

*5 Tips To*

# Conduct a Culturally Responsive Evaluation

By Dr. Lisa Aponte-Soto



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Organizations lean on evaluation to demonstrate the impact of their programs and services and to make critical decisions about future directions that will help them maximize resources. However, for evaluation findings to be relevant, they must attend to cultural and historical contexts. This includes employing culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate approaches throughout all phases of the evaluation. In other words, being culturally “competent” or responsive is not a prescriptive means to an end. It is a lifelong process that requires thoughtful and iterative reflection. Evaluation consultants have a responsibility to practice culturally responsive evaluation (CRE) and approach each interaction with clients and beneficiaries as authentic learning experiences. The following recommendations will assist evaluators and organizations conducting internal evaluation with practicing CRE.

## OUR FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 1. PRACTICE SELF REFLECTION

Everyone has biases and prejudices that influence how they think and view the world. Evaluators are not immune to this. As such evaluation consultants should engage in praxis-oriented exercises including self-reflection and self-awareness to understand how their own biases and prejudices shape their perspectives and expectations, as well as their evaluations.

### 2. HONOR CULTURAL VALUES

It is important for evaluation consultants to understand the community they are working with and the cultural values regarded by the members of the community. For example, in the Latinx community, *respeto* (respect) and *familismo* (collectivism) are among central cultural values vital for gaining *confianza* (“trust”).

### 3. ATTEND TO LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCES

Understanding the target community also calls for developing protocols and data collection instruments in the primary language/s of your target audience/s. This will contribute to the validity of the evaluation results.

### 4. BE INCLUSIVE OF COMMUNITY

Having translated instruments is not sufficient. It is important to be attentive of the local colloquialisms used by community members. This requires using a participatory or collaborative evaluation approach that will allow evaluation consultants to learn from and with your client and their beneficiaries (e.g., staff, leadership, advocates, funders, sponsors, community members, etc.). Community inclusivity will be valuable for interpreting and disseminating findings.

### 5. BEWARE OF POWER DIFFERENTIALS

As evaluators, it is important to remain mindful of professional privileges that influence power differentials when engaging with clients and their beneficiaries. Even if the consultants are a part of the community or a member of the same racial/ethnic background, evaluators need to understand their positionality and how it may positively or negatively influence the evaluative process.

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#### *HAVE A SPECIFIC PROJECT IN MIND?*

Tanoma offers a free 30-minute consultation to prospective clients. We would be happy to discuss your organization and your goals for research, evaluation, or training. Contact Dr. Lisa Aponte-Soto at [lapontesoto@tanomaconsulting.com](mailto:lapontesoto@tanomaconsulting.com)



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