooperation and assistance of the Community Information Challenge projects highlighted in this document, including *The Rapidian*, the *Philadelphia Public School Notebook*, *The Florida Independent*, *ACTion Alexandria* and *Amazing County*. We appreciate the feedback and effort of all of the Community Information Challenge grantees as we provided assistance and guidance around evaluating their community information projects. We would also like to thank those who have informed our thinking on evaluating online activities, including Victor Acquah, Dana Chinn, Jessica Clark, Julia Coffman, J.D. Lasica, Michele McLellan, Susan Mernit, K.D. Paine and Lisa Williams.

## Resources

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Preskill, H. and N. Jones (2009). Practical Guide for Engaging Stakeholders in Developing Evaluation Questions. FSG. Available at: <http://www.fsg.org/tabid/191/ArticleId/78/Default.aspx?srpush=true>.

Russ-Eft, D. and H. Preskill (2009). Evaluation in Organizations: A systematic approach to enhancing learning, performance and change (Second Edition). Basic Books: New York, N.Y.

Torres, R.T., H. Preskill, H. and M. Piontek (2005). Evaluation Strategies for Communicating and Reporting (Second Edition). Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.

### Free Website and Social Media Data Collection Resources

- [Bit.ly/pages/tools](http://bit.ly/pages/tools)
- [Facebook.com/FacebookInsights](https://www.facebook.com/facebookinsights)
- [Google.com/analytics](https://www.google.com/analytics)
- [MyTweeple.com](http://mytweeple.com)
- [TweetStats.com](http://tweetstats.com)
- [TweetBeep.com](http://tweetbeep.com)
- [SocialMention.com](http://socialmention.com)
- [PostRank.com](http://postrank.com)

### Web Analytics Readings and Courses

- *Web Analytics: An Hour a Day* and *Web Analytics 2.0*, by Avinash Kaushik
- *Actionable Web Analytics*, by Jason Burby and Shane Atchison
- *Social Media Metrics*, by Jim Sterne
- *Advanced Web Metrics with Google Analytics* (Second Edition), by Brian Clifton
- Introductory Google Analytics courses (offered by many independent vendors, such as <http://www.seminars.websharadesign.com>)
- *Applying Google Analytics Goal and Funnel Techniques*, by Justin Cutroni for Public Media Metrics, a research organization for public radio and TV. Available at <http://publicmediametrics.com/sections/5/projects>.

### Media and Engagement

- *Public Media 2.0: Dynamic, Engaged Publics*, by Jessica Clark. Available at: <http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/future-public-media/documents/white-papers/public-media-20-dynamic-engaged-publics#references>

# Appendix: Evaluation Tools and Resources

## Theory of Change Template

<b>What the issue is and why we are taking action (Assumptions)</b>	<b>What we are doing to address the issue – how we plan to solve the problem or create the change (Activities)</b>	<b>The change we hope to see if we are successful (Outcomes)</b>
Insert your assumptions here	Insert your activities here	Insert your outcomes here

Theory of Change – *The Florida Independent* (2010)

**Current State**  
*What the issue is and why the AINN is taking action (The Need)*

- Significant reduction in capitol press corps, hence, decrease in coverage of important statewide issues
- Lack of a nonpartisan, transparent and accountable news source covering state politics
- Absence of a press watchdog lessens accountability among corporations and public officials
- Active, vital “fourth estate” not seen as a necessity in the community and its value is unclear to stakeholders

**What the AINN is doing to address the issue (Activities)**



**Future State**  
*The change the AINN hopes to see if it is successful (Outcomes)*

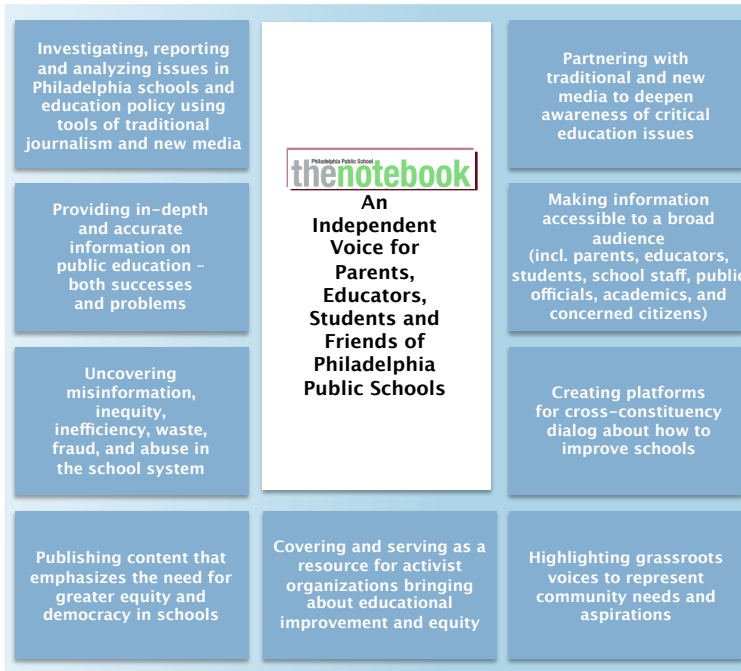
- A more transparent and accountable media
- A community that considers *The Florida Independent* to be invaluable to its understanding of policy and politics
- A more transparent and accountable government due to the presence of a press watchdog
- A standard of excellence in online journalism that can be replicated
- A diverse and sustainable revenue base for the Florida Independent and for the online journalism sector

Theory of Change – *The Notebook* (2010)

**Current State**  
*What the issue is and why the Notebook is taking action (The Need)*

- Long-term school improvement depends in large part on “public engagement”
- In the past decade, Philadelphia’s school system has been constantly buffeted by rapid change, heightening the need for reliable and timely information and commentary
- Declining resources, readership and an erosion of trust in traditional media has made the time ripe for new news organizations to step in with new models and fill the void

**What the Notebook is doing to address the issue (Activities)**



**Future State**  
*The change the Notebook hopes to see if it is successful (Outcomes)*


- More parents put their skills and energy into school improvement
- Students and parents gain a greater role in decision-making in schools and the system overall
- Positions advanced by grassroots constituencies are considered by educational decision-makers and reflected in policy decisions
- Transparency, accuracy, and accessibility of public information increases
- Accountability of educational institutions increases
- Diversified and sustainable revenue mix

## Logic Model Template

**Assumptions:** *What are the underlying assumptions of your community information project?*

Resources What resources do we have to work with?	Activities What is the project doing with its resources	Outputs What are the tangible products of our activities?	Short-term Outcomes What changes do we <u>expect</u> to occur within the short term?	Intermediate Outcomes What changes do we <u>want</u> to see?	Long-term Outcomes What changes do we <u>hope</u> to see over time?
<p><b>External Forces:</b> <i>What external factors may affect the ways in which, how, and the extent to which the project may achieve its outcomes?</i></p>					

Logic Model – *The Florida Independent* (2010)

Assumptions – What are the underlying assumptions of <i>The Florida Independent</i> ?					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>News shapes public opinion, hence, by influencing the news cycle with deliberate coverage, one can shape public opinion</li> <li>By shaping public opinion, the media can play a key role in demanding a more fair, accountable government</li> <li>An informed citizenry is necessary for a well-functioning democracy</li> </ul>					
Resources	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reputation, network and resources of the Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Community Foundation of Central Florida and The American Independent News Network</li> <li>Content and network of professional journalists</li> <li>Content and network of citizen journalists</li> <li>Citizens Advisory Board, to ensure fair and accurate reporting</li> <li>Relationships with media outlets around the state, including Spanish-speaking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating a new, policy-focused online news source</li> <li>Providing daily original investigative reporting and analysis of state and local issues</li> <li>Marketing and outreach to influencers (e.g. advocacy orgs, press partners, govt. officials)</li> <li>Providing online journalists with financial support, professional development and other types of support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of reporters</li> <li>Web visits/ week</li> <li>Stories posted/week</li> <li>Blog posts/ week</li> <li>Comments/ week</li> <li>Reader participation on Twitter and Facebook</li> <li>Newspaper impressions</li> <li>Radio impressions</li> <li>TV impressions</li> <li>Impact stories</li> <li>Media bookings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TFI is a fast growing resource (based on online and offline KPIs) for credible, nonpartisan policy information used by legislators, residents, opinion leaders and other media outlets</li> <li>TFI breaks at least 1 important investigatory news report each month which is perceived by readers as nonpartisan and credible</li> <li>TFI generates online discussion of public policy</li> <li>TFI has at least one reporter with credentials in the capital press corps</li> <li>The readership of TFI on a monthly basis is approximately 1% of the state pop., ~185K</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stories reported by The Florida Independent result in impact.</li> <li><i>The Florida Independent</i> is viewed as one of the top sources for investigatory journalism in the state by legislators, residents and opinion leaders</li> <li>Influentials (e.g., lawmakers, advocacy leaders) regularly cite TFI stories</li> <li>The Florida Independent's stories are picked up regularly by other media outlets.</li> <li>Community is built around TFI both online and offline. Online: daily return readership, interaction in comments and through social media. Offline: TFI hosts forums, panels around the state, featuring current events (e.g., candidates seeking office) or topics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A more transparent and accountable media</li> <li>A community that considers TFI to be invaluable to its understanding of policy and society</li> <li>A more transparent and accountable government due to the presence of a press watchdog</li> <li>A standard of excellence in online journalism that can be replicated</li> <li>A diverse and sustainable revenue base for TFI and for the online journalism sector</li> <li>Recognition for excellent journalism by journalistic peers (e.g., Society of Professional Journalists)</li> </ul>

Logic Model – *The Notebook* (2010)

Resources	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reputation and network of <i>the Notebook</i>, print version (especially the brand equity among Philadelphia school employees)</li> <li>Reputation, network and resources of the William Penn Foundation and other funders</li> <li>Full-time staff</li> <li>Board support</li> <li>Community partnerships</li> <li>Journalist content</li> <li>Local presence and knowledge</li> <li>Philadelphia school students and their parents</li> <li>Membership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigating, reporting and analyzing issues in Philadelphia schools and education policy using tools of traditional journalism and new media</li> <li>Providing in-depth and accurate information on public education – both successes and problems</li> <li>Making that information accessible to a broad audience (incl. parents, educators, students, school staff, public officials, academics, and concerned citizens)</li> <li>Creating platforms for cross-constituency dialogue about how to improve schools</li> <li>Publishing content that emphasizes the need for greater equity and democracy in schools</li> <li>Uncovering misinformation, inequity, inefficiency, waste, fraud, and abuse in the school system</li> <li>Highlighting grassroots voices to represent community needs and aspirations</li> <li>Covering and serving as a resource for activist organizations bringing about educational improvement and equity</li> <li>Partnering with traditional and new media to deepen awareness of critical education issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Membership</li> <li>Print circulation</li> <li>Advertising dollars</li> <li>Page views/ week</li> <li>Page views/visit</li> <li>Total visits/ week</li> <li>Unique visitors/ week</li> <li>Visits/unique visitor/week</li> <li>Comments/ day</li> <li>Blog posts/week</li> <li>Alliances formed as a result of the Notebook</li> <li>Stories/week that represent on-the-ground perspectives</li> <li>Activist activities undertaken as a result of the Notebook</li> <li>All metrics above, by geographic and audience segment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online dialogue spurs offline action</li> <li>More diverse voices are represented in online and offline dialogue, including parents and Spanish speakers</li> <li>The Notebook supports activist groups</li> <li>Coverage has impact on education-related events and institutions, i.e., Renaissance Schools; CEP</li> <li>Educators become more responsive to parents</li> <li>Public officials are prodded to remedy egregious problems</li> <li>Growth in board and volunteer base</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broad and diverse readership</li> <li>Broad awareness of the Notebook across stakeholder groups</li> <li>Significant growth in membership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More parents put their skills and energy into school improvement</li> <li>Students and parents gain a greater role in decision-making in schools and the system overall</li> <li>Positions advanced by grassroots constituencies are considered by educational decision-makers and reflected in policy decisions</li> <li>Transparency, accuracy, and accessibility of public information increases</li> <li>Accountability of educational institutions increases</li> <li>Diversified and sustainable revenue mix</li> </ul>			
			<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Short and Intermediate Outcomes</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growth in partnerships and collaboration in the community</li> <li>Increase in contributions and earned income</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Short and Intermediate Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growth in partnerships and collaboration in the community</li> <li>Increase in contributions and earned income</li> </ul>		
Short and Intermediate Outcomes								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growth in partnerships and collaboration in the community</li> <li>Increase in contributions and earned income</li> </ul>								
<p><b>External Forces – What external factors may affect the ways in which and the extent to which the program achieves its outcomes?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor public access to technology</li> <li>Competition from other news and entertainment sources</li> <li>Economic and social conditions in the community</li> <li>Lack of fluency in English among target audience</li> <li>Opposition from district and political leadership</li> </ul>								



## Data Collection Methods Template

Data Collection Matrix for Methods and Sources by Evaluation Question

<b>Key Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>Data-Collection Method</b> (E.g., interview, survey, focus group, web analysis, document review)	<b>Data Source</b> (E.g., community members, policy makers, readers, educators, students)
1. [WRITE YOUR 1st QUESTION HERE]		
2. [WRITE YOUR 2nd QUESTION HERE]		
3. [WRITE YOUR 3rd QUESTION HERE]		

Data Collection Matrix – *The Rapidian*

Key Evaluation Questions	Data-Collection Method	Data Source
1. What is the distribution and density of connections (e.g., other websites referring to <i>The Rapidian</i> , people sharing weblinks to <i>The Rapidian</i> , people discussing <i>Rapidian</i> content on Facebook or other social platforms) to and from <i>The Rapidian</i> ?	Online user survey	Users
	Analysis of website traffic and visitor engagement records	Google Analytics
	Analysis of reach and exposure on Twitter	Tweetreach
2. What keeps, and will continue to keep, citizen journalists engaged in <i>The Rapidian</i> ?	Online citizen journalist survey	Citizen journalists
3. What has fueled, and will continue to fuel, increased diversity in citizen journalists?	Online citizen journalist survey	Citizen journalists

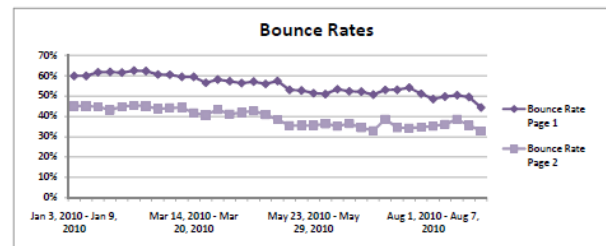
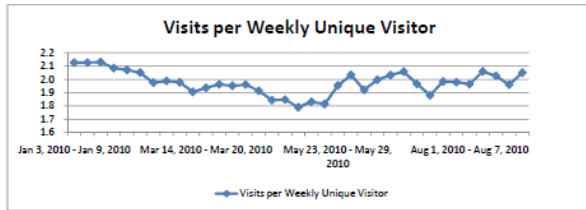
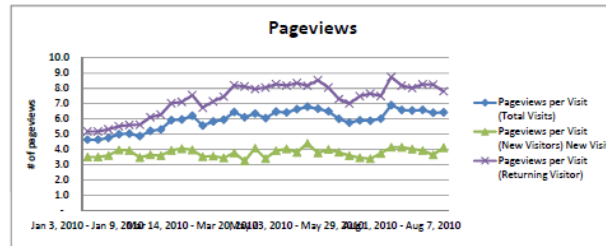
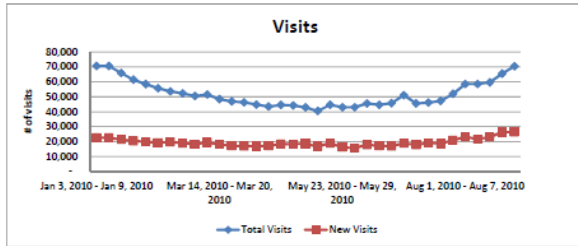
Data Collection Matrix – *The Notebook*

Data Collection Matrix – *The Notebook*

Key Evaluation Questions	Data-Collection Method	Data-Collection Source
<u><i>Reach Questions</i></u> 1. What kinds of audience groups are reading the <i>Notebook</i> online? 2. How are readers using the <i>Notebook's</i> website differently than the printed version? 3. How has the introduction of the <i>Notebook's</i> website changed the way readers view the <i>Notebook</i> ?	Online member survey (e-mailed to members)	Member readers
	Online nonmember survey (available on the <i>Notebook</i> website)	Nonmember readers
	Website traffic and visitor engagement records	Google Analytics
<u><i>Impact Questions</i></u> 4. Which stakeholder groups did the <i>Notebook</i> reach and influence during the 2010 planning and rollout of the Renaissance Schools initiative? 5. How did the <i>Notebook's</i> coverage address the needs of each stakeholder group? 6. What kinds of dialogue, behaviors, actions or change in dialogue, did the <i>Notebook's</i> coverage generate within each stakeholder group?	Focus group	Parents
	Focus group	Students
	Individual phone interviews	Teachers/ administrators
	Individual phone interviews	Policymakers
	Individual phone interviews	Media
	Individual phone interviews	Education reform support organizations

# Key Performance Indicators Dashboard<sup>6</sup>

Metrics	Overall Site Trends			Growth and Stickiness						TRENDS	
	Visits	Visits per Weekly Unique Visitor	Pageviews per Visit	Site				Top Landing Page 1	Top Landing Page 2		
				New Visits	% of Visits from New Visitors	% of Visits from Returning Visitors	Page Views per visit (New Visitors)	Page Views per visit (Returning Visitors)	Bounce Rate		Bounce Rate
CWGR Jan-March (13 weeks)	-3.2%	-0.7%	1.8%	-2.1%	1.1%	-0.6%	0.1%	2.5%	-0.2%	-0.3%	Increase
CWGR Apr-Jun (13 weeks)	1.0%	0.4%	-0.3%	0.9%	-0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	-0.5%	-0.9%	-1.7%	Stable
CWGR Jul-Aug (9 weeks)	5.0%	0.5%	0.9%	4.4%	-0.5%	0.3%	2.0%	0.5%	-2.0%	-1.8%	Decrease
Jan 3, 2010 - Jan 9, 2010	70,598	2.1	4.6	22,535	32%	68%	3.5	5.2	60%	45%	
Aug 29, 2010 - Sep 4, 2010	70,409	2.1	6.4	26,374	37%	63%	4.1	7.8	44%	33%	



<sup>6</sup> From FSG. *Measuring the Online Impact of Your Information Project: A Primer for Practitioners and Funders*. John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Available at: <http://www.knightfoundation.org/dotAsset/370642.pdf>.

# About

## **John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation advances journalism in the digital age and invests in the vitality of communities where the Knight brothers once owned newspapers. Knight Foundation focuses on projects that promote informed and engaged communities and lead to transformational change. The Knight Community Information Challenge is part of the foundation's Media Innovation Initiative, a \$100 million plus effort to meet America's information needs. The challenge is a \$24 million contest that helps community and place-based foundations find creative ways to use new media and technology to keep residents informed and engaged.

> For more information on the challenge, visit [informationneeds.org](http://informationneeds.org).

## **FSG**

FSG is a nonprofit consulting firm specializing in strategy, evaluation and research, founded in 2000 as Foundation Strategy Group and celebrating a decade of global social impact. Today, FSG works across sectors in every region of the globe – partnering with foundations, corporations, nonprofits and governments to develop more effective solutions to the world's most challenging issues. FSG brings together leaders that are hungry to exchange information, elevate learning and to create collective impact in discovering better ways to solve the world's most difficult social problems.

In the field of evaluation and performance measurement, FSG has significant client and thought leadership experience. FSG's approach focuses on the use of evaluation as a management tool to improve decision making and increase social impact. We use traditional as well as innovative data collection approaches to determine the various effects and impacts an organization's efforts have produced over time – always with the purpose of informing and improving strategy and program implementation.

FSG's Strategic Learning and Evaluation Center offers several evaluation related services, which include designing and implementing developmental, formative and summative evaluations, building organization-wide evaluation systems, building staff and grantee evaluation capacity, facilitating organizational learning processes, and building the field through the development of tools, resources and research to support innovative evaluation practices.

> For more information, visit [fsg.org](http://fsg.org).

### Step One: Describe

Identify the goals and objectives of your evaluation and the key characteristics of your target audience.

STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT	GOALS OF YOUR COMMUNITY INFORMATION PROJECT			TARGET AUDIENCE CHARACTERISTICS (e.g., location, age, occupation)
	<i>Project-level Outcomes</i>	<i>Community Outcomes</i>	<i>Impact</i>	
	<input type="radio"/> Reaching target audience <input type="radio"/> Engaging target audience	<input type="radio"/> More informed community <input type="radio"/> More civically engaged community	<input type="radio"/> Policy Change <input type="radio"/> Attitude Change <input type="radio"/> Behavior Change	
Prelaunch  Launched, initial year  Ongoing implementation	<b>Changes to the Information Ecosystem</b>			_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
	<input type="radio"/> Media attention to local issues	<input type="radio"/> Greater organizational collaboration	<input type="radio"/> Greater digital media capacity	
	Other Goal(s): _____			

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### Step Two: Identify

Identify the purpose of your evaluation and determine the key evaluation questions.

<b>What is the purpose of your evaluation?</b> The purpose of the evaluation is to... _____ _____ _____	<b>I want my evaluation to answer the following questions:</b> 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
<b>Stakeholders</b> (i.e., intended users, such as staff or funders) • _____ • _____	Notes: _____ _____

### Step Three: Design

Determine which methods and sources you will use to collect information to answer your evaluation questions.  
 (Consider your access to data collection and analysis expertise, budget, time and resource constraints)

EVALUATION QUESTIONS (from Step Two)	METHODS					SOURCES (consider target audiences, Step One)
	Website Analytics	Social Media Analytics	Survey	Interviews	Other	
<b>1</b> →	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	• _____ • _____
<b>2</b> →	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	• _____ • _____
<b>3</b> →	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	• _____ • _____

### Step Four: Communicate

Communicate, report, and use evaluation findings.

<b>Format</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Written report <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation slide deck	<input type="checkbox"/> Dashboard/info-graphic <input type="checkbox"/> Social media post	<input type="checkbox"/> Memo <input type="checkbox"/> Video/photo	<input type="checkbox"/> Web conference <input type="checkbox"/> Working group session	_____ _____
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