

**CANADIAN EVALUATION SOCIETY PROJECT  
IN SUPPORT OF ADVOCACY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**EVALUATION BENEFITS, OUTPUTS, AND KNOWLEDGE ELEMENTS**

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**Rochelle Zorzi, Martha McGuire, & Burt Perrin**

***Zorzi & Associates***

722 Windermere Ave.  
Toronto, ON M6S 3M1  
tel: 416-761-1024  
fax: 416-761-1609  
rochelle.zorzi@sympatico.ca

# Canadian Evaluation Society Project in Support of Advocacy and Professional Development

## PROJECT TEAM

**Martha McGuire**

Cathexis Consulting, Inc.  
Toronto, Ontario

**Burt Perrin**

Independent Consultant  
Vissec, France

**Rochelle Zorzi**

Zorzi & Associates  
Toronto, Ontario

## PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE

**Linda Lee (Co-chair)**

Co-Chair, CES Advocacy Committee  
Proactive Information Systems Inc.  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

**Bud Long (Co-chair)**

Chair, CES Professional Development  
Committee  
Independent Consultant  
Bowen Island, British Columbia

**Tracy Fiander-Trask**

Member, CES Professional Development  
Committee  
MarketQuest Research  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

**Gerald Halpern**

Member, CES Professional Development  
Committee  
Fair Findings Inc.  
Ottawa, Ontario

**Karyn Hicks**

Vice President of CES  
Financial Management Board Secretariat,  
Government of the Northwest Territories  
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

**Gwen Keith**

President of CES  
Regina Catholic Schools  
Regina, Saskatchewan

**Heather Perkins**

Treasurer of CES  
Chaytor Educational Services  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

# Canadian Evaluation Society Project in Support of Advocacy and Professional Development

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

The purpose of this project was to support the Canadian Evaluation Society's advocacy efforts as well as the development of a Core Body of Knowledge (CBK) for program evaluation by identifying a) the benefits that can be attributed to program evaluation, b) the outputs<sup>1</sup> necessary to achieve those benefits, and c) the knowledge and skills needed to produce the outputs.

### Methods

Our methods included a literature review, two Internet consultations with the evaluation community, two discussion sessions with delegates at the CES 2002 National Conference, and on-line discussions among the members of an international expert reference panel.

One of the most exciting aspects of this project was getting evaluators engaged in discussing the nature of evaluation. The links that were forged between evaluators, and the thinking that was stimulated, were valuable in and of themselves. Through this engagement process, a number of important considerations were raised that relate to the definition of the field of program evaluation and its promotion. It is worth considering how CES can encourage continued discussion of these issues nationally, as well as on a global scale.

### Suggestions for CES

- Post the report on the CES website.
- Provide a mechanism for commentary and input, such as an interactive website.
- Publish significant parts of the report in the Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation.
- Use the project as a means of engaging the international evaluation community in future collaborative work. Some associations are currently involved in complementary projects that could serve as a basis for collaboration (for example, the Australasian Evaluation Society's effort to identify evaluator competencies, and the Qualitative Research Consultants Association's set of draft professional competencies).
- Present the results at the conferences of CES chapters and other national evaluation associations.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "evaluation output" is not commonly used in the literature, and may be new to many evaluators and evaluation users. For the purposes of this project, evaluation outputs have been defined to include the evidence, conclusions, and recommendations that are produced by an evaluation, as well as manifestations of stakeholder involvement in the evaluation process.

- Encourage dialogue about specific questions of interest, both between and within the various CES chapters.
- Collaborate with other evaluation associations when following up on specific questions of interest.
- Take a consultative approach when following up on specific questions of interest.

### **Considerations in Defining Evaluation**

This project confirmed our belief that program evaluation is a diverse and evolving field. This is one of its strengths, as it allows for greater flexibility and adaptation. At the same time, some evaluators have suggested that there is an obligation to define evaluation, even if doing so means that certain activities are excluded by the definition. However, there is no widespread consensus about where the line that defines evaluation should be drawn, and how inclusive it should be. This makes it difficult to determine what benefits, outputs, and knowledge elements should be attributed to evaluation.

While there is no universally accepted definition of program evaluation, our consultation process did identify some basic characteristics of evaluation that appear to be widely accepted:

- Evaluation applies research design principles to answer practical questions about programs.
- Data is collected and processed systematically to provide evidence about what is happening in a program (processes and outcomes), why it is happening, and how the program can be improved. This evidence can be used to make judgements about the program's merit or worth.
- Evaluation is cross-disciplinary and draws methods from many different fields of study.

### **Benefits that May be Derived from Evaluation**

We have identified twelve broadly stated benefits that may be derived from evaluation. These benefits are grouped into five categories:

- Accountability,
- Decision Making,
- Knowledge and Skills,
- Social Change, and
- Cohesion and Collaboration.

A summary of the benefits is shown on page vii. In this summary, you will see that many of the benefits have been stated in terms of the program being evaluated. This does not diminish the potential for larger-scale societal benefits that may result from the widespread use of evaluation. Over the long term, we believe that the local benefits of evaluation will contribute to more effective social programs, financial savings, and an improved human condition (better health, higher quality of life, cleaner environment, etc.).

CES hopes to use the identified benefits for advocacy purposes. The reference panel members raised the following issues for consideration in advocating for program evaluation:

- What some people perceive as a benefit of evaluation, others may perceive as unimportant, or even as a threat.
- What is a benefit in one situation may not be a benefit in another.
- Evaluation can have both benefits and negative impacts or costs.
- It is important to ensure that any claims we make about evaluation are substantiated so we don't "over-sell" the benefits of evaluation.
- Some evaluators are very uncomfortable with the idea of advocating for evaluation.

### Suggestions for CES

- When determining next steps for advocacy and professional development, consider the concerns that have been identified relating to the promotion of evaluation and the limiting of the field.
- This report is based primarily on the input of evaluators. Other stakeholders may have different opinions. It would therefore be valuable to invite evaluation stakeholders to comment on the identified benefits and their relationship to evaluation outputs. For advocacy purposes, it would be valuable to determine what differences in perception exist between stakeholders who are experienced/knowledgeable about evaluation and those who are new to the concept of evaluation.
- Using the benefit descriptions and the descriptions of sample evaluations (Appendix G), develop advocacy materials tailored to specific audiences. The materials can be reviewed by evaluation stakeholders with two simultaneous goals: advocacy and refinement of the list.
- Update *The Value in Evaluation: A Statement for Managers* booklet that CES published in 1989, and post the updated version on the website.
- Develop a checklist or other assessment instrument that individual evaluators can use prior to an evaluation to determine what benefits their project stakeholders hope to derive from an evaluation.
- Develop a measurement tool to assess the benefits stakeholders actually derived from evaluation. Encourage evaluators to use this tool for meta-evaluative purposes, in conjunction with the above-mentioned checklist. CES may also want to collect Canada-wide data using such an instrument.

### **Evaluation Outputs**

Evaluation outputs include the evidence, conclusions, and recommendations that are produced by an evaluation, as well as manifestations of stakeholder involvement in the evaluation process. They are an important link between the knowledge elements (inputs) and the benefits (outcomes) of evaluation. Specifically:

1. For the purposes of advocacy, outputs should help us determine if the benefits we have attributed to evaluation do in fact result from evaluation activities.
2. For the purposes of the Core Body of Knowledge, outputs help us determine which knowledge and skills people need to make certain evaluation benefits possible.

We have identified 27 evaluation outputs, grouped in the following seven categories:

- Needs Assessment Outputs,
- Evaluability Assessment Outputs,
- Process Evaluation Outputs,
- Outcome Evaluation Outputs,
- Efficiency Assessment Outputs,
- Outputs of Stakeholder Involvement, and
- Outputs Spanning all Types of Evaluation.

A summary of the outputs is shown on the page viii.

One school of thought says that how an evaluation is done can impact evaluation utilization and provide other benefits that are independent of the results. This is commonly known as *process use* of evaluation.<sup>2</sup> Stakeholder involvement is an important contributor to process use, and is tangible enough to be reflected in outputs. However, other processes may be more difficult to see and measure, and may have been inadvertently excluded by the model.

### **Evaluation Knowledge Elements**

Knowledge elements are the knowledge, skills, and effective practices that are required to conduct evaluation activities. We identified 151 specific knowledge elements. Some examples include application of ethical guidelines, naturalistic inquiry, data collection using questionnaires, and active listening. Relevant texts, articles, or other resources were identified for each knowledge element. The specific knowledge elements were grouped into 23 more general knowledge elements, which are summarized on page ix.

Readers should keep the following important points in mind when reviewing the list of knowledge elements:

- Many knowledge and skill requirements vary from evaluation to evaluation. It may be helpful to view the list of knowledge elements as a toolkit from which evaluators can select the tools that are most appropriate for the specific evaluation, taking into account the context of the evaluation and the desired benefits.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, see Patton, M.Q. (1997). *Utilization-focused evaluation: The new century text* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- This is **not** a list of what every evaluator should know. Evaluation has a wide range of methods and approaches. It is not possible, or even desirable, for any one person to have an in-depth knowledge of everything. Evaluators need to be:
  - a) aware of the different methods and approaches
  - b) able to realistically assess their own capabilities, and
  - c) able to assemble teams of people with the knowledge and skills needed for a specific evaluation.
- Because of the applied nature of evaluation, soft skills such as effective listening, questioning, and negotiation may be particularly important across the evaluation process.
- The list of knowledge elements and relevant resources will need to evolve along with the field.

The lists of outputs, knowledge elements, and resources will be a valuable guide for designing curriculum for evaluation programs and courses; designing professional development workshops to be offered by CES and other organizations; providing evaluators with ideas about alternative methods and approaches; and developing a self-assessment guide for use by evaluators.

### Suggestions for CES

- Publish checklists of evaluation outputs, knowledge elements, and resources that can be used by individual evaluators for the purpose of self-assessment, continued competence, and evaluation planning.
- Post the lists on the CES website and allow evaluators to submit comments, suggest new items and/or suggest that obsolete or outdated items be removed.
- Use the list to develop workshops for CES members.
- Ensure the list reflects the diversity of the field by seeking verification from evaluators in different positions (academic, consulting, internal) and sectors, and with different approaches (particularly those who have less mainstream approaches to evaluation).
- Assess members' need for training in interpersonal, communication, and project management skills.

### **Relationships Between Knowledge Elements, Outputs, and Benefits**

We had initially hoped to be able to describe how each output contributes to each benefit, and which knowledge elements are needed to produce which outputs. While the consultations provided interesting information about benefits, outputs, and knowledge elements, we were unable to draw conclusions about the relationships between them.

In retrospect, our initial hopes were likely unrealistic. The review of the literature, the consultations, and the discussions of our reference panel all underscored the incredible diversity and complexity of evaluation practice. Reference panel members, in particular, cautioned us

against getting too linear and specific, and questioned the initial assumptions that this would be possible — or even appropriate.

In our preliminary explorations of these relationships, we have found that in many cases, the relationship depended not only on the background of the evaluator, but also on the specifics of the evaluation situation. In other words, the relationships between knowledge elements, outputs, and benefits do not appear to be direct and linear. The model on which this project was based may therefore not be appropriate for future work in this area. A more complex, realistic model would help researchers identify the various routes by which an evaluation can produce benefits, and the various factors that help or hinder along the way. In our review of the literature, we did not come across any other explicit models of how program evaluation works, so the development of such a model could be a major contribution to the field in and of itself.

The process of thinking through the relationships between benefits, outputs, and knowledge elements may still be a useful activity within the context of a specific evaluation. It can help evaluators focus their thinking by guiding them through the following questions:

- What benefit is the client trying to gain? What other benefits are possible?
- What outputs does the client require? What other outputs are possible?
- What knowledge and skills are required to provide the benefits and outputs?
- Do we have the required knowledge and skills, or can we get them?

### Suggestions for CES

- When training evaluators, provide exposure to a variety of approaches and build awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of each. Also teach evaluators how to deal with difficult choices and trade-offs.
- Develop a tool that evaluators can use to explore the benefits, outputs, and knowledge elements required for a specific evaluation.
- Seek funding for future exploration of the relationships between benefits, outputs, and knowledge elements.
- Begin the research by developing a more complex, realistic model of how program evaluation produces benefits.
- Ensure that evaluators with diverse backgrounds and approaches are involved in the process of exploring the relationships.

### **Conclusion**

Evaluation is a developing field that will continue to evolve. This is one of the strengths of the field, placing evaluators in a position where they must constantly review and improve their practices. This document identifies some important issues for evaluators, and perhaps evaluation clients, to think about. Implementing the further steps suggested here will carry on the dynamic process started by this initiative.

# CANADIAN EVALUATION SOCIETY PROJECT IN SUPPORT OF ADVOCACY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## POTENTIAL BENEFITS AT A GLANCE

### **Accountability**

Evaluation can support accountability for program performance and spending.

- Providing information for stakeholders
- Meeting the requirements of funders

### **Decision Making**

Evaluation can help one make better decisions about program direction.

- Setting goals and priorities
- Reviewing goals and priorities

Evaluation can help one make better decisions about allocation of resources.

- Determining the value of programs
- Allocating resources to programs

Evaluation can help one improve programs.

- Improving program design
- Improving program implementation
- Improving program cost-effectiveness
- Supporting effective management practices
- Making more effective use of evaluation

### **Knowledge and Skills**

Evaluation can increase understanding of the program being evaluated

Evaluation can build knowledge about existing/potential needs and about programming that addresses those needs.

- Increasing knowledge of needs and problems
- Increasing knowledge of effective practices and programs
- Increasing knowledge of programming

Evaluation can develop capacity for effective program design, assessment, and improvement.

- Learning to think more critically about programs
- Improving attitudes toward evaluation
- Developing capacity to understand, use, and/or conduct evaluation

### **Social Change**

Evaluation can be used to promote, defend, or oppose specific methods, approaches, or programs.

Evaluation can be used to shape public opinion.

Evaluation can be used to support pluralism and democracy.

- Exploring diverse perspectives
- Supporting a more democratic process for program decision-making

### **Cohesion and Collaboration**

Evaluation can increase consistency and communication between departments or organizations.

Evaluation can build energy and enthusiasm within the program team.

- Building pride and confidence
- Building cohesion and enthusiasm

# CANADIAN EVALUATION SOCIETY PROJECT IN SUPPORT OF ADVOCACY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## OUTPUTS AT A GLANCE

### **Needs Assessment Outputs**

- Description of unmet needs

### **Evaluability Assessment Outputs**

- Description of program design and logic
- Articulation of standards for performance or criteria for success
- Description of the context of the program
- Determination of readiness for/appropriateness of evaluation

### **Process Evaluation Outputs**

- Description of program implementation
- Comparison of actual events with the program plan or performance standards
- Explanations of why implementation has deviated from the plan

### **Outcome/Impact Evaluation Outputs**

- Description of program outcomes
- Identification of unexpected/unwanted outcomes
- Attributions linking outcomes to specific interventions
- Identification of factors that affect the effectiveness of an intervention
- Determination of merit or worth

### **Efficiency Assessment Outputs**

- Description of program costs
- Estimation of the value of program outcomes
- Comparison of value for money

### **Outputs of Stakeholder Involvement**

- Involvement of stakeholders in some or all evaluation activities
- Integration of the evaluation with the customs the stakeholders' or the program's culture
- Consultation with stakeholders to solicit their views of the program
- Sharing of results with stakeholders
- Positive relationships between the evaluator and the program stakeholders
- New partnerships
- On-the-project training in evaluation for program managers and other stakeholders

### **Outputs Spanning all Types of Evaluation**

- Performance indicators and indicator systems
- Evaluation tools
- New questions about the program
- Syntheses of previous research
- Suggestions of good practices
- Recommendations

# CANADIAN EVALUATION SOCIETY PROJECT IN SUPPORT OF ADVOCACY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## KNOWLEDGE ELEMENTS AT A GLANCE

### **Ethics**

- Ethical conduct
- Competence and quality assurance

### **Evaluation Planning and Design**

- Understanding the program
- Assessing readiness for the evaluation
- Focusing the evaluation
- Systems theory, organizational development, and change
- Specific types of evaluation
- History of evaluation, evaluation theory, and evaluation models
- Research design
- Constructing meaning
- Selecting appropriate data collection and analysis methods
- Effective practices in applied research

### **Data Collection**

- Sampling
- Measurement issues
- Data collection methods

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

- Qualitative analysis
- Quantitative analysis
- Determining merit or worth
- Critical thinking skills

### **Communication and Interpersonal Skills**

- Interpersonal skills
- Reporting skills
- Other communication skills

### **Project Management**

- Managing evaluation projects



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- The CES members and other interested individuals who took the time to complete one or both consultations. Quite simply, this project could not have been completed without them. An extra special thanks goes to those correspondents who generously provided written descriptions of evaluations that they were involved in.
- The members of our international reference panel, who overcame language barriers and a variety of technological difficulties to discuss program evaluation over the Internet. Through their discussions, the panel members raised important issues that shaped and strengthened the project.
- The members of the steering committee, especially the co-chairs, whose friendly guidance and support energized us throughout the project. Their vision made this project happen.
- The Canadian Evaluation Society's National Council, who commissioned the project, and who reviewed drafts of the report. Their thoughtful comments and questions challenged and strengthened this report.
- The Canadian Evaluation Society Conference 2002 delegates who attended the discussion sessions in Halifax, and who fearlessly waded into the debate about "what makes evaluation unique." Their enthusiasm and ideas shaped the project and made the sessions a memorable experience for everyone involved.
- The members of the CES-Ontario Chapter who attended the chapter's breakfast session about this project, and provided many helpful suggestions for improvement to the model on which the project is based.
- Benoît Gauthier of Circum Network Inc., who provided the on-line forum that we used for the reference panel discussions. Benoît was available at all times to accommodate our needs and ensure that the system was working for us.
- Ronald DeVries, who created the web-based forms for the consultations, and who responded promptly and cheerfully to a stream of last-minute requests.
- The staff at the Willow Group, who arranged for translation of the materials into French, and who distributed news broadcasts about the project to CES members.
- Nathalie Ocelus, who translated all of the consultations and reports into French in a timely and professional manner.
- And finally, the many individual evaluators around the world who expressed interest in this project, provided feedback about our draft reports, and encouraged us along the way.

Rochelle Zorzi, Burt Perrin, and Martha McGuire.



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<b>Benefit of Evaluation</b>	An outcome of the evaluation that is advantageous for stakeholders in some way. Benefits are not automatic; stakeholders typically need to do something (for example, use the evaluation outputs) to make the benefits happen.
<b>Evaluation Output</b>	An immediate result of the evaluation process. Typical outputs would include evidence, conclusions, and recommendations. Outputs can also include manifestations of stakeholder involvement in the evaluation process.
<b>Evaluator</b>	A person who conducts evaluation, regardless of whether or not that is their primary role. For example, program managers who conduct evaluation would be considered evaluators for the purposes of this report.
<b>Knowledge Elements</b>	The knowledge, skills, and effective practices that are required to conduct evaluation activities.
<b>Process Use of Evaluation</b>	Changes in thinking, behaviour, procedures or culture that occur among those involved in the evaluation as a result of learning that occurs during the evaluation process (Patton, 1997; p 90).
<b>Program</b>	For the purposes of this report, “program” represents programs, policies, and initiatives.
<b>Program Evaluation</b>	Likewise, “program evaluation” is intended to be inclusive of program, policy, and initiative evaluation.
<b>Stakeholder</b>	Individuals or groups who may benefit from evaluation. Stakeholders may be internal or external to the program, and may include politicians, program funders, decision makers (e.g., policy makers, program directors, etc.), program managers, service delivery staff, recipients of a program, evaluators, the research community, special interest groups, disadvantaged/underrepresented groups within a community, shareholders, citizens, society, or humanity/the global community.



# Canadian Evaluation Society Project in Support of Advocacy and Professional Development

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

A number of years ago, the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) Council participated in a strategic planning process. Two broad areas were confirmed as priorities:

- professional development, and
- advocacy on behalf of the evaluation function.

Having an identified Core Body of Knowledge (CBK) was viewed as one means (but not the sole means) of supporting these two priorities. The CBK comprises “those theories, skills, and effective practices that people, working largely without supervision, must possess in order to plan, carry out, and report on valid and reliable evaluations of the programs<sup>3</sup> of governments, other public sector agencies and organizations, not-for-profit organizations, and business.<sup>4</sup>” The CBK is to be updated periodically to include proven new techniques and approaches.

The CBK will serve as:

- a guide for CES members in their self-assessment of their capacity to do an evaluation;
- a guide for the Society and its members in the identification of Canadian post-secondary courses, and possibly texts and other publications, that cover each of the knowledge elements contained in the CBK;
- the basis for the Society’s design of its own professional development courses where these are needed to supplement those offered by other institutions; and
- a major element in the definition of the concept of evaluation and, thus, a potentially important element in the CES advocacy program.

### Purpose of the Current Project

This project was intended to support the Society’s advocacy efforts as well as the development of the CBK by identifying a) the benefits that can be attributed to program evaluation, b) the

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<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this paper, the term *program* represents programs, policies, and initiatives. Likewise, the term *program evaluation* is intended to be inclusive of program, policy, and initiative evaluation.

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Evaluation Society (2001). *Request for proposals: A project in support of the advocacy and professional development work of the Canadian Evaluation Society*. Unpublished document, available from the Canadian Evaluation Society, Ottawa, ON.

outputs necessary to achieve those benefits, and c) the knowledge and skills needed to produce the outputs.

For advocacy purposes, the project aimed to demonstrate that the benefits attributed to evaluation do in fact result from evaluative activities and outputs. For professional development purposes, it aimed to explain why each core knowledge element is essential for evaluation by demonstrating its link with well-defined evaluation benefits.

The project had three phases. The purposes of each phase are shown in the table below.

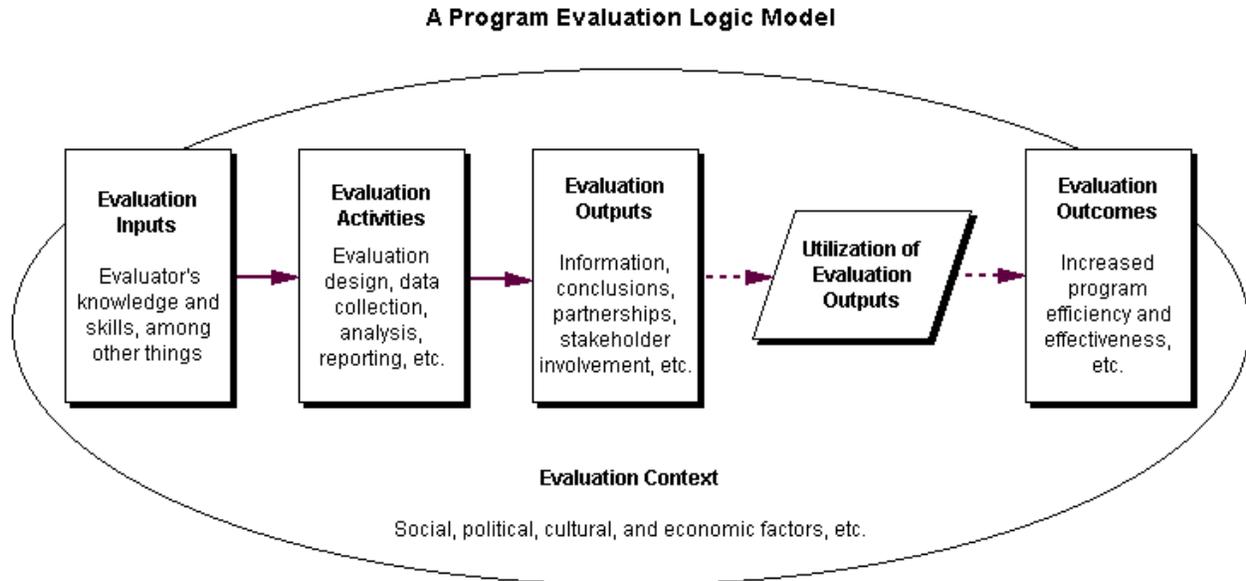
<b>Phase</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Phase 1	To articulate and describe the benefits that stakeholders can derive from program evaluation
Phase 2	To explore evaluation outputs in relation to the benefits
Phase 3	To investigate the knowledge and skills needed to produce the outputs in a way that makes the benefits possible

The specific research questions were as follows:

1. *What exactly are the benefits that evaluation can offer to governments, other public sector agencies and organizations, not-for-profit organizations, and business?*
2. *What exactly are the generic types of output that evaluations can produce that are related to each benefit?*
3. *How exactly does each type of output contribute to each benefit?*
4. *In what ways are the outputs unique to evaluation?*
5. *What are the knowledge elements that are needed to produce the various types of outputs?*
6. *For each knowledge element, what sections of which commonly available text or publication contains a good description of it?*

## The Underlying Model

The underlying model for this project assumes that, like the programs we evaluate, program evaluation has inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. The model is deliberately simplified to provide a manageable framework for the project<sup>5</sup>. The model has evolved over the course of the project, but maintains the three original concepts of inputs (knowledge elements), outputs, and outcomes (benefits). It is shown below.



Evaluation is conducted within a specific **evaluation context**. Social, political, cultural, economic, and other factors influence all aspects of the evaluation.

**Evaluation inputs** include funding, time, and other resources. For this project, we are concerned specifically with the *knowledge elements* (knowledge and skills) of the person or group of people conducting the evaluation.

**Evaluation activities** are what happen in the course of the evaluation, and they are manifested in evaluation outputs.

**Evaluation outputs** are the immediate results of the evaluation process. Typical outputs would include evidence, conclusions, and recommendations. Outputs can also include manifestations of stakeholder involvement in the evaluation process. The latter warrants specific consideration,

<sup>5</sup> The model is not intended as a tool to help individual evaluators in their work. For those purposes, a more realistic, multi-causal model would be appropriate.

because it is thought to affect evaluation utilization, and to result in benefits independently of the results of the evaluation<sup>6</sup>.

**Evaluation outcomes** are realized when stakeholders use the outputs of an evaluation. The dotted lines in the diagram recognize that the links between outputs, utilization, and outcomes are contingent on stakeholder behaviour.

Typical outcomes include increased program efficiency or effectiveness. Other outcomes might include increased understanding of a problem, or empowerment of a marginalized group. Although evaluation sometimes produces unintended negative outcomes, the focus of this project is on *benefits*, or positive outcomes. Evaluators<sup>7</sup> with appropriate skills and knowledge should be in a better position to avoid unintended negative outcomes.

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<sup>6</sup> For example, see Patton (1997).

<sup>7</sup> Throughout this report, when we refer to “evaluators,” we are talking about people who conduct evaluation, regardless of whether or not that is their primary role. For example, program managers who conduct evaluation would be considered evaluators.

## METHODS

The process of conducting a study is often as important as the results. We elected to use a broad consultative process with CES members and other evaluators across the world in the hopes that it would:

- ensure that the results represent the diversity of the field,
- bring evaluators together in constructive dialogue about the nature of evaluation,
- increase the credibility of the results, and
- encourage individual evaluators to think more about how to maximize the benefits offered by their evaluations.

Our methods included a literature review, two Internet consultations with the evaluation community, two discussion sessions with delegates at the CES 2002 National Conference, and on-line discussions among the members of an international expert reference panel. These methods are summarized in the table on the following page, and described in greater detail in Appendix A.

### **Analysis of the Data**

The analysis involved summarizing and synthesizing data from diverse sources and perspectives. Brief *Analysis Notes* are included in a footnote at the beginning of each section.

### **Limitations of the Methods**

The information on which this report is based comes mainly from evaluators. Being close to the topic, these individuals bring a level of expertise that is necessary as we begin to lay the foundation for the Core Body of Knowledge. At the same time, their views about evaluation-related topics are shaped by their own paradigms, training, and practice. How they collectively see program evaluation may represent only one side of the story. Other stakeholders, such as program staff, participants, citizens, or directors, might view it differently.

In short, the results of this project present a picture of evaluation as seen through the eyes of people who do evaluation. While it does not tell the whole story, it does provide a starting point for determining how evaluation can be helpful to various stakeholders, and what outputs and knowledge elements are required to make evaluation beneficial. The results of this project, once reframed for different audiences, can be used as a basis for testing our conclusions and exploring other perspectives.

## Methods

<b>Methods used in the project</b>			
<b>Method</b>	<b>Purposes</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Results</b>
Literature Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify key issues and serve as a basis for further discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scanned selected texts</li> <li>• Briefly summarized what we found in relation to benefits, outputs, and knowledge elements</li> </ul>	Appendix C
Consultation #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solicit ideas about the benefits of evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactive on-line consultation form</li> <li>• Potential respondents recruited through CES member broadcast and international evaluation listservs</li> <li>• Respondents could post benefits, view benefits posted by others, and comment on benefits posted by others.</li> </ul>	Appendix D
Consultation #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solicit ideas about evaluation benefits, outputs, processes, and knowledge elements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactive on-line consultation form</li> <li>• Potential respondents recruited as above</li> <li>• Respondents:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ focused on a single evaluation</li> <li>○ listed and prioritized the benefits of the evaluation</li> <li>○ identified the outputs and processes needed to produce each of the three most important benefits</li> <li>○ identified the knowledge elements required to carry out the processes and produce the outputs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Appendix E
Conference discussion sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the factors that make evaluation unique from other activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two sessions at the CES 2002 National Conference in Halifax</li> <li>• Three discussion questions:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is unique about evaluation?</li> <li>2. What do we mean by the 'outputs' of evaluation?</li> <li>3. What are the knowledge and skills that are needed to do evaluation?</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	Appendix F
International expert reference panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help complete, interpret, and organize the results from the literature review and consultations</li> <li>• Raise considerations about the project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23 Canadian members and 13 members from outside Canada (see Appendix B)</li> <li>• On-line discussion forum</li> <li>• Benefits discussion: 2 weeks in April</li> <li>• Outputs/knowledge discussion: 3 weeks in May</li> </ul>	

### Reflections

We tried some innovative approaches with this study. The Internet was a wonderful tool for linking people and ideas across vast distances. At the same time, it had a few limitations:

- a) Some people were more comfortable with the Internet-based consultations than others, and the medium may have deterred some people from participating.
- b) It was difficult for the reference panel to develop a sense of community over the Internet in the short span of time we had for this project. This may have inhibited reference panel communications to some degree. Nevertheless, there were a number of high calibre discussions, along with many specific suggestions that have contributed to this project.

We were very satisfied with the results of the first consultation, and feel that they reflected a broad cross-section of perspectives and experiences. Being able to view people's responses to others' suggestions was invaluable.

With the second consultation, we may have tried to cover too much ground at once. Given resource and time restrictions, the most feasible approach was a more closed-ended consultation that turned out to be quite lengthy. In retrospect, an open-ended consultation process might have been more suitable, given that we were still at an exploratory stage with outputs and knowledge elements.

As anticipated, the consultative methods used in the project have been valuable in and of themselves, forging links between evaluators and stimulating more in-depth thought about the nature of evaluation.

The project generated considerable interest, both in Canada and internationally. Sessions related to the project at the CES 2002 National Conference in Halifax attracted large audiences, and we had to schedule a second discussion session to accommodate the interest. In addition, evaluators from around the world (including Australia, the United States, South America, and parts of Europe) wrote to express their interest in the project and their desire to participate where possible. The high level of interest suggests that this is an important and compelling topic for evaluators.

### Organization of this Report

This report presents the results of this project in four sections:

- Articulation and description of the benefits that may derive from evaluation
- Articulation of evaluation outputs
- Articulation of evaluation knowledge elements, with relevant resources
- Discussion of relationships between benefits, outputs, and knowledge elements.

We conclude with a review and discussion of what we have learned, and provide suggestions for actions that CES can take to build on the efforts of this project.



## ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Through the literature review, reference panel, and conference sessions, we identified a number of issues that should be considered when interpreting and using the results of this project.<sup>8</sup>

### Difficulties in Defining Evaluation

What constitutes a benefit (or output, or knowledge element) of evaluation depends in part on how we define evaluation. A number of definitions have been proposed by different authors, but there is no widespread consensus about which definition most faithfully represents the field. Reference panel members raised this as a point of discussion, asking, “What distinguishes evaluation from other activities or professions?”

After hearing the reference panel members’ suggestions, we took the question to the discussion sessions at the Canadian Evaluation Society 2002 National Conference in Halifax. The responses from the two groups suggest that evaluation may distinguish itself from other knowledge-based activities by 1) its purpose, 2) its approach and methods, and 3) its outputs.

#### Purpose

- Evaluation addresses practical questions and feeds into decision making.
- Evaluation makes judgements about a program’s merit or worth.  
*Controversial:* Some evaluators argued that the purpose of evaluation is solely to provide the information needed to make such judgements, not to actually make those judgements.
- Evaluation looks for explanations; it tries to determine *why* things work in different contexts and for different people. It attempts to get at the substance of a program rather than just skimming the surface of processes, or relying on cursory measures.

#### Approach and methods

- Evaluation applies research design principles appropriately in controlled and uncontrolled settings.
- Evaluation data is collected and processed systematically.
- In addition to using existing program data, evaluation collects new information to respond to specific questions about a program.

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<sup>8</sup> **Analysis Notes:** CES members and reference panel members raised a number of issues throughout the project. Our review of the literature also uncovered some issues deserving of consideration. We summarized the issues, making note of differences of opinion. We brought some of the issues forward during the discussion sessions at the Canadian Evaluation Society 2002 Conference in Halifax, and incorporated the ideas from those sessions. Where additional information (e.g., feedback from the steering committee) could help clarify or resolve the issues, we incorporated it as appropriate.

- Evaluation tends to be comprehensive, paying attention to many aspects of the program, to get a full understanding of what's going on.
- Evaluation is cross-disciplinary and draws methods from many different fields of study.

### Outputs

- The evidence provided by evaluation is:
  - credible
  - reliable
  - valid
  - objective/unbiased
- Evaluation can provide evidence about:
  - achievement of program objectives
  - attribution of changes to the program (impact)
  - the value of a program
  - what's working and what's not working
  - what needs to be done to improve
  - why a program is being conducted
  - how a program is being conducted

Panel members observed that most of the factors listed above are provided by at least one other professional group (audit, research, accounting, organizational development, etc.). While other fields may share certain characteristics, perhaps it is the combination of characteristics that distinguishes evaluation from other activities.

### **A Simple Model vs. the Complexities of Program Evaluation**

#### The model does not reflect the complexities of evaluation

The model on which this project is based (page 3) is deliberately simplified to provide a manageable framework for the project. It suggests a linear relationship between knowledge, activities, outputs, and benefits that does not take into account the many complexities of a program evaluation. Some reference panel members were wary of making a direct link between evaluation outputs and benefits (as was suggested in the initial version of the model), or between knowledge elements and outputs. They felt it would be misleading to attempt to be overly reductionist in suggesting how evaluation might work.

#### Evaluators cannot guarantee benefits.

Some members of the reference panel had a high degree of discomfort with the concept of evaluation benefits. They observed that evaluation does not automatically provide benefits. The benefits we have identified will only be realized under certain conditions, which may vary by benefit type. Many were therefore uncomfortable with the generation of a list of evaluation benefits.

Similarly, in the conference discussions, participants recognized that, while evaluators have control over outputs, they cannot control benefits (although they can *influence* them). They questioned whether evaluators should be held accountable for benefits when they are partly determined by factors beyond their control.

In recognition of these concerns, we have chosen to speak about the benefits that *may be derived* from evaluation. While this implies that evaluation can offer benefits, it also implies that stakeholders have to do something to get these benefits; that they are not automatic and may not occur in all cases. We have also updated the model to include *utilization of evaluation outputs*, which is an intermediate step between outputs and benefits.

### **Difficulties in Defining “Outputs”**

#### The meaning of the term output is unclear.

The term “evaluation output” is not commonly used in the literature. Some participants in the conference discussions raised the concern that the term could cause confusion because it has different meanings in different contexts. They suggested that we use the same terminology as is used in similar fields such as audit and knowledge management. In those fields, the terms of choice are “products” and “services.” “Product” is a broad term that can include tangibles (e.g., reports) and intangibles (e.g., different types of information). Although participants favoured this term, its breadth may conflict with the need to be precise. Other possible terms include results, information, findings, immediate outcomes, or deliverables.

There was a diversity of opinion about this issue among the reference panel members. Some members of the reference panel preferred the word output over other terms such as products or results.

The questions raised about this term were valuable in clarifying what we mean by evaluation outputs. The steering committee for the project developed the following definition:

*“For the purpose of the CES Advocacy-CBK project, the “outputs” of evaluation are what the evaluator, during or at the end of an evaluation process, provides to the client and possibly other stakeholders. They are the immediate results of the evaluation process.*

*“Outputs generally comprise: (1) information, conclusions and perhaps recommendations that are useful for making decisions about a program or policy (for example, information on the effectiveness with which it achieves its goals), and/or (2) arrangements for the participation by stakeholders in the evaluation process. In both cases, outputs, together with factors beyond the evaluator's control, lead to the benefits of evaluation.*

*“In the CES Advocacy-CBK project, outputs serve two key purposes. First, for advocacy, they are the demonstrable link between evaluation benefits and the evaluation function. Second, for professional development, they are the criteria for the content of the CBK: if*

*a certain knowledge element or skill is important for the production of an evaluation output, it should be included in the CBK; if it is not important for this purpose, then it should not be.*

*“We appreciate that some evaluators may prefer other words, like "product" or "service", but we have decided to remain with "output". It has a long history in evaluation in Canada, and many, perhaps most, people appear to be comfortable with it. In any case, we believe that the concept, regardless of the name that is applied to it, is essential to this project.”*

The concept of evaluation outputs is difficult to isolate.

Going beyond terminology, the very concept of an evaluation output seems to be difficult to isolate. There seems to be substantial interconnectedness between benefits, outputs, activities, and knowledge. We found that people often wrote about evaluation outputs as if they were the benefits of evaluation. Furthermore, when describing evaluation benefits, they often wrote about knowledge, activities, outputs, and benefits in the same sentence.

The concept of an evaluation output may be new to many people who conduct evaluations. Nonetheless, it has proved to be a useful concept for organizing our thinking and discussion. It has caused us to reflect on how we take our knowledge and translate it into something from which others can gain some benefits.

We may not be able to capture all important evaluation processes through outputs.

One school of thought says that how an evaluation is done can have more impact than its conclusions or recommendations. *Process use* of evaluation is thought to increase evaluation utilization, and to provide other benefits that are independent of the results.<sup>9</sup> Such benefits might include increased thought about an issue, culture change in the organization, or changes in values. Some evaluators feel that these benefits are not as important as those resulting from use of evaluation conclusions or recommendations, but others argue that they are equally important, or even more important.

Stakeholder involvement is an important contributor to process use, and is tangible enough to be reflected in outputs. However, proponents of process use have suggested that other processes may be more difficult to see and measure. We should take care that no important processes are inadvertently excluded by the model.

## **Considerations in Promoting Evaluation**

Reference panel members raised a number of considerations about the promotion or advocacy of evaluation.

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<sup>9</sup> For example, see Patton (1997).

Benefit is in the eye of the beholder.

Not all of the potential benefits described in this document will be useful for advocacy with all stakeholder groups. What some people perceive as a benefit, others may perceive as unimportant, or even as a threat. Context may also play a role in this; what is a benefit in one situation may not be a benefit in another.

We identified the following audiences who may benefit from evaluation:

- Politicians
- Program funders
- Decision makers (e.g., policy makers, program directors, etc.)
- Program managers
- Service delivery staff
- Recipients of a program
- Evaluators
- The research community
- Special interest groups
- Disadvantaged/underrepresented groups within a community
- Shareholders
- Citizens
- Society
- Humanity/the global community

For advocacy purposes, it will be important to identify which benefits are relevant to which audiences. Although specific beneficiaries will differ from situation to situation, we believe that certain audiences are more likely to be interested in some benefits than others. For example, program funders are more likely to be interested in benefits related to allocation of resources than are service delivery staff. Where possible, the descriptions of the benefits have specified which stakeholders are most likely to be interested in the benefit. The advocacy committee may wish to conduct further research to confirm which benefits are of greatest interest to which audiences.

Should we acknowledge unintended negative impacts of evaluation?

Evaluation can have both benefits and negative impacts, risks, or costs. When advocating for evaluation, some panel members felt there was an obligation to address both of these aspects of evaluation, rather than focusing exclusively on benefits.

Should we be cautious in promoting evaluation?

There was considerable disquiet among some of the reference panel members with focusing too much on the advocacy of evaluation. Partly because of the negative impacts or costs, some panel members suggested that we need to be cautious in promoting evaluation. They felt that it might be better to refer to the “role(s)” of evaluation rather than the benefits. (e.g., what role does

evaluation have to play in improving social programs? What role does it have to play in accountability?)

Other panellists and CES members have disagreed, stating that it is important to promote the benefits of evaluation, as long as our claims are substantiated and we take care not to over-sell the benefits of evaluation, as was done in the 1960s. Further, it was argued that we have an obligation to publicize the benefits of evaluation to ensure that this important tool for accountability and improvement is used well.

At least some of the disquiet seems to relate to the fear that advocacy efforts would be on behalf of the vested interest of professional evaluators (i.e., drumming up business for ourselves, “blowing our own horns”) rather than on behalf of the value that evaluation can provide. Some panellists felt that advocacy as a marketing effort was inappropriate. Others, however, felt that this form of advocacy was justified. They suggested that, to stay competitive with other knowledge-based professions, evaluation needs to find its market niche, define it precisely, and then promote it.

### **Concerns about Limiting the Field**

There is a trade-off between defining the field and accepting its diversity.

The literature review confirmed our beliefs that program evaluation is a diverse and evolving field. This is one of its strengths, as it allows for greater flexibility and adaptation. At the same time, some evaluators have suggested that there is an obligation to define evaluation, even if doing so means that certain activities are excluded by the definition. The enduring question is, of course, where the line that defines evaluation should be drawn, and how inclusive it should be.

There are concerns about evaluator certification.

Some reference panel members expressed concerns that this initiative is a first step toward the certification of evaluators. They noted that many evaluations are conducted by people who would not consider themselves “evaluators” because evaluation is only one part of their role, and were concerned that these individuals would be prevented from carrying out the evaluation function if evaluators became certified.

CES Council’s decision to approve the development of a Core Body of Knowledge in 1999 was based on a document that stated:

*“The development of the CBK does not imply the CES will ever adopt some form of certification. That is an additional step that can be decided quite independently on its merits. On the other hand, the need for effective professional development and advocacy does imply the need for a CBK.”*

Thus, while certification would ultimately require an articulated core (or basic) set of knowledge elements (among other prerequisites), that is not one of the purposes of the current project.

## BENEFITS THAT MAY BE DERIVED FROM EVALUATION

Through the review of the literature, the two consultations with the evaluation community, and the discussions of the reference panel, we have identified twelve broadly stated benefits that may be derived from evaluation. These benefits are grouped into five categories: accountability, decision making, knowledge and skills, social change, and cohesion and collaboration. The benefits are described in this section. A summary is shown on the following page.<sup>10</sup>

Many of the benefits in this section have been stated in terms of the program being evaluated. This does not diminish the potential for larger-scale societal benefits that may result from the widespread use of evaluation. Over the long term, we believe that the local benefits of evaluation will contribute to more effective social programs, financial savings, and an improved human condition (better health, higher quality of life, cleaner environment, etc.).

### Accountability

Evaluation can support accountability for program performance and spending.

Citizens, shareholders and funders have a right to information about the programs they support. Evaluation can support accountability through its transparent, collective and public nature.

*Providing information for stakeholders.* Evaluation provides stakeholders with information about program performance, thereby opening the program to public scrutiny and judgement.

Evaluation can help stakeholders:

- verify that planned programs are implemented as intended;
- assess the efficiency of a program, or its components;
- determine the extent to which a program is having the intended effects, as measured against objectives, benchmarks, standards, or targets;
- identify any unintended effects of the program; and
- judge whether the program is worth the resources that are devoted to it.

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<sup>10</sup> **Analysis Notes:** A large number of potential benefits were identified through the literature review, consultation data, and panel discussions. After the first consultation, we listed the benefits from all sources in a single document, then eliminated duplicates and combined similar benefits. Categorizing the benefits proved to be a challenge. We began with categories that had been defined in the literature, and revised them as necessary to accommodate the diversity of benefits. We revised the categories through several iterations, with input from the reference panel at each stage. New benefits were identified through the second consultation. The categories were revised again to accommodate these additions.

# CANADIAN EVALUATION SOCIETY PROJECT IN SUPPORT OF ADVOCACY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## POTENTIAL BENEFITS AT A GLANCE

### **Accountability**

Evaluation can support accountability for program performance and spending.

- Providing information for stakeholders
- Meeting the requirements of funders

### **Decision Making**

Evaluation can help one make better decisions about program direction.

- Setting goals and priorities
- Reviewing goals and priorities

Evaluation can help one make better decisions about allocation of resources.

- Determining the value of programs
- Allocating resources to programs

Evaluation can help one improve programs.

- Improving program design
- Improving program implementation
- Improving program cost-effectiveness
- Supporting effective management practices
- Making more effective use of evaluation

### **Knowledge and Skills**

Evaluation can increase understanding of the program being evaluated

Evaluation can build knowledge about existing/potential needs and about programming that addresses those needs.

- Increasing knowledge of needs and problems
- Increasing knowledge of effective practices and programs
- Increasing knowledge of programming

Evaluation can develop capacity for effective program design, assessment, and improvement.

- Learning to think more critically about programs
- Improving attitudes toward evaluation
- Developing capacity to understand, use, and/or conduct evaluation

### **Social Change**

Evaluation can be used to promote, defend, or oppose specific methods, approaches, or programs.

Evaluation can be used to shape public opinion.

Evaluation can be used to support pluralism and democracy.

- Exploring diverse perspectives
- Supporting a more democratic process for program decision-making

### **Cohesion and Collaboration**

Evaluation can increase consistency and communication between departments or organizations.

Evaluation can build energy and enthusiasm within the program team.

- Building pride and confidence
- Building cohesion and enthusiasm

*Meeting the requirements of funders.* When an organization or organizational unit carries out evaluation, this can meet formal requirements of a funder that evaluation be done. Carrying out and demonstrating use of evaluation can demonstrate to a funder an organization's true commitment to accountability and to learning and to making improvements where warranted.

### **Decision Making**

Evaluation can help one make better decisions about program direction.

There are many issues, social needs and problems that compete for attention in a world of limited resources. If priorities are selected arbitrarily, staff may find that they are addressing needs that do not exist, that do not fit with the organization's mission, or that just are not important. Organizations can be more effective when their programs focus on important needs that are relevant to their stakeholders.

*Setting goals and priorities.* Evaluation can help directors, policy makers, managers and funders set priorities, goals and objectives that:

- reflect the values and ideologies of different stakeholder groups;
- reflect the organization's role in society;
- focus on real (not imagined) needs;
- focus on needs that are most amenable to change; and/or
- focus on more important needs (i.e., those that are prevalent, serious, and/or pressing).

*Reviewing goals and priorities.* Evaluation can help determine whether existing goals and priorities are still valid and/or relevant, enabling the organization to adapt to changing needs, organizational changes, and values shifts.

Evaluation can help one make better decisions about allocation of resources.

Without some form of evaluation, organizations risk devoting considerable time, money and effort to programs that are inefficient or even ineffective in meeting specified goals. Evaluation can help directors, policy makers and funders determine the merit or worth of different programs. It allows them to compare the costs and effectiveness of different programs to determine which ones they will support, and to what extent.

*Determining the value of programs.* Evaluation can help:

- generate multiple criteria for judging the program's value. Program sponsors may have different opinions than program staff or participants. Value judgements based on multiple perspectives are more relevant than those based on a single perspective.
- assess the effects (expected and unexpected) of a program relative to these criteria; and
- determine if those effects can be attributed to the program, or if they may be due to other factors outside the program.

*Allocating resources to programs.* Evaluation can support:

- termination of programs that are not effective, are not efficient, or are no longer needed;
- expansion of programs that have proven effective;
- reduced funding to programs when the additional funds are not needed;
- increased funding for programs when inadequate resources are limiting their effectiveness;
- use of effective prevention to avert potential future costs;
- selection of programs that produce a given outcome for the least cost;
- selection of programs that produce a better outcome for the same cost;

Evaluation can help one improve programs.

Policy makers, program managers and program staff can use evaluation to make improvements to their programs. Evaluation can help improve program design, day-to-day implementation, cost-effectiveness, management, and evaluation. Sometimes evaluation provides the impetus to make necessary changes, as can happen when an evaluation confirms what managers or staff already suspected.

*Improving program design.* Evaluation can help managers and staff make corrections to the program design that increase its effectiveness and efficiency. It helps program managers and staff know what changes to make, and can be useful in communicating the need for these changes. Using evaluation, managers and staff can:

- determine if the program, as designed, is likely to meet its objectives;
- set more realistic objectives;
- identify and address incorrect assumptions and weaknesses in the design;
- determine what components are effective and what are ineffective;
- reduce overlap between similar programs;
- drop ineffective activities and add more effective ones; and
- identify and avoid potential unwanted effects.

*Improving program implementation.* Evaluation can determine whether or not the program is being implemented as intended. When implementation is not going as intended, evaluation can help managers and staff understand why. In some cases, it may be appropriate for program implementation to deviate from the original plan – for example, if the original plan is flawed, or if program staff are being responsive to new opportunities or changes in circumstance. In other cases, evaluation can help managers and staff take steps to improve implementation.

## Benefits that May be Derived from Evaluation

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Evaluation can help managers and staff:

- identify and address problems that have arisen, such as glitches in the delivery process, service gaps, or specific issues such as abuse of power, racism, incompetence, etc.;
- implement proven good practices;
- avoid unwanted effects; and
- correct staff assumptions that impact service delivery or efficiency.

*Improving program cost-effectiveness.* Evaluation can help managers and staff select program methods that produce a given outcome for less cost, or produce a better outcome for the same cost.

*Supporting effective management practices.* Evaluation is part of the program cycle. It can provide managers with tools and systems they can use to increase their effectiveness. Evaluation helps managers:

- explain the program to others: how it works, what its goals and standards are, what responsibilities others have, and what role they can play in achieving the program goals;
- create and/or improve systematic monitoring systems such as management information systems and performance measurement systems (identifying the most important indicators, selecting valid indicators, encouraging more timely and accurate reporting, etc.);
- improve process and efficiency flows;
- use program data more effectively for management decisions; and
- manage the change process more effectively.

*Making more effective use of evaluation.* The beginning phases of evaluation can identify whether or not it is appropriate to evaluate a program, and can identify the most appropriate time to conduct an evaluation. These beginning phases can also help managers and staff determine what they need to measure and how to measure it.

Data systems and whole evaluations can also be evaluated (meta-evaluation) to assess and improve their validity, reliability and cost-effectiveness.

## Knowledge and Skills

Evaluation can increase understanding of the program being evaluated.

One of the most immediate benefits that stakeholders can derive from evaluation is a clearer, more objective understanding of the program, including:

- what the program is expected to accomplish;
- the context of the program (political, ideological, organizational);
- the role the program plays in society;

## Benefits that May be Derived from Evaluation

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- the program's logic and assumptions;
- the roles of individuals or groups involved in the program;
- who the program is serving;
- the program's day-to-day activities;
- the program's strengths and weaknesses; and
- the results of the program.

Increased clarity about the program can ensure that all players are pulling in the same direction. A thorough and objective understanding of the program also serves as the foundation for improvement, accountability, and the allocation of resources.

Evaluation can raise questions and increase awareness of issues that are in need of more attention. For example, evaluation might identify that some stakeholder groups are doing better than others, or perhaps that one program location is serving twice (or half) as many as others with seemingly no difference in other aspects. Even if an evaluation cannot answer these questions, it is important to bring these questions and issues out into the open where they can be dealt with.

Evaluation can build knowledge about existing/potential needs, and about programming that addresses those needs.

Evaluation can build incremental knowledge, awareness, and understanding of social, economic, health, or environmental problems, as well as effective practices and programming that can ultimately contribute to the development of more relevant, effective, and efficient programs.

*Increasing knowledge of needs and problems.* Evaluation can increase awareness of the types of social, economic, health, or environmental needs that exist, as well as their prevalence and severity. It can also help stakeholders understand the origins and context of the needs, and can help predict future needs. A thorough understanding of needs enables the development of more relevant and effective programs, and helps establish program priorities.

*Increasing knowledge of effective practices, programs.* Evaluation can increase awareness of specific programs or practices that are known to be effective in addressing a particular need, enabling those programs or practices to be considered for use in other settings with similar conditions and needs. Evaluators can facilitate this cross-fertilization by sharing effective practices and lessons learned from other programs that they have evaluated.

With the incremental accumulation of knowledge about effective practices, evaluation can provide insights into what typically works and what typically does not work when addressing particular needs under specific conditions. Stakeholders can also develop a better understanding of why something is working or not, again resulting in better and more appropriate programming.

*Increasing knowledge of programming.* Evaluation can help us understand where and why programs arise. It can explore factors that affect organizational learning and innovation.

Evaluation can build capacity for effective program design, assessment, and improvement.

Evaluation can help managers, staff and other stakeholders think more critically about their programs, place increased importance on evaluation, and develop skills to continue evaluation activities. Because they impact stakeholders' thinking, these benefits extend beyond the program being evaluated to other programs.

***Controversial:*** Some evaluators consider this to be one of the most enduring benefits of evaluation. Others consider it a side benefit, arguing that it is only useful to the extent that evaluation provides other benefits as well.

*Learning to think more critically about programs.* Evaluation helps foster a more thoughtful approach to planning that can extend beyond the program being evaluated. This is closely related to the concept of continuous quality improvement, where managers and staff are constantly asking themselves how things are going and what can be done differently or better. Specifically, evaluation can help managers and staff learn to:

- develop clear objectives;
- critically analyse program design;
- collect data systematically;
- incorporate formal and informal processes for reflection, discussion, and review;
- visualize implementation and consider how it will be monitored;
- ask difficult questions about the program;
- focus on improvement;
- strategically allocate resources to maximize impact;
- visualize possible results and consider how they will be assessed;
- be more critical about claims of effectiveness and causal links; and
- rely on evidence in their decision-making.

*Improving attitudes toward evaluation.* Evaluation can foster an organizational culture that values accountability and evaluation, and focuses on quality and continuous improvement. It can help staff become committed to addressing the strengths and weaknesses of the program. Staff and other stakeholders can come to view evaluation as a useful tool for improvement.

*Developing capacity to understand, use, and/or conduct evaluation.* Stakeholders who participate in the evaluation process can learn how to understand evaluation and to use it knowledgeably and appropriately. In some cases, stakeholders may develop skills to continue evaluation activities.

## Social Change

Evaluation can be used to promote, defend, or oppose specific methods, approaches, or programs.

Proponents of a program can use evaluation findings to:

- promote the program goals;
- secure funding for the program;
- gather public support for the program;
- gather political support for the program; or
- lobby for organizational or legislative changes that are favourable to the program.

Opponents can likewise use evaluation findings to gather opposition to the program, argue against funding, and block organizational or legislative changes that are favourable to the program.

Both proponents and opponents can use evaluation to provide credibility or support for politically difficult decisions.

**Concern:** There is a possibility that evaluation can be misused for personal or political gain. For example, evaluation could be used as a privileged resource for those with high status in a program, without giving voice to other important stakeholders.

Evaluation can be used to shape public opinion.

Individuals can use evaluation to argue in favour or against certain views. For example, evaluation information is sometimes used to advocate for the rights of marginalized groups.

**Controversial:** Some evaluators argue that advocacy is essential to fair evaluation, particularly when it compensates for an existing power imbalance. Others are opposed to this use of evaluation in principle. Again, there is a concern that evaluation can be misused for personal or political gain.

Evaluation can be used to support pluralism and democracy.

*Exploring diverse perspectives.* Evaluation can provide a forum for listening to and sharing the perspectives of all stakeholders, including front-line staff, program participants, and marginalized groups, whose views are not always heard. In doing so, it can legitimate pluralism and foster a greater appreciation of inclusiveness and diversity.

*Supporting a more democratic process for program decision-making.* Evaluation can increase the involvement of service delivery staff and participants in future design and delivery decisions. Thus, it can empower those who traditionally have had little influence on programs.

Evaluation can reform organizations through the free flow of information, and foster a greater appreciation of democracy.

## **Cohesion and Collaboration**

Evaluation can increase consistency and communication between departments or organizations.

Evaluation can provide a common framework for understanding, delivering, monitoring and evaluating a program among different departments or organizations. It can facilitate the sharing of knowledge across systems. Evaluation can also help develop a supportive network of individuals participating in similar but different processes.

Evaluation can build energy and enthusiasm within the program team.

*Building pride and confidence.* Evaluation can help provide a feeling of pride and satisfaction among managers and staff. Staff may be gratified that they have systematically explored questions about the value of the program rather than just relying on assumptions. They may also feel good about identifying ways to better serve their clientele and meet their objectives. Also, in many program areas, such as where staff are working constantly with people who have severe problems, there can be a very real risk of burnout. Evaluation can provide a way for staff to step back and to realize that they *have* made a difference.

*Building cohesion and enthusiasm.* Evaluation can provide an opportunity for all staff to view themselves as part of a team that is dedicated to achieving shared goals. It can increase morale, buy-in, and commitment to the program.



## EVALUATION OUTPUTS

It is useful at this point to revisit the reasons we studied evaluation outputs. The model shown on page 3 indicates that outputs are an important link between the knowledge elements (inputs) and the benefits (outcomes) of evaluation. Specifically:

1. For the purposes of advocacy, outputs should help us determine if the benefits we have attributed to evaluation do in fact result from evaluation activities.
2. For the purposes of the Core Body of Knowledge, outputs help us determine which knowledge and skills people need to make certain evaluation benefits possible.

Outputs, then, are concepts that allow us to consciously reflect on how we take our knowledge and translate it into something from which others can gain some benefits. Of course, this process is rarely as simple or straightforward as the model makes it seem. It can happen in many direct or indirect ways, often interacting with other factors, some of which are beyond the control of those conducting the evaluation. Exploring outputs is nonetheless useful to give us a better appreciation of how evaluation knowledge and activities can ultimately lead to benefits.

Evaluation activities can manifest themselves in many and varied outputs. Through the review of the literature, the two consultations with the evaluation community, and the discussions of the reference panel, we have identified 27 evaluation outputs.<sup>11</sup> The outputs are articulated in this section, grouped by evaluation type. A summary is shown on the following page.

### Needs Assessment Outputs

- Description of unmet needs, for example:
  - Specific needs of existing clients
  - The type, magnitude, and distribution of a social problem
  - Trends in social problems
  - Clients' strengths and assets
  - Existing programs that serve identified needs
  - Gaps in service

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<sup>11</sup> **Analysis Notes:** A number of evaluation outputs were included in the submissions for the first consultation. We listed these and combined similar ones, then used some of the more common ones as a starter list for the second consultation, deliberately keeping the list brief. However, few new outputs were identified through the second consultation. Those that were suggested were incorporated into the list.

Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey (1999) provide one of the few comprehensive taxonomies of outputs, which appears to include those identified elsewhere and also through our consultations. We consulted their text to identify examples of the outputs in our list, as well as to add to the list. Because evaluation outputs are manifestations of activities, we found that most of the outputs could be grouped easily into categories reflecting the types of evaluation described in the text.

# CANADIAN EVALUATION SOCIETY PROJECT IN SUPPORT OF ADVOCACY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## OUTPUTS AT A GLANCE

### **Needs Assessment Outputs**

- Description of unmet needs

### **Evaluability Assessment Outputs**

- Description of program design and logic
- Articulation of standards for performance or criteria for success
- Description of the context of the program
- Determination of readiness for/appropriateness of evaluation

### **Process Evaluation Outputs**

- Description of program implementation
- Comparison of actual events with the program plan or performance standards
- Explanations of why implementation has deviated from the plan

### **Outcome/Impact Evaluation Outputs**

- Description of program outcomes
- Identification of unexpected/unwanted outcomes
- Attributions linking outcomes to specific interventions
- Identification of factors that affect the effectiveness of an intervention
- Determination of merit or worth

### **Efficiency Assessment Outputs**

- Description of program costs
- Estimation of the value of program outcomes
- Comparison of value for money

### **Outputs of Stakeholder Involvement**

- Involvement of stakeholders in some or all evaluation activities
- Integration of the evaluation with the customs of the stakeholders' or the program's culture
- Consultation with stakeholders to solicit their views of the program
- Sharing of results with stakeholders
- Positive relationships between the evaluator and the program stakeholders
- New partnerships
- On-the-project training in evaluation for program managers and other stakeholders

### **Outputs Spanning all Types of Evaluation**

- Performance indicators and indicator systems
- Evaluation tools
- New questions about the program
- Syntheses of previous research
- Suggestions of good practices
- Recommendations

### **Evaluability Assessment Outputs**

- Description of program design and logic, for example:
  - Its goals and objectives
  - The target group
  - Identification of stakeholders
  - Anticipated resources
  - Intended activities
  - Expected outcomes
  - Linkages between activities and expected outcomes
  
- Articulation of criteria for success, for example:
  - Identification of the values of different stakeholder groups
  - Specific standards for performance
  
- Description of the context of the program, for example:
  - Organizational context
  - Communication channels
  - The funding environment
  - Other related programs
  
- Determination of readiness for/appropriateness of evaluation, for example:
  - Identification of the stage at which the program is
  - Identification of steps that should be taken prior to evaluation
  - Identification of the most appropriate types of evaluation for the program

### **Process Evaluation Outputs**

- Description of program implementation, for example:
  - Who the actual participants are
  - What resources (human, monetary, etc.) are available and expended
  - What activities are occurring
  - How the activities are carried out (quality, timeliness, etc.)
  
- Comparison of actual events with the program plan or performance standards
  
- Explanations of why implementation has deviated from the plan

### Outcome/Impact Evaluation Outputs

- Description of program outcomes, for example:
  - Change in condition (e.g., health)
  - Change in status (e.g., employment status)
  - Change in behaviour (e.g., frequency of alcohol use)
  - Change in functioning (e.g., level of mobility)
  - Change in attitude (e.g., attitudes about eating vegetables)
  - Change in feeling (e.g., feelings of belonging)
  - Change in perception (e.g., perceptions of young people)
- Identification of unexpected or unwanted program outcomes, for example:
  - A program has the opposite effect than was intended
  - A program has positive side effects that were not anticipated or planned
  - A program has negative side effects that may or may not have been anticipated
- Attributions linking outcomes to specific interventions, for example:
  - Changes in outcomes over time
  - Comparing outcomes with comparison groups
  - Identification of confounding factors that might obscure or enhance apparent effects
  - Identification of effective practices/activities
  - Identification of ineffective practices/activities
- Identification of factors that affect the effectiveness of an intervention, for example:
  - Population demographics
  - General economic conditions
  - Staff enthusiasm
  - Leadership
  - Organizational context
  - Political/social context
  - Available resources
- Determination of merit or worth, for example:
  - Comparison of actual outcomes with performance standards or criteria for success
  - Comparison with other programs that have similar goals

### Efficiency Assessment Outputs

- Description of program expenditures and other costs, for example:
  - Direct, monetary costs
  - Indirect costs such as time, effort, lost opportunities
- Estimation of the value of program outcomes, for example:
  - Monetary value of specific outcomes
  - Relative value (in non-monetary terms) of specific outcomes

- Comparison of value for money, for example:
  - Payoff per dollar of expenditure
  - Cost of achieving a given outcome

### Outputs of Stakeholder Involvement

The literature on evaluation utilization suggests that *how* evaluation is done (i.e. the process) can be at least as important to its ultimate impact as what exactly it says or concludes.<sup>12</sup> For example, process use of evaluation is thought to generate interest in continuous quality improvement, increase commitment to the program, and increase knowledge and awareness that staff members maintain and use.

Outputs relating to stakeholder involvement in the evaluation, at various levels, include:

- Involvement of stakeholders in some or all evaluation activities, for example:
  - discussions about program
  - designing the evaluation
  - developing instruments
  - collecting data
  - interpreting data
  - action planning
  - communicating results
- Integration of the evaluation with the customs of the stakeholders' or the program's culture
- Consultation with stakeholders to solicit their views of the program
- Sharing of results with stakeholders
- Positive relationships between the evaluator and the program stakeholders, for example:
  - A level of trust
  - Respect for one another's skills/responsibilities
- New partnerships
- On-the-project training in evaluation for program managers and other stakeholders

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example:

Patton, M.Q. (1997). *Utilization-focused evaluation: The new century text* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

### Outputs Spanning All Types of Evaluation

- Performance indicators and indicator systems
- Evaluation tools, for example:
  - Evaluation questions
  - A description of the evaluation methods
  - Data collection frameworks and tools
  - Analytical frameworks
- New questions about the program, for example:
  - Why one program site seems to produce better outcomes than others
  - Why some clients seem to be doing better than others
- Syntheses of previous research, for example:
  - Findings from previous evaluations of the program
  - Findings from the research literature
- Suggestions of good practices, for example:
  - Alternate service delivery models
  - Methods used by similar programs to overcome similar problems
- Recommendations, for example:
  - Ways to improve program design
  - Ways to improve program implementation
  - Recommendations about program expansion, continuation, or termination
  - Recommendations about resource allocation

## EVALUATION KNOWLEDGE ELEMENTS

Knowledge elements are the knowledge, skills, and effective practices that are required to conduct evaluation activities. Before articulating the knowledge elements, we would like to emphasize four points:

- 1) *Knowledge and skill requirements vary from evaluation to evaluation.* While some knowledge and skills might be important for almost any evaluation, others are only applicable in certain situations. For example, we believe that ethical conduct, being able to focus the evaluation, and interpersonal and communication skills are likely to be useful in every evaluation, whereas survey methods, questionnaire development, and quantitative analysis would be useful in some evaluations but not in others.

It may be helpful to view the list of knowledge elements as a toolkit from which evaluators can select the tools that are most appropriate for the specific evaluation, taking into account the context of the evaluation and the desired benefits.

- 2) *This is **not** a list of what every evaluator should know.* Evaluation has a wide range of methods and approaches. It is not possible, or even desirable, for any one person to have an in-depth knowledge of everything. Evaluators need to be:
  - a. aware of the different methods and approaches,
  - b. able to realistically assess their own capabilities, and
  - c. able to assemble teams of people with the knowledge and skills needed for a specific evaluation.

It may in fact be possible to define a set of core skills and knowledge that all evaluators *should* know. We were unable to do so based on the results of this project, but this list may provide a starting point for further exploration.

- 3) *“Soft” skills may be particularly important.* Skills such as effective listening, questioning, and negotiation were emphasized in the consultations, and also by participants of the conference discussion sessions. Because of the applied nature of evaluation, these skills are important across all stages of the evaluation process. In the words of one conference session participant, *“You can have the strongest academic credentials, but if you don’t have the skills on the people side, they’re no good.”* It will be important to consider these soft skills in professional development planning.
- 4) *This list will change.* This list of knowledge elements and resources is intended to be dynamic, not definitive or exhaustive. There are certainly other good resources in existence now, and others will become available in the future. New approaches and methods will also be developed. The list will need to evolve along with the field.

## Evaluation Knowledge Elements

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This section articulates the 23 general knowledge elements that were identified through the course of the project. For each general knowledge element, we have identified more specific knowledge, skills, or practices, which are shown in the tables in this section. We have also suggested relevant resources that have good discussions of each item.<sup>13</sup> The general knowledge elements are summarized on page 33.

In some instances, respondents commented on the necessity of the knowledge elements. Disparate views among respondents may indicate areas of controversy, or may simply indicate that different evaluations have different knowledge requirements.

### Ethics

#### Ethical conduct

K	S	P	Items	Resource(s)
✓			Knowledge and application of ethical guidelines	<i>CES Guidelines for Ethical Conduct</i> AEA (1994) AES (1997) AfrEA (2000) Sanders (1994) Newman & Brown (1996) CIDA (2000)
		✓	Respect the human dignity and worth of the people involved in the program and in the evaluation	
		✓	Behave with sensitivity to the cultural and social environment of the program and its stakeholders	
		✓	Ensure the honesty and integrity of the evaluation	
		✓	Act in the best interest of the program stakeholders and the general public	
		✓	Disclose biases, conflicts of interest, any limitations in approaches or skills, etc.	
✓			Freedom of information and protection of privacy	Provincial legislation

#### Legend

K = Knowledge

S = Skill

P = Practice

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<sup>13</sup> **Analysis Notes:** A number of evaluation knowledge elements were mentioned in the submissions for the first consultation. A good many others were listed in King et al.'s (2001) taxonomy of essential evaluator competencies. We used some of the more common ones as a starter list for the second consultation, deliberately keeping the list brief. While some new knowledge elements were suggested in the second consultation, we still did not feel that the list was comprehensive. We therefore reviewed numerous evaluation texts and articles to identify additional knowledge elements and associated resources.

**CANADIAN EVALUATION SOCIETY PROJECT IN SUPPORT OF  
ADVOCACY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**KNOWLEDGE ELEMENTS AT A GLANCE**

**Ethics**

- Ethical conduct
- Competence and quality assurance

**Evaluation Planning and Design**

- Understanding the program
- Assessing readiness for the evaluation
- Focusing the evaluation
- Systems theory, organizational development, and change
- Specific types of evaluation
- History of evaluation, evaluation theory, and evaluation models
- Research design
- Constructing meaning
- Selecting appropriate data collection and analysis methods
- Effective practices in applied research

**Data Collection**

- Sampling
- Measurement issues
- Data collection methods

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

- Qualitative analysis
- Quantitative analysis
- Determining merit or worth
- Critical thinking skills

**Communication and Interpersonal Skills**

- Interpersonal skills
- Reporting skills
- Other communication skills

**Project Management**

- Managing evaluation projects

## Evaluation Knowledge Elements

### Competence and quality assurance

<b>K</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Resource(s)</b>
✓			Awareness of the steps in conducting an evaluation	<i>CES Essential Skills Series (#2)</i> Any introductory evaluation text
✓			Awareness of risks to the integrity of the evaluation process	Rose (2001)
		✓	Self-assessment of competency to perform the evaluation (knowing own limits)	King (2001) QRCA (2002)
		✓	Ongoing improvement of skills, knowledge, networks	<i>CES Guidelines for Ethical Conduct</i>
✓			Application of standards for evaluation	<i>CES Guidelines for Ethical Conduct</i> Sanders (1994) Newman & Brown (1996)
✓			Meta-evaluation	Cook & Gruder (1978) Scriven (1969) Stufflebeam (1981)

### **Evaluation Planning and Design**

#### Understanding the program

<b>K</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Resource(s)</b>
		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Become familiar with the program</li> </ul>	Owen, with Rogers (1999) TBS (1998) Most introductory evaluation texts
	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze the social, political, and cultural context of the program (legislation, similar programs, culture-specific understandings, relationships, communication patterns, agendas, etc.)</li> </ul>	TBS (1998) Owen, with Rogers (1999) CIDA (2000) Patton (1997)
		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a program description</li> </ul>	<i>CES Essential Skills Series (#2)</i>
	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a logic model</li> </ul>	Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey (1999) Smith (1989) Rutman (1980) Wholey (1977) Wholey, Hatry, & Newcomer (1994) Wong-Rieger & David (1995) W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2001).

## Evaluation Knowledge Elements

Respondents indicated that it was important to understand various aspects of the program, including the context and the need being served. Without this knowledge, the evaluators may evaluate the wrong thing or misinterpret the results.

### Assessing readiness for the evaluation

K	S	P	Item	Resource(s)
	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine if it is appropriate to evaluate the program</li> </ul>	Wholey (1977) Wholey (1994)

### Focusing the evaluation

K	S	P	Item	Resource(s)
		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtain the cooperation of stakeholder groups</li> </ul>	Owen, with Rogers (1999) Patton (1997) CIDA (2002)
		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be clear who is the client</li> </ul>	Owen, with Rogers (1999) Kellogg Foundation (1998) Cresswell (2002) Porteous et al. (1997) Any introductory evaluation text
		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify stakeholders</li> </ul>	
	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the goals and values of the stakeholders</li> </ul>	
	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify program objectives</li> </ul>	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify information needs</li> </ul>	
	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specify evaluation questions</li> </ul>	

Respondents felt that knowing how to focus the evaluation was key, and that no evaluation should be conducted without this first step.

### Systems theory, organizational development, and change

K	S	P	Item	Resource(s)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge of organizational development and change</li> </ul>	Senge (1990)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge management</li> </ul>	Harvard Business Review (1998)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge of evaluation's role in organizational development and change</li> </ul>	Weiss (1999; 1977) Chelimsky & Shadish (1997) Cousins & Earl (1995)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge of evaluation uses (e.g., formative, summative)</li> </ul>	Scriven (1991) Patton (1997)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding of how decisions are made in a political context</li> </ul>	Weiss (1999; 1977) Chelimsky & Shadish (1997)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Systems approaches, systems thinking</li> </ul>	Flood (1999) Williams (Work in progress)

## Evaluation Knowledge Elements

✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chaos and complexity theories</li> </ul>	Axelrod (2000) Stacey, Griffin, & Shaw (2000)
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Having an understanding of organizational systems and change allows the evaluators to help managers introduce and manage change, and to design recommendations that are likely to have maximum impact.

### Specific types of evaluation

<b>K</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Resource(s)</b>
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs assessment</li> </ul>	Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey (1999) <i>CES Essential Skills Series (#2)</i>
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluability assessment</li> </ul>	Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey (1999) Smith (1989) Rutman (1980) Wholey (1977) Wholey, Hatry, & Newcomer (1994) Wong-Rieger & David (1995) Hudson et al. (1992)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process evaluation/implementation evaluation</li> </ul>	Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey (1999) <i>CES Essential Skills Series (#3)</i> Hudson et al. (1992)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outcome evaluation/impact assessment</li> </ul>	Mohr (1995) Hudson et al. (1992) Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey (1999) Posavac & Carey (1997) <i>CES Essential Skills Series (#4)</i>
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Efficiency evaluation/Cost analysis</li> </ul>	Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey (1999)

Respondents indicated that the evaluators should be familiar with, or even have a thorough knowledge of, many types of evaluation.

### History of evaluation, evaluation theory, and evaluation models

Some respondents felt that people who conduct an evaluation should be familiar with basic evaluation models. However, others suggested that knowledge of models is irrelevant for most evaluations, since they are eclectic.

## Evaluation Knowledge Elements

<b>K</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Resource(s)</b>
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various theories of evaluation</li> </ul>	Shadish, Cook, & Leviton (1995)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History of evaluation</li> </ul>	Chelimsky & Shadish (1997) Shadish, Cook, & Leviton (1995) House (1993) Segsworth (2001)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilization-focused</li> </ul>	Patton (1997)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empowerment</li> </ul>	Fetterman, et al. (1996)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory</li> </ul>	Cousins & Earl (1995) CIDA (2002)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal-free</li> </ul>	Scriven (1991)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realistic Evaluation</li> </ul>	Pawson & Tilley (1997)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other models</li> </ul>	Stufflebeam (2001)

### Research design

<b>K</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Resource(s)</b>
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experimental, quasi-experimental, non-experimental</li> </ul>	Campbell & Stanley (1966) Cook & Campbell (1979) Posavac & Carey (1997)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longitudinal</li> </ul>	Pedhazur et al. (1991)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case study</li> </ul>	Yin (1989)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnography</li> </ul>	Fetterman (1989)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Naturalistic inquiry</li> </ul>	Denzin (1971) Guba & Lincoln. (1981)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phenomenology and epistemology</li> </ul>	Campbell (1988)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program review</li> </ul>	
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey research</li> </ul>	Santo Pietro (1983) Dillman (2000) Fink (2002)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed method</li> </ul>	Cook & Campbell (1979) Datta (1997) Cresswell (2002) Mertens (1997)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ruling out alternative interpretations</li> </ul>	Campbell & Stanley (1966) Cook & Campbell (1979)

Some respondents indicated that it is helpful to understand many types of evaluation design. However, others suggested that knowledge of one or more types of research design is not usually possible in the real world.

## Evaluation Knowledge Elements

### Constructing meaning

<b>K</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Resource(s)</b>
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluation paradigms (e.g., positivism, constructivism, collaborative interpretation, hermeneutics)</li> </ul>	Cronbach and associates (1980) Guba & Lincoln (1989)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human construction of meaning</li> </ul>	Gilovich (1991) Guba & Lincoln (1989)

Some respondents indicated that having a conceptual framework is helpful. Others thought that the people conducting the evaluation should understand how participants and staff construct reality in the program being evaluated. Still others felt that knowledge of paradigms was not important in simple evaluations, because academic rigour is not required.

### Selecting appropriate data collection and analysis methods

<b>K</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Resource(s)</b>
	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selecting appropriate data collection and analysis methods</li> </ul>	Owen, with Rogers (1999) Campbell (1988) Chelimsky & Shadish (1997) Patton (1997) Cook & Reichardt (1979)

Some respondents felt that this skill was important to allow the evaluators to select among a variety of methods and sources for quality, reliability, etc. They also felt that it was important to tailor methods to different respondent groups and evaluation activities. Other respondents felt that this skill was not essential.

### Effective practices in applied research

Respondents indicated that this knowledge element was critical to conducting a good evaluation.

## Evaluation Knowledge Elements

K	S	P	Item	Resource(s)
		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triangulation, multiple methods, multiple perspectives, multiple lines of evidence</li> </ul>	Campbell and Stanley (1966) Cook and Campbell (1979)
		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement of stakeholders</li> </ul>	Cousins & Earl (1995) Fetterman et al. (1996) Patton (1997) CIDA (2002)
		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate consultation as appropriate</li> </ul>	Cousins & Earl (1995) Patton (1997)
		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to design the evaluation to minimize intrusiveness</li> </ul>	Patton (1997) Webb et. al. (1966)
		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to adapt the evaluation to situational needs/constraints</li> </ul>	Patton (1997)
		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to adapt/change study as needed</li> </ul>	Patton (1997)
		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention to cross-cultural, gender, or age issues</li> </ul>	CIDA (2002)

## Data Collection

### Sampling

K	S	P	Item	Resource(s)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Probability sampling</li> </ul>	Dillman (2000) Fink (2002)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purposeful sampling</li> </ul>	Patton (2001a) Marshall & Rossman (1999)
	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of when to use/not to use different types of sampling</li> </ul>	Patton (2001a) Marshall & Rossman (1999) Fink (2002)

Respondents noted that, in some cases, the population is too small for sampling. However, even in these cases, the people conducting the evaluation may still find useful to have knowledge of sampling issues so that they can address stakeholder questions about sampling.

## Evaluation Knowledge Elements

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### Measurement issues

<b>K</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Resource(s)</b>
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reliability</li></ul>	Campbell and Stanley (1966) Pedhazur et al. (1991) Patton (2001a)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Validity</li></ul>	Campbell and Stanley (1966) Pedhazur et al. (1991) Patton (2001a)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Psychometric theory, including factor analysis</li></ul>	Pedhazur et al. (1991) Nunnally & Bernstein (1994)

Some respondents felt that knowledge of measurement issues was not relevant for all evaluations. However, others indicated that such knowledge was key to accurate assessment of program effectiveness. They felt that the absence of this would result in impressionistic evaluation with poor data reliability. They further noted that the applied nature of evaluation makes this particularly important since it is even more vulnerable to the many threats to reliability and validity (e.g., sampling bias, measurement bias, research design bias).

### Data collection methods

Respondents noted that a range of data collection methods may be required for a given project, and that the relative importance of each method would depend on the specifics of the evaluation. However, they felt that knowledge of at least some data collection methods was essential, because evaluation is about research, which requires data collection.

## Evaluation Knowledge Elements

<b>K</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Resource(s)</b>
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature review</li> </ul>	Cooper (1998)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program records, documents</li> </ul>	Guba & Lincoln. (1981)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance measurement systems, program information systems, indicator systems, monitoring systems</li> </ul>	Mayne (1999) Montague (1997) Perrin (1998) Hatry (1999)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questionnaires</li> </ul>	Dillman (2000) Marshall & Rossman (1999) Fink (2002)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews</li> </ul>	Marshall & Rossman (1999) Denzin & Lincoln (1994) Fink (2002) Patton (2001a) Guba & Lincoln. (1981)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus groups</li> </ul>	Krueger & Casey (2000) Morgan & Krueger (1997)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observation</li> </ul>	Marshall & Rossman (1999) Santo Pietro (1983) Patton (2001a) Webb et al. (1966) Guba & Lincoln. (1981)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant observation</li> </ul>	Marshall & Rossman (1999) Santo Pietro (1983) Patton (2001a)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group concept development, brainstorming, etc.</li> </ul>	Santo Pietro (1983)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Town hall meetings and other group processes</li> </ul>	Santo Pietro (1983)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expert opinion (e.g., delphi)</li> </ul>	Dick (2000)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experiential methods (games, classroom activities)</li> </ul>	Santo Pietro (1983) Hart (1994)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Projective techniques and psychological tests</li> </ul>	Marshall & Rossman (1999)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narrative inquiry, logs, journals, oral histories</li> </ul>	Santo Pietro (1983) Schwandt (2001)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using physical evidence</li> </ul>	Marshall & Rossman (1999) Santo Pietro (1983)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unobtrusive evidence</li> </ul>	Webb et al. (1966) Marshall & Rossman (1999) Guba & Lincoln. (1981)

For overviews/discussions of many of these, see: Love (1991b), the CES Evaluation Sourcebooks, or most general texts (e.g. Owen with Rogers, Worthen, Mertens, Rossi & Freeman).

## Data Analysis and Interpretation

### Qualitative analysis

K	S	P	Item	Resource(s)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narrative review</li> </ul>	
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content analysis, quantifying qualitative data</li> </ul>	Marshall & Rossman (1999) Miles & Huberman (1995) Patton (2001a)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying and verifying emergent themes</li> </ul>	Marshall & Rossman (1999) Miles & Huberman (1995) Patton (2001a)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grounded theory</li> </ul>	Glaser (1992)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flow diagrams</li> </ul>	

Respondents indicated that a certain level of knowledge is important to ensure the appropriate type of data is collected.

### Quantitative analysis

K	S	P	Item	Resource(s)
	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Database construction and manipulation</li> </ul>	
		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handling missing data</li> </ul>	
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, etc.)</li> </ul>	Knapp (1996) Jaeger (1990) Any social science statistics text
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple regression and analysis of variance</li> </ul>	Knapp (1996) Jaeger (1990) Pedhazur (1997) Any social science statistics text
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meta-analysis</li> </ul>	Glass (1977)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trend analysis</li> </ul>	
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structural equation modeling</li> </ul>	Kenny (1979)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost-effectiveness analysis, case costing, financial analyses, etc.</li> </ul>	Posavac & Carey (1997) Kee (1994)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of regular analysis and reporting systems (to go with MIS, performance measures)</li> </ul>	Nutter (1992)

See also the CES *Evaluation Method Sourcebooks*.

## Evaluation Knowledge Elements

Respondents indicated that a certain level of knowledge is important to ensure the appropriate methods are used at the appropriate times. Some respondents indicated that there are some instances where knowledge of quantitative analysis methods are not required.

### Determining merit or worth

<b>K</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Resource(s)</b>
✓			• Grading	
✓			• Ranking	
✓			• Setting criteria (e.g., based on specific program experience and perceptions)	
✓			• Making judgments	

Respondents indicated that this knowledge element is helpful for determining an agreed-upon standard for assessing effectiveness. They suggested that caution was warranted when dealing with and acknowledging various value systems and social groups involved in the program.

### Critical thinking skills

<b>K</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Resource(s)</b>
	✓		• Analysis	
	✓		• Synthesis	
	✓		• Problem solving	Block (2000)
	✓		• Conceptual thinking	Block (2000)
		✓	• Openness to unintended impacts and effects	Sanders (1994)
		✓	• Neutrality	Sanders (1994)
		✓	• Courage to question the system	Kushner (2000)
		✓	• Inquisitiveness, curiosity	
		✓	• Thinking outside the box	Senge (1990)
	✓		• Drawing conclusions	CIDA (2002) Porteous et al. (1997)
	✓		• Making recommendations	CIDA (2002) Porteous et al. (1997) Patton (1997) Sonnichsen (1994)

Some of these are touched upon in Perrin (2000).

Respondents suggested that critical thinking skills were important for looking at the big picture, which may go beyond immediate issues. Some respondents felt these skills were useful ways for external evaluators to add value to the study.

## Communication and Interpersonal Skills

### Interpersonal skills

K	S	P	Item	Resource(s)
	✓		• Facilitation	Kaner et al. (1996)
	✓		• Negotiation	Fisher, Ury, & Patton (1991) Barrington (1992)
	✓		• Diplomacy	Carnegie (1981)
	✓		• Group processing	Kaner et al. (1996)
	✓		• Collaboration, team player	
	✓		• Motivating others	Carnegie (1981)
	✓		• Conflict resolution; Dealing with antagonistic people	Brounstein (2001)
	✓		• Political astuteness, perceptiveness	Barrington (1992)
	✓		• Ability to work within a multicultural environment	Jennings (1992)
✓			• Adult education principles and techniques	Knowles, Holton, & Swanson (2000)

Respondents indicated that interpersonal skills are essential on a day-to-day basis; because evaluation occurs in an applied setting, evaluators have to work with others. Negotiation skills were deemed particularly important to for getting access for the evaluation, obtaining resources, getting appropriate participation, and building support for the final report

### Reporting skills

K	S	P	Item	Resource(s)
	✓		• Presentations	Torres, Preskill & Piontek (1996) Carnegie (1977)
	✓		• Report writing	Torres, Preskill & Piontek (1996) CIDA (2002) Cresswell (2002)
	✓		• Preparation of cabinet documents and presentations	See requirements for each jurisdiction
	✓		• Graphical displays	Henry (1992)
	✓		• Media communications	Torres, Preskill & Piontek (1996)
	✓		• Presenting negative/lukewarm evaluation results constructively	Torres, Preskill & Piontek (1996)
		✓	• Regular and timely communications	Barrington (1992)
	✓		• Development of a communication strategy	Torres, Preskill & Piontek (1996)

## Evaluation Knowledge Elements

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Respondents indicated that reporting skills were essential for decision-making, and for ensuring that the evaluator has thought it through. They noted that there is not much point to conducting an evaluation if the results are not presented to program stakeholders effectively.

### Other communication skills

<b>K</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Resource(s)</b>
	✓		• Questioning	Perrin (2001)
	✓		• Active listening	Brounstein (2001)
	✓		• Sensitivity	Hunsaker & Alessandra (1980)
	✓		• Probing, obtaining clarification	Lewis (1999) Block (2000)

Respondents indicated that these communication skills were essential on a day-to-day basis for involving stakeholders, data collection, and disseminating results.

## Project Management

### Managing evaluation projects

<b>K</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Resource(s)</b>
		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be clear who is the client</li> </ul>	Sanders (1994)
	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiscal responsibility, budgeting</li> </ul>	Sanders (1994) Marshall & Rossman (1999) Lewis (1999)
	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheduling, time management</li> </ul>	Lewis (1999)
✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk management</li> </ul>	Lewis (1999)
	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assembling an evaluation team</li> </ul>	Bell (1994) Sanders (1994)
		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making use of outside expertise (e.g., advisory committees, specialists/experts, subcontractors)</li> </ul>	
	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing a team; supervising</li> </ul>	Bell (1994) Hunsaker & Alessandra (1980)
	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposal writing, competitive proposal process (for contracts and/or grants)</li> </ul>	
	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessing needed resources, including personnel, information, instruments, funding</li> </ul>	
	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizing resources, maximizing use of available resources, doing evaluation on a shoestring</li> </ul>	Favaro & Ferris (1991)
	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing formal agreements</li> </ul>	Sanders (1994)
	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computer skills</li> </ul>	
		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good documentation practices</li> </ul>	Sanders (1994)
		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematically reviewing data, analyses, and reports for accuracy/quality</li> </ul>	Sanders (1994)

## RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE ELEMENTS, OUTPUTS, AND BENEFITS

We had initially hoped to be able to describe how each output contributes to each benefit, and which knowledge elements are needed to produce which outputs. While the consultations provided interesting information about benefits, outputs, and knowledge elements, we were unable to draw conclusions about the relationships between them.

In retrospect, our initial hopes were likely unrealistic. The review of the literature, the consultations, and the discussions of our reference panel all underscored the incredible diversity and complexity of evaluation practice. Reference panel members, in particular, cautioned us against getting too linear and specific, and questioned the initial assumptions that this would be possible. Evaluation interacts with many other factors within a complex environment. In reality, outputs are only able to produce benefits if they are applied in the right way to the right situation. No single output is going to be appropriate for all situations or all purposes. Likewise, the knowledge required to conduct an evaluation will depend on the purpose of the evaluation, the approach of the evaluators, and the specific circumstances in which the evaluation takes place.

In sum, we believe that there are no simple answers to the research questions:

- *How exactly does each type of output contribute to each benefit?*
- *What are the knowledge elements that are needed to produce the various types of outputs?*

It is nonetheless important to think about these questions, and we compliment CES (as have others) for daring to tackle this ambitious project. Although simple answers may be beyond our grasp, the quest for understanding will contribute to the development of the field.

To stimulate further thinking and determine if this avenue is worthy of further study, we have conducted some preliminary explorations of the relationships between benefits and outputs, and between outputs and knowledge elements. While our explorations are at this point subjective, they have resulted in additional insights. The results of this activity are annexed to this report.

In our explorations, we found that it was quite difficult to define the relationships in the abstract. There were often many possible routes to the same benefit, depending on the evaluator's background and the specifics of the program being evaluated. It may be helpful to think of evaluation outputs and knowledge elements as a toolkit. Evaluators must select the tools that are most appropriate for the specific evaluation, taking into account the context of the evaluation and the desired benefits.

That said, there may be areas of agreement and commonality where evaluators agree on the elements required to make a given benefit possible. In this report, we have attempted to provide a comprehensive, although not perfect, list of benefits, outputs, and knowledge elements, upon which future explorations can build.



## DISCUSSION

This project undertook to answer a set of challenging questions about the essence of program evaluation. Not surprisingly, we found no simple answers. There were some questions we were unable to answer within the resource and methodological constraints of this project, and to some extent we are uncertain that they even can be answered. However, the process of thinking them through is enormously valuable, even if no definitive answers exist. The Canadian Evaluation Society should be applauded for taking the initiative to explore this topic.

This section reviews what has been accomplished over the course of this project, and suggests steps that CES can take to use and build on the results.

### Evaluator engagement in the process

One of the most exciting aspects of this project was getting evaluators engaged in discussing the nature of evaluation. The links that were forged between evaluators, and the thinking that was stimulated, were valuable in and of themselves. Through this engagement process, a number of important considerations were raised that relate to the definition of the field of program evaluation and its promotion. It is worth considering how CES can encourage continued discussion of these issues nationally, as well as on a global scale.

Some of the best Canadian thinking about the implications of this project has been done by La Société québécoise d'évaluation de programme (SQÉP), the Québec chapter of CES, who have devoted substantial time to the consideration of these issues. We suggest that the CES council work with SQÉP to encourage dialogue about these issues both between and within the various CES chapters.

To date, most aspects of the project have been made public through the project website, member broadcasts, listserv postings, and word of mouth. Descriptions of the methods and interim results have been posted on the Internet, and have attracted attention in Canada and around the world. CES should be commended for having the courage to take such an open process to a work in progress. It will be important to maintain transparency and credibility by making the final report available to interested parties.

### Suggestions for CES:

- Post the report on the CES website.
- Publish significant parts of the report in the Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation.
- Provide a mechanism for commentary and input, such as an interactive website.
- Use the project as a means of engaging the international evaluation community in future collaborative work. Some associations are currently involved in complementary projects that could serve as a basis for collaboration (for example, the Australasian Evaluation Society's effort to identify evaluator competencies, and the Qualitative Research Consultants Association's set of draft professional competencies).

- Present the results at the conferences of CES chapters and other national evaluation associations.
- Encourage dialogue about specific questions of interest, both between and within the various CES chapters.
- Collaborate with other evaluation associations when following up on specific questions of interest.
- Take a consultative approach when following up on specific questions of interest.

### Benefits that may be derived from evaluation

The study identified a broad range of benefits that may be derived from evaluation. The benefits were identified through the first consultation and confirmed and improved through the reference panel discussions and the second consultation. The descriptions of sample evaluations in Appendix G provide real world examples of how evaluation has resulted in benefits. The benefit descriptions and the examples can be used for advocacy and professional development.

### Suggestions for CES:

- When determining next steps for advocacy and professional development, consider the concerns that have been identified relating to the promotion of evaluation and the limiting of the field.
- Invite evaluation stakeholders to comment on the identified benefits and their relationship to evaluation outputs, because they may have different opinions than evaluators. For advocacy purposes, it would be valuable to determine what differences in perception exist between stakeholders who are experienced/knowledgeable about evaluation and those who are new to the concept of evaluation.
- Using the benefit descriptions and the descriptions of sample evaluations (Appendix G), develop advocacy materials tailored to specific audiences. The materials can be reviewed by evaluation stakeholders with two simultaneous goals: advocacy and refinement of the list.
- Update *The Value in Evaluation: A Statement for Managers* booklet that CES published in 1989, and post the updated version on the website.
- Develop a checklist or other assessment instrument that individual evaluators can use prior to an evaluation to determine what benefits their project stakeholders hope to derive from an evaluation.
- Develop a measurement tool to assess the benefits stakeholders actually derived from evaluation. Encourage evaluators to use this tool for meta-evaluative purposes, in conjunction with the above-mentioned checklist. CES may also want to collect Canada-wide data using such an instrument.

### Evaluation outputs, knowledge elements, and resources

The study identified a number of evaluation outputs and knowledge elements. Some were identified through the consultations and others through a brief review of the literature. The lists of outputs, knowledge elements, and resources will be a valuable guide for:

- Designing curriculum for evaluation programs and courses;
- Designing professional development workshops to be offered by CES and other organizations;
- Providing evaluators with ideas about alternative methods and approaches; and
- Developing a self-assessment guide for use by evaluators.

Once working lists of outputs, knowledge elements, and resources have been refined, they will need to be kept up-to-date. One efficient way of keeping them up to date is to post the lists on the CES website and allow members to suggest new outputs, knowledge elements, and/or resources, and to suggest that outdated knowledge elements and resources be removed.

It is interesting that, in talking about knowledge elements, evaluators emphasized the importance of “soft skills” such as interpersonal, communication, and project management over skills that are more specific to program evaluation, such as data collection and analysis. This may reflect a particular need for professional development in the softer skills.

Suggestions for CES:

- Publish checklists of evaluation outputs, knowledge elements, and resources that can be used by individual evaluators for the purpose of self-assessment, continued competence, and evaluation planning.
- Post the lists on the CES website and allow evaluators to submit comments, suggest new items and/or suggest that obsolete or outdated items be removed.
- Use the list to develop workshops for CES members.
- Ensure the list reflects the diversity of the field by seeking verification from evaluators in different positions (academic, consulting, internal) and sectors, and with different approaches (particularly those who have less mainstream approaches to evaluation).
- Assess members’ need for training in interpersonal, communication, and project management skills.

### Relationships between evaluation knowledge elements, outputs, and benefits

We were not able to describe how evaluation outputs contribute to each benefit, or what knowledge elements are needed to produce each output. Members of the reference panel were unsure that it would even be possible to identify definitive relationships in all cases.

In our preliminary explorations of these relationships, we have found that in many cases, the relationship depended not only on the background of the evaluator, but also on the specifics of the evaluation situation. In other words, the relationships between knowledge elements, outputs, and benefits do not appear to be direct and linear. The model on which this project was based may therefore not be appropriate for future work in this area. A more complex, realistic model would help researchers identify the various routes by which an evaluation can produce benefits, and the various factors that help or hinder along the way. In our review of the literature, we did

not come across any other explicit models of how program evaluation works, so the development of such a model could be a major contribution to the field in and of itself.

If the relationships can be better defined, CES may be in a better position to define a Core Body of Knowledge for program evaluation. This would have implications for CES-sponsored workshops and training, and for post-secondary education of evaluators. It would also make it easier for evaluators to determine the knowledge and skills required for a given evaluation, and to assess their capacity to conduct it.

In the meantime, the process of thinking through the relationships between benefits, outputs, and knowledge elements may be a useful activity within the context of a specific evaluation. It can help evaluators focus their thinking by guiding them through the following questions:

- What benefit is the client trying to gain? What other benefits are possible?
- What outputs does the client require? What other outputs are possible?
- What knowledge and skills are required to provide the benefits and outputs?
- Do we have the required knowledge and skills, or can we get them?

Suggestions for CES:

- When training evaluators, provide exposure to a variety of approaches and build awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of each. Also train evaluators in how to deal with difficult choices and trade-offs.
- Develop a tool that evaluators can use to explore the benefits, outputs, and knowledge elements required for a specific evaluation.
- Seek funding for future exploration of the relationships between benefits, outputs, and knowledge elements.
- Begin the research by developing a more complex, realistic model of how program evaluation produces benefits.
- Ensure that evaluators with diverse backgrounds and approaches are involved in the process of exploring the relationships.

### Conclusion

Evaluation is a developing field that will continue to evolve. This is one of the strengths of the field, placing evaluators in a position where they must constantly review and improve their practices. This document identifies some important issues for evaluators, and perhaps evaluation clients, to think about. Implementing the further steps suggested in this section will carry on the dynamic process started by this initiative.

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## Canadian Evaluation Society Project in Support of Advocacy and Professional Development

### ANNEX: EXPLORING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BENEFITS, OUTPUTS, AND KNOWLEDGE ELEMENTS

Under the guidance of the steering committee, the project team conducted some preliminary explorations of the relationships between benefits and outputs, and between outputs and knowledge elements. The purpose of this effort was to stimulate further thinking and to determine if this avenue is worthy of further exploration.

To explore the relationships, we selected three of the benefits, and used an outputs x knowledge elements matrix to determine a) which outputs were required to make the benefit possible, and b) which knowledge elements were required to produce the necessary outputs.<sup>14</sup> Each project team member undertook this activity separately, and then we reviewed each other's work. One of the steering committee members also participated in this activity. The resulting matrices, plus one text-based exploration, are shown at the end of this annex. A blank matrix is also included, and can be used as a worksheet for those who would like to try to replicate our efforts.

Each of the explorations presented in this section represent the views of a single evaluator. As such, they are quite subjective, and thus should not be viewed as a definitive determination of what knowledge elements are required to make a given evaluation benefit possible.

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<sup>14</sup> The instructions for this activity were as follows:

1. Select a benefit for exploration.
2. Type/print the name of the benefit in the appropriate place.
3. Refer to the descriptions of the benefit, and the outputs, in the report.
4. Determine how important each output is in making the benefit possible. Rate the output 2 if it is "highly likely to be essential for a given evaluation," and 1 if it is "somewhat likely to be essential for a given evaluation." Leave the box blank if the output is not likely to be essential for making the benefit possible. Burt found he needed to add a category of "?" to indicate that it would depend on how the output was used.
5. Next, focus \*only\* on those outputs to which you have given a "2" rating.
6. For each of these outputs, determine how necessary each knowledge element would be in producing the output. Refer to the report for more detailed descriptions of the knowledge elements. Rate the knowledge element 2 if it is "highly likely to be essential for a given evaluation," and 1 if it is "somewhat likely to be essential for a given evaluation."
7. As you complete the matrix, keep in mind that we are trying to determine what knowledge and skills are required to carry out the evaluation - it does not matter who has the skill. For example, one member of an evaluation team may have expertise in data collection methods, another may have expertise in a specific type of evaluation, and they may contract out the data analysis to a third party; nonetheless, all of these elements might be necessary for producing the output, and should be reflected as such in the matrix.

## Reflections

The purpose of this exercise, as previously mentioned, was to stimulate further thinking and to determine if this avenue is worthy of further exploration. The project team and steering committee reflected on the process of completing this, and made the following observations.

### We felt as though our ratings were arbitrary.

In completing the matrices, we felt that each rating we made was arbitrary. When some of us repeated the exercise twice for the same benefit, we came up with somewhat different results. We also produced different results when trying to replicate each others' matrices. In the words of one project team member, completing the exercise felt "much the same as rolling dice."

Much of the time, we felt that our rating should be "it depends." We noted that:

- There can be multiple routes (including outputs) to a given benefit, requiring a range of potential skills.
- Much depends on the specifics of the program being evaluated.
- One's background, beliefs, and approach to evaluation have a significant impact on which outputs and knowledge elements one deems essential.

### Implications for professional development.

Given that "it depends," perhaps people conducting evaluations really need a good basis in understanding the rationale of a variety of alternative approaches, in order to know which to apply when. In other words, being too specialized, or overly focused on a specific approach or methodology, can be a problem. When training people to conduct evaluations, CES should therefore ensure exposure to a variety of approaches, and build an awareness of their strengths and limitations. Evaluators would also benefit from training in how to deal with difficult choices and trade-offs.

### We are still struggling to achieve a balance between specificity and manageability.

The benefits, outputs, and knowledge elements were interpreted differently by different people, in spite of the descriptions in the report. This is likely because they were stated in general terms. More precision in delineating the benefits, outputs, and knowledge elements would make it easier to determine the relationship between a given benefit and a given output, or between a given output and a given knowledge elements. For an example of this, see the last example in this annex, which shows a text-based exploration.

However, making the terms more precise would also result in a larger number of benefits, outputs, and knowledge elements. The sheer number of items would make the delineation of relationships a huge task. Finding a balance between specificity and manageability remains a challenge.

There are some knowledge elements that are important, even if they do not contribute to outputs. Some knowledge elements seemed to be crucial to an evaluation, but did not contribute directly to the outputs (for example, ethical behaviour or project management). We added a row at the bottom of the matrix where these knowledge elements could be recognized.

This exercise may be a useful planning tool within the context of a specific evaluation.

We believe that this exercise has some promise as a means of conducting a preliminary assessment of what is required for a particular evaluation. Indeed, at this stage, this is how we would recommend that it be used. Going through this exercise could help evaluators focus their thinking by guiding them through the following questions:

- What benefit is the client trying to gain?
- What other benefits are possible? (value-added)
- What outputs does the client require?
- What other outputs are possible? (value-added)
- What knowledge and skills are required to provide the benefits and outputs?
- Do we have the required knowledge and skills, or can we get it?

CES may be able to adapt the matrix as a tool for evaluators. Applied to specific evaluation case studies, the tool could also be useful in training new evaluators. This use of the matrix is consistent with what one of the reference panel members had suggested during the last phase of the reference panel discussions:

*“All of the above purposes would seem to incline one to a more comprehensive list with encouragement to select from within the list according to purpose rather than a more limited, and dare I say, ‘precious’ list.”*

## Analysis of Relationships Between Outputs and Knowledge Elements<sup>15</sup>

**Output under consideration:** Recommendations on increasing cost effectiveness, i.e., reducing the cost of producing any given amount of any given type and quality of desirable outcome while reducing or holding constant the amount of any (unintended) undesirable outcome.

**Benefit under consideration:** More of the good outcomes AND/OR less of the undesirable outcomes produced by the program AND/OR dollar savings (which of course permit the purchase of more of other types of good outcomes).

### Required Knowledge Elements:

- Ability to organize and facilitate QI improvement project teams (interpersonal skills, reporting skills, other communication skills, managing evaluation projects )
- Flow diagrams (critical thinking skills, understanding the program, systems theory etc.)
- Cause and effect diagrams (critical thinking skills, understanding the program, systems theory etc.)
- Pareto Analysis (critical thinking skills, understanding the program, systems theory etc.)
- Histograms (critical thinking skills, understanding the program, systems theory etc.)
- Scatter diagrams (critical thinking skills, understanding the program, systems theory etc.)
- Control charts (critical thinking skills, understanding the program, systems theory etc.)
- Brainstorming (critical thinking skills, understanding the program, systems theory, interpersonal communication, other communication)
- Data collection (research design, selecting appropriate data collection and analysis methods, effective practices in applied research, sampling, data collection methods, quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis)

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<sup>15</sup> Prepared by Bud Long



Outputs x Knowledge Elements Matrix

Benefit: Evaluation can support accountability for program performance and spending

		Knowledge elements (page 2 of 2)										
		Data Collection			Data Analysis and Interpretation				Communication and Interpersonal Skills			Proj Mng
Output x benefit relationship	Outputs	Sampling	Measurement issues	Data collection methods	Qualitative analysis	Quantitative analysis	Determining merit or worth	Critical thinking skills	Interpersonal skills	Reporting skills	Other communication skills	Managing evaluation projects
		<b>Needs Assessment</b>										
	Description of unmet needs											
	<b>Evaluability Assessment</b>											
	Description of program design and logic											
	Articulation of standards for performance or criteria for success											
	Description of the context of the program											
	Determination of readiness for/appropriateness of evaluation											
	<b>Process Evaluation</b>											
2	Description of program implementation		1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	
2	Comparison of actual events with the program plan or performance standards		1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	
2	Explanations of why implementation has deviated from the plan				2	1	2	2	2	2	2	
	<b>Outcome/Impact Evaluation</b>											
2	Description of program outcomes	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	
2	Identification of unexpected/unwanted outcomes	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	
2	Attributions linking outcomes to specific interventions			2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	
2	Identification of factors that affect the effectiveness of an intervention			2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	
2	Determination of merit or worth	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	
	<b>Efficiency Assessment</b>											
2	Description of program costs	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2		
2	Estimation of the value of program outcomes	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2		
2	Comparison of value for money	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2		
	<b>Stakeholder Involvement</b>											
2	Involvement of stakeholders in some or all evaluation activities			2	2			2	2		2	
2	Integration of the evaluation with the customs of the stakeholders' or the program's culture			2				2	2		2	
2	Consultation with stakeholders to solicit their views of the program						2	2	2		2	
2	Sharing of results with stakeholders							2	2	2	2	
2	Positive relationships between the evaluator and the program stakeholders	2	2	2				2	2		2	
2	New partnerships							2	2		2	
2	On-the-project training in evaluation for program managers and other stakeholders							2	2		2	
	<b>General</b>											
2	Evaluation tools	2	2	2	2	2		2				
2	Identification of new questions about the program				2		2	2		2	2	
2	Suggestions of good practices				2			2	2	2	2	
	Recommendations											
	Knowledge elements not associated with specific outputs that would be important for carrying out the evaluation in a way that makes the benefit possible											2

2 = Highly likely to be essential for a given evaluation  
 1 = Somewhat likely to be essential for a given evaluation  
 ? = It depends on the situation and who makes the decision

### Outputs x Knowledge Elements Matrix

*Benefit: Evaluation can help one improve programs (Improving program implementation)*

Output x benefit relationship		Knowledge Elements (page 1 of 2)												
		Ethics		Evaluation Planning and Design										
		Ethical conduct	Competence and quality assurance	Understanding the program	Assessing readiness for the evaluation	Focusing the evaluation	Systems theory, organizational development, and change	Specific types of evaluation	History of evaluation, evaluation theory, and evaluation models	Research design	Constructing meaning	Selecting appropriate data collection and analysis methods	Effective practices in applied research	
<b>Outputs</b>														
	<b>Needs Assessment</b>													
	Description of unmet needs													
	<b>Evaluability Assessment</b>													
2	Description of program design and logic			2		1	1	2				2	1	
2	Articulation of standards for performance or criteria for success			2		2	1	2			2	2	1	
2	Description of the context of the program			2		1	1	2				2	1	
1	Determination of readiness for/appropriateness of evaluation													
	<b>Process Evaluation</b>													
2	Description of program implementation			2		1	1	2				2	1	
2	Comparison of actual events with the program plan or performance standards			2		1		2			2	2	1	
2	Explanations of why implementation has deviated from the plan			2		1	1	2				2	1	
	<b>Outcome/Impact Evaluation</b>													
	Description of program outcomes													
	Identification of unexpected/unwanted outcomes													
	Attributions linking outcomes to specific interventions													
	Identification of factors that affect the effectiveness of an intervention													
	Determination of merit or worth													
	<b>Efficiency Assessment</b>													
	Description of program costs													
	Estimation of the value of program outcomes													
	Comparison of value for money													
	<b>Stakeholder Involvement</b>													
1	Involvement of stakeholders in some or all evaluation activities													
1	Integration of the evaluation with the customs of the stakeholders' or the program's culture													
2	Consultation with stakeholders to solicit their views of the program							1						1
2	Sharing of results with stakeholders			1				2						1
1	Positive relationships between the evaluator and the program stakeholders													
1	New partnerships													
	On-the-project training in evaluation for program managers and other stakeholders													
	<b>General</b>													
2	Evaluation tools													
1	Identification of new questions about the program													
1	Suggestions of good practices													
2	Recommendations	2	2	2				2			2			
	Knowledge elements not associated with specific outputs that would be important for carrying out the evaluation in a way that makes the benefit possible				2					1	1			2

2 = Highly likely to be essential for a given evaluation  
 1 = Somewhat likely to be essential for a given evaluation  
 ? = It depends on the situation and who makes the decision

Annex: Exploring Relationships

Outputs x Knowledge Elements Matrix

Benefit: Evaluation can help one improve programs  
(Improving program implementation)

Prepared by Rochelle Zorzi

		Knowledge elements (page 2 of 2)										
		Data Collection			Data Analysis and Interpretation				Communication and Interpersonal Skills			Proj Mng
Output x benefit relationship	Outputs	Sampling	Measurement issues	Data collection methods	Qualitative analysis	Quantitative analysis	Determining merit or worth	Critical thinking skills	Interpersonal skills	Reporting skills	Other communication skills	Managing evaluation projects
		<b>Needs Assessment</b>										
	Description of unmet needs											
	<b>Evaluability Assessment</b>											
2	Description of program design and logic	1	2	2	2*		2				2	
2	Articulation of standards for performance or criteria for success	1	2	2	2*	2	2	2			2	
2	Description of the context of the program	1	2	2	2*		2				2	
1	Determination of readiness for/appropriateness of evaluation											
	<b>Process Evaluation</b>											
2	Description of program implementation	1	2	2	2*		2				2	
2	Comparison of actual events with the program plan or performance standards		2		2*	2	2				2	
2	Explanations of why implementation has deviated from the plan	1	2	2	2*		2				2	
	<b>Outcome/Impact Evaluation</b>											
	Description of program outcomes											
	Identification of unexpected/unwanted outcomes											
	Attributions linking outcomes to specific interventions											
	Identification of factors that affect the effectiveness of an intervention											
	Determination of merit or worth											
	<b>Efficiency Assessment</b>											
	Description of program costs											
	Estimation of the value of program outcomes											
	Comparison of value for money											
	<b>Stakeholder Involvement</b>											
1	Involvement of stakeholders in some or all evaluation activities											
1	Integration of the evaluation with the customs of the stakeholders' or the program's culture											
2	Consultation with stakeholders to solicit their views of the program							2			2	
2	Sharing of results with stakeholders							2	2		2	
1	Positive relationships between the evaluator and the program stakeholders											
1	New partnerships											
	On-the-project training in evaluation for program managers and other stakeholders											
	<b>General</b>											
2	Evaluation tools			2								
1	Identification of new questions about the program											
1	Suggestions of good practices											
2	Recommendations		2		2*	2	2	2	2	2	2	
	Knowledge elements not associated with specific outputs that would be important for carrying out the evaluation in a way that makes the benefit possible											2

2 = Highly likely to be essential for a given evaluation  
 1 = Somewhat likely to be essential for a given evaluation  
 ? = It depends on the situation and who makes the decision

\*One of these two knowledge elements would be essential

**Outputs x Knowledge Elements Matrix**

*Benefit: Evaluation can be used to support pluralism and democracy*

Prepared by Burt Perrin		Knowledge Elements (page 1 of 2)															
		Ethics		Evaluation Planning and Design													
		Ethical conduct	Competence and quality assurance	Understanding the program	Assessing readiness for the evaluation	Focusing the evaluation	Systems theory, organizational development, and change	Specific types of evaluation	History of evaluation, evaluation theory, and evaluation models	Research design	Constructing meaning	Selecting appropriate data collection and analysis methods	Effective practices in applied research				
<b>Output x benefit relationship</b>	<b>Outputs</b>																
	<b>Needs Assessment</b>																
2	Description of unmet needs	2		2		2											
	<b>Evaluability Assessment</b>																
	Description of program design and logic																
	Articulation of standards for performance or criteria for success																
1	Description of the context of the program																
	Determination of readiness for/appropriateness of evaluation																
	<b>Process Evaluation</b>																
2	Description of program implementation	2		2													
	Comparison of actual events with the program plan or performance standards																
?	Explanations of why implementation has deviated from the plan	2		2	1		2			2							
	<b>Outcome/Impact Evaluation</b>																
?	Description of program outcomes	2		2	2	1	2			1							
2	Identification of unexpected/unwanted outcomes	2		2	2	2	2	2									
	Attributions linking outcomes to specific interventions																
1	Identification of factors that affect the effectiveness of an intervention																
	Determination of merit or worth																
	<b>Efficiency Assessment</b>																
	Description of program costs																
	Estimation of the value of program outcomes																
	Comparison of value for money																
	<b>Stakeholder Involvement</b>																
2	Involvement of stakeholders in some or all evaluation activities	2		2	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	2					
2	Integration of the evaluation with the customs of the stakeholders' or the program's culture	2		2		2	2	2	1	2	2	2					
2	Consultation with stakeholders to solicit their views of the program	2		2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2					
2	Sharing of results with stakeholders	2				2		1		2	2						
2	Positive relationships between the evaluator and the program stakeholders	2		2		2	1	1		2	2	2					
2	New partnerships	2				2						2					
1	On-the-project training in evaluation for program managers and other stakeholders																
	<b>General</b>																
	Evaluation tools																
2	Identification of new questions about the program	2		2		2	2	2			2						
	Suggestions of good practices																
	Recommendations																
	Knowledge elements not associated with specific outputs that would be important for carrying out the evaluation in a way that makes the benefit possible																

2 = Highly likely to be essential for a given evaluation  
 1 = Somewhat likely to be essential for a given evaluation  
 ? = It depends on the situation and who makes the decision

### Outputs x Knowledge Elements Matrix

*Benefit: Evaluation can be used to support pluralism and democracy*

		Knowledge elements (page 2 of 2)										
		Data Collection			Data Analysis and Interpretation				Communication and Interpersonal Skills			Proj Mng
Output x benefit relationship	Outputs	Sampling	Measurement issues	Data collection methods	Qualitative analysis	Quantitative analysis	Determining merit or worth	Critical thinking skills	Interpersonal skills	Reporting skills	Other communication skills	Managing evaluation projects
		<b>Needs Assessment</b>										
2	Description of unmet needs							2	2	2	2	2
	<b>Evaluability Assessment</b>											
	Description of program design and logic											
	Articulation of standards for performance or criteria for success											
1	Description of the context of the program											
	Determination of readiness for/appropriateness of evaluation											
	<b>Process Evaluation</b>											
2	Description of program implementation							1	2	2	2	2
	Comparison of actual events with the program plan or performance standards											
?	Explanations of why implementation has deviated from the plan							2	2	2	2	2
	<b>Outcome/Impact Evaluation</b>											
?	Description of program outcomes											
2	Identification of unexpected/unwanted outcomes							2	2	2	2	2
	Attributions linking outcomes to specific interventions											
1	Identification of factors that affect the effectiveness of an intervention											
	Determination of merit or worth											
	<b>Efficiency Assessment</b>											
	Description of program costs											
	Estimation of the value of program outcomes											
	Comparison of value for money											
	<b>Stakeholder Involvement</b>											
2	Involvement of stakeholders in some or all evaluation activities						2	2	2	2	2	2
2	Integration of the evaluation with the customs of the stakeholders' or the program's culture						2	2	2	2	2	2
2	Consultation with stakeholders to solicit their views of the program						2	2	2	2	2	2
2	Sharing of results with stakeholders						2	2	2	2	2	2
2	Positive relationships between the evaluator and the program stakeholders						2	2	2	2	2	2
2	New partnerships								1	1	1	1
1	On-the-project training in evaluation for program managers and other stakeholders											
	<b>General</b>											
	Evaluation tools											
2	Identification of new questions about the program							2	2	2	2	2
	Suggestions of good practices											
	Recommendations											
	Knowledge elements not associated with specific outputs that would be important for carrying out the evaluation in a way that makes the benefit possible											

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Outputs x Knowledge Elements Matrix

Benefit: \_\_\_\_\_

Output x benefit relationship		Knowledge Elements (page 1 of 2)											
		Ethics		Evaluation Planning and Design									
		Ethical conduct	Competence and quality assurance	Understanding the program	Assessing readiness for the evaluation	Focusing the evaluation	Systems theory, organizational development, and change	Specific types of evaluation	History of evaluation, evaluation theory, and evaluation models	Research design	Constructing meaning	Selecting appropriate data collection and analysis methods	Effective practices in applied research
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	Description of program implementation												
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	Determination of merit or worth												
	<b>Efficiency Assessment</b>												
	Description of program costs												
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Outputs x Knowledge Elements Matrix

Benefit: \_\_\_\_\_

		Knowledge elements (page 2 of 2)										
		Data Collection			Data Analysis and Interpretation				Communication and Interpersonal Skills			Proj Mng
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		<b>Needs Assessment</b>										
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	Explanations of why implementation has deviated from the plan											
	<b>Outcome/Impact Evaluation</b>											
	Description of program outcomes											
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	Attributions linking outcomes to specific interventions											
	Identification of factors that affect the effectiveness of an intervention											
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	New partnerships											
	On-the-project training in evaluation for program managers and other stakeholders											
	<b>General</b>											
	Evaluation tools											
	Identification of new questions about the program											
	Suggestions of good practices											
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## **Appendix A**

### **Description of Methods**



# Canadian Evaluation Society Project in Support of Advocacy and Professional Development

## DESCRIPTION OF METHODS

### Literature Review

We scanned selected texts, articles, and other publications and briefly summarized what we found in relation to evaluation benefits, outputs, processes, and knowledge elements. The literature review was not intended to be a comprehensive summary of the literature. Instead, its primary purposes were to draw attention to key issues and serve as a basis for further discussion. We intentionally kept it brief. The literature review is attached as Appendix A.

### Consultations With the Evaluation Community

#### Consultation #1

The first consultation took place from April 1 to 12, 2002. We used an interactive web-based form to solicit ideas about evaluation benefits from the evaluation community. We informed the evaluation community about the consultation through the CES member broadcast and through postings to six international evaluation discussion groups (EVALTALK, GOVTEVAL, evalbusiness, EvalChat, XC-EVAL, and eee-tig).

Consultation participants were asked to think about a specific program evaluation with which they were familiar; browse the benefits that had already been suggested by other people; and add any benefits that had not already been listed. The web-based form automatically added new suggestions to the list. Participants could also add comments about any of the benefits, and view comments made by other people.

The consultation generated 35 benefit suggestions and a multitude of comments from evaluators in Canada, the United States, Europe, Brazil, and Australia. The suggestions and comments made by the participants are attached verbatim as Appendix B.

#### Consultation #2

The second consultation took place from May 13 to 24, 2002. We used an interactive web-based form to solicit ideas about evaluation benefits, outputs, processes, and knowledge elements. We informed the evaluation community about the consultation through the CES member broadcast and through postings to seven international evaluation discussion groups (EVALTALK, GOVTEVAL, evalbusiness, EvalChat, XC-EVAL, Evaluator, and eee-tig).

Participants were asked to consider a specific evaluation as they completed the consultation. We collected some demographic information about the participants (role in the evaluation, country of residence, CES membership status). Participants could voluntarily provide their name and email

address if they were willing to provide a brief description of the evaluation for the final report. We will follow up to obtain the descriptions as needed.

The first page of the consultation provided a list of evaluation benefits with accompanying descriptions, based on the results of the first phase. Participants were asked to indicate which benefits stakeholders derived from the specific evaluation under consideration. They could add to the list of benefits if they wished. Participants were then asked to select the three benefits they deemed most important for the evaluation.

For each of the three selected benefits, participants then rated the importance of various outputs and processes. We provided a list of outputs and processes for their consideration, but again, they could add to the list.

Finally, participants rated the importance of various knowledge elements in producing all of the outputs and processes, collectively. We provided a preliminary list of knowledge elements. Respondents could provide specific comments for each of the knowledge elements in the list, and could add to the list.

A summary of the results of the second consultation is attached as Appendix E.

### **Conference Discussion Sessions**

We held two discussion sessions at the Canadian Evaluation Society's 2002 Conference in Halifax, NS. The purpose of the discussion sessions was to explore the factors that make evaluation unique from other professional activities such as research, knowledge management, or audit. The discussions explored three interrelated questions:

1. What is unique about evaluation?
2. What do we mean by the 'outputs' of evaluation?
3. What are the knowledge and skills that are needed to do evaluation?

Approximately 25 delegates attended the first discussion session, and approximately 10 were in the second session, which was arranged after the first session became full. The discussions in both sessions were lively, with participants expressing different – and sometimes contrary – opinions.

### **International Reference Panel**

We established a reference panel of individuals who explored the results of the consultations and literature review in greater depth. In addition to the steering committee and project team members, the reference panel included 23 Canadians and 13 evaluators from outside Canada. A range of backgrounds and specialties were represented. A list of reference panel members is shown in Appendix C.

Reference panel communications were conducted through an on-line discussion forum. The panel discussions for the first phase took place between April 10 and 23, 2002. The discussions for the second and third phases were held between May 23 and June 14, 2002.

The literature review and summaries of the consultation results were posted on the reference panel forum. We also posed specific questions to begin the discussion. Panellists raised important considerations about the project and provided suggestions to help complete, interpret, and organize the results.



## **Appendix B**

### **Reference Panel Participant List**



## Canadian Evaluation Society Project in Support of Advocacy and Professional Development

### REFERENCE PANEL PARTICIPANT LIST – CANADA

<i>Name</i>	<i>Province</i>	<i>Sector</i>	<i>Specialty</i>
Gail Pearcey	Newfoundland	Provincial government	Public sector
Stephanie Mowry	PEI	Provincial government	Public sector
Kaireen Chaytor	Nova Scotia	Consulting	Social programs
Natalie Kishchuk	Quebec	Consulting	Health
Jean-René Bibeau	Quebec	Provincial government	Public sector
Jim Cullen	Quebec	Provincial government	Government
Hélène Johnson	Quebec	Academic, consulting	
Sue Weinstein	Ontario	Consulting	Health
Richard Allingham	Ontario	Government	Social programs
Barb van Maris	Ontario	Consulting	Health
Anita Myers	Ontario	Academic	Health
Lyn Shulha	Ontario	Academic	Education, Participatory
Nancy McMahan	Ontario	Federal government	Treasury Board
John Mayne	Ontario	Federal government	Audit, public sector
Steve Montague	Ontario	Consulting	Performance measurement
Greg Mason	Manitoba	Consulting	Economic
Alan Ryan	Saskatchewan	Academic	Education
Christopher Smith	Alberta	Foundation	Social development
Ian Davies	BC	Academic, govt, consult	Public sector
Jim McDavid	BC	Academic	Public sector
Pat Zellinsky	BC	Private sector	Education
Debbie Delancey	Northwest Territories	Provincial government	Government
Bob Segsworth	at large	Academic	Political science, CJPE editor
Guy Leclerc	at large	Federal government	Public sector, audit, consulting

+ Steering Committee:

Bud Long, Linda Lee, Gwen Keith, Heather Perkins, and Gerald Halpern.

+ Project Team:

Rochelle Zorzi, Martha McGuire and Burt Perrin

## Canadian Evaluation Society Project in Support of Advocacy and Professional Development

### REFERENCE PANEL PARTICIPANT LIST – INTERNATIONAL

<i>Name</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Sector</i>	<i>Specialty</i>
Karen Odhiambo	Africa	Academic	AfrEA
Sue Funnell	Australia	Consulting	AES PD
Patricia Rogers	Australia	Academic	Everything
Zulmira Hartz	Brazil	Academic, consulting	Health, intersectoral
Christina Nirup	France	Government	Environment
Nicoletta Stame	Italy	Academic	EES, social policy
Kate McKegg	New Zealand	Government, consulting	Social development
Marlène Laübli	Switzerland	Government	Health (+ PD etc.)
Saville Kushner	U.K.	Academic	Education, personalized evaluation
Molly Engle	U.S.A.	Academic	Extension, AEA PD
Michael Scriven	U.S.A.	Consulting, academic	Everything
Craig Russon	U.S.A.	Foundation	International
Gene Lyle	U.S.A.	Internal	Law, government

**Appendix C**  
**Literature Review**



# Canadian Evaluation Society Project in Support of Advocacy and Professional Development

## LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE BENEFITS, OUTPUTS, PROCESSES, AND KNOWLEDGE ELEMENTS OF EVALUATION

### Benefits of Evaluation

Much of the information about the benefits of evaluation in the literature can be gleaned from discussions regarding what evaluation should and should not be, as well as what it potentially can be if done properly. This summary of the literature suspends judgment on what evaluation should be and looks at how it has been used beneficially and what it potentially can be from the perspective of the client and the client's clients. In other words, if the client is a funding agency, their clients would be funded programs. If the client is a program, their clients would be users of their programs.

The various definitions of evaluation include statements about the benefits of evaluation. Earlier literature often provides more restrictive definitions of evaluation. For example, in 1980 Scriven defined evaluation in the following way: "*Evaluation is what it is, the determination of merit or worth, and what it is used for is another matter.*"<sup>1</sup> He later states: "*Bad is bad and good is good and it is the job of evaluator to decide which is which.*"<sup>2</sup>

However, evaluators such as Carol Weiss saw broader benefits to evaluation than merely defining what is good and bad:

The purpose of evaluation research is to measure the effects of a program against the goals set out to accomplish, as a means of contributing to subsequent decision-making about the program and improving future programming.<sup>3</sup>

Later definitions of evaluation consistently reflect a broader approach, with greater emphasis on the various benefits that can be gained through evaluation. In 1994, Wholey, Newcomer and Hatry point out:

*One of our major themes throughout this work is that evaluation . . . should not only assess program results, but also identify ways to improve the program performance.*"<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Scriven, M. The Logic of Evaluation, Edgepress, 1980. p.7

<sup>2</sup> Scriven, M. "New Frontiers on Evaluation" Evaluation Practice, 1986.

<sup>3</sup> Weiss, Carol H. Evaluation Research: Methods of Assessing Program Effectiveness

<sup>4</sup> Wholey, Joseph S., Harry P. Hatry and Kathryn E. Newcomer. Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation, Jossey-Bass, 1994.

In 1997, Michael Quinn Patton provides the following definition of evaluation:

*“Program evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming.”*<sup>5</sup>

Shadish, Cook and Leviton provide a definition that focuses even further on the benefits:

*“Intrinsic to evaluation is an idealized problem-solving sequence for (a) identifying a problem; (b) generating alternatives to reduce its symptoms; (c) evaluating these alternatives; and then (d) adopting those that results suggest will reduce the problem satisfactorily.”*<sup>6</sup>

Rossi, Freeman and Lipsey reinforce the trend towards defining evaluation in terms of the benefits:

*“More specifically, evaluation researchers use social research methods to study, appraise and help improve social programs in their important aspects, including the diagnosis of the social problems they address, their conceptualization and design, their implementation and administration, their outcomes and their efficiency.”*<sup>7</sup>

Both Chelimsky and Patton provide three key areas of benefits. In looking at the literature almost all other benefits specified are subcategories of these three areas. Cheliminsky states:

*“These different purposes, along with the questions they seek to address, seem to fall naturally into three general perspectives:*

- *Evaluation for accountability (e.g. the measurement of results or efficiency)*
- *Evaluation for development (e.g., the provision of evaluative help to strengthen institutions)*
- *Evaluation for knowledge (e.g., the acquisition of a more profound understanding in some specific area or field”*<sup>8</sup>

Patton identifies a menu for using findings:

*Making Overall Judgments*  
*Facilitating Improvements*  
*Generating Knowledge*<sup>9</sup>

These categories are quite similar and have been used to organize the more detailed benefits that have been put forward by others:

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<sup>5</sup> Patton, Michael Quinn. Utilization Focused Evaluation: The New Century Text, Sage Publication, 1997. p. 23

<sup>6</sup> Shadish, William R. Jr., Thomas D. Cook, Laura C. Leviton. Foundations of Program Evaluation: Theories of Practice, Sage Publications, 1995. p. 21

<sup>7</sup> Rossi, Peter H., Howard E. Freeman and Mark Lipsey. Evaluation: A Systematic Approach, Sage Publications, 1999. p. 21

<sup>8</sup> Chelimsky, Eleanor & William Shadish. Evaluation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Handbook, Sage Publications, 1997. p. 10

<sup>9</sup> Patton p. 65

### Accountability/Making Overall Judgments

- Analyze efficiency and effectiveness
- Measure and account for the results of public policies and programs
- Determine the efficiency of programs, projects and their component processes
- Increase agency responsiveness to the public
- Assess program benefits relative to their cost
- Verify that planned programs do provide services
- Analyze cost compared to outcome
- Determine program quality
- Provide timely and convincing evidence of program effectiveness
- Measure and account for the results of public policies and programs
- Determine the efficiency of programs, projects and their component processes

### Development/Facilitating Improvements

- Identify program's strengths and weaknesses
- Make programs less vulnerable
- Strengthen institutions and improve managerial performance
- Monitor how well programs are functioning
- Examine results
- Provide information needed to maintain and improve quality
- Gain direction for improving programs
- Help agency managers run their programs
- Help policy makers and managers improve their programs while they are underway

### Knowledge/Generating Knowledge

- Provide evidence of what works and what does not
- Understand how organizations learn
- Expand results or efficiency measurement from that of local or national interventions to that of global interventions
- Assessment of program impact
- Devote resources to meeting unmet need
- Determine which services produce the best results
- Select the types of programs that offer the most needed services
- Help policy makers and managers decide realistically what their programs can do
- Gain explanatory insights into social and other public problems and efforts to address them

Patton has expanded on his three categories, stating that the evaluation process itself is a benefit:

Process use, then, refers to and is indicated by individual and group changes in thinking and behaviour, and program or organizational changes in procedures and culture, that occur among those involved in an evaluation-type activity (regardless of whether it is so named) as a result of the learning that occurs during that activity.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Patton, Michael Quinn, "Organizational Development and Evaluation" The Canadian Journal of Evaluation, Special Edition, 1999. p.108

Wholey and Chelimsky both make reference to other benefits that are somewhat different from the three main categories and are more related to advocacy.

- Shaping public opinion about government
- To reform governments through the free flow of valuable information

As early as 1975, Stake pointed out that “*People expect evaluation to have many different purposes*”<sup>11</sup>. This continues to be the case, with increased emphasis on the responsibility of evaluators to understand the benefits that the clients are expecting from the evaluation and designing the evaluation to meet those expectations.

Discussion questions:

1. Do you believe all of the benefits have been covered – is anything missing?
2. Are there any benefits that you would question? Is everything listed really a benefit? If not what is it?
3. Do you know of any examples that you can share of instances where these benefits have been realized?

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<sup>11</sup> Stake, R.E. Evaluating the Arts in Education: A Responsive Approach, Merrill, 1975. p. 15

## The Outputs and Processes of Evaluation

This review could easily be titled, “The Challenge of Defining Outputs”. One of the challenges in conducting a literature review on the outputs and process of evaluation is that ‘outputs’ is not a term that is commonly used in the literature; hence this review is based on extrapolation and inference, rather than direct reference to outputs. There is a much more substantial body of literature on ‘process’, with Patton’s work emphasizing that the process is at least as important as the outputs<sup>12</sup>. Perhaps the perspective put forward by Joe Hudson almost a decade ago is a good starting point for thinking about outputs and processes: “*No one approach to evaluation is likely to be suitable for all purposes, all potential information uses, and users, nor is any particular evaluation approach necessarily suitable for the different developmental stages of programs.*”<sup>13</sup> In other words, outputs and processes are dependent on what a particular evaluation is attempting to achieve.

A second challenge is defining the terms ‘outputs’ and ‘processes’. The literature refers to various types of outputs and processes, generally without defining the terms. For example, a comprehensive evaluation text such as Rossi, Freeman and Lipsey’s<sup>14</sup> identifies key concepts for each of the chapters. Some of the concepts are clearly outputs and processes, but are not identified as such. King, Stevahn, Ghere and Minnema, in their article on evaluator competencies<sup>15</sup>, indicate a number of things that evaluators must be able to do. In other words, competencies are defined by the outputs and processes that an evaluator must do, in addition to certain knowledge, skills and personal characteristics. For the purpose of this review, ‘outputs’ is defined as the information, ideas or results that are produced by an evaluation, either formally or informally. ‘Processes’ are the means by which the outputs are achieved. Processes also produce benefits on their own.

A third challenge is attempting to get a sense of ‘good practice’ in regard to outputs and processes. Which returns us to the notion that there are ever-growing number of potential outputs and processes that are able to produce benefits only if they are applied in the right way to the right situation. There are no clearly defined ‘best practices’. As pointed out by Patton:

*“From a systems point of view, a major problem with many ‘best practices’ is the way they are offered without attention to context. Suppose automobile engineers identified the best fuel injection system, the best transmission, the best engine cooling system, the best suspension system, etc. . . . Let us further suppose, as is likely, that these best subsystems . . . come from different car models (Lexus, Infiniti, Audi, Mercedes, etc). When one had assembled all the ‘best’ systems from all the best cars, they would not constitute a working car.”*<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Patton, Michael Quinn. Utilization Focused Evaluation: The New Century Text, Sage Publication, 1997

<sup>13</sup> Hudson, Joe, John Mayne and Ray Tomlinson. Action-oriented Evaluation in Organizations: Canadian Practices, Wall and Emerson, 1992. p.129

<sup>14</sup> Rossi, Peter H., Howard E. Freeman and Mark W. Lipsey. Evaluation: A Systematic Approach, Sixth Edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1999.

<sup>15</sup> King, Jean A., Laurie Stevahn, Gail Ghere and Jane Minnema. “Toward a Taxonomy of Essential Evaluator Competencies” American Journal of Evaluation, V.22, No.2, Spring-Summer 2001 pp233-235.

<sup>16</sup> Patton, Michael Quinn. “Evaluation, Knowledge Management, Best Practices, and High Quality Lessons Learned”, The American Journal of Evaluation. V.22, No. 3 Fall, 2001, p. 331.

A fourth challenge is distinguishing outputs and processes from benefits and knowledge. There seems to be substantial overlap with both. Patton's example provides a warning about the negative side of using knowledge to produce an output without placing the process in context. Under such conditions, the output cannot benefit anyone. Conversely, knowledge that is used to produce an output or process within the context of the situation is much more likely to create something beneficial.

The proposed evaluation standards for the Government of Canada demonstrate the interconnectedness between benefits, outputs/processes and knowledge, covering all three with the various standards. The standards that speak directly to outputs and processes are:<sup>17</sup>

- *Evaluation work must incorporate sufficient and appropriate consultation and, where appropriate, apply the advice and guidance of specialists and other knowledgeable persons.*
- *Evaluation work must produce timely, pertinent and credible findings and conclusions that managers and other stakeholders can use with confidence, based on practical, cost-effective and objective data collection and analysis.*
- *Evaluation reports must present the findings, conclusions and recommendations in a clear and objective manner.*

Mark, Henry and Julnes<sup>18</sup> outline four inquiry modes (yet another taxonomy for looking at outputs and processes) and perhaps most importantly discuss how to make choices between weaker and stronger options. Unfortunately, the selection of outputs is much more complex than they imply. Most often there are more than two choices of outputs or processes. And as pointed out by Patton, getting the right combination for the particular context is of paramount importance. This leads to a situation where evaluators must choose among a seemingly endless numbers of combinations and permutations of options.

Once one determines the primary purpose of the evaluation, it is possible to get guidance on how to proceed. For example, Nutter sets out steps for ongoing evaluation, which indicate what the processes and outputs are to be:

- Determine who is the client for the evaluation
- Discover the client's most important evaluation questions
- Discover or develop the program logic or structure model
- Confirm the logic and structure model with the evaluation client
- Develop a formal information system that contains performance indicators that will adequately address the client's evaluation questions
- Develop an analysis and reporting system to supply the evaluation client with reports that answer the client's questions.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, if the primary goal is empowerment, then Fetterman suggests a different approach. His steps (outputs and processes) in conducting an empowerment evaluation are:

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<sup>17</sup> Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. Evaluation Policy, February 1, 2001, pp 7-10

<sup>18</sup> Mark, Melvin M., Gary T. Henry, and George Julnes. "Toward an Integrative Framework for Evaluation Practice", The American Journal of Evaluation, v.20, No. 2, Spring-Summer, 1999, p.193

<sup>19</sup> Nutter, Richard W. "Program Monitoring: The Case of Ongoing Evaluation Systems", Action-oriented Evaluation in Organizations: Canadian Practices, Wall and Emerson, 1992, p. 137.

- Taking stock
- Setting goals
- Developing strategies
- Documenting progress
- Creating a dynamic community of learners<sup>20</sup>

One way of making sense of this is to think of the outputs and processes as tools that one selects that through products produce benefits, and the more choice one has, the more likely one is to find the right set of tools for the particular situation. The following table outlines output, processes and products which serve as tools that are appropriate for the various stages of planning and implementing an evaluation. It synthesizes information from a number of different sources.<sup>21</sup>

Processes	Outputs	Products
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions about the program</li> <li>• Designing the evaluation</li> <li>• Developing data collection instruments</li> <li>• Data collection</li> <li>• Interpreting the data</li> <li>• Action planning</li> <li>• Communicating the results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of gaps</li> <li>• Information about the impacts and effects of the program</li> <li>• Information about value for money of the program</li> <li>• Information about why a program/ activity is effective/ineffective</li> <li>• Information about what programs/ activities are effective</li> <li>• Information about harmful/unwanted program effects</li> <li>• New questions regarding programs</li> <li>• Suggestions of good practices</li> <li>• Performance results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logic models</li> <li>• Research/evaluation questions</li> <li>• Research methods</li> <li>• Data collection frameworks and tools</li> <li>• Analytical frameworks</li> <li>• Literature reviews</li> </ul>

*Knowledge* and skills are what the evaluator brings to the project. *Processes* are what the evaluators do with their knowledge and skills to produce information, ideas, and results, which we are calling outputs. *Outputs* are normally (although not necessarily) delivered through *products*, such as graphs or figures or reports. This project has not been particularly concerned with products, but it is probably important to consider what one is trying to produce. The client *benefits* from the outputs when he/she uses the information to increase his/her understanding or to make decisions.

The importance of choosing the right outputs and processes for the right situation is described by Rossi, Freeman and Lipsey:

<sup>20</sup> Fetterman, David. "Reflections on Empowerment Evaluation: Learning from Experience". The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, Special Issue, 1999, p.16

<sup>21</sup> King, Jean A., Laurie Stevahn, Gail Ghore and Jane Minnema. "Toward a Taxonomy of Essential Evaluator Competencies" American Journal of Evaluation, V.22, No.2, Spring-Summer 2001 pp233-235.  
 W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Evaluation Handbook, 1998.

*Evaluation must tailored to the political and organizational context to be evaluated. It typically involves assessment of one or more of five program domains: (a) the need for the program, (b) the design of the program, (c) the program implementation and service delivery, (d) the program impact on outcomes, and (e) program efficiency. Evaluation requires an accurate description of the program performance or characteristics at issue and assessment of them against relevant standards or criteria.”<sup>22</sup>*

Owen and Rogers summarize all the complexities quite simply: “. . . *evaluation as the process of*

- *Negotiating an evaluation*
- *Collecting and analyzing evidence to produce findings*
- *Disseminating to identified audiences”<sup>23</sup>*

From this literature review, it seems that the following state exists:

- Nobody has defined the term output. Process has received much more attention, but primarily in terms of its direct relationship to benefits.
- No single output or process is going to be appropriate for all situations and all purposes. The literature does not provide much guidance in this area and this project, which attempts to link outputs/processes and benefits, appears to be breaking new ground if, in fact, the interconnectedness works.
- It is hard to separate outputs from benefits, and it is also hard to separate outputs from knowledge/skills.

### Discussion Questions

1. Why is it, given that the plethora of literature on seemingly just about every other aspect of evaluation, that outputs are not spoken of in this way?
2. Given that, does it make sense to use the term?
3. If not, what other term makes sense, given there is a certain logic in thinking about the outputs necessary to attain benefits?

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<sup>22</sup> Rossi, Peter H., Howard E. Freeman and Mark W. Lipsey. Evaluation: A Systematic Approach, Sixth Edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1999, p.35

<sup>23</sup> Owen, John and Patricia Rogers. Program Evaluation Forms and Approaches, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1999, p.63

## The Knowledge Elements of Evaluation

What is the core body of knowledge required by evaluators to enable them to conduct evaluations competently and ethically? The literature addressing this question is both informative and thought-provoking. Several themes emerged:

- The knowledge required varies, depending on the purpose of each specific evaluation;
- Evaluation is an evolving field, so the knowledge required is constantly changing;
- Despite the variety and evolution of evaluation, inventories of knowledge elements have been developed and there appears to be a fairly high degree of agreement on some basic elements
- The variety and evolution of evaluation implies a need for evaluators to engage in personal life-long learning

This literature review will explore each of these themes in more detail.

### Determining What Knowledge is Required

The knowledge required for any given evaluation depends on the methods that are to be applied. Michael Quinn Patton articulates the complexities of determining methods:

*“There are no universal and absolute standards for judging methods. The consensus that has emerged within evaluation, as articulated by the Joint Committee on Standards (1994) and the American Evaluation Association’s Guiding Principles (Shadish, et al, 1995), is that evaluations are to be judged on the basis of appropriateness, utility, practicality, accuracy, propriety, credibility and relevance. These criteria are necessarily situational and context bound.”<sup>24</sup>*

The Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) Guidelines for Ethical Conduct indicate:

Evaluators are to be competent in their provision of service.

*1.1 Evaluators should apply systematic methods of inquiry appropriate to the evaluation.*

*1.2 Evaluators should possess or provide content knowledge appropriate for the evaluation.*

*1.3 Evaluators should continuously strive to improve their methodological and practice skills.<sup>25</sup>*

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<sup>24</sup> Patton, Michael Quinn. Utilization-Focused Evaluation, Edition 3, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 1997, p. 249.

<sup>25</sup> Canadian Evaluation Society. *Guidelines for Ethical Conduct*.

The American Evaluation Association's (AEA) Guiding Principles for Evaluators indicate:

Competence: Evaluators provide competent performance to stakeholders.

1. *Evaluators should possess (or, here and elsewhere as appropriate, ensure that the evaluation team possesses) the education, abilities, skills and experience appropriate to undertake the tasks proposed in the evaluation.*
2. *Evaluators should practice within the limits of their professional training and competence and should decline to conduct evaluations that fall substantially outside those limits. When declining the commission or request is not feasible or appropriate, evaluators should make clear any significant limitations on the evaluation that might result. Evaluators should make every effort to gain the competence directly or through the assistance of others who possess the required expertise.*
3. *Evaluators should continually seek to maintain and improve their competencies, in order to provide the highest level of performance in their evaluations. This continuing professional development might include formal coursework and workshops, self-study, evaluations of one's own practice, and working with other evaluators to learn from their skills and expertise.*<sup>26</sup>

Both the CES and AEA guidelines imply that evaluators must first have the skills and knowledge to determine what is required to conduct a particular evaluation and second must have sufficient insights into their own knowledge and skills to determine whether they can undertake a specific evaluation. The AEA guidelines make explicit the expectation that no single evaluator is expected to have the full range of skills, rather that evaluators must be able to form teams with the requisite abilities for any given assignment. This is reinforced by J. Bradley Cousins: *"Approaches to evaluation and applied social research are increasingly relying on members of the research community (e.g. trained evaluators) working in collaboration with members of the community practice (e.g., program managers or implementers)."*<sup>27</sup>

Whitehead and Avison further support that the selection of methods must be appropriate to the circumstances: *"Two principal conclusions can be drawn from this analysis of evaluation frameworks. First, not only do different types of analyses produce different information, but that information differs in scope and validity. . . The second conclusion is that although not all evaluations need to do everything, if they are to be accurate and useful it is nevertheless important that there be a reasonable balance of scope and validity. The framework that we call comprehensive evaluation can be used as the basis for making choices and trade-offs in selecting the circumstances, what needs to be done, and how it will be used."*<sup>28</sup>

The Kellogg Foundation provides advice on what to look for in an evaluator, depending on what the evaluation is intended to do. *"If the evaluation purpose is to determine the worth or merit of*

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<sup>26</sup> American Evaluation Association. *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*.

<sup>27</sup> Cousins, J. Bradley. *Do Evaluator and Program Practitioners Perspectives Converge in Collaborative Evaluation?*, The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, Vol 18, No. 2, 2001, p. 114

<sup>28</sup> Whitehead, Paul C. and William R. Avison. *Comprehensive Evaluation: The Intersection of Impact Evaluation and Social Accounting*", The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1999, p. 81

*a program, you might look for an evaluator with methodological expertise and experience. If the evaluation is focused on facilitating program improvements, you might look for someone who has a good understanding of the program and is reflective. If the primary goal of the evaluation is to design new programs based on what works, an effective evaluator would need to be a strong team player with analytical skills. Experience tells us however that the most important overall characteristic to look for in an evaluator are the ability remain flexible and to problem-solve.”<sup>29</sup>*

In order for the evaluator to produce the benefits expected by the client, as well as any unanticipated benefits, it is essential first to assess those expectations in the context of the program in order to determine the appropriate evaluation approach and methodology. The selected approach and methodology determine the knowledge required by the evaluation team.

### Evaluation: A Constantly Changing Field

Evaluation is a relatively new and quickly changing area, making it both exciting and challenging at the same time. This is reflected in discussions regarding the changes as well as in thinking about the future. The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation devoted the special issue in 2001 to reflecting on the development of evaluation in provinces across Canada. The American Journal of Evaluation devoted the fall issue to reflections on the future of evaluation. The American Evaluation Association also publishes *New Directions for Evaluation*, a journal entirely devoted to changes in evaluation.

Arnold Love pointed out, *“During the past 30 years, evaluation has made enviable strides in theory and practice around the globe. Evaluation is becoming increasingly diverse and reflects an ever-changing socio-economic and political context. To remain relevant, however, evaluation must innovate.”*<sup>30</sup> This implies that evaluation will continue to change.

What are some of these changes? As indicated by Les McLean, *“Case studies, performance indicators, logic models, high-tech measurement, critical theory – none of these were discussed widely, if at all, even 20 years ago. The theory and practice of program evaluation are both rich and varied in ways no one predicted, as the annual conferences of the CES and AEA attest. What we can safely predict is that they will continue to evolve and grow in exciting ways.”*<sup>31</sup>

New terms are constantly coming into use. Meta-evaluation, evaluability assessment, economic evaluation, and data mining all represent changes in evaluation within recent years. Changes in technology have changed the ways in which data is gathered and analyzed. Any comprehensive discussion on surveys must include e-based methodologies. The notion of comparative research takes on a different meaning as the potential for global data bases become reality. User-friendly, PC compatible statistical packages make it possible for anyone with the skills to collect and analyze relatively large quantitative data bases. It can also make it possible for those without adequate skills to have access to tools that may be misused. The technological advances place increased responsibility on evaluators to know the limits of their abilities.

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<sup>29</sup> Kellogg Foundation. *Evaluation Handbook*, 1998, pp. 59-60

<sup>30</sup> Love, Arnold. *The Future of Evaluation: Catching Rocks with Cauldrons*, American Journal of Evaluation, Vol 22, No. 3, 2001, p.441

<sup>31</sup> McLean, Les. *Reflections on Program Evaluation, 35 Years On*, The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, Special Issue, 2000, p. 189

A review of evaluation practices across Canada reinforces the evolving nature of the field. Mark Season concludes, *“The message is clear: evaluation is evolving at the provincial level. As Bradley argues, evaluation practice will survive where it is perceived to add value to public-sector management and enhances the learning environment. Further, evaluation must adapt to the prevailing political and administrative culture if it is to survive”*.<sup>32</sup>

As evaluation changes, so do the expectations of the users of evaluations. Valerie J. Caracelli points out, *“These changes in practice expanded the roles and responsibilities of evaluators, with confident changes occurring in our understanding of the multi-dimensional aspects of use”*<sup>33</sup> Clients are becoming more knowledgeable and expecting more. The related field of evaluation capacity building (ECB) is being developed, which can only serve to raise expectations even further. *“ECB is the intentional work to constantly co-create and co-sustain an overall process making quality evaluation and its uses routine in organizations and other systems . . . The ECB practitioner’s orientation is to a longer-term, ongoing process of co-creation and co-sustentation rather than to completing discrete, isolated evaluation studies.”*<sup>34</sup>

This constant evolution means that the knowledge required to carry out evaluations must be expected to expand.

### Inventory of Knowledge

Determining the knowledge required to carry out evaluation feels a bit like shooting a high-speed missile with a musket – no matter how close we come we can never be fully on target. Despite this challenge, a significant portion of the literature speaks to the skills, knowledge, abilities and attributes required to conduct evaluation. It also shows progression from the asking of questions to the development of taxonomies that can serve as useful tools to both evaluators and those who use evaluators.

In 1991, Shadish, Cook and Leviton listed questions related to knowledge construction. Although aimed at the evaluator, they can also be useful to those making decisions about engaging an evaluator. Perhaps more importantly, their questions provide a context in which to explore the knowledge required. Their overview questions are summarized as follows:

- (1) *What criteria are you going to use in deciding what constitutes acceptable knowledge?*
- (2) *What kind of knowledge does the client who paid for the evaluation want? (this could include a funder or an organization)*
- (3) *What kind of knowledge, if any, do you think should be most important in the evaluation?*
- (4) *Can you produce the required knowledge, at the desired level of certainty, in the time available?*

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<sup>32</sup> Seasons, Mark. *Epilogue*, The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, Special Issue, 2001, p. 118

<sup>33</sup> Caracelli, Valerie. *Evaluation Use at the Threshold of the Twenty-first Century*, The Expanding Scope of Evaluation Use, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2000, p. 105

<sup>34</sup> Compton, Donald W., Michael Baizerman and Stacey Hueftle Stockdill, *New Directions for ECB*, The Art, Craft and Science of Evaluation Capacity Building, Jossey Bass, San Francisco, 2002, p.114

(5) *What arrangements will you make to carry out critical evaluation of your own evaluation?*<sup>35</sup>

Daniel Caron outlined what he felt were the nucleus of courses for a study program in evaluation. The four key modules he suggested are:

*Module 1: Understanding the Investigation Environment*

*Module 2: Research Methods*

*Module 3: Design and Analysis*

*Module 4: Management and Communication*<sup>36</sup>

The functional table of contents from The Program Evaluation Standards, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition,<sup>37</sup> outlines the major tasks of program evaluation, and can be viewed as a starting point for determining evaluation competencies and complete the picture when combined with the associated guidelines and standards.

In its paper on evaluation competencies, the Australian Evaluation Society<sup>38</sup> outlines four key areas of competence:

- Knowledge or cognitive competence (e.g. models, theories, context, research methodology, project management, communication, organizational processes)
- Functional competence (e.g. focus, design, data collection, analysis, planning, reporting)
- Personal or behavioural competence (e.g. problem-solving, analytical thinking, conceptual thinking, self-control, self-confidence, tenacity, initiative, professional development)
- Values/ethical competence (e.g. personal, professional)

Consistent with the functions outlined in the standards is a taxonomy of essential competencies developed by King, Stavahn, Ghere and Minnema<sup>39</sup>, based on their exploratory study on the extent to which evaluation professionals could reach agreement on essential evaluator competencies. They concluded that there may be more agreement on the competencies needed by evaluators than initially anticipated, based on finding a 78% agreement on the competencies in their taxonomy. They also concluded that the areas where consensus did not emerge reflected the role- and context-specific nature of evaluation practice, thus supporting the notion that the knowledge depends on the expected benefits and the outputs necessary to gain those benefits. Their table of essential evaluator competencies is comprehensive and shows areas of agreement and disagreement.

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<sup>35</sup> Shadish, William R., Thomas D. Cook, and Laura C. Leviton. Foundations of Program Evaluation: Theories of Practice, Sage, Newbury Park, 1991, p.463.

<sup>36</sup> Caron, Daniel. *Knowledge Required to Perform the Duties of an Evaluator*, The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, 1993, p.75.

<sup>37</sup> Sanders, James R. The Program Evaluation Standards, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Sage, Thousand Oaks, 1994.

<sup>38</sup> Australian Evaluation Society. *Evaluation Competencies*, no date.

<sup>39</sup> King, Jean A., Laurie Stavahn, Gail Ghere and Jane Minnema. *Toward a Taxonomy of Essential Evaluator Competencies*, American Journal of Evaluation, Vol. 22, No. 2, 2001

**Essential Evaluator Competencies: Means and Ranges<sup>40</sup>**

<i>Competencies</i>	Domains		Categories		Items	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
I. Systematic Inquiry	95.10	60-100				
<b>IA. Able to do research-oriented activities*</b>			87.10	50-100		
IA1. Framing the research questions					94.03	10-100
IA2. Research design						
IA3. Measurement					90.23	50-100
IA4. Research methods (quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods)					80.00	20-100
					92.65	70-100
<b>IB. Able to do evaluation-oriented activities</b>			97.26	70-100		
IB1. Evaluation theory, models, and underlying philosophical assumptions					86.61	0-100
IB2. Needs assessment						
IB3. Framing the evaluation questions						
IB4. Evaluation design					91.58	60-100
IB5. Evaluation processes					99.97	99-100
<b>IB6. Making judgments*</b>						
<b>IB7. Developing recommendations*</b>					97.32	80-100
IB8. Meta-evaluation					97.61	90-100
<b>IC. Able to do activities common to both research and evaluation</b>					74.68	10-100
<b>IC1. Literature review*</b>					82.16	50-100
IC2. Sampling						
IC3. Instrument construction			94.58	75-100	78.06	10-100
IC4. Data collection						
IC5. Data analysis					80.58	10-100
IC6. Data interpretation					82.16	0-100
IC7. Reporting results					94.90	50-100
					95.71	80-100
					94.65	80-100
					97.90	80-100
					96.45	80-100

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. pp233-235

<i>Competencies</i>	Domains		Categories		Items	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
II. Competent Evaluation Practice IIA. Able to serve the information needs of intended users IIB. Able to do situational analysis IIB1. Knowledgeable about organizational development, change and politics IIB2. Able to analyze the political context of an organization IIB3. Respectful of the uniqueness of the evaluation site and client IIB4. Open to others' input IIB5. Able to adapt/change study as needed IIC. Able to organize and manage evaluation projects IIC1. Able to respond to a request for proposal IIC2. Able to write formal agreements IIC3. Able to budget an evaluation IIC4. Able to access needed resources (information, personnel, instruments) IIC5. Able to supervise others IIC6. Able to train others <b>IIC7. Able to conduct the evaluation in a non-disruptive manner*</b> IIC8. Able to complete work in a timely manner <b>IIC9. Able to deal with stress during a project*</b>	94.35	55-100	96.54	50-100		
			95.48	75-100	87.29	0-100
					93.87	80-100
					91.94	50-100
					93.23	50-100
					96.45	50-100
			98.06	80-100	78.71	10-100
					84.65	0-100
					87.58	0-100
					95.29	50-100
					79.42	0-100
					81.71	0-100
					90.65	50-100
					94.06	50-100
					89.52	50-100
III. General Skills for Evaluation Practice IIIA. Logical and critical thinking skills IIIB. Written communication skills IIIC. Verbal communication skills IIID. Interpersonal competence IIID1. Negotiation skills <b>IIID2. Conflict resolution skills*</b> IIID3. Group facilitation skills IIID4. Group processing skills IIID5. Teamwork/ collaboration skills <b>IIID6. Cross-cultural skills*</b> IIIE. Computer application skills*	91.61	60-100				
			97.58	50-100		
			92.90	60-100		
			95.71	60-100		
			94.19	75-100		
					90.13	75-100
					86.45	50-100
					87.10	0-100
					87.26	0-100
					96.61	75-100
					90.32	50-100
			84.84	50-100		

<i>Competencies</i>	Domains		Categories		Items	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
IV. Evaluation Professionalism	88.39	60-100				
<b>IVA. Knowledge of yourself as an evaluator*</b>			89.45	50-100		
IVB. Ethical conduct			99.52	85-100		
IVB1. Ensures the honesty and integrity of the evaluation					98.87	85-100
IVB2. Is able to convey to potential clients your evaluation approach and skills					91.77	65-100
IVB3. Respects the security, dignity and self-worth of the respondents, program, participants, clients and other stakeholders					98.71	90-100
<b>IVB4. Is responsible for contributing to the general and public welfare*</b>					73.19	40-100
IVC. Knowledge of professional standards (e.g. Joint Committee Standards, AEA Guiding Principles)			78.55	0-100		
IVD. Application of professional standards						
IVE. Professional Development			86.13	0-100		
IVE1. Is aware of needs for professional growth			91.19	70-100		
<b>IVE2. Reflects on practice*</b>					92.42	50-100
<b>IVE3. Networks*</b>					93.23	50-100
IVE4. Updates personal knowledge in the evaluation field (e.g. workshops, conferences, journals)					80.81	40-100
					89.68	0-100
<b>IVE5. Updates knowledge in relevant content areas*</b>						
<b>IVE6. Contributes to the knowledge base of evaluation*</b>					89.52	50-100
					60.84	0-100

*Note:* Bold and asterisk (\*) indicate “real” disagreement on perceived importance: see text for explanation

Donna Mertens<sup>41</sup> provides a slightly different taxonomy, categorizing the knowledge and skills into the following areas: research methodology; borrowed from other areas; and unique to specific disciplines. As with others, she emphasizes the importance of a range of skills and knowledge set in the context of the ethics and values. Torres, Preskill and Piontek reinforce the importance of the range of competencies presented by King in their discussion of the breadth and depth of knowledge required by evaluators pointing to the key areas of: organizational change, consultation and facilitation; gender and multicultural sensitivity and ethics and values.<sup>42</sup>

Hatry, Newcomer and Wholey further emphasize the need for a diversity of skills, knowledge and attributes: *“Evaluators need a variety of skills to be effective. They should be good analysts. They should be gifted at listening. Evaluators should also possess marketing skills. They must communicate the value of evaluation to policy-makers and managers who may not*

<sup>41</sup> Mertens, Donna M. *Training Evaluators: Unique Skills and Knowledge*, New Directions in Program Evaluation, no. 62, Summer, 1994

<sup>42</sup> Torres, Rosalie, Hallie S. Preskill and Mary E. Piontek. *Evaluation Strategies for Communicating and Reporting: Enhancing Learning in Organizations*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, 1996.

*appreciate the benefits to be derived from systematic evaluation efforts.*"<sup>43</sup> Torres, Preskill and Piontek emphasize the need to develop the softer skills in order to communicate and report findings effectively. They point out: *"Indeed, the entry point for any learning to occur is communication. For the evaluator's part, this communication is about evaluation approaches, activities and findings. It occurs throughout all phases of an evaluation, from early planning stages to follow-up."*<sup>44</sup>

The competency standard established by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat states: "The person or persons carrying out evaluation, or evaluation-related work, must possess or collectively possess the knowledge and competence necessary to fulfill the requirements of the particular evaluation work."<sup>45</sup> The guidance provided states: *"Evaluators should possess or ensure the provision of content knowledge appropriate for the evaluation and continuously strive to improve their methodological and practice skills. Evaluators should possess the knowledge, skills and experience in:*

- *The application of sound research design able to answer the chosen questions;*
- *The collection and analysis of reliable quantitative and qualitative data; and*
- *The development of valid, credible and unbiased conclusions and recommendations"*<sup>46</sup>

This standard reinforces the responsibility for evaluators to first determine the benefits or outcomes that are anticipated by the client, and develop approaches, methodologies and outputs appropriate to achieve those benefits and outcomes. That will then determine the specific knowledge and skills required for the specific evaluation.

M.F. Smith, in responding to the articles on the future of evaluation in the fall, 2001 American Journal of Evaluation, points out the range of opinion regarding what skills are needed: *"Many authors identify needed evaluation skills. These include:*

- *Strategies for coping with the information revolution (Love); that is, assisting government with electronic delivery of information and services; learning to use new technologies for real-time data collection and analysis; and moving beyond simply collecting and storing data to performing analyses and making reports accessible and useful for intelligent and timely decisions;*
- *Strategies for engaging, coping with and capitalizing on the political side of evaluation (Stake)*
- *Skills for promoting organizational learning; for example collaboration and facilitation, interpersonal communication, team development, group process, consulting, organizational behaviour and change(Torres & Preskill)*
- *Interpersonal and group dynamic skills for working in collaborative relationships, partnering with stakeholders, and serving as coach, facilitator and critical friend*

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<sup>43</sup> Hatry, Harry P., Kathryn E. Newcomer, Joseph S. Wholey. *Conclusion: Improving Evaluation Activities and Results, Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, Jossey-Bass, 1994, p. 591

<sup>44</sup> Torres, Preskill and Piontek. p. 64

<sup>45</sup> Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. *Evaluation Policy*, February, 2001. p.8

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

- *Cultural sensitivity, mediating, negotiating and conflict resolution (Datta);*
- *A few evaluators will serve as technical experts (Fetterman); and*
- *Skills for providing training for organization members in such areas as strategic planning and development of goals (Wholey), though Worthen predicts that evaluators will fail to embrace such areas and then face the consequence of competition from other professions that will satisfy these needs.*<sup>47</sup>

### Implications for Professional Development

Based on this review, it seems that both users and providers of evaluation need to have sufficient basic knowledge to enable them to determine what knowledge, skills and attributes are required for a specific evaluation. The literature also emphasizes the evolving and diverse nature of evaluation. Some, such as Enoch Sawin may view this as a problem: *“There are serious problems and issues in program evaluation in terms of both theory and practice. This seems to be attributable largely to the wide diversity of approaches. Redefining the evaluation in a specific way that will be generally acceptable seems impossible. Unless the diversity is reduced, we need a new name for the field, or more likely a generally agreed-on set of names. Team approaches and some specialization by evaluators should help to cope with the diversification that increasingly characterizes the field.”*<sup>48</sup> The majority of the literature presents the diversity of evaluation as a challenge, but also a strength. It speaks to the need for ongoing professional development, both for evaluators and for those who use evaluators. There are clearly both soft skills required such as communication, mediation, listening and hard skills such as statistics, survey design to name but a few. As pointed out by Burt Perrin: *“You should acknowledge that there are gaps in your knowledge and skill base. In particular, you may need to enhance your people skills and learn the ‘art’ of practical utilization-focused evaluation.”*<sup>49</sup>

All of this also speaks to what makes evaluation unique: a field that is diverse and flexible, while at the same time is built on long-standing and respectable fields of study including sociology, economics and mathematics.

### Discussion questions:

- (1) Does the knowledge required depend on the specific evaluation?
- (2) If we agree that the knowledge required depends on the specific evaluation, what are the implications for the development of evaluators?
- (3) Even a comprehensive list such as King’s does not get into the knowledge related to specific methods such surveys, focus groups, cost-benefit analysis, etc. Should it? Is it more important to talk about attributes and competencies than about specific knowledge?

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<sup>47</sup> Smith, M.F. *Evaluation: Preview of the Future*, American Journal of Evaluation, V. 22 no. 2, Fall, 2001, p. 284

<sup>48</sup> Sawin, Enoch I. *Toward a Clarification of Program Evaluation: A Proposal with Implications for the Possible Certification of Evaluators*, The American Journal of Evaluation, Vol. 21, No. 2, Spring-Summer, 2000, p. 234

<sup>49</sup> Perrin, Burt. *Commentary: Making Yourself – and Evaluation – Useful*, American Journal of Evaluation, Vol. 22, No.2, 2001, p. 252

## **Appendix D**

### **Data from Consultation 1**



# Canadian Evaluation Society Project in Support of Advocacy and Professional Development

## DATA FROM CONSULTATION 1

### **Benefit #1:**

Evaluation can help program staff better understand the logic of the program (this would be an immediate benefit), so they know the key places where implementation is likely to break down and can take steps to prevent that breakdown, thereby improving the effectiveness of the program (a longer term benefit).

Rochelle Zorzi, Independent Consultant, Toronto, Ontario

### Comment #1

Would it be fair to consider this to be a particular case of the general idea, expressed in one of the other benefit statements, of producing a particular quantity and type of outcome at the least cost?

### Comment #2:

An improvement in "Effectiveness" is mentioned as the longer term benefit. Surely it would likely be an improvement in COST-effectiveness, in the sense that there would be greater good effect within the same budget. In any case, it's cost- effectiveness that is of interest to governments these days.

### Comment #3

Evaluation will be beneficial inwards to departmental staff only to the extent the evaluation exercise looks outward to outside stakeholders

Roger Mandeville, Management Consultant, Ottawa

### Comment #4

Evaluation helps program staff understand how to develop good, clear objectives and the critical role that objectives play in program structure, accountability definition and delivery.

Logic models, as part of evaluations, are also greatly appreciated by program managers as visual aids that help communicate the roles that other parties play in program delivery; and where additional measures/partners may be needed.

A.M. Cooper, Evaluation Manager, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

### Comment #5

All projects we participate in require us to fully understand a program. Initial discussions about program components, activities, outcomes, etc. and developing a logic model have contributed to immediate changes(improvements) to programs by helping staff focus their efforts and resources. Often program staff realize in this very early stage of our involvement that they need to drop certain activities and/or add others. In addition, broad participation of stakeholders in this phase results in an alignment of what the program is expected to accomplish. Evaluators' ability to

critically assess and dissect a program in preparation for planning an evaluation provides staff with a fresh and clear perspective on their program and its underlying assumptions.  
Barb van Maris, Smaller World Communications, Ontario

Comment #6

Most, but all programs have a logic - some (which are really services) are offered on an ad hoc, as needed basis, and may not have a consistent desired outcome i.e. if counselling re domestic abuse the goal is not always to reconcile and return to the (bad) marriage.  
Reed,

Comment #7:

In addition to helping staff understand a program's logic and focus (comment #5 by Barb van Maris), evaluation planning can provide insights to a variety of program advisory bodies and senior decision-makers. This is particularly true with first-time evaluations. An evaluation plan or framework often represents the first critical examination of a program since its inception (how many first-time evaluations discover - surprise - that no written program plan exists?). Many programs operate for decades with fuzzy, "political" objectives, or simply adopt the "objectives" attached to their budget approval. Probing and examining program objectives often produces the AHA! reaction among program advisors (so THIS is what we're really trying to do!).  
Russ Graham, Management Consultant, North Vancouver

Comment #8:

(blank)

Comment #9:

It would be difficult for the programme staff to understand the programme if on the one hand, they are not properly oriented to programme objectives ( this is significantly different to programme outputs ); and on the other, if the staff are not equipped with indicators that link programme outputs with programme results ( outcome results, that is ).  
M. Adil Khan, Consultant, Brisbane, Australia

Comment #10:

Evaluation can be useful to staff as long as they are actively involved in the process. When they have ownership, they are less resistant and view it as a helpful tool that will allow them to better do their job.  
Stanley Capela, Senior Director, MIS-DQI HeartShare Human Services, Brooklyn, New York

**Benefit #2:**

As Carol Weiss has emphasised, evaluation can help raise questions that otherwise might not be considered, or at least dealt with. For example, evaluation might identify that some client groups are doing better than others, or perhaps that one program location is serving twice (or half) as many as others with seemingly no difference in other aspects. Even though the evaluation might not provide an answer, it can put these questions on the table for consideration.  
Burt Perrin, independent consultant, France

Comment #1:

Raise questions, eh? An interesting way of putting it, which reminds me of a specific, unexpected benefit of evaluation. We were doing an evaluation of a non-profit agency, and although it was aside from our focus, we identified some concerns about racism at the agency. We brought this to the attention of the Board of the association, who then dealt with the problem. This use from the evaluation may have been more important than the "official" things it set out to address.

Comment #2:

The number of questions raised is a function of what a Steering Committee might admit as legitimate priority issues. It is not so much the number of issues raised as the will to take them up in the evaluation process.  
Roger Mandeville, Management Consultant, Ottawa

Comment #3:

Some of the greatest insights we have obtained in one key evaluation came through the 'additional comments' provided by the people we surveyed. In this case, we received 130 pages of single-spaced comments on science and technology management. All of the themes identified were reinforced through multiple lines of evidence.

Advisory committees have proved to be very valuable sources of insight and buy-in for evaluations--properly managed--identifying issues that might otherwise not be considered. Additionally, including 'intended and unintended impacts and effects' in evaluations as an issue has reaped benefits for us.  
A.M. Cooper, Evaluation Manager, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Comment #4:

Evaluation helps to raise questions that often lead to other questions. If it is done right ultimately the answer is found. Very often coming up with the appropriate question often has value in and of itself even if it does not lead to an answer.  
Stanley Capela, Senior Director, MIS-DQI HeartShare Human Services, Brooklyn, New York

**Benefit #3:**

Evaluation can provide insights into what works and what does not work. This information is even more useful when the evaluation explores why something is working or not. For example in looking at approaches to service provision that seem to work better than others, information about the factors that contribute to good practice are important when thinking about replication and transferability.  
Martha McGuire, Independent Consultant, Toronto, Ontario Canada

Comment #1:

This is the most important issue that we use in evaluations! Our interview questions always include 'what should change, what should not' and people love responding to it. Lessons learned are critically important to our program managers and can be applied horizontally (i.e. from one program to another).

A.M. Cooper, Evaluation Manager, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Comment #2:

This is important, but this can only be ensured when evaluation results are linked to the budgeting process. Regrettably, in many developing countries, there remains a gap between evaluation and the planning and the budgeting process.

M. Adil Khan, Consultant, Brisbane, Australia

Comment #3:

The context of the program evaluation is important under this benefit. It is not only what work and does not work, but under what conditions does it work and not work. What might work in one program or community might not work in another. Therefore, what is the context of the program and community you are trying to evaluate.

Comment #4:

The key here is evaluation allows us to learn from both. If evaluation works right, programs that may not be working can learn from other programs who have similar problems and learn what they did to correct the problem.

Stanley Capela, Senior Director, MIS-DQI HeartShare Human Services, Brooklyn, New York

**Benefit #4:**

A better allocation of available resources among competing program outcomes.

**Benefit #5:**

The use of those program methods that will produce at the least cost any given quantity of any given program outcome .

Ben

Comment #1:

Again, evaluators are not running programs. Like bees, they cross-pollinate. The study of cost-efficient delivery models is usually contracted out by busy program managers, who would then run a pilot program. Evaluators are free to offer examples from outer space if this can help.

Roger Mandeville, Management Consultant, Ottawa

Comment #2:

My experience has been that the value brought by evaluation to lowering program delivery costs or improving program efficiency was from bringing alternatives to the attention of program managers from experience of conducting evaluations elsewhere (e.g. "This model worked in program XYZ whose clients and services are similar to yours") as well as by measuring the

impacts and effects of programs themselves through innovative means. One of these studies is still being used roughly 10 years later.

A.M. Cooper, Evaluation Manager, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

**Benefit #6:**

Harmful effects of a program can be identified when they might not otherwise be detected.

Comment #1:

"Harmful" ought to read "unwanted". If effects are really harmful, the media and the victims will come in screaming. Some for example would argue that unemployment insurance is harmful because it makes you lazy. On the other hand, evaluators can present a well documented argumentation about the pros and cons of a given program's effect; keep in mind that government planners are more and more educated and sophisticated and they all know that "you better teach the recipient to catch fish than to create a free food stamp program forever".

Roger Mandeville, Management Consultant, Ottawa

Comment #2:

Agree that 'unwanted' is better than 'harmful', since harmful impacts usually get stopped pretty quickly. One example is a subsidy program to convert to a new technology that the evaluation found increased the price of the new technology by the amount of the subsidy.

A.M. Cooper, Evaluation Manager, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Comment #3:

One will only discover unwanted effects if one asks the right questions, not likely if they were also unintended effects....a case for goal free evaluation?

Reed

**Benefit #7:**

Program evaluation allows you to determine if your program or service is having the impact you intended it to have or none at all.

Comment #1:

Usually our managers are well aware of how their programs and people are performing and use evaluations to gather objective evidence to determine the extent to which their intuition is accurate.

A.M. Cooper, Evaluation Manager, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Comment #2:

In this area, we would need to define what impact means to the particular stakeholder. Impact for a funder at times can be very different from what the program may view as an impact on the community and/or client.

Stanley Capela, Senior Director, MIS-DQI HeartShare Human Services, Brooklyn, New York

**Benefit #8:**

"Evaluation" as an internal function in the organization creates the opportunity for management to formulate and visualize possible results and to systematize the data collection process early, at program inception, for measurement of progress against a given baseline situation.

Roger Mandeville, Management Consultant

Comment #1:

This is one of the greatest benefits of Results-based Management and Accountability Frameworks, and of interim evaluations. Our program managers have increasingly made use of interim evaluations to help them determine whether mid-course corrections are needed--when it is relatively painless and easier to do so. We also have worked with managers in program development and identified gaps or instances of over-commitment and over-reporting.

A.M. Cooper, Evaluation Manager, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Comment #2:(Blank)Comment #3:

Think of all the positive effects of including more than just management in this process. This is particularly helpful when you move away from business models and into the non-profit arena. In that first step alone, "Formulate and Visualize possible results," there is the opportunity for funders, staff, even constituents to add input and to share information about needs, realistic activities and resources, and outcomes. Then, these same stakeholders can participate in the data collection process. All around it keeps people informed and aware of goals and process---which ultimately affect accountability.

Elizabeth Kelly, Ph.D., Senior Associate, Evaluation, New York, New York

**Benefit #9:**

Evaluation is an inherent and inescapable part of the policy and planning cycle. By its nature, evaluation brings accountability and good governance to the organization by making "results management" processes flow from the inside out, to stakeholders and the constituents who justify and support the organization's budget and existence. Stakeholders are invited to observe and performance achievement is made more transparent. The public wants that, they demand it. The government has pushed for it through its publication of "Results for Canadians"

Roger Mandeville, Management Consultant, Ottawa

Comment #1:

Evaluation ensures accountability through its transparent, collective and public nature. The next step would be to make it horizontal (across jurisdictions and departments) to a greater extent than is now the case--which is likely to be the next phase of evolution.

A.M. Cooper, Evaluation Manager, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

**Benefit #10:**

Evaluation (aside from its benefit to the current program or project) helps instil a mindset in the client that allows future projects to be designed more "thoughtfully".

Brad Milburn, Manager, Projects & Systems Development, Toronto, Ontario

(No comments)

**Benefit #11:**

Evaluation is a valuable tool for 1) identifying service gaps, 2) making informed system and program decisions, 3) planning effective programs, and 4) strengthening accountability.

Chris Sullivan, Senior Program Consultant, Kingston, Ontario

Comment #1:

Programs often have preconceived ideas about what may actually be happening. Evaluation allows scrutiny of the process and reveals new glitches, results from the process. This provides an opportunity to enhance it.

Shara Godiwalla, Program Manager, Columbia, Maryland, USA

**Benefit #12:**

Program evaluation identifies the value or merit of the program. This knowledge is essential for future development and the allocation of resources.

Terese Weisberg, Sr. Program/Policy Analyst, Toronto, Ontario

(no comments)

**Benefit #13:**

Evaluation results feed directly into planning (or at least they should) in order that program changes/revisions/enhancements can be made.

Reed

(no comments)

**Benefit #14:**

Evaluations, especially with participatory elements, help develop skills on the part of the participants to continue evaluation-type processes.

Margo, Philadelphia, USA

Comment #1:

This is one of the perhaps most enduring benefits from evaluations I have been reviewing for this consultation. Project managers and staff have talked about thinking differently, being more critical, more focused on improvement, more sceptical about claimed benefits and causal links, and more keen to get evidence to check these out.

Patricia Rogers, Evaluation researcher, practitioner and educator, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

**Benefit #15:**

Evaluation increases participation from clients and direct service practitioners in shaping future program delivery. Whether clients or direct staff know it, policy and program decisions are made from evaluation. It is our responsibility to get clients and all staff informed and involved in evaluation.

Carl Brun, Associate Professor, Dayton, Ohio, USA

(no comments)

**Benefit #16:**

In some instances, Program Evaluation confirms and formalizes and what the program area already knows. In this case it raises the awareness of the results of a program/project that would not otherwise get the attention of senior management. The benefit is that the program evaluation may lend support to a business case for improvements.

Marilyn Murphy, Program Evaluation, CCRA, Ottawa, Ontario

Comment #1:

Yes, and even before the variety of stakeholders learn about benefits (i.e., senior management, as you said) they learn about the program in new ways. This takes place when discussions about input and activities include a representative variety of stakeholders. Not only do "upper management" people gain a clearer picture of day to day activities, but those "on the ground" are reminded of the bigger picture, the program's mission and goals.

Elizabeth Kelly, Ph.D., Senior Associate, Evaluation, New York, New York

**Benefit #17:**

In the public sector, evaluation can promote well-managed government and increase accountability to the public. Specifically, it helps assess whether publicly funded organizations are achieving their assigned mandate and their planned objectives.

L. Jane Knox, Principal, Performance Audit, Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan, Regina, Sask. , Canada

Comment #1:

This is a very important benefit of evaluation. However, to link evaluation with performance accountability, it is important as a prior requirement that every public institution is encouraged to develop their performance indicators vis-à-vis their mandates. It is only within the framework of performance indicators of public institutions that evaluation can assist improving accountability and measure performance in an objective manner.

The "indicator" fixing for the public sector institutions is a very interesting process that helps positioning these institutions within, what is called by the United Nations Development Programme, a Strategic Results Framework (SRF). An SRF is must for evaluation of performance of public sector institutions.

M. Adil Khan, Consultant, Brisbane, Australia

**Benefit #18:**

Program evaluation helps to objectively determine if what staff believe to be true about clients is in fact true - sometimes staff bias is not substantiated by the clients. In our recent experience we have had 2 incidents where staff were in fact operating under false assumptions.

Comment #1:

This is true. I was recently involved in evaluating an UN funded agricultural/rural development programme in an Asian country. In the course of the evaluation, we gathered the targeted beneficiaries and asked them whether they could list the goods and services they received from the project. They listed about 20. Then I asked them, of these 20 items that they received from the project how many they thought they did not need, but the project still gave them. The answer, 15.

M. Adil Khan, Consultant, Brisbane, Australia

**Benefit #19:**

Evaluation that reveals beneficial impacts at the early stages of a project has the capacity to attract policy managers' attention and prompt important policy changes at the macro level

M. Adil Khan, Consultant, Brisbane, Queensland/Australia

(no comments)

**Benefit #20:**

Evaluation provides clients with opportunities to examine alternate service delivery models which maybe more cost effective and efficient and having similar outcomes

Carl E. Doucette, Policy Analyst , Dept. of Provincial Treasury, Province of PEI

(no comments)

**Benefit #21:**

Evaluation can be a beneficial tool for measuring programs and policies performance thus providing specific tangible evidence of which programs or policies are working and which are not against a background of clear goals, objectives and outcomes.

Mukaria J. Itang'ata, Ph.D student (Evaluation), Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA

(no comments)

**Benefit #22:**

Evaluation is an excellent tool for not only determining a program and/or policy evaluation theory, logic model and evaluation questions but also for establishing valid and reliable standards on which evaluation results are based to gain the satisfaction of all stakeholders.

Mukaria J. Itang'ata, Ph.D student (Evaluation), Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA

(no comments)

**Benefit #23:**

Well documented outcome based evaluations can be effective tools for marketing good programs especially to program funders as they clearly help funders understand why they should be involved in funding a certain or specific program.

Mukaria J. Itang'ata, Ph.D student (Evaluation), Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA

Comment #1:

Yes. But a lot depends on what is that constitutes a "well documented evaluation". Does it mean presentation of lucidly written impression based data or does it mean presentation of data, based on rigorous quantitative analysis. I had the experience of commenting on a recent evaluation report of a UNDP funded poverty programme in an Asian country, which was written most lucidly disguised with impressionistic data. The report though grossly flawed in presentation of its conclusions, earned the attention of the donors simply because of its packaging value. The evaluation profession must devise mechanisms to guard against evaluation reports that are methodologically weak and offer misleading conclusions.

M. Adil Khan, Consultant, Brisbane, Australia

**Benefit #24:**

Program evaluation both summative and formative, essentially helps the evaluator conclude whether or not the ultimate goals and objectives of a particular program have been achieved. Program evaluation-through surveys and interviews; help measure the impact of a specific program on its "target group". It also helps to identify which variables (dependent or independent) that enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of a program, and which variables (dependent or independent) that hinder its efficiency and effectiveness. In essence, evaluation help pinpoint the "who", "what", "how", and "why" of a program, which results in making the necessary changes, modifications and elimination that are most beneficial to the program in question.

Rosanna Montoute, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

(no comments)

**Benefit #25:**

Program evaluation can help administrators/providers better understand not only IF the program is working, but also WHERE it is working, HOW it is working, WHAT works and does not work, and HOW what is working can be used elsewhere.

Brittawni L. Olson, Evaluation & Research Specialist, Lincoln, Nebraska USA

(no comments)

**Benefit #26:**

As Martha McGuire mentioned (above), "evaluation can provide insights into what works and what does not work." Statistical analysis of program data, if data are available, can help rule out competing causes, and can help determine whether the program is what is causing the outcome. gene shackman, research scientist (speaking for my self, not the organization I work for), albany, NY, USA

(no comments)

**Benefit #27:**

When an evaluation mindset is internalized by an organization, it stimulates planning discussions about goals and criteria for success, on going implementation discussions about process and efficiencies, and post program discussions about outcomes, effectiveness, transportability and the like.

Adrienne Bank, Evaluation consultant, Berkeley, California

**Comment #1:**

Agree. Internalization of evaluation activities within the governance of an organization not only represents mere inclusion of an important management tool for decision-making, but a value shift to strategize it to undertake activities and spend money to produce results.

Adil Khan, Consultant, Brisbane, Australia

**Benefit #28:**

In its simplest form evaluation systematizes and adds rigor to the process we all use every day to make judgements about things. In the context in which we normally work as evaluators it (a)helps us understand if programs are working, (b)can help us understand how to help programs work better, and (c)helps people decide how to allocate resources (e.g., spend money)and make other necessary decisions.

Gene Lyle, Sr. Program Evaluator, Ramsey County Human Services, St. Paul, MN

(no comments)

**Benefit #29:**

Evaluation, if it is done right, provides an opportunity for everyone in the organization to view themselves as part of a team that is dedicated to ensuring quality services for all those who seek assistance from the organization.

Stanley Capela, Senior Director, MIS-DQI HeartShare Human Services, Brooklyn, New York

(no comments)

**Benefit #30:**

Program Evaluation adds value to the non-profit world because it helps them prioritize what needs to be done in a world of limited resources.

Stanley Capela, Senior Director, MIS-DQI HeartShare Human Services, Brooklyn, New York

(no comments)

**Avantage #31:**

Program evaluation, among others benefits, fulfill an important accountability function by providing information on the performance of the programs and the value-for-money to stakeholders and citizens for the use – in many cases - of public funds.

L'évaluation de programme remplit, notamment, une importante fonction de reddition de comptes en communiquant de l'information sur la performance des programmes aux détenteurs d'intérêts et payeurs de taxes en leurs permettant d'apprécier ce qu'ils ont pour l'utilisation – dans beaucoup de cas - des deniers publics.

Denis Jobin, Office of the Auditor General of Canada, Canada

(pas de commentaires)

**Benefit #32:**

Evaluation is a tool that aids in determining if an organization or program is meeting standards, benchmarks, goals and objectives of the organization. It assist policymakers in determining what changes need to be made to move a program, or an organization in the direction of organizational goals. These goals could be in the best interest of the public or stakeholders depending on if the organization is a public or private institution. It could mean measuring such indicators as accountability, quality, transparency, effectiveness, efficiency, reaching target populations, and appropriateness etc.

Otalene Shaw, Mississauga On.

(no comments)

**Benefit #33:**

One way organizations can profit from evaluation is to better understand the role they play or must play in society and how they interact in this context. Ecological levels of analysis as

proposed by Bronfrenbrenner and Mabry\* help stakeholders visualize their ideological, organizational and political contexts as well as the relationships and interactions that take place and make up the core of the evaluation outputs.

M. C. Biazus, Evaluation consultant, Brazil

(no comments)

**Benefit #34:**

(duplicate posting of #33)

**Benefit #35:**

If duly integrated into the project/program/policy cycle, evaluation will contribute to the achievement of the objectives these interventions are pursuing.

Hellmut Eggert, former Head of the Evaluation Division, Directorate General DEV, European Commission, Brussels, Belgium, 109 Ave. des Aubépines

(no comments)



## **Appendix E**

### **Data from Consultation 2**



# Canadian Evaluation Society Project in Support of Advocacy and Professional Development

## DATA FROM CONSULTATION 2

### Brief description of the consultation

- Respondents considered a specific evaluation as they completed the consultation.
- They first indicated which benefits the stakeholders derived from the evaluation (a list was provided, but respondents could add to the list).
- They then selected up to three of those benefits that they deemed most important.
- For *each* of the three selected benefits, they rated the importance of various outputs and processes (again, they could add to the list).
- They then rated the importance of various knowledge elements in producing all of the outputs and processes, collectively (again, they could add to the list).
- Respondents could voluntarily provide their name and email address if they were willing to provide a brief description of the evaluation for our report. We will follow up to obtain the descriptions as needed.

### Respondent Demographics

- 78 respondents
- 28 provided contact information for follow-up
  
- 87% were CES members, 10% were not, 3% unknown
- 91% responded in English, 9% in French
- 86% from Canada, 9% from the US, 1% from Australia, 1% from Belgium, 3% unknown
  
- Role in the evaluation: 42% internal evaluators, 40% external evaluators, 5% policy makers, 4% program funders, 3% program managers, 3% program directors, 1% service delivery staff, 1% other stakeholders, 1% unknown

## Evaluation Benefits

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>% of respondents who selected this benefit</b>	<b>% who rated it as one of the three most important benefits</b>
Support accountability for program/ policy performance and spending	77%	45%
Make better decisions about program or policy direction	86%	50%
Make better decisions about allocation of resources	60%	26%
Help us improve programs and policies	78%	60%
Clarify understanding of the program or policy being evaluated	58%	24%
Build knowledge about social needs and social programming	38%	12%
Develop capacity for evaluative thinking	56%	18%
Used to promote, defend, or oppose specific programs or policies	74%	24%
Used to shape public opinion	15%	0%
Used to support pluralism and democracy	13%	5%
Various pragmatic benefits	71%	17%

### New types of benefits identified by the respondents

Many of suggested benefits fit into the benefit types already defined, and they were recoded accordingly. We updated the benefit descriptions to capture the new aspects of those benefit types. Those listed below did not seem to fit in any of the pre-defined benefit types.

#### *Cohesion and Collaboration*

- Form connections between different departments or organizations (to share ideas, provide support, form partnerships, etc.)
- Develop a common framework or language between departments or organizations
- Increased cohesion within working groups
- Increased confidence – individual and collective

## Matrix of Benefits x Outputs

The matrix below shows the percent of evaluations in which the output was considered *essential* to producing each benefit (i.e., the benefit would not have been possible without the output.) To facilitate interpretation, the squares are highlighted in light yellow if 50%-74% rated the output as essential; bright yellow if 75% to 100% rated it as essential.

*Note that data is only available for those respondents who rated the benefit as one of the three most important.*

Benefit \ Output	N	Information about...									
		Unmet needs	Program design	Program activities	Program impacts/ effects	Unwanted effects	Value for money	What activities are effective	Why an activity is effective/ineffective	New questions about the program	Good practices
Support accountability	35	34%	26%	46%	69%	40%	51%	49%	57%	17%	34%
Decisions about direction	39	41%	31%	36%	64%	36%	26%	49%	46%	36%	31%
Decisions about allocation of resources	20	55%	15%	25%	50%	35%	45%	70%	55%	25%	30%
Decisions for Improvement	47	47%	26%	40%	62%	47%	23%	51%	55%	19%	36%
Understanding of the program	19	37%	63%	79%	58%	26%	21%	32%	47%	42%	26%
Build knowledge about social needs	9	67%	22%	44%	89%	44%	22%	89%	78%	56%	33%
Build capacity for evaluation	14	43%	43%	50%	64%	43%	7%	36%	57%	36%	36%
Promote, defend, or oppose programs	19	37%	58%	47%	79%	26%	37%	68%	47%	37%	53%
Shape public opinion	0										
Support pluralism/ democracy	4	75%	50%	25%	50%	25%	25%	75%	25%	25%	50%
Pragmatic benefits	13	31%	62%	54%	62%	31%	38%	38%	38%	31%	46%

### New outputs suggested by the respondents

Some of the outputs suggested by the respondents were actually benefits (e.g., increased understanding of something), products (e.g., literature review, logic model), or processes (e.g., participatory methods). Those that seemed to be outputs were:

- Information about dilemmas (part of unmet needs)
- Information about program participants
- Information about the need for program expansion
- Demonstration of the linkages between program activities and expected outcomes
- Information about how program communication takes place
- Comparisons with parallel programs in other countries

## Matrix of Benefits x Processes

The matrix below shows the percent of evaluations in which the process was considered *essential* to producing each benefit (i.e., the benefit would not have been possible without the process.) To facilitate interpretation, the squares are highlighted in light yellow if 50%-74% rated the process as essential; bright yellow if 75% to 100% rated it as essential.

*Note that data is only available for those respondents who rated the benefit as one of the three most important.*

Benefit \ Process	N	Involving stakeholders in...						
		Discussions about program	Designing the evaluation	Developing instruments	Collecting data	Interpreting data	Action planning	Communicating results
Support accountability	35	60%	37%	31%	31%	20%	37%	37%
Decisions about direction	39	64%	31%	28%	21%	21%	41%	31%
Decisions about allocation of resources	20	65%	20%	15%	25%	25%	50%	25%
Decisions for Improvement	47	66%	30%	30%	36%	23%	47%	40%
Understanding of the program	19	74%	42%	37%	32%	32%	47%	37%
Build knowledge about social needs	9	78%	22%	11%	78%	44%	56%	44%
Build capacity for evaluation	14	79%	79%	71%	57%	71%	64%	57%
Promote, defend, or oppose programs	19	63%	16%	16%	37%	37%	47%	42%
Shape public opinion	0							
Support pluralism/ democracy	4	75%	50%	50%	25%	50%	50%	50%
Pragmatic benefits	13	46%	31%	31%	31%	31%	15%	31%

### New processes suggested by the respondents

- Consultation with stakeholders to solicit their views of the program
- Involving the beneficiaries in communicating the results
- Using our Elders and Spiritual Advisors as part of the process
- Understanding, embracing and utilizing the customs of a particular culture as part of the process

## Knowledge Elements

The following table shows the percent of evaluation in which each knowledge element was considered essential to producing the outputs and carrying out the processes.

Knowledge Element	% of Evaluations
<u>Evaluation Planning</u>	
a) Knowledge of one or more specific types of evaluation (e.g., needs assessment, evaluability assessment, process evaluation, outcome evaluation, cost analysis)	69%
b) Knowledge of one or more types of research design (e.g., quasi-experimental, longitudinal, case study, ethnography)	57%
c) Knowledge of one or more evaluation model (e.g., utilization-focused, empowerment, goal-free)	25%
d) Knowledge of one or more evaluation paradigm (e.g., positivism, constructivism)	12%
e) Knowledge of good evaluation practices (e.g., triangulation, involvement of stakeholders, openness to unintended impacts and effects, ethical principles)	82%
f) Ability to focus the evaluation (e.g., identify stakeholders, develop an understanding of the program, form hypotheses or evaluation questions)	90%
g) Knowledge of the area being evaluated (e.g., familiarity with the issues, the context, the values of the community)	Not available*
h) Understanding of organizational change (e.g., organizational development, etc.)	Not available*
<u>Data Collection</u>	
a) Knowledge of data collection methods (e.g., literature reviews, questionnaires, observation, program records, brainstorming)	71%
b) Knowledge of sampling techniques (e.g., random, purposive, snowball)	42%
c) Knowledge of psychometrics (e.g., reliability, validity)	32%
d) Ability to select appropriate data collection methods	69%
<u>Data Analysis and Interpretation</u>	
a) Knowledge of data preparation techniques (e.g., database construction, handling missing data)	52%
b) Knowledge of qualitative analysis techniques (e.g., content analysis, flow diagrams, matrix displays)	49%
c) Knowledge of quantitative analysis techniques (e.g., frequencies, multiple regression, trend analysis, cost-effectiveness analysis)	36%
d) Methods for determining merit or worth (e.g., grading, ranking, setting criteria)	52%

<b>Knowledge Element</b>	<b>% of Evaluations</b>
<u>Communication and Other Skills</u>	
a) Reporting skills (e.g., presentations, report writing)	82%
b) Communication skills (e.g., questioning, listening)	86%
c) Interpersonal skills (e.g., negotiation, facilitation, collaboration)	84%
d) Project management skills (e.g., budgeting, time management, proposal writing)	69%
e) Critical thinking skills (e.g., analysis, synthesis)	79%
f) Political astuteness	Not available*

\*These knowledge elements were suggested by individual respondents

## **Respondent Comments on Knowledge Elements**

### Evaluation Planning

a) Knowledge of one or more specific types of evaluation (e.g., needs assessment, evaluability assessment, process evaluation, outcome evaluation, cost analysis)

- Specific types of evaluation: development and use of program logic models; needs assessment (including age specific needs assessment); cost analysis; summative evaluation; process evaluation; outcome evaluation
- An evaluator should be familiar with / have a thorough knowledge of many types of evaluation
- Stakeholders should have an understanding of the specific type of evaluation being conducted (e.g., outcome evaluation) to maximize their contributions and commitment

b) Knowledge of one or more types of research design (e.g., quasi-experimental, longitudinal, case study, ethnography)

- Helpful to understand all of these
- Specific types of research design: quasi-experimental, case study, longitudinal, program review, mixed method, survey
- Stakeholders should have an understanding of the specific types of research design so they have a better understanding of what can be learned through the evaluation
- Knowledge of one or more types of research design is not usually possible in the real world

c) Knowledge of one or more evaluation model (e.g., utilization-focused, empowerment, goal-free)

- Specific models: empowerment, developing criteria from program experience, utilization-focused, participatory
- This helps a better understanding of the process, and enhances reliability
- This is irrelevant to most, since they are eclectic
- Evaluators should be familiar with these basic models

- d) Knowledge of one or more evaluation paradigm (e.g., positivism, constructivism)
- Specific paradigms: constructivism; collaborative interpretation;
  - Having a conceptual framework is helpful
  - Evaluators should understand how one constructs reality in the given program being evaluated
  - Not important for simple reviews of the program; bureaucrats are often not interested in academic rigour
- e) Knowledge of good evaluation practices (e.g., triangulation, involvement of stakeholders, openness to unintended impacts and effects, ethical principles)
- Specific practices: triangulation; involvement of stakeholders; openness to unintended impacts and effects (surprises); ethical principles; program-specific rating tools; site visits to interview key stakeholders; methodological eclecticism; reflexivity; knowledge of government policies about privacy, data etc.; familiarity with the standards for evaluation;
  - This is critical; without these considerations, you can't claim you've conducted an evaluation
- f) Ability to focus the evaluation (e.g., identify stakeholders, develop an understanding of the program, form hypotheses or evaluation questions)
- Specific ways of focusing: identify stakeholders; develop an understanding of the program; form hypotheses or evaluation questions; be clear who is the client; develop an understanding of what the funders want; assess throughput, output, value for money; conducting a group process evaluation of program concepts to focus the evaluation; identify the goals and value systems of the stakeholders involved; identify communication principles at work between the stakeholders
  - This is key; should never undertake evaluation without this first step
- g) Knowledge of the area being evaluated (e.g., familiarity with the issues, the context, the values of the community)
- Specific knowledge: relevant government policies; the need being served; other programs serving the same need; culture-specific paradigms, ways and understandings; knowledge of the culture and social context of the communities in which the programs were delivered.
  - Without this knowledge, the evaluator is just a technician and outside observer; is likely to miss the point; may evaluate the wrong thing; may misinterpret the results; may waste the program funding
- h) Understanding of organizational change (e.g., organizational development, etc.)
- Specific knowledge: knowledge of how evaluation can help the organization
  - This allows the evaluator to help managers introduce and manage change, and to design recommendations that are likely to have maximum impact.

## Data Collection

a) Knowledge of data collection methods (e.g., literature reviews, questionnaires, observation, program records, brainstorming)

- Specific methods: literature review, questionnaires, observation, program records, brainstorming, interviews, group concept development, focus groups, topic specialist
- This is essential; evaluation is about research, which requires data collection
- The relative weight of each method listed above should be tailored to the project
- A range of methods may be required for a given project

b) Knowledge of sampling techniques (e.g., random, purposive, snowball)

- Specific techniques: purposive, stratified random; random
- In some cases the population is too small for sampling
- Important for addressing client questions about the sampling

c) Knowledge of psychometrics (e.g., reliability, validity)

- Specific psychometric issues: reliability, validity
- In some instances this is not relevant
- This is key to accurate assessment of program effectiveness – the absence of this results in impressionistic evaluation with poor data reliability; the applied nature of evaluation makes this particularly important since it is even more vulnerable to the many threats to reliability and validity (e.g., sampling bias, measurement bias, research design bias)
- Helpful in assessing data collected by others

d) Ability to select appropriate data collection methods

- Specific methods: statistical and interview; system data and manual review
- A variety of methods and sources are possible – you need to select among them for quality, reliability, etc.
- Methods may vary across respondent groups, evaluation activities
- Prevents collection of a lot of irrelevant data
- This is not essential

## Data Analysis and Interpretation

a) Knowledge of data preparation techniques (e.g., database construction, handling missing data)

- Specific data preparation techniques: database construction
- This is essential; ensures better motivation for data gathering
- Can seek assistance or hire expertise in this area
- Not integral to the design of the evaluation
- Helps to determine the usefulness of data supplied by others

b) Knowledge of qualitative analysis techniques (e.g., content analysis, flow diagrams, matrix displays)

- Specific techniques: content analysis; quantifying qualitative data, simple techniques

- This is essential; critical to participatory processes
- A certain level of knowledge is important to ensure the appropriate type of data is collected, helps develop evaluation plan and resource requirements of the evaluation
- Support can be sought in the analysis phase without damaging the integrity of the design

c) Knowledge of quantitative analysis techniques (e.g., frequencies, multiple regression, trend analysis, cost-effectiveness analysis)

- Specific techniques: simple techniques; cost-effectiveness analysis; descriptive statistics; frequencies; not the high-end stats; statistical analyses; case costing; financial analyses
- Helps assess the usefulness of information from other sources
- A certain level of knowledge is important – should know what they are and how they can be used; should know when quantitative analysis is useful and necessary to complement qualitative methods
- Can seek assistance or hire expertise in this area
- There are some instances where this is not required
- Stakeholders do not need to have detailed knowledge of the methodological rigours

d) Methods for determining merit or worth (e.g., grading, ranking, setting criteria)

- Specific methods: grading scale; merit criteria based on specific program experience and perception
- Helpful for determining an agreed-upon standard for assessing effectiveness
- Useful in many cases, but caution is warranted when dealing with and acknowledging various value systems and social groups involved in the project or policy implementation

### Communication and Other Skills

a) Reporting skills (e.g., presentations, report writing)

- Specific skills: report writing; presentation; preparation of cabinet documents and presentations; computer graphics skills useful
- This is essential for decision-making, ensuring that the evaluator has thought it through
- Not much point to conducting an evaluation if you can't present the results to clients effectively

b) Communication skills (e.g., questioning, listening)

- Specific skills: listening; probing; questioning; being open to new ideas and information
- Essential in a participatory process; essential for data collection (e.g., interviews); essential for disseminating results; essential on a day-to-day basis

c) Interpersonal skills (e.g., negotiation, facilitation, collaboration)

- Specific skills: effective collaboration; facilitating data gathering activities; negotiation for resources; collaboration with other studies that are going on at the same time; motivating others; dealing with antagonistic stakeholders; constructively channelling diverse stakeholder expectations; sensitivity when collecting data

- Negotiating skills essential to get access for the evaluation and to get appropriate participation and to build support for the final report
- Essential on a day-to-day basis – evaluators have to work with others

d) Project management skills (e.g., budgeting, time management, proposal writing)

- Specific skills: competitive proposal process, team approach, meeting deadlines, managing the project, proposal writing, budget control, managing time constraints, doing evaluation on a shoestring, fundraising for evaluation
- Evaluators should be reliable as professionals – this affects the reliability of the evaluation results

e) Critical thinking skills (e.g., analysis, synthesis)

- Specific skills: constructing acceptable and meaningful processes, data analysis, data synthesis, analysing qualitative information, having an open but critical mind
- Particularly important for external evaluators – these are ways you can add value to the study
- Important for looking at the big picture which may go beyond immediate issues

f) Political astuteness



## **Appendix F**

### **Summary of Conference Discussion Sessions**



# **Canadian Evaluation Society Project in Support of Advocacy and Professional Development**

## **SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE DISCUSSION SESSIONS**

### **Introduction**

The Canadian Evaluation Society has undertaken a project in support of the Society's advocacy and professional development work. The project, which has gathered considerable international attention, attempted to articulate and describe the benefits, outputs (defined to include evidence, conclusions, and recommendations), processes, and knowledge elements associated with program evaluation.

The first phase of the project explored the benefits that clients and other stakeholders can derive from evaluation. From this phase came the observation that it is difficult to determine what benefits are attributable to evaluation without knowing what evaluation is, and how it is unique from other professional activities such as research, knowledge management, or audit.

We chose to put this issue forward for discussion at the Canadian Evaluation Society 2002 conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Two discussion sessions were arranged to allow people to consider three interrelated questions:

- What is unique about evaluation?
- What do we mean by the "outputs" of evaluation?
- What are the knowledge and skills that are needed to do evaluation?

Approximately 25 people attended the first discussion session, and approximately 10 were in the second session. The discussions in both sessions were lively and animated, with participants expressing a number of different opinions.

This paper provides a summary of the themes that emerged during the discussions. We used the ideas raised in the discussion as one of several sources of information for the project in support of the Society's advocacy and professional development work.

### **What is unique about evaluation?**

The discussions during the two conference sessions suggested that evaluation may distinguish itself from other knowledge-based activities by 1) its purpose, 2) its approach to studying programs, and 3) the information and evidence it provides.

## Purpose

Evaluation is intended primarily for practical, context-specific use. It takes place within the context of an organization, program, or policy. Evaluation questions tend to come from managers, program delivery staff, or other stakeholders, and concern practical issues such as the need for the program, its success, quality assurance, cost-effectiveness, design delivery alternatives, and so on. Funding for the evaluation is often internal, although this seems to be changing.

Common purposes for evaluation are to:

- help people make better decisions
- inform how we manage our organizations
- report back to their stakeholders about spending and results
- investigate or re-question the purpose of a program
- identify the impact of a program
- determine whether or not a program is sustainable
- make value judgements about a program (this was controversial<sup>50</sup>)

In contrast, the primary purpose of research is the creation of new knowledge that is not specific to a certain program or policy. The researchers normally set the agenda, and funding is typically available from external sources.

One of the participants summed up this difference in the following terms: “Research sets out to prove something. Evaluation sets out to improve something .”

## Approach to studying programs

Although evaluation shares many methods with other fields of study, it tends to take a different approach. Some of the differences highlighted in the discussions were:

- Evaluation tends to be an art, in that the steps in evaluation are not predetermined or prescribed. In audit there are Generally Accepted Auditing Principles that clearly delineate what steps need to be taken. In evaluation, the steps are not as clear.

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<sup>50</sup> Some participants felt that making value judgements was an important part of evaluation, and that evaluators should attempt to identify and consider all of the different values that come into play when forming judgements. Other participants thought the evaluator needed to be as objective as possible, providing unbiased information to decision-makers, who can then apply whatever values and other factors are relevant. They felt strongly that the evaluator’s values should not come into play in making recommendations or decisions.

Some participants thought that the evaluator’s role in making value judgements would depend to some extent on whether the evaluator is internal or external. They also felt that client expectations would be an important factor, as clients will often specify whether they want conclusions and recommendations or just findings.

- Evaluation focuses on program processes as well as results.
- Evaluation tends to consider the program in its entirety to develop a complete understanding of how it functions, rather than looking at smaller pieces.
- Evaluation is more objective and independent than other operational or management reviews that are performed by project managers.
- There is considerable breadth in evaluation, and there is no single model that defines evaluation. Evaluators come from different backgrounds, and as a result, evaluation is cross-disciplinary. The nature of the evaluation can be tailored to the commissioning organization's needs.

### Information and evidence

Evaluation can provide reliable and valid information and evidence about:

- why a program is being conducted
- how a program is being conducted (it was noted that this is the primary function of organizational reviews; some participants argued that the focus of an evaluation would have to go beyond this)
- achievement of program objectives
- what's working and what's not working
- what needs to be done to improve

### **What do we mean by evaluation outputs?**

Participants raised the concern that the term output could cause confusion because it has different meanings in different contexts. They said we should be precise in the terminology we use.

It was suggested that we use the same terminology as is used in similar professions such as audit and knowledge management. In those fields, the terms of choice are "products" and "services." "Product" is a broad term that can include tangibles (reports) and intangibles (presentations, and even different types of information). Although participants favoured this term, its breadth may conflict with our need to be precise for the purposes of this project. Other possible terms include:

- Results
- Knowledge (there were differing opinions about whether this was an output or an outcome)
- Information
- Findings
- Deliverables (those things which an evaluation team specifies it will produce at the beginning of the evaluation)

There was some discussion on the distinction between outputs and outcomes. Participants thought that outputs would be the products of the evaluation, and outcomes would be the utilization of those products. Outputs are within the control of those who conduct the evaluation, while outcomes are not (although evaluators can *influence* outcomes).

This discussion led participants to ask whether or not evaluators should be accountable for utilization, even though the client ultimately needs to take that step. Participants also wondered what role evaluators should play in increasing the use of evaluation products. This would be an interesting discussion topic for next year's conference.

### **What are the knowledge and skills that are needed to do evaluation?**

Participants identified a large number of skills that are needed to do evaluation. While evaluation methods and models were considered important by participants in both groups, softer skills such as communication, organization, and interpersonal skills were emphasized as being particularly important.

#### Communication Skills

Evaluators need effective listening and communication skills to:

- fully understand the dynamics of the organization and can adapt the evaluation accordingly;
- work in partnership with other evaluators;
- get the results out to the people who make the decisions; and
- ensure that new knowledge does not come as a surprise to the client.

#### Interpersonal Skills

A number of participants indicated that interpersonal skills are essential to program evaluators – so much so that, without the people skills, even the strongest academic credentials are useless. Some participants indicated that, when hiring evaluators, they looked for the people skills rather than research skills. In the words of one attendee, “Just being a good researcher doesn't necessarily mean you'll be a good evaluator – the people skills are harder to learn.”

Important interpersonal skills identified by participants include:

- Negotiation, mediation, and conflict resolution skills are useful when evaluators need to report on sensitive or controversial findings.
- Sensitivity.
- Collaboration is useful when evaluators need to bring different parties to the table who are doing the same thing.
- Political acumen helps an evaluator smell out controversy and capture subtleties.

- Leadership, because the program evaluator is often the torch bearer, getting people to commit to the purpose of the study.
- Diplomacy is needed to convince the client that something has to be done (or that something can't be done).
- Finding the balance between courage and diplomacy.

### Project management skills

Some participants felt that evaluation was more effective when conducted by a team of evaluators, where people bring different skills, than when conducted by a single evaluator. As they noted, no single person can have in-depth knowledge of everything. Evaluators who lead projects therefore need to have effective project management skills.

They also indicated that evaluators needed to be knowledgeable and skilful in creating budgets, writing proposals, and seeking funding for evaluation projects.

### Analytical and thinking skills

Curiosity and an open mind were two qualities that ensure evaluators capture and interpret data effectively. Letting go of preconceived ideas, remaining neutral, and being willing to question the system were also seen as important.

Logic and analytical skills were also seen as important. In addition, creativity is important for the synthesis that takes place in an evaluation.

Finally, some participants felt it was important for evaluators to use common sense and to think outside the box.

### Ethics

Participants thought that evaluators should be knowledgeable about, and committed to, ethical principles (for example those outlined in the CES Guidelines).

### Knowledge of government

Many evaluations take place in government contexts. To develop effective conclusions and recommendations, evaluators need to understand how government works, be aware of government agendas, and understand how decisions are made in a political context.

### Research methods and models

Participants agreed that knowledge of research methodologies, evaluation models, and analyses were required to do evaluation. As one participant noted, methodology is the only thing that distinguishes audit from evaluation. Participants disagreed about whether graduate study was required to ensure a proper methodological background. There was also some discussion about the level of expertise required. Some participants noted that only a minimum amount of research knowledge is required to manage (or even carry out) an evaluation.

For those who practice evaluation as a profession, some participants felt that it is also important to understand the history of the field (for example, the debate between the “quals” and the “quants”). This history helps evaluators feel an identity as evaluators.

Awareness of a range of methods, and ability to select among them.

Participants noted that evaluation is characterized by a diversity, flexibility, and range of methodologies that is not present in research. Furthermore, the tools of evaluation are continually changing.

According to the participants, individual evaluators may develop specific areas of specialization. However, it is also important for evaluators to:

- have an understanding of a wide range of models and methodologies;
- know when a particular model or method is applicable;
- be aware of their own limits; and
- know where to find expertise in a particular model or method (if one has not specialized in that model or method themselves); and

Evaluators therefore need to build and maintain a diverse, up-to-date “toolbox” from which they can select models and methods that are appropriate to a given evaluation. Participants noted that they would like ongoing courses for mid-level evaluators to help build their toolboxes.

## **Conclusions**

The discussion sessions have allowed us to identify some of the ways evaluation is unique from other endeavours such as research, audit, and organizational review. According to the participants in our sessions, and in general terms, evaluation:

- is an applied field of study that is conducted for practical purposes;
- is objective and independent, either remaining neutral or taking into consideration the values of diverse stakeholders;
- provides reliable and valid evidence about many aspects of a program, including its purpose, its implementation, its outcomes, and the effectiveness of its components;
- has a flexible, diverse, and multidisciplinary methodology, elements of which are selected as appropriate for a given evaluation; and
- requires a combination of research skills, analytical skills, interpersonal and communication skills, project management skills, ethical conduct, and an understanding of the program context.

## **Appendix G**

### **Descriptions of Sample Evaluations**



# **Canadian Evaluation Society Project in Support of Advocacy and Professional Development**

## **DESCRIPTIONS OF SAMPLE EVALUATIONS**

Through the second consultation, we recruited volunteers to share descriptions of evaluations they had been involved in. We have obtained seven descriptions of sample evaluations in various sectors including economic development, education, health and social services, and international development.

The descriptions demonstrate how evaluation works in real-world settings. They include information about:

- the program,
- the scope of the evaluation,
- the evaluation outputs,
- benefits to stakeholders, and
- factors affecting the impact of the evaluation.

These descriptions may be useful as examples for advocating evaluation.

## **Sample Evaluation #1**

### Sector

Economic Development

### The Program

This program aimed to increase viability of small businesses in the Columbia Basin of British Columbia by providing business owners access to business assessment and counseling to address their particular business needs. The program involved providing business assessment through the service of a business advocate and if required access to a consultant with expertise in a business area of use to that business e.g. marketing, creating a business plan etc.

### Scope of the Evaluation

Duration: Six months

Expenses: None

Staff time: One evaluator and one program staff person worked with a subcommittee of the economic development advisory committee to plan and focus the evaluation and use the evaluation results to develop recommendations to support the advisory committee's program decisions (approximately 200 hours, total)

### Evaluation Outputs

- Program description
- Evaluation focus to be addressed (program did not have a logic model in advance of the evaluation)
- Identification of program benefits by program participants
- Identification of program areas in need of improvement
- Immediate results of program to participating businesses
- Identification of gaps in business types accessing program
- Recommended changes to the program design to improve implementation
- Identification of the areas in which role clarification was needed and how to identify and respond to areas of frustration in service provision
- Community and business indicators to be tracked through program

### Benefits to the Stakeholders

- The evaluation increased their understanding of both the program and the evaluation process.
- It helped the program advisory committee to defend its recommendation to continue funding the program
- It also helped program staff identify ways of strengthening and improving the program design to ensure more consistent implementation.

### Factors Affecting the Impact of the Evaluation

- Program staff; advisory committee members and the program delivery contractors were eager to improve their program, and were receptive to the evaluation.
- Since there was no previous logic model developed it was important that we spend considerable time in the evaluation planning to ensure that we were asking the right questions

so that the results of the evaluation would support the decisions around continued funding and improved program implementation.

- In-depth, qualitative data collection from participating businesses was essential to identifying and understanding the effects the program was having on their businesses.
- Involving program staff; advisory committee members and program delivery contractors in the evaluation maximized the benefits to the program.

## Sample Evaluation #2

### Sector

Education Post Secondary (College)

### The Program

This program is a nine month certificate program in office administration offered to provide graduates with career entry training. Learners participate in classes that enable them to learn software applications, administrative procedures, information administration, communications as well as a wide range of interpersonal skills.

### Scope of the Evaluation

A participatory module of program evaluation was used.

Duration: Nine months

Expenses: Printing for questionnaires and reports, scan sheets, telephone interviewer contract

Staff time: Evaluation team consisted of internal evaluation expert, eight faculty members, and one program co-ordinator.

All team members worked on this project on a part-time basis.

Over the course of the project the team met for approximately 20 hours, plus an additional 10 hours for sub-team meetings.

### Evaluation Outputs

- Program description
- Logic model
- Identification of helpful program components
- Identification of challenges experienced in program with concentration on efficiencies in program.
- Recommendations regarding the program design, delivery, learner support and efficiencies.
- Formal Report

### Benefits to the Stakeholders

- The evaluation increased their understanding of both their program and the evaluation process.
- Helped make informed decisions regarding the program.
- Helped in revising the program to make improvements for the learners.
- Renewed faculty enthusiasm and excitement about the program.
- Evaluation team members now understand the evaluation process and the benefits of program evaluation.

### Factors Affecting the Impact of the Evaluation

- At first the faculty were very hesitant about the evaluation and its purpose. This was quickly overcome and enthusiasm and excitement about the evaluation as well as the program grew.
- A shared and clear understanding of the program was established through the development of the Logic Model. The Logic Chart then guided the evaluation.
- Using the participatory model where the recommendations came from the faculty helped the faculty implement changes to the program. There was immediate 'buy-in'.

### **Sample Evaluation #3**

#### Sector

Health and social services

#### The Program

Community addictions programs are funded by the Territorial Government with a view to supporting communities to design culturally appropriate programs to address issues related to addictions at the local level. The programs, which employ local addictions counselors, are predominantly based on an abstinence model of recovery with education and prevention as a secondary focus. Clients access the services for support, counseling and referral to residential addictions treatment programs. To supplement the locally designed and delivered programs, pilot projects were recently put in place to test a mobile addictions treatment program.

#### Scope of the Evaluation

Duration: Nine months.

Expenses: Consulting fees for a team of expert consultants; travel and accommodation for 15 community-based reviews; administration and overhead; printing.

Staff time: One program expert dedicated almost full-time to project management; Steering Committee of six managers and program staff who approved terms of reference, provided direction and reviewed draft reports.

#### Evaluation Outputs

- Literature review including definitions and models, recent trends in the delivery of addictions services, components of a typical program and costs of addictions (articulation of standards for program success)
- Program description for 15 community-based programs and mobile addictions treatment programs
- Individual site reports for each program evaluated, including a description of unmet needs
- Separate report on the evaluation of the Mobile Addiction Programs
- Community Addictions Program Effectiveness Rating Scale (evaluation tool developed by the consultants)
- Overall program/treatment effectiveness assessment, administration/management assessment, linkages of addiction programs to the larger health and social services system and value for money assessment of the program
- 30 findings (including an analysis of each finding) and 48 recommendations for changes to the program design and its context to improve overall service delivery throughout the jurisdiction

#### Benefits to the Stakeholders

For government decision-makers:

- Objective assessment of program effectiveness and value for money
- Clear recommendations for new direction

For staff:

- Increased understanding of **actual** program operations
- Validation of concerns expressed by staff responsible for program delivery, funding allocation and program management
- In-depth, qualitative data to support program change
- Development of a shared vision for the program

For clients:

- Realistic assessment of program effectiveness
- Concrete recommendations for action to provide better service to clients in the future

Factors affecting the impact of the evaluation

- The program has a high political profile
- Community program staff and community governments have a strong commitment to the need for community-level addictions programming
- Program effectiveness has been publicly questioned for several years, by political leaders, staff and clients
- Involving program staff and clients maximized the benefits and increased buy-in to the findings and recommendations

## Sample Evaluation #4

### Sector

Education (K-16)

### The Program

The major goals of the program are building the capacity of all schools in the El Paso, Texas area to move all students to the highest possible levels of achievement in mathematics, science, technology (MST) and literacy. Key features of initiatives are K-16 alignment of mst teaching, learning, and assessment; building high expectations curriculum, instruction, and assessment with all partners accountable for success of all students; evolving a successful systemic model for accomplishing project goals; and building continually renewing inquiry-based K-16 education toward careers grounded in science, mathematics, and technology.

### Scope of the Evaluation

Duration: Ongoing since 1992

Expenses: Estimated at 1 million a year or more

Staff time: Large staff including project directors, professional development, site-based support, consultants, research and evaluation.

### Sample of Evaluation Outcomes

- Reduction in ethnic achievement gap on state assessment at all levels.
- Surpass international norms on some TIMSS (Third International Mathematics and Science) items in mathematics and science at elementary, middle, and high school.
- Students in higher rated Opportunity to Learn (OTL) classrooms in grade seven surpass students in lower rated classrooms and the cohort advantage continued to grade 10.
- Focus group, interviews, and observations support OTL questionnaire data, but identify depth of implementation and shortfalls not revealed by questionnaire data.
- Immediate response of program staff to shortfalls in program implementation and student achievement.
- Increase in success and first semester retention of students entering university in engineering.

### Benefits to Stakeholders

- Higher student achievement along with higher expectations among all stakeholders.
- Understanding of the “why” of the outcomes, both positive and negative.
- Evolving culture of continuous inquiry and program improvement in schools

### Factors Affecting the Impact of the Evaluation

- A culture of “automatic responsibility” (i.e., anyone who sees an opportunity or problem takes responsibility for seeing it through directly or seeing that someone else does).
- Building in “use of data” discussions and formal forums along lines of National Issues Forums ([www.nifi.org](http://www.nifi.org)).
- Use of multi-method evaluation increasing credibility of findings, seeing the complexity of implementation initiatives and contexts, working toward depth of understanding of what works and what does not, and raising questions of “so what” for findings.

## Sample Evaluation #5

### Sector

International Development

### The Program

The program serves women who have very low esteem due their gender and the caste system that still prevails in remote rural areas. There are no other services provided to these women who are illiterate, anaemic, and poor. They are often overworked, with very limited knowledge of health, nutrition, sanitation, and skills or means to improve their lives. The program aimed to increase the self-esteem of these women by: teaching functional literacy skills; sewing to enable them to sew their own clothes (save precious cash income); income generation; learning about health (both mental and physical) and nutrition using familiar traditional methods (song and dances); sharing life experiences.

### Scope of the Evaluation

Duration: On-going monitoring by front-line staff and periodic evaluation by funder

Expenses: Travel and correspondence costs

Staff time: Weekly monitoring by program staff (one hour a week in total) and periodic visit by staff from funder (approximately 4 days in this location).

### Evaluation Outputs

- Program description (i.e., essential cross-cultural information to increase understanding)
- Description of implementation at the each village level (i.e., site specific information)
- Description of program effects at the village level (i.e., realistic program indicators)
- Demonstrated link between implementation and program effects (i.e., role of perception)
- Identification of helpful program components (i.e. use of indigenous methods)
- Identification of barriers to village-level implementation (i.e. details of hardships)
- Recommended changes to the program design and its context that would improve village-level implementation (i.e., identification of many practical ideas)

### Benefits to the Stakeholders

- The evaluation increased their understanding of both the program and the evaluation process.
- It helped the program staff lobby for the continuation of the program.
- It also helped program staff identify ways of strengthening the program design to ensure more consistent implementation at the village level and optimize use of limited resources.

### Factors Affecting the Impact of the Evaluation

- *Participatory development of the evaluation guidebook* was important in ensuring that the various stakeholders recognized: the need for sound monitoring and evaluation to take place for improving the program; the importance of incorporating their various needs; the need to have a monitor and evaluation system in place for the long term benefit of the program.
- *Participatory approach to evaluation enabled:* program staff to provide in-depth, qualitative data essential to identifying; illiterate women to be more receptive to being interviewed; better understanding of barriers and identification of practical cost-effective solution to maximize the benefits to the program.

## **Sample Evaluation #6**

### Sector

Health Services

### The Program

The expectations of the program were to provide support services in an consistent manner at the highest level of quality, within the most efficient cost structure and in the best practice model.

The program consisted of the contracting out of support services in a health centre and re-engineering areas taken over by the contracted agency. Performance evaluations were performed by the contracted organization on the program monthly basis with the result given to the V. Pres. of Corporate Services.

### Scope of the Evaluation

Duration: 3 ½ months- (Recommended pilot) (Practicum Project)

Expenses: N/A

Staff time: N/A

### Evaluation Outputs

- Program Description
- Logic Model of Quality Measures- Surveys
- Organigraph
- Description of the Evaluation
- Evaluation Results
- Recommendations for the future in the areas of program design, computer programs education for staff. strategic planning, building renovations, customer satisfaction, suggested research for the future.

### Benefits to the Stakeholders

- To improve make improvements to increase program quality, effectiveness and efficiency.
- To have an evaluation model that can be use in the future to measure the value of other public/private partnership entered into in the future.
- To identify areas requiring improvements.

### Factors Affecting the Impact of the Evaluation

- All front line staff and some management staff were eager to participate in evaluation as a result of job security and workload issues.
- Some management staff reluctant to participate in evaluation process as they felt threatened by the evaluation process.
- Limited down time scheduling of front-line staff to participate in focus groups.

## **Evaluation Description #7**

### Sector

Education (post-secondary)

### The Program

This was a teacher training program targeted exclusively to Aboriginals. Delivered by a community college, the program aimed to provide qualified elementary school teachers for area schools, which featured a disproportional low number of native teachers compared with the student population. The program had operated for eight years but had never been evaluated.

### Scope of the Evaluation

Duration: Ten months

Cost: \$70,000

Resources: The government agency funding the program retained a team of three consultants to carry out an independent review. Five program staff were interviewed and contributed background data; this required about 20 collective hours of their time.

### Evaluation Outputs

- Program description, including a logic model
- Program activity data, e.g. numbers of admits, graduates, retention by year, and so on
- Comparison of student performance with other programs in the areas of marks and retention
- Description of graduate employment in area schools
- Description of key stakeholders' (First Nations, Department of Education, teachers) perceptions and views of the program
- Feedback from program graduates regarding their education experience
- Conclusions regarding program effectiveness and efficiency
- Recommended changes designed to improve program effectiveness

### Benefits to the Stakeholders

- The review increased decision makers' understanding of both the program and the evaluation process.
- It refuted commonly-held beliefs to the effect that program students performed poorly.
- It revealed widespread support for the program in all sectors of the community.
- It assured government funding agencies that the program was indeed meeting its mandate.
- It defined and promoted the idea of program accountability.
- It identified several shortcomings, and ways in which these areas could be improved.

### Factors Affecting the Impact of the Evaluation

- First Nation stakeholders were quite ignorant and suspicious of the evaluation process.
- The evaluation was conducted in a highly-charged political atmosphere (it was suspended for three months at one point to convince a key aboriginal organization of its value).
- Widespread community interviews and consultation was an essential "political" component of the evaluation methodology.

- Planning, collecting and analyzing relevant data proved invaluable to assessing student performance
- The program manager, while overtly cooperative, was committed to maintaining the status quo.
- Interviews of program staff, while necessary, revealed only that they were hostile towards the review.
- First Nations organizations were preoccupied with “protecting” the program and were ill-prepared to deal with the recommended changes.
- The funding agency, while concerned with improving the program, encountered a great deal of passive opposition to the recommended changes.

