

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a person's hands. One hand holds a pen, and the other hand is positioned near a ruler. The pen is drawing a line on the ruler. The background is a light blue gradient.

Learning As We Go: Making Evaluation Work for Everyone

A Briefing Paper for Funders and Nonprofits

Peter J. York

Introduction

TCC Group often gets calls from funders and nonprofits seeking evaluation assistance. The first question we always ask is: Why? Many funders respond by saying, “We want to know what’s working and what isn’t.” What they often mean is, “We want to know which grantees are succeeding and which aren’t.” The typical response from nonprofit leaders is, “We want to be able to show that our programs are effective.” What they often mean is, “Our funders want us to evaluate our programs.” Both statements demonstrate that funders and nonprofit leaders typically use evaluation to prove the effectiveness of their work to others rather than for their own benefit.

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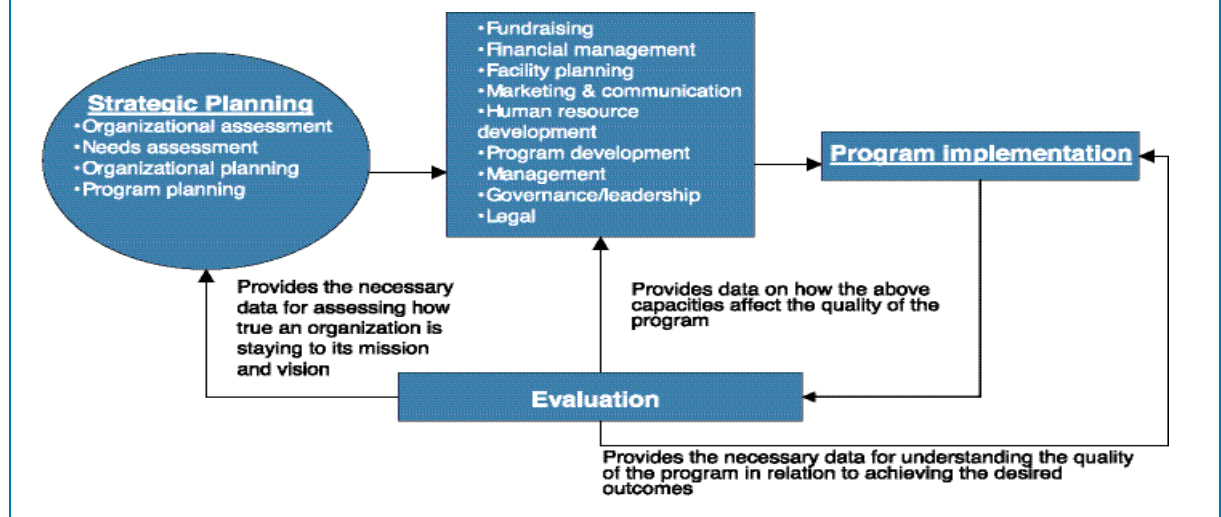
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Exhibit A: The Role Evaluation Should Play in Organizational Capacity Building



An important piece is missing from these answers: When evaluations aim to demonstrate something to someone else, their design often excludes opportunities for internal learning. Questions about how to strengthen programs

and services, use resources more efficiently and effectively, and share models of success take a back seat to questions of whether everyone did what they said they would do, and if clients' lives and communities improved as a result.

The learning can't stop there. At TCC Group, we're noticing a trend in which funders and nonprofits are shifting away from "proving something to someone else," and toward enhancing what they do so they can achieve their mission and share successes with their peers in and outside the organization. Funders, including the Northern California-based Sierra Health Foundation, have approached us to help design evaluation systems for specific grantmaking programs that will help them facilitate ongoing learning. Nonprofits such as Eureka Communities, a national leadership development program, have engaged us to develop evaluation systems to help enhance its programs and organizations. These examples are encouraging, but there are still many nonprofit leaders and funders who continue to view evaluation as something that is done to demonstrate something to others.

It is important to distinguish between evaluation for accountability and evaluation for learning - a collaborative approach to evaluation that we call "evaluative learning." This paper distills what TCC Group has learned about evaluative learning and provides information and tools to help you take next steps so everyone can "learn as we go." Whether your organization is large and has many resources, or is small and operates on a limited budget and staff, you can use evaluation as a learning tool.

Evaluation as the Cornerstone of Organizational Capacity Building

Capacity building is any activity that improves organizational effectiveness. As defined by Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, organizational effectiveness is "the ability of an organization to fulfill its mission through a blend of sound management, strong governance, and a persistent rededication to achieving results." Examples of capacity building include strategic planning, board development, marketing,

communications, upgrading technology, increasing fund development capability, enhancing operations, planning and developing facilities, acquiring new equipment, hiring new staff, improving staff knowledge and skills, improving organizational leadership, and evaluating programs.

Since nonprofit organizations must focus on achieving their missions through high quality programs and services, the types of capacity building they invest the most resources in are those most directly tied to program and service delivery. As a result, most identify fundraising, human resource development and general operations as their highest priority. These capacities are the "nuts and bolts" necessary to achieve an organization's mission.

However, over the past five to ten years, the nonprofit sector has begun to realize that these "nuts and bolts" aren't enough for them to be effective. Solid leadership and planning are prerequisites for any organization to ensure that other functions, including programs and services, serve the mission. Drawing on resources within the management assistance field, a growing number of nonprofits are taking steps to strengthen their planning and leadership.

In a recent survey of California nonprofits, TCC Group found that just 13 percent of respondents identified evaluation as a top priority with respect to capacity building. Among the rest, organizational planning and leadership often proceed without a clear, ongoing understanding of the quality and success of their programs. The failure to assess operations and programs on an ongoing basis means that the intuitive understanding that leaders have of their operations and programs are usually not shared widely enough within the organization.

An overall, constant organizational learning process is intrinsic to all nonprofits. This learning process is always informed by strong leadership and involves three steps, beginning with organizational planning (see Exhibit A above). It is the organization's planning capacity - which includes scanning the environment, taking stock of itself, conducting client needs assessments, and developing strategic plans and programs - which start the learning process. In the absence of ongoing evaluations, however, these planning efforts will lack the information necessary to adequately assess how well an organization is adhering to its mission and achieving the desired impact.

A second step in the learning process is to build the “nuts and bolts” capacities, using the plan as a guide. Here, too, well-designed evaluations are a valuable source of information, specifically when evaluation activities include assessing how the “nuts and bolts” capacities affect the quality of programs and services. Core organizational capacities should always directly or indirectly serve the programs.

The third step in the learning process is program implementation. Evaluation serves program delivery by providing critical information about the quality of the program in relation to achieving the intended outcomes.

What Is Evaluative Learning?



To make evaluation a cornerstone of organizational learning and capacity building requires a re-examination of how we design, conduct and use evaluation. We recommend evaluative learning as a particularly useful way to facilitate organizational learning on an ongoing basis.

Evaluative learning requires a degree of compromise between the traditional thinking about the need for a completely objective evaluation (which requires an outside evaluator) and how the evaluation methodology is designed. Evaluations that aim to maintain absolute objectivity and only use external evaluators are useful for accountability, but less so for organizational learning. These types of evaluations can be expensive, and thus difficult for an organization or funder to support on an ongoing basis.

By contrast, evaluative learning is an ongoing, collaboratively designed, and stakeholder-led evaluation process that aims primarily to serve organizational learning. There are four main elements of this definition, as explained below with illustrative cases.

1. Evaluation should be ongoing. Most evaluations, whether initiated by funders or nonprofit organizations, tend to occur periodically, if at all. When evaluation does take place, it is usually scheduled when funders need to make critical grant-making decisions or nonprofit organizations want to prove that their programs deserve new or continued support. Instead, the evaluation

process should occur frequently, and at points in time when key organizational and programmatic decisions are being made.

TCC Group is currently developing an evaluation system for **Eureka Communities**, a national leadership development program for nonprofit executive directors, to ensure evaluation findings are always in alignment with organizational decision making. TCC Group is developing a web-based evaluation system—or, as the client refers to it, a “dashboard”—that will provide “real-time” findings in an interactive web-based report that will be current whenever it is accessed.

2. Evaluations need to be collaboratively designed to ensure buy-in and support from everyone. The evaluative learning process involves more than an outside evaluator in designing the evaluation approach, methods, tools and processes. When organizational leaders, staff, partners and constituents are part of the evaluation design process, they become active participants in shaping what and how they want to learn, and, as a result, are much more likely to use what they learn. The findings are also more likely to be used collaboratively to reinforce group successes and jointly solve problems. While outside evaluation expertise will probably still be needed to help with design and methods, the professional evaluator will serve mainly as a partner in the design process, not as the sole designer.

The Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) hired TCC Group to help develop a logic model and an evaluation plan for its START Initiative, a program that provides organizational capacity building assistance to local cultural councils and arts and cultural organizations. MCC wanted expert help with methodology to ensure that the evaluation addressed ongoing learning needs.

TCC Group met with all senior staff, MCC internally engaged all staff members, to lay out the evaluation framework. Organizational leaders and staff proposed the evaluation questions, methods and measures, and TCC provided feedback regarding feasibility and ensured that the design addressed long-term learning goals.

As a result of this client-led approach, program staff members gained a clear sense of how their ability to improve their work would be addressed through the evaluation. Once the new system is in place, everyone will have a stake in ensuring that the evaluation is of the highest quality.

Achieving Evaluative Learning When a Funder is Still Driving an Evaluation

TCC Group has considerable experience assisting in funder-driven evaluations, in which funders have explicit evaluation requirements, reporting guidelines, and in some instances, prescribed evaluation data collection tools, processes and protocols. While there is obvious value in such structured evaluations for the grantmaker, the value to the organization often requires further examination, and, frequently, the technical assistance of an outside consultant to oversee the evaluation.

We've identified three steps to be most productive in turning a funder-driven evaluation into a valuable process for organizational and program planning, and determining strategic direction:

1. Acknowledge the role of evaluation for the organization as well as for the funder. Not to do so ends up nullifying valuable opportunities for evaluative learning.

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3. Key stakeholders need to serve as leaders to move the evaluation process forward if the organization and everyone involved is to learn and grow.

By definition, stakeholders are those individuals who have a stake in an organization and/or its programs and services. Of course, not everyone has an equal stake, and therefore each person's role in the evaluative learning process can and should be different. But when stakeholders lead an evaluation process they are much more likely to "own" the findings—that is, they will be significantly more likely to use the findings for internal planning and decision-making.

TCC Group recently concluded an evaluation of the **Strategic Solutions Initiative**, a five-year project that aims to improve the understanding and use of strategic restructuring (such as mergers and joint ventures) among funders, consultants and nonprofit leaders nationwide. The core strategies involved conducting research and sharing what was learned, training consultants on how to facilitate strategic restructuring processes, and disseminating knowledge locally and nationally through workshops and presentations. Evaluation was integral to this initiative from the outset. The funders (the James Irvine Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation) and the grantee, La Piana Associates, jointly designed the evaluation with assistance from TCC.

All stakeholders provided leadership with regard to how the data could and should be interpreted. For example, when the data showed that not enough was known about the role of leadership in a nonprofit's decision to consider strategic restructuring, the initiative's strategies were revised to focus more research on that issue. Such strategy changes would have been less likely if key stakeholders were not leading the evaluation process together. When one organizational leader oversees the evaluation without other stakeholder involvement, and others disagree with a particular finding, the leader may dismiss this feedback without considering the ramifications.

4. The primary purpose of "evaluative learning" is organizational learning. For both funders and nonprofit organizations, evaluative learning focuses on ongoing internal program and organizational planning and development needs before it addresses accountability to others. As a result,

the evaluative learning process results in a shifting away from analyzing what went wrong and towards understanding what works. In short, the shift away from accountability (to others) to internal learning replaces a tendency to look for problems with looking for solutions.

Overcoming the Biggest Barrier to Evaluative Learning?



The biggest barrier to developing evaluative learning capacity is the often different and sometimes disparate perceptions of evaluation among funders and nonprofit leaders. As Exhibit C on pages 6 and 7 shows (Partnering for Learning), many funders and nonprofit leaders have different perceptions about the purpose of evaluation, what to evaluate, how to evaluate, who should evaluate, when to evaluate and how to use findings. If evaluation is to truly serve organizational learning and capacity building, funders and nonprofit organizations need to come together with respect to these perceptions. More specifically, in order for nonprofit organizations and funders to equally benefit from evaluative learning, they need to agree to:

- **Use evaluative learning to strengthen program and organizational planning** as well as overall grantmaking strategies. Both funders and nonprofits thus benefit from the learning.
- **Evaluate the relationship between program resources (money, experience, and time), program quality, and the desired outcomes.** It is vital to the learning process to look at the big picture. If evaluation measures only the number of dollars spent, services provided, clients served, quality of programs, or the outcomes, it misses the key to understanding how to improve programs overall. Rather than consider each element individually, it's essential to understand the relationships between these elements in service to the organizational mission.
- **Be receptive to making compromises on the degree of objectivity required for the evaluation,** along with the level of sophistication of evaluation design and methods. Nonprofit organizations will not be able to conduct costly and

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2. Engage an evaluation expert to interpret and apply evaluation findings. Few nonprofits have in-house resources or time to assess evaluation reports or data that could inform decision-making and influence strategic directions. Funder-driven evaluations may not, on the surface, produce solutions for future programmatic and operational planning, but expert evaluators can often cull data for the valuable learnings to the organization.

3. Engage the evaluator to expand the scope of the evaluation. A funder-driven evaluation can add more value to an organization through additional data collection and a tweaking of the evaluation tools, protocols and processes.

—Chantell Johnson

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Exhibit B: The Evaluative Learning Continuum

Key Questions	Zero to Minimal Learning	Modest Learning	Significant Learning	High Learning
1) What's the purpose of the evaluation?	Accountability to funders	Accountability to funders and organizational leaders	Program planning	Organizational and program planning
2) Who is the audience for the findings?	Funders	Funders and organizational leaders	Funders, organizational leaders and staff	Funders, organizational leaders, staff and the broader field
3) Who will conduct the evaluation?	External evaluator	External evaluator (hired by funders) with assistance from organizational staff	External evaluator (hired by organization) in conjunction with organizational staff	Internal evaluator, perhaps with coaching from an external evaluator, if not trained in evaluation
4) Who will determine the evaluation questions and evaluation design process?	Funders and external evaluator	Funders, external evaluator and organizational leaders	Funders, external evaluator, organizational leaders, and staff	Funders, external evaluator, organizational leaders, staff, clients, and community stakeholders
5) What data are available to address evaluation questions?	Objective data gathered only using scientific methods	Objective data gathered only using scientific or quasi-scientific methods	Objective and subjective data	Objective, subjective, and alternative types of data (e.g., pictures, stories, etc.)
6) What types of evaluation reports or presentations of data are provided?	Very detailed findings, but no examination of recommendations beyond the data	Somewhat detailed, with some examination of recommendations beyond the data	User friendly (i.e., audience-defined) with examination of recommendations beyond the data	User friendly (i.e., audience defined), examines findings beyond the data, and incorporates a reflective process (e.g., program planning "scenarios")
7) Who will provide interpretive feedback on the findings?	Funders	Funders and organizational leaders	Funders, organizational leaders, and staff	Funders, organizational leaders, staff, clients, community stakeholders, and the broader field
8) How frequently will evaluations occur?	At the conclusion of program funding	At the conclusion of each program cycle	Periodically throughout the life of the program	Ongoing for all programs within an organization

Key Elements of Any Evaluative Learning Process

There are eight key elements to any evaluation if it is to serve ongoing organizational learning: (See Exhibit B above).

1) The primary purpose of any evaluation is to serve program and organizational planning processes. It is fine if evaluation also serves as an accountability tool, but only secondarily.

2) The primary audience for the evaluation should be organizational leaders and managers. After all, these leaders and managers are the agents of change within their organizations. Funders should be a secondary audience.

3) The evaluator should ultimately be a staff person or persons trained in evaluation. However, an external evaluator may need to be engaged in the beginning, and perhaps play a small ongoing role, such as a coach, if an organization doesn't have the in-house evaluation expertise and/or resources.

4) All key stakeholders should have a voice (relative to their "stake") in the evaluation process. This includes the evaluation design, implementation, analysis and interpretation phases.

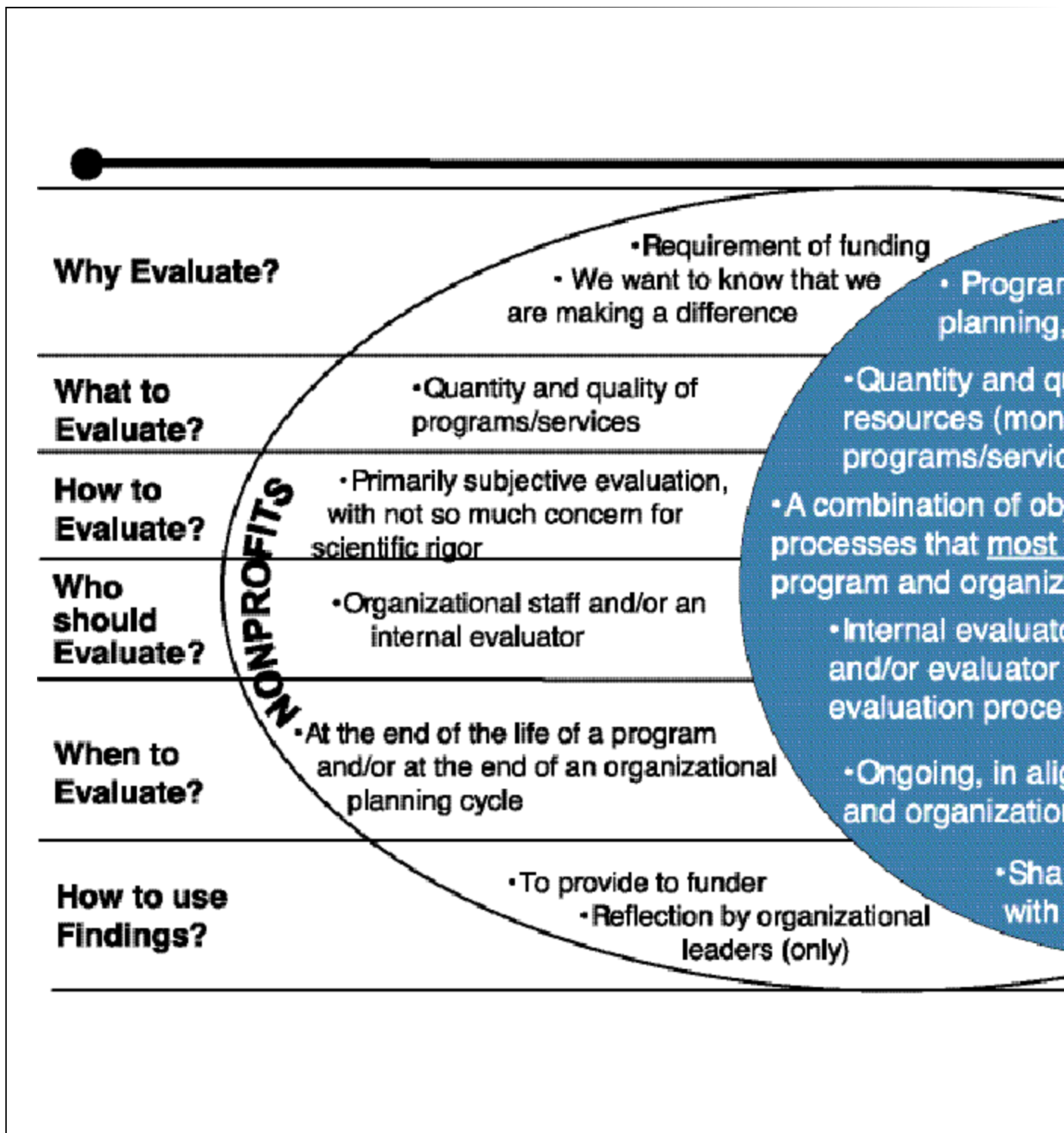
5) Data can come in many forms (e.g., objective, subjective, and alternative), as long as it best serves organizational planning needs. A mix of different types of data is best.

6) Reports should be presented in a user-friendly manner that combines a presentation of data with a clear analysis and synthesis of the findings, including implications and recommendations.

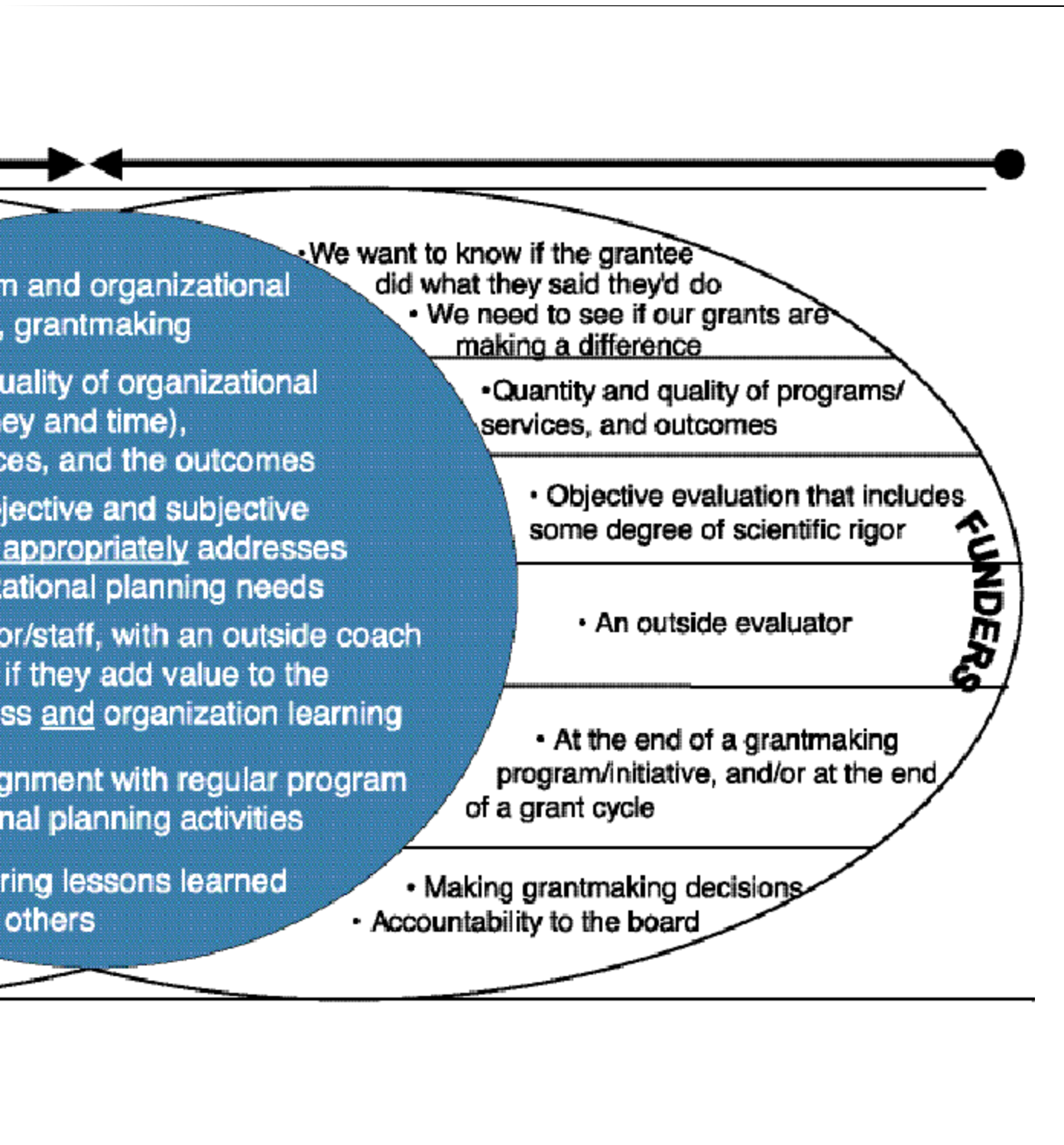
7) All key stakeholders should have the opportunity to provide interpretive feedback on the findings.

8) The frequency of evaluation should be ongoing.

The following diagram shows six critical questions that a nonprofit organization and funders typically respond to these questions.



questions to any evaluation, how nonprofits
the questions, and how they can meet in the middle.



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sophisticated evaluations on an ongoing basis, yet funders will need some level of objectivity and sophistication for the purposes of accountability.

- **Provide support to develop the nonprofit organization's in-house staff capacity to evaluate.** For the purposes of ongoing learning, the ideal evaluator should be someone within the organization. That person could be a current staff member who receives professional development or possibly a new employee for whom evaluation will be a responsibility of the job. An outside coach or evaluator can provide technical assistance for designing and implementing an evaluation.
- **Evaluate on an ongoing basis,** especially in alignment with regular program and organizational planning activities, both for the nonprofit and the funder. Achieving this goal on a routine basis may require some negotiation between funders and nonprofits so that findings meet the planning needs of both.
- **Ensure that evaluation findings are used for planning and learning.** This measure requires commitments in principle and in time. It might be helpful for the funder and nonprofit to arrange periodic meetings to share what each is learning, including both the successes and challenges with the learning process.

The First Step in Ongoing Learning: Develop a Logic Model

The logic model, according to the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, is "a picture of how your organization does its work - the theory and assumptions underlying the program." It shows the relationships between short- and long-term outcomes, the program strategies or activities and their outputs, and program inputs or resources. (See Exhibit D below for definitions of these terms.)

All stakeholders should be involved in the logic model development process. The power of the logic model is that it grows out of consensus about everyone's underlying program assumptions, and the result is an evaluation design that is much more relevant to the organization. Once the logic model and corresponding evaluation questions have been developed, nonprofits and funders might want the assistance of a professional evaluator to provide expert guidance. However, the data collection design and analysis should be driven by the organization and the evaluator will serve only as an expert collaborator.

Exhibit D: Example of a Logic Model

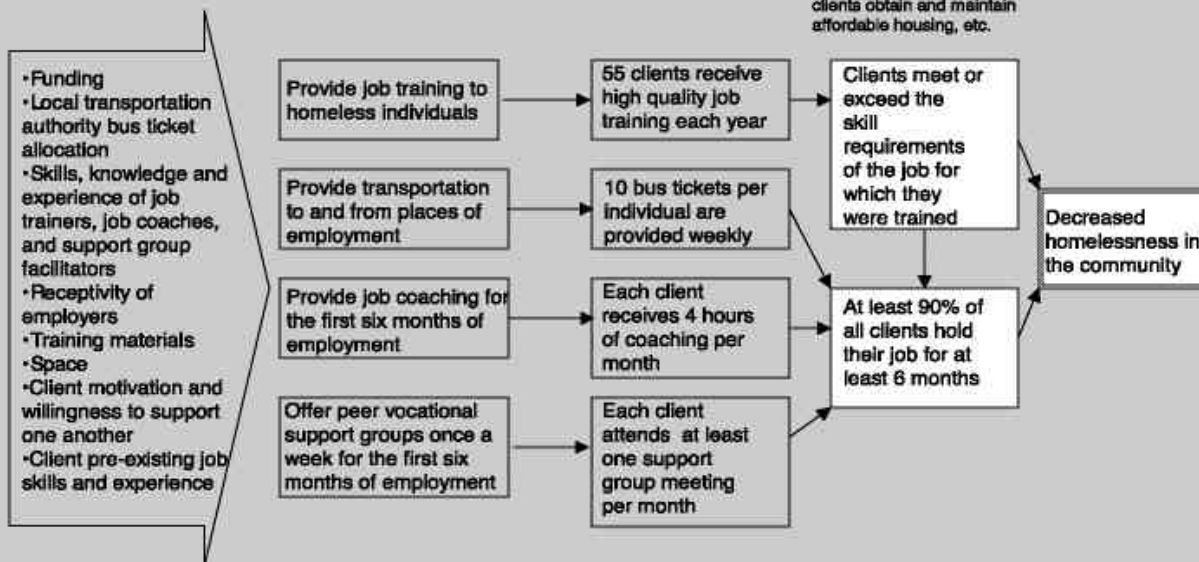
Inputs: all the resources necessary for supporting a program; e.g., money, time, expertise, experience, leverage, facilities, technology, etc.

Strategies: the specific activities, interventions, services and/or programs that serve a particular target audience; e.g., case management services for homeless families, advocacy efforts for particular legislation and/or policy changes, etc.

Outputs: a short-term measure of program strategy implementation; e.g., number of clients served, number of services provided, actual dollar expenditures per client or unit of service, etc.

Outcomes: the short- and longer-term effects of program strategies on client behaviors, attitudes, knowledge, and/or perceptions; e.g., improved student performance in math coursework, homeless clients obtain and maintain affordable housing, etc.

Impact: the long-term and aggregate effect of a sustained program, service or intervention on the overall target population.



The logic model helps evaluative learning by serving as a tool to develop a shared understanding of the organization and program. As a result, everyone close to the organization helps set and meet learning objectives. More than any other evaluation approach, the logic model requires everyone to ask questions, seek answers, make changes based on what was learned, and repeat the process as often as necessary. In other words, the logic model forces everyone to continue learning.

Over time, the logic model can be revised until it represents not only what everyone assumes will work, but also what actually does work. Then, everyone has a more accurate road map that will serve their mission.

Where Do Nonprofits Go From Here?



The first step is to bring staff and key stakeholders together to discuss everyone's readiness for making evaluation a more integral part of the everyday work of the organization. We recommend using the "Readiness Checklist" (see Exhibit E on page 10).

The next step is to assess what the organization is already doing to evaluate programs, services and the organization. Rather than discontinue what the organization is doing, it can reframe how it meets key organizational learning needs and goals. At this stage, a nonprofit organization may determine that it isn't ready, and therefore needs more time for preparation in order to develop learning goals, objectives and strategies for evaluative learning efforts.

When ready, a nonprofit must assess its in-house capacity to develop and implement evaluative learning strategies. If some staff already have training and skills, they can be tapped as resources and given time to begin developing a plan.

Then, the nonprofit leaders identify what additional resources they may need, such as time, money, human resources, and technical assistance. There are many ways to meet these needs. Examples include using volunteers, collaborating with similar organizations to share resources, changing job responsibilities, hiring a part-time evaluator, and/or identifying funding to hire a coach or consultant. Above all, nonprofit leaders need to think creatively about how to meet their organizations' ongoing learning needs.

Where Do Funders Go From Here?



The first step for a funder planning to pursue evaluative learning is to determine the readiness of program staff and the board to do it (see the "Readiness Checklist" in Exhibit E). Most funders will first have to explain how evaluative learning differs from typical accountability-based evaluations and how it offers real value to the organization.

One of the first hurdles in the education process is that evaluative learning processes do not generate the immediate outcomes-based findings that funders often want; evaluative learning will generate outcome data, but the initial process takes longer.

Over time, however, through evaluative learning, outcomes improve because an organization is learning more about what works and what doesn't, and correcting as it goes. Funders need to understand these differences and buy into the long-term benefits for both grantees and themselves alike. The long-term benefit to funders is that their grantees are more effective, which allows for making more strategic grantmaking decisions.

Funders may want to take a more hands-off approach and just provide resources, such as funding, referrals, and access to technical assistance.

For step two, funders need to assess their grant-making strategies to determine which programs or program areas are most "ready" for evaluative learning. The readiness requires strong leadership from program staff, good communication with grantees, a clearly defined program theory or logic model, and clearly measurable goals and objectives. In addition, program staff must be willing to make mid-course corrections if evaluative findings suggest doing so. If a grant-making strategy meets these criteria, then a funder is ready to move forward.

The third step for funders is to determine their role and level of involvement with grantees for the purposes of evaluative learning. Funders may want to take a more hands-off approach and just provide resources, such as funding, referrals, and access to technical assistance, so that grantees may improve their evaluation capacity.

Exhibit E: The Evaluative Learning “Readiness” Checklist



Some funders may prefer to become more involved in the design and implementation of grantees' evaluative learning processes. After all, funders are key stakeholders. This degree of involvement is probably most appropriate for very strategic or large, multi-year investments.

Finally, funders must determine the type and level of support they will grant for evaluative learning. In addition to – or instead of – grant support, some funders can bring their own evaluation expertise to the table.

While larger funders should, ideally, provide resources to grantees to develop evaluative learning systems, many smaller funders lack the wherewithal to do so, and do not have enough funds to pay consultants or coaches for individual grantees.

If they're serious about evaluation, here are two excellent and economical options to consider:

- 1) Support evaluation workshops for a set of grantees so that peer learning can occur at the same time. The Philadelphia Cultural

Management Initiative, an intermediary organization that receives funding from the Pew Charitable Trusts to support arts and culture organizations in the Delaware Valley, has hired TCC to provide a two-day evaluation workshop to a number of organizations. Every participant leaves with a beginning evaluation plan.

- 2) Change how funders request evaluation information from grantees. Ask grantees to document how they “used” their evaluation findings to improve their organizations. This shift in reporting will demonstrate that evaluation is valued not just for accountability, but also for joint learning.

A Final Word

Nonprofits and funders need to change the way they think about evaluation. They must see that evaluation can be more than an accountability tool for demonstrating something for someone else. Instead, evaluation can create more opportunities for learning. By pursuing an evaluative learning approach, nonprofits and funders together, as part of a learning community, can figure out how to strengthen programs, allocate resources better, and share successful models. This makes evaluation work for everyone. ■

A Private Funder's Innovative Peer-led Approach to Evaluative Learning

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) was seeking to improve the evaluation capacity of its Precollege Program grantees and contracted with TCC Group to manage, facilitate and assess the process.

Grantees consisted of biomedical research institutions, science museums and other informal science education institutions that sponsor projects to improve science education from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. As with many funders, HHMI has evaluated its grantmaking programs. But over many years, HHMI found that evaluating multiple grantees was expensive, time-consuming, and often inconclusive. It was difficult to generalize evaluation findings and use them for real learning.

HHMI developed a pilot "Peer Cluster Evaluation Project" (PCEP) with the overall goal of improving the evaluation capacity of each grantee. HHMI selected 12 grantee project managers to participate in the pilot project. The project managers were divided into three groups of four. Each group member was to host one visit from all other members in order to receive feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of current evaluation approaches. At site visits, team members observed projects and evaluation

data collection; reviewed and provided feedback on evaluation plans, tools and instruments; and offered what they called "critical friendship." After each site visit, the groups drafted a report highlighting observations and offering recommendations. Reports were shared with team members, HHMI, and other PCEP groups.

This "Peer Cluster Evaluation Project" proved to be a powerful learning experience, because participants:

- used suggestions from peers to improve survey instruments
- learned how to use control groups in contexts that they had previously thought impossible.
- learned to use video as an effective evaluation tool.
- said they better understood "formative evaluation" and the importance of evaluating the "big picture," not just "outcomes."
- developed and shared their logic model with each other.

—Chantell Johnson

Resources

Selected Readings

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Gray, Sandra Trice and Associates, *Evaluation with Power: A New Approach to Organizational Effectiveness, Empowerment and Excellence*. (Washington, D.C.: Independent Sector, 1998).

Love, Arnold J., *Internal Evaluation: Building Organizations from Within* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1991).

Russ-Eft, Darlene and Hallie Preskill, *Evaluation In Organizations: A Systematic Approach to Enhancing Learning, Performance, And Change* (Cambridge, Perseus Publishing, 2001).

Sonnichsen, Richard C., *High Impact Evaluation* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1999).

Online Resources

AMERICAN EVALUATION ASSOCIATION:

Information about evaluation practices, methods, and uses through application and exploration of program evaluation, personnel evaluation, and technology.
<http://www.eval.org>.

GETTING TO OUTCOMES: METHODS AND TOOLS FOR PLANNING, SELF-EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY:

A manual that works through ten questions that incorporate the basic elements of program planning, implementation, evaluation, and sustainability.
<http://www.stanford.edu/~davidf/empowermentevaluation.html#GTO>

W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION LOGIC MODEL DEVELOPMENT GUIDE, 2001:

<http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf>

TCC Group

About TCC Group

For over two decades, TCC has provided strategic planning, program development, evaluation and management consulting services to nonprofit organizations, foundations, corporate community involvement programs and government agencies. In this time, the firm has developed substantive knowledge and expertise in fields as diverse as community and economic development, human services, children and family issues, education, health care, the environment, and the arts.

From offices in Philadelphia and New York, and full-time staff in Chicago, the firm works with clients nationally and, increasingly, globally. Our services include strategic planning, organizational assessment and development, feasibility studies, program evaluation and development, board development, restructuring and repositioning, as well as grant program design, evaluation, and facilitation.

Approach

Our approach is governed by the need to establish a clear and engaging consulting process that offers structure and predictability as well as flexibility to meet unforeseen needs. Working in multidisciplinary teams, we tailor each new assignment to meet the individual needs and circumstances of the client. We develop a scope of work that responds to the particular challenges, timetable and budget for the assignment.

Sometimes clients engage us for short-term research, problem solving, or facilitation projects. Other times we provide comprehensive planning and evaluation assistance over a longer period or conduct other activities, over one or more years. Increasingly, TCC helps clients manage and implement their work and provide advice on an ongoing basis. We bring to each new assignment the perspective of our expertise, broad experience and the enthusiastic commitment to get the job done right.

Evaluation Services

Our evaluation services are geared to improve and enhance ongoing program development (formative evaluation) and provide information that informs decision-making on the continuation or evolution of programs (summative evaluation). We offer evaluation services to the nonprofit as well as funders.

We believe that evaluation is an integral part of the planning process and as such can be used to assess and develop current capacity so that an organization can enhance its overall effectiveness. Our evaluation team will assist in designing the processes and tools necessary to create an organization's internal evaluation system, as well as provide professional development and technical assistance related to evaluation theory, design, implementation and data collection to executives, program officers and staff.

Our Clients

We have provided consulting services to a broad range of nonprofit groups, governmental agencies, corporate citizenship programs, and philanthropic organizations in many fields, from the arts and community development to education and medical research.

Among our grantmaker clients are such leading foundations as The Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Knight Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts, and the William Penn Foundation. Yet we also have served smaller foundations such as the Brandywine Foundation in Philadelphia. Corporate and nonprofit clients include Goldman Sachs, the Industrial Bank of Japan, Lorraine Monroe Leadership Institute, Chicago Historical Society, Kraft Foods, The Altman Foundation, Pfizer and UBS PaineWebber.

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