'Quick Start' Ideas for Deepening Learning about Impact
(Using Qualitative Methods)

Here are some ways to connect with those you serve to better understand the impact of your programs.

1. Use qualitative methods to support the quantitative reporting. The descriptive stats on program metrics can offer some context, but the qualitative can add the depth and story to the numbers.

2. Explore participatory and co-design methods. This could look like inviting participants to tell you want they want to evaluate, assess, or report on; what their main themes of interest are; and engaging them in the analysis and reporting.

3. Invite self-reporting in "organic" but predictable ways, that ideally align easily with existing engagement approaches. For example, ask individuals at the start of routine activity to put an X on a list on the wall beside what their first interaction with your program(s) was, or, drop a note in a bucket stating something they'd like to see introduced or removed from your program(s) line-up. Alternatively, invite them to answer the question "how did your program(s) make me feel this week/month" on a standing (anonymous) online or in-room board. These consistent check-ins are effective ways to build a participatory culture of impact measurement, creating room for individuals to engage and guide the process.

4. Consider starting a very loose alumni engagement strategy – it could be a meet up, message thread, tik tok, or any connection mechanism. Though you certainly wouldn't engage all your "alumni" to come back and offer their feedback, the stories of 1-5 can be enough to show what the time ripples of your program are for some past participants.

5. You could explore the impact of your program(s) on the community by inviting community stakeholders to an engagement session to speak about what they see, as individuals are connecting and engaging with your program(s).

6. Create a standard documentation space for staff to capture verbal stories – success, feedback, failures – in the moment. This could be a slack channel, a google doc, a trello board, even emails sent to one central place with a standard subject line. Systematically collecting these observations that would otherwise get lost over time can yield valuable program insight.

7. To get a better understanding of use and pathways, you could refine data collection and reporting tools to track more details about client use. You may want to log first contact, order of structured services used, attendance at events, or drop-ins. Alternatively, you could gather details through narratives, client journey mapping, engagement sessions, or other data collection approaches.