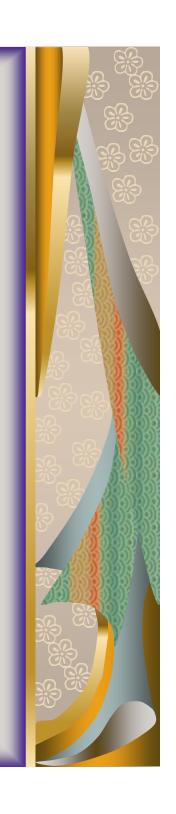
Evaluation Capacity Building with Community-Based Organizations: Results of a yearlong planning process & curriculum

Vidhya Shanker, Cindy Reich, Laura Pejsa & Jean A. King



What is MACC?

- Metropolitan Alliance for Connected Communities
- 1999: Metro-area community center leaders formed alliance to forge new ways of collaborating in programs and operations
 - Composed of 27 nonprofit human service agencies in the Twin Cities, MN
- **2000:** Became 501(c)(3)
 - Mission: To unleash the connective power of communities to build their own futures



History of relationship

- **2005-6:** Jean King and Boris Volkov (Evaluation Studies doctoral student) develop **ECB Checklist**
- **2006-7:** Jean connects with MACC via relationship with member agency
 - Jean and another Evaluation Studies doctoral student adapt ECB Checklist for MACC context



MACC's Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) Project

- **2007:** MACC formalizes ECB Group that meet monthly to study, raise questions about, hold discussions around evaluation capacity building
- **2008:** Teams at two MACC member agencies meet regularly with Operations Director and Laura Pejsa (Evaluation Studies doctoral student), guided by adaptation of **ECB Checklist**
 - Laura volunteers time piloting the process, collecting dissertation data in the process
 - Teams finish year having completed ECB plans to implement following year Shanker, Reich, Pejsa & King, 2009



MACC ECB Curriculum

- **2008:** Laura is hired to develop written **ECB Curriculum** of tools, articles, activities, and other resources from pilot experience
 - Jean and Laura propose to extend ECB project, establishing potential for long-term relationship between MACC & University of Minnesota
- 2009: Cindy Reich, Vidhya Shanker (Evaluation Studies doctoral students), and MACC's Operations Director begin engaging in process similar to 2008, but with three MACC agencies

ACC agencies
Shanker, Reich, Pejsa & King, 2009

MACC ECB Curriculum, continued

- **Jan-May:** Cindy, Vidhya, and Operations Director further develop **ECB Curriculum**
 - Jean conducts two trainings on evaluation open to all MACC member-agency personnel
- May: MACC downsizes; cancels contract with U-MN



Goals for 2009-10 participating agencies (and beyond)

- To make gains on integrating purposeful evaluation into all areas of their work
- To establish or improve existing infrastructure and processes for making quality evaluation routine, on-going practice
- To create written purposeful ECB plan, including considerations of sustainability
- To and build learning, fun, and socialization into evaluation processes



Process for 2009-10 participating agencies

- Name ECB teams of members interested in evaluation and representative of organization
- Authorize teams to perform ECB work during regular working hours, adjusting time and duties accordingly
- Request full staff participation as appropriate
 - e.g., Readiness for Organizational Learning
 & Evaluation Survey, periodic evaluation
 workshops, reviewing logic models,
 contributing to ECB plan
- Budget to begin implementing ECB plan in 2010

Shanker, Reich, Pejsa & King, 2009



Challenges through the four frames of Bolman & Deal

Structural frame

- Role of Operations Director
- Role of doctoral students
- Definition of responsibilities
- Patterns of communication (also a political challenge)



Challenges, continued

M Human Resources frame

- Recruiting agencies to participate, even without direct costs to them (only staff time)
- Developing relationships with agency teams



Challenges, continued

Political frame

- Relationship between MACC and U-MN
- Decision-making by and role of MACC President



Challenges, continued

Cultural frame

- Perceptions of "the university"
- Attitudes about and experiences with evaluation—perceived by some as empty ritual



Some lessons learned

- Serving as external ECB facilitator requires considerable time, access
- Investing in ECB—though it ultimately saves financial and other resources—is a tough sell to agencies struggling on shoestring budgets
- The value of ECB is not obvious before participating in the process; but organizations are unlikely to participate without realizing its value
- Funders are well positioned to encourage better evaluation practice and ECB among nonprofits



Questions?

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Thank You!

