Developing an Evaluation Plan and Selecting an Evaluator

The Children's Trust

Workshop Overview

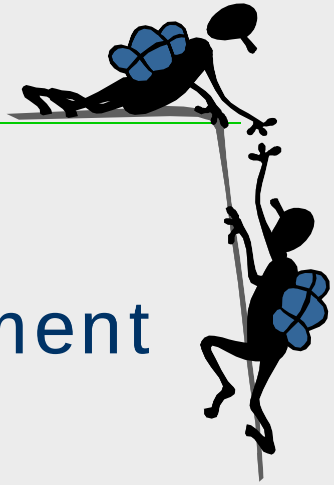
- Program Evaluation Overview
- Types of Program Evaluation
- Program Evaluation Approach at The Trust
- Set the Groundwork for an Internal Evaluation
- How to Contract with an External Evaluator

What is Program Evaluation?

The systematic collection of information about program activities, characteristics, and outcomes that helps to

- Make judgments about a program
- Improve program effectiveness
- Inform decisions about future program development

How can Agencies Benefit from Program Evaluation?



- Guide program development
- Help participants increase achievement
- Improve customer satisfaction
- Promote recruitment and retention efforts
- Show the funder that your agency is committed to continuous quality improvement

Major Types of Program Evaluation

- **Goals-Based**
  - Should program goals change at some point
  - Are resources sufficient to reach goals
- **Process-Based**
  - **Formative Evaluation** – Are all facets of the program operating effectively
    - Considers service delivery, personnel, and procedures
  - **Implementation Evaluation** – Is the program model being implemented with fidelity
- **Outcomes-Based**
  - **Summative Evaluation** – What was the program's overall impact

What Types of Program Evaluation are Utilized at TCT?

- Formative Evaluation at TCT
  - Monthly Certification Reports (attendance)
  - Utilization Reports
  - Pre-tests and mid-tests
  - Expenditure Reports
  - Program Narrative Reports (quarterly)
- Outcome-Based Evaluation at TCT
  - Post-tests

Evaluation Philosophy at The Trust

- Empowerment Evaluation
  - Approach is designed to give people the tools to help themselves and to improve their programs using self-evaluation and reflection
  - Programs build internal capacity to collect data and analyze results
  - Can be applied to any of the major types of program evaluation

Internal Evaluation Groundwork: Where To Start

Step 1: Determine your evaluation's audience!

Step 2: What will you tell your audience?

- Develop evaluation questions that respond to the information needs of your audience

Step 3: Find the answers!

- Decide which types of data your agency will collect (perhaps you are already collecting it)
- Consider which evaluation methods your agency can use effectively

Step 1: Determine Your Audience

- Staff (program administrators, teachers, other front-line staff)
- Partner organizations
- Participants, their families and social networks, other agencies and community groups
- Funders, policy makers, advocates

Step 2: Use a Logic Model to Help Determine the Topics of your Evaluation

Formative Evaluation Topics (Inputs, Outputs)

Summative Evaluation Topics (Outcomes)

Inputs → **Outputs** → **Outcomes**

Inputs

Program Investments

- -Enough staff?
- -Staff qualified?
- -Facility appropriate?
- -Sufficient equipment?
- -Materials age-appropriate?
- -Need additional funding?

Outputs

Activities

- -Meet requisites from funder?
- -Implemented correctly?
- -Student and staff response?
- -Engaging activities for kids?

Participants

- -Successful recruitment?
- -Retention efforts sufficient?
- -Serving intended population?
- -Participants engaged in programming?

Outcomes

- -Improve academic performance?
- -Attendance trends?
- -Participant and staff satisfaction?
- -Assessments useful?
- -Lessons learned?

Step 3: Where to Find the Answers

- Sources of Information at Your Program
  - Participant demographics, attendance records, assessment performance
  - Personal knowledge from administrators, staff, participants and their families
- Data Collection
  - Survey
  - Interviews, testimonials
  - Observations
  - Focus groups

Feeling Overwhelmed?

- External evaluators are an option
  - Consider the following:
    - Cost
    - Availability of evaluator
    - Evaluator’s knowledge of program, participants, and overall operations
    - Specialized skills and expertise
    - Objectivity
    - Ethics

Guidelines to design evaluations…

- **Utility**… Who needs the information? This ensures that the information needs of intended users are met.
- **Feasibility**… How much money, time, and effort can we put into this? Ensures that the evaluation is realistic, prudent, diplomatic, diplomatic, and frugal.
- **Propriety**… What steps need to be taken for the evaluation to be ethical? Ensures that the evaluation is conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved and those affected.
- **Accuracy**… What design will lead to accurate information? Ensures that the evaluation reveals and conveys technically accurate information.

External Evaluation: Where to Start?

Step 1

- Determine your agency’s evaluation needs
- Decide on payment amount and delivery options

Step 2

- Advertise evaluator job

Step 3

- Interview candidates
- Select an evaluator

Step 4

- Draft and execute contract documents

Step 1: Show Me the Money

- The Trust pays for evaluation expenditures up to 5% of the total program cost.

- If you are a Trust-funded agency, include a payment schedule in the contract and identify associated deliverables
  - Periodic payment at regular intervals
  - Pay as you go for deliverable
  - Lump sum at the end of the project

Step 1: Show Me the Money

- Consider that Costs Vary by:
  - Complexity of evaluation or evaluation type
  - Number of sites
  - Labor required for data collection, analysis, and reporting
  - Scientific rigor
  - Capacity-building needs

- Cost-Saving Advice
  - Delegate data entry responsibilities and test administration to internal staff

Step 2: Advertise the Job

- Advertise using a request for proposal (RFP)
  - Statement of work expected (identify deliverables)
  - Timeframe for project
  - Contracted payment stipulations
  - Format requirements for proposals
  - Deadlines to submit proposals
  - Description of selection process
  - Contact person at the agency
- Post RFP on your website, organizational list serves, or at local universities
- Informally through personal networks and recommendations

Five Steps for Selecting an Evaluator: A Guide for Out-of-School Time Practitioners Jacinta Bronte-Tinkew, Krystle Joyner, Tiffany Allen (October 2007)

Step 3: Selecting and Interviewing Candidates

- Be wary of proposals written in “science-speak” – your evaluation may take on the same lingo

- Conduct Interviews – Use the proposal as the beginning of a conversation

- Consider these details:
  - Academic preparation/specialized training
  - Evaluation philosophy or approach
  - Track record (references, ask to see sample work products)
  - Location (travel costs may be involved)
  - Interpersonal style (dynamic with agency staff)

Step 4: The Trust Guidelines and Requirements

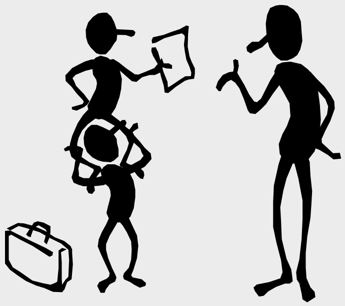
- Duties to Assign External Evaluators
  - Assessment of the program
  - Identification/development of measurement tools
  - Training/capacity building
  - Database development
  - Data analysis
  - Summary reports
  - Program performance and continuous quality improvement

Step 4: The Trust Guidelines and Requirements

- Duties Not to Assign External Evaluators
  - Data entry
  - Assessment administration
  - Trust-required reporting (agencies should take care of this)

Step 4:
Developing Contract Details

- **Contract/Subcontract** or **Memorandum of Understanding**
  - Scope of Work
  - Each item/category within the Scope of Work should be accompanied by the fee charged
  - Documents **must** be submitted to The Trust for review prior to execution of the contract



Major Types of Program Evaluation

(from: Free Management Library, www.managementhelp.org)

When designing your evaluation approach, it may be helpful to review the following three types of evaluations, which are rather common in organizations. Note that you should not design your evaluation approach simply by choosing which of the following three types you will use -- you should design your evaluation approach by carefully addressing the following key considerations:

1. For what purposes is the evaluation being done, i.e., what do you want to be able to decide as a result of the evaluation?
2. Who are the audiences for the information from the evaluation, e.g., customers, bankers, funders, board, management, staff, customers, clients, etc.
3. What kinds of information are needed to make the decision you need to make and/or enlighten your intended audiences, e.g., information to really understand the process of the product or program (its inputs, activities and outputs), the customers or clients who experience the product or program, strengths and weaknesses of the product or program, benefits to customers or clients (outcomes), how the product or program failed and why, etc.
4. From what sources should the information be collected, e.g., employees, customers, clients, groups of customers or clients and employees together, program documentation, etc.
5. How can that information be collected in a reasonable fashion, e.g., questionnaires, interviews, examining documentation, observing customers or employees, conducting focus groups among customers or employees, etc.
6. When is the information needed (by when must it be collected)?
7. What resources are available to collect the information?

Goals-Based Evaluation

Often programs are established to meet one or more specific goals. These goals are often described in the original program plans. Goal-based evaluations are evaluating the extent to which programs are meeting predetermined goals or objectives. Questions to ask yourself when designing an evaluation to see if you reached your goals, are:

1. How were the program goals (and objectives, is applicable) established? Was the process effective?
2. What is the status of the program's progress toward achieving the goals?
3. Will the goals be achieved according to the timelines specified in the program implementation or operations plan? If not, then why?
4. Do personnel have adequate resources (money, equipment, facilities, training, etc.) to achieve the goals?
5. How should priorities be changed to put more focus on achieving the goals? (Depending on the context, this question might be viewed as a program management decision, more than an evaluation question.)
6. How should timelines be changed (be careful about making these changes - know why efforts are behind schedule before timelines are changed)?
7. How should goals be changed (be careful about making these changes - know why efforts are not achieving the goals before changing the goals)? Should any goals be added or removed? Why?
8. How should goals be established in the future?

Process-Based Evaluations

Process-based evaluations are geared to fully understanding how a program works -- how does it produce that results that it does. These evaluations are useful if programs are long-standing and have changed over the years, employees or customers report a large number of complaints about the program, there appear to be large inefficiencies in delivering program services and they are also useful for accurately portraying to outside parties how a program truly operates (e.g., for replication elsewhere).

There are numerous questions that might be addressed in a process evaluation. These questions can be selected by carefully considering what is important to know about the program. Examples of questions to ask yourself when designing an evaluation to understand and/or closely examine the processes in your programs, are:

1. On what basis do employees and/or the customers decide that products or services are needed?
2. What is required of employees in order to deliver the product or services?
3. How are employees trained about how to deliver the product or services?
4. How do customers or clients come into the program?
5. What is required of customers or client?
6. How do employees select which products or services will be provided to the customer or client?
7. What is the general process that customers or clients go through with the product or program?
8. What do customers or clients consider to be strengths of the program?
9. What do staff consider to be strengths of the product or program?
10. What typical complaints are heard from employees and/or customers?
11. What do employees and/or customers recommend to improve the product or program?
12. On what basis do employees and/or the customer decide that the product or services are no longer needed?

Outcomes-Based Evaluation

Program evaluation with an outcomes focus is increasingly important for nonprofits and asked for by funders. An outcomes-based evaluation facilitates your asking if your organization is really doing the right program activities to bring about the outcomes you believe (or better yet, you've verified) to be needed by your clients (rather than just engaging in busy activities which seem reasonable to do at the time). Outcomes are benefits to clients from participation in the program. Outcomes are usually in terms of enhanced learning (knowledge, perceptions/attitudes or skills) or conditions, e.g., increased literacy, self-reliance, etc. Outcomes are often confused with program outputs or units of services, e.g., the number of clients who went through a program.

The United Way of America (http://www.unitedway.org/outcomes/) provides an excellent overview of outcomes-based evaluation, including introduction to outcomes measurement, a program outcome model, why to measure outcomes, use of program outcome findings by agencies, eight steps to success for measuring outcomes, examples of outcomes and outcome indicators for various programs and the resources needed for measuring outcomes. The following information is a top-level summary of information from this site.

The general steps to accomplish an outcomes-based evaluation include to:

1. Identify the major outcomes that you want to examine or verify for the program under evaluation. You might reflect on your mission (the overall purpose of your organization) and ask yourself

what impacts you will have on your clients as you work towards your mission. For example, if your overall mission is to provide shelter and resources to abused women, then ask yourself what benefits this will have on those women if you effectively provide them shelter and other services or resources. As a last resort, you might ask yourself, "What major activities are we doing now?" and then for each activity, ask "Why are we doing that?" The answer to this "Why?" question is usually an outcome. This "last resort" approach, though, may just end up justifying ineffective activities you are doing now, rather than examining what you should be doing in the first place.

2. Choose the outcomes that you want to examine, prioritize the outcomes and, if your time and resources are limited, pick the top two to four most important outcomes to examine for now.
3. For each outcome, specify what observable measures, or indicators, will suggest that you're achieving that key outcome with your clients. This is often the most important and enlightening step in outcomes-based evaluation. However, it is often the most challenging and even confusing step, too, because you're suddenly going from a rather intangible concept, e.g., increased self-reliance, to specific activities, e.g., supporting clients to get themselves to and from work, staying off drugs and alcohol, etc. It helps to have a "devil's advocate" during this phase of identifying indicators, i.e., someone who can question why you can assume that an outcome was reached because certain associated indicators were present.
4. Specify a "target" goal of clients, i.e., what number or percent of clients you commit to achieving specific outcomes with, e.g., "increased self-reliance (an outcome) for 70% of adult, African American women living in the inner city of Minneapolis as evidenced by the following measures (indicators) ..."
5. Identify what information is needed to show these indicators, e.g., you'll need to know how many clients in the target group went through the program, how many of them reliably undertook their own transportation to work and stayed off drugs, etc. If your program is new, you may need to evaluate the process in the program to verify that the program is indeed carried out according to your original plans. (Michael Patton, prominent researcher, writer and consultant in evaluation, suggests that the most important type of evaluation to carry out may be this implementation evaluation to verify that your program ended up to be implemented as you originally planned.)
6. Decide how that information can be efficiently and realistically gathered. Consider program documentation, observation of program personnel and clients in the program, questionnaires and interviews about clients' perceived benefits from the program, case studies of program failures and successes, etc. You may not need all of the above.
7. Analyze and report the findings.

Checklist for Selecting an Evaluator

	Evaluator appears to be: (Check one for Each Item)		
	Well Qualified	Not Well Qualified	Cannot Determine if Qualified
1. To what extent does the formal training of the potential evaluator qualify him/her to conduct evaluation studies? (Consider major or minor degree specializations; specific courses in evaluation methodology; whether the potential evaluator has conducted applied research in a human service setting, etc.)			
2. To what extent does the previous evaluation experience of the potential evaluator qualify him/her to conduct evaluation studies? (Consider items such as length of experience; relevance of experience.)			
	Acceptable Match	Unacceptable Match	Cannot Determine Match
3. To what extent is the professional orientation of the potential evaluator a good match for the evaluation approach required? (Consider items such as philosophical and methodological orientations.)			
	Well Qualified	Not Well Qualified	Cannot Determine if Qualified
4. To what extent does the previous performance of the potential evaluator qualify him/her to conduct evaluation studies for your project? What prior experience does she or he have in similar settings? (Look at work samples or contact references.)			
	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Cannot Determine Acceptability
5. To what extent are the personal styles and characteristics of the potential evaluator acceptable? (Consider such items as honesty, character, interpersonal communication skills, personal mannerisms, ability to resolve conflicts, etc.)			
	Well Qualified and Acceptable	Not Well Qualified and/or Unacceptable	Cannot Determine if Qualified or Acceptable
Summary Based on the questions above, to what extent is the potential evaluator qualified and acceptable to conduct the evaluation?			

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RESOURCES

- **Community Tool Box: http://ctb.ku.edu**
- **Free Management Library www.managementhelp.org**
- **American Evaluation Association: www.eval.org**
- **Grantmakers for Effective Organizations: www.geofunders.org**
- **Bureau of Justice Assistance :Center for Program Evaluation: http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation/guide/index.htm**
- **OJJDP Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center Online: www.jrsa.org/jjec**