grantcraft
PRACTICAL WISDOM FOR GRANTMAKERS

Participatory Action Research
Involving "All the Players" in Evaluation and Change

Contents

Evaluation Techniques: A Series of Brief Guides

What is participatory action research?

This guide focuses on participatory action research (PAR), a widely used applied research methodology. As an evaluation approach, PAR offers grant makers opportunities to bring applied research and evaluation skills to those closest to the issues involved. PAR evaluation promotes positive change as it produces objective data, building knowledge that communities and communities of practice can put to use in strengthening themselves.

PAR aspires to engage all parties relevant to an evaluation in all of aspects of that evaluation, including defining the problem, developing questions, gathering and analyzing data, and preparing recommendations. PAR is "bottom up," "inside out" research, a partnership between evaluators, practitioners, and other stakeholders, including those who hold official positions of authority. In the words of a grant maker who has used the technique, "PAR defines all stakeholders as experts with important knowledge and perspectives."

Thus, even as it produces credible, convincing evidence, PAR strengthens knowledge and builds skills that can be used by people experiencing a community problem. The PAR process engages those close to the problem (it is "participatory") while also promoting positive change (it involves "action").

Associated with the work of social psychologist Kurt Lewin and emerging in recent decades from pioneering efforts in international community development, PAR has diverse historical roots. They range from popular education among people in third-world poverty through feminist theory through corporate models of organizational learning. Its branches cover a variety of fields that have chosen PAR as a method of research and evaluation. Grant makers interviewed for this guide come from a wide range of foundations supporting projects that include:

- studies involving local farmers, researchers, and government officials in Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and Latin America in "participatory plant breeding" experiments to improve livelihoods and conserve biodiversity in agriculture.

- early childhood programs in the U.S. that bring parents, teachers, caregivers, and evaluators into partnerships to collect and analyze data related to preventive interventions in child development.

- evaluations led by newcomers to the United States that answer questions about problems they face, bring them into working relationships with government officials and service providers, and enhance community integration.

- collaborative projects among university researchers and school teachers in the U.S. to create "continuous feedback loops" of analysis to improve pedagogy and student outcomes.

- a youth-led research and evaluation project in the U.S., in which young people develop skills to analyze and address problems they perceive in their communities, schools, or youth development organizations.

PAR seems to have as many variations as there are circumstances in which it is used. Indeed, intentional design based on local conditions was one of several basic tenets described often in our interviews.

- **No one way**. PAR evolves from and must be attentive to local context. It is, according to a leader of international development projects, "not a model, but an approach." Various mainstream quantitative and qualitative methods of evaluation may be selected. Flexibility of design and the ability of all involved to respond to what is being learned along the way are essential.

- **Relevance and ownership**. "In so many evaluations," said a program officer committed to PAR, "no one thinks to ask the users." The questions must come from those immersed in the daily life of a community and its issues. From a researcher: "Real problems, real people, and research as part of the process of change."

A note on terminology

We use the term participatory action research, or PAR, to refer to a category of techniques that go under several names in social science research and evaluation, including participatory monitoring and evaluation, participatory community research, community-based participatory research, practitioner research, action research, participatory rapid assessment, participatory rural appraisal, empowerment evaluation, and participatory learning and action.

> "PAR defines all stakeholders as experts with important knowledge and perspectives."

- **The process of change as a driver**. The "process of change" sits at the heart of the approach: recognition among community members or practitioners and researchers that there is a problem to be solved or a practice to be improved. Evaluation is in the service of problem solution. "PAR," said a grant maker, "gets to the question of how the community works and enables improvement." From another: "PAR engages practitioners in a process of inquiring that becomes part of the solution and points to avenues for change."

- **Democratic value system**. With impetus from international development projects in which change in policy and practice could not be achieved, in the words of a program officer, "in the absence of insider knowledge at every level of a community, system, or institution," PAR seeks to "strengthen democratic participation, engage multiple voices and perspectives, and enhance self-help and empowerment."

- **Interplay of research and practice**. According to a foundation leader, PAR "is a never-ending push to marry practice and research. It is a fantastic learning opportunity for both practitioners and researchers." All parties learn in the process, gaining new knowledge.

- **Leaving a legacy**. PAR is designed to build the continuing ability of those closest to a problem to use what one grant maker termed "evidence-based analysis" to improve their practice and identify and solve problems. "You are striving to put yourself out of business," said an evaluator experienced in the use of PAR.

Getting Past the Evaluation Jargon

As grant makers, we want evaluation and assessment techniques that help document and analyze the work we support in ways that are meaningful to our foundations, grantees, and wider field or community. To help grant makers weigh the advantages of different approaches, GrantCraft offers **Evaluation Techniques: A Series of Brief Guides**. Each guide explains the basics of one technique, answers common questions about its use, describes how some grant makers are applying it, and includes a list of resources for readers who want to learn more. See **www.grantcraft.org** for other titles in the series.

Two mini-case studies

In the U.S.: Using PAR to empower young people as agents of civic change

When a series of racist incidents unfolded (shouts at school events, off-campus fights, and spray-painted slurs) involving high school students in a liberal U.S. university town, a prominent local leader responded by directly engaging young people in the high school. Working with school administrators, she recruited some 30 students representing the diversity — gender, age, race, religion — of the student body. She also brought in an organization that teaches participatory action research, or as the group calls it, "research, evaluation, and planning," to young people.

"For the first three or four months," said a youth participant, "we did group dialogues, meeting weekly at lunch, and once a month for a longer period during school. We held weekend retreats." Facilitated by the adults, students were learning, sometimes with great difficulty, how to listen and talk to one another about race. They were also learning how to do research on school-wide racial conditions. Quantitative analysis on disproportionate graduation rates was done by the adults. The group decided that the work of the young people was to be qualitative. The question they developed to bring to fellow students: "How do expectations contribute to racial/ethnic differences in academic achievement, class placement, and discipline patterns?"

A program officer whose foundation helped support the work describes such PAR efforts as "one of the most powerful tools to help youth become agents of positive change." Young people gain an "incredible array of hard skills on how to get information" that is unbiased, "how to collaborate with others," and "how to influence the minds of teachers and other adults." The process is "transformative": young people change community conditions and are themselves changed. "Anger and frustration are transformed into hope and possibility."

How did the students proceed with their research, and in what ways did transformation unfold? They decided to conduct focus groups, followed by surveys of the student body, and they divided their work, some specializing in the former, some the latter. They were interested in the perceived expectations of administrators, teachers, counselors, families, fellow students, and friends. They decided to segment ethnicities, separating Asians, for instance, into Eastern, Southeastern, and Western groups.

Some students were reluctant at first to talk; some teachers were wary of being faulted. But the student researchers were fully supported by their school counselor, and, according to one participant, "we explained to teachers that we were not trying to blame them. We were just looking at perceptions."

Among the perceptions they uncovered were some familiar racial stereotypes — whites and Asians were expected to excel, Latinos and blacks not. Some findings were uplifting: almost across the board, students felt their parents held high expectations of them. But blacks and Latinos felt they were more closely monitored and more harshly disciplined than other ethnic groups, and a significant percentage of white and Asian students shared that perception.

The point was to use these data to open a larger conversation at the school and beyond. "Surveying is a starting point," said a supporting program officer, "and you want to develop strategies for engaging large groups." The researcher-students did so, making presentations to faculty and administrators, the full school, the school board, the City Council, the Human Relations Commission, colleges and universities, and hearings at the State Senate, among others. They even went international: one presentation was held at a conference in China. They produced and widely screened a video and published a journal report.

Several community transformations followed:

- The PAR process helped to save the position of a counselor for English language learner students.

- The high school curriculum now includes a course for university credit that focuses on race relations throughout U.S. history.

- Students have led workshops for teachers.

- Young people have held day-long meetings on campus, focusing on race, identity, and the school's social climate.

And what about individual transformations in the participants — the "deeper level," in the words of a program officer, "where young people become subjects, not objects, and develop a sense of agency"? These, too, have been significant. The evaluation and research skills the students learned propelled them into civic activity. In the words of one: "Lots of us had just been sitting there in school, but afterwards we wanted to be part of community life."

Every student involved in the project went on to higher education. "The process of analyzing my experience, quantifying it with evidence," explained a participant, "empowered me to determine my own future. I learned to be independent, to pursue my own path and follow my passions. I never would have thought about pursuing a Ph.D. before."

In China: Using PAR to cross-fertilize knowledge between farmers and scientists

The highlands of southwest China are believed to be one of the first places in human history where maize was cultivated, despite the region's varying and often difficult growing conditions. Through the generations, the challenges of their local conditions have forced poor farmers to preserve a high level of genetic diversity in corn seed, a "bottom up" diversity whose importance to the future of China's maize cultivation some scientists are coming to see as vital.

But to improve food security, the country has developed a "top down" system of seed production and supply, producing a small number of scientifically hybridized maize strains that are particularly suited as high-yield crops for the fertile north and promulgated by the government in a formal "extension" system throughout the country. As China has opened its market-driven economy in recent years, profit motive has accelerated the formal system.

This formal system has not necessarily benefited the rural southwest highlands. "High yield means high input" of fertilizer and other maintenance, said the lead researcher of a PAR project to partner modern breeding scientists with farmers using generations-old "informal" systems that preserve genetic variety. In a written report on the project, a program officer noted that "poverty remains persistent" in the southwest, "in particular affecting women and households headed by women," and "rapid growth . . . goes hand-in-hand with increasing natural resource degradation."

As the report explained, the project "set out to identify and assess ways of mutually beneficial partnership between the formal and informal systems in maize crop development specific to the southwest region." Misunderstandings between local farmers and representatives of the formal breeding system were the norm. The researcher characterized the beliefs of formal breeders, who had little personal knowledge of the highlands: "The farmers are stubborn. Why won't they accept our high yield seeds?"

To build a team, the researcher had to find "common interest." In an early step, she brought a national breeder for a first visit to the mountain region. "He was so touched," she recalled. "How could local farmers bring fertilizer into the mountains?" He also recognized that local maize breeds were important to the preservation of biodiversity. For their part, local farmers saw value in improving their varieties and possibly selling their own seeds.

The team that was developed included the researcher, national and provincial breeders, local "extensionists" of the formal system to serve as facilitators, and, importantly, five women's farmer groups from six local villages. (Men, many of whom had mitigated to the cities, joined later.) According to the program officer, the project has aimed for "empowerment through knowledge." Team members reported that they wanted to improve the livelihoods of women and men farmers, building their abilities to manage agrobiodiversity and sustain the development of crops.

Farmers learned new breeding techniques that are appropriate to their fields and complementary to those used by government breeders. Team members decided consensually on the breeds to be tested and the characteristics they saw as important, such as drought resistance, high yield, and the self-saving of seeds. Participants came together to evaluate and vote on varieties during the cycle of each harvest season. Some of the hard science accomplishments:

- From several dozen local maize varieties, farmers selected three — taking into account "agronomic, cultural, and economic" factors — for use in ultimately successful formal trials in neighborhood villages.

- Several varieties from outside the region have been locally adapted, and local varieties have been improved collaboratively.

- Women farmers produced an improved variety, both robust and flavorful, that has been "tested and certified by the formal breeding institution" and is used throughout the project region.

One of the measures of greatest success, according to the researcher, has been that China's "institutional approach has been changing to a more collaborative approach." "Farmers used to be passive receivers," she said. "But now they have a platform through the project and their community organization. They speak out more and are listened to."

At the policy level, the Ministry of Agriculture will include participatory approaches in a pilot project to reform the national extension program. And locally, farmers have organized several "diversity fairs," at which they plan to sell their own seeds.

Common questions about participatory action research

When should a foundation consider using PAR for evaluation?

PAR is probably not the approach to take when you are, according to a grant maker, seeking "demographic or cultural data," or in the words of an evaluator, "looking at larger patterns, rates, changes over time," or trying to demonstrate the results of an intervention by comparison with a control group.

But when considerations of community usefulness and internal transformation are important — if your program seeks to promote civic empowerment and democratic ideals — PAR should be considered. If your intent, said a grant maker, is to "leave skills behind that will sustain accountability for certain outcomes," PAR can be a powerful approach. "The more closely you want to understand the local community," said an evaluator, the more relevant PAR becomes. "PAR builds knowledge," explained a grant maker, "that communities create, own, and use, transforming everyday knowledge into social capital for social change."

Because the approach engages so many stakeholders, foundation staff tend to become more involved with PAR than with traditional evaluations, and they should be ready for that commitment. "PAR challenges the firewalls that many foundations put in between themselves and evaluation," argued a researcher. "It challenges assumptions about who is responsible for social change and invites people outside as well as inside to get involved." It invites grant makers, themselves, to enter the process.

At the very least, foundations must be willing to accept the risk of "stirring the waters" of change and, according to an evaluator, be "flexible and open to products that might become different in the course of the work." An internationally renowned researcher on participatory action approaches cautioned that PAR runs counter to normal foundation cycles. "It calls for iterative, long-term support, and doesn't easily fit time-bound approaches," he said. Bureaucracy becomes a "straight jacket," particularly in an environment where projects face the "tyranny of the target," when demands for "outcomes and indicators come from the top."

But when funders can create space for the necessary flexibility, PAR evaluation can be powerful. Perhaps the most compelling words on when to use the approach come from a foundation president: "Not every evaluation project is appropriate for PAR. But when the day is done, if you're trying to change practice, this is the vehicle."

In the partnership between professional evaluators and community practitioners, how much direction must be given by evaluators to ensure rigor of approach and objectivity of results?

Context counts and approaches vary. Everyone interviewed for this guide emphasized the importance of engagement from the start by the people for whom the evaluation is intended to make positive change: in the words of a grant maker, "the questions must be posed by the people who need the information." However, no one described PAR evaluation without a professional partner.

For a group of young people trying to make a case to policymakers about community conditions in need of change, the purest of social science partners might not be necessary for their research. From a program officer: "If the problem is broken bathrooms, you don't need pros." Similarly, a group of immigrants studying the

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WHAT THEY DID/HOW THEY DID IT

From Community Teams to Statewide Policy. To "develop trusting partnerships," there was "plenty of schmoozing time over spaghetti dinners," recalled the lead evaluator of a PAR research program to engage parents, nonprofit service providers, and teachers in interventions for children who showed signs of developmental delays. The evaluators also had another objective: to create a research and consultation team that reflected the diversity of community. Their message was "we are here to help you show how good you are at what you do." According to a key funder of the project, "we knew the approach was working when community people and teachers were anxious that they didn't have data. . . . We'd never heard of people that interested in getting data." One innovative technique devised by the evaluator team was to turn participant observations into "letters from the children" to parents and teachers, stating what the child was good at and where he or she needed help. "It unpacked the data and made it useable," said the program officer. Data were also aggregated, and an outside team of evaluator advisors checked the rigor of the work. In the end, the grant maker concluded, the project not only "embedded at the community level an infrastructure of capacity" but also affected policy by influencing the governor, who credited the work as he launched a statewide pre-kindergarten initiative.

More examples on our website

needs of their communities might be able to learn the skills of surveying from a willing paid or volunteer graduate student.

Yet most of the projects we encountered in our interviews relied on the most rigorous evaluation techniques, deployed in consultation with highly regarded professionals and able to withstand objective scrutiny from the outside and convince decision makers in the audience. For teams of local researchers, one evaluator group conducts "research camps," which can be a semester-length course on methods.

The amount of help given by evaluators in sharpening the research questions of community members varies with context. An evaluator team working on pre-school interventions has found it difficult to "do it completely from the ground up." "Starting with or growing the question is a choice point," described a researcher, but "you want your 'mother question' to be stretchy enough to change" as people learn.

The key is to develop a trusting partnership in which researchers treat community members and local practitioners as equals, respecting their local knowledge as new skills are developed. One evaluator described the process as creating a "diverse contact zone," in which "each participant has a piece of the puzzle, all have equal intelligence" from their own points of view. In the words of a program officer, trust building, "and the negotiation and conflict mediation it can entail," takes time, and PAR must allow for it.

Then don't the evaluator partners in PAR need specialized skills and sensibilities?

They do, indeed. "Human skills on the part of evaluators are necessary but not sufficient," said a foundation officer who has funded the technique. The aim, in the words of the director of an intermediary PAR organization, is "research in the service of the goals of all stakeholders." That demands facilitation, consensus building, and team-building skills on the part of the evaluators. It demands patience. As the director of an intermediary working to change practice in schools explained, PAR evaluators "must have a deep respect for people from all walks of life."

Evaluators also must be flexible as the work unfolds; as questions change through collective work, so do appropriate inquiry techniques. "You might start by assuming you'll do a survey," said a researcher, "then shift gears to decide it's better to talk with ten key informants in the community."

Several said that the evaluation team should, to the greatest extent possible, look like the community. But the ability to bridge differ-

ence — the necessary cultural competency — is about something more profound than ethnic background alone. "The elephant always in the room," said a program officer, "is racial and class privilege, the attitude that we know what is best for the clientele." Taking a truly democratic approach is not trivial work. "The challenges of partnership for the researchers," argued another grant maker, "are to get beyond the dismissal of practitioner knowledge as valid and to eliminate hierarchical dimensions." The director of an evaluation intermediary explained that her organization sometimes pairs two people who work in tandem, "one with stronger community experience and one with stronger research skills, although both need exceptional human skills and insights. If it's the right pair, it can work very well."

And there is a further demand on the evaluators. Newly trained grassroots researchers are often at the bottom of their own community hierarchies. In the words of an evaluator: "You are asking people without a lot of power to interrogate an institution about what has been haunting it. You must protect them" whether that means protecting participants from negative repercussions, ensuring confidentiality, or doing what's possible to make the experience a positive one. A program officer extends this point: the evaluator has "entered into a process with a partner with some expectation of mutual protection . . . and needs to either have access to resources the community can call upon or make clear that this is explicitly not the case. The community has the right to know its risks and responsibilities."

What does the approach demand from the community-based practitioners as members of a PAR evaluation team?

They must be willing to overcome their own preconceptions about trained evaluators, willing to learn about the value of evidence and accepted techniques for gathering it, willing, in the words of a program officer, to distinguish "what constitutes legitimate evidence for different people." As a program director who supports PAR for youth development in civic life explained, "Data are the king. Young people feel things passionately, but what you want is a speed bump, in which their intuition and passion are tested in the crucible of fact."

There must be a degree of community acknowledgment that something needs improvement, that a change is necessary. This is rarely an issue for low-income, immigrant, or otherwise socially marginalized groups. Problems are all around them. But there can be initial reluctance to become actors in a long-term, research-oriented process of change: "We are just housewives," said the mothers involved in what eventually became a successful PAR project to improve their children's schools. A good PAR evaluator can help to overcome such

reluctance by assisting people as they learn to identify root causes and promising strategies toward lasting change.

Professional practitioners can be reluctant participants in their own ways, particularly when an intervention comes from the outside. Professionals often "define themselves as independent of the problems faced by those they serve," noted a researcher turned program officer. "The process of building a picture of a problem that involves everyone can be challenging." Here is where the facilitation skills of the intermediary evaluators pay off. As the director of an organization that works with teachers to "build an inquiry culture that is embedded in existing patterns of interaction" recounted, "we started by doing some reading together with a group of leaders. Only then did we ask them what their questions were."

Because research for action comes from the bottom up, from people whose voices are not normally heard, recommendations for change and, said a grant maker, "even the PAR process itself" can threaten the status quo. In the words of another program officer, "It is always a political process." So, along with their research abilities, PAR participants must also build courage, communication and leadership skills, and strategic political savvy if they are to be successful.

So if change is the ultimate goal of the evaluation, and change starts from the bottom up, how does PAR evaluation deal with powerful interests at the top that might be threatened?

People with decision-making authority must be considered from the start, kept always in mind, and brought into the process as appropriate. They are a key part of the audience. And, according to a grant maker, "PAR presents an opportunity to define decision-makers as part of the community."

"You must work from the top to the bottom at the same time," said a program officer who supported PAR approaches to school district changes. "It is important to engage all people with respect, so no one is threatened by knowledge." The director of an intermediary working in schools added this: "If the leadership doesn't get it, you won't get there." From another: "You need to have an ear to the ground at all times and expect feathers to be ruffled."

"You need to seek good relationships and find good translators with executive directors, with mayors," said a program officer who funds PAR. An international development project seeking to improve access to land and grazing patterns in Mongolia has engaged farmers, researchers, and officials at various levels of government in rewriting national policy. In the United States, a county Office of Human Resources was the sponsor of a PAR project that engaged a diverse group of immigrants and refugees in identifying and, with the help of local government, solving the problems they surfaced.

As "policy-makers are redefined as community members, while previously invisible members of the community assert themselves as policy and practice experts," explained a grant maker, "traditional approaches to power and audience are transformed through PAR." Accordingly, many of those we interviewed emphasized the importance of building strong communication components into the research and evaluation plans.

"A watchword," said a university-based PAR researcher, "is that communication and dissemination are very important ways to engender trust," as well as to have ultimate impact. Participants are lead authors of reports and proposals issued through the university. Another university-based program engages in "lots of conversations about the voice and authorship of final reports." The decisions — according to one grant maker, the "timing and type" of reporting and the methods for sharing drafts and final products with the broader community — hinge on protection of participants, selection of audience, and desired impact.

Doesn't PAR cost more in time and money? Doesn't it raise questions about validity of results?

"It takes awhile to get people up to speed," said one program officer. Another explained: "You've got to have patience. Time must be built in for the researchers and practitioners to get to know each other's worlds." "You must be ready to invest time and energy," said another, "to make a long-term commitment." Some projects provide stipends for participants, which can raise budgets.

But for those who value the approach, rewards far exceed costs. Because the capacity for critical perspective and reflective practice is being built on the ground, "it's win-win for everyone and saves resources in the end," emphasized a program officer. "That's what you're betting on." Another grant maker agreed: "In the process of conducting PAR, the very barriers to effective change are identified and addressed, preparing the way for more rapid uptake of new practice or policy." A researcher added, "Yes, it might take more time, but what you get lasts longer than most evaluations."

PAR evaluators and researchers argued strongly for the methodological validity of the approach. "Bringing in voices usually excluded makes research more valid," said one. "It's the closest thing you can get to a 360-degree evaluation; it doesn't come from just one point of view. . . . It builds an organic capacity for self-evaluation and enables people to take skills to other places." Said another: "The data are so much richer when the community is involved. There are so many layers of data."

As understanding of PAR has grown, evaluators and other users of the approach have found ways to increase its validity, achieve

greater consistency, and even realize certain economies of scale. In the United States, for example, a group of national funders and grantees have been involved over the past several years in creating a web-based participatory assessment system for the community development field. The system lets local organizations assess outcomes related to community building, housing, and economic development using a set of standard (but customizable) core indicators and data collection tools. With help from technical assistance providers, organizations analyze their objectives and plan their work. Decisions about what to measure, and how, are made by the people closest to the work.

Thinking back on the decision to support the development of the system, a grant maker explained that it was practitioners' "drive to be accountable that really got it started and kept it going." Grantees wanted to know much more about "whether or not they were having an impact on the ground, in their communities." Academic evaluations weren't necessarily giving them the right kind of information — "and it wasn't for lack of money." What they needed was a more "practical, meaningful approach to evaluation."

As the system was being planned, the grant maker sat in on some long, heated discussions among evaluators, practitioners, and community activists as they tried to reach consensus on what they really wanted to learn and how those things might be measured. She sometimes found herself feeling "really worried": the participants came from all over the country, and they emphatically brought their local concerns to the table. But eventually they hammered out a list of several dozen measurable indicators of community and personal change, including quantitative outcomes (such as "wealth creation through homeownership") and more qualitative dimensions (such as residents' "personal effectiveness and stability"). Grantees have begun to use the system to assess their work; in time, this program officer's foundation and other funders should be able to look at data gathered across the organizations they support for lessons about the community development field and the impact of their grant making and investments.

There will always be those who argue that PAR gives up the neutrality, objectivity, and distance that characterize "gold standard" evaluative science. Yet proponents make a convincing case for the usefulness and transformative nature of PAR as an evaluation approach, one informed by a democratic world view that action should not be separate from research. As one leader of the PAR field put it, "you are creating evaluation with legs and a heart, building within institutions a culture of inquiry, building within communities a civic conversation about justice."

Some evaluation skills community participants might learn through a PAR evaluation

- Designing and interpreting surveys
- Interviewing: developing and asking insightful questions
- Taking oral histories
- Preparing and implementing focus groups
- Mapping community assets or needs
- Drawing inference from observation

- Recognizing and screening personal bias
- Developing goals and objectives
- Identifying relevant measures and their indicators
- Analyzing qualitative and quantitative data
- Preparing and presenting results in public
- Communicating results convincingly toward positive change

How Funders Build the Conditions for a Successful PAR Evaluation

1. Determine that the evaluators have adequate facilitation skills to identify and engage all relevant stakeholders, as well as to help participants learn. If this is not the case, be certain that appropriate and effective facilitators are present on the team.

2. Set clear goals, objectives, and milestones with evaluators in advance and schedule regular check-ins on progress.

3. Be proactive about anticipating that plans will likely change as the evaluation unfolds. Ask about changes, and be ready to help modify milestones and redefine outcomes.

4. With sensitivity to your role as the funder and taking care not to overstep the appropriate boundaries, prepare to be a problem-solving partner, assisting individuals, organizations, and the team to find solutions and build capacity as problems are inevitably encountered. At the same time, realize that it might sometimes be important not to understep out of deference to the group process. As one of the stakeholders, funders have an obligation to the group to articulate their true interests and needs.

A PAR evaluation process is usually going well when . . .	It might be time to get more involved if . . .
Participants can speak knowledgeably about the problem that concerns them, the questions they've designed, the course of inquiry they're pursuing, and any changes they've made because of what they're learning.	The only voice coming back to the foundation is that of the evaluators, and there is little description of collaborative process.
A clear sense is established of the audience(s) toward which the action for change is directed, and participants take responsibility and action without being motivated by external rewards.	Once given enough time to get going, participants seem passive in their activity and have a hard time articulating their direction or commitment.
Collective analysis has identified where the power lies that must be convinced to make change, and a strategy for engaging those power bases has been developed.	Decision-makers are withholding access to data or exhibiting active hostility to the work, or there is active disruption from other community subgroups.
With support from diverse members of the community, those with some of the least power in the hierarchy of the community or organization are taking leading roles in the research and action.	Confidentiality concerns don't seem to have been carefully examined, and it's not clear that the most vulnerable members of the team are being protected in their life or work situations.
Participants can articulate risks and challenges and can say what they're doing to minimize them.	Researchers or evaluators cannot describe the risks being taken by the community participants.
Products and dissemination plans include active authorship and leadership by participants.	There has been little evident deliberation among the practitioner team about who should play what roles and why or why not.
Participants can articulate and demonstrate the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors they've acquired.	The "usefulness" of the evaluation is in question: action toward change and a "culture of inquiry" among the participating community members or institutional practitioners are difficult to see.

To learn more . . .

These selected online resources are good places to start exploring participatory action research. A more complete list of online and print resources is available on our website at www.grantcraft.org.

- **http://web.gc.cuny.edu/che/start.htm**. The web site of the Participatory Action Research Collective at the City University of New York Graduate Center. Also see www.changingminds.ws/ for a detailed description of a particular project.

- **www.idrc.ca**. The publications of the International Development Resource Centre are available for download or purchase. See, in particular, Ronnie Vernooy, *Seeds that Give: Participatory Plant Breeding*; Marisol Estrella et al., eds., *Learning from Change: Issues and Experiences in Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation*; and Julian Gonsalves et al., eds., *Participatory Research and Development for Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management: A Sourcebook*.

- **www.ids.ac.uk/ids/part/**. The Institute of Development Studies has pioneered PAR methods in international development. See, in particular, under Publications, Marisol Estrella and John Gaventa, *Who Counts Reality? Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation: A Literature Review*; and Irene Guijt, *Critical Readings on Assessing and Learning for Social Change. A Review*.

- **www.successmeasures.org**. A participatory, outcomes-based evaluation approach, Success Measures offers a set of core indicators and data collection tools for measuring community development outcomes.

- **www.youthinfocus.net**. Youth in Focus trains underrepresented youth and adult allies in youth-led action research, evaluation, and planning.

For additional guides and other materials in the GrantCraft series, see www.grantcraft.org