

# *Getting Started with Community-Based Outreach*

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**Planning and Evaluating Health Information Outreach Projects**  
Booklet

**1**

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Preface _____	i
Acknowledgements _____	ii
Introduction _____	1
Step One — Find Partners for Health Information Outreach _____	2
Step Two — Learn More about the Outreach Community _____	3
Step Three — Inventory Resources and Assets _____	5
Take Home Messages _____	6
References _____	6
Appendix 1 — Networking Opportunities _____	7
Appendix 2 — Identifying Innovators and Early Adopters _____	8
 <i>Tool Kit</i>	
Case Example — High School Peer Tutor Outreach Project _____	9
Worksheet 1 — Find Partners for Health Information Outreach _____	10
Worksheet 2 — Learn More about the Outreach Community _____	11
Blank Worksheets _____	15
Checklist _____	19

This booklet is part of the Planning and Evaluating Health Information Outreach Projects series, designed to supplement *Measuring the Difference: Guide to Planning and Evaluating Health Information Outreach*.<sup>[1]</sup> This series also supports evaluation workshops offered through the Outreach Evaluation Resource Center of the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM). The goal of the series is to present step-by-step planning and evaluation methods. Along with providing information about evaluation, each booklet includes a case study and worksheets to help you with your outreach planning.

The series emphasizes the relationship between planning and evaluation—this is why both words are part of the series title. By including evaluation in the planning stage, you are committing to doing it and you are more likely to make it integral to the overall project. Conversely, in planning the evaluation you identify outcomes, which in turn help you to carefully assess project activities and resource needs.

These booklets are aimed at librarians—from the health sciences sphere, particularly—and representatives from community organizations who are interested in conducting health information outreach projects. We consider “health information outreach projects” to be educational or awareness activities designed to enhance community members’ abilities to find and use health information. A goal of these activities might be to equip group members to better address their—and their family members’ and peers’—questions about health. Such outreach often focuses on online health information resources such as the websites produced by the National Library of Medicine. Projects may also include other sources and formats of health information.

The first booklet, *Getting Started with Community-Based Outreach* is designed for those who have an idea for working with their communities but do not know how to start. It describes these steps:

1. Find partners for health information outreach projects,
2. Learn more about the outreach community, and
3. Inventory resources and assets.

The second booklet, *Including Evaluation in Outreach Project Planning*, is intended for those who need guidance in designing a good evaluation plan. It discusses how to do the following:

1. Develop an outcomes-based project plan,
2. Develop an outcomes assessment plan,
3. Develop a pre-project assessment plan, and
4. Develop a process assessment plan.

The third booklet, *Collecting and Analyzing Evaluation Data*, will probably be more understandable to those with some experience in conducting health information outreach, but those just starting in health information outreach also may find it useful for planning their outreach projects. It presents these steps for quantitative methods (processes for collecting data and turning them into statistics) and qualitative methods (processes for collecting non-numeric descriptive information and summarizing it):

1. Design your data collection methods,
2. Collect your data,

***Getting Started with Community-Based Outreach***

Planning and Evaluating Health Information Outreach Projects, Booklet 1  
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3. Summarize and analyze your data, and
4. Assess the validity of your findings.

We strongly endorse partnerships among organizations from a variety of environments, including health science libraries, community-based organizations, and public libraries. We also encourage broad participation of members of target outreach populations in the design and implementation of the outreach project. We try to describe planning and evaluation methods that accommodate this approach to community-based outreach. Still, we may sound like we are talking to project leaders. In writing these booklets we have made the assumption that one person or a small group of people will be in charge of initiating an outreach project, writing a clear project plan and managing the evaluation processes.

We also encourage evaluation practices that adhere to the Program Evaluation Standards developed by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, which can be found at <http://www.eval.org/EvaluationDocuments/progeval.html> [2]. The utility standards require that evaluation findings will serve the information needs of the intended users, primarily those implementing a project or those with some vested interest in it. The feasibility standards direct evaluation to be cost-effective, credible to the different groups who will use evaluation information, and minimally disruptive to the project. The propriety standards uphold evaluation that is conducted ethically, legally, and with regard to the welfare of those involved in or affected by the evaluation. Finally, the accuracy standards indicate that evaluation should provide technically adequate information for evaluating a project.

We sincerely hope that you find these booklets useful. We welcome your comments, which you can email to [nnlm@u.washington.edu](mailto:nnlm@u.washington.edu).

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