



Building Evaluation Capacity: Tips and Strategies

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Overview of session

Content

- Background
Motivation – Assumptions-Expectations
- STEPS in ECB
- Components
Strategies
TIPS

Process

- Share resources and ideas
- Learn from each other

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ECB Defined

Single definition not universally applicable given varying contexts and realities.

But, for our purposes today, we will start with...

"...the intentional work to continuously create and sustain overall organizational processes that make quality evaluation and its uses routine."

(Compton, Baizerman, Stockdill, 2002: 14)

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ECB in various settings

ECB occurs within

- governments
- organizations
- clusters of programs across dispersed locations
- single programs

Focus of change

- Individual
- Team, unit
- Program
- Organization-, agency- wide
- Government wide

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Goal of ECB

Different authors and practitioners offer various goals for ECB. Here is one:

“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.” (Preskill and Boyle 2008, p 444)

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Clarity of goal and purpose of ECB in your context

- “Doing” evaluation, as in conducting an evaluation study
“conduct a quality evaluation”
- Embedding evaluative thinking into organizational fabric
“evaluation as a habit of mind”; “evaluation culture”
- ... ??

Professional development.....organizational development

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Research Foundations of ECB

- Community empowerment movement of the 1970's
 - 'Teach a person to fish': participatory and empowerment focus
- Empowerment/participatory/collaborative approach; "...help people help themselves and improve their programs using a form of self-evaluation and reflection" (Fetterman et al, 1996:5)
- Organizational effectiveness and learning
 - Evaluation fosters transparency, improved governance, efficient and effective management
 - Evaluation is a core function of a learning organization (Cousins et al, 2004; Preskill & Torres, 1999)
- Transformational learning and education
- ECB within evaluation (Compton, Baizerman and Stockdill, 2002; King, 2002, 2007; Preskill, 2008; Preskill & Boyle, 2008)

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Motivations - Assumptions - Expectations of ECB?

- What is motivating the ECB work?
- What assumptions underlie the ECB work?
- What are the explicit and implicit expectations for what the ECB effort will achieve?

Answers to these questions ultimately affect the design and implementation of the ECB effort

Adapted from Preskill and Boyle, 2008

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1) Motivations for ECB: External and internal

- Need to meet accountability demands
- Not enough trained evaluators
- Not enough money to hire professional evaluators
- Changes in environment
 - new leadership; acceptance of evaluation
- Desire to be a learning organization
- Desire to support policy making and planning
- Interest in evidence-based practice and scholarship
- Desire to use evaluation for ongoing performance improvement

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2) Assumptions about ECB

- Evaluation is a “good” thing to do
- Evaluation leads to more effective decision-making
- Evaluation improves programming
- Evaluation develops human capital and promotes critical inquiry
- Evaluation is a core organizational function
- Evaluation can be learned
- Evaluation will be valued
- Resources will be allocated

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3) Expectations of ECB

- Staff and organizational members will value evaluation and engage in it
- Evaluation will become part of the organizational culture
- Problem solving and decision making will improve
- More resources and grants will be generated
- The organization will increase its capacity and interest in learning

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STEP 1: Assess Organizational Readiness

- Barriers and facilitators to ECB
- Diagnostic tools for assessing readiness
 - ROLE Survey (Preskill, 2000; hallie.preskill@fsg-impact.org)
 - Fitzsimmons and Crave, University of Wisconsin-Extension (<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/bceo/pdf/bceoresource.pdf>; pg 81)
 - United Way
 - Evaluation Capacity Diagnostic Tool, BTW [informingchange](http://btw.informingchange.com/featured/1933) (<http://btw.informingchange.com/featured/1933>)

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STEP 2: Plan for and design ECB (Intentional vs. ad hoc, "opportunistic" ECB)

Develop a purposeful long-term ECB plan

- Establish ECB team – roles, responsibilities
- Create concept of evaluation/ECB
- Engage stakeholders
- Set priorities
- Write detailed plan, including evaluation plan
 - Create buy-in, understanding, acceptance
- Attend to sustainability
- Disseminate/communicate plan

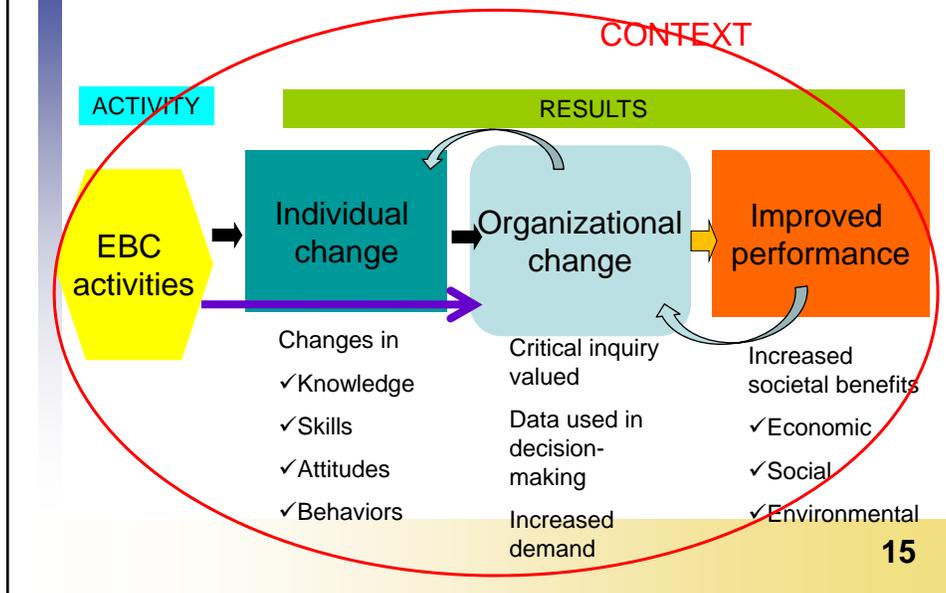
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What theory of change is influencing your ECB effort?

If your ECB work is successful, what would it look like? Who would be doing what – individuals, teams, organization?

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Simple theory of change (logic model)



STEP 3: Implement

STEP 4: Monitor and Evaluate

Topic: How do we evaluate our capacity building work?



“walk the talk!”

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STEP 5: Communicate about ECB

Internal

- consistent, continual, effective communications across organization
 - Be a cheerleader!

External

- explain processes and findings, positive and negative, to stakeholder groups

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Like a 3-legged stool, ECB involves three components



Taylor-Powell and Boyd, 2008. NDE, #120, Winter 2008, pages 55-69

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Professional Development



Primary purpose: to build knowledge, skills and positive attitudes in evaluation:

- Knowledge objectives (cognitive):
 - increased understanding of evaluation
- Skills objectives (behavior):
 - increased ability to conduct evaluation
- Attitudes (affective):
 - Increased valuing of evaluation

Preskill and Boyle identify 36 potential learning objectives (2008:450)

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Professional Development

STRATEGIES

- Training, workshops, seminars, meetings
- Technical assistance
- Collaborative evaluation projects
 - “learn by doing”
- Mentoring and coaching
- Communities of practice
- Internships
- Opportunities for peer learning, reflection

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Professional Development

TIPS

1. Be learner-driven: start where the learner (organization) is
 - Assess learners – self-assessment
 - Establish ongoing assessment process to guide skill development
2. Be practical and relevant
3. Demystify evaluation: Give evaluation away
4. Employ best practices in adult learning
5. Treat every interaction as an educational opportunity

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Professional Development

TIPS, cont...

6. Use mix of delivery methods
 - Training isn't enough
 - Ongoing TA
7. Customize to meet learner needs
8. Design multi-tier systems for: beginners, intermediate, advanced
9. Provide for ongoing professional development – build incrementally
10. Make it fun!

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SHARE IDEAS

- What ideas caught your attention?
- What successful strategies or techniques have you used?

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Resources and Supports



i.e., the resources and supports that make ECB and evaluation possible

INVOLVES

- Evaluation expertise
 - technical AND capacity building expertise
- Evaluation materials: print, web
- Evaluation champions

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Resources and Supports

INVOLVES...

- Organizational assets
- Financing
- Technology: survey software, data management systems, analysis software
- Time

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Resources and Supports

TIPS

1. Differentiate between evaluator role and ECB practitioner role
2. View ECB as organizational development, not just professional development
3. Continually grow and diversify the pool of champions
 - Start small and grow;
 - Identify and support those who care about evaluation

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Resources and Supports

TIPS, cont...

4. Establish and use common language
5. Develop/access practical, user-friendly materials
 - Own examples – relevant program examples
6. Access ALL available resources – don't be a 'loner'!
7. Even small investments in technology may make all the difference

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SHARE IDEAS

- What successful strategies or techniques have you used?
- What ideas caught your attention?

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Organizational Environment



Favorable organization environment

Involves:

- Supportive leadership
- Demand for evaluation
- Incentives
- Purposeful socialization about evaluation
- Structures
- Policies and procedures

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Organizational Environment

TIPS

1. Nurture, encourage leaders
 - Recognition, awards
2. Use mandatory evaluation as positive support
3. Intangible incentives spur motivation such as leadership opportunities, recognition by peers, having data to validate work peer recognition
4. Communicate consistently and continually
“the way we do business”

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Organizational Environment

TIPS, cont...

5. Capitalize on existing structures to facilitate evaluation – teams, advisory committees, etc.
6. Make evaluation expectations explicit
 - in job descriptions, annual performance reviews, grant proposals.
7. Take a long-term perspective
“...a journey without end.”

Boyle and Lemaire, 1999



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SHARE IDEAS

- What successful strategies or techniques have you used?
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FINAL COMMENTS - REFLECTIONS?

THANKS!

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