Evaluation Expectations and Considerations:

Determining When, If and How to Work with an Evaluator

CENTER FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

RESEARCH AND SERVICES

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Welcome!

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Introductions:

- Name
- Community
- Which State grant?
- Primary role

As a courtesy to others:
- ✓ Please put phones on mute
- ✓ Please **do not** put us on hold!

Outline

Evaluation
- Purpose
- Types
- Steps of Evaluation
- Evaluation Data

Evaluators
- Roles
- Types of evaluators
- Considerations when choosing an evaluator
- How to find an evaluator
  - Hiring
  - Vetting

Working with Evaluators
- Considerations
- Cost Considerations
  - Minimizing evaluation costs on a tight budget

Resources

If you don't know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else.

- Yogi Berra

Evaluation fears…

I don't speak the evaluation language.

I am not a numbers person.

It will inhibit our innovative nature.

It means reading huge reports.

It will make my grantees anxious.

It will distract from the real work.

It will make me look bad.

Evaluation potential…

It provides data that helps to develop or refine efforts.

Success involves being open to feedback, and evaluation allows you to do this.

It does not have to be complicated.

Evaluation allows you to demonstrate effectiveness.
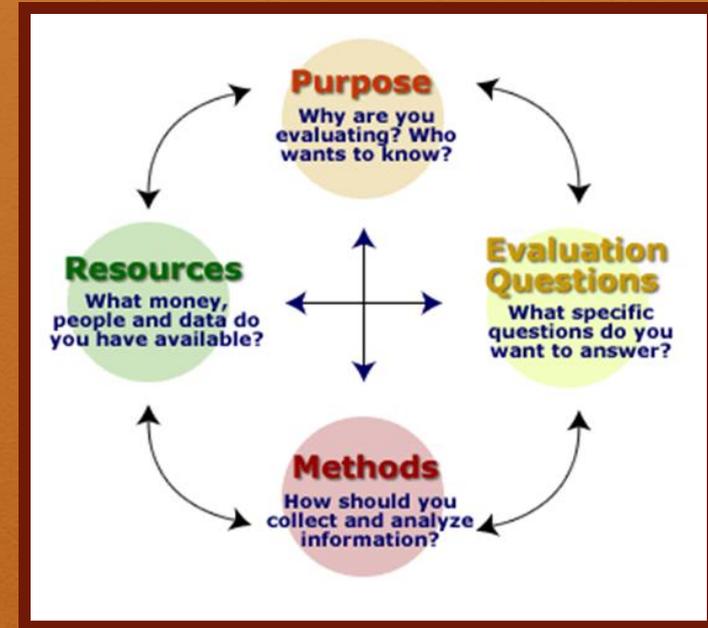
Evaluation: Purpose

Two fundamental questions:

- 1. What do you want to know?
- 2. Who will use that information, and how?

Evaluation should not be a stand alone activity, or done just at the end of the project

Purpose

- Learning, decision making and taking action
- Understand and increase the impact of your products/services
- Make product/service delivery more efficient and cost-productive
- Verify whether program is running as originally planned
- Produces data/results that can be used to promote/advertise your services

Case Study:

- Evaluating a school-based Alcohol Education Program
  - Objective: To educate school-aged children and young people about alcohol and its effects on the body; to promote responsible attitudes towards alcohol; to reduce the age at which drinking is initiated.

Evaluation: Types

Process Evaluation

- How the program is being implemented
  - Program fidelity
  - Help refine and improve the delivery/quality of the program
    - Program strengths and weaknesses
  - Help interpret outcome data

What aspects of the implementation process are facilitating success or acting as stumbling blocks?

To what extent does what is being implemented match the program as originally planned?

Outcome Evaluation

- Changes for people in response to the program
  - Magnitude and direction of change
  - Number of participants who have undergone change
  - Way to test if logic model is valid

What effect is the program having on its stakeholders or participants? (e.g., changes in knowledge, attitudes or behavior)

Impact Evaluation

- Long term/wide-reaching impact of the program

What effect is the program having on our long term goals?

Case Study ?

Evaluation: Steps

- 1. Clarification of program goals and identification of measures of success

- 2. Evaluation design and creation of data collection instruments

- 3. Staff training in evaluation and/or data collection

- 4. Data collection, analysis, and reporting of program *implementation*

- 5. Data collection, analysis, and reporting of program *outcomes*

- 6. Dissemination of program results and lessons

EVALUATION STAGES

| Identifying Measures of Success | Evaluation Design | Grantee Training | Implementation Analysis | Outcomes Analysis | Dissemination |

Evaluation: Data

Quantitative

- Counted, reported in numerical form
- Who, what, where and how much questions
- Useful for concrete phenomenon, can have standardized instruments

Qualitative

- Described in narrative format
- Case studies, observation, focus groups, key informant interviews
- May shed light on unanticipated outcomes, new ideas

Mixed Methods

- Allows you to measure the same phenomenon in different ways
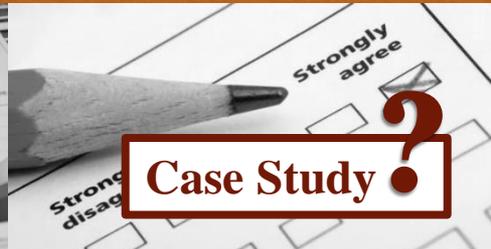- Allows to reach a wider audience (charts and narratives)

Case Study ❓

Roles of Evaluators

Functions
- Training
- Analyzing and Describing
- Interpreting
- Recommending

Roles
- Researcher: Collect and analyze data; report the facts.
- Judge: Are results positive or negative? What is their value?
- Auditor: Ensure compliance with a grant award.
- Program Planner: Specify program model and goals.
- Coach: Assist in understanding how to monitor progress and use results.
- Technical Assistance Provider: Develop management information system (MIS); Improve program or organizational processes.
- Facilitator: Surface hidden agendas, support reflection.

Types of Evaluators

- Internal
  - Formal: Built into organization
    - Example: Southcentral Foundation
  - Informal: Staff members do own evaluation work

- External
  - Evaluators outside the organization
    - Example: Alaska SPF SIG
  - May work alone or receive support from internal staff

- Combination
  - Internal Evaluator with external support

Case Study

Considerations When Choosing an Evaluator

Internal

External

Pros

Internal
- Comfort between evaluators and participants
- Contextual Knowledge
- Accessibility to the program
- Immediate access
- Evaluation costs are somewhat covered by staff salary

External
- Specialized Knowledge/Ability
- Objectivity
- Credibility
- Perspective
- Evaluation activities does not take away from program staffs' other roles

Cons

Internal
- Possible decreased objectivity
- Possible lack of expertise
- Limited time
- Split obligations

External
- Increased cost
- Possible agenda by evaluator
- Time
- Might not understand implementation issues in the community and create unrealistic evaluation plans

General rule: The more interest there is in your program by people outside your local environment, the more you will want to consider an outside evaluator

Finding an Evaluator
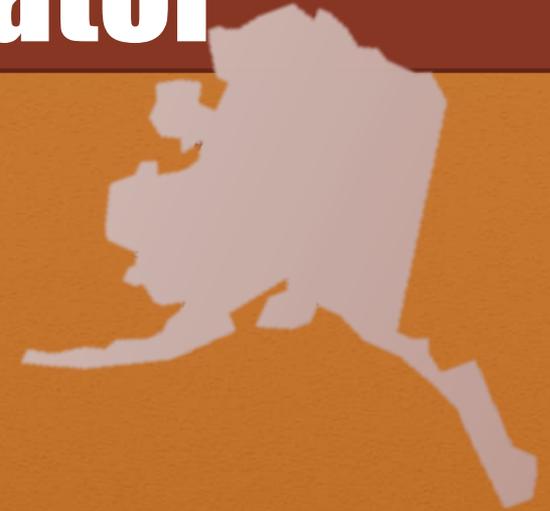
- Ask colleagues for referrals
- Research/consulting firms
- Local colleges/universities
- Evaluation Organizations/Online Databases
  - American Evaluation Association
    - www.eval.org
    - Find an evaluator, by state
  - Alaska Health Education Library Project (AHELP)
    - http://www.ahelp.org/People.aspx
    - "Search Rolodex", check "Program Evaluation" to find people with program evaluation skill sets

There is no current certification process of degree for evaluators

How to hire an evaluator

Steps for hiring an evaluator

- Formal Process
  - 1. Develop a statement of work
  - 2. Locate sources for evaluators
  - 3. Advertise and request applications
  - 4. Renew proposals and select an evaluator
- Informal Process

Information to discuss/Advertise
- ❑ Your agency's name and contact information
- ❑ Brief description of program to be evaluated
  - ❑ Program Objectives
  - ❑ Type of evaluation requested
  - ❑ Timeline
  - ❑ Budget
- ❑ Principal tasks of the evaluator.
- ❑ Requested evidence of expertise
- ❑ Whether an interview is required
- ❑ Deadline for response

Vetting an Evaluator

Questions to ask an evaluator

- Difference between research and evaluation?
- How do they understand your program?
- General evaluation approach?
- Can they conduct the evaluation with your specific funding?
- How do they handle supervision by the program director or evaluation committee?
- Prior program experience?
- Any current time/project commitment conflicts?

Questions for people who referred:

- Done on time?
- Stay in budget?
- Was the report useful?
- Would you hire the evaluator again?

Evaluators should ask questions regarding your program

QUESTION DOMAINS
Competencies
Approach and Style
Capacity

Considerations when working with an evaluator

Considerations

- Evaluator role
  - Should be a collaborative process
- Can the evaluator be involved in a full range of evaluation activities (research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation and dissemination?
- Willing to work with a national evaluation team (i.e. for some federal grants), if there is one?

During/After hiring

- Clarify roles of internal staff and external evaluator
  - Develop a formal contract
- Make frequent contact
- Familiarize the evaluator with the local project environment

Cost Considerations

General rule: It depends, but up to 20% of program budget

Specific costs

- Salary of program staff who will be involved in evaluation
- Payment of external evaluator
- Travel expenses
- Communication (postage, telephone, fax, etc.)
- Printing (surveys, reports)
- Supplies (software, computer, etc.)

Costs vary

- Complexity of program
- Number of sites
- Labor required for data collection, analysis, and reporting
- Scientific rigor
- Need for grantee capacity building
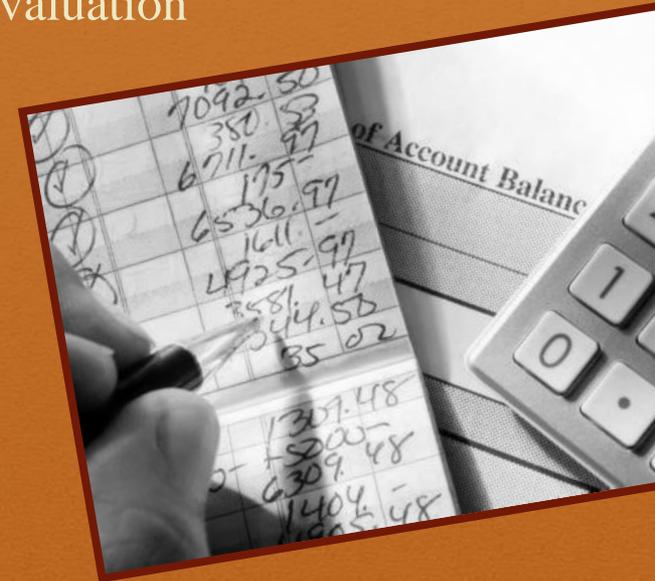
Example Spreadsheet

Evaluation Expenses	Estimated Cost
Will additional secretarial support, data entry services, graphic design services, transcribing, etc., be needed?	
Are there consultant fees for evaluation design, statistical analysis, telephone surveyors, data collection, etc.?	
What travel will be incurred for administration, data collection, participants, etc.? If you have one or more consultants, will their travel expenses be paid from the travel budget line or included in the consultant fee?	
What postage or other forms of mail services will be required for mailing of surveys, notices, invitations, etc.? Will express services be needed?	
What printing costs will be incurred as a part of the data collection process for surveys, interview guides, etc.? As part of report submission?	
Will you use telephones to collect data? Will long-distance charges be incurred? What are the charges per completed interview?	
What supplies will be needed? (CD-ROMs, notebooks, pencils)	
Are promotional materials (e.g., brochures, pamphlets) a product of the evaluation? Include graphics and printing charges.	
What specialized equipment is needed for scanning surveys, recording responses, random telephone dialing, etc. (e.g., tape recorders and tapes, computer software, laptop) Will they be purchased or rented?	
Are there costs for data storage, transmission or analysis?	
Are translation services required?	
Are there incentives for evaluation participants?	
Other:	
Other:	
Other:	
Other:	
Other:	
ESTIMATED TOTAL COSTS	

Cost Considerations

Ways to trim costs

- Prioritize evaluation questions
  - 'Need to know' versus 'want to know'
- Find inexpensive ways to gather data
  - Interview saturation
  - Archival databases
- Consider a shared evaluation with collaborating programs
- Work with evaluator to determine tasks that the program staff can take on
- Utilize volunteers or coalition members
- When possible, select someone in your geographical area
  - If not, need to account for travel expenses
- Obtain a grant for evaluation
- Utilize university graduate students for coursework/dissertation
- Evaluator at a university to provide services for a reduced rate in exchange for publishing a research article or fulfilling service requirements?

Case Study ?

Resources

- Practical Guide for Engaging Stakeholders in Developing Evaluation Questions:
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- CDC Evaluation Guide
  - Retrieved from: http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/programs/nhdsp_program/evaluation_guides/docs/evaluation_plan.pdf

- ICAP Toolkit: A Guide to Evaluating Prevention Programs
  - Retrieved from: http://www.icap.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=MFWINBPAuww%3D&tabid=437

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