

Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) in Complex Systems: Role of Internal Evaluators

Stacey Friedman, PhD

Foundation for Advancement of International Medical
Education and Research (FAIMER)

Philadelphia, USA



Complex systems

- Rapidly changing needs & priorities

Need for...

- Adaptability
- Collaborative learning
- Innovation

What is ECB?

“ECB involves the design and implementation of teaching and learning **strategies** to help individuals, groups, and organizations, learn about what constitutes effective, useful, and professional evaluation practice.

The ultimate **goal** of ECB is sustainable evaluation practice—where members continuously ask questions that matter, collect, analyze, and interpret data, and use evaluation findings for decision-making and action.

For evaluation practice to be sustained, participants must be provided with leadership support, incentives, **resources**, and **opportunities** to transfer their learning about evaluation to their everyday work.

Sustainable evaluation practice also requires the development of **systems, processes, policies, and plans** that help embed evaluation work into the way the organization accomplishes its mission and strategic goals.”

ECB strategies

Strategies to promote learning about evaluation practice.

- Individual, group, organizational learning about....
 - Evaluation design, implementation, management
 - Evaluative thinking
 - Evaluation as performance improvement strategy
 - Organizational learning culture

King, J. A. (2007). Developing evaluation capacity through process use. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 116, 45-59.

Preskill H., & Boyle S. (2008). A multidisciplinary model of evaluation capacity building. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 29, 443-459.

Capacity building approaches

- **top-down:** change organizational policies and practices.
- **bottom-up:** skill-building (continuous learning and improvement, 'reflective practitioners').
- **partnerships:** strengthening relationships between organizations (two-way flow of knowledge).
- **community organizing:** individual community members motivated to form or join organization.

Crisp, B.R., Swerissen, H., & Duckett, S.J. (2000). Four approaches to capacity building in health: consequences for measurement and accountability. *Health Promotion International*, 15(2), 99-107.



ECB goal

■ Sustainable evaluation practice

- continuously ask questions that matter
- collect, analyze, and interpret data
- use evaluation findings for decision-making and action

Preskill H., & Boyle S. (2008). A multidisciplinary model of evaluation capacity building. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 29, 443-459.

Sustainable evaluation practice

Supported by....

- leadership support
- incentives
- resources
- opportunities for learning transfer
- systems, processes, policies, and plans to embed evaluation work into organizational operations

Preskill H., & Boyle S. (2008). A multidisciplinary model of evaluation capacity building. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 29, 443-459.

ECB in complex systems



- Rapidly changing needs & priorities

Need for...

- Adaptability
- Collaborative learning
- Innovation

ECB supports...

- On-going process of improvement & adaptation
- Learning organization; evaluative thinking
- Culture of scholarship & evidence-based practice

Role of internal evaluator

- Evaluation practitioner – **ECB practitioner**
 - Teacher (curriculum = evaluation process & findings)
 - Collaborative team member
 - Facilitator of evaluation champions
 - Evaluation infrastructure architect
 - Evaluation study guide
 - ❖ Evaluator-directed study in consultation with stakeholders
 - ❖ Evaluator as coach with stakeholders leading study
 - ❖ Collaboration between evaluator and stakeholders

Compton, D. W. et al. (2002). Ongoing capacity building in the American Cancer Society (ACS) 1995-2001. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 93, 47-61.

King, J. A. (2007). Developing evaluation capacity through process use. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 116, 45-59.

Taylor-Powell, E., & Boyd, H. H. (2008). Evaluation capacity building in complex organizations. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 120, 55-69.

Useful attributes of internal evaluator

- Respectful communicator
- Group facilitation & interpersonal skills
- Open-minded
- Trustworthy
- Ensures all voices are heard
- Has ability to manage project details
- Identifies teachable moments

King, J. A. (2007). Developing evaluation capacity through process use. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 116, 45-59.

FAIMER fellowships background



- 6 faculty development fellowships, 2-year duration
- For those involved in education of health professionals
- On-site based in 4 countries
- Fellows from over 40 countries (focus on low resource)
- Over 600 current or graduated fellows
- Over 100 new fellows each year

FAIMER fellowships (cont.)



- Program components
 - Education methods, leadership, management
 - Education innovation **projects**
 - Community building
 - Professional development and collaboration

FAIMER fellowships (cont.)



- Program funding
 - FAIMER
 - Brazil government
 - Grants (foundation, government)
 - Fellow institutions

FAIMER fellowships (cont.)



■ Program Goals

- Regional and international communities of practice
- Institutional and systems change
- Decreased health gaps and inequities

FAIMER evaluation utilization



- Fellows - Projects
- Program faculty - Curriculum
- Program leadership - Programs
- Organizational leadership - Strategies

FAIMER evaluation purposes



- Program planning & improvement
- Supporting sustainability
- Strategy planning & decision-making

FAIMER evaluation challenges



- Quick data turnaround - “real-time”
- Frequent changes in programs, adaptations
- Shifts over time in stakeholder needs
- “Real world” challenges to data collection
- Multiple program components
- Many stakeholder “voices”

FAIMER evaluation challenges (cont.)

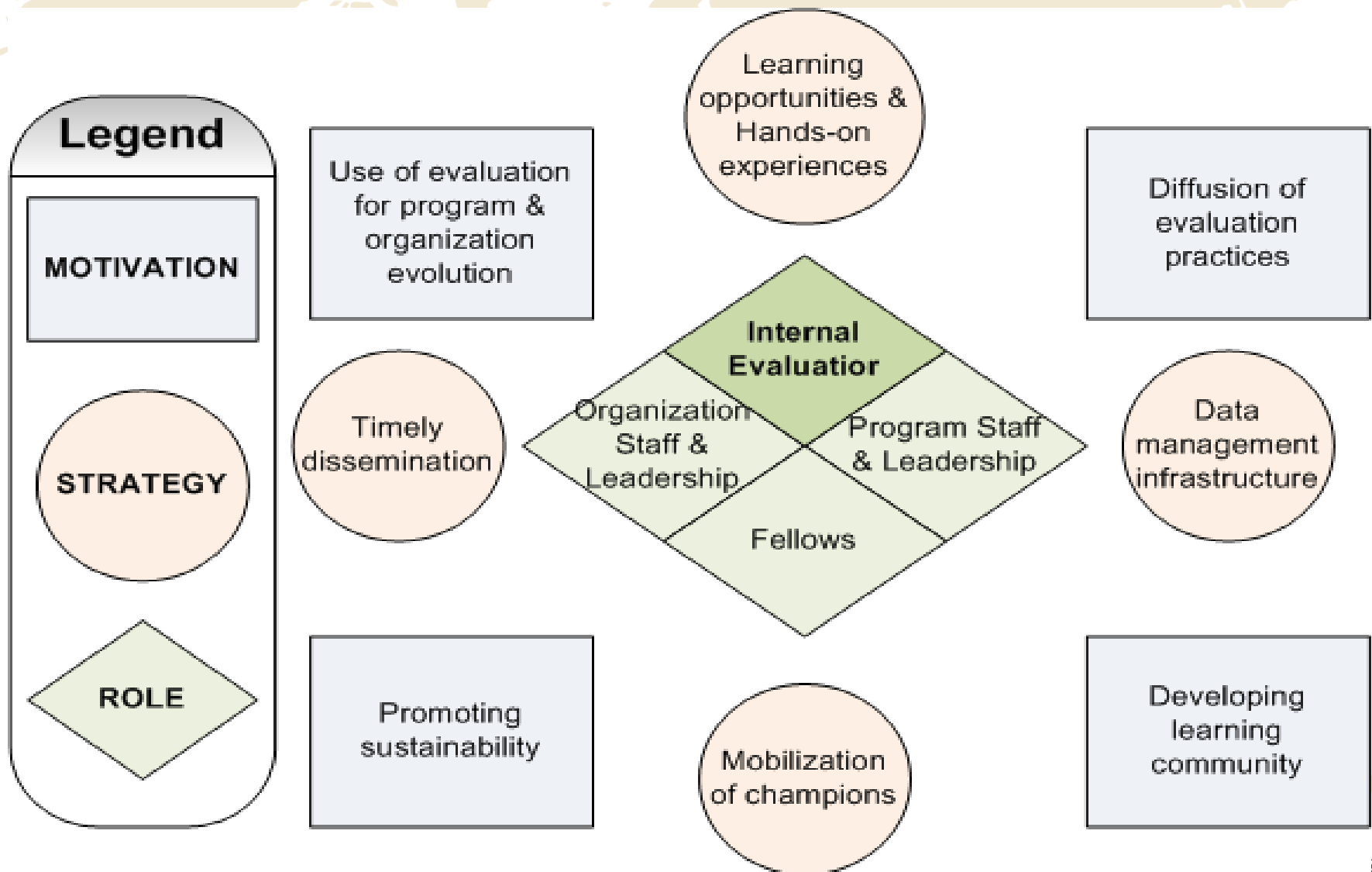


- Consensus on strategies and vision
- Limited resources
- Engaging stakeholders
- Evaluation utilization
- “intended” vs “realized” strategies
- Complex contexts

FAIMER ECB motivations

- Diffusion of evaluation practice to environments with limited evaluation expertise and/or resources
- Learning community and reflective practitioner values
- Desire to diversify funding sources; sustainability
- Desire to use evaluation to support program improvement and evolution

FAIMER internal evaluator



FAIMER ECB strategies - Fellows

Directly by evaluator & indirectly via trained faculty...

- Workshops / modules
- Coaching (project advisors)
- Hands-on experience (“process use”)
- Communities of practice

Preskill H., & Boyle S. (2008). A multidisciplinary model of evaluation capacity building. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 29, 443-459.

Taylor-Powell, E., & Boyd, H. H. (2008). Evaluation capacity building in complex organizations. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 120, 55-69.

FAIMER ECB strategies - Faculty



- PE advisory group membership
 - Collaborative evaluation projects
 - Sharing resources
 - Skills training
 - Promoting evaluation engagement & use by faculty & leadership
- Coaching / Co-teaching
- Curriculum consultation

FAIMER ECB strategies - Leadership



- Organizational environment
 - Including evaluation in regular meetings (not in its own silo)
 - Endorsing learning organization culture
 - Leadership as evaluation advisory group members
 - Leadership review of recommendations of evaluation advisory group
 - Pairing evaluation and planning
- Dissemination of findings
 - Brief reports
 - Annual / other full-length reports
 - Publications / Scholarship

Sustainable evaluation practice achieved?



1. Strategic plan for evaluation
2. Use of evaluation findings
3. Continuous learning about evaluation
4. Shared evaluation beliefs & commitment

Examples of evaluation use

- Faculty debriefs using daily evaluations data
- Sharing evaluation findings with each new year's faculty teams to inform session planning
- One program had faculty observers write reports of their observations and suggestions for improvement
- Presentation of evaluation findings regularly at FAIMER Board meetings where strategy-related questions / decisions are considered

Examples of evaluation learning

- Faculty-Fellow project evaluated alignment of India program curricula with stakeholder expectations and needs
- Program leadership engaged in writing manuscripts using or focused on evaluation findings
- PE Advisory Group members involved in collaborative evaluation project to better understand a subset of Fellow projects

Examples of evaluation planning

- Recent proposal for the PE Advisory Group to “brainstorm” on FAIMER evaluation through a social accountability lens
- Measurement revisions based on PE Advisory Group work
- More formalized (and evolving) ECB planning

Lessons learned

- Leadership support for ECB (not just evaluation findings use) is important.
- Work to minimize “evaluation silo” attitudes – promote “inclusive and included” evaluation.
- Promote evaluative thinking.
- Identify & mobilize evaluation champions.
- ECB “decentralizes” evaluation.... And internal evaluator is central facilitator.

Lessons learned (cont.)

- With ECB, evaluation users have a “personal stake” in the evaluation process.
- ECB planning & process is opportunity for dialogue on evaluation needs.
- Document your ECB plan.
- ECB plan will evolve over time.
- Culture of learning is essential.



Website:

www.faimer.org

Email:

sfriedman@faimer.org