Building Evaluation Capacity
Session 6

Putting it All Together:*
Projecting Level of Effort and Cost,
(Stakeholders, Reporting, Evaluative Thinking)
*** and a note about Focus Groups**

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Conducting Focus Group Interviews

Carefully prepare* http://engage.thewadsworth.org/research-reports/

Carefully recruit participants (who, how many)

- Systematic procedures (outreach and follow-up)
- A total of 5 – 10 people per group
- Conduct multiple groups per topic

Provide a proper meeting environment

- Neutral setting, circle seating
- Materials for recording

Use a Skilled Moderator

Conduct appropriate data analysis; report findings

Conducting Focus Group Interviews

Carefully prepare

- What is your overall goal?
- What do you need to know? (brainstorm categories and general ideas, plus initial thoughts about timing, reporting, audiences, stakeholders)
- Who and where are your respondents and how can you reach them? How many will you need to include?
- Do you need incentives to attract respondents?
- Will your respondents need special accommodations? (language, child care, hearing impairments)
- What will you do with the information?

Conducting Focus Group Interviews

Use a skilled moderator

- Trained, familiar, connects with participants
- Smooth introduction, ground rules, primes
- Uses pre-determined questions, pauses, probes
- Uses an assistant (scribe) for logistics and recording
- Establishes a permissive environment, but controls verbal and non-verbal reactions
- Uses subtle group control (manages *experts, dominants, shy, ramblers*)
- Uses 3-step conclusion: summarizes with confirmation, reviews and asks for missing data, thanks participants.

Good Evaluation Designs Include the Following

- ✓ Summary Information about the program
- ✓ The questions to be addressed by the evaluation
- ✓ The data collection strategies that will be used
- ✓ The individuals who will undertake the activities
- ✓ When the activities will be conducted
- ✓ The products of the evaluation (who will receive them and how they should be used)
- ✓ Projected costs to do the evaluation

Increasing Rigor in Program Evaluation

- ➔ Mixed methodologies
- ➔ Multiple sources of data
- ➔ Multiple points in time

Thinking about . . . .
Data Collection Procedures

- **What are your timelines for data collection?**
  - When will you administer surveys, conduct interviews, etc. ?
  - Are pre/post strategies needed? Doable?
- **When do you need data?**
  - Is this the same time that data collectors and subjects are available?
  - What outcomes are expected by the time data collection is planned? i.e., is this the proper timeframe?
- **What is required for data collection approval?**
  - Institutional review?
  - Active consent?
  - Passive consent?
  - Informed consent?

Thinking about . . . . Data Entry and Management

- **How will you store and maintain the information you collect?**
  - How much data is expected and in what form?
  - What procedures are necessary to ensure confidentiality?
  - Where will the data reside?

- **How will you handle data entry?**
  - Do you have specialty software or can you use readily available programs like Excel to help support your data entry?
  - Who will actually enter the data and where will it be entered? Are there training needs?

Thinking about . . . . Data Collector Training

- **Who will collect the data?**
  Staff within a program, staff from another program, other agency staff, clients from another program (e.g., youth), volunteers?

- **What training do data collectors need?**
  - Can they administer surveys?
  - Do they know how to conduct interviews?
  - Have they been trained as observers for this data collection?
  - Do they have access to and knowledge about records?

Thinking about . . . .
Data Analysis

- **How will you analyze the data you collect?**
  - How will you handle quantitative data? e.g., frequencies, averages, ranges, distributions? Do you need tables and graphs? Do you know how to make them?
  - How will you handle qualitative data, e.g., quotes, "snippets," numerical summaries?
  - What will you do about missing data?
  - What influencing factors should you consider? What disaggregation is needed?
- **Who (staff, volunteers, consultants) will conduct the analysis and how long will it take? Will they need some additional training?**
- **Are there any additional costs associated with data analysis?**

Thinking about . . . .
Data Analysis

- **Putting it all together: Combining Data from Multiple Sources**

** Develop an overall analysis plan, guided by your evaluation questions.

- Clarify why you are using multiple methods.
  - **Sequence:** Are you using one form of data collection to inform the design of the next (i.e. informant interviews prior to record review)?
  - **To answer different questions:** Your different methods may be designed to answer different evaluation questions. For example, record review may be your source of information on case-worker compliance with protocols, while interviews may be your source on how they are using the new protocols.
  - **Triage:** Both sources may answer the same question. Interviews with caseworkers is one source of information on compliance with the new protocols, record reviews could be another source to substantiate the interview findings.
- Plan out how you will join your analysis across the methods and determine the overall findings.
  - E.g., I will analyze the interview data to determine the extent to which caseworkers are using the new protocols and I will then check these results against the record review data. I will also examine the records for specific examples of the types of protocol use that caseworkers report in the interviews.

Projecting Level of Effort

LOE projections are often summarized in a table or spreadsheet. To estimate labor and time:

- List all evaluation tasks
- Determine who will conduct each task
- Estimate time required to complete each task in day or half-day increments (see page 77 in the manual).

Projecting Timelines

Timelines can be constructed separately or embedded in an LOE chart (see example pp. 77-78). To project timelines:

- Assign dates to your level of effort, working backward from overall timeline requirements.
- Be sure the number of days required for a task and when it must be completed are in sync and feasible.
- Check to make sure evaluation calendar is in alignment with program calendar.
    - Don't plan to do a lot of data collecting around program holidays
    - Don't expect to collect data only between 9 and 5

Clearly Identify Audience
Decide on Format

Who is your audience?

Staff? Funders? Board? Participants? Multiple

What Presentation Strategies work best?

PowerPoint	Newsletter
Fact sheet	Oral presentation
Visual displays	Video
Storytelling	Press releases
Report	

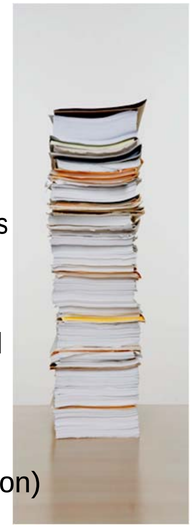
full report, executive summary, stakeholder-specific report?

Think About
Communication Strategies

Are there natural opportunities for sharing (preliminary) findings with stakeholders?

- At a special convening
- At regular or pre-planned meetings
- During regular work interactions (e.g., clinical supervision, staff meetings, board meetings)
- Via informal discussions

Components of A Strong Program Evaluation Report



Introduction
- Description of the subject program.
- Clear statement about the evaluation questions and the purpose of the evaluation.

Methods
- Description of actual data collection methods

Findings
- Summary of key findings (including tables, graphs, vignettes, quotes, etc.)
- Discussion or explanation of the meaning and importance of key findings

Conclusions
- Suggested Action Steps
- Next Steps (for the program and the evaluation)
- Issues for Further Consideration (loose ends)

Additional Reporting Tips

- Findings can be communicated in many forms.
  * brief memos
  * powerpoint presentations
  * oral reports
  * formal evaluation report is most common
- Think about internal and external reporting.
- Plan for multiple reports.
- Before you start writing, be sure to develop an outline and pass it by some stakeholders.
- If you're commissioning an evaluation report, ask to see a report outline in advance.
- If you are reviewing others' evaluation reports, don't assume they are valuable just because they are in a final form. Review carefully for the important components and meaningfulness.

Budgeting and Paying for Evaluation

- Usually the cost to do good evaluation is equivalent to about 10 – 15% of the costs to operate the program effectively.
- Most of the funds for evaluation pay for the professional time of those who develop designs and tools, collect data, analyze data, summarize and present findings.
- Other expense include overhead and direct costs associated with the evaluation (e.g., supplies, computer maintenance, communication, software)

Projecting Budgets

- Determine rates for all "staff" to the project.
- Calculate total labor costs by multiplying LOE totals by "staff" rates.
- Estimate other direct costs (ODC) such as copying, mail/delivery, telephone use and facilities.
- Estimate any travel costs.
- Calculate the subtotal of direct costs including labor (fringe where appropriate), ODC and travel.
- Estimate additional indirect (overhead) costs, where appropriate, as a percentage applied to the direct costs.
- Apply any other fees where appropriate
- Sum all project costs to determine total cost of project.
- Establish a payment schedule, billing system and deliverables.

Things to Avoid when Budgeting and Paying for Evaluation

- ~~It is bad practice to assume there is a standard, fixed evaluation cost regardless of program size or complexity.~~
- ~~It is dangerous to fund an evaluation project that does not clarify how evaluation funds will be used.~~

What Should Thoughtful Organizations Do to Obtain Funds for Evaluation?

- Write evaluation costs into project development budgets. Estimate what it would really cost to do good evaluation and include that figure as a line-item on the project budget. Use the money accordingly if the project is funded.
- Set aside funds for evaluation on a percentage basis into the organizational budget. Develop and follow a plan to use these funds.
- Obtain funds solely for the purpose of evaluation. Some grantmakers will provide dedicated funds for evaluation, or capacity-building which includes evaluation capacity-building or evaluative thinking enhancement.
- Consider sharing and/or pooling resources with other departments or organizations involved in evaluation.

Who are Evaluation Stakeholders, and Why Do They Matter?

- Decision-makers
- Information-seekers
- Those directly involved with the evaluation subject

- Most programs/strategies have multiple stakeholders

  Organization managers, clients and/or their caregivers, program staff, program funders, partner organizations

  - Stakeholders have diverse, often competing interests related to programs and evaluation.
  - Certain stakeholders are the primary intended users of evaluation.

What is Evaluative Thinking?

Evaluative Thinking is a type of reflective practice that incorporates use of systematically collected data to inform organizational decisions and other actions.

Organizations that Regularly use Evaluative Thinking Will Also . . .

- Think carefully about developing and assessing programs and other actions.
- Incorporate program evaluation findings and other assessment findings into program and other planning.
- Involve significant others in planning and revising plans.
- Develop written, logical plans.
- Follow plans.
- Have strategies in place to modify plans.

Organizations That Regularly Use Evaluative Thinking Will . . .

- Regularly conduct evaluations that include attention to characteristics, activities and outcomes of selected programs.
- Involve program staff, org. leaders and clients (as appropriate) in developing/revising program evaluation plans; collecting and analyzing program evaluation data.
- Share results of program evaluations including findings about client outcomes, as appropriate, with leaders, staff, clients, board members and funders.
- Use results of program evaluation to drive continuous improvement of programs. Use results to modify policies and procedures.

Organizations That Regularly Use Evaluative Thinking Will Also . . .

- Insure that there are key staff with evaluation expertise to address the organization's evaluation needs and that there are staff members whose jobs or components of their jobs are dedicated to evaluation.
- Hire evaluation consultants when needed.
- Provide or obtain training in evaluation for program staff members and make sure that the training is current, well-delivered, and provided for enough staff members to insure that evaluation use is a standard practice.