

City of Rosemount Community Gardens Evaluation Proposal

Part of the Resilient Communities Project

Prepared by:

Elizabeth McNamara, Danielle Proulx, Luke Hanson,
Yue Zhang and Tai Stephan



Prepared for Tom Schuster, Parks Supervisor
December 8, 2014



This project was supported by the Resilient Communities Project (RCP), a program at the University of Minnesota that convenes the wide-ranging expertise of U of M faculty and students to address strategic local projects that advance community resilience and sustainability. RCP is a program of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) and the Institute on the Environment.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/> or send a

letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA. Any reproduction, distribution, or derivative use of this work under this license must be accompanied by the following attribution: “Produced by the Resilient Communities Project at the University of Minnesota, 2014. Reproduced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Unported License.”

This publication may be available in alternate formats upon request.

Resilient Communities Project

University of Minnesota

330 HHHSPA

301—19th Avenue South

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

Phone: (612) 625-7501

E-mail: rcp@umn.edu

Web site: <http://www.rcp.umn.edu>

The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation.

Contact Information

Elizabeth McNamara....mcnam296@umn.edu

Danielle Proulx.....dproulx@umn.edu

Luke Hanson.....hans0281@umn.edu

Yue Zhang.....zhan3198@umn.edu

Tai Stephan.....steph289@umn.edu



Table of Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------------------|----|
| Executive Summary | 1 |
| Object Description | 2 |
| Program goals & objectives..... | 2 |
| Program staff & stakeholders..... | 2 |
| Community Garden participants..... | 3 |
| Activities..... | 3 |
| Setting..... | 4 |
| Program budget..... | 4 |
| Logic Model | 6 |
| Evaluation Plan | 7 |
| Data Collection | 12 |
| Guidelines for conducting focus groups..... | 13 |
| <i>Purpose</i> | 13 |
| <i>Assumptions</i> | 13 |
| <i>Limitations</i> | 14 |
| <i>Protocol</i> | 14 |
| <i>Preparation</i> | 16 |
| <i>Analysis</i> | 18 |
| Recommendations | 19 |
| Appendix | 20 |



Executive Summary

The Rosemount Community gardens operate in five neighborhood parks and are comprised of 49 twenty-by-twenty foot plots. Gardeners submit a \$35 application fee to obtain a garden plot for the season. Gardens are distributed on a first-come first-serve basis with priority given to the previous years' gardeners. Gardeners who do not receive a plot are placed on waiting list. There are currently seventeen gardeners on the waiting list. The Community Garden program is administered by Tom Schuster, Parks Supervisor for the Rosemount Parks and Recreation Department. Mr. Schuster is responsible for administrative oversight of the Community Gardens, which requires regular communication with returning and prospective program participants and minor plot maintenance responsibilities.

This evaluation plan lays out the guidelines for conducting a formative evaluation and is focused on the improvement of the current program structure and activities. This evaluation is intended to help its primary users make decisions about how to fairly assign plots, how to run the program in a cost effective way, and how to provide the best program possible to participating citizens.

The evaluation questions are:

- 1. What is the fairest way to meet the demand for plots?**
- 2. How can the program be run more cost effectively?**
- 3. How can the program make gardeners more successful?**
- 4. Who uses the plots and for what purposes?**
- 5. How does the Rosemount program compare to those in similar communities?**

A combination of focus groups, surveys, interviews, document review and observations is recommended in order to collect sufficient data to answer these questions. This proposal includes specific guidelines for conduction focus groups and discusses the assumptions, benefits and limitations of using focus groups as an evaluation instrument.

Object Description

The Rosemount Community Gardens provide a public space where Rosemount residents can grow their own food. Community Garden participants pay a nominal fee of \$35 to rent a twenty-by-twenty foot garden plot. The Community Garden program actively tries to keep the application fee low so that it does not present a barrier to entry for anyone in the community. Although they are called Community Gardens, each plot is for the personal use of the resident that pays the rental fee. Previous years' gardeners are offered the opportunity to continue their plot for the following year, and then new applicants are awarded any remaining plots on a first-come first-serve basis. There is an estimated 80% return rate for gardeners.

The Rosemount Community Gardens were initiated in 2010 at the request of Mayor Bill Droste. Tom Schuster, Parks Supervisor of the Rosemount Parks and Recreation Department, is the lead administrator and supervisor for the Community Gardens project. The inaugural year of the Community Garden program was unsuccessful, but the program has since picked up in popularity. The program began with one garden containing approximately twenty-four plots, and by the end of the first season only three participants had been able to produce successful gardens. It was determined that the soil had been previously compacted by utility work, which made the location unsuitable for gardening. In 2011 the Community Garden program changed the location of the garden and had immediate success. Currently, the community gardens project has expanded into five different Rosemount parks with a total of 49 garden plots and an additional seventeen gardeners on a waiting list.

Program Goals & Objectives

The goal of the Rosemount Community Gardens is to provide dedicated space in local parks, close to where people live, where residents can grow food for personal use. By providing the garden space and some basic materials, the Community Garden program aims to improve the lives of program participants. When participants garden outdoors and connect to nature, their mental and physical health is improved. When they consume vegetables they have grown, participants improve their diet and save money on groceries.

The Community Garden program also has goals for the broader community. Since the garden plots are located in densely populated neighborhood, they facilitate an increased sense of community and more connections among neighbors. The Rosemount Resilient Communities application listed several longer-term goals for the Community Garden program. These include improved public health, increased opportunities for social interaction, preserved natural resources, and a reduction in the environmental impact of shipping food across the country.

Program Staff & Stakeholders

As mentioned earlier, Mr. Schuster is responsible for administrative oversight of the Community Gardens, regular communication with returning and prospective program participants, and minor plot maintenance responsibilities. He handles program operations at the behest of the Mayor of

Rosemount, Bill Droste. Mayor Droste has served the city of Rosemount in his current position since 2002 and favors programs such as Community Gardens that encourage engagement with the natural environment. Community Gardens is one of many projects that form Rosemount's Resilient Communities Project (RCP), a partnership between the community of Rosemount and the University of Minnesota intended to promote social, environmental, and economic sustainability. The director of RCP, Mike Greco, has a vested interest in the Community Gardens program. In addition to Mayor Droste and Mike Greco, Schuster reports to the Rosemount Parks Director, Dan Schultz, and the Parks and Rec Commission, an advisory board to the city council (See Appendix A: City of Rosemount Organizational Chart). While Schuster will be the primary user of any evaluation findings, all of these actors take stake in Community Gardens' outcomes.

Additional stakeholders include returning and prospective gardeners; relatives and acquaintances who benefit from the program's produce; local healthcare professionals interested in the therapeutic benefits of gardening; community members interested in the educational aspects of gardening; community members who compete for park land space with Community Gardens; farmers and environmentalists; and parks operators from other communities with similar programs or looking to start similar programs.

Community Garden Participants

The program participants are the lynchpin that makes the Community Garden program function. The participants bring the seeds, tools, knowledge, time and physical effort in an attempt to turn bare plots of earth into productive gardens. Mr. Schuster believes that the Community Garden program was "built on the backs of the first participants that made it a success," and once others saw the success of the gardens, the popularity and future success of the Community Gardens program was established.

Anecdotally, there are a few distinct demographics of people who chose to participate in the Community Garden program. The majority are white, middle class families from Rosemount. Many are older people who grew up on farms and have experience raising their own food. Some are still working. Many of them value the time outdoors in the sunshine. Sometimes whole families join the program once their children are old enough to share in the experience. There are a few families with Somalia heritage who participate: one of which who in 2014 had branches of the same family working several different plots at different parks.

Activities

Participants are responsible for turning their bare twenty-by-twenty foot plot into a successful garden. This includes planting, watering, weeding and fencing their garden plots. They provide the seeds, tools, time and effort needed for the garden. The gardeners get to keep 100% of the produce they grow, and are not required to donate any food to the local food shelf, as is the case in some other community garden programs.

As described above, Mr. Schuster manages the program. In the winter he devotes about two full weeks or 80 hours to organizing the gardens for the following growing season. He writes and

sends the communication emails to current and prospective gardeners. After garden plots are assigned, Tom stakes each of the five gardens into individual plots, which typically takes about three days. Throughout the summer Tom is the main contact to field requests, questions and complaints about the gardens.

The Community Garden program provides soil amendments, rototilling, water, and guidelines about what types of plants can be grown. The program does not provide gardening classes, gardening assistance, or food donation requirements. The cost of the spring and fall rototilling is about \$800 per year. The gardens do not have access to running water, so the City has placed water storage units at each of garden sites. Last season, the employees for the Public Works department dedicated approximately two to three hours a day, three to four times week to keeping the water storage tanks full of water. The gardeners are responsible for filling up buckets of water and carrying them to their gardens in order to water their plots.

Setting

Currently, Rosemount provides open space areas for the Community Garden program in five sites. All of them are in neighborhood parks: Biscayne, Flint Hills, Jaycee, Lions and Winds Parks. Within these parks are the 49 different garden plots.

The plots are located in flat areas with good sunlight, which are good for weeding and tilling. The topography and sandy soil ensures that the drainage systems work well in all the gardens. The gardens are oddly shaped with limited space and were placed in perceived under-utilized portions of the parks.

Program participants and affected community members contact Mr. Schuster via email or telephone so do not have a need to travel to the Parks Department offices. However, the administrative setting of the program may have implications for the evaluation. Specifically, the somewhat simple organizational hierarchy may mean there will be fewer obstacles to obtaining information, but it will also necessitate relying on Mr. Schuster as a single source for most information.

Program Budget

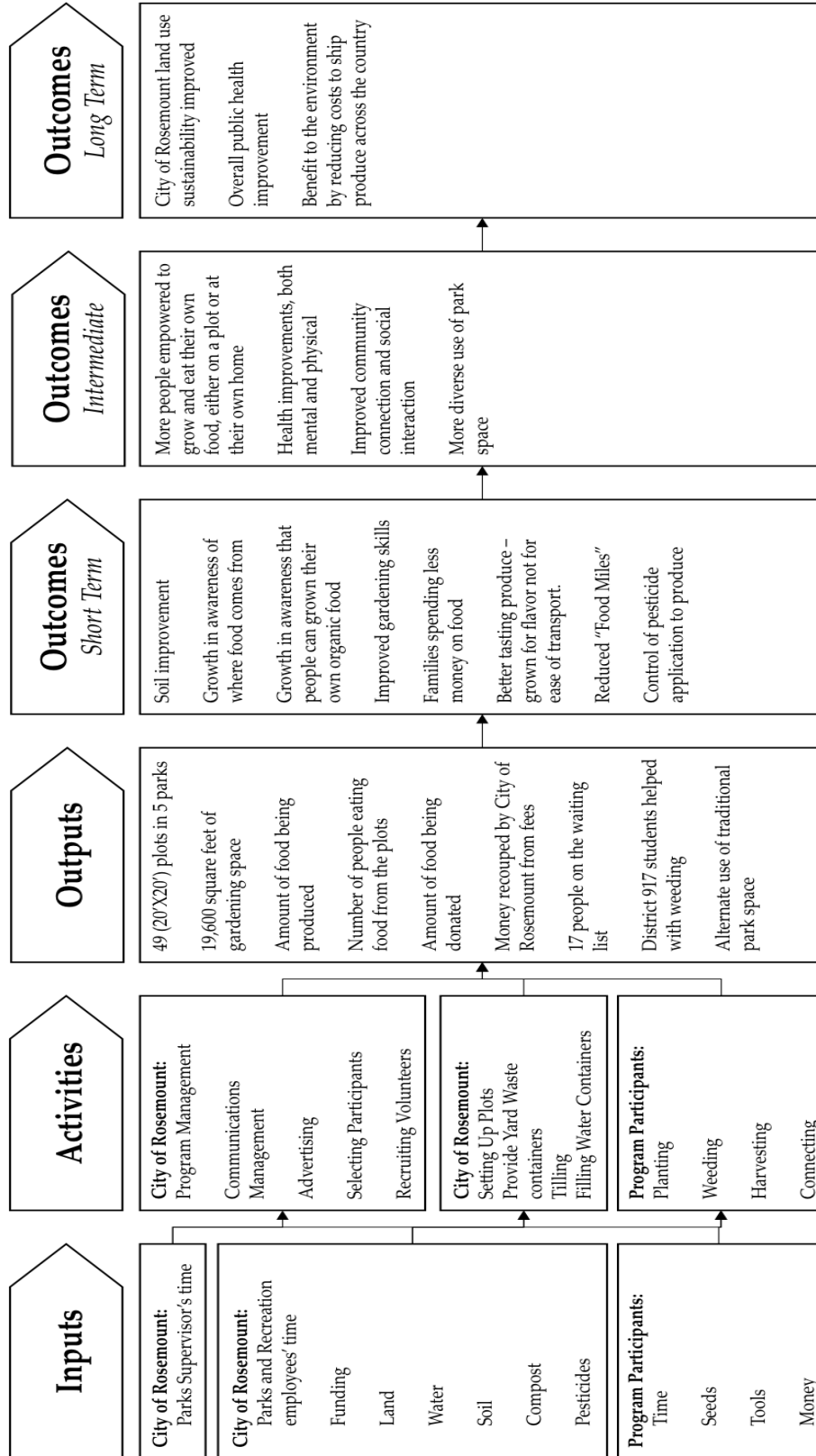
There are two sources of financial resources available to implement the Community Gardens. The first is the regular parks budget from the city of Rosemount, for which there is no independently set budget for the Community Garden program. With no set amount of money to spend on the Community Garden program, Mr. Schuster tries to minimize costs wherever possible. The second source of revenue is the fee for every plot used by program participants, which was \$30 in 2012 and \$35 in 2013. This revenue accounted for \$1,715 in 2013. The plot fees are used to cover as many of the garden costs as possible, but are insufficient to cover the program expenditures (see Appendix C and D: Garden Plots Budget -2012 and -2013 Charts).

According to the Expense Trackers, the total budget for Community Gardens was \$3,392.72 in 2012 and slightly decreased to \$3,089.70 in 2013. Expenditure items included water tanks,

compost, rototilling, steel drums, etc. These hard costs came out of the Parks and Recreation operating budget, and did not include the manpower cost of staff time that the Public Works Department spent applying those materials and delivering those services (including filling up water tanks) during spring and summer.

With no set budget for the program and no strong sense of whether revenue balances expenditures, Mr. Schuster only makes expenditures on the Community Garden program in times need. Until now, there has been no final report of costs specifically about this program presented to higher-level decision makers.

Logic Model



The logic model assumes:

1. The people who have plots grow food on them and eat the food they grow instead of buying the same thing in a store.
2. Plots for growing food is a sustainable use of public land.
3. When people grow and eat their own food it improves their overall health.
4. Food security is related to people's daily life, and the community should be responsible for generating awareness of eating in a healthy, sustainable way.
5. Sustainability requires citizen's participation.
6. Public property can appropriately be used by citizens for their private interests.

Evaluation Plan

Through discussions with Mr. Schuster, we learned that the City of Rosemount is interested in an evaluation that can explore several different aspects of the Community Gardens program. First, there is a concern about the waiting list, and a question of whether the current system for allocating the limited number of plots is fair. Next, there is a question about how much the program actually costs, and a concern about whether the Community Gardens program could be run more cost effectively. Lastly, there is an interest in learning about how Rosemount can better support gardeners in their efforts. Generally, there is an interest from Mr. Schuster to better understand how Rosemount's program compares to similar communities' gardening programs.

From these discussions, we developed these key evaluation questions:

- 1. What is the fairest way to meet the demand for plots?**
- 2. How can the program be run more cost effectively?**
- 3. How can the program make gardeners more successful?**
- 4. Who uses the plots and for what purposes?**
- 5. How does the Rosemount program compare to those in similar communities?**

The order of the questions reflects the needs and interests of the City of Rosemount.

This plan lays out the guidelines for conducting a formative evaluation, focused on the improvement of the current program structure and activities. The primary users will use the evaluation to make decisions about how to fairly assign plots, how to run the program in a cost effective way, and how to provide the best program possible to participating citizens.

The primary intended users of the evaluation are the city staff that oversees the community garden program:

- Tom Schuster, Parks Supervisor
- Dan Schultz, Parks Director
- The Rosemount Parks and Recreation Commission, comprised of chair Michael Eliason and members Jason Eisold, Maureen Bartz, Barb Farrell, and Lincoln Tilson
- The Rosemount City Council, comprised of Mayor Bill Droste and Council members Mark DeBettignies, Vanessa Demuth, Kim Shoe-Corrigan, and Jeff Weisensel

The following pages present a matrix that describes how each evaluation question will be answered, including the methods for data collection and analysis.

| EVALUATION QUESTION | INDICATOR | DATA SOURCE | METHOD | TIMELINE | ANALYSIS |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. What is the fairest way to meet the demand for plots? | Program participants' perceptions of fair plot distribution | Program participants | Survey | One time, completed after focus group if in attendance | Quantitative analysis of discrete-choice survey questions to determine the average distribution across different choices for plot distribution |
| | People on the waiting lists' perceptions of fair plot distribution | People on the waiting list | Focus groups | 3 – 4 focus groups | Qualitative analysis of open-ended focus group responses to determine common perceptions of fair distribution |
| | People on the waiting lists' perceptions of fair plot distribution | People on the waiting list | Survey | One time | Quantitative analysis of discrete-choice survey questions to determine the average distribution across different choices for plot distribution |
| | Program participants' desired plot size(s) | Program participants | Survey | One time, completed after focus group if in attendance | Quantitative analysis of discrete-choice survey questions to determine average distribution across different suggested sizes |
| | | Program participants | Focus groups | 3 – 4 focus groups | Qualitative analysis of open-ended focus group questions to determine perceptions of how participants would react to receiving a smaller plot size |
| | | | | | |

| EVALUATION QUESTION | INDICATOR | DATA SOURCE | METHOD | TIMELINE | ANALYSIS |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2. How can the program be run more cost effectively? | Cost of the program per plot | Tom Schuster, Parks Supervisor City Finance/Accounts Payable Office | Interview Document Review | At least once, perhaps more for follow-up questions Once documents are collected, could take several days to review | Results from interview and document review will be used to calculate a total cost for the program, divided by the total number of plots, to determine the cost per plot |
| | Limit of how much city officials are willing to budget for the project | Mayor of Rosemount City Council Members | Interviews | One time | Qualitative analysis of open-ended interview questions will determine a range of limits Quantitative analysis of discrete-choice interview questions will determine the average distribution of approval for different suggested spending limits |
| 3. How can the program make gardeners more successful? | Price participants are willing to pay for different sizes of plots | Program participants | Survey | One time, completed after focus group if in attendance | Quantitative analysis of discrete-choice survey questions will determine the average distribution of approval of different suggested plot size/cost combinations |
| | Program participants' definitions of "success" for their gardens Program participants' suggestions for desired supplementary services | Program participants Program participants | Survey Focus groups | One time, completed after focus group if in attendance 3 – 4 focus groups | Qualitative analysis of open-ended survey and focus group questions to determine common definitions of "success," as well as outlying definitions expressed by certain subsets of participants |

| EVALUATION QUESTION | INDICATOR | DATA SOURCE | METHOD | TIMELINE | ANALYSIS |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4. Who use and plots and for what purposes? | Demographic distributions among participants (age, income, ethnicity, gender, etc.) | Program participants | Survey | One time, completed after focus group if in attendance | Quantitative analysis of average distribution across different demographic characteristics |
| | Participants reported uses for what is grown in their gardens | Program participants | Survey | One time, completed after focus group if in attendance | Quantitative analysis of frequencies reported for different uses of what is grown |
| | | | Focus groups | 3 – 4 focus groups | |
| | Types of plants grown on plots | Program participants | Survey | One time, completed after focus group if in attendance | Quantitative analysis of frequencies reported and observed for different types of plants grown |
| | | | Focus groups | 3 - 4 focus groups | |
| | | | Observation | Observations could take place several times, but at least once for each park | |
| | Time per week that participants eat food grown in their gardens | Program participants | Survey | One time, completed after focus group if in attendance | Quantitative analysis of discrete-choice survey questions to determine the average distribution across different numbers of time food is eaten |
| | Number of garden visits per week | Program participants | Survey | One time, completed after focus group if in attendance | Quantitative analysis of discrete-choice survey questions to determine the average distribution across different numbers of times gardens are visited |

| EVALUATION QUESTION | INDICATOR | DATA SOURCE | METHOD | TIMELINE | ANALYSIS |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | List of the ways that other communities award garden plots | Park Directors of other Twin Cities suburbs | Interview | Contact at least 3 – 5 Park Directors, interviewing each once | Qualitative analysis of open-ended interview questions to determine range of ways that other communities distribute limited numbers of plots and how those ways compare to Rosemount's system |
| 5. How does the Rosemount program compare to those in similar communities? | Range of costs per plot of other communities' garden programs | Park Directors of other Twin Cities suburbs | Interview | Contact at least 3 – 5 Park Directors, interviewing each once | Quantitative analysis of open-ended interview question to determine the range of costs-per-plot, as reported by Park Directors, in other communities |
| | List of the types of supplementary services provided by other communities garden programs | Park Directors of other Twin Cities suburbs | Interview | Contact at least 3 – 5 Park Directors, interviewing each once | Qualitative analysis of open-ended interview questions to determine the range of types of services that other communities provide to their gardeners |

Data Collection

This evaluation plan includes five methods for data collection:

- **Focus groups** of program participants
- **Surveys** of program participants people on the Community Gardens waiting list
- **Interviews** with Tom Schuster, Parks Supervisor; the Mayor and City Council members; and garden program managers in comparable cities
- **Document review** of financials
- **Observations** of garden plots

Each of these methods answers a different component of the evaluation questions, which are outlined in the methods template in Appendix B. This section of the proposal details specific implementation guidelines for using focus groups in Community Gardens' evaluation. As the evaluation proceeds, the other data collection instruments will be created as well.

Guidelines for Conduction Focus Groups

Purpose of Focus Groups

A focus group consists of 6-10 program participants who engage in an open discussion to share their different points of view on the program. It is an exploratory data collection method and there is no intent to reach a group consensus. Focus groups are helpful for checking the validity of tentative conclusions about a program, in evaluating how programs are working and how they might be improved, and in understanding how people see needs and assets in their communities. Focus groups are appropriate for the type of formative, improvement-focused evaluation proposed for the Rosemount Community Garden program.

The purpose of the participant focus groups is to gather information on the following evaluation questions and indicators:

- What is the fairest way to meet the demand for plots?
 - Optimal plot size from the participant perspective
 - Participants' perceptions of fair plot distribution
- How can the program make gardeners more successful?
 - Program participants' definitions of "success" for their gardens
 - Program participants' suggestions for desired supplementary services
- Who use and plots and for what purposes?
 - Participants reported uses for what is grown in their gardens

Assumptions

Focus groups will follow best practices to increase validity. The conversations will be recorded and analyzed using rigorous qualitative methods designed to reduce subjectivity. Focus groups will be repeated three to four times with different groups of individuals to strengthen the accuracy of the data collected.

Focus groups are a quick, low cost method for collecting lots of qualitative data. Conducting a series of focus groups is relatively low cost and requires, at a minimum, a trained facilitator, an appropriately comfortable space, and recording technology. The data collected is immediately available for analysis. Focus groups are a good way to increase sample size for this evaluation, which has a short timeline.

Focus groups will collect a wider variety of information than other qualitative methods. Because focus groups allow for a greater number of individuals to share their opinion, this method takes in a wider variety of information than interviews alone. It also helps for people to listen to others opinions and beliefs when forming their own, because it is natural that individual's attitudes and beliefs do not form in a vacuum.

Limitations

Participant familiarity may affect group dynamics. Scholars of qualitative research caution that the social dynamics of focus groups may skew the information collected. Given the likely familiarity of many Garden Program participants, the focus group facilitator should take extra caution to mitigate power dynamics within the focus group that may allow one group member to influence others. Care should be taken to structure the group in a way that minimizes familiarity among individuals by mixing participants from different parks together.

Selection of focus group participants may be difficult due to evaluation timing. The evaluation of the Rosemont Community Gardens will be conducted in Spring 2015, at which time a new group of participants will just be starting the program. Focus Groups will need to include participants from the 2014 gardening season who will have information on the whole program experience.

Protocol

Help participants get settled

- Moderators should arrive earlier than participants, and plan for sufficient time to arrange all materials.
- The moderator should welcome participants as they enter and give them instructions for how to do the sign-in, help themselves to lunch, write their first name on their name tent and complete the consent form.

Welcome everyone and give instructions

Once paperwork is taken care of, the moderator should welcome the group as a whole. Suggested introduction:

Thank you all for taking the time to share your thoughts today about the Rosemount Community Gardens. This discussion is being conducted as part of an evaluation of the Garden Program in order to improve the program for future years. For the discussion today I would like to lay out a few ground rules:

- There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your opinions as participants, and it is ok if those opinions are different. Everyone speaks from their own perspective; using “I” statements helps with this.
- We should make room for everyone should participate in the conversation. As the moderator, I may occasionally encourage some of our quieter participants to share their thoughts.
- This discussion is confidential. We ask you to use first names only and to respect the fact that what your fellow participants share in this discussion should not be repeated outside of this room.

This conversation will be recorded to help document the ideas presented by the group. In keeping with the confidentiality, participants will not be identified in the final report. Does anyone have any questions before we start talking about the community gardens? Is it ok if I begin recording?

Discussion questions

Introduction: Please tell us your first name and share one thing besides gardening that you like to do in your free time.

1. Now that we know a little bit about each other, let's discuss the Rosemount community garden program. What motivated you to apply for a community garden plot?
2. What were some of the things that you grew in your garden last year?
 - a. What meals have you created with this food?
 - b. With whom did you share food? Did you ever share with people you did not know?
 - c. How much of the food in your garden went unused?
 - d. Who gardens with you?
3. How much interaction do you have with other gardeners?
 - a. How well do you think other participants make use of their plots?
 - b. What do you do if you see a plot being underused?
 - c. About what proportion of the plots in your park are underused?
4. How did you feel about how much space you had for your garden plot?
 - a. How much space did you have between your plants?
 - b. How well were plot boundaries respected in your park?
 - c. If you instead had half the space, how would that affect your gardening?
5. There are currently 49 gardeners this year. We know there is a waiting list for people who are interested in plots. In your opinion, what do you think is the fairest way to distribute plots next year? [*Do not mention how it is currently distributed, because this may skew participant responses.*]
 - a. Imagine you were on the wait list. How would this change your response?
 - b. [*If suggested to keep as-is with grandfathering in*] What are the benefits and drawbacks of the current system?
 - c. [*If suggested to keep as-is with grandfathering in*] If you ran the program, is there anything you think should disqualify a gardener from automatic plot renewal?
6. How do you define success for your garden plot?
 - a. How could the city of Rosemount help you be more successful?
 - b. [*If necessary*] ask about programs seen in other communities

Summary and Closure

- Ask: "Is there anything else about the program that you'd like to share?"
- Request that participants fill out the short survey that will be emailed out to all other garden participants as well. Provide candy bars as an incentive to stay and complete the short survey.
- Tell participants that the focus group is one of several that will be held, and ask what feedback or advice they have for improving the focus group.
- Thank participants for sharing their thoughts and say goodbye to participants as they leave.

Preparing for the Focus Groups

Identify participants

- Focus group participants will be randomly selected from the list of 2014 participants and contacted via their email addresses on file. Selecting randomly from the entire email list should allow for multiple experiences and perspectives to be represented.
- When assigning participants to focus groups, the intent will be to form groups with gardeners from a variety of different parks and aim for gender and age balance within groups.
- Incentives of lunch and perhaps a packet of vegetable seeds or a “City of Rosemount” gardening sun visor will be provided to focus group participants as a token of gratitude.

Design focus groups

- Depending on the volume of response, plan to conduct three or four focus groups with 6-8 people per focus group. Invite 8-10 people per group to accommodate for a few absences.
- Focus groups will be scheduled for 90 minutes, including time for an introductory lunch and a quick survey at the close of the focus group.

Select and train interviewers

- Moderator and recorder/note-taker are selected from among the evaluation team members.
- Train moderator on needed skills for facilitation, including warm tone, ability to exercise mild unobtrusive control to guide the conversation, techniques for creating a balanced participation from all focus group members, and sense of private information confidentiality.
- Moderator should role play the entire focus group protocol multiple times with the evaluation team acting as participants.

Piloting

- **Expert review:** In order to field test the focus group protocol we would first have an expert in focus groups and evaluation review the proposed protocol. This would enable focus group facilitators to make changes to the protocol prior to the first focus group.
- **Student pilot:** A pilot can be completed with volunteer Humphrey students who garden, either on personal property or in community gardens. This would enable focus group facilitators to make changes to the protocol prior to the first focus group.
- **Improve upon first focus group:** The first focus group could serve as a pilot group by asking for feedback at the end of the focus group. (See questions, below.) Following the advice obtained from the first focus group changes could be implemented into the proceeding focus groups.

Arrange location

- Since having the focus groups at the normal program location is impractical, the location should instead be a central location in Rosemount where space is free for public use, such as the Rosemount community center or library.
- The room for the focus groups will need to be a private room with a table and space for 10 people to comfortably move, eat, and interact.
- Evaluation team and Community Gardens' manager are responsible for the arrangement.

Gather materials

| | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Incentives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lunch (nothing crunchy!)- Packets of seeds- Sun visors- Fun-size candy | Welcoming materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Sign-in clipboard- Table tents and markers- Signs to locate the room- Consent forms | Moderator materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Voice recorder- Notebook and pen- Timer/watch |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Analyzing the Information

After-meeting debriefing

- Moderator and note taker debrief after each focus group to write up a quick summary of the logistics of how the focus group occurred, and well as of their initial impressions of the content of the focus group.
- Label the notes and audio recording from the focus group according to the evaluator's specific confidential labeling protocol.

Transcribe notes and recordings

- Transcription should be done as soon as possible after each meeting while the material is still fresh in the mind of the evaluation team.
- Transcribe the recordings as completely as possible.
- Transcribe those meaningful notes clearly from each meeting, and reorganize them according to the sequence of discussion questions.

Code all focus group output

- Code for organizational, overarching themes for your organization of the evaluation.
- Code for substance for the specific participants judgments that go under each organizational theme.
- Check your coding by reading all of the comments under each code to make sure they are in the proper category.

Analyze the coded text

- Move through one question at a time, considering responses from all focus groups.
- Organize comments by common themes, and be sure to consider outlying opinions that do not fit into the common themes.

Incorporate focus group findings into the rest of the multiple methods of the entire evaluation.

Recommendations

Execution of the plan will need to be flexible

The execution of this evaluation plan will need to be flexible. The method of plot distributed may change before next season. In this case, the evaluation team in the Spring will need to take any potential changes into account before proceeding with this plan. In particular, the object description and evaluation plan may need to be revised to reflect any future changes.

Additional data collection instruments need to be developed

Look at the limits of each method before diving into developing the process for each. This plan provides a drafted protocol for a focus group and outlines the other four evaluation instruments in the methods template. A survey for current participants and people on the waiting list will need to be developed, however, the written survey for participants can be completed at the end of the focus group. This means the survey needs to be able to be completed both online and on paper, to capture the opinions of both groups of interest.

Voices of community stakeholders should be incorporated

While this is a Utilization Focused Evaluation, with the intended users being the City of Rosemount employees and elected officials, it is vital to the success of this evaluation that the voices of community stakeholders be incorporated-- especially concerning fair plot distribution and supportive programs for gardeners. One practical way to do this would be to share evaluation findings from participants and from people on the wait list with all stakeholders to increase understanding of the different groups.

Appendix

Appendix A

Chart A: City of Rosemount Organizational Chart

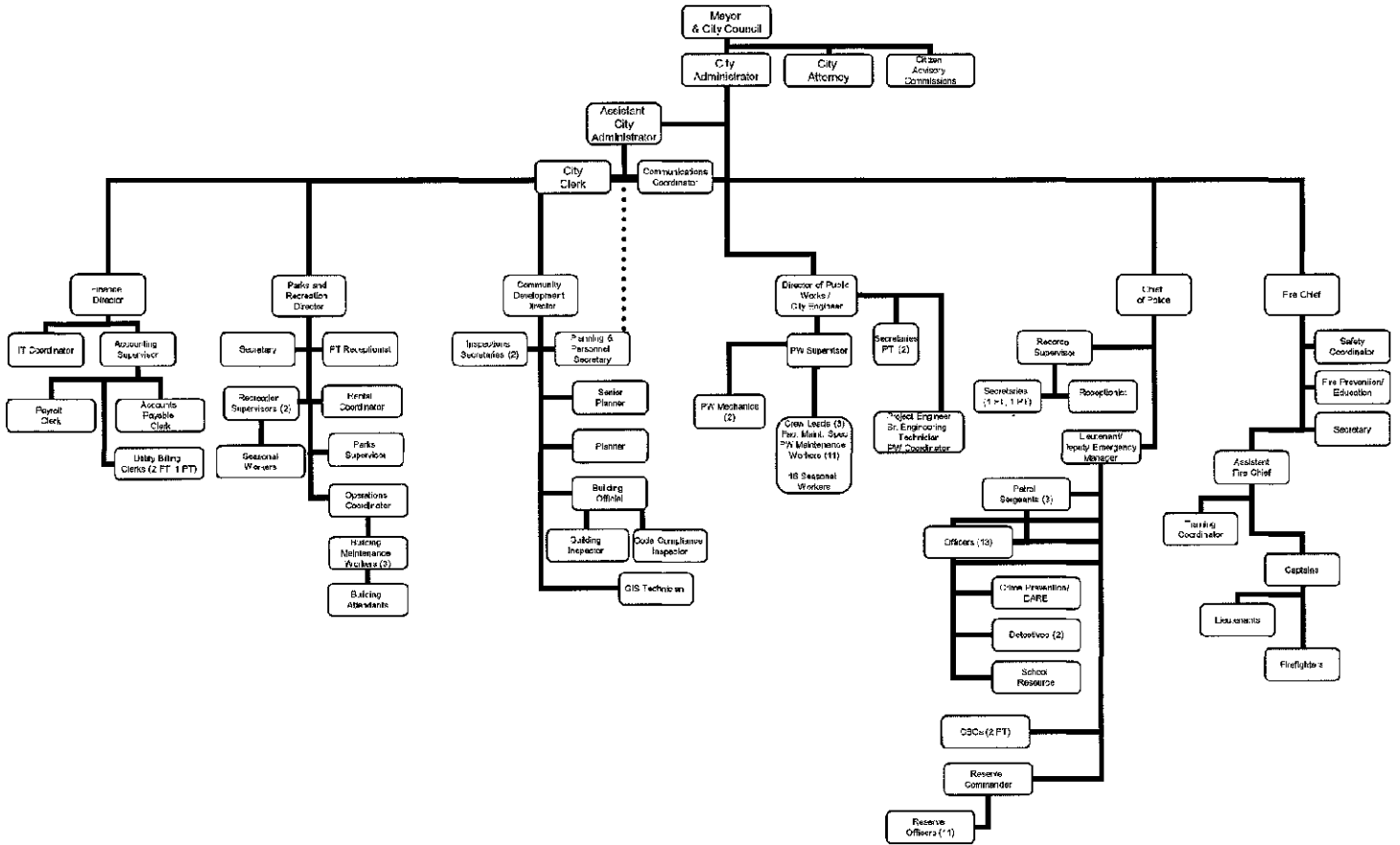


Chart B: Stakeholders Analysis



Chart C: Garden Plots Budget-2012

| Garden Plots Budget – 2012 | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Vendor</i> | <i>Product /service</i> | <i>Date</i> | <i>Amount Paid (\$)</i> | <i>Total Expenditure (\$)</i> |
| Ken Dreher | Rototilling | 11/18/2011 | 450 | 450 |
| The Mulch Store | Compost (36 yds.) | 4/9/2012 | 384.75 | 834.75 |
| Specialty Turf and Ag | Water Tanks (4) | 4/13/2012 | 534.38 | 1369.13 |
| Ken Dreher | Rototilling | 5/1/2013 | 810 | 2179.13 |
| Specialty Turf and Ag | Water Tank (1) | 5/21/2012 | 133.59 | 2312.72 |
| Ken Dreher | Rototilling | 11/19/2012 | 1080 | 3392.72 |

Chart D: Garden Plots Budget-2013

| Garden Plots Budget - 2013 | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Vendor</i> | <i>Product /service</i> | <i>Date</i> | <i>Amount Paid (\$)</i> | <i>Total Expenditure (\$)</i> |
| Specialty Turf and Ag | Water Tanks (2) | 4/26/2013 | 267.19 | 267.19 |
| Twin Cities Container | Steel Drums (4 -for rocks) | 4/30/2013 | 147.48 | 414.67 |
| The Mulch Store | Compost (48 yds.) | 5/7/2013 | 718.20 | 1132.87 |
| Terry's Hardware | White Marking Paint (3) | 5/8/2013 | 17.60 | 1150.47 |
| Ken Dreher | Rototilling | 5/20/2013 | 1140.00 | 2290.47 |
| Terry's Hardware | Spigot parts | 6/18/2013 | 6.18 | 2296.65 |
| Menard's | Spigot Parts | 6/28/2013 | 8.58 | 2305.23 |
| Terry's Hardware | Spigot parts | 7/8/2013 | 34.47 | 2339.70 |
| Ken Dreher | Rototilling | 11/4/2013 | 750.00 | 3089.70 |

Appendix B: Methods Template of Evaluation Instruments

| METHOD | INDICATORS THAT WILL BE DETERMINED USING THIS METHOD | ASSUMPTIONS AND CONDITIONS FOR THIS METHOD TO BE VIABLE | LIMITATIONS OF THIS METHOD |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Survey of program participants</p> <p>Survey of people on the waiting list</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program participants’ perceptions of fair plot distribution • Program participants’ desired plot size(s) • Price participants are willing to pay for different sizes of plots • Program participants’ definitions of “success” for their gardens • Program participants’ suggestions for desired supplementary services • Demographic distributions among participants (age, income, ethnicity, gender, etc.) • Participants reported uses for what is grown in their gardens • Types of plants grown on plots • Time per week that participants eat food grown in their gardens • Number of garden visits per week • People on the waiting lists’ perceptions of fair plot distribution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a comprehensive email list for each population of interest • It is possible to survey a representative sample of people, so that results can be generalized to the entire population • If conducted online, that the selected sample have internet capabilities to access and complete the survey • The survey is designed well and piloted to reduce measurement error • There is not systematic nonresponse bias that could cause error | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sampling error will always exist when conducting a survey • Can be time consuming to design and pilot • Analysis can be time consuming, especially with open-ended questions • With close-ended answer choices there is less opportunity to construct meaning |
| <p>Focus groups of program participants</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program participants’ perceptions of fair plot distribution • Program participants’ desired plot size(s) • Program participants’ definitions of “success” for their gardens • Program participants’ suggestions for desired supplementary services • Participants reported uses for what is grown in their gardens • Types of plants grown on plots | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enough people will be available to conduct the recommended number of focus groups • Enough people from each park will be available and willing, so that focus groups can be diverse • Focus groups will be led by a highly capable facilitator • Questions and format will be well designed to reduce potential bias | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming to develop protocols, to schedule and conduct (scheduling more difficult than interviews), and to analyze the results • Danger of participants influencing each others’ responses • Doesn’t address questions of the broader community’s needs • Inability to get a program’s costs • Analysis can be difficult |

| METHOD | INDICATORS THAT WILL BE DETERMINED USING THIS METHOD | ASSUMPTIONS AND CONDITIONS FOR THIS METHOD TO BE VIABLE | LIMITATIONS OF THIS METHOD |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Interview with Tom Schuster, Parks Supervisor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of the program per plot | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interview subjects can be contacted and are willing to participate • Interview questions are well designed to reduce potential bias or measurement error • The interviewer is highly capable • Interviews replicated with different people are conducted in the same way | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming to develop protocols, to schedule and conduct, and to analyze the results • Requires a well-trained interviewer • Analysis can be difficult |
| Interviews with Mayor and City Council members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit of how much city officials are willing to budget for the project | | |
| Interviews with Park Directors from other Twin Cities' suburbs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of the ways that other communities award garden plots • Range of costs per plot of other communities' garden programs • List of the types of supplementary services provided by other communities garden programs | | |
| Document review of financial documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of the program per plot | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents are available and will be given to the evaluation team • Documents accurately reflect the costs of the program (there are no hidden costs) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data can be missing, wrong, or just not what the evaluation needs to answer its questions • Can be issues with gaining information from organizations if there are worries about confidentiality • The data is open to interpretation by the evaluator, so the evaluator must work hard to explain his/her logic |
| Observations of garden plots | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of plants grown on plots | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of plants types would be direct and simple • Observation forms can be created in advance to ensure that different observers collect the same information • Digital device may required (camera, tablet) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital device may be costly if it needs to be purchased • Observers needs to be trained how to keep record in a consistent way • Observations of plants growing will depend on seasonality |