

The Friendly Face of Program Evaluation



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Questions to Think About

- What are the purposes of Program Evaluation?
- Who conducts Program Evaluation?
- What are the tools of Program Evaluation?
- Who are the users of Program Evaluation?
- What are the impacts of Program Evaluation?



The Inner Program Evaluator Inside of Us

- We are continually evaluating programs although these programs may manifest themselves as a product or service.
- We gather and interpret data to inform our evaluation.
- We make decisions based on our evaluations.



The Many “Faces” of Program Evaluation

- Summative and Formative Evaluation
- Internal vs. External Evaluation
- Participatory and Collaborative Evaluation
- Developmental Evaluation
- Utilization Evaluation

What are the Purposes of Program Evaluation?



- Is the program worthwhile? Does it have merit and worth?
 - Client is the funder
 - Provide funder with 'best choice' options.
 - Evaluator as external judge
 - Emphasis on accurate data generation
 - Often involves a comparative model

"Consumer Reports"



What are the Purposes of Program Evaluation?

- Is the program meeting its goals?
 - Client is the funder or program manager
 - Generate accountability information
 - Evaluator as external judge
 - Emphasis on documenting goal achievement
 - Often a comparison between stated objectives and observable outcomes

“Annual Reports”



Who Conducts Program Evaluation?

- Among others, this is a function of costs, beliefs, and program culture?
 - External evaluators with or without interest and knowledge of the program.
 - Program or methods expertise.
 - Internal evaluators who have a vested interest.
 - Comparing or developing programs.



What are the tools of Program Evaluation?

- The tools of evaluation are those that will provide the most efficient data for the given purposes of the evaluation.
 - Quantitative data
 - Outcome results
 - Breadth of information
 - Qualitative Data
 - Provides context and understanding
 - Depth of information



Who are the users of Program Evaluation?

- Program evaluators want to increase the number and types of users of program evaluations.
 - Clients
 - Program buyer
 - Program developer
 - Participants
 - Program recipients
 - Researchers and future evaluators



What are the impacts of Program Evaluation?

- Historically, program evaluations were used to determine worth and merit in order to make choices.
 - Decision making
 - Program changes and modifications
 - Further evaluation
 - Changing models of program evaluation



The Friendly Face of Evaluation

- What are you up to?
 - Creating a program description.
 - context
 - supporting resources (input)
 - program processes (does the program work)
 - outcomes (products)

We often assume that we know how things work. The question leads to multiple perspectives that need to be examined.



The Friendly Face of Evaluation

- How are you doing?
 - Formative Evaluation
 - Program development
 - Program improvement

Incorporate evaluation as a monitoring process that occurs alongside implementation. Evaluation becomes a correction mechanism to avoid major disappointments.



The Friendly Face of Evaluation

- Can I help?
 - Participatory evaluation. Program personnel and the evaluators work together to:
 - Identify the important questions
 - Determine the information needed
 - Decide how to collect this information
 - make sense of the information
 - communicate what has been learned



What are the advantages of Friendly Evaluation?

- Generates more relevant questions for program personnel and users.
- Leads to greater instrumental use of the findings.
- Provides an educative function for program personnel and users.
- Leads to new collaborations.
- Create an ongoing pattern of inquiry that leads to data informed decision making (capacity building).



What are the Ongoing Challenges?

- Evaluations are conducted as an afterthought or long after program implementation.
- Insufficient time for an effective evaluation.
- Fear of asking important but difficult questions, resulting in poor data.
- Creating a culture for evaluation to be used.
- Building and maintaining trust.
- Insufficient communication with, and involvement of stakeholders.
- Lack of support for use of evaluation findings.



Getting Started

- Create a context for learning and non-judgmental change.
 - True learning community
- Identify current data that may serve evaluative purposes.
 - Attendance, feedback, products, phone records
- Identify and include stakeholders.
- Create mechanisms to collect relevant data.



Beyond Getting Started

- Maintain communication.
 - True learning community
- Continue to build and maintain trust.
 - Maintain communication
- Create the climate to communicate and use evaluation findings.
 - Deal with the “fear of the findings.”



Do You Need an External Evaluator?

- You may not need an external evaluator
 - What decisions need to be made and what is at stake?
 - You have the capacity to implement the Program Evaluation Standards
- Call an “external” evaluator when...
 - Additional credibility is required
 - Program personnel are overloaded
 - A fresh perspective is needed



The Program Evaluation Standards

- Deciding Whether to Evaluate
- Defining the evaluation problem
- Designing the evaluation
- Collecting information
- Analysing information
- Reporting the evaluation
- Budgeting the evaluation
- Contracting the evaluation



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