

Building Evaluation Capacity Session 1

Evaluation Basics



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Working Definition of Program Evaluation

The practice of evaluation involves thoughtful, systematic collection and analysis of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs, for use by specific people, to reduce uncertainties, improve effectiveness, and make decisions.



Working Definition of Participatory Evaluation

Participatory evaluation involves trained evaluation personnel and practice-based decision-makers working in partnership.

P.E. brings together seasoned evaluators with seasoned program staff to:

- Address training needs
- Design, conduct and use results of program evaluation



What is Needed to Conduct Evaluation?

- Specify evaluation questions
 - Develop an evaluation design
 - Apply evaluation logic
 - Collect and analyze data
 - Summarize and share findings



Types of Evaluation

1. **Monitoring:** Tracking progress through regular reporting. Usually focuses on activities and/or expenditures.
2. **Formative Evaluation:** An evaluation that is carried out while a project is underway. Often focuses on process and implementation and/or on more immediate or intermediate outcomes.
3. **Summative Evaluation:** An evaluation that assesses overall outcomes or impact of a project after it ends.



Types and Focuses of Evaluation (What's in a Name?)

	GRANTEE	FDN Program Area (e.g., Employment)	FOUNDATION
Monitoring	Compliance with terms of Grant	Compliance with Policies & Budget	Compliance with Governing Laws & Policies
Formative	Implementation Short/Mid-Term Outcomes	Program Performance Relative to Strategy	Internal Performance Goals
Summative	Long-Term Outcomes	Program Strategy & Goals	Foundation Strategy & Goals

Administrative Processes

Cluster Evaluation

Process Evaluation

Impact Evaluation

Multiple Sources



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Grantmaker Performance Evaluation

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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, types of data and data collection strategies.



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Purposes of Evaluation

Evaluations are conducted to:

- Render judgment
- Facilitate improvements
- Generate knowledge

Evaluation purpose must be specified at the earliest stages of evaluation planning and with input from multiple stakeholders.



Purposes of Participatory Evaluation at NPOs

Evaluations are conducted to help:

- Recognize important trends in client data
- Understand whether programs are working as intended
- Make informed suggestions about ways in which programs can be changed/improved
- Satisfy reporting/information requirements for other stakeholders
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Getting Started

- ✓ Why evaluate?
- ✓ What to evaluate?
 - ✓ MORE SPECIFICALLY, what are the key Evaluation Questions to address?
- ✓ How to evaluate?
- ✓ Who should evaluate?
- ✓ When to evaluate?
- ✓ How to use the findings?



What do you need to know about a program *before* you design an evaluation?

1. What is/are the purpose(s) of the program?
2. What stage is the program in? (new, developing, mature, phasing out)
3. Who are the program clients?
4. Who are the key program staff (and where applicable, in which department is the program)?
5. What specific strategies are used to deliver program services?
6. What outcomes are program participants expected to achieve?
7. Are there any other evaluation studies currently being conducted regarding this program?
8. Who are the funders of the program?
9. What is the total program budget?
10. Why this program was selected for evaluation?



Who are Evaluation Stakeholders, and Why Do They Matter?

- Decision-makers
 - Information-seekers
 - Those directly involved with the evaluation subject (*evaluand*)
 - 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 an Evaluation Design?

An evaluation design is a written summary that communicates key decisions/plans to evaluators, program officials and other stakeholders.

Evaluation designs help evaluators and their partners think about and structure evaluation work.



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



Evaluation Questions Get you Started

- ✓ 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.



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 programmatic activity.



Evaluation Questions: Advice

- Limit the number of questions
- Between two and five is optimal
- Keep it manageable

Examples:

What are staff and participant perceptions of the program?

How and to what extent are participants progressing toward desired outcomes?

(see handout)



How are evaluation data collected?

- ▶ Surveys
 - ▶ Interviews
 - ▶ Observations
 - ▶ Record Reviews
- ▶ All have limitations and benefits
 - ▶ All can be used to collect either quantitative or qualitative data
 - ▶ Require preparation on the front end:
 - Instrument Development and testing
 - Administration plan development
 - Analysis plan development



What Are Key Components of Evaluative Thinking?

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

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

