Building and Sustaining Evaluative Capacity

Executive Management Institute

February 16, 2017

Anita M. Baker, Ed.D.
Evaluation Services

Working Definition of Program Evaluation

Thoughtful, systematic collection and analysis of information about activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs, for use by specific people, to reduce uncertainties, inform decisions.

Evaluation Purposes

Evaluations are conducted to:

➜   Render judgment
➜   Inform decision-making
➜   Facilitate improvements
➜   Generate knowledge

Evaluation Purposes:

‣ Specify at earliest stages of evaluation planning.
‣ Obtain input from stakeholders.

Distinguishing Between Evaluation and Research

- Different objectives and data standards

- Different size and scope

- Research informs program development and evaluation provides opportunities to understand program effectiveness

See handout 1

Evaluation Strategy Clarification

▶ All Evaluations Are:
  - → Partly social
  - → Partly political
  - → Partly technical

▶ Both qualitative and quantitative data can be collected and used and both are valuable.

▶ There are multiple ways to address most evaluation needs.

▶ Different evaluation needs call for different designs, data and data collection strategies.

What do you need to do to conduct Evaluation?

▸ Specify key evaluation questions

    ▸ Specify an approach (evaluation design)

        ▸ Apply evaluation logic

            ▸ Collect and analyze data

                ▸ Summarize and share findings

How are evaluation data collected?

▸ **Surveys**

▸ **Interviews**

▸ **Observations**

▸ **Record Reviews**

▸ All have limitations and benefits

▸ Require preparation on the front end:

    ▸ Instrument Development and testing

    ▸ Administration plan development

    ▸ Analysis plan development

Surveys

▶ Series of items with pre-determined response choices

▶ Can be completed by administrator or respondents

▶ Can be conducted
- ▪ "paper/pencil"
- ▪ phone, internet (e-survey)
- ▪ using alternative strategies

USE SURVEYS TO:
Study attitudes and perceptions
Collect self-reported assessment of changes in response to program
Collect program assessments
Collect some behavioral reports
Test knowledge
Determine changes over time.

▶ Instruments are called – surveys, "evaluations," questionnaires

GRAND CLAIMS

PRE POST

Surveys Are Most Productive When They Are:

➢ Well targeted, with a narrow set of questions

➢ Used to obtain data that are otherwise hard to get.

➢ Used in conjunction with other strategies.

Surveys are best used:
- • with large numbers
- • for sensitive information
- • for groups that are hard to collect data from

Most survey data are qualitative but simple quantitative analyses are often used to summarize responses.

For Survey Items, Remember:

1) State questions in specific terms, use appropriate language.

2) Use multiple questions to sufficiently cover topics.

3) Avoid "double-negatives."

4) Avoid asking multiple questions in one item (and).

5) Be sure response categories match the question, are exhaustive and don't overlap.

6) Be sure to include directions, check numbering, formatting etc.

Assessing Survey Instruments

➢ Are questions comprehensive without duplication, exhaustive without being exhausting?

➢ Do answer choices match question stem, provide coverage, avoid overlap?

➢ Are other data needs (e.g., characteristics of respondent) addressed?

➢ Do order and formatting facilitate response? Are directions clear?

➢ Does the survey have face validity?

Things to Think about Before Administering a Survey

- ➢ Target group: who, where, sampling?

- ➢ Respondent assistance, A/P consent

- ➢ Type of survey, frequency of administration

- ➢ Anonymity vs. Confidentiality

- ➢ Specific fielding strategies (including alternatives), incentives?

- ➢ Time needed for response

- ➢ Tracking administration and response

- ➢ Data analysis plans

- ➢ Storing and maintaining confidentiality

Key Survey Administration Strategies

- ➢ **Captive**
  - ▪ Use (trained, multiple) survey administrators
  - ▪ Recruit/inform respondents
  - ▪ Facilitate response (clipboards, deposit boxes, pencils)
  - ▪ Use incentives

- ➢ **Intercept Surveys**
  - ▪ Use (trained, multiple) survey administrators
  - ▪ Develop brief and feasible instruments*

  * (can include one or multiple sets of questions)

- ➢ **Alternative Surveys**
  - ▪ Sticky dots, candy, marbles, relevant symbols
  - ▪ Exhibit based (tablets, manipulatives)

- ➢ **Electronic Surveys**
  - ▪ Can be used to administer and/or analyze data
  - ▪ Tablets and handheld strategies available

Record Reviews:

- Accessing existing internal information, or information collected for other purposes.

- Can be focused on
  - own records
  - records of other orgs
  - adding questions to existing docs

USE REC REVIEW TO:
Collect some behavioral reports
Conduct tests, collect test results
Verify self-reported data
Determine changes over time

- Instruments are called – protocols

What Kinds of Data Can you Collect Through Record Reviews?

- **Background information about participants** (e.g., race/ethnicity, age, gender, location, family composition)

- **Status information about participants** (e.g., whether and how much they are working, what their income levels are, whether they have prior or multiple arrest records, whether they are owed child support)

- **Behavioral data** (e.g., program attendance, program service utilization)

- **Test results** (e.g., SAT or GRE scores, employment aptitude test scores, medical test results such as immunization status, TB test results)

- **Other outcome data** (e.g., report cards, health or psychological assessments, home visit results)

Myths

▸ Only highly trained, skilled researchers can conduct program evaluations.

▸ To measure outcomes, you have to use quantitative data.

▸ Participatory evaluation compromises objectivity.

▸ You need a control group or an experimental design to prove you have a good program or to prove that positive outcomes were caused by your programs.

Indicators of
Organizational Evaluative Capacity

✓ Internal Motivation

✓ Competence

✓ Mainstream Function

✓ Strategic Use of Evaluation Results

✓ Sufficient Quantity, Good Quality

✓ Availability of Resources

Adapted from the Evaluation Capacity Assessment Instrument ECAI

Organizational Evaluative Capacity: what to look for

✓Internal Motivation

- Do organization leaders want to do evaluation?
- Do organization staff want to do evaluation?
- Does the organization board want evaluation done?

Building and Sustaining Evaluative Capacity: Anita M. Baker, *Evaluation Services*

Organizational Evaluative Capacity: what to look for

✓Internal Motivation
✓Competence

- Do organization leaders and/or staff know how to do evaluation?

Building and Sustaining Evaluative Capacity: Anita M. Baker, *Evaluation Services*

What do you need to do to conduct Evaluation?

▸ Specify key evaluation questions

    ▸ Specify an approach (evaluation design)

        ▸ Apply evaluation logic

            ▸ Collect and analyze data

                ▸ Summarize and share findings

Building and Sustaining Evaluative Capacity: Anita M. Baker, *Evaluation Services*

Evaluation Questions . . .

✓   Focus and drive the evaluation.

✓   Should be carefully specified and agreed upon in advance of other evaluation work.

✓   Generally represent a critical subset of information that is desired.

Building and Sustaining Evaluative Capacity: Anita M. Baker, *Evaluation Services*

Evaluation Questions: Criteria

▸ It is possible to obtain data to address the questions.

▸ There is more than one possible "answer" to the question.

▸ The information to address the questions is wanted and needed.

▸ It is known how resulting information will be used internally (and externally).

▸ The questions are aimed at changeable aspects of activity.

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

Program Planning Includes Evaluation

1. Think about the results you want.
2. Decide what strategies will help you achieve those results?
3. Think about what inputs you need to conduct the desired strategies.
4. Specify outcomes, identify indicators and targets.**

   DECIDE IN ADVANCE,
      HOW GOOD IS GOOD ENOUGH

5. Document how services are delivered.
6. Evaluate actual results.

Outcomes and Indicators

➢ **Changing or achieving levels of behavior, skills, knowledge, attitudes, condition or status.**

➢ **Specific, measurable characteristics or changes that represent achievement of an outcome.**

Indicator: Reminders

▶ Many outcomes have more than one indicator

▶ Identify the set of indicators that accurately signal achievement of an outcome (get stakeholder input)

Building and Sustaining Evaluative Capacity: Anita M. Baker, *Evaluation Services*

Targets

Specify the amount or level of outcome attainment expected, hoped for or required.

Targets can be set. . . .

▶ Relative to external standards (when available)
▶ Past performance/similar programs
▶ Professional hunches

Building and Sustaining Evaluative Capacity: Anita M. Baker, *Evaluation Services*

Target: Reminders

- ▶ Should be specified in advance. Requires buy in.

- ▶ Carefully word targets so they are not over or under-ambitious, make sense, and are in sync with time frames.

- ▶ If target indicates change in magnitude – be sure to specify initial levels and what is positive.

Outcome, Indicator, Target - EXAMPLE

Outcome	Indicators
	At least 500 students will participate each month.
Participants will be actively involved in afterschool activities	Students will attend 70% or more of all available sessions.
	At least half of participants will participate in 100 or more hours per semester.

Outcome, Indicator, Target - EXAMPLE

Outcome	Indicators
Participants will learn important skills	75% of campers' parents will report their child learned something new at camp.
	Two-thirds of campers enrolled in swimming will demonstrate competency in 3 basic strokes.
	Most campers (85%) will demonstrate mastery of all performance dance moves.

Organizational Evaluative Capacity: what to look for

✓ Internal Motivation

✓ Competence

✓ Mainstream Function

- Who actually does evaluation?
  - All/any staff
  - Dedicated staff
  - External consultants

- Does leadership support or hinder evaluation?

Organizational Evaluative Capacity: what to look for

✓ Internal Motivation

✓ Competence

✓ Mainstream Function

✓ Strategic Use of Evaluation Results

- Does evaluation inform organizational decisions?

Organizations with Evaluative Capacity
Use Evaluation Results:

1. To report to funders.
2. To improve services or programs.
3. To get additional funding.
4. To design ongoing monitoring processes.
5. To assess implementation of a program.
6. To assess quality of a program.
7. To improve outreach.
8. To make informed decisions.
9. To train staff.
10. To eliminate un-needed services or programs.

Organizational Evaluative Capacity: what to look for

- ✓ Internal Motivation
- ✓ Competence
- ✓ Mainstream Function
- ✓ Strategic Use of Evaluation Results
- ✓ Sufficient Quantity, Good Quality

- Is evaluation done according to an organizational plan?
- Are evaluations rigorous?

Increasing Rigor in Program Evaluation

➔ Mixed methodologies

➔ Multiple sources of data

➔ Multiple points in time

Organizational Evaluative Capacity: what to look for

- ✓ Internal Motivation
- ✓ Competence
- ✓ Mainstream Function
- ✓ Strategic Use of Evaluation Results
- ✓ Sufficient Quantity, Good Quality
- ✓ Evaluation resources

  - Are there dedicated funds for evaluation?
  - Are there reference materials available?
  - Is there access to Technical Assistance?

Supportive Evaluation Environments

1. Promote evaluative capacity

   - ➢ reward learning
   - ➢ provide staff time and resources to engage in evaluation
   - ➢ develop organizational evaluation plans
   - ➢ **monitor and promote evaluation**
   - ➢ conduct data collection <u>and</u> analysis
   - ➢ use data

   Adapted from Kramer, 2007

Supportive Evaluation Environments

2. Directly engage key decision-makers

3. Involve multiple evaluation stakeholders

4. Undertake manageable and straightforward evaluation

5. Use targeted and compelling methods to communicate results

Adapted from Kramer, 2007

Building and Sustaining Evaluative Capacity: Anita M. Baker, *Evaluation Services*

Developing an Organizational Evaluation Plan

1. Conduct an evaluation inventory and evaluation status assessment

2. Review annual results of evaluation

3. Identify current evaluation needs

4. Specify the plan – account for all programs
   a. Programs subject to new evaluation plans
   b. Programs subject to ongoing evaluation plans
   c. Any other documentation/reporting required

See handouts 2a, 2b,2c

Building and Sustaining Evaluative Capacity: Anita M. Baker, *Evaluation Services*

Why Bother Conducting an Evaluation Inventory and Evaluation Status Assessment?

An evaluation inventory is a way to document evaluation activity.

1. Informs stakeholders about what is already being done.
2. Identifies areas where not enough is being done and helps to reduce duplication of efforts.
3. Informs decisions about how to use evaluation resources.
4. Informs projections about resources needed.
5. Clarifies schedules.

An evaluation status assessment helps clarify evaluation needs.

1. Includes details about what is already being done.
2. Includes stakeholder feedback regarding what is needed, evaluability and how results could be used.

See handouts 2a, 2b

Evaluation Roles for Executive Leaders

- Promote clear communication about the purposes of evaluation

- Design and support evaluations that are honest and that help promote sound practices.

- Set short-term measures and milestones, but seek clarity regarding how those fit into longer-term outcomes and *the bigger picture*.

- Decide in advance *how good is good enough*.

- Educate staff, board members and other stakeholders about and support good practice regarding evaluation.

Board Members and Evaluation?

Board members must understand:

▸ the working definition for evaluation

▸ reasonable outcomes

▸ how to commission and pay for evaluation

▸ how to report about evaluation findings and what to do with them

▸ why evaluative thinking is important

▸ how evaluative thinking can be enhanced, and what they can do to support and inspire it

Building and Sustaining Evaluative Capacity: Anita M. Baker, *Evaluation Services*

Why Involve the Board?

Involvement can . . .

▸ increase the quality of evaluation

▸ provide opportunities for them to be heard and for them to hear others

▸ reduce fears and suspicions about the program or evaluation if an environment of openness is established

▸ help them become sensitized to the multiple perspectives that exist around any program

▸ contribute to a sense of shared responsibility for the program and the evaluation

▸ help build a momentum that reduces delays, counters roadblocks, and results in lasting involvement

Building and Sustaining Evaluative Capacity: Anita M. Baker, *Evaluation Services*

Facilitating Meaningful Board Involvement

▸ Determine who from your board should be part of your stakeholder group while the evaluation is being conceived.

▸ Clarify specific roles and workplans that are in alignment with your evaluation timeframe.

▸ Be clear about optimal and minimum required involvement.

Read 43a –c

Building and Sustaining Evaluative Capacity: Anita M. Baker, *Evaluation Services*

Board Member Involvement: Initiation Stage

Board members can help:

▸ Clarify the evaluation questions and purpose for the evaluation.

▸ Review/refine program logic model including outcomes clarification, indicator identification, target setting.

▸ Select data collection strategies, and specify timelines, products, and evaluation consultants.

▸ Review data collection instruments, administration and analysis plans, and report outlines.

Building and Sustaining Evaluative Capacity: Anita M. Baker, *Evaluation Services*

Board Member Involvement: Implementation

Board members can help:

▸ Hear updates on evaluation progress/ preliminary findings

▸ Begin to think about communications plans

▸ Generate solutions/acquire help for those directly involved in data collection and analysis (if needed).

Building and Sustaining Evaluative Capacity: Anita M. Baker, *Evaluation Services*

Board Member Involvement: Post Evaluation

Board members can help:

▸ Hear presentations of summarized findings,

▸ Discuss and interpret results

▸ Develop action steps.

▸ Determine audiences and formats for evaluation reporting

Building and Sustaining Evaluative Capacity: Anita M. Baker, *Evaluation Services*

Evaluative Thinking

<u>Evaluative Thinking</u> is a type of reflective practice that uses five key evaluation skills in areas other than programs or initiatives.
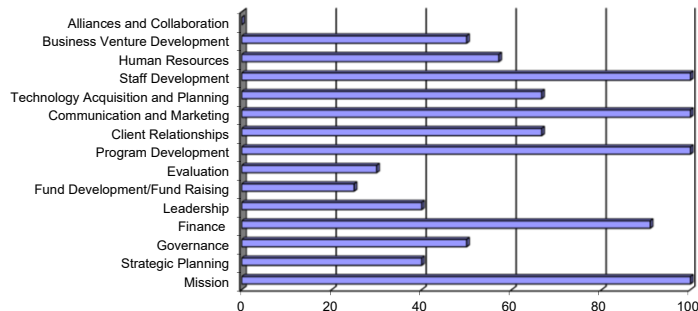
What Are Key Components of Evaluative Thinking?

1. Asking questions of substance
2. Determining data needed to address questions
3. Gathering appropriate data in systematic ways
4. Analyzing data and sharing results
5. Developing strategies to act on findings

Organizational Capacity Areas Addressed by the Bruner Foundation Evaluative Thinking Tool

✓ Mission

✓ Strategic Planning

✓ Governance

✓ Finance

✓ Leadership

✓ Fund Development

✓ Evaluation

✓ Client Relationships

✓ Program Development

✓ Communication & Marketing

✓ Technology Acquisition & Training

✓ Staff Development

✓ Human Resources

✓ Alliances/Collaborations

✓ Business Development

Characteristics of Effective Evaluators

▸ Basic knowledge of substantive area being evaluated

▸ Knowledge about and experience with program evaluation

▸ Good references from sources you trust

▸ Products that match your needs

▸ Personal style and approach fit (MOST IMPORTANT)

What Can Evaluators Do For You?

▸ Provide training

▸ Conduct evaluation

▸ Partner with organization to conduct evaluation
  ▸ Develop evaluation designs (proposal sections)
  ▸ Develop instruments
  ▸ Collect and analyze data
  ▸ Summarize findings
  ▸ Develop reports
  ▸ Present findings/reports

▸ Develop organizational evaluation frameworks/plans

Before you Commission Evaluation

✓ Talk to a few trusted colleagues who've done it

✓ Think about how you will identify evaluators
   Sole Source v. Competitive Processes
   ＊ Unrestricted v. Invited
   ＊ Any geographic limitations or advantages
   ＊ Tax or business requirements
   ＊ How will you attract bidders

✓ Determine best strategy/requirements for proposals

✓ Determine timeline for finding evaluators

✓ Determine format for response to RFP/RFQ/Invitation

✓ Determine who will be involved in making the selection and what process they will follow

Read 49a –b
See Handout 3a

What's the Difference Between an RFP and an RFQ?

Request for Proposals	Request for Quote or Qualifications
Requires detailed written response to key questions in specific format.	Can include many of the same elements as RFP, but less detailed and focused on approach and justification (why!!)
Usually includes additional required contractor documentation.	Usually requires specific references.
Usually more formal and typically lengthier. Can and usually does include interviews.	Somewhat less formal. Less reading and writing involved. Almost always includes some additional interview process.
Best used when grantor not very familiar with recipients, and/or when there are specific needs or requirements.	Best used when you have some familiarity with the contractors who might respond.
Grantor must give ample time for response	Grantor must maximize an interview process to inform selection.

▶ 49a

Questions to Ask Evaluators

1. What do you need to know to properly design an evaluation for this program/strategy/initiative?

2. What evaluation questions would guide your effort?

3. What data collection strategies would you use to address your questions?

4. How will you handle challenges such as:
   - Implementation difficulties (e.g., delayed start-up of subject program, staffing changes)?
   - Subject access/confidentiality/IRBs?

5. What is the timeline for the evaluation?

6. Who will conduct the work and what relevant experience do they have?

7. How and when will the findings be communicated? How will you contribute to making recommendations from findings?

8. What level of financial support will you need to conduct this evaluation and how will those fees be used?

▶ 49b

What Should Thoughtful Organizations Do to Obtain Funds for Evaluation?

▶ Usually the cost to do good evaluation is equivalent to about 10 – 15% of the costs to operate the program effectively.

▸ Write evaluation costs into project development budgets. Use the money accordingly.

▸ 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.

▸ Consider sharing and/or pooling resources.

Read 50a, See Handout 3b

▸ 50   Building and Sustaining Evaluative Capacity: Anita M. Baker, *Evaluation Services*

Things Agencies* Should Avoid When Commissioning Evaluation Projects

▸ Assuming there is a standard, fixed evaluation cost regardless of program size or complexity

▸ Funding an evaluation that does not clarify how evaluation funds will be used

▸ Agreeing to fund an evaluation design that they do not understand

▸ Agreeing to fund an evaluation where disbursement is not attached to deliverables

▸ Commissioning evaluation on a timetable that is inappropriate for the subject of the evaluation

▸ Commissioning an overly complicated evaluation design

▸ Commissioning an evaluation design with insufficient stakeholder involvement in its development

* and funders

▸ 50a   Building and Sustaining Evaluative Capacity: Anita M. Baker, *Evaluation Services*