

**ImproveGroup:Cultural  
Competency Chat  
6/9/10**

Good morning!

Wednesday June 9, 2010

7:52

**ImproveGroup:**

Welcome to our chat on Cultural Competency in Evaluation



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**ImproveGroup:**

When you arrive, say "hello". This will give me a chance to authorize all of your comments so you can easily comment or ask questions later.



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**ImproveGroup:**

I'll get started with the "meat" of our conversation at 8:00 AM CST



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8:01

**ImproveGroup:**

Welcome! I'm going to start by introducing myself.



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**ImproveGroup:**

Ms. Goldstein Moses founded the Improve Group in 2000 to help organizations deliver effective services through planning and evaluation.



- Masters in Urban & Regional Planning
- Expert in obtaining and understanding high-quality data for program planning, development and evaluation
- Extensive work in a wide variety of cultural contexts

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**ImproveGroup:**

I'm looking forward to talking about cultural competency, because it is a topic I have learned a lot about as an evaluator, and am continuing to learn about.



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**ImproveGroup:**

Before we get started, I'd like all of our participants to say "hello" – this will allow me to approve your comments and set you up so that future comments are automatically posted.



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**ImproveGroup:**

I'm going to start with a quick poll to help me tailor this chat.



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**ImproveGroup:**

First, I'd like to start with what cultural competency means to me, and why it is personally important.



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**ImproveGroup:**

I became an evaluator because I love to ask questions and to learn. I approach evaluation with the guiding philosophy that everyone has wisdom, and the purpose of evaluation is to uncover that wisdom and use it to broaden our shared understanding of an issue or program or outcome.



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**ImproveGroup:**

Being sensitive, and honest and adaptable in many contexts helps me to learn more and be more confident that I am getting a fuller picture. To me, this is the essence of cultural competency.



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**ImproveGroup:**

The California Endowment has been studying culturally-competent evaluation, and provided this explanation: “[Culturally competent evaluation] takes into consideration the cultural factors that are going to influence the evaluation. That includes the design, data collection, and ultimate analysis of the results.”



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**ImproveGroup:**

Like me, the California Endowment emphasizes that culturally competent evaluation improves the quality of evaluation.



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**ImproveGroup:**

Resource:

[http://www.calendow.org/Collection\\_Publications.aspx?coll\\_id=74&ItemID=416#](http://www.calendow.org/Collection_Publications.aspx?coll_id=74&ItemID=416#)



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**ImproveGroup:**

Many of the fields in which we work also focus on cultural competency.



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**ImproveGroup:**

For example, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services notes that culture may effect:

- › health, healing, and wellness belief systems;
- › how illness, disease, and their causes are perceived; both by the patient/consumer and
- › the behaviors of patients/consumers who are seeking health care and their attitudes toward health care providers;

as well as the delivery of services by the provider who looks at the world through his or her own limited set of values, which can compromise access for patients from other cultures.

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**ImproveGroup:**

See

<http://raceandhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=11>  
for more on cultural competency in health.

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**ImproveGroup:**

A brief report from Child Trends noted that in programs serving youth, cultural competence enables programs to incorporate youths' ideas and values into their activities and structures and to increased youth enjoyment of programs and encourage their continued involvement and attendance.

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**ImproveGroup:**

See [http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child\\_Trends-2007\\_01\\_31\\_RB\\_CultureCompt.pdf](http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2007_01_31_RB_CultureCompt.pdf) for more info.

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**ImproveGroup:**

Does anyone have examples, questions or thoughts about their field and why cultural competence might be important?

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**ImproveGroup:**

How do people define cultural competence?

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**ImproveGroup:**

The National Center for Cultural Competence at Georgetown University provides this definition, which is focused at the organizational rather than individual level:

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**ImproveGroup:**

Cultural competence requires that organizations:

- have a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally.
- have the capacity to (1) value diversity, (2) conduct self-assessment, (3) manage the dynamics of difference, (4) acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge and (5) adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of the communities they serve.
- incorporate the above in all aspects of policy making, administration, practice, service delivery and involve systematically consumers, key stakeholders and communities.

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**ImproveGroup:**

It goes on to say:

Cultural competence is a developmental process that evolves over an extended period. Both individuals and organizations are at various levels of awareness,

knowledge and skills along the cultural competence continuum.

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**ImproveGroup:**

(adapted from Cross et al., 1989) See:

<http://nccc.georgetown.edu/foundations/frameworks.html>

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**ImproveGroup:**

Karen Lokkesmoe, my colleague, has worked with organizations to understand their levels of cultural competence and develop ways to increase cultural competence. She's hoping to join us this morning -- feel free to send comments directed to Karen, as well!

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**ImproveGroup:**

For other participants, do you have anything to add about how cultural competency is or should be defined in your organizations?

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[Comment From Susan]  
Hello

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**ImproveGroup:**

For me as an individual, I have the following approach to cultural competence:

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**ImproveGroup:**

- Recognize my own assumptions or culturally-specific framework and voice those assumptions when needed. For example, when working with a diverse group, I might say "I always have assumed that this issue was universal; now I see I have been working from a cultural perspective."

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**ImproveGroup:**

- Be willing to ask questions to help me understand when others are making assumptions or acting from a culturally-specific, rather than individual, framework. For example, I might ask someone how prevalent their perspectives are among people they know.

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**ImproveGroup:**

- Embrace and respect relativity; while I know there is a debate about whether there are absolute values, I think understanding that others are going to have different priorities and values is a helpful way to remind myself that I am not always right.

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**ImproveGroup:**

Now I want to share a framework developed in Canada for cultural competency in evaluation and some examples from my own work that are relevant (see <http://www.acuns.ca/EthicsEnglishmarch2003.pdf> for an English-language version

of this framework). If you have had similar experiences, I'd love to hear them!

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**Karen Lokkesmoe:**

Hello, this is Karen - I am so sorry - I wrote down 8:30 in my calendar.

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**ImproveGroup:**

Welcome Karen! I'm so glad you can join us!

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**Karen Lokkesmoe:**

I am trying to read through the conversation quickly and get caught up

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**ImproveGroup:**

I was just sharing some personal perspectives on cultural competency, and was going to start talking about a framework of cultural competency in evaluation used in Canada.

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**ImproveGroup:**

Karen, I know you've had experiences helping people to measure and improve cultural competency; perhaps you can share some of those in a few minutes?

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**Karen Lokkesmoe:**

Okay, great.

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**ImproveGroup:**

This framework from Canada has over a dozen suggestions for evaluators. Some of those we've really used in our work; including the following.

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**ImproveGroup:**

- **There should be appropriate community consultation at all stages of research, including its design and practice.** In determining the extent of appropriate consultation, researchers and communities should consider the relevant cross-cultural contexts, if any, and the type of research involved. However, incorporation of local research needs into research projects is encouraged.

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**ImproveGroup:**

One of the strategies we sometimes use is to create an evaluation advisory team made up of staff, participants and other interested parties. We facilitate a dialogue so that the advisory team can let us know if our methods are logical, if the questions we are using have language that can easily be understood by respondents, and to make sure the resulting data will be useful to them as they continue to develop and improve their programs.

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**ImproveGroup:**

Another item from the framework:

- Mutual respect is important for successful partnerships... there should be respect for the language, traditions, and standards of the community and respect for the highest standards of scholarly research.

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**ImproveGroup:**

Here at the Improve Group, this is embodied as an intentional respect for the wisdom and knowledge brought to research by non-researchers. For example, while we may work with organizations which have staff that profess that they are not “numbers people”, we encourage them to share their stories and experiences and help us interpret the numbers appropriately.

Recently we helped a local supportive housing program organize all of the wonderful outcomes they were seeing into a logic model that would help them share that story with the people who are important to their success – including staff, volunteers, partners and funders.

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**ImproveGroup:**

Again, from the framework:

- The research must respect the privacy and dignity of the people. Researchers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the cultures and traditions of local communities.

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**ImproveGroup:**

For example, we might be interviewing a person one day who is completely comfortable sharing very intimate details about their lives, and on another day working with someone for whom privacy is a primary concern. We can respect each person by explaining the purpose of our research, the types of questions we will ask, and giving them some comfortable ways to “opt out” of any questions.

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**ImproveGroup:**

One example is a recent series of focus groups we did with school district staff. In some of the districts, there was a very open atmosphere; people felt comfortable sharing positive feedback, and any negative feedback was approached as an opportunity rather than a deficit. In another district, the atmosphere was more guarded and wary of sharing feedback. Because we knew each group would have a different dynamic, we offered participants the opportunity to share private feedback in writing or via 1:1 conversations after the focus group.

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**ImproveGroup:**

This item from the framework is particularly relevant for us:

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**ImproveGroup:**

- No research involving living people or extant environments should begin before obtaining the informed consent of those who might be unreasonably affected or of their legal guardian.

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**ImproveGroup:**

This is so important because many of the people who participate in our evaluation work are vulnerable in some way - they are youth, or people unable to give their own consent, or people who might feel undue pressure to participate in an evaluation when they really should be offered a choice.

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**ImproveGroup:**

While some federal funding guidelines have clear rules around consent, many programs and services operate under less stringent rules. We work with our clients to understand any vulnerabilities in the population and what options we have for obtaining consent. Many times, we might perceive the risks to be very low, but our close stakeholders help us understand the risks more broadly. For example, we had a situation in which students give us anonymous surveys that have them share their experiences with alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Although we hope that students will be encouraged to be honest because the surveys are anonymous, our colleagues helped us understand that there are other risks to these young people besides getting in trouble; some may remember uncomfortable events and need personal support to address any issues that surface.

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**ImproveGroup:**

A final framework item to consider:

- Research summaries in the local language and research reports should be made available to the communities involved. Consideration also should be given to providing reports in the language of the community and to otherwise enhance access.

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**ImproveGroup:**

One way we address this issue is by creating reports in various formats; for example, we might write a short summary in a school's newsletter and provide a link to a longer, more detailed report. This gives all stakeholders an opportunity to be as informed as they would like.

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**ImproveGroup:**

Karen, would you like to share some experiences you've had in measuring and improving cultural competency? Do any of these items from the framework resonate in particular?

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**Karen Lokkesmoe:**

Yes, thanks.

I would add that first - I agree with Leah regarding the need for respect and making a conscious effort to be inclusive. You have shared some valuable insights and strategies. One thing I would like to add is that good intentions do not always translate into effective intercultural work. It requires more than language skills, culture specific knowledge and good intentions.

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**ImproveGroup:**

Are there specific practices that are helpful?

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**Karen Lokkesmoe:**

In my years of intercultural work I have found that being able to assess intercultural competence (IC) is particularly useful. I work a lot with the IDI - Intercultural Development Inventory

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**ImproveGroup:**

When we were preparing for this chat, you described the IDI to me a bit; can you describe it for our readers?

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**Karen Lokkesmoe:**

The IDI allows one to see not only how you are THINKING about your IC skills - but compares that to how you are actually acting with respect to IC encounters.

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**ImproveGroup:**

Are the questions situation-based, then?

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**Karen Lokkesmoe:**

Using a developmental approach to IC takes much of the sting out of it as it is not personalized by someone else - but determined from your own responses to a set of 50 questions that ask about culture general concepts

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**ImproveGroup:**

In your practice, do you usually address cultural competence in a group setting, or with individuals?

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**Karen Lokkesmoe:**

By culture general, I mean they are not asking about how do you do X in a certain culture, but rather how do you think about and react to differences.

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**Karen Lokkesmoe:**

I work with both groups and individuals. With groups it is often about how to address stress points or issues around differences that they may not even really be able to identify

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**Karen Lokkesmoe:**

The inventory is given to the individual, but you can work at both the group and individual level with it

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**ImproveGroup:**

If you are giving a group some service that includes the assessment, how do you help the individuals feel "safe" in sharing their developmental opportunities without being outed to the groups?

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**Karen Lokkesmoe:**

Individual feedback is always present in a one-to-one basis. For the group - you can go over the model and the group profile, but not identify individual results

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**ImproveGroup:**

Oh, that makes sense.

Are there domains of cultural competency that you explore? You mentioned how you think and how you act - are there others, or different ways of looking at it?

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**Karen Lokkesmoe:**

For the group, you can discuss what stress points exist, help them identify those and talk about potential ways to developmental approach ways to ensure that the work is IC sensitive

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**Karen Lokkesmoe:**

We really look at all domains because any of them can have a huge impact on effectiveness

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**Karen Lokkesmoe:**

In doing an evaluation project, I look at many of the practices that you talked about and also check to see what primary orientation (there are 5 orientations in the model) those working on the project

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**ImproveGroup:**

Interesting! Can you share a bit about the 5 orientations, or provide a resource so our readers can learn more?

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**Karen Lokkesmoe:**

Sure,  
You can read more about the model at  
[www.idiinventory.com](http://www.idiinventory.com) and there are a number of research articles and book chapters about the instrument and its uses

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**ImproveGroup:**

Thanks Karen! We will be wrapping up soon and I want to pose a few questions to our readers as we wrap up.

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**Karen Lokkesmoe:**

The basic progression goes from a monocultural worldview to a multicultural worldview. We all pretty much start out with a monocultural view.

I will wait for questions.

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**ImproveGroup:**

What are some evaluations you have been involved in that demonstrated cultural competence?

Are there evaluations that proved to be culturally incompetent? What happened?  
Was anything resolved over time?

What additional questions do you have about cultural competency?

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**Karen Lokkesmoe:**

I assume that question is posed to the participants and not me specifically - yes?

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**ImproveGroup:**

Right!

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**ImproveGroup:**

Feel free to email me with specific feedback: [leah@theimprovementgroup.com](mailto:leah@theimprovementgroup.com).

We will be posting the transcript on our website within the next few weeks.

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**Susan:**

Thanks Karen and Leah

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**ImproveGroup:**

Also, join us at our next chat: **Partnerships:** This chat examines using the best models of collaboration for your initiative's objectives, context and needs.

September 8, 2010, 8:00-9:00 AM

Have a great Summer!!

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**Karen Lokkesmoe:**

Thanks for inviting me Leah, I appreciated it and again - sorry for being late. I enjoyed your insights and strategies.

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**ImproveGroup:**

Thank you for joining us, Karen! I loved learning about your work