Practical Evaluation Tools

Webinar Handout

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Evaluation faces unique demands, which call for unique methods, approaches, and strategies. Some elements that set evaluation apart from research include (1) the engagement of decision-makers and participants; (2) the process of valuing by comparing outcomes to standards or benchmarks; (3) the intentional emphasis on using evaluation findings for decision-making, project improvement, and accountability; and (4) feasibility considerations given time, funding, or data constraints. This resource lists some practical evaluation tools that have been developed to address the various demands on evaluators, along with open-access resources to learn more about each tool.

Causal Link Monitoring

A process used by program designers to identify activities that are critical for achieving desired program results, articulating the linkages between activities and outcomes, then monitoring the program to gather data to inform adaptive management.

Causal Link Monitoring by Britt, Hummelbrunner, and Greene

Contribution Analysis

A process for determining the extent to which a program contributed to specific changes that draws on the program's theory of change, logical reasoning, and empirical evidence.

Contribution Analysis by INTRAC

Cost-Benefit and Cost-Effectiveness Analysis

Methods for comparing the costs and benefits of a project. Cost-benefit requires both costs and outcomes to be expressed in monetary units, whereas cost-effectiveness compares other outcome units.

Economic Evaluation Overview by the CDC

Culturally Responsive Evaluation

An approach to evaluation that rejects culture-free evaluation and calls for carrying out evaluations in ways that are aligned with the values and beliefs of those involved.

A Guide to Conducting Culturally Responsive Evaluations by Fierson, Hood, and Hughes

Data Parties

Facilitated events where a group reviews evaluation data to engage in sense-making, recommendation development, and action planning.

Grab the Cake, It's Time for a Data Party! by EvalAcademy

Goal Attainment Scaling

A process for setting program goals and tracking progress towards those goals in relation to the level of progress expected.

*Goal Attainment Scaling: An Evaluation Tool to Improve Evaluation Design and Data Collection for Aaccountability and Program Improvemen*t by Sharp

Most Significant Change

A technique for collecting stories of change experienced by program participants and identifying the cases that represent the most significant change to illuminate project impacts.

The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique: A Guide to Its Use by Davies and Dart

Outcomes Harvesting

A structured way of identifying changes that have occurred in a project's context and working backward to determine if and how the project caused those changes.

About OH by Wilson-Grau

Photovoice

A tool for enabling individuals to tell their stories and represent a project's impact through photos.

AEA365 blogs illustrating different applications by various authors

Rapid Appraisal

A method that draws on a variety of data collection methods that allow for gathering, analyzing, and reporting evaluative informationin a very short time frame in resource-constrained situations.

Using Rapid Appraisal Methods by USAID

Ripple Effects Mapping

A method of engaging individuals to identify, discuss, and visually map program outcomes based on their direct experiences.

A Field Guide to Ripple Effects Mapping by Chazdon et al.

Rubrics

Tools that make the reasoning behind evaluative judgments clear and transparent. They define criteria and explain what a project's performance would look like at different levels (e.g., good, excellent, etc.)

Evaluation Rubrics: How to Ensure Transparent and Clear Assessment That Respects Diverse Lines of Evidence by Oakden

Social Return on Investment

A method for calculating a ratio that compares the financial cost of project investments with the social, environmental, and economic value of the project's outcomes.

Social Return on Investment: A Comprehensive Guide by Sopact

Stakeholder Analysis

A process that involves identifying the individuals or groups who could or should be involved in an evaluation and assessing and prioritizing their needs and interests.

Evaluation Stakeholder Analysis by USAID

Success Case Method

A strategy for assessing and understanding learning interventions that involves identifying and exploring the most successful and sometime least successful cases.

Success Case Method by BetterEvaluation

Utilization-Focused Evaluation

An evaluation approach that emphasizes meeting the needs of an evaluation's specific intended users.

Utilization-Focused Evaluation: A Primer for Evaluators by Rameriz and Brodhead