



Amy Cyr, Ph.D.

Managing Consultant, The Improve Group

In her work at The Improve Group, Amy thoughtfully collaborates with clients and communities to balance the big picture, a utilization focus, and attention to detail. Outside of work, she can be found engaging with a local Zen meditation community, spending time with family, and in nature.

Expertise

Evaluation

Amy takes a participatory, creative approach to evaluation to maximize both stakeholder involvement and usability of results. Amy applies The Improve Group's Community-Responsive ApproachSM to make evaluation inclusive and accessible. She ensures utilization by engaging stakeholders through qualitative and quantitative approaches; crafting relevant evaluation questions and data collection tools that align (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups); analyzing quantitative and qualitative data in partnership with stakeholders; and ensuring reports serve their audiences. Clients appreciate working with Amy because of her responsiveness, adaptability, and focus on ensuring results are useful to their organization and stakeholders.

Consulting

In her relationships with clients, Amy listens carefully to attend to the full picture of an organization's work and a client's broader goals, such as capacity building and ongoing use of results. She practices thoughtful partnership, blending project, community, and other types of expertise with evaluation expertise for a multifaceted approach. This is rooted in her belief that everyone has unique strengths to bring to projects and that thinking together can bring the best outcomes. Amy is also adept at partnering with clients to come to a deeper and clearer understanding of their goals—and the exact steps needed to reach them. She collaborates with clients to create a structured path toward those goals, a process that can include visioning, planning, and project management support.

Qualitative evaluation and research

Amy has deep expertise in qualitative design, data collection, analysis, and reporting. She is known as a resource in the organization for advice on qualitative approaches, including analysis tools. Amy enjoys working with a range of qualitative methods: from participatory workshops to focus groups and interviews. She is inspired by hearing people's stories and appreciates flexible interview approaches that enable stories to unfold and the focus to shift naturally based on the emerging data. Amy thrives in the spaces of deep exploration that qualitative inquiry offers and enjoys collaboratively creating case studies. She has experience working with a wide range of communities to tell stories of experience and impact. Amy's training in qualitative work stems from her Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy training in the ethnographic discipline of ethnomusicology.

Practice areas

Strategic Planning

Professional Experience

The Improve Group | St. Paul, MN | Managing Consultant | 2023-present | Lead evaluation projects and phases to make the most of information, navigate complexity, and ensure clients' investments of time and money lead to meaningful, sustained impact. Project experience includes:

Leading a community-based strengths and needs assessment to inform Community Action Partnership of Hennepin County's work supporting residents with lower incomes. This project included hiring and collaborating with community liaisons to ensure we reached diverse county residents with data collection.

Facilitating focus groups for Second Harvest Heartland to gather local food organizations' input on what is important about how Second Harvest communicates to the public about their shared work.

Leading a community-focused, mixed-methods strengths and needs assessment of a metropolitan area's LGBTQIA+ communities to ensure a local funding group distributed grants in a community-responsive way.

Supporting an Omaha arts organization by facilitating a planning process based on visioning workshops, surveys with more than 200 community members, and a literature scan of promising practices.

Previous roles at The Improve Group: Senior Consultant | 2014-2023| Plan, lead, and execute project activities

San Francisco Department of Public Health | San Francisco, CA | Evaluation Associate | 2013-2014 | Interviewed individuals living with mental health conditions and housing instability to inform program improvements for a mental-physical health services integration program.

Dominican University of California | San Rafael, CA | Adjunct Lecturer | 2013-2014 | Taught interdisciplinary humanities and sociology courses, including social science research methods, research design, and ethics.

Independent ethnographic research | Cairo, Egypt and Oakland, CA | 3 years | Designed and conducted ethnographic research for Doctor of Philosophy program. Research focused on music and national identity in Egypt and on music-based youth development programs in Oakland, CA, that help youth build resiliency and cope with violence.

Education

University of California-Santa Barbara | Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnomusicology, with a focus on applied and qualitative research methods

University of California-Santa Barbara | Master of Arts in Ethnomusicology, with a focus on Middle East studies and Arabic language

Indiana University | Bachelor of Music in Flute Performance

Training

Technology of Participation® Facilitation Methods and Strategic Planning

Toastmasters Competent Communicator

Professional Affiliations

American Evaluation Association

Minnesota Evaluation Association

Ethnographic Praxis in Industry