



Required Skill Set for Successful Evaluators

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Question

- **What are the required skills for program evaluators?**
- **What competencies does a program evaluator have to have to successfully complete the evaluation?**



Evaluation vs. Research

- They are closely related and should be synergistic
- “The purpose of evaluation is to improve, not prove”

-Daniel Stufflebeam

- Evaluation suggests a judgment needs to be made
 - *Effective or ineffective*
 - *Adequate or inadequate*
 - *Good or bad*



Bumper Stickers

- Evaluation particularizes, research generalizes.
- Evaluation is designed to improve something, while research is designed to prove something.
- Evaluation – so what? Research – what’s so?
- Evaluation – how well it works? Research– how it works?
- Evaluation is about what is valuable; research is about what is.
- Evaluation provides the basis for decision-making; research provides the basis for drawing conclusions.



Evaluation vs. Research

- **Research**
 - Produces generalizable knowledge
 - Scientific inquiry based on intellectual curiosity
 - Advances broad knowledge and theory
 - Controlled setting
- **Evaluation**
 - Judges merit or worth
 - Provides information for decision-making on specific program
 - Interest of stakeholders is key
 - Changing actors, priorities, resources, timelines



Evaluators and Evaluation

- Evaluators determine the merit, worth, or value of programs or policies
- Evaluations aim to determine the:
 - Relevance and fulfillment of objectives
 - Efficiency, effectiveness, impact
 - Sustainability of efforts



Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

- Quantitative and qualitative methods, Mixed methods
- Literature reviews, program theory
- Framing evaluation questions
- Evaluation design
- Data collection, analysis, interpretation
- Rationales for decisions
- Evaluation strengths and limitations



Other Key Skills

- **Program evaluability**
- **Identification of stakeholders' interests**
- **Needs of intended users**
- **Understanding organizational and political context**
- **Open to input, flexible**
- **Modifications as needed**



Evaluation Design

- Knowledge of various evaluation designs (e.g., non-experimental, experimental, quasi-experimental).
- Evaluations using mixed method approaches.
- Knowledge of approaches for generating, revising, and prioritizing evaluation questions.
- Able to develop evaluation plans.
- Knowledge of methods for designing evaluations so as to increase the likelihood that the findings will be used by primary evaluation stakeholders.



Gathering Credible Evidence

- Ability to lead staff in developing and testing data collection instruments.
- Ability to identify and assess existing data sources for their potential use in program evaluation.
- Ability to gather data using qualitative and quantitative approaches such as interviews, group processes, participant observation, surveys, electronic data files, or other methods.
- Ability to manage databases, construct data files, conduct and supervise data entry, and perform data edits/cleaning.
- Knowledge of methods for protecting confidential data.



Interpersonal Skills

- Ability to engage with, listen to, and learn from a broad range of evaluation stakeholders, encouraging their meaningful participation.
- Ability to identify limitations of one's evaluation expertise and devise methods for acquiring additional evaluation knowledge when necessary.
- Commitment to ensuring that evaluation activities are done in a culturally competent manner.



Analysis, Justify Conclusions

- Knowledge of appropriate quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods.
- Ability to conduct analyses using appropriate analytic tools for quantitative data (e.g., SAS) and/or qualitative data (e.g., Nvivo).
- Ability to develop criteria and standards reflective of the values held by key evaluation stakeholders.
- Experience with synthesizing information generated through an evaluation to produce findings that are clearly linked to the data collected.
- Skill in working with stakeholders to develop feasible recommendations.



Communications & Dissemination

- Skill in developing and implementing a communications and dissemination plan.
- Ability to prepare and present evaluation results in a manner that increases the likelihood that they will be used and accepted by a diverse group of stakeholders.
- Ability to develop action plans and systems to facilitate and track implementation of evaluation findings and recommendations.
- Ability to work with stakeholders to present analyses, find common themes, and identify relevant and actionable findings from evaluations.
- Willingness to work with stakeholders to create and implement an action plan based on evaluation findings.



Project Management

- Identify needed resources
- Timeliness
- Minimal burden in data collection
- Utilize administrative data effectively
- Cost-benefit of conducting the evaluation