

# EVALUATION STRATEGIES FOR FUNDERS

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# TOPICS

- Why Evaluate?
- What do Funders Evaluate?
- How to do Evaluation
- If you Decide to Commission Evaluation, Remember that...

# Why Evaluate?

EVALUATIONS CAN BE USED THREE WAYS:

- To Help Make Re-funding Decisions
- To Improve the Funded Project
- To Learn What Works and What Doesn't Work

## To Help Make Re-funding Decisions

- Evaluations focussed on refunding decisions, really are **trying** to answer only one question:

**Did the results meet expectations?**

If "Yes" -- Re-fund.

If "No" -- Don't re-fund, unless there were extenuating circumstances.

*IF THE RESULTS DID NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS, THE  
BURDEN OF PROOF IS ON THE GRANTEE.*

## To Improve the Funded Project

- Key Concept: find out how well we are doing so that we can improve our performance.
- Key element is feedback loop: information on results used to change the way the project is being conducted.
- Also called Participatory or Empowerment Evaluation.

## To Improve the Funded Project (cont'd)

- Encourage reflection -- "how well are we doing and how can we do better?"
- Begins to converge with technical assistance and training.

*IF THE PURPOSE OF EVALUATION IS TO IMPROVE A PROJECT, THE EVALUATIVE INFORMATION NEEDS TO BE FED BACK INTO PROJECT LEADERSHIP DIRECTLY AND FAIRLY FREQUENTLY.*

## To Learn What Works and What Doesn't Work

- Did the grant work? Did it achieve what it set out to do?
- OR, Which of two approaches to the same problem is more promising.
- Key Concept: improvement hypotheses --  
If we do X then Y should occur.

## To Learn What Works and What Doesn't Work (cont'd)

- Example: "If we provide tenant-landlord mediation, we can reduce rent refusal and reduce housing abandonment."
- Example: "If we subsidize teen-trips to Israel, it will increase the numbers of teens who go; teens who go to Israel, are more likely to feel good about being Jewish."

*IF THE PURPOSE OF EVALUATION IS TO LEARN*

*WHAT WORKS AND DOESN'T WORK, FAILURE IS*

*JUST AS ILLUMINATING AS SUCCESS.*

## **What do Funders Evaluate?**

- Actions: Did they do it?
- Process: How did they do it?
- Outcome: What Happened after they did it?
- Impact: What Difference did the Outcome Make?

Actions: Did they do it?

- "Evaluating" actions is also called "monitoring."
- Two key questions: what actions were anticipated by the grantee in their original proposal and were those actions completed?
- When were these actions expected to be completed (Plan) and when were they completed (Actual)?

*THIS IS THE MOST BASIC LEVEL OF EVALUATION:*

*IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO DO "HIGHER ORDER"*

*EVALUATION WITHOUT THIS FACT BASE.*

## Actions: Did they do it? (cont'd)

ILLUSTRATION: *Grant to send teens to Israel*

Funds to be used for:

- community-wide marketing brochure
- a single info-line
- scholarships for summer trips for teens on their 1st trip to Israel
- two post-summer events with participants

At the end of one year, it was discovered that:

- the brochure was done
- the info line was established, but it was three months late
- they did make scholarships available
- they held one out of two post-summer events; the other was canceled because of lack of attendance

## Process: How did they do it?

- Also called "Formative Evaluation."
- Key Questions: Who was involved in the project? How did they interact? What processes or procedures were used to bring the project to fruition?
- To help understand why some actions were taken and others were not and to help understand outcomes.

*BEWARE OF PROCESS: ONE CAN SPEND ENDLESS*

*AMOUNTS OF TIME DOCUMENTING EVERY MEETING*

## Process: How did they do it? (cont'd)

ILLUSTRATION: *Grant to send teens to Israel*

Was the coalition that sponsored the project broadly or narrowly based?

Did the grantee have an effective process for publicizing the program and recruiting students?

Who was involved in building community support for the project and how was that done?

Did they have an effective process for insuring that students who were recruited had never been to Israel before?

Was the process for allocating scholarship dollars equitable?

Outcome: What happened after they did it?

- Also called "Summative Evaluation"
- Involves measurement of results of actions and processes
- Useful approach for looking at results:  
[Expected Outcome] - [Actual Outcome] = [Positive or negative variance] -- See illustration below

*EVALUATION OF ACTIONS AND PROCESSES AND NOT OF  
OUTCOMES IS LIKELY TO BE VERY UNSATISFYING*

Outcome: What happened after they did it? (cont'd)

ILLUSTRATION: Grant to send teens to Israel				
Measures	Expected	Actual	Variance	Explanation
Inquiries	200	150	-25%	late publicity
# of Applicants	40	50	+25%	more interest than expected
# of Participants in trip	20	25	+25%	½ of those who applied went, as planned
# of participants in follow-up	18	12	-33%	lack of clear accountability for organizing follow-up

Impact: What difference did the outcome make?

- The most complex level of evaluation.
- Key issue: Did the outcomes result in the benefits anticipated in making the grant.
- Impact analysis deals with questions of change -- in organizations or individuals.

*IMPACT ANALYSIS DEALS WITH THE MOST IMPORTANT  
ISSUES, BUT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT TO DO*

Impact: What difference did the outcome make? (cont'd)

**ILLUSTRATION: Grant to send teens to Israel**

- Did the grant enable more teens to go to Israel than would otherwise have gone?
- Did participants become more involved in the Jewish community upon their return?
- Did the trip engender positive feeling about Israel and about being Jewish?

# How to do Evaluation

- Scientific vs. Interpretative Evaluation
- Elements of Scientific Evaluation
- Elements of Interpretative Evaluation
- When to Use an Outside Evaluator  
[and when to Rely on Self-Evaluation]

## Scientific vs. Interpretive Evaluation

- Both involve a **fact** component: What occurred?
- Scientific Evaluation answers more questions, takes more time, costs a great deal more, and is more grounded in "hard information."
- Interpretative Evaluation answers fewer questions, answers them more quickly, costs much less and is more grounded in judgment and "soft information."
- Both involve a **value** component: Was what occurred positive or negative according to some value or values?

## Elements of Scientific Evaluation

- Emphasis on Quantitative Methods
- Measurement over extensive periods of time (longitudinal measurement)
- Comparative Measurement -- ideally with a control group

*MOST FUNDERS DO NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES OR TIME  
TO UNDERTAKE SCIENTIFIC EVALUATION*

## Elements of Interpretive Evaluation

- Includes Qualitative Methods
- Includes Quantitative Methods

## Elements of Interpretive Evaluation (cont'd)

### Qualitative Methods

- Site Visits
- Participant-Observation
- Interviews
- Focus Groups

## Elements of Interpretive Evaluation (cont'd)

### Quantitative Methods

- Tracking Systems
- Surveys of Participants (before and after)

## When To Use an Outside Evaluator [and when to Rely on Self-Evaluation]

*IT DEPENDS ON THE USE OF THE EVALUATION*

If the Use is ->	REFUNDING	LEARNING	IMPROVEMENT
OUTSIDE EVALUATOR	75%	50%	25%
SELF-EVALUATION	25%	50%	75%

## **If you Decide to Commission an Evaluation, Remember that ...**

- Not Everyone is Going to be in Favor
- The Original Proposal is a Baseline, not an Iron-clad Framework
- Success is Relative, not Absolute

## Not Everyone is Going to be in Favor

- Bad news is embarrassing to funders as well as grantees.
- May interfere with project work (outsiders buzzing around).
- Takes resources away from doing project.
- There is no way to really know what works.
- Smart funders can find out if a grant is working without an evaluation.

## The Original Proposal is a Baseline, not an Iron-clad Framework

- In the real world, objectives are a moving, not static target.
- A project that discovers a new objective in the course of doing the project may be a success, not a failure.

## Success is Relative, not Absolute

- The more innovative the project, the greater the uncertainty and the higher the risk of failure.
- Ideas that have never been tried before should not be held to the same standard of "success" as those that involve minor variations on a well-tested theme.
- If you penalize the risk-taker you will discourage risk-taking.

CONCLUSION:

AN EVALUATION IS ONLY A TOOL FOR

ENRICHING HUMAN JUDGMENT --

IT IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR

THE IMPORTANT STUFF:

**COURAGE, VISION, IDEAS AND IDEALS**