

A Walk through the World of Program Evaluation

AAISA 2013 Provincial Settlement Conference

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A few opening questions...

Evaluation...	
Exposure?	None - Lots
Comfort Level?	☹ ☺ ☺ ?
Drivers?	Accountability vs. Learning
How do you rate it for...	
providing accountability for \$ spent ?	☹ ☺ ☺ ?
learning for the settlement sector?	☹ ☺ ☺ ?
Regarding evaluation in the Alberta Settlement Sector... What do you want more of in the next two years?	

Evaluate...?

- “To form an idea of the amount or value of; assess.” (Oxford English Dictionary)

Evaluation - What is it?

- A form of inquiry whose focus is some evaluand (program, process, organization, person, etc) which results in “merit” and/or “worth” judgments about it. (Guba and Lincoln, 2001)
 - Merit = intrinsic quality (sourced within itself, rather than because of associations)
 - Worth = extrinsic quality (sourced from its interactive effects with its context)

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Evaluation - Critical Questions

- What gets evaluated?
- Who makes the judgment?
- On what criteria?
- For what purpose?

Why are these so important?

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Evaluation Approaches – A Spectrum

	Conventional	Participatory
Who	External experts	Community members, project staff, facilitator(s)
What	Predetermined indicators of success	People identify their own indicators of success
How	Focus on scientific objectivity, evaluator distanced from other participants; delayed and limited access to results	Self-evaluation, simple methods adapted to local conditions; open, immediate sharing of results through local involvement
When	Usually Mid and End of Project	More frequent, small scale evaluations
Why	Accountability - to address donor requirements	Empowerment - to help people initiate, navigate, control

Adapted from Narayan-Parker, 1993: 12 (taken from Estrella and Gaventa, 1998)

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**Evaluation –
Conventional vs Participatory?**

- What do you think are the most important considerations when designing an evaluation?

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Evaluation – Key Steps

1. Deciding to evaluate
2. Building a team
3. Making a plan
4. Collecting the data
5. Processing & verifying the data
6. Reporting & planning forward

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1. Deciding to evaluate
 - Often worked out at the beginning of a project cycle
 - Build into design phase
 - With budget
 - 5–15% of total cost
 - Level of experimentation – an important variable
 - Options (timing)
 - Formative (Process)
 - Summative

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- Terms of Reference (TORs)
 - Describe project
 - Scope and Outcomes
 - Evaluation purpose and users
 - Key questions to be addressed
 - Budget and timeframe

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- Important to situate the actors and their interests

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- Insiders - What can they bring to the evaluation table?
- On the positive side...
 - Deep knowledge of project implementation
 - Local knowledge (community)
 - A forward perspective - a stake in the future

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- **Insiders** - What can they bring to the evaluation table?
- On the LESS positive side...
 - A singular or narrow perspective
 - A vested interest
 - Their position of power (over)

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- **Outsiders** - What can they bring to the evaluation table?
- On the positive side...
 - Curiosity from an independent vantage point
 - A perspective, uncluttered by project detail
"can see the forest not just the trees"
 - An ability to facilitate an evaluation - to encourage dialogue, to challenge, to mediate

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- **Outsiders** - What can they bring to the evaluation table?
- On the LESS positive side...
 - They don't (or can't) really understand the project and its context
 - They bring their outside ideas in too strong and make inappropriate assumptions

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- **A Joint Team** - a balancing act...
 - Disinterest - Vested Interest
 - Distance - Closeness
 - General - Particular

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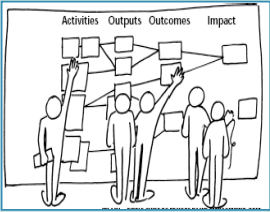
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- **Request for Proposal (RFP)**
- **Proposal should cover:**
 - Understanding of assignment
 - Person/team experience
 - Preferred approach to evaluation
 - Proposed method, by phase
 - Level of effort and timeframe
 - Budget
 - References/samples

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- **Behind most projects is a logic model**
 - Important to know
 - Who created it and how
 - How much people use it
 - Tension - how much to follow the logic model and its indicators?



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- 15 Years of logic models - lots of "gut" reaction from users

What's yours?

A Progression of Results - Typical Terms

Ultimate Outcomes	Conditions - Social Economic Civic Cultural Environmental
Intermediate Outcomes	Performance Improved - Institutional behaviour changes End-user benefits Larger scale policy and programming shifts Social mobilization
Immediate Outcomes	Capacities Developed - Institutional exchanges/collaborations Applied knowledge Functioning spaces/infrastructure System improvements/adaptations New/Improved leadership Aligned decision-making
Outputs	What we Produce - Networks Courses Trained participants Assessments Publications Infrastructure
Activities	What we Do - Research Build Train/Mentor Promote Counsel Procure Convene
Inputs	What we Need - Staff Equipment Supplies Office Space Services

- Deciding to evaluate
- Building a team
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- When building a logic model, pay attention to the following:
 - Time
 - Outputs - immediate,
 - Short and Medium Term Outcomes – by the end
 - Ultimate Outcomes – beyond
 - Control-Influence
 - Outputs - control,
 - Short and Medium Term Outcomes – less control but still direct influence
 - Ultimate Outcomes – Indirect influence
 - Spread effect
 - Outwards, like a ripple in a pond

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- Evaluation Team Orientation
 - Clarify purpose of the Evaluation
 - Get a sense of the overall project (logic model)
 - Generate stakeholder questions
 - Explore possible inquiry methods, sources, timeframes
 - Sampling



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- Conventional Methods - surveys, interviews, focus groups, observation, document reviews, counts, etc.

4. Sometimes the impetus for change comes from outside the organization (i.e. Board of Directors, donors or partners), and sometimes it comes from within (i.e. Secretary General, Management Committee or senior managers). From where does the impetus for change at IDEA come?

The source is mostly or exclusively external

The source is mostly or exclusively internal

External and internal sources are driving the change in equal measure

The source is transactional (for example)

The source is mostly or exclusively internal

5. What messages are you hearing about the need to adjust the way IDEA plans and manages its activities?

6. How do you judge the level of clarity in the messaging about the changes in planning and management practice that IDEA is pursuing?


None

Fair

Good

Excellent


Please explain your choice



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- Participatory Reflection and Action Methods - mapping, ranking exercises, calendars, walks, historical profiles



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- **Mapping Processes**
 - Summary of what happened
 - Rating of
 - Interest/Relevance
 - Clarity/Understanding



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- **Exploring issues or tensions**
 - Current state
 - Preferred future



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- **Mapping neighbourhoods / communities**
 - Showing before and after differences
 - Land use
 - Housing
 - Community infrastructure and services
 - Boundaries and contested areas



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- **Mapping Relationships & Power Dynamics**
 - Showing before and after differences
 - Buttons
 - Size
 - Colour/Shape
 - Spatial patterns



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- **Whatever the kind of mapping; there is a standard line of inquiry**
 - Focus the inquiry around a key question
 - Start with 'facts'
 - Surface the feelings about the facts
 - Analyse/Interpret with reference to
 - expectations
 - previous patterns
 - other similar situations
 - Make decisions/recommendations

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- **Bringing Stakeholders Together**
 - Using the evaluation as a means to build bridges, explore new possibilities



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- Sense-making without reliance on a logic model and indicators
 - Inductive research
 - Appreciative Inquiry
 - **Most Significant Change**



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Data Collection


What methods have worked for you in the past?

- Describe a moment when you felt like you were getting very good information
- What were you doing to make this so?

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- Evaluation can generate lots of data, simply because of the
 - number of people acting evaluators
 - and variety of different encounters that might take place in the course of a day



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- When in teams, regular debriefs are essential
 - Informal and relaxed, but facilitated to ensure each evaluator has their turn
 - Project logic model, key evaluation questions a helpful organizing tool



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- Daily debriefs...
 - An opportunity to...
 - Identify information/learning gaps
 - Conflicting or contradictory information
 - Unanswered questions
 - Unheard perspectives
 - Allocate information gathering tasks
 - Places to go
 - People to see
 - Areas of inquiry to pursue

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- Reporting back preliminary findings...
 - An obligation to share findings with those who engage with the evaluation
 - Community
 - Project Team
 - Project as a Whole
 - Organization
 - Important to place emphasis on findings that are relevant at each level
 - Idea is to validate and/or elaborate on insights generated to date



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- Agree up front on audience and uses
 - A draft Table of Contents helps
- When preparing the report
 - Break into sections that match the different areas of inquiry
 - In each, separate:
 - What key questions are being addressed
 - What you observed
 - Your analysis and conclusions
 - Recommendations
- Writing the evaluation report is MUCH EASIER when the person/team has validated data in hand

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My five “take aways”

1. Evaluation “process” is as important as the “content”
2. Project “beneficiaries” are “actors” not “subjects”
3. Evaluators can be insiders or outsiders, or both
 - Outside evaluators are facilitators or catalysts who share, rather than hold power
 - Insider evaluators know the project well

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My five “take aways”

4. Inquiry methodology must be respectful of different ways of knowing and cognizant of power dynamics
5. Findings and conclusions need validation - those who participate in the inquiry should be included in the analysis

Throughout, be mindful of the ethical code that should guide evaluators – see Canadian Evaluation Society
<http://www.evaluationcanada.ca/site.cgi?section=5&ssection=4&lang=en>

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Discussion...

- Each take a minute to write down 3 key ideas that you would take into your next evaluation
- Share at the table
- Prepare for a short plenary discussion

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Key Resources

- The Canadian Evaluation Society <http://www.evaluationcanada.ca>
 - Alberta Chapter - <http://ab.evaluationcanada.ca>
- Better Evaluation - <http://betterevaluation.org>
- Michael Quinn Patton – Utilization Focused Evaluation 4th Ed. <http://www.sagepub.com/books/Book229324>
- Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln – Fourth Generation Evaluation
<http://www.amazon.com/Fourth-Generation-Evaluation-Egon-Guba/dp/0803932359>

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