Evaluation Planning: Starting on the Right Path

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If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll end up somewhere else.

- Yogi Berra -
TODAY’S GOALS

Understand the value of program evaluation

Know the components of evaluation planning

Take home a set of tools & resources to assist in your evaluation planning
This research is really going to help move our field forward.

This evaluation is really going to help our program become more effective.
Evaluation Defined

A systematic and intentional process of gathering and analyzing data to inform:

1. Learning
2. Decision-making
3. Action
“Research seeks to prove, Evaluation seeks to improve.”

- M.Q. Patton -
Common Concerns

• Evaluation will:
  • divert funding from the program
  • be too complicated
  • be an additional burden on staff
  • produce negative results

• Evaluation is just another form of program monitoring
An effective evaluation can help programs leverage additional funds and make changes to a program that could save money.
Common Concerns Addressed

Evaluations can be developed in a way that aligns with an organization’s current resources and priorities.
Finding out what doesn’t work so well is just as important as finding out what is working well.
Common Concerns Addressed

Monitoring typically measures program fidelity and focuses on outputs, while evaluations explore whether expected outcomes were achieved.
MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

FROM: Peter R. Orszag
Director

SUBJECT: Increased Emphasis on Program Evaluations

Rigorous, independent program evaluations can be a key resource in determining whether government programs are achieving their intended outcomes as well as possible and at the lowest possible cost. Evaluations can help policymakers and agency managers strengthen the design and operation of programs. Ultimately, evaluations can help the Administration determine how to spend taxpayer dollars effectively and efficiently -- investing more in what works and less in what does not.

Although the Federal government has long invested in evaluations, many important programs have never been formally evaluated -- and the evaluations that have been done have not sufficiently shaped Federal budget priorities or agency management practices. Many agencies lack an office of evaluation with the stature and staffing to support an ambitious, strategic, and relevant research agenda. As a consequence, some programs have persisted year after year without adequate evidence that they work. In some cases, evaluation dollars have flowed into studies of insufficient rigor or policy significance. And Federal programs have rarely evaluated multiple approaches to the same problem with the goal of identifying which ones are most effective.
The Value of Evaluation

1. Tell your program’s **story**

2. Measures the **effectiveness** of your program

3. Be **accountable** - show funders why your program should be continued or expanded

4. Find out **what works and what doesn’t work** - improve your program

5. Helps **build evaluation capacity** within an organization

6. Can **contribute knowledge** to the field

7. Contributes to program **sustainability**
ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

Getting everybody on board.
Identify Stakeholders

Those served or affected by the program

Involved in program operations

Providing the funding or resources for the program

Primary intended users of findings
Engaging Stakeholders

- Increases awareness and commitment
- Can bring in new perspectives
- Reduces suspicion and fear
- Increases the likelihood that evaluation findings will be used
EVALUATION PLANNING PROCESS

- Describe Program
- Focus the Evaluation
- Determine Design & Data Collection Methods
- Collect Data
- Analyze Data & Interpret Findings
- Disseminate & Utilize Results
- Engage Stakeholders
PLAN COMPONENTS

1. Purpose & Stakeholders
2. Logic Model
3. Program Context
4. Evaluation Matrix
5. Dissemination & Utilization Plan
**PURPOSE**

**Formative Evaluation**
- Provide information that helps improve the program

**FOCUS**
- Program activities
- Outputs
- Short-term outcomes

**PURPOSE**
- Monitor progress
- Make mid-course corrections
- Bring suggestions for improvement

**Summative Evaluation**
- Demonstrate program results to funder and community

**FOCUS**
- Intermediate outcomes
- Impact

**PURPOSE**
- Determine the value of the program
- Describe the quality & effectiveness of the program

W. K. Kellogg Foundation
Formative Evaluation

- Needs Assessment
- Process Evaluation
- Implementation Evaluation

Summative Evaluation

- Outcome Evaluation
- Impact Evaluation
- Cost-effectiveness Analysis

TYPES
DESCRIBE
YOUR PROGRAM

“I think you should be more explicit here in step two.”
Describe Your Program

Look At Your Program Plan

- Need
- Goals
- Objectives

Create A Logic Model

Picture of the critical elements of your program and how they work together
LOGIC MODEL

Problem Statement

Goal / Impact

Inputs → Activities/Outputs → Outcomes

External Factors
Problem Statement

A description of the problem that the program seeks to solve

Goals

The intended aim or impact over the life of the program
Inputs

Resources that go into a program

- Staff Time
- Money
- Materials
- Equipment
- Facilities
- Volunteer Time
Activities

What the program does with the resources

- Process
- Tools
- Events
- Technology
- Actions

Outputs

Direct products of program activities and may include types, levels and targets of services to be delivered by the program

Data about activities
Size and Scope of the services
Outcomes

**SHORT-TERM**
- Immediate outcomes
- First benefits or changes
- Most closely influenced by program outputs

**INTERMEDIATE**
- Links initial outcomes to long-term outcomes
- Often changes in behavior that result from new knowledge, attitude, skills

**LONG-TERM**
- Ultimate outcomes a program desires to achieve
- Most removed benefits that can reasonably expect to influence
Example 1

Construct a Logic Model
INPUTS

**Financial:**
- State funding
- In-kind

**Human:**
- Clean Water Inc.
- City of Bedford
- Local landowners
- Local ranchers
- Local arborists
- Other contractors

**Information:**
- Thermal load modeling prediction
- Local landscape
- Local flora habitat
- Motivations of local stakeholders

**Physical:**
- Land along watershed

ACTIVITIES

**Reduce river temperature**
- Minimize presence of invasive plant species
- Plant shade producing trees
- Introduce native plants

**Re-section farmland**
- Build livestock fences
- Relocate animals

**Partnership development**
- Build relationships with local representatives
- Connect with City representatives
- Convene stakeholder group

OUTPUTS

**# and type of invasive species removed**

**# and type of trees planted**

**# and type of native plants planted**

**Length and location of fences constructed**

**# of animals relocated**

SHORT-TERM

**OUTCOMES**

**INTERMEDIATE**

**LONG-TERM**

- **Greater amount of runoff absorbed by trees**
- **Decreased water temp**
- **Decreased presence of nutrients**
  - Phosphorus
  - Nitrogen
- **Expanded habitat**
- **Greater biodiversity**
- **Increase in local job opportunities**
- **Improved understanding of WQT programs**
- **Increased number of WQT champions**
- **Expanded partnerships among stakeholders**
- **Sustained cleaner, safer waterway**
FOCUS
THE EVALUATION
Identify Evaluation Questions

- Refer to your logic model
- Think about your stakeholders

Preskill & Jones, RWJF, 2009
# Stakeholders’ Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHO might use the evaluation</th>
<th>WHAT do they want to know</th>
<th>HOW will they use the results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>YOU</strong></td>
<td>Are the strategies achieving our goals? Are we being effective?</td>
<td>o Make informed decisions o Adapt strategies o Track progress along the way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FUNDERS FUTURE FUNDERS</strong></td>
<td>How are efforts progressing? How &amp; where are grantees making an impact? Are efforts cost effective?</td>
<td>o Justify their investments o Adjust grant-making strategies o Determine future funding opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PARTNERS</strong></td>
<td>Updates on the efforts? Are we having an impact?</td>
<td>o Make informed decisions o Can serve as a motivator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MEDIA</strong></td>
<td>What is newsworthy? Relevant?</td>
<td>o To inform their stories</td>
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Evaluation Questions

Process: How well was the project designed and implemented (i.e. its quality)?

Outcome: How valuable were the outcomes to participants? To the organization, the community, the economy?

Value/Worth: Did the value of the outcomes outweigh the value of the resources used to obtain them?

Next Steps: How strong is the program’s sustainability? Can it survive/grow in the future with limited additional resources?
Prioritization

• Step back from your questions and prioritize
  • Keep in mind:
    • What components are most essential?
    • What do the stakeholders want to know?
    • What is the program’s unique contribution?
    • What is realistic and feasible?
• Get input from your stakeholders
Potential WQT Evaluation Questions

1. What are stakeholder attitudes towards water quality trading, and why?

2. What are the location-specific conditions conducive to water quality trading?

3. To what extent was the program implemented as planned?
   • what worked, what didn’t work, challenges

4. To what extent have trading programs realized cost savings?

5. In what ways has the watershed transformed over the past two years? How substantial were those changes?
   • temperature
   • nutrients
   • wildlife
DETERMINE
DESIGN & METHODS
Indicator

• Characteristics or changes that show the progress a program is making toward achieving a specific outcome
• Tied to your evaluation questions

What do I look at to find answers to the questions?
Indicator Characteristics

- Meaningful
- Direct
- Useful
- Reliable
- Practical to collect
Data Collection Methods

• The methods and procedures should match the questions and indicators

• Think about:
  • Available data sources
  • Potential respondents
  • Credibility
  • Timing
  • Resources
  • Quantitative vs. Qualitative
Data Collection Methods

- Individual Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Case Study
- Questionnaires
- Monitoring Systems
- Observation
- Materials Review
Data Collection TIPS

- Determine how you are going to manage your data prior to collecting
- Collect only the information you are going to use
- Review data collection strategies periodically
  - What is working?
  - What is not working?
  - What pieces of data are still missing?
We have a board meeting coming up and could use a little input from the evaluation team.

Sorry, we're not scheduled to provide input until year 3.

DISSEMINATING & UTILIZING RESULTS
Dissemination Planning

WHO: is your audience?

WHY: disseminate?

WHAT: evaluation results need to be disseminated?

HOW & WHEN: will you disseminate?
Common Problems in Evaluation

• So many questions = evaluation not focused
• Drowning in data = no data analysis/reporting plan in place
• Too many data collection instruments
• Bias for quantitative data
• Forgetting to ask the “why” and “how” questions
• Not being able to tie outcomes specifically to the program
Questions?

Brown School Evaluation Center helps to:

- Improve efficiencies & outcomes
- Enhance evaluation capacity
- Use data for decision-making & improvement
- Tell your story effectively

Thank you!
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