



Successful Evaluations - Lessons Learned Along The Way

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We'll talk about. . . .

- Evaluation versus Research
- Know the proposal/project
- Know the project director (PD)
- Get connected with key personnel
- Evaluation “operations”
- Data, Data, Data
- Resources



Research vs Evaluation

**“You cannot prove causality;
you can only prove
synchronicity.”**

**Barry Kibel
Pacific Institute**



	Research	Evaluation
Purpose	To make a contribution to a body of knowledge	To assess service/program merit or functioning
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ External ▪ Results often generalizable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Internal ▪ Results mostly site-specific
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Question ▪ Design ▪ Hypothesis ▪ Collect data ▪ Analyze ▪ Interpret 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engage stakeholders ▪ Program description ▪ Focus design ▪ Collect evidence ▪ Justify ▪ Ensure use
Standards & Skills Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Validity ▪ Qual/Quant methods ▪ Research design ▪ Ethics review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utility Feasibility Propriety Accuracy ▪ Qual/Quant methods ▪ Evaluation design



Evaluation vs Research

- “Petri Dish” vs “Real Life”
- “Experimental Design” vs “Quasi-Experimental Design” vs “Eclectic”
- “RCTs” vs “Matched Groups” vs “Convenience Sampling”
- “Causality” vs Trends/Patterns



Know the Proposal/Project

- Logic Model
- Partners
- Activities/Services/Strategies/Etc.
- The “Geography” – community, school(s), businesses, agencies, etc.
- “Iron out” all the questions ASAP



Know the Project Director

- Communication/Operational Style
- Expectations
- Decide early who is responsible for what and who does what
- Define conflict resolution process



Get Connected with Key Personnel

- Who is the “real” decision maker(s)?
- The key information sources
- Identify the “worker bees” ASAP
- Avoid going “Native”!



Evaluation “Operations”

- Establish firm timelines/deadlines
- Attend partner meetings
- Use technology whenever possible
- “Boots on the ground” – walkabouts, site visits, etc.
- Blend Qual and Quant for full picture



Data, Data, Data

- What is currently available?
- Triangulation (both qual & quant)
- Confidentiality (IRB)
- Multiple Sources
- “Real – World”



The Ultimate Question: “So What?”

- 1. What important points do these data reveal?**
- 2. What patterns or trends show up? Can they be explained?**
- 3. How do data from various sources compare or contrast?**
- 4. Do any correlations seem important?**
- 5. What actions are indicated?**



Food for Thought?

- How do I currently gather & analyze data?
- How could I revise my process to be more effective?
- What is my first step?
- Who are my “sounding boards”?



Resources

- Evaluation Institute – www.wmich.edu/evalctr
- American Evaluation Association – www.eval.org
- Evaluation Theory, Models, & Applications
(Stufflebeam & Shinkfield)
- Utilization-Focused Evaluation (Patton)



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