


Summer Institute in Program Evaluation
June 8-12, 2026

Introduction to Program Evaluation I & II

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1




Learning Objectives

- Define program evaluation and identify types of program evaluation
- Recognize the different purposes for program evaluation
- Identify the different steps involved in program evaluation
- Learn to develop program evaluation questions

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2




Outline

- What is program evaluation?
 - Types of evaluations
 - Purposes of evaluations
- Steps in program evaluation
- Developing evaluation questions

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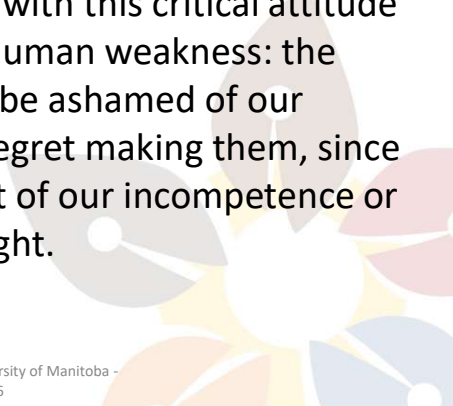
3




Introduction with a long quote

“We all make mistakes...(however, we also) put our ideas and inventions to the test, we probe critically, we scrap what we find to be wrong and try again. Mingled with this critical attitude there is...a distinctive human weakness: the feeling that we should be ashamed of our mistakes, and should regret making them, since they must be the result of our incompetence or our lack of mature insight.

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4




Introduction with a long quote

(But) If we are in earnest to discover what the world is like, we must be fully prepared to correct mistakes; but if we are to correct them, we must be fully prepared to commit them first.”(Miller, 1985, p. 9)



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5



What is Program Evaluation?


“A process of systematic inquiry to provide sound information about the characteristics, activities, or outcomes of a program or policy for a valued purpose.”

(King & Stevhan, 2013)



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6




What is Program 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.”

(Patton)

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7




Why?

“It is a systematic collection of information....for use by specific people to reduce uncertainties, improve effectiveness, and make decisions with regard to what those programs are doing and affecting.” It means, “gathering data that are meant to be, and actually are, used for program improvement and decision making.”

(Patton)


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8




Key Question

Key question to be asked from the beginning:
How are we going to use this information?



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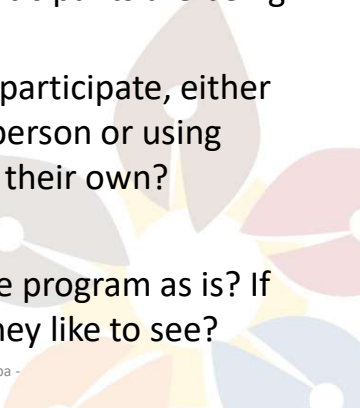
9



Types of Evaluation


Process evaluation: deals with program delivery issues (outputs) and stakeholder concerns.

- How many potential program participants are being reached?
- How many of the above actually participate, either through attending a program in person or using various educational materials on their own?
- What are the program activities?
- Are participants satisfied with the program as is? If not, what improvement would they like to see?



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10




Types of Evaluation (cont'd)

Outcome evaluation (short-term): For instance in health related program evaluation, short-term outcomes may refer to changes in behaviour and the psychological and social influences on behaviour

- What behaviour changes (e.g., quitting smoking, increasing one's community participation) occur during or after involvement in the program?
- Do participants feel increased confidence in making behaviour changes that are conducive to improving health?
- Do participants develop the skills they need to change their health behaviours (e.g., proper condom use, cooking skills) or to work toward larger changes in their communities (e.g, advocacy skills)?

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11



Types of Evaluation (cont'd)

Outcome evaluation (long-term): The term outcome usually may refer to longer-term changes which are assumed to follow from changes in health related behaviour.

- Do participants experience a positive change in their physical health status?
- Do participants have a long-term enhanced sense of positive well-being since their involvement in the program?
- Do the skills learned in the program contribute to an improved quality of life?
- Are there long-term increases in community resources and public or private sector policies as more residents get involved in?

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12

Logic Model



Logic models are useful for visually summarizing the structure of a program. They are widely used to show the intended causal linkages in a program (McDavid et al., 2013). Specifying the causal mechanism transforms the logic model into a theory of change (Patton, 2012)

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13




Theory of Change

- For instance, many education and health programs are built on the validity assumptions that: 1) new information leads to attitude change; and 2) attitude change affects behaviour.
- For programs, there is also an important distinction to consider, that of *theory* failure from *implementation* failure.

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14




Evaluation Purposes

- Judgment oriented
 - Aimed at determining the overall merit, worth, significance or value (e.g., summative evaluation aimed at deciding if a program is sufficiently effective to be continued or replicated).
- Accountability
 - Aimed at rendering account. Includes oversight and compliance, the assessment to the extent to which a program follows the directives, regulations, mandated standards, or other formal expectations (e.g., audits; accreditation). Driven by attention to external stakeholders.

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15




Evaluation Purposes (cont'd)

- Improvement oriented
 - Improve programs (e.g., formative evaluation; continuous improvement; quality enhancement; manage more effectively).
- Knowledge-Generating
 - Generate knowledge (e.g., generalizations about effectiveness; theory building; scholarly publishing; policy making; extrapolate principles about what works).

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16




Evaluation Purposes (cont'd)

- Monitoring
 - Manage the program, routine reporting, early identification of problems. Provided information to those internal to the program (e.g., quality control, management information systems; routine reporting).
- Development
 - Involves changing the intervention, adapting it to changed circumstances, and altering tactics based on complex, emergent and dynamic conditions (e.g., developmental evaluation; rapid assessment; rapid feedback; environmental scanning).

(Patton, 2008)

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17




Types of Evaluation Revisited

Formative
Summative
Prospective
Developmental

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18




Types of Evaluation Revisited (cont'd)

Formative
To collect information that can be used for program development and improvement.

Summative
To make an overall judgment about the effectiveness of a program.

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19




Types of Evaluation Revisited (cont'd)

Prospective
Assess the likely outcomes of proposed projects, program (theory of change).

Developmental
Supports program and organizational development to guide adaptation to emergent and dynamic realities from a complex systems perspective.


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20



Evaluation & Research

Program evaluation uses research methods to gather information, but evaluation differs fundamentally from basic research in the purpose of the study.



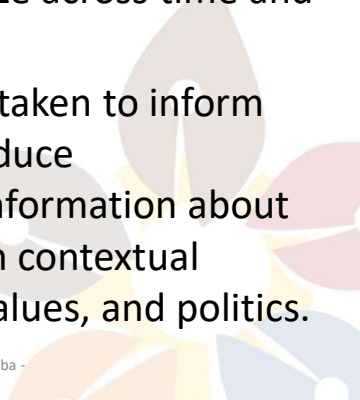
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21




Evaluation & Research (cont'd)

- Basic scientific research is undertaken to discover new knowledge, test theories, establish truth, and generalize across time and space.
- Program evaluation is undertaken to inform decisions, clarify options, reduce uncertainties, and provide information about programs and policies within contextual boundaries of time, place, values, and politics.



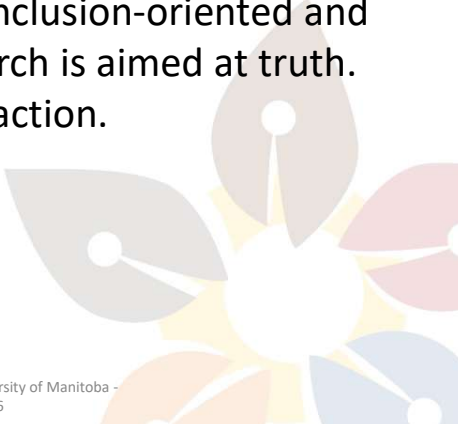
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22



Evaluation & Research (cont'd)

The difference between research and evaluation has been called by Cronbach and Suppes the difference between conclusion-oriented and decision inquiry. Research is aimed at truth. Evaluation is aimed at action.



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23




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24




Evaluation: A Seven Step Program

1. Identify program actors and primary intended users of the evaluation (who)
2. Identify the purpose/s of the evaluation and formulate the evaluation questions (why & what)
3. Make methodological/methods decisions (how)
4. Collect and/or refine data
5. Analyze data, ideally with the involvement of intended users
6. Interpretate findings with intended user (meaning)
7. Facilitate intended use by intended users (action)

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25




Identify the Primary Intended Users of the Evaluation

Who will make the decisions?
Whose questions will the evaluation answer?
(People, not organizations, use evaluation information)

- Multiple program actors and potential primary intended users
 - Funders
 - Staff
 - Administrators
 - Clients
 - Other

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26




Identify the Purposes of the Evaluation

Once primary intended users have been identified and organized, the second step is to identify why they want to conduct an evaluation. Different program actors are likely to have different purposes

What is the purpose of the evaluation?
How will the information be used?

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27




Formulate the Relevant Evaluation Questions

The next step is to formulate the relevant evaluation questions. It can be difficult because deciding what to evaluate means deciding what will not be evaluated.

What will we know after the evaluation that we do not know now?
What can we do after the evaluation that we cannot do now for lack of information?

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28



Formulate the Relevant Evaluation Questions (cont'd)


Formative and Summative Evaluation Questions

Important to clarify whether the primary purpose of the evaluation is:

- To collect information that can be used for program development and improvement (formative)
- To make an overall judgment about the effectiveness of a program (summative)

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29




Formulate the Relevant Evaluation Questions (cont'd)

Three Classic Evaluation Questions

- What happens in the program? (implementation question)
- What resulted? (outcomes question)
- Can what resulted be attributed to what was implemented? (attribution question)

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30




Examples of Evaluation Questions

About need for program services:

- What is the nature and magnitude of the problem to be addressed?
- What are the characteristics of the population in need?
- What are the needs of the population?
- What service delivery arrangements are needed to provide those services?

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31




Examples of Evaluation Questions (cont'd)

About the program's conceptualization or design:

- What services should be provided?
- What are the best delivery systems for the services?
- How should the program be promoted?
- How should the program be organized?
- What resources are necessary and appropriate for the program?

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32




Examples of Evaluation Questions (cont'd)

About program operations and service delivery:

- Are the intended services being delivered to the intended persons?
- Do sufficient numbers of participants complete the program?
- Are program participants satisfied with the services?
- Are administrative, organizational, and staff functions handled well?

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33




Examples of Evaluation Questions (cont'd)

About program outcomes:

- Are the outcome goals and objectives being achieved?
- Do the services have beneficial effects on program participants?
- Do the services have adverse side effects on program participants?
- Are some program participants affected more by the services than others?

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34




Examples of Evaluation Questions (cont'd)

About program cost and efficiency:

- Are resources used efficiently?
- Is the cost reasonable in relation to the magnitude of the benefits?
- Would alternative approaches yield equivalent benefits at less cost?

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35



Criteria to Assess Questions


Criteria

- Data can be brought to bear on the question; that is, it is truly an *empirical* question.
- There is more than one possible answer to the question; that is, the answer is not predetermined by the phrasing of the question.
- The primary intended users want information to help answer the question. They care about the answer to the question.
- The primary users want to answer the question for themselves, not just for someone else.
- The intended users can indicate how they would use the answer to the question; that is, they can specify the relevance of an answer to the question for future action.

(Patton)

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36




Question Development

- Brainstorm
- Identify themes
- Define question/s
- Operationalize question/s

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37




Examples of actual evaluation questions

Evaluation Questions

1. ***How*** does the program work over time? (*Activities & Outputs*)
How refers to actual activities that take place and outputs produced during the entire project, for both the prevention and the intervention components. More so, it explains the rationale for adjustments and changes that occur.
2. ***Who*** attended the program and patterns of participation? (*Activities & Outputs*)
Who refers to age, gender, ethnicity, housing, sources of income, multiple diagnoses, connections to the system, marital status, pregnant/parenting, education level, etc.
Who, for the prevention component, also refers to schools and school divisions.
3. ***What*** seems to be the ***immediate effects*** of the program? (*Short-term Outcomes*)
 The main indicators of immediate effects will be: 1) Clean time of participants; 2) Proportion of participants that have stayed clean and for how long; 3) Engagement in agency activities; 4) Changes in the presence of risk and protective factors during participation in the program.

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38



Examples of actual evaluation questions

Evaluation questions

1) How well implemented was the CES 2022 conference? Implementation refers to:

- Conference logistics
- Topics covered
- Social events

2) How effective was the CES 2022 conference? (in relation to what CES expects out of a conference and CES strategic plan)
Effective in terms of the conference being a:


- Learning space (skills, professional development)
- Networking space
- Promoter/actualizer of IDEAS
- Fundraiser for CES (i.e., profit)
- Disciplinary fields/work settings (reach of conference)

3) How relevant was the CES 2022 conference for delegates, organizers, volunteers, sponsors, exhibitors, and society at large? Relevant in terms of:

- Skill development/learning opportunities/professional development
- Networking opportunities
- Current/future roles in the evaluation field
- IDEAS

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39



Examples of actual evaluation questions

Canada Learning Bonds Uptake Project – Seven Oaks School Division

Evaluation questions (what)

1) How was the CLB UP implemented at SOSD?


- CLB UP – Detailing the components and population groups being considered in relation to implementation

2) Why were there differential outcomes across student population groups?

- Outcomes – Refer to: sign up, mindset
- Population groups – youth transitioning to post-secondary, children and families from Berens River, children and families with low incomes, children in care, newcomer families

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40



Caution about proof

“In empirical inquiry, nothing is ever literally proven; one presents evidence and tries to show that it can be explained on the basis of the hypothesis advanced. A critic could then rationally argue that the evidence is mistaken, poorly chosen, or otherwise inadequate, or that there is a better theory to explain the facts.” (Chomsky, 2003, p. 146)

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41



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42




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43



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44