Part 1: Program Evaluation: What is It?

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Definition

Program Evaluation

• Is an applied (vs. theoretical) research process
• Systematically collects, analyzes and interprets data
• Addresses activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs
• Is focused on what is valuable or important
Goal of Program Evaluation

To assist stakeholders in making data-informed judgments about a specific program’s:

• Effects
• Impact
• Value
How Does Evaluation Differ from Research?

- Research is an investigation that seeks to find out what is.
- *Evaluation* is an investigation into how, why, and to what extent valued objectives or goals are achieved.
- Evaluation is research that compares what *is* with what *should* be. *It makes a judgment against criteria, expectations, standards.*
- Evaluation is normative, while using objective methods.
“Value” in Evaluation Research

“...We must value something to find it significant enough to measure, to pluck it from the complexity of human social life, and to see it as a set of phenomena worthy of study.” Heather Douglas, *Facts, Values, and Objectivity*. https://www.academia.edu/3897904/Facts_Values_and_Objectivity
What is a Program?

• Structured, intentional, intervention to improve the well-being of people, groups, organizations, or communities
• General effort that mobilizes staff and resources toward some defined and funded goals
• Programs vary in size, scope, duration, clarity, and specificity of goals
What is a Program for?

Programs exist to create change.

- Changes are typically called “outcomes”
- Programs implement *activities* and *actions* called “outputs”
- The outputs of a program seek to produce outcomes (i.e., changes, results, effects.)

Program ➔ Outputs ➔ Outcomes
e.g. Program for Healthy Horses

Program ➔ Outputs ➔ Outcomes

Program goal: healthy horses

1. Program leads horses to water (output)
2. Horses drink water (outcome)
3. Horses thrive (impact)
Basic Purposes/Kinds of Evaluations

• **Formative evaluations** are evaluations whose primary purpose is to gather information that can be used to improve or strengthen the implementation of a program. Formative evaluations typically are conducted in the early- to mid-period of a program’s implementation.

• **Summative evaluations** are conducted near, or at, the end of a program or program cycle, and are intended to show whether or not the program has achieved its intended outcomes (i.e., intended effects on individuals, organizations, or communities) and to indicate the ultimate value, merit and worth of the program.
Basic Purposes/Kinds of Evaluations (cont.)

- **Process evaluations.** Typically, process evaluations seek data with which to understand what’s actually going on in a program (what the program actually *is* and *does*), and whether intended service recipients are receiving the services they need. Process evaluations are, as the name implies, about the *processes* involved in delivering the program.
Basic Purposes/Kinds of Evaluations (cont.)

- Impact evaluations gather and analyze data to show the ultimate, often broader range, and longer lasting, effects of a program. An impact evaluation determines the causal effects of the program. This involves trying to measure if the program has achieved its intended, longer-term outcomes.
Typical Evaluation Methods and Tools

- Surveys and questionnaires
- Interviews (Individual and Focus Group)
- Observations
- Review of existing data/records
- Collection and statistical analysis of quantitative data
Evaluation Design

Quantitative Methods (numbers, scores, etc.):

Non-experimental design:
Pre- and post-test, (“a single group interrupted time series”)
(Observation → Treatment → Observation)

Experimental design: (Randomized Control Trial, RCT)
Compare outcomes among: “treatment” and “control” groups
Random → Observation → Treatment → Observation
Observation → No Treatment → Observation
Evaluation Design

Qualitative Methods:

• Interviews/focus groups with participants, community members, staff, etc.)
• Observations of program activities
• Document analysis
• Case studies
• Narratives/stories

Qualitative methods emphasize the importance of observation, the phenomenological quality of the evaluation context, and the value of subjective human experience/interpretation.
Evaluation Design

The key to evaluation design:

The evaluation design should be determined by the kind of questions you want to answer.
Example Evaluation Questions

Examples of Formative Evaluation Questions:

- How can the activities, products, and services of the program be refined and strengthened during project implementation, so that they better meet the needs of participants and stakeholders?
- What suggestions do participants and stakeholders have for improving the program?
- Which elements of the program do participants find most beneficial, and which least beneficial?
Example Evaluation Questions

Examples of **Summative** Evaluation Questions:

- **What effect(s) did the program have on its participants** and stakeholders (e.g., changes in: knowledge, attitudes, skills, practices and behavior, )?
- Did the activities, actions, and services of the program raise the awareness and provide new and useful knowledge to participants?
- **What is the ultimate worth, merit, and value of the program?**
- Should the program be continued or curtailed?
Review: Fundamental Evaluation Questions

- What will be changed or different as a result of the operation of the program?
  - Attitudes
  - Knowledge
  - Behavior
  - Feelings
  - Competencies/Skills
- What will a program’s success “look like”?
- How will we show that intended changes occurred? (i.e., which measures/indicators?)
Questions?

Comments?
Thoughts?
Observations?

Resources:
https://bradroseconsulting.com/whitepapers/
- “Program Evaluation Essentials for Non-evaluators”
- “Preparing for a Program Evaluation”
- “Logic Modeling”
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Logic Models

Program Development & Funding

Data Collection & Outcome Measurement

Feedback & Continuous Improvement

Impact & Assessment Reporting
What is a Logic Model?

- “A logic model is a systematic and visual way to present and share your understanding of the relationships among the resources you have to operate your program, the activities you plan, and the changes or results you hope to achieve.” (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004)

- Visual/graphic summary of the logical relationships between the resources, activities, outputs and outcomes of a program
Why use a logic model?

Logic Models:

• allow you to describe what your program invests, does, and changes

• build a shared understanding of why and how a program operates

• clarify and create a consensus about the goals and effects of the program

• demonstrates (to funders, community members, staff, etc.) how and why a program works
Context and Need

• What set of needs or issues does the program address?

• What is the purpose of the program or initiative?
Assumptions

• If program X does “a,” “b,” and “c”, it is more likely that Y (i.e., change) will occur.
• What is it about the program that makes desired changes likely to happen?
• What does the program do, and who/what does it do it to/with?
Inputs (Resources, Contributions, Investments)

- What investments does the program make?
  - Staff and volunteers
  - Time
  - Funds
  - Materials/equipment
  - Knowledge
  - Relationships
Outputs (Activities, Services, Events)

• What activities, events, actions, does the program employ or implement?

For example:
  • Workshops
  • Trainings
  • Practices
  • Etc.
Outcomes  (changes, effects, results)

- What are the short-term outcomes/changes for program recipients/participants?
- What are the medium-term outcomes/changes for program recipients/participants?
- Remember: changes or outcomes typically include changes in:
  - Awareness
  - Attitudes
  - Knowledge
  - Feelings
  - Competencies/Skills
  - Behavior
Impacts (longer-term changes and effects)

What are the longer-term (3-5 year), and broader, effects of the operation of the program?

- Increased employment for area youth
- Successive cohorts of students prepared for college or employment
- Protected natural resources
- Thriving families
- Reduced hunger
Describe Your Program in 100-150 Words

• What is the need for the program?
• What will change or be different because of the program? (How will participants change?)
• What does the program do (activities and actions)?
• How will we know (what evidence is there) when the program is successful, and has achieved its goals?
## Logic Model | Program Theory

**Program Context Background**

**List of Needs**
What set of needs or issues does the program address?

**Program Assumptions**
What are the underlying assumptions about how the program works?

### Inputs

- Resources, contributions, & investments

### Outputs

- Activities, processes, services & events

### Outcomes / Impacts

- **Outcomes**
  - Short Term
  - Medium Term
  - Long Term/Aggregate

- **Outcomes**

- **Impacts**

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**Notes:**

- The effects, changes, and/or results produced by the program's operation/activities.
Resources

On-line Resources:
www.bradroseconsulting.com

617-512-4709