INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION IN THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR: CHALLENGES AND LESSONS FROM RECENT EXPERIENCES

Hubert Paulmer M.Sc. (Ag), MBA, G.D.I.P
Harry Cummings and Associates Inc.

Dr. Harry Cummings Ph.D., R.P.P., M.C.I.P
University of Guelph / Harry Cummings and Associates Inc.

AEA – ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2009 – ORLANDO

NOVEMBER 12, 2009
Institutional Evaluation – Some Definitions
Program Evaluation vs. Institutional Evaluation
Frameworks
Evaluation Issues
Approach Methodology
Lessons
Challenges
Impact of our Evaluations
How does Institutional Evaluation help?
Is it gaining importance?
DEFINITIONS

- **Institutional evaluations** have been described as “processes which use concepts and methods from the social and behavioural sciences to assess organization’s current practices and find ways to increase their efficiency”

  (Universalia, 1993)
Institutional assessment is a comprehensive approach for profiling institutional capacity and performance. The approach considers various factors which come to play in institutional development: external environment; institutional factors; and inter-institutional linkages.

(Morgan and Taschereau, 1996)
• **Organizational assessment** can be defined as a systematic process for obtaining valid information about the performance of an organization and the factors associated with the performance

(Gaebler, & Osborne, 1993; Meyer & Scott, 1992)
TERMS - LITERATURE

- Institutional evaluation
- Institutional assessment
- Organizational assessment
PROGRAM vs. INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

- IE is more complex – lot more factors / issues to be looked at
- IE needs more time
- Stakeholder commitment, involvement and participation is important for both (but for IE it is essential) – “buy in” at all levels required for IE
PROGRAM vs. INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

- Performance in the context of external environment, organizational capacity and motivation (in program it is against the plan)
- IE contributes to the institution’s strategy/vision/mission (PE to program strategy)
- Program / projects are driven by logic and relatively linear, where as institutions/organizations are dynamic and changes are clustered / interactive
FRAMEWORK – 7 S MODEL

( McKinsey)

- Structure
- Strategy
- Skills
- Style
- Staff
- Shared Values
- Systems
FRAMEWORK - UNIVERSALIA / IDRC

External Environment
- Administrative & Legal
- Socio-cultural
- Geographic
- Political
- Stakeholder
- Economic

Organizational Performance
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Relevance
- Financial Viability

Organizational Capacity
- Strategic Leadership
- Structure
- HR Management
- Financial Management
- Program management
- Infrastructure
- Inter-institutional Linkages
- Organizational Processes

Organizational Motivation
- History
- Mission
- Culture
- Incentives or rewards

Source: CIDA (2006); Universalia (1995)
“Performance is a function of an organization’s enabling environment, capacity and organizational motivation”

(CIDA, 2006)
OTHER MODELS / CONCEPTS

- Porter’s – Five Forces Model

- Porter’s – Competitive Advantage (cost leadership, differentiation, focus)

- Prahalad’s and Hamel’s – Core Competencies

No one method / framework – you can combine frameworks and / or adapt & adopt
Depended on Funding / Grant agreement and / or requirements of main funders

The Most Common Ones

- Relevance
- Efficiency
- Success (effectiveness / impact)
- Access / Reach

Plus

- Cost-effectiveness
WE ALSO LOOKED AT

- Governance
- Management – style/structure
- Processes / Mechanisms / Systems
  - Planning
  - Relationships
  - HR
  - Reporting
  - Communications – internal / external - platforms
- Project Management
WE ALSO LOOKED AT

- Partnerships / Inter-institutional linkages
- Financial Viability / Sustainability
  - Sources of revenue - trend
  - # of donors & contribution by each donor – trend
ALSO LOOKED AT

- External Environment

- Organizational Motivation
  - History
  - Mission
  - Incentive / Rewards

- Strengths and Weaknesses
• Initial meeting
• Evaluation Framework / Work Plan – shared with funders / institutions for inputs
• Mixed-methods approach
• Participatory (where possible) involving key stakeholders – but retaining the external reviewer’s perspective

Note: Too much loosely structured involvement of internal stakeholders with vested interest will create conflicts over agendas, methodologies, working relationships and the wording of reports (Chelimksy & North 1997)
APPROACH / METHODOLOGY

- Methods used
  - Document review
  - Key informant interviews
  - Online survey
  - Focus groups
  - Delphi Panel
DATA

- Qualitative / Quantitative
- Rating / Ranking scale scores
- Comparisons of “similar” organizations
- Financial numbers
- Cost data
- Internal data – projects, events, partners, media etc.
LESSONS – Points to keep in mind

- IA Frameworks can give you a lot of information – but it's important to help focus on the dynamics/relationships between various factors.
- It is important to keep in mind that the focus of IE/IA is on the individual institution and its environment than on a development challenge/program/initiative.
- Institutional “lens”
LESSONS – Points to keep in mind

- Data has to be contextualized and the limitation of both data and process has to be acknowledged/explained
- Avoid “insight fatigue”
CHALLENGES

• Stakeholder commitment / involvement
  o Long-term vs. short-term
  o All levels
• Sensitive information
• Identifying leverage points of change
• Comparisons – benchmarking
• Data / information considered in isolation of context can be misleading
• Time / cost factor (how comprehensive)
CHALLENGES

- Availability of data (reliance on perceptions of experts)
- Measuring effectiveness / impact for “policy oriented” think tanks
IMPACT OF OUR WORK
(INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATIONS)

- Changes in processes / systems within institutions
- Revisions in strategy – (work in progress)
- Focus on work - (narrowed) on themes
- Project / Partner identification processes
- Changes in reporting/sharing of project costs (within the organization)
HOW DOES INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION HELP?

- Insights for the institution – revise strategy, turning point, preparing for funding, staffing, programming, etc.
- Reveals capacities and gaps / strengths and weaknesses
- Creates an understanding of relationships among departments/units of the institution
- Develops an understanding of the inter-institutional linkages
HOW DOES INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION HELP?

- Facilitates capacity development / organizational change
- Feedback on governance and management
- Help institutions to get better / sustainable
THE GROWING IMPORTANCE

- Financial resources – scarce
- Pressure to perform / deliver
- Changing (global) context
- ‘Environment’ has become very competitive
- High inter-dependency / multi-stakeholder linkages
- Holding a continued presence in the ‘market place’ – this needs a new level of performance
Organizations / institutions have to be dynamic, flexible, accommodating and forward thinking
THANK YOU

HUBERT PAULMER M.Sc. (Ag), MBA, G.D.I.P.

Dr. HARRY CUMMINGS Ph.D., R.P.P., M.C.I.P

Harry Cummings and Associates Inc.
Ottawa / Guelph, Canada

hca@web.ca
TEL: 613-567-4500 / 519-823-1647
www.hcaconsulting.ca