

## **LPC Consulting Associates, Inc. Services Offered**

**Evaluation Design:** LPC staff and consultants work closely with clients to develop an evaluation design that satisfies the needs of clients and their funding sources. We provide a range of services that are directly related, as well as some that are indirectly related, to evaluation research.

**Logic Model Development:** There are several approaches to develop a logic model, but we focus on the common elements among them. We use the logic model framework to illustrate how program theory or needs, relate to program activities, and to program outcomes. Logic models are particularly helpful for facilitating the general understanding of how to link needs, activities and stages of outcomes. We encourage programs to develop logic models with representatives of their programs (e.g., staff and participants) as a feature of empowerment evaluation. We facilitate training and technical assistance toward the development of logic models. There may be logic models for various components of a single program, as well as one to represent systems change. The logic model provides the basis for developing an evaluation design and approach.

**Program Evaluation Approaches:** We tailor all evaluation studies to suit the needs and budget of our client programs. This requires that we get acquainted with the program, its staff, and the rationale for its creation. As a result of learning about the program and its intended outcomes, we create an evaluation design which is likely to include the development of data collection tools or forms. In many cases we identify standardized outcome measures and combine those with some tailor-made forms in order to maximize the value of the data collected and analyzed. For multi-year studies, we may take up to 90 days to draft the evaluation design and data collection tools. Other elements of program evaluation include:

- **Survey research:** We conduct surveys among large audiences, using a combination of mail, email, fax, and telephone contact. Depending on the purpose of the study, we may select a representative sample of the target audience, or include the universe (e.g., all individuals who received a service). For large community level telephone surveys we contract with a well-respected marketing research firm, which has random digit-dialing capability.
- **Database Development:** LPC is capable of developing simple to complex databases. We utilize Microsoft Access 2000, primarily, to develop user-friendly databases. In the process of developing a database it is important to take into account who will be responsible for data entry and their comfort and familiarity with the computer. We develop a database with screens that mirror the format of the form, and structured to minimize data entry error. The database is the byproduct of collaboration between the evaluation team, the data systems manager, the program director, and line staff who may participate in the creation of data collection forms and in direct data entry.

- **Data Analysis:** LPC staff are experienced in the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. We know how to look at a program in quantitative terms, as well as in the voice of program staff, clients, and stakeholders. And we know how to integrate findings from both quantitative and qualitative data into a comprehensive and comprehensible report. We are accustomed to analyzing data so that the findings will communicate effectively with the program's clients and its constituents. We routinely run frequency distributions and cross-tabulations for pairs of variables, and add more sophisticated analysis as warranted by the evaluation study. For some studies, we place more attention on tests for statistical significance to understand differences in findings. We have also employed simple regression and analysis of variance analyses. We present data findings in table and graph form in both written reports and oral presentations to a variety of audiences.
- **GIS Mapping:** LPC provides GIS mapping services to visually represent geographic distributions. We often use maps to graphically analyze client addresses and identify clusters and gaps in service delivery. In addition, we use maps to visually identify neighborhood resources. We can generate maps using already developed address lists (such as clients) as well as research resource addresses, as appropriate for the project. Maps provide a high-impact visual complement to other qualitative and quantitative facets of the evaluation.
- **On-line surveying:** LPC strives to keep up with technological and methodological advancement in the field of evaluation research. Online surveying has developed into a valuable and cost-effective evaluation tool, and we have used online methods to survey program staff and program partner agencies. While some projects will require traditional paper and pen survey methods, we offer innovative data collection methods to best serve our clients' needs.
- **Focus Group Facilitation:** We use focus groups for a variety of purposes from soliciting input that can be used to develop a data collection questionnaire to conducting a "quick and dirty" survey of a select group of respondents. We may rely on convenience sampling, purposive sampling, or deliberate sampling to assure representation from specific groups or viewpoints. LPC staff are experienced facilitators with audiences that range from grassroots neighborhood groups to elementary school age children to program management and policy makers. LPC staff also conduct training in facilitation and have trained bi-lingual facilitators to obtain input from many non-English speaking groups.
- **Interviews:** We conduct interviews with individuals using a variety of means. Individual interviews may be part of a telephone follow-up to ascertain client satisfaction after receiving a service. We also develop lists of key informants for more targeted interviews with selected representatives to learn more about their role, experiences, and opinions. Staff are skilled interviewers and develop interview guides tailored for the specific audience and purpose.

- **Data Collection Tool Development:** We draft data collection tools that are tailored to meet the needs of a program, designed to make record keeping and data entry easy, and with attention to formatting detail. Many times programs want to record information that is unique to their work, or they need to anticipate reporting expectations of their funding sources. LPC staff work closely with program staff to identify the data elements required for reports to funders to document and describe their work and the related program and client outcomes. Tailor-made tools permit maximum flexibility in terms of building a companion database and then making modifications as needed. Both forms and database structure can change when they are customized for a particular program.
- **Identification of Standardized Measurement Tools:** Sometimes programs establish outcomes that are best measured with standardized measurement tools that are based on established norms and include their own research-based analysis. We work with programs to identify these tools, and have approached publishers and authors to obtain authorization for use as well as the package of materials required. We actively seek standardized tools that come in multiple languages, as needed, and those that have been normed for other cultures. In many instances, we can integrate the scoring or analysis for a standardized tool into the database we develop.

**Needs Assessment:** LPC staff have conducted needs assessments for programs in preparation for developing new services or to periodically assess service needs and gaps. The needs assessment often requires working in a task force or collaborative environment, with opportunity for a variety of data collection strategies. This may include a combination of focus groups, mail survey, and key informant interviews. Needs assessment reports generally include a statement of need, identification of service gaps, description of service capacity, and a detailed analysis of population needs and characteristics. A needs assessment may be the basis for developing part of the logic model.

**Strategic Planning:** We provide consulting services to nonprofit organizations and public agencies toward the development of a strategic plan. We can provide training on the strategic planning process, facilitate the process, and draft the plan. We are also flexible in terms of program budget and time commitment, and will present options for both modest and comprehensive planning processes.

**Capacity Building:** One of the operating principles of LPC Consulting Associates, Inc. is to develop capacity among our staff and clients in the course of our work. This means we invest in our staff by sending them to training courses in evaluation, database development, and human resources. We encourage them to continue their formal education and remain flexible when staff are scheduling out-of-office training or education. In addition, we practice empowerment evaluation by seeking ways to train and provide technical assistance to program clients, so they will be better consumers of evaluation consulting services. Finally, we also look for opportunities to engage program participants in evaluation activities, as advisors, focus groups for data interpretation, or to present findings in public venues. We have hired and trained students in pursuit of college credit in research, and we regularly retain a high school student each summer to learn more about the evaluation research field.