Evaluability assessment: A pre-evaluation tool

The purpose of this handout is to facilitate the process of selecting a potential evaluation project for the year. It will be necessary to obtain permission from the agency or project director to undertake the evaluation project. This will be necessary in written format for your proposal, but hopefully you can obtain a verbal agreement in the next couple weeks. It is a good idea to have your field supervisor and/or task supervisor, as well as the faculty consultant aware of or involved in the selection process if possible.

1. Identify student research groups and committee members. (Working in groups necessarily means that not all projects will be directly related to each student's field placement).

2. Identify a program or part of a program for evaluation.

3. With program staff identify what the primary purpose of the evaluation might be.

4. Obtain at least verbal consent to undertake the evaluation project.

Start to collect the following:

1. *A brief program description* (a program brochure or information available on the internet is a good starting place). When was the program initiated? (Is it a newer program or an established program?)

2. *What are the program components?* What are the major clusters of activities carried out by the program? (e.g., case management, parenting classes, counseling, food distribution, pain management, etc.)

3. *A copy of the mission, goals, and objectives of the program or project.* These may appear in the written materials about the program, such as a grant proposal for the program. What issues or problems are being addressed the program? If the program's mission and goals are not explicit, you may be able to elicit how staff (or other stakeholders) operationalize these by asking the following questions:[1]

   a. What are you trying to achieve with your clients?

   b. If you are successful, how will your clients be different after the program than they were before?

   c. What kinds of changes do you want to see in your clients?

   d. When your program works as you want it to, how do clients *behave* differently? What do they say differently? What would I see in them that would tell me they are different?

4. *A list of beginning evaluation questions* (research questions) that the agency is interested in answering.

5. *What information* might be needed to answer the evaluation research questions? Is it accessible? Available? How? From where?

6. *A list of the potential stakeholders*, based upon the evaluation purpose and beginning research questions.

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[1] Patton, M.Q. (1997). *Utilization-focused evaluation, 3rd ed.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.