Evaluability Assessment
Basics and Benefits

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Statement of Use

Some of the material presented in this workshop is adapted from our book, *Evaluability Assessment: Improving Evaluation Quality and Use.*

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Learning Outcomes

Participants will learn:

- Current theory and uses of evaluability assessment (EA).
- How to implement an EA.
- How EA can support culturally responsive evaluation, address program complexity, and build evaluation capacity.
Introductions and Workshop Goals

Think-Pair-Share
Background
Joseph Wholey
Evaluation: Promise and Performance (1979)
Leonard Rutman
Midge Smith
Wilfreda Thurston & Louise Potvin

## Purpose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1970s</th>
<th>Current</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Primary:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine a program’s</td>
<td>Determine the plausibility of a program to achieve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>readiness for</td>
<td>intended outcomes as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outcome/impact</td>
<td>currently conceived and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evaluation</td>
<td>implemented</td>
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## Purpose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1970s</th>
<th>Current</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Secondary:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make recommendations</td>
<td>Make recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for outcome evaluation</td>
<td>for further evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>design</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
## Timing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1970s</th>
<th>Current</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-evaluation activity</td>
<td>Any point in a program’s lifecycle</td>
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</table>
## Evaluation Uses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1970s</th>
<th>Current</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Precursor to summative evaluation</td>
<td>Program development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formative evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developmental evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Precursor to summative evaluation</td>
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## Additional Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1970s</th>
<th>Current</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not identified</td>
<td>Supporting culturally responsive evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Addressing program complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building evaluation capacity</td>
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Resurgence
International Development Evaluation
United Nations
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Canadian Evaluation Society
American Evaluation Association
Michael Trevisan & Tamara Walser
Our Definition
(2015, p. 14)
The systematic investigation of program characteristics, context, activities, processes, implementation, outcomes, and logic to determine...

- The extent to which the theory of how the program is intended to work aligns with the program as it is implemented and perceived in the field;
- The plausibility that the program will yield positive results as currently conceived and implemented; and
- The feasibility of and best approaches for further evaluation of the program.
Our Definition

(2015, p. 14)

The systematic investigation of program characteristics, context, activities, processes, implementation, outcomes, and logic to determine...

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- The **plausibility** that the program will yield positive results as currently conceived and implemented; and

- The feasibility of and best approaches for **further evaluation** of the program.
Our Model

- Focusing the Evaluability Assessment
- Developing an Initial Program Theory
- Gathering Feedback on Program Theory
- Using the Evaluability Assessment
Workshop Format
For Each Model Component

Walk through each component with:
- Guiding Questions
- Examples

Apply knowledge and skills through:
- Small Group Activities
- Case Scenarios
Federal School Improvement Initiative
(Fleischman & McNeil, 2015, pp. 79-84)
Background:

Contract evaluation with Windwalker Corporation

New program, a collaboration between community-based organizations and schools
Purpose:

Determine the feasibility of conducting formative evaluation and to gather information needed for evaluation planning, including documenting the work and diverse contexts of recently launched project sites.
Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports
(Reedy & Lacireno-Paquet, 2015, pp. 99-101; Lacireno-Paquet & Reedy, 2015, pp 119-122)
Background:
Contract evaluation with WestEd
Statewide initiative of the Kansas State Department of Education
Purpose:
Inform the development and implementation of the Multi-Tier System of Supports formative and summative evaluation framework
Case Scenarios

Nutrition Program

Respite Care Program

School Counseling Program
Ongoing Reflection

Chalk Talk Activity

- How can EA support culturally responsive evaluation?
- How can EA address program complexity?
- How can EA build evaluation capacity?
How Can EA Support Culturally Responsive Evaluation?
Culturally Responsive Evaluation

Definition
Being aware of and intentionally responsive to diversity of contexts, cultures, and stakeholders throughout the evaluation process.
Culturally Responsive Evaluation

For culturally responsive evaluation, the term *culture* broadly encompasses social, cultural, historical, economic, and political contexts; as well as dimensions of race, ethnicity, language, gender, age, disability, religion, and sexual orientation (SenGupta, Hopson, & Thompson-Robinson, 2004, p. 5).
Culturally Responsive Evaluation

Strategies

- Reflect on your own cultural position (American Evaluation Association [AEA], 2011, p. 3).

- Engage program stakeholders in the evaluation process.
Strategies (continued)

- Understand program context, culture, and stakeholders.

- Use evaluation theory, approaches, and methods that are appropriate given program culture and context (AEA, 2011).
How Can EA Address Program Complexity?
Program Complexity

Definition

- The program is constantly adapting, changing, evolving—relatively unstable.
- Program outcomes are influenced by a web of interactions, relationships, and feedback.
Definition (continued)

- Program involves multiple sites.
- Program context, culture, and stakeholders are diverse.
Program Complexity

Strategies

- Engage program stakeholders in the evaluation process.
- Include multiple perspectives.
Strategies (continued)

- Understand program context, culture, and stakeholders.

- Gather and use feedback.
How Can EA Build Evaluation Capacity?
Building Evaluation Capacity

Definition

Building the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of individuals and organizations to do and use evaluation.
Building Evaluation Capacity

Strategies

- Engage program stakeholders in the evaluation process.
- Provide evaluation resources.
Strategies (continued)

- Provide evaluation training and mentoring.
- Foster positive attitudes about evaluation.
- Disseminate and use evaluation findings.
The Basics of Implementing an EA
Is an internal or external EA evaluator needed?
Does the EA evaluator have the requisite set of skills?
Have commitments been secured?
Has the purpose of the EA been identified?

Primary Purpose

- Determine readiness for outcome or other evaluation
Secondary Purpose(s)

- Identify appropriate and feasible evaluation design
- Adjust program theory
- Identify areas for technical assistance
- Build evaluation capacity
- Understand program culture and context
- Increase stakeholder involvement
- Other?
What constitutes the program—scope and boundaries?
Has respect and protection of participants been dealt with?
What program stakeholder groups will be involved?

- The EA client
- Program staff
- EA work group
- Expert panel
- Technical advisory group
- Other?
Federal School Improvement Initiative
(Fleischman & McNeil, 2015, pp. 79-84)
Stakeholder Involvement

Evaluability assessment client

Program staff

Technical advisory group
Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports
(Reedy & Lacireno-Paquet, 2015, pp. 99-101; Lacireno-Paquet & Reedy, 2015, pp 119-122)
Stakeholder Involvement

Policy-level stakeholders

Program-level stakeholders

Practice-level stakeholders
Has effective communication, collegiality, and teamwork been established?
Focusing the EA

Small Group Activity
1. What program stakeholder groups would you engage in the EA process and how?

2. How might engaging them:
   – Support culturally responsive evaluation?
   – Address program complexity?
   – Build evaluation capacity?
developing an initial program theory
Could you provide us with a little more detail on step two?
Evaluation Trivia

Developing program theory as part of evaluation got its start with EA.
What degree of practitioner logic and research logic is needed to develop the program theory model?
Mother Goose Logic

You're right, after thinking it through, I'm not sure how the one leads to the other.
We have no idea what you're talking about.

Trust me, it's science.
What type of program theory model should be developed?
Simple Transactions: Simple Models
Simple Logic Model

Inputs

Resources used to implement the program—e.g., program staff, facilities, equipment, funding, curricula

Used to carry out the activities

Note: Descriptions of program inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes are based on *Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach*, by United Way of America (1996).
## Simple Logic Model

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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Services delivered by the program—what most people think of as the “program”

Intended to lead to outputs and outcomes

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Note: Descriptions of program inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes are based on *Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach*, by United Way of America (1996).
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Immediate “products” of the activities, often described as counts—e.g., number of participants who attended training

Intended to lead to outcomes

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Benefits of the program—changes in knowledge, skills, dispositions, or conditions

Can be categorized as initial to longer-term with initial leading to longer-term

Note: Descriptions of program inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes are based on *Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach*, by United Way of America (1996).
Complicated Transactions: Program Blueprints
Complex Transactions: Theory in Progress
Federal School Improvement Initiative
(Fleischman & McNeil, 2015, pp. 79-84)
Program Theory Model

Focus on practitioner logic through document review and interviews

Program framework for overall initiative, allowing for site-specific details
What documents will be reviewed to develop an initial program theory model?
What program stakeholder groups will be involved in developing an initial program theory?
Developing an Initial Program Theory

Small Group Activity
1. What type of program theory model would you initially develop and how would you represent it?

2. How might development of the model:
   – Support culturally responsive evaluation?
   – Address program complexity?
   – Build evaluation capacity?
Which type(s) of EA questions should be the focus when gathering feedback on program theory?
Types of EA Questions

Program Perspectives/Practitioner Logic

Program Context

Program Implementation

Research Logic

Methodological Scoping
Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports
(Reedy & Lacireno-Paquet, 2015, pp. 99-101; Lacireno-Paquet & Reedy, 2015, pp 119-122)
Types of EA Questions

Program perspectives

Program implementation

Methodological scoping
EA Q1. Was there a consistent/consensus definition of the initiative?

EA Q2. Did key leaders have a common understanding and vocabulary for talking about/describing the initiative?
**EA Q3.** Were data sources available to enable the evaluators to respond to the evaluation questions?

**EA Q4.** Did the logic model and theory of action for the initiative align with stakeholder perceptions of how the initiative was being conceptualized and implemented across the state?
What program stakeholder groups will be involved in gathering feedback on program theory?
What data collection methods will be used to gather feedback on program theory?
Data Collection Methods

Individual Interviews
Focus Group Interviews
Survey
Observation
Archival Data
Literature Review
Analyze, summarize, deliberate, answer EA questions, develop findings...
Our Definition
(Trevisan & Walser, 2015, p. 14)

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Findings
Alignment – Plausibility – Further Evaluation
Gathering Feedback on Program Theory

Small Group Activity
1. What types of EA questions would be the focus of data collection and why?

2. How might these types of questions:
   - Support culturally responsive evaluation?
   - Address program complexity?
   - Build evaluation capacity?
What are the EA conclusions regarding program evaluability?
What are the main EA recommendations?
If further evaluation is recommended, what suggestions can be provided based on EA results?
If program modification is recommended, what suggestions can be provided based on EA results?
What strategies for communicating and reporting results will support EA use?
What strategies will be used?

- Formal evaluation report(s)
- Formal presentation(s)
- Informal presentation(s)/discussion(s)
- Short report(s)/brief(s)
- Video
- Infographics
- Other?
Federal School Improvement Initiative
(Fleischman & McNeil, 2015, pp. 79-84)
Purpose:
Determine the feasibility of conducting formative evaluation and to gather information needed for evaluation planning, including documenting the work and diverse contexts of recently launched project sites.
Recommendations and Use

Conduct another EA after each project site has been fully operational for at least one year.

Gather data on student outcomes including achievement, attendance, and behavior.
Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports
(Reedy & Lacireno-Paquet, 2015, pp. 99-101; Lacireno-Paquet & Reedy, 2015, pp 119-122)
Purpose:
Inform the development and implementation of the Multi-Tier System of Supports formative and summative evaluation framework
Recommendations and Use

Move forward with implementing the formative-summative, multi-year evaluation framework.

Developed an evaluation framework (plan and design) informed by the EA findings.
Using the EA

Small Group Activity
1. What strategies for communicating and reporting EA results would you use and why?

2. How might these strategies:
   – Support culturally responsive evaluation?
   – Address program complexity?
   – Build evaluation capacity?
Ongoing Reflection

Chalk Talk Activity

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How Can EA Support Culturally Responsive Evaluation?

Chalk Talk Activity
How Can EA Address Program Complexity?

Chalk Talk Activity
How Can EA Build Evaluation Capacity?

Chalk Talk Activity
Final Questions and Wrap-up

Thank You!