Essential Competencies for Program Evaluators

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What competencies do evaluators need?

In other words, what are the knowledge, skills and dispositions that the program evaluator needs to complete the evaluation successfully?
Introducing... The Essential Competencies for Program Evaluators
Evaluator Relationships

- A relationship exists between the evaluator and the client, the program staff, and other evaluation stakeholders.
- The evaluation decision making and implementation relationship may shift during the study.
Evaluator Relationships

Primary responsibility for making and implementing evaluation decisions may lie with:

(1) the evaluator
(2) someone else in the setting
(3) both jointly
The Basic Question

“Who directs the evaluation?”
Interactive Evaluation Quotient

Evaluator Program leaders, staff

Evaluator-directed Collaborative Participant-directed

Involvement in decision making and implementation

zburg: ZONES

Evaluator

Program leaders, staff

Evaluator-directed Collaborative Participant-directed

HIGH LOW
Every evaluation setting is unique.
The answer to virtually every evaluation question is, “It depends...”
On what does IT depend?
How were the ECPE developed?

- **Began**: With an idea in a graduate course
- **Then**: “What does the literature tell us?”
- **Then**: A pilot study using the initial set of competencies, *AJE* publication (2001)
- **Then**: A revision process including a crosswalk
- **Then**: ECPE published in *AJE* (2005)
- **Then**: Articles in *CEJ* (2005) and *AJE* (2006)
- **Next**: A national validation study
Essential Competencies for Program Evaluators

- Professional Practice
- Systematic Inquiry
- Situational Analysis
- Project Management
- Interpersonal Competence
- Reflective Practice
1) Professional Practice

- Fundamental norms and values of evaluation practice
  - Applies evaluation standards
  - Works ethically
  - Respects all stakeholders
  - Considers the general and public welfare
  - Contributes to knowledge base
2) Systematic Inquiry

- Technical aspects of evaluation practice
  - Understands knowledge base
  - Knows quantitative and qualitative methods
  - Knows mixed methods
  - Conducts literature reviews
  - Specifies program theory
  - Frames evaluation questions
  - Designs the evaluation

PLUS...
2) Systematic Inquiry (cont.)

- Collects and interprets data
- Makes judgments and recommendations
- Provides rationales for decisions
- Reports procedures and results
- Notes evaluation strengths and limitations
- Conducts meta-evaluations
3) Situational Analysis

- Unique interests, issues, and contextual circumstances of evaluation
  - Describes program
  - Determines program evaluability
  - Identifies stakeholders’ interests
  - Serves intended users’ informational needs
  - Addresses conflicts
  - Attends to evaluation use

PLUS...
3) Situational Analysis (cont.)

- Examines organizational and political context
- Attends to organizational change
- Respects site and client uniquenesses
- Remains open to input
- Modifies evaluation as needed
4) Project Management

“Nut and bolts” of evaluation work

- Responds to RFPs
- Negotiates with clients
- Writes formal agreements
- Communicates with client
- Budgets evaluation
- Justifies cost

PLUS...
4) Project Management (cont.)

- Identifies needed resources
- Uses technology as appropriate
- Supervises and trains others
- Conducts evaluation in nondisruptive manner
- Presents work in timely manner
5) Reflective Practice

- One’s own evaluation expertise and need for growth
  - Knows self
  - Reflects on practice
  - Pursues professional development: *evaluation and content areas*
  - Builds professional relationships
6) Interpersonal Competence

- “People skills” necessary for evaluation practice
  - Uses written and verbal/listening communication skills
  - Uses negotiation skills
  - Uses conflict resolution skills
  - Facilitates constructive interpersonal interaction
  - Demonstrates cross-cultural competence
Competencies and Evaluator Role

Given the three zones of the framework, how does your competency category apply?

- What are the priorities?
- Is it different for the evaluator and the client?
For each statement, circle

**SD** for **Strongly Disagree**

**D** for **Disagree**

**A** for **Agree**

**SA** for **Strongly Agree**

There are no right or wrong answers, only opinions.
Belief # 1

The field will never completely agree on a set of competencies for program evaluators.
Belief # 2

No one person can have the competencies needed to conduct every possible evaluation.
Belief # 3

Technical knowledge and skills are the most important category of evaluator competencies.
And Now?

- Has seeing these competencies made you feel *better* or *worse* about your evaluation practice?
- Any additions or deletions?
Competencies Case Application

- Read the case study and answer the questions
- If there is time, compare your answers with someone nearby
1. What are the key issues the evaluation team confronted in the study?
2. To what extent did they resolve them successfully?
3. To what extent did the team effectively apply the ECPE?
4. In what ways might the ECPE have facilitated the team’s work?
Understanding the Case Program

- Rationale
- Purpose and goals
- Participants
- Staff
- Administrative organization
- Activities
Work Context and Program Evaluator Competencies

- Professional Practice
- Systematic Inquiry
- Situational Analysis
- Project Management
- Reflective Practice
- Interpersonal Competence
Imagine a Concept Map--

- In your work context, what are the relationships between and among the competencies?
Context Specific Concept Map: Example 1

- Social Services
- External Evaluator
Context Specific Concept Map: Example 2

- Education
- Internal Evaluator

Systematic Inquiry

Project Management

- Situational Analysis
- Interpersonal Competence
- Professional Practice
- Reflective Practice
Context Specific Concept Map: Example 3

- Business
- Internal Evaluator

Diagram:

- Reflective Practice
- Professional Practice
- Systematic Inquiry
- Interpersonal Competence
- Project Management
- Situational Analysis
Reflecting on your own practice, how do you rate your knowledge, skills, and dispositions to effectively carry out program evaluations?
ECPE Rating Scale

Entry / Novice  |  Proficient / Skilled  |  Mastery / Expert
ECPE Self-Assessment

- Learned?
- Affirmed?
- Challenged?
Forms of Professional Development

- Individual study and reflection
- Professional learning communities
- Professional development courses
- Conferences
- University courses
- Networking
Now what?

Complete your professional development plan.
Essential competencies for program evaluators DO exist. They help us analyze our current practice and guide future practice. Professional evaluators are obligated to reflect continually on personal improvement.