



[Shift] Evaluation Guide

This guide was produced by a third party evaluator. If you have any questions or concerns about this guide, please email Evan Gravely, the program evaluator, at gravely.evan@gmail.com.

Purpose and Scope

This guide is intended to support [Shift] program administrators in structuring an evaluation for the program. Two evaluation domains are covered: process (i.e., implementation) and outcomes evaluation. Results are intended to support program learning and development and to satisfy stakeholders' (e.g., funders) needs for evaluation.

No evaluation expertise is required to follow this guide, though some familiarity with evaluation concepts (e.g., outcomes, indicators), basic data collection methods (e.g., surveys, interviews), and data analysis methods (e.g., thematic and content analysis) are an asset. [Shift] administrators are encouraged to review the content in the guide that's most relevant to their needs, and to increase their evaluation capacity using the tools and resources provided.

No single guide can fully cover the structural and procedural aspects of evaluation. In particular, step-by-step instructions for analyzing evaluation data is beyond the scope of this guide, as the range of approaches and methodological considerations are extensive and complex. At the end of the guide, however, we provide links to external resources that can assist with evaluation planning and methods. Our intention is for future [Shift] administrators to supplement the contents in this guide with other learning resources to round out their evaluation knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, this guide outlines possible evaluation questions, data collection and analysis approaches, and reporting considerations to help streamline evaluation planning for [Shift].

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Limitations

The contents of this guide are based on the evaluation of the [Shift] pilot program, administered by Centre[3] from 2018-2021. Accordingly, the content in this guide falls within the scope of what was covered in the pilot evaluation. As such, this guide is not exhaustive of the range of questions and methods that could be used to evaluate a [Shift] program. Notably, this guide only provides guidance for evaluating two short-term program outcomes: soft skill and assertive communication skill improvements among participants. It is anticipated that future [Shift] program administrators may ask additional and/or alternative evaluation questions, evaluate

different outcomes, and/or use different (or modified) methods, which will require particular evaluation designs.¹

Structure of document

This guide begins by outlining potential process and outcome evaluation questions to structure an evaluation. Then, the guide outlines an evaluation plan based on the specified questions. Next, the guide reviews data collection methods and tools, as well as the components of a data management and analysis plan. Finally, the guide outlines reporting considerations, some suggestions and resources for conducting evaluations online, and links to other self-directed learning supports for evaluation.

Evaluation Questions

The following are some process and outcome evaluation questions that can be used to structure a [Shift] evaluation. Administrators may prioritize asking certain questions over others, or may pose additional or alternative questions.

Process evaluation questions

- To what extent did the workshops go according to plan?
 - Did participants apply soft skills during the program? If so, how/ which skills?
 - Did staff administer the full [Shift] curriculum? If not, why?
 - Did participants attend the majority of the program sessions? If not, why?
- What factors contributed to, or prevented, success of the program?
 - Were there enough resources (staff, time, materials, funds) to run the program well?
 - Was the program well-managed?
 - Were staff trained or educated to the right level in the program design?
 - Was facilitation effective and appropriate?
 - Did participants value the program?

Outcomes evaluation questions

- To what extent, if at all, did the program improve soft skills among participating youth?
- To what extent, if at all, did the program improve assertive communication skills among participating youth?
- Were there any unintended outcomes of the program?

¹ For instance, it's likely that [Shift] administrators may want to measure [Shift]'s impact on employment attainment and retention. Directly measuring this outcome would likely require a longitudinal study design that followed participants after they completed the program to collect data on their employment situations.

Evaluation Plan

This section outlines a potential evaluation plan for [Shift]. We begin by outlining some program design assumptions that underlie the plan. Then, we provide definitions of the stakeholders captured through data collection, as well as the components of the plan. Finally, we present the plan in table format.

Program design assumptions

This plan was designed to collect data to assist with monitoring and evaluation of [Shift] programs with extended program cycles² (e.g., 8-12 months), and with each program series³ consisting of multiple sessions⁴. For example, the [Shift] program from which this evaluation plan was developed operated annually, with four to six series per year consisting of four to eight sessions each.

In addition, this evaluation plan assumes:

- A manager (or coordinator) is in place to oversee planning and administration, evaluation activities, budgeting, and staffing.
- The manager hires qualified facilitators and provides training.
- The program has an operating budget for materials/art supplies.
- Facilitators use an existing (or modified version of the) [Shift] curriculum and recommended art-based activities to facilitate learning.
- The program has developed relationships with external observers such as employment providers, support workers (i.e., social workers), and/or parents.
- The program's outreach and advertising efforts are securing sufficient numbers of participants for the program to warrant an evaluation.

Stakeholders

This evaluation plan is designed to collect data from the following stakeholders:

Participants: the primary beneficiaries of [Shift].

Facilitators: trained program staff who implement [Shift] sessions and who develop relationships with the participants.

² "Program cycle" refers to the stages involved in the creation, implementation, and closure of a program. For example, for a [Shift] program with a cycle of 12 months, one month may involve planning, hiring, and training staff; ten months may involve program implementation; and the last month may involve evaluation, reporting, and facilitating necessary program design changes. This cycle may be repeated (indefinitely) depending on program funding/sustainability.

³ "Program series" refers to the number and sequence of sessions that constitute a complete program for participants.

⁴ "Program session" refers to an instance of program activities occurring at a set time and location.

Managers: those involved in coordinating [Shift] and who have relationships with facilitators and external observers

External observers: include those outside the program who have relationships with participants and a vested interest in their progress and who may be able to observe changes in participants resulting from completing the program.

Plan components

The following are the components of the evaluation plan (which begins on the next page):

Evaluation questions: Organized under the two domains (process vs. outcome-related questions) and restated from Section 2 to help organize the other components of the evaluation plan.

Focus: Succinct statements of what will be evaluated to assist in answering the evaluation questions.

Indicators: Articulate the type of change or condition expected from the area being investigated.

Data sources: Identify where the evaluation data will be obtained.

Who is responsible/when: Proposes who should be responsible for data collection and analysis, and when these activities are expected to occur. Note that an external evaluator is recommended to collect and/or analyze some of the data due to the sensitive nature of the information. For instance, due to the power relations embedded in conventional organizational structures, it is likely inappropriate for a [Shift] manager to ask facilitators directly about the adequacy of resources, training, and management support, as they may feel compelled to provide favourable responses. An external evaluator does not need to be a hired consultant, but could be a coordinator from another one of the host organization's programs, a volunteer, or a student researcher.

The plan

Evaluation questions	Focus	Indicators	Data sources	Who is responsible/ when?
Process				
To what extent did the workshops go according to plan?	Participant application of soft skills	Participant perceptions of soft skill application during program	Participant reflection exercises Participant focus groups	Facilitators collect data every program series; manager to analyze data every x # of program series
	Implementation of [Shift] activities	Lack of deviations from planned activities ⁵ (if there were deviations - why?)	Program logs	Facilitators fill out program logs every session; manager to review at the end of every program series
	Participant attendance	Proportion of participants who attend at least 80% of the program	Program logs	
What factors contributed to, or prevented, success of the program?	Program resources	Facilitators' and manager's perceptions of resource availability compared to resource demands	Staff interviews	External evaluator to conduct interviews and analyze data at the end of every x # of program series
	Management support for staff	Facilitators' satisfaction with management	Staff interviews	
	Staff training	Facilitators' satisfaction	Staff interviews	

⁵ Could also include logging any deviations from teaching the standard [Shift] curriculum.

		with level of training provided/preparedness for role		
	Effectiveness and appropriateness of session facilitation	Participants' rating and perceptions of facilitation	Post-program survey	Facilitators to distribute surveys at the end of every program series; manager to review at the end of every x # of program series
	Effectiveness and appropriateness of session activities	Participant ratings and perceptions of effectiveness and appropriateness of session activities	Post-program survey	
	Program value	Participants' and/or observers' perspectives of program value for employment	Post-program survey Staff interviews Participant focus groups	Facilitators to collect data every program series; manager to analyze data at the end of every program cycle
Outcomes				
To what extent, if at all, did the program improve soft skills among participating youth?	Changes in soft skill competencies attributed to program	Participants', facilitators', and observers' perceptions of soft skill learning and application resulting from program participation	Post-program survey Participant focus groups Staff interviews External observer interviews	External evaluator or manager to conduct interviews at the end of every program series. Manager to analyze data at the end of every program cycle
To what extent, if at all, did the program improve assertive communication	Changes in assertive communication skill competencies attributed to program	Participants', facilitators', and observers' perceptions of assertive communication skill	Post-program survey Participant focus groups	

skills among participating youth?		learning and application resulting from program participation	Staff interviews External observer interviews	
Were there any unintended outcomes of the program?	Changes to participants' lives outside of soft or assertive communication skill development	Participants', facilitators', and observers' perceptions of other outcomes as a result of participating in program	Post-program survey Participant focus groups Staff interviews External observer interviews	

Data Collection

The following outlines some methods and tools for collecting monitoring and evaluation information from the [Shift] program. For each method, we provide an overview, the people involved, materials required, and the step-by-step procedure for administering the method. For most methods, templates and other resources for data collection (e.g., informed consent scripts) are provided in the appendices. It is not necessary to use all the methods suggested in this guide, though using a mixture of methods can help collect feedback from stakeholders with diverse perspectives to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the program's process and outcomes (known in social science research as "triangulation").

Program logs

Overview

To monitor program implementation, one method is to use program logs to keep track of participation and sessional activities. Basic information to include in the log would be attendance (notably if any participants were missing or late for the program), a reflection on if everything went as planned (and if not, why), and a reflection on what went particularly well and/or if there were any challenges. This log could be combined with notes from the participant reflection activities (discussed in the next section) so that all the data collected from individual program sessions can be found in one place. See Appendix A for a program log template.

People involved

- One facilitator

Materials required

- Electronic or hard copy of program log (see Appendix A for template)

Procedure

1. At the beginning of the program session, take attendance.
2. At the end of the program session, review the activity checklist, noting which activities occurred during the session and any that did not occur. You should provide notes as to why an activity didn't occur, and can also take note of what went particularly well/what was challenging about the session.
3. After the program session, the upload an electronic copy of the log to a shared access folder that the [Shift] manager has access to.

Participant reflection exercises

Overview

An emphasis of [Shift] is the use of transferable soft skills as participants complete the program's art activities. To reinforce learning and perceived value of the soft skills, we conducted reflection exercises at the end of each program session (except the first and last sessions⁶), which also serves to monitor the soft skills being used during the sessions. The goal of the reflection exercises is for participants to identify the main soft skill(s) they used during the program session and to reinforce their understanding of the value of that skill in terms of its contribution to their success.

People involved

- One activity facilitator
- One note-taker (if available)
- Workshop participants

Materials required

- Soft skills handout (Appendix C) with descriptions of each soft skill (enough for all participants). Kindly request participants don't write on these so you can collect and re-use them each session
- Sticky notes or small squares of paper (enough for all participants)
- Laptop or notepad
- Pens or pencils (enough for all participants)
- (Optional) Printed copy of these instructions and/or the participant consent script (see Appendix B)
- (Optional) Program log for taking notes (see Appendix A)

Procedure

1. The first time you conduct this activity, it's important to let participants know that you'll be taking notes and that their information will be used to help monitor implementation of the program. Although all feedback will remain anonymous, it's important that participants are informed they can refuse participation in this study and not have their data collected. We've provided a script you can choose to follow along with in Appendix B to help make sure participants are informed about their right to not participate.
2. Set aside roughly 15 minutes at the end of each workshop to conduct this reflection exercise. If this is the first time conducting the activity, explain the activity and

⁶ The first session usually focuses on program orientation/teaching the theory behind assertive communication and soft skills without application of the learning. The last session usually concludes with a participant focus group. These activities preclude the need to do a reflection at the end of the session.

participants' right to not participate (following along with the script in Appendix B if you choose).

3. Distribute the sticky notes (or paper), pens/pencils, and soft skill descriptions⁷ handout to participants (Appendix C).
4. Ask participants to take a few minutes to review definitions of the soft skills, think about what they did today, and write down the *one* top soft skill that they used today.
 - a. The skill they choose can represent what they used the most that day, or it can be a new skill they developed that they're excited about and/or that helped them in their group project.
5. Ask each participant to reveal the skill they chose and briefly explain why they chose it.
 - a. Gently probe participants to justify why they chose that skill. If a participant provides a vague response, ask them if they can identify a specific example in their group art activity where they used that skill. If a participant is struggling with or resistant to justifying their choice, move on to the next participant in order to maintain a safe, non-confrontational space for sharing.
6. Next, ask participants to write down one soft skill they did NOT use today, but that they want to develop. Ask each participant to reveal the skill they chose and briefly explain why they chose it (e.g., why they think it might help them in their personal or professional life).
7. The notetaker (if available) should take notes on participants' responses. We recommend using participants' initials to keep track of who's speaking. You can record your notes in the note taking space on the program log (see Appendix A) or on a separate notepad. Notes can be electronic or handwritten.
 - a. Take notes on: 1) The soft skill each participant identifies, and 2) Their justification for choosing that skill. You don't need to record the discussion verbatim, but you should at least summarize the main points. Feel free to capture direct quotes if they're particularly illustrative of a soft skill use.
 - b. A record might look something like this: *EG: Conflict resolution. Had a disagreement with a team member; listened to their viewpoint and found a compromise. Both ended up happy with the decision.*
 - c. If a notetaker is not available, you (the facilitator) may wish to record and later transcribe the reflection activity word for word. If you do this, make sure you get permission from participants to record the session, and you'll need a strategy in place to securely store any audio files.
8. Wrap up the activity by encouraging participants about the value of their input.

External observer interviews

Overview

⁷ When asking participants to reflect on soft skills they used, we found they were better able to recall and identify soft skills when they had definitions of them on-hand.

External observer interviews can be used to identify program outcomes⁸ and assess the extent to which these outcomes can be attributed to participating in [Shift]. The external “observers,” in this case, refer to anyone outside the program administration but who are in the position to observe its effects on participants (e.g., parents, social workers, employment support staff). Ideally, [Shift] administrators should have relationships with observers before the program starts. For instance, in evaluating the [Shift] pilot program, the observers were the staff of the employment service providers that the program partnered with.

Observer interviews can be conducted within a week or two of participants completing the program to assess short-term outcomes from the program, and/or can be conducted months later to assess the medium- to long-term impacts (e.g., to see if the program has a long-term effect on soft and assertive communication skill competencies).

People involved

- External evaluator or [Shift] manager
- External observers⁹

Materials required

- Interview guide (see Appendix D for a sample interview guide)
- Voice recorder (or recording software)
- Phone or laptop (for a telephone or teleconference call, respectively)

Procedure

1. Contact and schedule a time for an approximately 30-minute interview with each observer. In your initial contact, depending on how well you’re acquainted with these individuals, you should remind them who you are, what you’re doing, what their participation would look like (including the length of the interview), and why their feedback is important.
2. Interviews can be conducted in-person, over the phone, or using teleconferencing software.
3. Set up a recording device so you can record the conversation. The recording device should be placed between you and the interviewee if conducting an interview in-person, otherwise near the device you’re using to host the call to capture clear audio output.
4. Introduce the interview and obtain verbal consent by following along with the script in Appendix D.

⁸ Depending on how well these observers know about [Shift] or are connected to the program, they might also be able to comment on the design/implementation of the program. Use your discretion when choosing what questions to ask in an interview.

⁹ Ideally, you should be connected to one observer for each program participant, aiming for at least five interviews. If there’s one observer for multiple participants (e.g., an employment program staff who works with all the participants), you may conduct fewer interviews, though having multiple perspectives helps to round out the data.

5. Ask questions, prompting interviewees for more information when necessary. See Appendix D for examples of questions you can ask to gather data on intended program outcomes.
6. Upload audio files and notes to a secure, shared access folder.
7. Transcribe the interview for later analysis.

Staff interviews

Overview

As [Shift] staff use program resources, administer program activities, and are in a position to observe program outputs and outcomes, they are highly useful informants for a process and outcomes evaluation. Staff interviews will usually include [Shift] program facilitators, who are the targets of this guide, but can also include managers and/or administrators. Staff interviews will likely be conducted at the end of every program cycle, though some administrators may wish to conduct a process-oriented interview at the end of every program series to more routinely monitor how things are going with the program.

People involved

- External evaluator¹⁰ or [Shift] manager
- [Shift] staff (i.e., facilitators)

Materials required

- Interview guide (see Appendix E for a sample interview guide)
- Voice recorder (or recording software)
- Phone or laptop (for a telephone or teleconference call, respectively)

Procedure

1. Contact and schedule a time for an approximately 30-minute interview with each facilitator. In your initial contact, depending on how well you're acquainted with these individuals, you should remind them who you are, what you're doing, what their participation would look like (including the length of the interview), and why their feedback is important.
2. Interviews can be conducted in-person, over the phone, or using teleconferencing software.
3. Set up a recording device so you can record the conversation. The recording device should be placed between you and the interviewee if conducting an interview in-person, otherwise near the device you're using to host the call to capture clear audio output.

¹⁰ As note previously, we recommend using an external evaluator for staff interviews due to the potentially sensitive nature of the interview questions (e.g., satisfaction with management support). Having a manager conduct the interview will likely contribute to biased responses.

4. Introduce the interview and obtain verbal consent by following along with the script in Appendix E.
5. Ask questions, prompting interviewees for more information when necessary. See Appendix E for examples of questions you can ask to gather data on intended program outcomes.
6. Upload audio files and notes to a secure, shared access folder.
7. Transcribe the interview for later analysis.

Post-program surveys

Surveys are an easy way to collect feedback from participants about the [Shift] program. Typically, surveys are administered at the end of a program, though some survey designs require a pre-program (or “pre-test”) and post-program (or “post-test”) survey to infer changes caused by participating in the program. This guide uses a post-survey design and asks participants directly about the contribution of the program to any outcomes they experience.

Surveys can be administered in-person using a hardcopy or online using open source (or paid) survey software (see Additional Resources section for recommended software). Whichever method you choose, it’s important to let participants know beforehand that filling out the survey is confidential and voluntary. Moreover, administrators of the survey should ensure participants are given privacy to fill them out, especially if they are being filled out in-person. One way to ensure privacy is to space participants around the room and allow them to place their completed surveys in an envelope rather than handing them directly to the facilitator.

There are many different kinds of data you can collect with a survey, though you should strive to keep the survey relatively short and easy to fill out (e.g., no more than two pages long). To help you consider what questions you might ask, the following table provides a list of survey measures according to the focus of your evaluation. We encourage you to use whatever measures are related to your evaluation needs and to add or modify questions as necessary.

Evaluation Focus	Survey Measure(s)
<i>Process:</i>	
Effectiveness and appropriateness of facilitation	I got along well with the [Shift] facilitator. (Likert scale, agree/disagree)
	I felt comfortable approaching the [Shift] facilitator if I needed help with something. (Likert scale, agree/disagree)
	The [Shift] facilitator seemed like they knew a lot about the skills required to get and keep a job. (Likert scale, agree/disagree)
	The [Shift] facilitator helped me to gain new knowledge and

	skills. (Likert scale, agree/disagree)
Effectiveness and appropriateness of session activities	I think art-based activities are an engaging way to learn employment skills. (Likert scale, agree/disagree)
	What did you like best about the [Shift] program? (Open ended)
	What could be improved about the [Shift] program? (Open ended)
	If you were to take part in the [Shift] program again, what would you like to see changed? (Open ended)
Program value	I enjoyed the [Shift] program. (Likert scale, agree/disagree)
	In [Shift], I learned (fill in the blank: nothing, a little, a medium amount, a lot) about the skills that will help me get and keep a job.
	In [Shift], I practiced skills that will help me get and keep a job. (Likert scale, agree/disagree)
	The [Shift] program better prepared me for employment. (Likert scale, agree/disagree)
<i>Outcomes:</i>	
Changes in soft skill competencies attributed to program	As a result of participating in [Shift], I increased my ability to use soft skills (fill in the blank: not at all, a little, a medium amount, a lot).
Changes in assertive communication skill competencies attributed to program	As a result of participating in [Shift], I increased my ability to express positive and negative ideas and feelings in an honest and direct way (fill in the blank: not at all, a little, a medium amount, a lot).
General outcomes (most significant change)	What was the most important thing (or three of the most important things) you learned from participating in [Shift]? (Open ended)

Participant focus groups

Overview

At the end of the [Shift] pilot program, facilitators conducted a summative focus group (or “reflection activity”) with participants. The focus groups were modelled on an activity provided by Session Lab¹¹ and were a form of narrative-based inquiry that helped participants create meaning out of their participation in [Shift]. The focus groups were approximately 1 hour in length and consisted of three reflection questions: “What happened over the last [x] weeks?”, “So what?”, and “What next?”. Participants were encouraged to reflect on each question and write their response on sticky notes, which the facilitator posted on chart paper at the front of the room, clustered into themes, and used to facilitate in-depth discussion about their responses.

The focus groups were a great way to collect data on the value of [Shift] for participants, as well as any outcomes resulting from their participation. The structure of this activity was facilitated such positive discussions that we recommend it regardless of whether you require the evaluation data!

It’s important to let participants know that you’ll be recording and taking notes on the discussion and that this information will be used to help evaluate the program. Although all feedback will remain anonymous, it’s important that participants are informed that they can refuse participation in this study and not have their data collected. We’ve provided a script you can choose to follow along with in Appendix F to help make sure participants are informed about their right to not participate.

People involved

- Facilitator
- One note-taker
- Workshop participants

One individual can potentially act as both the activity facilitator and note-taker, but we don’t recommend this because it can be difficult to take notes at the same time as facilitating.

Materials

- Soft skills handout with descriptions of each soft skill (Appendix C)(enough for all participants). Kindly request participants don’t write on these so you can collect and re-use them each session
- Three pieces of chart paper, each with one of the titles, “What happened?”, “So what?”, and “What next”?
- Sticky notes (enough for all participants, three different colours for each question)
- Pens, pencils, and/or markers (enough for all participants)
- Laptop or notepad
- (Optional) Printed copy of these instructions and/or the participant consent script

Procedures (facilitator)

¹¹ [Session Lab](#) is a for-profit organization providing workshop and collaboration tools to broad audiences.

1. Set aside roughly 1 hour for this activity (depending on the length of the session).
2. Explain the activity and participants' right to not participate (following along with the script in Appendix F if you choose). Let participants know that you're going to be asking them some questions about the [Shift] program and that they're encouraged to write or doodle about their answers or ideas on the sticky notes provided.
3. Ask the three focus group questions, using the prompts to encourage discussion:
 - a. "What happened over the last [x] weeks?"
 - i. What did we do?
 - ii. Is there anything that stood out to you?
 - iii. What did you learn?
 - b. "So what?"
 - i. Why was any of this important (e.g., for a job, in your personal life)?
 - ii. What's the value of learning and practicing soft skills/assertive communication?
 - iii. If you were to recommend this program to a friend, how would you convince them about it?
 - c. "What next?"
 - i. What are you going to do with what you learned? Can you see yourself doing anything differently in your personal life, or for a job?
 - ii. Is there anything you feel like you need to practice more? If so, how will you get that practice?
 - iii. If you did this workshop again, would you do anything differently or want to learn something new?
4. For each question, before you move onto the next, get participants to write their ideas on the sticky notes provided and place them on the chart paper. Their answers can be a single word or full or partial sentences. Once everyone has contributed sticky notes for a question, facilitate a discussion about their responses, looking for patterns/clusters of ideas. Feel free to ask participants to elaborate on their response or question why they identified a particular idea/action. Repeat for each question.
5. Wrap up the activity by relaying to participants the value of their input.

Procedures (note taker)

1. Create ID's for each participant, e.g. first names or initials.
 - a. If using first names or initials, make sure someone anonymizes this information once it's entered into a data sheet.
2. When the activity begins, start a recording device and place it at the centre of the room so that it captures the discussion.
3. Optional: as participants put their sticky notes on the chart paper, you can attempt to "cluster" similar responses so that themes start to emerge.

4. Take notes throughout the discussion¹² using the note-taking sheet provided. You don't have to capture what everyone says - the most important thing is to take note of the speaking order to resolve any discrepancies around who's speaking when transcribing the focus group.
5. Upload your notes and the audio recording to a secure shared drive.
6. Transcribe the focus group for later analysis.

Data Management and Analysis Plan

Ongoing collection of [Shift] program data will result in a wealth of interview and focus group transcripts, program logs, survey records, and other data you may be collecting. Organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing this data can be a challenge without a clear plan. The goal of this section is to give you a high-level overview of how to develop a data management plan, as well as approaches to analyzing qualitative and quantitative data resulting from your data collection activities.

Note: This section does not provide a step-by-step instruction for analyzing qualitative or quantitative data, as such content would constitute an entire guide of its own! Moreover, most analyses benefit from a specialized skill set typical of a trained evaluator or researcher. While we can provide resources to support you in conducting analyses yourselves, we highly recommend collaborating with (or contracting out to) a trained researcher or evaluator to make sense of your data.

Developing a data management plan

The data management plan provides guidance for collecting, storing, and analyzing data, often using an electronic database (or multiple databases). Having a clear data management plan is especially important for programs collecting many different kinds of data. Some organizations house their data in dedicated software, though lower-budget organizations may operate multiple existing data systems (e.g., Excel, client management software) in order to address different functions. In general, the steps to creating a data management plan include¹³:

- Identifying database requirements (e.g., what kind of data are you collecting and what capabilities should database software have?),
- Identify data to be collected and entered into the database (e.g., participant numbers, post-survey result records),
- Determine data entry and storage procedures, including the roles/responsibilities for each,

¹² If you're already recording the conversation, you may ask why it's necessary to also take notes. Primarily, this is to prevent total loss of data if the recording fails, but can also be used to keep track of the discussion and aid transcription (which can get tricky if the audio is poor or there are a lot of people talking over each other).

¹³ Modified from Markiewicz, A., & Patrick, I. (2016). *Developing monitoring and evaluation frameworks*. Sage Publications.

- Determine what data analyses will be undertaken (e.g. frequency distributions of survey feedback, thematic analysis of interview transcripts).

A template for a data management plan is provided below.

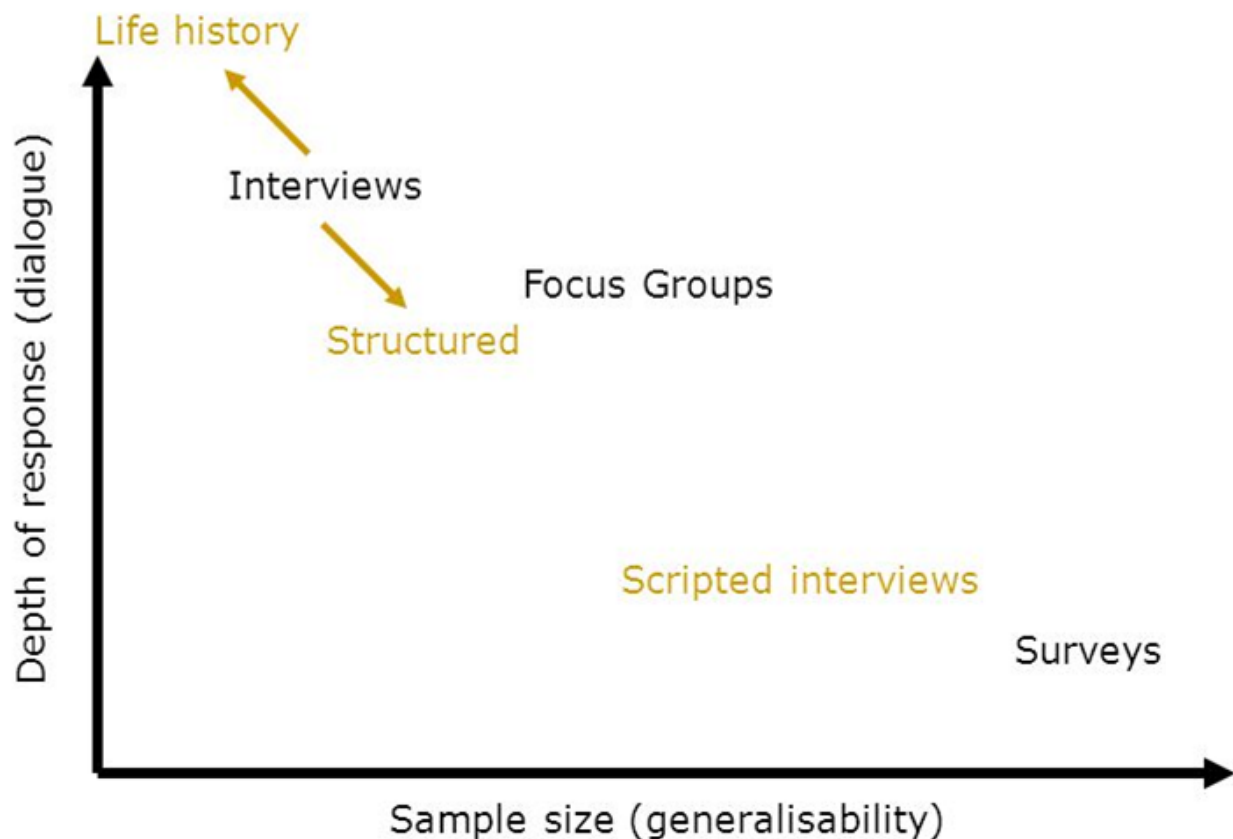
Database requirements		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hardware and software to be used</i> • <i>Access arrangements (e.g., web portal)</i> • <i>Formats for data entry (e.g., spreadsheets)</i> • <i>Required technical capabilities (e.g., statistical analysis, cross-tabulations)</i> 		
Data collected	Data storage & entry	Data analysis
<i>Participant logs. Includes:</i> -Program attendance -Process-related questions (e.g., how well did things go?) -Soft skill reflection exercise notes	<i>Responsible: facilitator</i> -Raw data (i.e., original log files) get stored in this folder: (link to folder) -Collected data gets entered into this spreadsheet: (link to spreadsheet) -Participant attendance goes in first tab, process-related questions & notes go in the second tab, soft skills reflection exercise notes go in third tab	-% of participants attending at least 80% of program sessions -thematic analysis of process-related question notes -content analysis of reflection exercise notes (to see which soft skills are most used by participants) + thematic analysis of notes for examples of applications
<i>Post-program surveys</i>	<i>Responsible: facilitator</i> -results go in this spreadsheet (link to spreadsheet) -process-related question responses go in first tab -outcomes-related question responses go in second tab	-frequency distribution of likert-style questions -content analysis of process-related open ended questions -thematic analysis of outcomes-related open ended questions

Quantitative vs. qualitative analysis

Data analysis involves identifying, organizing, and assessing collected information and also considering relationships between different data sets. The purpose is to derive meaning from your data in order to answer the specific evaluation questions identified for your evaluation. The analytical approach(es) you take is dependent on the kind of data you have, the quantity and complexity of the data, the amount of time available, and available skills, equipment, and resources (e.g., data analysis software; staff expertise; resources to hire an external consultant).

Commonly, you'll have a mix of both qualitative and quantitative data. Each kind of data has its strengths and weaknesses. One way to characterize the differences between qualitative vs. quantitative data is by comparing the depth of the data vs. its generalizability. Depth refers to the density of contextual information, or the amount of "dialogue" that is captured. Generalizability refers to the extent findings from the data in your sample can be attributed to the population at large.

As seen in the figure below, different methods gathering quantitative vs. qualitative data often involve tradeoffs in terms of their depth of information vs. generalizability. For instance, using surveys, you're often able to collect a wide breadth of quantitative information, which might allow you to detect patterns or trends in the population, but the nature of survey questions means your information isn't going to be very in-depth. In contrast, conducting interviews or focus groups can yield in-depth qualitative insights, yet due to the resource-intensiveness typically involved in conducting them, you're likely going to have fewer responses than in a survey, meaning the findings may not be generalizable to the broader population.



Another key difference between qualitative and quantitative data relates to how the information is presented (or synthesized) following analysis. For quantitative data, emerging themes and trends are usually presented graphically in tables, charts, and graphs using predetermined categories. Such categories can include frequencies of occurrence, percentage, ratios, etc. Data may be analyzed for meaning using measures of central tendency (e.g., means, medians,

modes). Statistical analyses may also be undertaken for quantitative data, particularly for large datasets, though this likely won't be appropriate for a small-scale [Shift] program (but may be more relevant later if/when the program expands in scale).

Qualitative data, on the other hand, is often sorted, coded¹⁴, and analyzed manually using word processing or spreadsheet programs. The aim of qualitative data analysis is to identify common themes emerging across the different data sources such as interviews and focus groups. Specialized software, such as NVivo, also exists to streamline qualitative data analysis, though it's often expensive to purchase a license.

Qualitative data can be semi-quantified by keeping track of the number of respondents that had similar responses, e.g. "10 participants stated that ..."

The main challenge for qualitative data analysis is the coding and categorization of the data into different themes. Categories can be selected according to the themes outlined in the evaluation questions. For example, if the theme highlighted in an evaluation question was program value, then all data drawn from a range of different sources related to that theme would be assembled and aggregated (in a particular category, which may contain several codes). If an initial scan of data, such as transcripts of interviews and focus groups, highlighted that program participants spoke about the reliability of facilitators, then the term *reliability* could become a code and used to classify and sort further data, falling under the theme of "effectiveness and appropriateness of facilitation" (an evaluation focus).

Reporting

When we talk about "reporting" on evaluations, most people think of summative evaluation reports that are done at the conclusion of a program to send to funders (and other stakeholders the program is accountable to). However, reporting can be just as important for monitoring program implementation, and can leverage process-related data to communicate insights that lead to program development in "real time."

The table below provides examples of some kinds of reports that you might produce using the evaluation data you gather over the course of your [Shift] program, ranging from regular monitoring reports to summative evaluation reports.

Type of report (including frequency)	Focus	Includes analysis and synthesis of ...
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¹⁴ Coding, a key process in most forms of qualitative data analysis, involves taking sections of the material you're analyzing and associating or condensing it into a discrete label. For instance, in an interview transcript, a participant statement that reads as follows, "I think a lot of the skills we learned are exactly what employers are looking for," might be coded as "transferability of skills" in the context of evaluating the program's value. The same code might be applied to subsequent statements made by other participants.

Regular monitoring report (end of every program series)	-Implementation of [Shift] curriculum -Participant attendance	-Program log data relating to what's going well and what's been challenging -Attendance records from program logs
Midterm monitoring report (end of x number of program series)	-Participant application of soft skills -Program resources -Management support for staff -Staff training -Effectiveness and appropriateness of session facilitation -Effectiveness and appropriateness of session activities	-Reflection exercise notes on soft skill use and application -Staff interview data relating to program resources, management support, training -Participant survey responses relating to facilitation and activities
Summative evaluation report (end of program cycle)	-Program value -Changes in soft skill competencies attributed to program -Changes in assertive communication skill competencies attributed to program -Other changes to participants' lives (unintended impacts)	-Survey responses related to program value, changes in soft skill competencies, changes in assertive communication skill competencies -Staff interview, external observer interviews, and focus group data related to program value and outcomes -Reflection exercise notes on soft skill use & any comments relating to application

Doing Evaluation Online

This guide was written at the tail end of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has altered everyone's lives, including how we work. The pandemic also changed how we do research, particularly social research, which has traditionally been dependent on in-person interactions to "observe" social phenomena. However, as we've all learned how to adapt to the circumstances, academic and non-academic communities have explored approaches to socially-distanced but deeply engaging qualitative research methods. A comprehensive guide, called "[Qualitative Research at a Distance](#)," has been prepared by Spark: A Centre for Social Research Innovation, and is an excellent resource to consult.

Luckily, there are many ways that the methods proposed in this guide can be adapted for online. For instance:

Program logs: can be recorded digitally on a Google Document or Sheet and stored in a Drive folder with shared access.

Post-program surveys: can be distributed and collected using online survey software (e.g., Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, Qualtrics, Limesurvey).

Staff and external observer interviews: can be conducted over video calling software (e.g., Zoom), a pre-recorded video (known as a one-way interview), telephone, or email.

Participant focus groups and reflection exercises: can be conducted using video calling software where a facilitator is able to share their screen. A [Jamboard](#) (an open source brainstorming platform) can be used to facilitate reflection activities where each participant can contribute using virtual sticky notes.

Though software exists to adapt the above methods for “virtual” interactions, [Shift] staff should be aware of the limitations to online engagement. Particularly, as anyone running an online program has likely experienced, some participants may experience access or engagement challenges when it comes to participating online. [Shift] evaluators should ensure they provide instructions for using any data collection technologies ahead of time and offer phone support (or other form of support) to walk participants through using the technology. Moreover, evaluators will need to determine ways to monitor participants’ energy levels without being able to rely on in-person bodily cues. A good practice is to structure breaks into any form of online, real-time data collection, so that participants can stretch, use the washroom, and refresh themselves. Other suggestions may be found in guides relating to digital/online engagement or by asking coworkers and peers about their experiences and suggestions.

Additional Resources

The following table provides a list of other resources that can assist you with evaluating your [Shift] program and building your evaluation capacity.

Area	Resource
Program evaluation	<p>A YouTube video that goes over the fundamentals of evaluation with a focus on process and outcomes evaluation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZEYgEv7EL4</p> <p>The Common Approach has a video series on impact evaluation/performance evaluation with a lot of transferable knowledge: https://www.commonapproach.org/explainer-videos/</p> <p>Betterevaluation.org has documented a wealth of methods, processes, and approaches to evaluation: https://www.betterevaluation.org/</p>
Surveys	Qualtrics provides a helpful overview of the survey analysis process,

	<p>with links to different analytical methods and techniques: https://www.qualtrics.com/experience-management/research/analysis-reporting/</p> <p>Here's a helpful YouTube video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4q5UZwwidRI</p> <p>Overview of quantitative data analysis software tools (paid and open source) if requiring complex statistical analysis of findings: Quantitative Guide — Spark: a centre for social research innovation (mcmaster.ca)</p>
Interviews	<p>This is a helpful, peer-reviewed article developed for medical science scholars but applicable to a variety of contexts: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0142159X.2018.1497149</p> <p>YouTube video on interviewing: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9t-_hYjAKww</p>
Focus groups	<p>Tips for preparing for a focus group: https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/conduct-focus-groups/main</p> <p>Tips on facilitating a focus group: https://www.uml.edu/docs/FG%20Tips%20sheet_RK_tcm18-167588.pdf</p> <p>Tips on preparing, facilitating, <i>and note taking</i> for a focus group: https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/how-to-conduct-focus-groups</p> <p>Tips for transcribing and analyzing focus groups (refer to pages 10-15): https://www.eiu.edu/ihec/Krueger-FocusGroupInterviews.pdf</p>
Qualitative data analysis	<p>Tips and examples for identifying codes and themes: https://youtu.be/eT-EDgwRvRU</p> <p>Thematic analysis of qualitative research data (in a visual way): https://youtu.be/eT-EDgwRvRU</p> <p>Example of the coding process (download and open the file on the webpage): How to analyze qualitative data – Baseline Help Center (campuslabs.com)</p> <p>Comparison of qualitative data analysis software (includes survey software): Quantitative Guide — Spark: a centre for social research innovation (mcmaster.ca)</p>

Appendix A: Program log template

Below is an example of a program log, with examples of information in italics that it would hopefully capture to assist with program monitoring and evaluation.

Facilitator's name: <i>Steven</i>	Date: <i>June 23, 2021</i>
Series ID: <i>[Shift] summer program, group 2</i>	
Participant attendance:	
Present: <i>Janet, Dave, Sheila, Andrew, Caitlin, Moaz</i>	Absent: <i>Ben</i>

Question	Comments
Did everything go as planned? If not, why?	<i>Several participants did not feel comfortable being recorded. We decided we would act out the scenes live instead of recording & screening them later as films.</i>
Did anything go particularly well?	<i>A fun icebreaker at the start of the session helped to energize participants who were feeling low-energy today.</i>
Was anything particularly challenging?	<i>One of the participants (Dave) had issues controlling his temper and would sometimes take it out on other participants. I found it challenging to de-escalate/monitor his behaviour while trying to run the session.</i>
Other thoughts/comments	<i>Today was challenging at times - I think I would find it hard to manage a group much larger than this without the help of an additional facilitator.</i>

Soft skill reflection activity:
Tally of skills identified by participants: <i>Initiative x3, Leadership x1, Empathy x1, Time management x1</i>
Discussion notes:

Janet: I think I demonstrated initiative today when I started to set up the props for our next scene while everyone else was busy preparing their scripts.

Moaz: I used time management when I noticed we were running out of time and told the group we should move onto practicing the other scene we wanted to accomplish today.

...

Appendix B: Sample consent script for reflection exercise

Thank you all for participating today. At the end of each session, we're going to take about 15 minutes to reflect on the soft skills we learned or used today. Soft skills are skills you'll use in any job, so it's helpful to understand what these are and how they're helping you work better.

[Distribute one-page list and descriptions of soft skills, as well as sticky notes/paper and pens, if you haven't already done so].

Take a few minutes to look over this list of soft skills. When you're done reviewing the definitions, I want you to pick *one* soft skill that you used today and write it down. The skill you choose can represent the one you used most today, or it can be a new skill that you developed that you're excited about or that helped you in your group work. After you've all written down a skill, we're going to go around in a circle and share why we chose that skill.

I'm going to be taking notes of the discussion. These notes will be shared with [person] who'll be keeping track of the soft skills you're learning and using through this program. All notes will be anonymous, but if there's anyone who'd rather not have notes taken on what they say, please let us know now or after the activity. It's entirely voluntary to take part in this activity, and it's okay if you choose not to participate.

Appendix C: Soft skill descriptions handout

Reflection Activity: What soft skill did you use today? (Pick your top one)

Skill	You probably used this skill today if ...
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Team building	You did something to improve the way your group worked together.
Interpersonal skills	You had good interactions with your team members and were able to effectively make decisions and solve problems together.
Social perceptiveness	You noticed and responded to someone's social cues, e.g. their body language, mood, or "vibe."
Time management	You used your time wisely, didn't get distracted, and completed all your tasks on time.
Leadership	You motivated your team members and helped them succeed at whatever they were doing.
Critical thinking	You asked interesting questions about what you were learning or doing.
Innovation	You thought of a new, creative idea.
Initiative	You realized something had to get done and you decided to do it yourself.
Conflict resolution	You disagreed with somebody about something but found a peaceful solution.
Self-reflection	You thought about how you think, act, or behave, and how this influences the work you do.
Empathy	You made an effort to understand how someone else is feeling (in other words, you "put yourself in their shoes").
Adaptability	You responded to a situation by making new decisions and changing your behaviour.

Appendix D: Sample observer interview guide

Introduction

Thanks very much for agreeing to participate in an interview. My name is [name], and I'm working with [organization] to evaluate the [Shift] program. The focus of the interview is to get a sense of the impact of the program on participants, if anything. Results from these interviews will help us learn about the potential value of the program and ways to improve the program going forward.

You can expect this interview to last approximately 30 minutes.

Before going over your rights as a participant, did you have any questions about the evaluation I'm conducting?

Verbal Consent

Before we get into the questions, I wanted to let you know a few things:

- Your participation is voluntary. You can leave or stop participating in this interview at any time with no repercussions.
- You do not have to answer any questions that you don't want to, or that you feel you don't have any information to provide.
- All responses will be kept anonymous, and I won't use your name in the report. You'll simply be referred to as an "observer" of the program's impact on participants.
- With your permission, this interview will be recorded and transcribed to increase accuracy and to reduce the chance of misinterpreting what you say. I will also be taking notes throughout the interview.
- All recordings, notes, and transcripts will be kept in a secure electronic folder that only I have access to. I will delete this data 6 months after the evaluation report is complete.
- If you feel tired or fatigued, feel free to take a break or we can end the interview.

Do you have any questions?

Do you give your consent to this interview? (Yes or no)

Interview Questions:

1. (Establishing context) Could you please tell me a bit about your relationship with [participant's name].
 - a. (Prompt) How well do you know [participant]?
 - b. (Prompt) How often do you interact or spend time with [participant]?
2. (Evaluating outcomes) As you may know, [participant] participated in [Shift], a program that helps youth to develop soft and assertive communication skills that will help them find and keep a job. Have you noticed anything about [participant] since starting and/or completing the program?
 - a. (If yes) What have you noticed? Would you say it's been a small, medium, or large change?
 - b. (Prompt) Have you noticed anything different about [participant]'s behaviour?
 - c. (Prompt) Have you noticed anything different about the way [participant] communicates?
3. (Inferring causation, if they provided a response to Question #2) How much do you think the changes (in communication/behaviour) you noticed are a result of [participant] participating in the [Shift] program?
 - a. Do you think anything else other than the [Shift] program contributed to the changes you observed? (I.e., was there anything else in the participants' life that caused the change?)

Appendix E: Sample staff interview guide

Introduction

Thanks very much for agreeing to participate in an interview. My name is [name], and I'm working with [host organization] to collect feedback on the [Shift] program. I've divided the evaluation into two phases. For the first phase, I'm conducting interviews with SHIFT staff to learn, from their perspective, how this project might be impacting participating youth and if there are any opportunities to improve the program. Results from these interviews will go into an interim evaluation report that will be used to improve the program for 2020.

You can expect this interview to last approximately 30 minutes.

Before going over your rights as a participant, did you have any questions about the evaluation I'm conducting?

Verbal Consent

Before we get into the questions, I wanted to let you know a few things:

- Your participation is voluntary. You can leave or stop participating in this interview at any time with no repercussions.
- You do not have to answer any questions that you don't want to, or that you feel you don't have any information to provide.
- All responses will be kept anonymous, and I won't use your name in the report. You'll simply be referred to as a "staff member." While I'll strive to protect your confidentiality this way, keep in mind there are a small number of staff members being interviewed for this project, so people might be able to figure out who you are depending on what you say. Keep that in mind when deciding what to tell me.
- With your permission, this interview will be recorded and transcribed to increase accuracy and to reduce the chance of misinterpreting what you say. I will also be taking notes throughout the interview.
- All recordings, notes, and transcripts will be kept in a secure electronic folder that only I have access to. I will delete this data 6 months after the evaluation report is complete.
- If you feel tired or fatigued, feel free to take a break or we can end the interview.

Do you have any questions?

Do you give your consent to this interview? (Yes or no)

Interview Questions

1. (Context) Could you please tell me a bit about yourself and your role in the SHIFT program.
 - a. (Prompt) What experience and skills do you bring to your role?
 - b. (Prompt) How long have you been a facilitator? How many SHIFT programs have you facilitated?
2. (Warming up the participant) From your perspective, how are things going with SHIFT so far?
 - a. (Prompt) Are things running smoothly? Please elaborate.
 - b. (Prompt) Are you encountering any challenges? Please elaborate.

3. (Program value) Putting yourself in the shoes of a participant, what do you think the best part of the SHIFT program is?
 - a. (Prompt) What do the youth seem to enjoy the most?
 - b. (Prompt) Have you received any positive feedback? If yes, what feedback have you received?
4. (Outcome - soft skills) One of the goals of the SHIFT program is to teach youth soft skills that will help them get and hold onto a job. Do you think SHIFT is achieving this goal?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. (Prompt) What are the main soft skills you see youth developing?
 - c. (Prompt) How effective do you think SHIFT's arts-based approach is in teaching soft skills?
5. (Outcome - assertive communication skills) Another one of the goal of the [Shift] program is to teach youth how to communicate assertively. Do you think [Shift] is achieving this goal?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. (Prompt) Over the course of the program, have you noticed any changes in the way participants communicate? If so, could you provide some examples?
6. (Other outcomes) Other than potentially improving soft and assertive communication skills, do you perceive [Shift] as having any other kind of impact on participants' lives? If so, please explain.
7. (Effectiveness and appropriateness of facilitation/activities) What proportion of participating youth seem engaged in the program? Most? Half? A small percentage?
 - a. Why do you think this is?
 - b. (Prompt, if some of the youth are not engaged) Why do you think these youth aren't engaged in the program? What do you think needs to change in order to engage these youth?
8. (Program resources) How satisfied are you with the program's available resources? Please explain.
 - a. (Prompt) Is there anything you would like to be doing, or think should be done, but there isn't enough time/money available through the program to do it?
9. (Staff training) How prepared did you feel before starting your role?
 - a. (Prompt) Did you receive any training or onboarding, both formal or informal?
 - i. Was the training/onboarding effective?
 - b. What other kind of training, if anything, do you think could have benefited your role?
10. (Management support) How supported do you feel in your role? Please explain.
 - a. (Prompt) Do you feel like you're receiving enough help from colleagues and/or management to do your job effectively?

- i. (If no) What kinds of support do you think is needed but isn't being provided?
 - b. What else can be done, if anything, to support you in your role?
- 11. Do you have any other recommendations to improve SHIFT? If so, what are they?
 - a. (Prompt) Do you have any ideas to make the program more engaging? To attract more partners to the program?
 - b. (Prompt) If you were in charge and had unlimited resources, what would you change or add to the program?

Appendix F: Sample focus group consent script

Today we're going to be spending some time reflecting what we learned in the [Shift] program. Reflection is important because it helps us to learn more about ourselves, how we learn, and what we need to do to get better at something. Think about a professional singer, dancer, or sports player. Many of them record their games or performances so that they can watch them later and identify what went well and what could have gone better. This way, they can make a plan to improve their next game or performance. We're going to do something similar today.

I'm going to be asking you some questions, and I want you to write down any words, ideas, or pictures that come to mind. When you've put down your ideas, place them on the chart paper. Once we've gone through all the questions, we're going to have a discussion about your ideas.

[Notetaker's name] is going to be recording and taking notes of the discussion. These notes will be shared with a researcher who'll be evaluating what you're learning in this program. All notes will be anonymous, but if there's anyone who'd rather not have [notetaker's name] take notes on what they say, please let us know now or after the activity. It's entirely voluntary to take part in this activity, and it's okay if you choose not to participate.