Research-based Approach

• Original follow-up study of the use of 20 federal health evaluations
• 40 years of research on use
INFLUENTIAL EVALUATIONS
Evaluations that Improved Performance and Impacts of Development Programs
Designing Useful Evaluations: Lessons Learned

Encouraging utilization
The following factors increase the likelihood that an evaluation will help enhance the performance and impacts of development policies, programs and projects:

- The importance of a conducive policy environment. The findings of the evaluation are much more likely to be used if they address current policy concerns and if there is a commitment of key decision-makers to accept the political consequences of implementing the findings.
- The timing of the evaluation. The evaluation should be launched when decision-makers have clearly defined information needs. The findings must be delivered in time to affect decisions, and key results must often be communicated informally before the final report is completed.
- The role of the evaluation. The evaluation is rarely the only, or even the most important source of information or influence for policy makers and managers. A successful evaluation must adapt to the context within which it will be used, and the evaluator must understand when and how the findings can most effectively be used.
- Building a relationship with the client and effective communication of the evaluation findings. It is essential to establish a good relationship with key stakeholders, listen carefully to their needs, understand their perception of the political context and keep them informed of the progress of the evaluation. There should be “no surprises” when the evaluation findings are presented.
Utilization-Focused Evaluation (U-FE)

A decision-making framework for enhancing the utility and actual use of evaluations.
U-FE begins with the premise that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use. Therefore, evaluators should facilitate the evaluation process and design any evaluation with careful consideration of how everything that will be done, from beginning to end, will affect use.
USE

• Take use seriously by evaluating use, the source of our own accountability and ongoing learning/professional development
• Different from dissemination
• Different from producing reports
• Groundwork laid and expectations set at the beginning
• Doesn’t happen naturally or automatically
In the beginning...
U-FE Checklist

Step 1  Assess and build program and organizational readiness for utilization-focused evaluation.

Step 2  Assess and enhance evaluator readiness and competence to undertake a utilization-focused evaluation.
SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

There's good news and bad news...
SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DEVIL
THE FAILURE OF HUMANITY IN RWANDA

"EXTRAORDINARY, WRENCHING LYRIC POWER." — MONTREAL GAZETTE
“I can honestly say that not a day goes by when we don’t use those evaluations in one way or another.”
U-FE Checklist

Step 1  Assess and build program and organizational readiness for utilization-focused evaluation.

Step 2  Assess and enhance evaluator readiness and competence to undertake a utilization-focused evaluation.
Exercise

Good idea that didn’t work out in practice and how you came to know that it didn’t work out.
Laying the foundation for use:

Situation analysis and setting the stage
The first step in *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* is **situation analysis**: assessing the readiness of a program, project or organization to commit to and undertake using evaluation.
Step 1
Assess and Build Program and Organizational Readiness for Evaluation
Formally launching the evaluation:

Exercises to help assess and build readiness for evaluation –

and get the process started
Menu of Exercises to Assess and Facilitate Stakeholder and Program Readiness for Utilization-Focused Evaluation

1. **Baseline assessment of evaluation use:**
   How are data currently collected being used? How have past evaluations been used?

   • **Situation for which this exercise is particularly appropriate:**
     • Organizations already engaged in some evaluation and/or ongoing data collection.
Menu of Exercises to Assess and Facilitate Stakeholder and Program Readiness for Utilization-Focused Evaluation

2. **Baseline associations with and perceptions of evaluation:**

“What comes to mind when you see the word EVALUATE?”

- Use with a group of stakeholders brought together to launch a new evaluation effort; surfaces the “baggage” that people bring to the new initiative from past experiences.
Menu of Exercises to Assess and Facilitate Stakeholder and Program Readiness for Utilization-Focused Evaluation

3. Create a positive vision for evaluation:

If evaluation was really useful and actually used here, what would that look like?

- Use to help a group move from evaluation anxiety and resistance to focus on the potential benefits of evaluation. Creates readiness for evaluation by focusing on use and creating a shared group understanding of and commitment to use the evaluation.
4. Assess incentives for and barriers to reality testing and evaluation use in their own program culture.

Once a group has a general sense of evaluation’s potential utility, this exercise takes the next step of getting concrete about what will need to occur with this program context to make evaluation useful.
5. *Engender commitment to reality-testing*: Are you willing to take a close look at whether what you think is happening in this program is actually happening, and whether what you hope it is accomplishing is actually being accomplished?

These questions are useful at the moment of commitment after some basic groundwork has been laid. These questions implicitly ask those involved: *Are you ready to get serious?*
“Just to be on the safe side, let’s look into evaluation models that don’t involve working with people.”
Baseline Question

How would you describe your current organization’s level of evaluation use?

1. High evaluation use: Regularly and visibly uses evaluation findings to inform decisions

2. Moderate evaluation use: Occasionally uses some evaluation findings to inform some decisions.

3. Low use: Seldom or never uses evaluation findings to inform decisions
Baseline question # 2

To what extent are you doing the things you know you should be doing in your personal life based on what you know? How would you describe yourself personally?

1. High information user – my behavior matches my knowledge
2. Moderate information user – much of my behavior matches my knowledge, but I have some major lapses.
3. Low information user – My behavior often falls short of what I know I should be doing.
"When I grow up, I want to be"...

"... a results-oriented cowboy."

"... an evidence-based fire fighter."

"... a performance-monitoring, accountability-driven movie star."
Behold the "STAKE-HOLDER"!
Evaluation and Research: Same or different? And why?
Foundational Premise:

✓ Research and evaluation are different
- and therefore...
Foundational Premise:

✓ Research and evaluation are different
  – and therefore…

✓ Evaluated by different standards.
Evaluation Standards

- Utility – ensure relevance & use
- Feasibility – realistic, prudent, diplomatic & frugal
- Propriety – ethical, legal, respectful
- Accuracy – technically adequate to determine merit or worth
- Accountability -- metaevaluation

For the full list of Standards:
www.wmich.edu/evalctr/checklists/standardschecklist.htm
Evaluation Models

U-FE is one among many....
Here's this week's new-and-improved evaluation system.

Can you find the double entendre?
Example

Caribbean Agricultural Extension Project

U.S. AID
European Development Bank
Caribbean Development Bank
University of the West Indies
Big Ten Universities (MUCIA)
CARDI
Overview

• 10 year project in 3 phases
• Phase 1, January 1980 to December 1982
• Mid-term and end-of-phase evaluations planned and budgeted
• 10 Caribbean countries
Utilization Question

When will evaluation results be needed to contribute to the summative decision about whether to fund Phase 2?

When do you think?
When will evaluation results be needed to contribute to the summative decision about whether to fund Phase 2?

State Department budget to Congress

✓ Caribbean Budget to State Department
✓ Barbados Regional Office to Wash DC and Caribbean Region Office
✓ Agriculture program to Caribbean
Evaluation Questions

• Are outstanding extension agents making a significant contribution to improved farming for small farmers?

   Answer “no”: End project

   Answer “yes”: Consider next question…

• If so, is it worth training more such agricultural extension agents?
An ancient example

• Group exercise:

What lessons about making evaluation useful do you extract from this example?
Goal of U-FE

Intended Use
by
Intended Users
Intended Evaluation Users

From…
Audiences to…
Stakeholders to…
Primary Intended Users

Connotative differences?
Personal Factor
Critical success factors:

There are five key variables that are absolutely critical in evaluation use. They are, in order of importance:

- People
  - People
  - People
  - People
  » PEOPLE
Identify and Involve

Primary Intended Users
Intended Use
by
Intended Users
-----------------
Facilitating
Intended Use Options
Different Evaluation Purposes

• **For making judgments**
  Commonly called *summative evaluations*:

• **For improving programs**
  Commonly called *formative evaluations*

• **For ongoing development**
  Sometimes called *developmental evaluations*
Lessons Learned Purpose

• Knowledge building
  Meta-evaluation, lessons learned, effective practices
Additional purpose distinctions

• **Accountability**

• **Monitoring (M & E)**
We're sure this evaluation will completely meet ALL the information needs of absolutely EVERYONE.

Would you buy a used car from this evaluator?
Tensions

Different intended uses serve different purposes and, typically,
different intended users.

Thus the need to **FOCUS**
and manage tensions
between and among
different purposes.
Balancing Different Purposes
Premises of Utilization Focused Evaluation

• No evaluation should go forward unless and until there are primary intended users who will use the information that can be produced
• Primary intended users are involved in the process
• Evaluation is part of initial program design - The primary intended users want information to help answer a question or questions.
• Evaluator’s role is to help intended users clarify their purpose and objectives.
• Make implications for use part of every decision throughout the evaluation – the driving force of the evaluation process.
Important trend

• Capacity-building:

Evaluation capacity-building as a priority to support use
Basic evaluation literacy

- Know the evaluation standards
- Know how to apply the standards in the actual conduct of evaluations
- Understand different potential uses and their implications methodologically and procedurally
- Understand how to identify and work with primary intended users
- Have evaluators with essential skills
Process Use

Process use refers to and is indicated by individual changes in thinking and behavior, and program or organizational changes in procedures and culture, that occur among those involved in evaluation as a result of the learning that occurs during the evaluation process. Evidence of process use is represented by the following kind of statement after an evaluation: "The impact on our program came not so much from the findings but from going through the thinking process that the evaluation required."
Process Uses

• Enhancing shared understandings
• Focusing programs: What gets measured gets done
• Supporting and reinforcing the program intervention, e.g., feedback for learning
• Capacity-building for those involved, deepening evaluative thinking
• Program and organizational development, e.g., evaluability assessments
New Direction

Infusing *evaluative thinking* as a primary type of process use.

Capacity-building as an evaluation focus of *process use*.
Do you have anything to declare?

Yes. Evaluation is a way of thinking.

They're only looking for findings.
Some premises:

- Evaluation is part of initial program design, including conceptualizing the theory of change.
- Evaluator’s role is to help users clarify their purpose, hoped-for results, and change model.
- Evaluators can/should offer conceptual and methodological options.
- Evaluators can help by questioning assumptions.
- Evaluators can play a key role in facilitating evaluative thinking all along the way.
Utilization-Focused

Methods Decisions
STEP 10

Negotiate Appropriate Methods to Generate Credible Findings That Support Intended Use by Intended Users
Involving primary intended users in methods decisions

• The myth that methods decisions are primarily technical
• Balancing utility and accuracy
• Attending to situational and purpose-based credibility
Examples of methods options

- Data collection options
- Odd-even questionnaire items
- Sampling options
- Definitional issues
- Dosage issues
- Cohort designs
The Challenge:

Matching the evaluation design to the evaluation’s purpose, resources, and timeline to optimize use.
No Perfect Designs:
The Art of Making Methods Decisions

Lee J. Cronbach (1982), an evaluation pioneer and author of several major books on measurement and evaluation, directed the Stanford Evaluation Consortium and was president of the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the Psychometric Society. He observed that designing an evaluation is as much art as science: “Developing an evaluation is an exercise of the dramatic imagination” (p. 239).

This perspective can help nonresearchers feel that they have something important to contribute. It can also, hopefully, open the evaluator to hearing their contributions and facilitating their “dramatic imaginations.” The art of evaluation involves creating a design that is appropriate for a specific situation and particular action or policy-making context. In art there is no single, ideal standard. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and the evaluation beholders include decision makers, policymakers, program managers, practitioners, participants, and the general public. Thus, any given design is necessarily an interplay of resources, possibilities, creativity, and personal judgments by the people involved. As Cronbach concluded,

There is no single best plan for an evaluation, not even for an inquiry into a particular program, at a particular time, with a particular budget. (p. 231)
Shaping of an issue over time

The morphing of the paradigms debate (qualitative vs quantitative) into the Gold Standard debate (randomized control trials as the alleged "gold standard" for impact evaluation)
GOLD STANDARD:

METHODOLOGICAL
APPROPRIATENESS

not

Methodological
orthodoxy or rigidity
• No single design or method is universally “strongest”

• Multiple ways of establishing causality

• Dangerous to privilege one method, creates perverse incentives
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1.</th>
<th>Assess and build program and organizational readiness for utilization-focused evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 2.</td>
<td>Assess and enhance evaluator readiness and competence to undertake a utilization-focused evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3.</td>
<td>Identify, organize, and engage primary intended users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4.</td>
<td>Situation analysis conducted jointly with primary intended users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5.</td>
<td>Identify and prioritize primary intended uses by determining priority purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 6.</td>
<td>Consider and build in process uses if and as appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 7.</td>
<td>Focus priority evaluation questions</td>
</tr>
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<td>Step 8.</td>
<td>Check that fundamental areas for evaluation inquiry are being adequately addressed</td>
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<td>Step 9.</td>
<td>Determine what intervention model or theory of change is being evaluated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 10.</td>
<td>Negotiate appropriate methods to generate credible findings that support intended use by intended users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 11.</td>
<td>Make sure intended users understand potential methods controversies and their implications</td>
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<td>Step 12.</td>
<td>Simulate use of findings</td>
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<td>Step 13.</td>
<td>Gather data with ongoing attention to use</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 14.</td>
<td>Organize and present the data for interpretation and use by primary intended users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 15.</td>
<td>Prepare an evaluation report to facilitate use and disseminate significant findings to expand influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 16.</td>
<td>Follow up with primary intended users to facilitate and enhance use</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 17.</td>
<td>Metaevaluation of use: Be accountable, learn, and improve</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
In Roman mythology, Janus is the god of gates, doors, beginnings, endings, and time. The month of January is named in his honor. He is depicted classically with two faces looking in opposite directions. One looks back at the past year while the other looks forward to the new, simultaneously peering into the future and the past.
The challenge I faced in writing this book was not in looking simultaneously backwards and forward, but rather in portraying utilization-focused evaluation as a series of sequential steps while also capturing the complex nature of the utilization-focused process as non-linear, interactive and dynamic.
1. Assess organizational and evaluator readiness
2. 
3. Engage primary intended users (ongoing)
4. Situation analysis (ongoing)
5. Focus intended findings uses
6. Focus intended process uses
7. Prioritize evaluation questions
8. Check that fundamental issues are sufficiently addressed: goal attainment, implementation, comparisons, attribution
9. Theory of change work
10. Negotiate methods
11. Methods debates
12. Simulate use of findings.
13. Gather data with ongoing attention to use.
14. Data presented for user engagement
15. Report produced
16. Follow up with users to facilitate use
17. Utilization-Focused Metaevaluation
The Challenge:

Matching the evaluation design to the evaluation’s purpose, resources, and timeline to optimize use.
## EXHIBIT 13.3
Three Presentations of the Same Data

Presentation 1: Raw results presented in the same order as items appeared in the survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressed Needs of 478 Physically Disabled People</th>
<th>Great Need for This (Percent)</th>
<th>Much Need (Percent)</th>
<th>Some Need (Percent)</th>
<th>Little Need (Percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational opportunities</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical care</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment opportunities</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public understanding</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architectural changes</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct financial aid</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in insurance regulations</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social opportunities</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Presentation 2: Results combined into two categories. No priorities emerge.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Great or Much Need (Percent)</th>
<th>Some or Little Need (Percent)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>Employment opportunities</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public understanding</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architectural changes in buildings</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct financial assistance</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in insurance regulations</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social opportunities</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank Order</td>
<td>Great Need for This (Percent)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>----------------------------------------</td>
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Leaders as Primary Intended Users

Reality-Testing, Results-Oriented, Learning-Focused Leadership
Evaluation Leadership Functions

1. Create and nurture a results-oriented, reality-testing culture.

2. Lead in deciding what outcomes to commit to and hold yourselves accountable for.

3. Make measurement of outcomes thoughtful, meaningful and credible.

4. Use the results -- and model for others serious use of results.
Summary Lessons on Useful Evaluation

• Clearly identify primary intended users
• Clearly identify primary intended uses
  Goal: Intended use by intended users
• Negotiate FOCUS -- get agreement on criteria
• Establish a clear ACTION framework
• Distinguish empirical questions from value questions
• Select methods appropriate to the question
• Facilitate actual use of the findings
When I grow up, I’m going to stop evaluating everything.
References
