Thinking Evaluatively, Acting Evaluatively
and Searching for Impact:
How far do you want to go?

MESI: March 7, 2013
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For Conference Distribution

Program Evaluation: Definition

• The systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to
• make judgments about the program
• improve program effectiveness and/or
• make informed decisions about future programming

• **Utilization Focused Evaluation (UFE)** is evaluation done for and with specific, intended primary users for specific, intended use.

...But we’re not talking about Evaluation

• ‘Thinking Evaluatively’ ~ How does this work?
• ‘Acting Evaluatively’ ~ Take time to reflect
• Preparing for ‘Impact’ ~ Pulling it together

This session will walk through three practices that make it easier to evaluate ... when the time comes...

Simply Thinking Evaluatively

1. The Problem: Is this a project worth doing / problem worth solving? ... Problem Description / Evidence
2. Who cares and why? ... Stakeholder Analysis
3. Can it be solved in more than one way? ... Options
4. What resources will it take? ... Action Oriented Strategy Mapping
5. What is it ‘worth’ if the problem is solved?
   ... Cost Benefit ... ... Private vs. Public Value ...
6. How will we know if we are making a difference?
   ...Vision of Success... ...Evaluation: Attribution vs. Contribution ...

...Simple Easy ... Thinking Evaluatively Evaluation
Step 1: Problem Description:
Questions to Consider

- What is the situation?
- What is the problem? → Problem Description
- What evidence exists to verify that this as a problem
- Why is it important that this problem be (re)solved?
- Why is it emerging at this time?
- What is the potential to harm / the potential to heal?
- Is this problem solvable?

A lack of evidence may lead you to define a research question:
- – we need to better understand … so we can prevent/preserve/protect/defend...

Characteristics of a “Good Problem”

Boundaries ... what’s in and what’s out?

Solvable ... is the problem actionable and in principle (re)solvable?

Worth solving ... is there something important to gain by (re)solving the problem?

Evidence!
...
Step 2: Who Cares?
Stakeholder Analysis

• Stakeholders are individuals, groups, or organizations that have a ‘stake’ in the problem – they are affected by the problem, have partial responsibility to act, or control key resources.

• How-To Guide for constructing a Power vs. Interest Grid:
  • List Stakeholders
  • Place them on the Power vs. Interest Grid
  • Use arrows to identify the direction of influence

* Eden and Ackermann 1998
Base of Power Direction of Interest

Source: Adapted from Bryson (2011)

Step 3: Generate Alternatives

- **What approach(s) might lead to resolution or improvement?** ...
  - Options
  - Risks
  - Dependencies
  - Scope of Influence / Reach
- **Identify criteria that will differentiate alternatives**
- **Recommended Solution** ... may be combination
Examples: Risks and Uncertainty

- Economic Volatility
- Political Stability
- Safety / Security / Corruption / Health
- Reputation
- Unintended Consequences
- Cultural Norms / Human Rights

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Generate Alternatives

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Step 4: What Will it Take?
Action Oriented Strategy Mapping

1. What do you want to do?

2. How would you do that?

3. Why would you want to do that?


Step 5: What is it Worth?

• Qualitative & Quantitative Measures
• Cost Benefit Analysis
• Private Benefits
• Public Value

• Public Value is the value that is created for those that are not direct beneficiaries of a program. It is the spill over benefit that is available to the public as a result of the program*. In this context, we are looking for the public value of nonprofit programs.

Public Value of Public Programs: Adapted from Materials presented by Laura Kalambokidis, U of MN Extension
Private Benefit vs. Public Value

• What are the private benefits to
  • Funder
  • Grantee
  • Beneficiary

• What is the value to the public
  • Those who are not direct beneficiaries
  • Community

Public Value Message:

• When you support ________ program,
• Participants will ___________ (change)
• Which leads to ____________ (outcomes)
• Which will benefit other community members by
  _______________ (public value / impact)

Public Value of Public Programs:
Materials presented by Laura Kalambokidis, U of MN Extension
Step 6: How Will We Know ...

- If we are making a difference?
- If the vision of success is being realized
- If the costs provide enough benefit?
- Is the success of the program attributable to our contribution?
- If not, what difference has our contribution made?

OK – This might require some evaluation....

Acting Evaluatively ... “The Air”

- What are we learning?
- What are we missing?
- What are the unanticipated outcomes / issues?
- What would we do different in the future?
- What should we change right now?
- Who else is doing something similar / same?
- Who else would benefit from our learning?

Acting Evaluatively is an Iterative and Reflective Process:
Budget and Plan Accordingly

Who is the “we”? 
Building a Framework to Assess Impact:
Clarity of the Opportunity / Problem and Contribution of the intended Result / Solution

Write your impact story!

- **Situation Analysis**: Describe the issue and why it is emerging at this time.
- **Evidence of the Issue**: Share the evidence and why it is a problem worth solving.
- **Description**: Describe how your *concept or project* will address the situation.
- **Evidence of the Solution**: What evidence do you have that this concept will bring promising results?
- **Organization**: Tell us about your organization, why it is in a good position to do this work - and other organizations are you dependent on to be successful.
- **Risks**: Describe any complicating factors and risks that may cause disruption to the program, your organization, or the beneficiaries.
- **Success**: Describe your vision of success.
- **Story**: Tell us a story about a person or group that characterizes the impact.

References

Resources

- Center for Effective Philanthropy
- MESI: Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute
  - http://evaluation.umn.edu/
  - Spring Conference March 6-8, 2013
- U of M Building Extension’s Public Value
  - http://blog.lib.umn.edu/kalam002/publicvalue/
- Stakeholder Analysis & Action Oriented Strategy Mapping Classes
  - U of M HHH May Sessions and The Evaluator’s Institute
- Transforming Public Policy course
  - HHH School of Public Affairs PA8001