



Evaluation and continuous improvement

CCPH Service Learning Institute

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“Good evaluation” is nothing more than “good thinking”

It is the systematic collection of information about activities, characteristics and outcomes of programs, personnel, and products to use to reduce uncertainties, improve effectiveness and make decisions.

Patton, 1997



Why Evaluate?



- Reduce uncertainties
- Measure program achievement
- Improve effectiveness
- Demonstrate accountability
- Make programmatic decisions
- Build constituency

Comparison of Academic Research and Practical Evaluation

	Academic Research	Practical Evaluation
Purpose	Test hypotheses	Improve program/ practice
Method	Controlled environment	Context sensitive
Statistics	Sophisticated	Simpler



Evaluation should:

- ◆ Strengthen projects
- ◆ Use multiple approaches
- ◆ Address real issues
- ◆ Create a participatory process
- ◆ Allow for flexibility
- ◆ Build capacity

WKKellogg Foundation, 1998



Guiding Principles

- ✓ Ongoing process
- ✓ Means, not an end
- ✓ Collaboration based on trust and respect
- ✓ Sensitive to cultural, socioeconomic, ethnic, lifestyle, life-span pluralisms
- ✓ Allow for combination of methodologies
- ✓ Remain flexible
- ✓ Build capacity



Thinking about data

- ◆ Match the data to the questions – what kinds of information would be worthwhile?
- ◆ As much as possible, use data that are being created as a regular part of the program
- ◆ Collect and analyze data from multiple perspectives
- ◆ Keep available resources in mind



Thinking about data

(continued)

- ◆ Where might we find them?
- ◆ How might we obtain them?
- ◆ What types should we consider?
- ◆ What do we do now that we have them?



Who can help us collect and make sense of data?

- ✓ Community partners
- ✓ Student participants
- ✓ College administrative offices
- ✓ Faculty colleagues (and their students)
- ✓ Students who participated in previous programs
- ✓ Campus service-learning centers

Stakeholders

- ◆ People who have a “stake” in what will be learned from an evaluation and what will be done with the knowledge
- ◆ They include:
 - People who manage or work in the program/organization
 - People who are served or affected by the program, or who work in partnership with the program
 - People who are in a position to do or to decide something about the program

CDC, 1998



Stakeholders



- ◆ Stakeholders' information needs and intended uses serve to focus the evaluation
- ◆ Variety of stakeholders may mean:
 - more than one focus (policy implications vs documentation of local activities)
 - varied levels of involvement

Institutionalization

◆ Institutionalized Practice

- Routine
- Widespread
- Legitimized
- Expected
- Supported
- Permanent
- Resilient

◆ Marginalized Practice

- Occasional
- Isolated
- Unaccepted
- Uncertain
- Weak
- Temporary
- At-Risk

Kramer, 2000

Components of Service-Learning Institutionalization

- ◆ Clear definition and purpose
- ◆ Long-term vision
- ◆ Tied to institutional mission
- ◆ Seen as vehicle for accomplishing other institutional goals
- ◆ Strong faculty involvement, buy-in, support
- ◆ Seen as legitimate scholarly pursuit
- ◆ Students assume active role
- ◆ Community members have a significant, respected, valued role

Components of Service-Learning Institutionalization (cont'd)

- ◆ A coordinating entity exists
- ◆ A policy making entity exists
- ◆ Adequate and appropriate staffing
- ◆ Sufficient funding
- ◆ Valued by administration
- ◆ Ongoing assessment; continuous improvement
- ◆ Seen as valuable component of departments' programs

Bell et al, 2000



Closing the Loop

Collaborate with stakeholders for
meaningful:

- ✓ Communication of results (process and outcome)
- ✓ Decisions based on results
- ✓ New assessment plans emerging from results
- ✓ Reflection on the assessment process



References

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