

# Evaluability Assessment

Practice and Potential

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## Goals of Session:

- ◆ Review evaluability assessment approach
- ◆ Review purposes and use to date
- ◆ Get closer to the reality of EA
  - To understand its real purposes in evaluation!
  - To understand *differences* from evaluation
  - To understand its role in program development
  - To anticipate how it can be used in your projects

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## Evaluability Assessment

- ◆ A “pre-evaluation” activity
- ◆ Developed in 1970’s by Joseph Wholey
- ◆ **Why?**
  - Many programs on paper don’t exist.
  - Many goals and objectives exist only on paper.
    - ◆ Or, they were never articulated.
    - ◆ Or, stakeholders disagree about them.
    - ◆ Or, program reality is not consistent with them

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## The Same is True Today

- ◆ 25 EAs conducted at UAB
- ◆ EA in HIV prevention: CDC and state health depts.
- ◆ Use in CDC SWAT project: worksite obesity prevention

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## The Method: Six Steps

1. Involve intended users of evaluation information.
2. Clarify the intended program from the perspective of policy makers, managers, and staff and other key stakeholders.
3. Explore program reality, including the plausibility and measurability of program goals and objectives.
4. Get agreement on any needed changes in program activities or objectives.
5. Explore alternative evaluation designs.
6. Get agreement on evaluation priorities and intended uses of information on program performance.

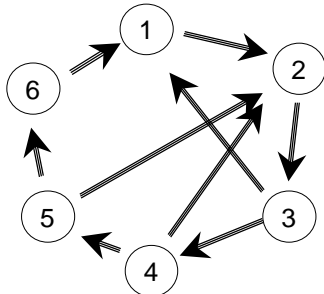
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## Additional Features

- ◆ Centrality of eliciting a proper logic model
- ◆ Test assumptions of logic model
- ◆ Some elements of a program may be ready for evaluation, others not.
- ◆ Stakeholders need to agree on criteria for evaluation, as well as goals.
- ◆ Stakeholders and even managers may not be aware of how program actually works

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## The Process: Often Iterative



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## What We Know

- ◆ Many evaluability assessments never result in evaluation
- ◆ Yet they are valued and used!!!
- ◆ Why would this be:
  - They clarify the logic model
  - They contribute to program development
  - They *may* provide excuse not to evaluate

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## My Conclusions from This:

- ◆ EA is most useful to clarify program reality
- ◆ Logic models need elicitation
- ◆ “The Goals Trap” in evaluation
- ◆ Most programs are underdeveloped
  - Lipsey, Reichardt have written about this
- ◆ Therefore, we expect relatively few programs to be ready for evaluation.

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## Evaluability Assessments are Used

- ◆ Contrast 2 studies: Project Follow Through
  - Evaluation:
    - ◆ Many years, millions of dollars
    - ◆ Follow Through not superior to regular classroom
    - ◆ Not used – *not anywhere*
  - Evaluability Assessment:
    - ◆ Several months, a few thousand dollars
    - ◆ Agreement to shift location and purpose to R&D
    - ◆ Used by many stakeholders -- documented

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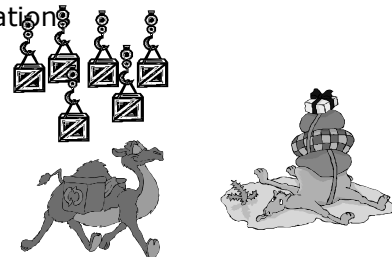
## Case Study: Program Development

- ◆ Birmingham AL
- ◆ Many stakeholders, many goals
- ◆ Program reality supported some of these
- ◆ Goal: program development
- ◆ Certainly not ready for evaluation
- ◆ **Lesson: EA is useful even or especially for goals clarification!!!**

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## Warning Signs

1. Piling on program goals and aspirations



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## Warning Signs

### 2. Grandiose or vague goals



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## Another Insight:

- ◆ Programs are Socially Constructed!!!!
- ◆ This matters because people need to agree on
  - What is to occur
  - What can be done
  - Test assumptions against reality

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## Cross-Site EA

- ◆ Example:
  - ◆ Discharge planning to prevent homelessness
    - Garrett Moran, Westat
    - presented Toronto AEA 2005
- ◆ Definition:
  - A short-term process to link a person to housing and other needed resources as they transition from a program to the community

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## Program Findings:

- ◆ Discharge planning process is:
  - not readily separable from the broader program
  - not well defined nor consistently implemented
  - Community housing and services also essential
  - Model discharge planning protocols are few, untested

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## Findings about Evaluation:

- ◆ Modest short term base rate of homelessness
- ◆ Most programs serve small numbers of at risk clients
- ◆ Early dropouts (up to 50% in some programs) are at high risk, but difficult to engage and follow-up
- ◆ Client sample size depends on study purpose, design
  - Larger sample for summative evaluation
  - Smaller for formative evaluation

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## Potential of EA

- ◆ Identify promising approaches
  - CDC SWAT project
  - RWJF Early Assessment process
- ◆ Identify common themes and challenges
  - RWJF Early Assessment

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## How to Capitalize on Variation

- ◆ Research “funnel” approach
- ◆ Reduce uncertainty about investment
- ◆ Sequential purchase of information
  - Wholey original concept

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## The Early Assessment Idea

- ◆ Work with stakeholders to identify a theme
- ◆ Sift through many exemplars– expert panel
- ◆ EA as centerpiece
  - we call it “brief assessment”
- ◆ Expert panel
  - What is “ready for evaluation”
  - “Watch list” of other projects
  - Feedback to others for program development

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## Products of Early Assessment

- ◆ Cross site overview
  - challenges, opportunities
  - test logic models, program assumptions
  - Valuable in itself
- ◆ Position projects for rigorous study
  - Immediate for a few
  - Evaluation capacity building for some
- ◆ Program development for the many

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## Key Challenges

- ◆ Differentiate from evaluation
- ◆ Optimal allocation of resources for EA
- ◆ Assuring optimal use of EA results

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## Great resource from Alan Listiak (from Eval talk List serve)

Last week a request went out for info on logic models. I have accumulated a number of resources on "How-to" develop and use logic models in program development and evaluation. Here they are.

1. Mayeske, George W. and Michael T. Lambur (2001). How to Design Better Programs: A Staff Centered Stakeholder Approach to Program Logic Modeling. Crofton, MD: The Program Design Institute. Highly Recommended.

Mayeske, George W. (2002). How to Develop Better Programs & Determine Their Results: An Organic & Heuristic Client & Staff Centered Approach with Stakeholder Involvement. Bowie, MD: The Program Design Institute. Highly Recommended.

The first manual (How to Design Better Programs) is a step-by-step guide to developing and implementing logic models. The second manual (How to Develop Better Programs) deals focuses on how-to develop experiential educational programs "based on, but not restricted to, the use of program logic models which serve as a tool for the development process." (from the Foreword).

Both manuals are available from The Program Design Institute, c/o Dr. George W. Mayeske, 12524 Knowledge Lane, Bowie, MD 20715-2622. The Logic Modeling manual is \$28.00 (includes shipping) and the Better Pro-grams manual is \$45.00 (including shipping) - checks only. But both manuals can be purchased at a discount. Contact Dr. Mayeske for details at [gwmayeske@aol.com](mailto:gwmayeske@aol.com).

2. W. K. Kellogg Foundation (2001). W. K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide. Available for no cost at <http://www.wkkf.org/> by clicking on the link to the guide on the right of the page.

This guide is not as detailed as the Program Design Institute guides on the nuts and bolts of logic modeling, but is better at discussing program theory and its application. And it's free for the downloading. Highly Recommended.

Also see: W. K. Kellogg Foundation (1998). W. K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook. Available at no cost through this site at <http://www.wkkf.org/> by clicking on the link to the handbook.

3. Devine, Patricia (1999). Using Logic Models in Substance Abuse Treatment Evaluations. Fairfax, VA: National Evaluation Data and Technical Assistance Center, Caliber Associates. Available at [http://www.calib.com/home/work\\_samples/files/logicmdl.pdf](http://www.calib.com/home/work_samples/files/logicmdl.pdf). Highly Recommended.

This paper discusses the use of logic models in planning and evaluating substance abuse treatment services. The best part is the "sample data maps" that specify evaluation questions, measures, and variables. The paper is part of the Integrated Evaluation Methods Package for substance abuse treatment programs developed under the auspices of the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, Department of Health and Human Services. The full discussion of this evaluation framework, concepts, and tools is presented in: Devine, Patricia (1999). A Guide for Substance Abuse Treatment Knowledge-Generating Activities. Fairfax, VA: National Evaluation Data and Technical Assistance Center, Caliber Associates. Available at [http://www.calib.com/home/work\\_samples/files/iemdoc.pdf](http://www.calib.com/home/work_samples/files/iemdoc.pdf).

There are other papers in the Integrated Evaluation Methods Package available at [http://www.calib.com/home/work\\_samples/pubs.cfm](http://www.calib.com/home/work_samples/pubs.cfm) under the heading Substance Abuse Research and Evaluation, Evaluation Tools and Resources. These papers include:

Devine, Patricia (1999). A Guide to Process Evaluation of Substance Abuse Treatment Services. Fairfax, VA: National Evaluation Data and Technical Assistance Center, Caliber Associates.

Devine, Patricia, Bullman, Stephanie, & Zeaske, Jessica (1999). Substance Abuse Treatment Evaluation Product Outlines Notebook. Fairfax, VA: National Evaluation Data and Technical Assistance Center, Caliber Associates.

Devine, Patricia, Christopherson, Eric, Bishop, Sharon, Lowery, Jacquelyn, & Moore, Melody (1999). Self-Adjusting Treatment Evaluation Model. Fairfax, VA: National Evaluation Data and Technical Assistance Center, Caliber Associates.

4. The University of Wisconsin-Cooperative Extension has an online course entitled, Enhancing Program Performance with Logic Models. The course contains two modules - Module 1, "Logic Model Basics," is an introduction to logic models; and Module 2, "Introducing The Community Nutrition Education Logic Model," is an application of logic models to community nutrition education programs. Each module has various interactive elements, including practice activities designed to help students better understand the course content. The free course is available at <http://www1.uwex.edu/ces/lmcourse/>. The citation is:

Taylor-Powell, E., Jones, L., & Henert, E. (2002) Enhancing Program Performance with Logic Models. Retrieved December 1, 2003, from the University of Wisconsin-Extension web site: <http://www1.uwex.edu/ces/lmcourse/>.

5. United Way of America (1996). Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach. This manual can be purchased for \$5.00 plus S&H by calling 1-800-772-0008 and ordering item number 0989. You can find the manual's table of contents and excerpts on the United Way web site at <http://national.unitedway.org/outcomes/resources/mpo/>.

6. Harrell, Adele, with Burt, Martha, Hatry, Harry, Rossman, Shelli, Roth, Jeffrey, and Sabol, William (no date). Evaluation Strategies for Human Service Programs: A Guide for Policymakers and Providers. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

This guide focuses on developing a logic model and selecting and implementing an evaluation design. Gives an example of a logic model for a children-at-risk program. It is available at [http://www.bja.evaluationwebsite.org/html/documents/evaluation\\_strategies.html](http://www.bja.evaluationwebsite.org/html/documents/evaluation_strategies.html).

7. Hernandez, M. & Hodges, S. (2003). Crafting Logic Models for Systems of Care: Ideas into Action. [Making children's mental health services successful series, volume 1]. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, The Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, Department of Child & Family Studies. Available at <http://cfs.fmhi.usf.edu/TREAD/CMHseries/IdeasIntoAction.html>. This monograph is a guide to developing a system of care using a theory-based approach. System stakeholders can use the theory of change approach to move from ideas to action-oriented strategies to achieve their goals and understand the relationships among the populations that the system is intended to serve.

#### **Other resources**

Alter, C. & Murty, S. (1997). Logic modeling: A tool for teaching practice evaluation. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 33(1), 103-117.

Conrad, Kendon J., & Randolph, Frances L. (1999). Creating and using logic models: Four perspectives. *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly*, 17(1-2), 17-32.

Hernandez, Mario (2000). Using logic models and program theory to build outcome accountability. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 23(1), 24-41.

Julian, David A. (1997). The utilization of the logic model as a system level planning and evaluation device. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 20(3), 251-257.

McLaughlin, J. A., & Jordan, G. B. (1999). Logic models: A tool for telling your program's performance story. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 22(1), 65-72.

Stinchcomb, Jeanne B. (2001). Using logic modeling to focus evaluation efforts: Translating operational theories into practical measures. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 33(2), 47-65.

Unrau, Y.A. (2001). Using client exit interviews to illuminate outcomes in program logic models: A case example. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 24(4), 353-361.

**EVALTALK is the listserv of the American Evaluation Association. AEA membership is not required to join the list. More information can be found at <http://www.eval.org/Resources/Listservs.htm>**