

Evaluation

A Systematic Approach

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Chapter 3: Assessing Program Theory and Design

Evaluability Assessment

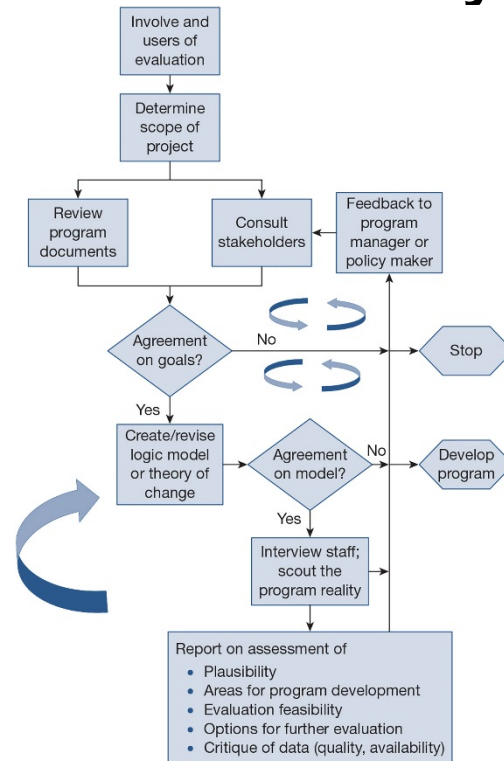
(1 of 3)

- Evaluability assessment involves three primary activities:
 - Description of the *program model*
 - Assessment of how well defined and evaluable that model is
 - Identification of stakeholder interest in the evaluation

Evaluability Assessment

(2 of 3)

- Rationale for Evaluability Assessment



Describing Program Theory

(1 of 3)

- Program Impact Theory
 - Constitutes the essence of a social program
 - Evaluators must assess whether the program can produce the expected changes required to realize the program goals.

Describing Program Theory

(2 of 3)

- Service Utilization Plan
- Includes:
 - The program's assumptions and expectations about how to reach the target population
 - Provide and sequence service contacts
 - Determine when to end services

Describing Program Theory

(3 of 3)

- Organizational Plan
- Relates to:
 - Program resources
 - Personnel
 - Administration
 - General organization

Eliciting Program Theory

(1 of 3)

- Articulated program theory
- Implicit program theory
- Defining the Boundaries of the Program
 - Important early step
 - Can do this by working from the perspective of the decision-makers

Eliciting Program Theory

(2 of 3)

- Explicating the Program Theory
 - Program Goals and Objectives
 - Program Functions, Components, and Activities
 - The Logic or Sequence Linking Program Functions, Activities, and Components

Eliciting Program Theory

(3 of 3)

- Corroborating the Description of the Program Theory
 - The description of program theory will generally represent the program as it was intended more than as it actually is.

Assessing Program Theory

(1 of 4)

- Assessment in Relation to Social Needs
 - Builds on the results of needs assessment
 - Must assess program theory in relation to the needs of the target population

Assessing Program Theory

(2 of 4)

- Assessment of Logic and Plausibility
 - Should reveal the assumptions and expectations inherent in the program's design
 - Must involve stakeholders

Assessing Program Theory

(3 of 4)

- Assessment through Comparison with Research and Practice
 - Can compare with social science and human services literature
 - Can examine evaluations of programs based on similar concepts

Assessing Program Theory

(4 of 4)

- Assessment via Preliminary Observation
 - Cannot be observed directly
 - But can assess by talking to staff and watching a program operate

Possible Outcomes of Program Theory Assessment

(1 of 2)

- If deficiencies are discovered, responses include:
 - Clarifying goals and objectives
 - Restructuring program components
 - Working with stakeholders to obtain consensus

Possible Outcomes of Program Theory Assessment

(2 of 2)

- If there is no adequate specification of the program impact theory, it will be difficult to explain why outcomes were or were not met.
- Evaluation under these circumstances is often referred to as black box evaluation.