

Fitting Developmental Evaluation Concepts into Government Evaluations: Our Journey from Objective Outsider to “Critical Friend”



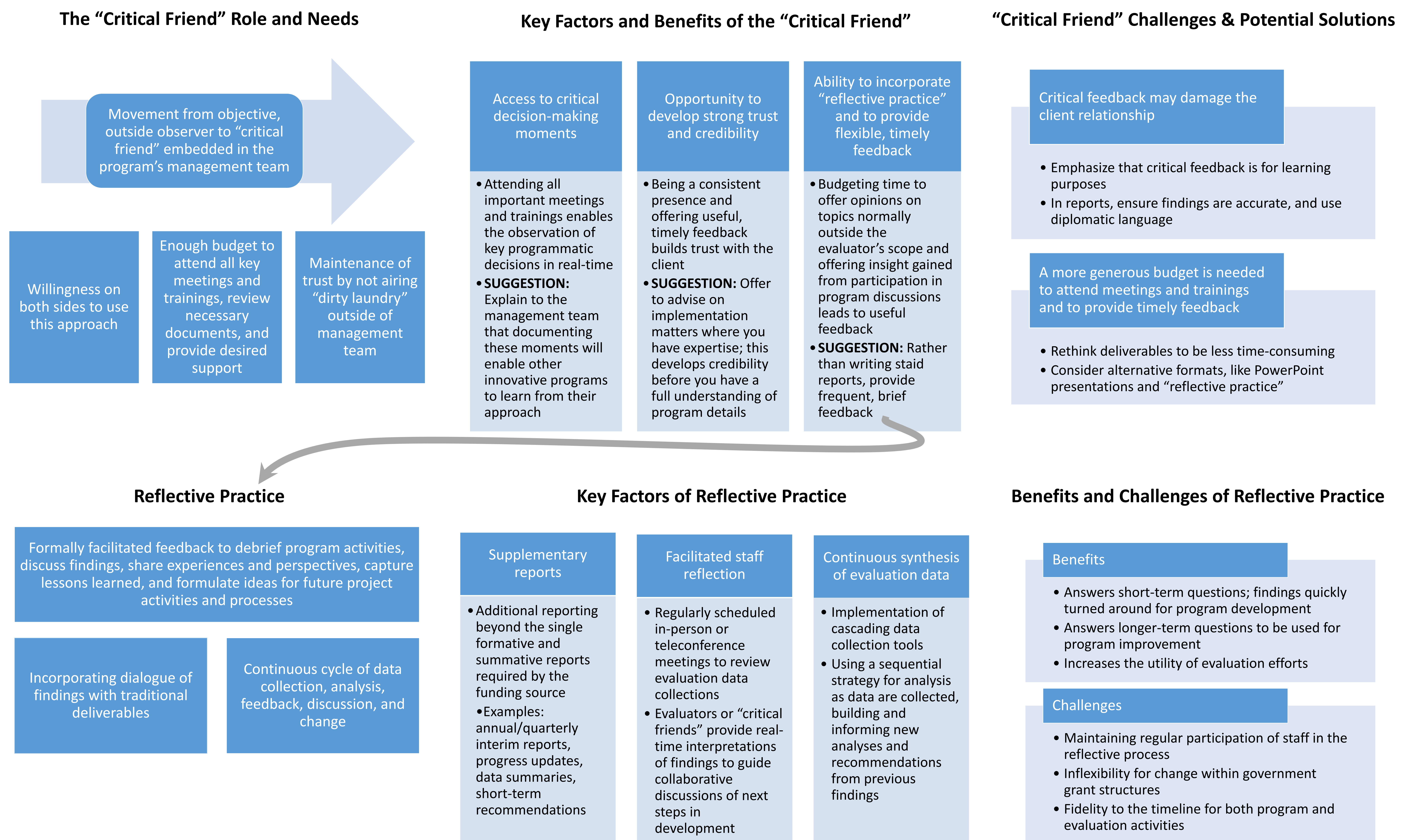
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The US Department of Labor awarded Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College Career Training (TAACCCT) grants to community colleges to implement innovative career pathways training programs.

Rather than relying on traditional government-funded implementation study methods, both Hezel Associates, LLC and Social Policy Research Associates incorporated aspects of Michael Quinn Patton’s developmental evaluation (DE) approach to evaluations of these grants.

Here we explore the benefits of applying DE concepts—particularly related to shifting the evaluator’s role to that of a “critical friend” and using “reflective practice” in evaluation products—in government-funded projects.



Given the current emphasis on collaboration and innovation in federal grant programs like TAACCCT, having the skills as an evaluator to navigate a “critical friend” relationship with embedded elements of reflective practice is beneficial to grantees while still satisfying grant evaluation requirements. This method provides real-time feedback, allowing grantees to make strategic adjustments so they can continually develop, as well as improve, their programs.