Bruner Foundation
Modified Evaluative Thinking Assessment Tool

Introduction

The Evaluative Thinking Assessment Tool was created in 2005 by Bruner Foundation evaluation consultants and representatives from 12 non-profit organizations in Rochester, New York to assess the extent to which evaluative thinking is present in various organizational capacity areas. In 2007, the tool was automated and in 2010-11 it was updated again after additional study.

The Bruner Foundation and its partners define *Evaluative Thinking* as a type of reflective practice that incorporates use of systematically collected data to inform organizational decisions and other actions. The *Evaluative Thinking Assessment Tool* was developed by the partners after a review of multiple organizational assessment instruments. The tool specifically focuses on indicators of evaluative thinking for a critical subset of organizational capacities at a particular point in time: Mission, Strategic Planning, Governance, Finance, Leadership, Fund Development/Raising, Evaluation, Client Relationships, Program Development, Communication & Marketing, Technology Acquisition, Planning & Training, Staff Development, Human Resources, Business Venture Development and Alliances and Collaborations.

Using the Modified Tool

This modified version of the Evaluative Thinking Assessment tool was designed to capture leader perceptions about Evaluative Thinking in a critical subset of organizational capacities, for a particular point in time. Both the original and this modified version of the *Evaluative Thinking Assessment Tool* include multiple questions (indicators of evaluative thinking) in 15 different organizational capacity areas. **For each item on this modified version of the assessment tool, you are asked to report, whether an indicator of evaluative thinking is present or not using the following simple codes: 1 if the indicator is present, 0 if it is not;** high priority, lower priority, not a priority. When using the automated version, just use the codes shown in drop down boxes next to each indicator. **(If you are uncertain about the presence or absence of the indicator no code is selected)**. Summarizing your best projections about evaluative thinking will help your organization recognize whether and to what extent it is incorporating specific evaluative thinking strategies into its work, and in which organizational areas. It will also help you prioritize strategy changes related to evaluative thinking.

The Evaluative Thinking Assessment Tool was designed to facilitate discussions about: perceptions of evaluative thinking in multiple organizational areas; changes in evaluative thinking; and challenge areas where additional evaluative thinking might be incorporated into organizational work. Evaluative Thinking Assessment scores can also inform the setting of priorities regarding incorporation of or enhancement of evaluative thinking in organizational practice. When the absence of a specific component is reported, tool users are encouraged to indicate a sense of the priority (higher, lower or not a priority) with which the absence should be addressed. Users of the tool are also encouraged to think about score thresholds for their own organizations – what is ideal, what is expected, and what is unacceptable; and to think of responses to challenge areas that are identified through its use. **This modified version of the tool should inspire similar thoughtfulness – where is evaluative thinking obvious and substantial, and where is additional evaluative thinking needed.**

[1]The idea for formatting this tool was inspired by the Marguerite Casey Foundation Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool which is a derivative product of the Capacity Assessment Tool created by McKinsey and Company for Venture Philanthropy Partners (www.vppartners.org), and published in *Effective Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations* (2001). The content contained herein was developed and field tested by members of the Rochester Effectiveness Partnership in Rochester New York as part of a project developed and supported by the Bruner Foundation (2004-05). It was modified again in 2007 by participants in the Building Evaluation Capacity (BEC) Program, Hartford, CT, and through the E-Tip project, 2010-11.

To access the tool, click on the following link, scroll to the bottom of the link and download the file. After opening the file be sure to scroll all the way to the left to activate the first worksheet.

http://www.evaluationservices.co/resources---tools.html

ORGANIZATION MISSION			
		Assessment	Priority
a.	The mission statement is specific enough to provide a basis for developing goals and objectives		
b.	The mission is reviewed and revised on a scheduled basis (e.g. annually)with input from key stakeholders as appropriate		
c.	The organization regularly assesses compatibility between programs and mission		
d.	The organization acts on the findings of compatibility assessments (in other words, if a program is not compatible with the mission, it is changed or discontinued)		
Comments:			

STATEGIC PLANNING		
	Assessment	Priority
a. There is a formal process for strategic planning		
b. Using evaluative strategies such as interviews and surveys, input is obtained from key stakeholders (staff, board, community and clients) about strategic direction where appropriate		
c. Activities related to strategic process are assessed at least annually.		
d. Activities related to strategic process involve key stakeholders (staff, board, community and clients) where appropriate		
e. Strategic plans inform decision-making		
Comments:		

GOVERNANCE		
	Assessment	Priority
a. Board uses evaluation data in defining goals/workplan/structure to develop plans summarizing strategic direction		
b. Board regularly evaluates progress relative to own goals/workplan/structure		
c. There is a systematic process for identifying, recruiting, and electing new board members		
d. Specific expertise needs are identified and used to guide board member recruitment		
e. The board regularly (e.g., annually) evaluates the executive director's performance based on established goals/workplan		
f. The relationship between organization mission and plans for strategic direction are assessed		
g. The board assesses the organization's progress relative to long-term financial plans		
h. The board assess the organization's progress relative to program evaluation results		
Comments:		

	FINANCE	Assessment	Priority
a.	The organization has systems in place to provide appropriate financial information to staff and board members		
b.	The organization monitors its financial information systems to ensure they inform sound financial decisions		
c.	The organization annually develops a comprehensive operating budget which includes costs for all programs, management and fundraising and identifies sources of all funding		
d.	The organization annually reviews the comprehensive budget which includes costs for all programs, management and fundraising and identifies sources of all funding		
e.	The organization monitors unit costs of programs and services through the documentation of staff time and direct expenses		
f.	Financial status of organization is assessed regularly (at least quarterly) by board and executive leaders		
g.	The organization prepares financial statements on a budget versus actual and/or comparative basis to achieve a better understanding of finances		
h.	The organization periodically forecasts year-end revenues and expenses to inform sound management decisions		
i	The organization has a review process to monitor whether they are receiving appropriate and accurate financial information whether from a contracted service or internal processing		
j	Capital needs are reviewed at least annually		
k	The organization has established a plan identifying actions to take in the event of a reduction or loss in funding		
	Comments:		

LEADERSHIP	Assessment	Priority
a. Executive leaders support and value program evaluation and evaluative thinking		
b. Executive leaders use evaluation findings in decision-making.		
c Plans for executive leadership succession include attention to evaluation – new executive leaders are expected to value and be knowledgeable about evaluation		
d. Executive leaders educate staff about the value of evaluation and how to participate effectively in evaluation efforts		
e. Executive leaders motivate staff to regularly use specific evaluation strategies		
f. Executive leaders modify the organizational structure as needed to embrace change in response to evaluation findings		
g. Executive leaders foster use of technology to support evaluation and evaluative thinking		
h. Management uses data to set staff goals and evaluate staff performance		
i. Plans for management succession include attention to evaluation – new managers are expected to value evaluation and where possible are knowledgeable about evaluation		
j Staffing decisions (e.g., to decide which staff work on which projects, which staff are eligible for promotions or advancements, or need more assistance) are based on data		
Comments:		

	FUND RAISING/FUND DEVELOPMENT		
	c	**Assessment**	**Priority**
a.	**Organization conducts research on potential fund development opportunities (grants and contracts) and assesses which to pursue**		
b.	**Organization develops a written fund development plan that clarifies which grants and contracts will be pursued**		
c	**Organization assesses the written fund development plan to be sure it is being followed, and to determine why changes and exceptions are made.**		
d.	**Organization revises the plan based on assessments.**		
e	**Staff (as appropriate) are involved in writing grant proposals (particularly sections on program design and outcomes)**		
f	**The costs and benefits for fund raising events and activities are assessed**		
	Comments:		

	EVALUATION	Assessment	Priority
a.	The organization involves program staff, organizational leaders and clients (as appropriate) in developing/revising program evaluation plans		
b.	The organization involves program staff, organizational leaders and clients (as appropriate) in collecting program evaluation data.		
c	The organization involves program staff, organizational leaders and clients (as appropriate) in collecting analyzing program evaluation data.		
d.	The organization insures that there are key staff with evaluation expertise to address the organization's evaluation needs		
e	The organization insures that there are staff members whose jobs or components of their jobs are dedicated to evaluation		
f.	The organization provides (or obtains) training in evaluation for program staff members and makes sure that the training is current, well-delivered, and provided for enough staff members to insure that evaluation use is a standard practice		
g.	The organization hires evaluation consultants when needed		
h	Evaluations that include attention to characteristics, activities and program and client outcomes are regularly conducted for organization programs		
i	Results of program evaluations including findings about client outcomes, as appropriate are shared with leaders, staff, clients, board members and funders		
j	Results of program evaluation drive continuous improvement of programs		
	Comments:		

CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS		Assessment	Priority
a.	Client needs assessments are conducted regularly		
b.	Client services are designed in response to determined needs		
c.	Client satisfaction is regularly assessed.		
d.	Client outcomes are regularly assessed.		
e.	Results of client satisfaction assessments are used in developing new programs.		
f.	Results of client outcome assessments are used in developing new programs.		
	Comments:		

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT		
	Assessment	**Priority**
a. **The organization identifies gaps in community services before planning new programs**		
b. **Findings from program evaluation are incorporated into the program planning process**		
c. **Multiple stakeholders are involved in developing/revising program plans**		
d. **Program plans are followed where possible and there are strategies in place to modify program plans if needed**		
e. **Each program has a written program plan including a logical formulation**		
Comments:		

COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING			
		Assessment	**Priority**
a.	Organization has a marketing and communications plan that is linked to the organization's strategic plan which is used to help the organization achieve its mission.		
b.	Multiple stakeholders including staff and board members and technical assistance providers as needed, are involved in developing the marketing and communications plan.		
c	Organization assesses the effectiveness of its marketing and communications planning (i.e., determines whether an accurate message is getting out and whether delivery of the message is furthering the mission of the organization).		
d.	Multiple stakeholders including staff and board members and technical assistance providers as needed, are involved in assessing the marketing and communications plan.		
	Comments:		

TECHNOLOGY ACQUISITION PLANNING AND TRAINING	Assessment	Priority
a. An assessment process is in place to make decisions about technology maintenance, upgrades, and acquisition		
b. Technology systems include software that can be used to manage and analyze evaluation data (e.g., Excel, SPSS)		
c. Technology systems provide data to evaluate client outcomes		
d. Technology systems provide data to evaluate organizational management		
e. Technology systems are regularly assessed to see if they support evaluation		
f. Staff technology needs are regularly assessed		
Comments:		

	STAFF DEVELOPMENT		
		Assessment	Priority
a.	A formal staff development needs assessment is done annually		
b.	There is a plan for staff development, based on needs assessment data		
c.	The staff development plan is evaluated		
d.	There are opportunities for staff to assess staff development training sessions		
e	Results of staff training assessments influence future staff development		
	Comments:		

	HUMAN RESOURCES		
		Assessment	**Priority**
a.	**Organization has an established personnel performance review process**		
b.	**Performance reviews are used (at least annually) to provide feedback relative to performance expectations**		
c.	**Organization collects and updates information on credentials, training and cultural competencies of staff**		
d.	**The organization uses results of data collected regarding staff credentials, training and cultural competencies to recruit culturally competent staff**		
e.	**The organization uses results of data collected regarding staff credentials, training and cultural competencies to train culturally competent staff**		
f.	**Organization conducts regular (e.g., annual, biannual) staff satisfaction surveys.**		
g.	**Organization uses the results of staff satisfaction surveys to inform modification of policies and procedures.**		
	Comments:		

BUSINESS VENTURE DEVELOPMENT		
	Assessment	**Priority**
a. **Organization systematically identifies gaps in community services**		
b. **Organization assesses whether they have the capacity to bring in new types of business**		
c. **Organization researches new business venture opportunities**		
d. **Organization strategies regarding new business ventures are based on capacity findings, and results of gap studies and business venture development research**		
Comments:		

ALLIANCES AND COLLABORATION		Assessment	Priority
a.	Existing partnerships/alliances/collaborations are assessed regularly to determine if they meet organization mission and strategic direction		
b.	Planning is conducted to identify additionally needed partnerships/ alliances/collaborations		
e.	Existing partnerships/alliances/collaborations are assessed regularly to determine if they are functioning effectively		
	Comments:		