In the deep end: Evaluation 101 for new evaluators

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About me...

Professional background

❑ Victorian Government, Department of Premier & Cabinet (2004-2008)

❑ Consultant: HLB Mann Judd (2008-10) ACIL Allen (2010-15) KPMG (2015+)

❑ Started working on evaluation-related projects in consulting in 2008

❑ Started managing program evaluations in 2011

❑ Completed Master of Evaluation, University of Melbourne, 2012-14

❑ Tutor in impact evaluation at University of Melbourne in 2015-16

❑ Member of the Australasian Evaluation Society (AES) since 2010

❑ Also a DTF-accredited Investment Logic Mapping facilitator *(business case development)*

❑ Currently Associate Director in the Policy, Programs and Evaluation Team at KPMG in Melbourne:

- Justice and Security

- Transport and Infrastructure

- Health, Ageing and Human Services

- Education

- Public Sector (general)

Broad session agenda

1 ▶▌	**What is evaluation?**
2 ▶▌	**Why do evaluation?**
3 ▶▌	**Steps in completing an evaluation**
a ▶▌	Framing the Evaluation
b ▶▌	Doing the Evaluation
c ▶▌	Reporting on the Evaluation
4 ▶▌	**Building evaluation skills**

Today we will:

❑ Identify what evaluation is and the key terms associated with it

❑ Discuss the program lifecycle and evaluation techniques that may be used

❑ Understand government's desires when they commission evaluations

❑ Build awareness of the skills you might need to advance your evaluation practice

❑ Know where to look for tools and templates to support evaluation projects

First, a quick straw poll

Who here just fell into the evaluation field, without really knowing much about it beforehand – in the deep end?

Who feels that they are still relatively new to evaluation - out of your depth?

Who in the room is at their first AES conference – out of your comfort zone?

Is there anything in evaluation that remains a total mystery to you that you hope to discuss today?

1. What is evaluation?

Defining key terms

The terms **review** and **evaluation** may be used interchangeably by commissioners of evaluations

There is some debate about the similarities and differences between **research** and **evaluation**.

Review | **Evaluation**

Research | **Evaluation**

In general:

— **Review** is a more generic word often used for a 'study' into a particular topic or issue

Generally less scary to be 'reviewed')

— **Evaluation** refers to a form of systematic enquiry to assess implementation or impact of an intervention

Often there is fear about being 'evaluated')

In general:

— **Research** seeks to advance knowledge and understanding of a chosen subject, often to test hypotheses or explore chosen subjects

*Traditional large-scale research projects often led by universities.*

— **Evaluation** seeks to collect information that supports judgements about the success or otherwise of an intervention, and areas for improvement

May use similar data collection techniques and methods to research.

Defining key terms

Evaluations may be **formative** and/or **summative**….
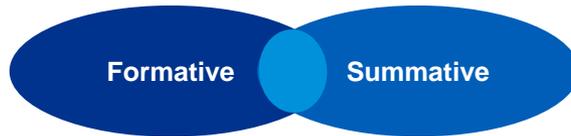
A **formative evaluation** is concerned with improving a program

May be throughout or at end of program (e.g. future improvements)

A **summative evaluation** is concerned with understanding the impact or outcomes of an intervention

Did it 'work', what changed, etc. = think impact evaluation

 … and draw on **qualitative** and/or **quantitative** data.
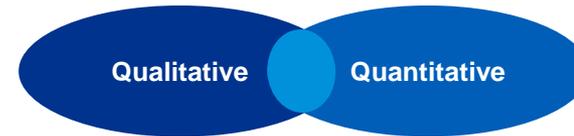
Quantitative data relates to anything that can be quantified numerically

E.g. 46/100 people agreed with the statement xxx.

Qualitative data is any non-quantifiable information

Examples include reflections, opinions or values, noting that some qualitative data can be counted/themed to produce quantitative data

Defining key terms

It is important to understand the differences between theory and practice
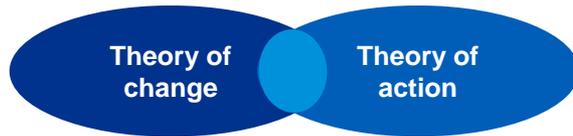
The **theory of change** *(or program theory)* is a description of the changes that an intervention is intended to achieve. It may be considered as a series of *if… then…* statements.

The **theory of action** relates more to implementation (so may also be called *implementation theory*). This focuses on how the theory of change will be achieved in practice.

It is a useful way of thinking about an intervention at a high level and can help pinpoint policy failures.

A logic model summarises the theory of change and theory of action on a single page (more on this later)

INPUTS → ACTIVITIES → OUTPUTS → OUTCOMES

Defining key terms

There is no single, agreed definition of **evaluation**, but generally it:

— Involves the measurement of the **merit, worth or significance** of a given program (or policy, organisation, personnel, procedure)

— Has **a judgement component**, rather than being purely for knowledge or research (e.g. what changed. Or what works, for whom, how, why)

— Requires **systematic inquiry** to respond to a set of defined questions (e.g. is driven by rigorous qualitative and quantitative research approaches)

2. Why do evaluation?

There are many reasons why government should evaluate

The American Evaluation Association (AEA) outlined how evaluation could be used, in a paper provided to the US Central Government (Sept 2010). The AEA suggested that the U.S. government would benefit from using program evaluation to:

— Address questions about current and emerging problems

— Inform program and policy planning efforts
                                        e.g. develop evaluation framework, logic modelling
— Monitor program performance

— Provide timely feedback to decision-makers, enabling them to make changes when needed

— Increase accountability and transparency
                                        e.g. performance audit

— Reduce waste and enhance efficiency
                                e.g. cost-effectiveness analysis, cost-benefit analysis

— Improve programs and policies in a systematic manner

— Support major decisions about program reform, expansion or termination
                                        e.g. lapsing program evaluation

— Identify program implementation and outcome failures and successes

— Identify innovative solutions that work, and the contexts in which they work

— Inform the development of new programs, where needed
                                        e.g. support program design

— Examine the requirements for the transfer of promising programs to new sites
                                        e.g. pilot testing

— Share information about effective practices across government programs and agencies

— Re-examine program relevance and effectiveness over time.
                                        e.g. lapsing program evaluation

"…The key is to make program evaluation integral to managing government programs at all stages, from planning and initial development through start-up, ongoing implementation, appropriations, and reauthorization. In short, what is needed is a transformation of the federal management culture to one that incorporates **evaluation as an essential management function**."

Available at: http://eval.org/d/do/107

Evaluation can be used across the full program cycle
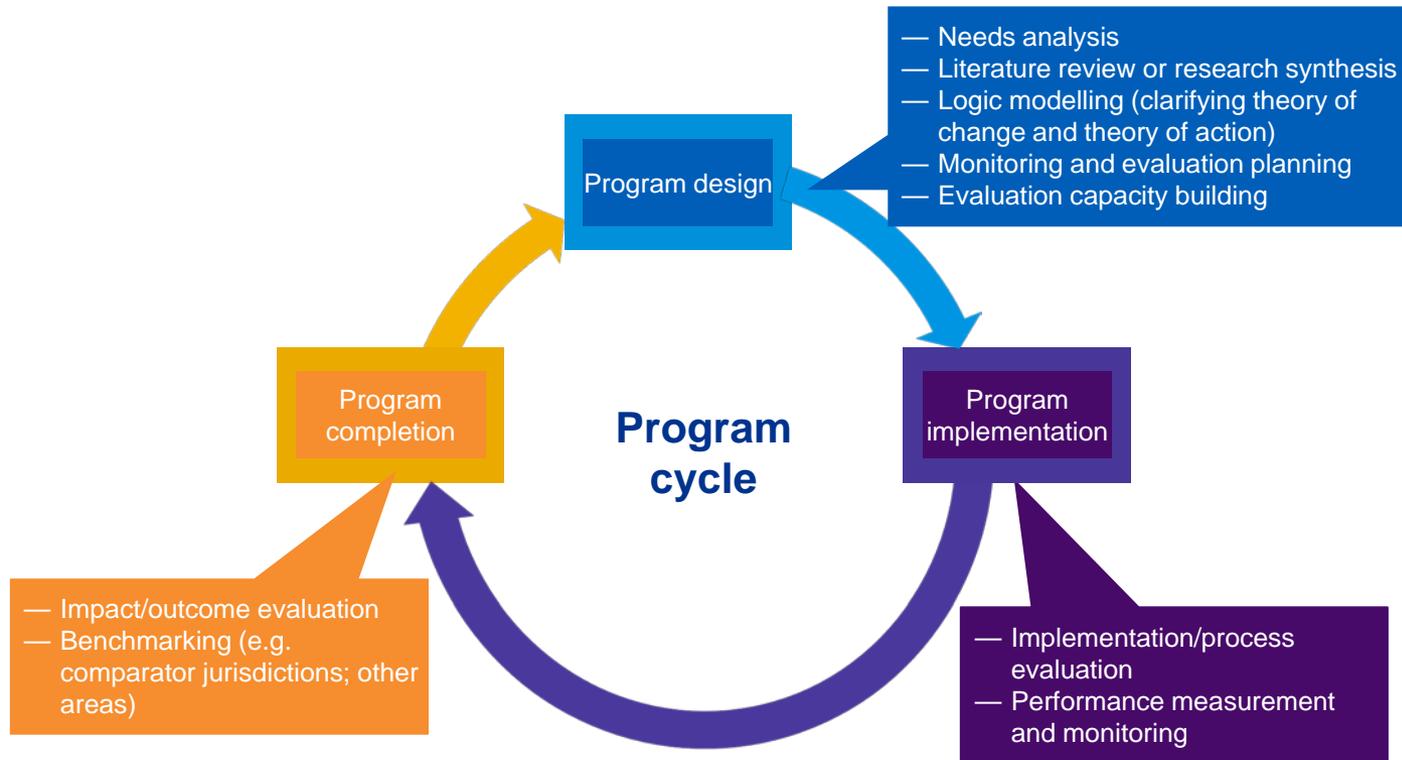
3. Steps in completing an evaluation

# Three major steps in planning and conducing evaluations

FRAMING the evaluation

— Understand purpose of the evaluation
— Build understanding of the evaluand itself
— *Select appropriate evaluation approach and methods*
— *Establish key questions*
— *Clarify (or develop) the program theory (e.g. logic model)*
— Plan the phases, team and timeframes
— Consider stakeholders to be involved and various audiences
— Data familiarisation
— *Develop primary data collection tools/approaches*
— Define (if possible) success measures, (e.g. baseline, targets)

Evaluation Framework

DOING the evaluation

— Deliver in line with evaluation framework
— Collect data to build understanding of history, context, activities, outputs, outcomes, expected/unexpected results
— Stakeholder engagement to collect data and test findings
— Consider report style, structure, visuals
— Consider causality and attribution
— Client engagement as part of project management approach

Completion of data collection

REPORTING on the evaluation

— Analyse findings of inputs collected
— Develop report on findings and associated deliverables
— Present and share findings, seek feedback
— Finalise report and related documentation

Draft and final report

Further related information is available from: http://betterevaluation.org/resource/tool/be_planning_tool

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Approach selection: We can learn from evaluation theory…

The evaluation theory tree
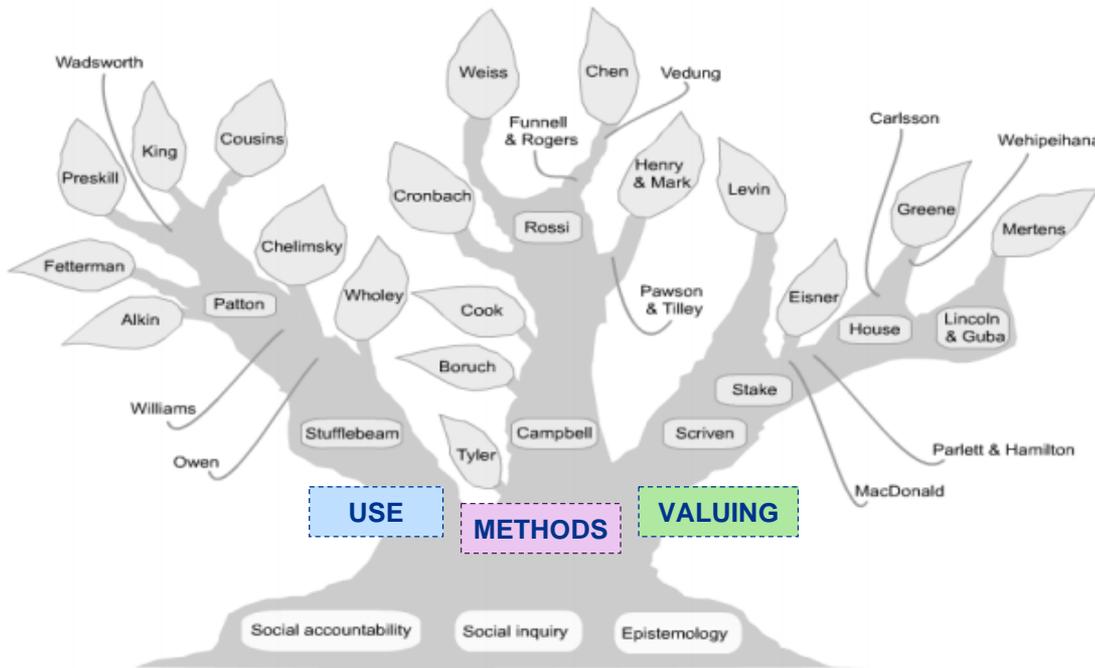
Source: Alkin, M. C. (2012). *Evaluation roots* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

"The international gold standard is methodological appropriateness not methodological orthodoxy or rigidity…"
Michael Quinn-Patton

Utilization-focused evaluation (Patton)

Developmental evaluation (Patton)

Participatory evaluation (various)

Empowerment evaluation (Fetterman)

Appreciative inquiry (Preskill)

Context-Input-Process-Product (CIPP) approach (Stufflebeam)

Experimental evaluation (Tyler, Cook, Campbell)

Quasi-experimental evaluation (various)

Theory-driven evaluation (various)

Objective-oriented evaluation (various)

Realist evaluation (Pawson and Tilley)

Goal free evaluation (Scriven)

Cost analysis (various)

Democratising evaluation (House)

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Methods commonly used in evaluation

Surveys	— Online or telephone surveys of various service delivery staff or recipients, collecting both qualitative (open text) and quantitative responses.
Stakeholder consultation	— Structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviews, workshops or focus groups with individuals or groups to discuss evaluation questions of most interest.
Case studies	— Visits to sites for discussions with various stakeholders. Often results in preparation of case study reports.
Desktop data analysis	— Analysis of client and other available program-related information. A very useful way to understand processes, progress and performance.
Literature review	— Analysis of academic and other literature regarding a particular program or intervention. — May consider benchmark data or practices in other jurisdictions
Observation	— Process of witnessing a service or program in action. Useful to consider whether actual delivery matches intended delivery.

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Agree key evaluation questions

— An agreed set of Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) is essential to determine what data exists and what needs to be collected during the evaluation

— The KEQs are sometimes suggested in an RFQ, but often need to be developed or tailored

— Try not to have too many KEQs: one technique is to have a broad theme, plus 4-6 questions per theme (see right)

— Try to keep questions open-ended (e.g. how, why), rather than closed (e.g. yes/no answers)

— The KEQs guide the entire evaluation, so be careful to ensure they are written carefully

— Typical key evaluation questions tackle appropriateness, efficiency and effectiveness

Design	Program objectives and theory	What is the need for the program? Who are the reforms targeting, and how? What is the program theory underpinning the reforms? How are the reforms intended to be delivered to achieved desired changes? How were the reforms integrated with similar existing services? What governance arrangements have been established?
Delivery	Implementation	What factors have supported the introduction of the reforms? What factors have inhibited change? Were all elements of the reforms implemented on a similar timeframe and in a similar way? How have governance arrangements supported or inhibited the change process? How have local operating procedures changed at prisons? How have the prison and CCS workforces adapted to support the parole system changes?
Achievements	Outcomes	Which elements of the reforms have driven the greatest changes to practice? How did the reforms change access to services for prisoners while in prison, and post-release? What emerging outcomes are evident for prisoners? How have perceptions of safety changed in the period since the reforms, relative to earlier periods? Is there evidence that actual levels of community safety have also changed in line with perceptions? What is the economic impact of the reforms?
Enhancements	Future directions	How could the implementation and outcomes of the reforms be strengthened?

Source: http://betterevaluation.org/plan/engage_frame/decide_evaluation_questions

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# Develop an evaluation framework to link the key evaluation questions with available datasets

Key question	Sub-question	Performance measure	Information source	Method of collection	Baseline (optional)	Targets (optional)
How have the reforms improved community safety?	e.g. How have community perceptions of safety changed as a result of the reforms?	Evidence of improvement in community perceptions of crime over time Reduction in crime rates (by location) over time Reduced regularity of crime reported in local media	Improved results year-on-year in *Perceptions of Safety Survey* Historic data regarding crime rates (CrimStats) Media monitoring by crime category (e.g. homicide, theft, burglary)	KPMG to conduct annual *Perceptions of Safety survey* Victoria Police statistical data analysis Review of other jurisdictions' crime statistics Victoria Police to provide media monitoring results	E.g. 55 persons /1000 report feeling less safe now than five years earlier E.g. 25 crime articles in local media over one month review period	E.g. Five year target = 40 persons /1000 report feeling less safe now than five years earlier E.g. Five year target = <20 crime articles in local media over one month review period

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Consider undertaking logic modelling

The program logic model/map is a picture of how a program is intended to work – its theory and assumptions. At its most simple, a program logic model links inputs to activities to outcomes (both short- and long-term). Logic models may be enhanced with additional information. It can help to define the objectives and measurable outputs/outcomes related to an initiative.

Core logic model elements

| INPUTS
What is needed to conduct the program | → | ACTIVITIES
What is done to deliver the program | → | OUTPUTS
What is achieved through delivery | → | OUTCOMES
What benefits are achieved (often by recipients) |
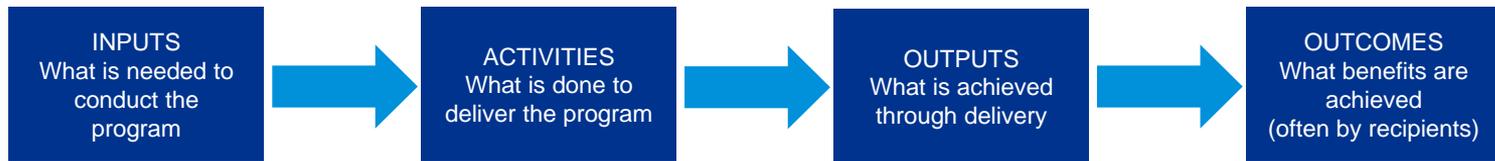
Optional additional elements

| Objectives | Problem or opportunities | Contextual considerations | Critical success factors | Assumptions | Mechanisms driving desired change | Related interventions |

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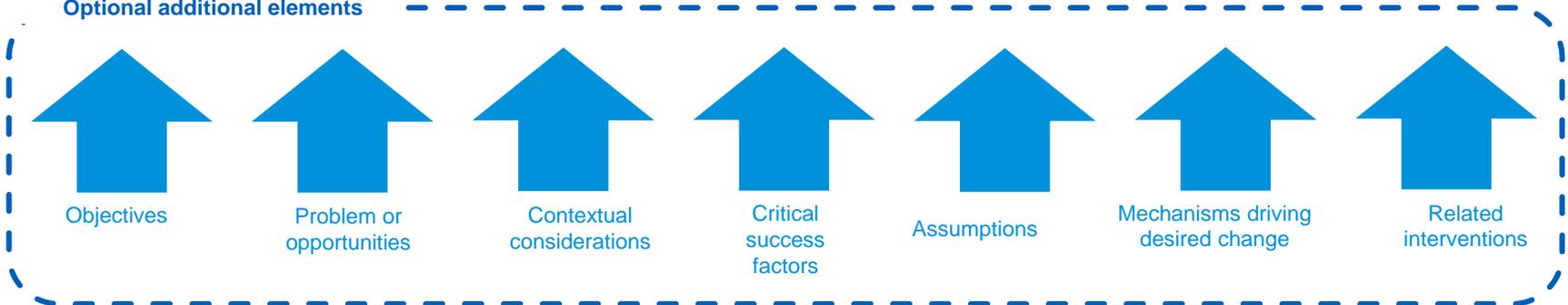
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Evaluation delivery should match the evaluation framework

To recap…

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DOING
the evaluation

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— Deliver in line with evaluation framework
— Collect data to build understanding of history, context, activities, outputs, outcomes, expected/unexpected results
— Stakeholder engagement to collect data and test findings
— Consider report style, structure, visuals
— Consider causality and attribution
— Client engagement as part of project management approach

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Completion of data collection

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A few pointers:

• Data collection often takes longer than expected, which can restrict time to analyse results and write reports

• Avoid waiting too long to schedule consultation activities (consider the availability of stakeholders early)

• Make sure data collection approaches are consistent across the team (to promote sharing)

• Establish the likely report requirements and structure early (so it is in-mind during the project and scope can be managed)

• Avoid leading the witness/interviewee in the way we ask questions

• Acknowledge our own inherent biases in conducting the evaluation

• Keep tabs on data received, consider completeness/gaps early, address any data issues

• Keep clients in the loop on emerging findings (aim to avoid surprises at the end)

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The final report should respond to the key evaluation questions

To recap…

| REPORTING on the evaluation | — Analyse findings of inputs collected
— Develop report on findings and associated deliverables
— Present and share findings, seek feedback
— Finalise report and related documentation | → | **Draft and final reports** |
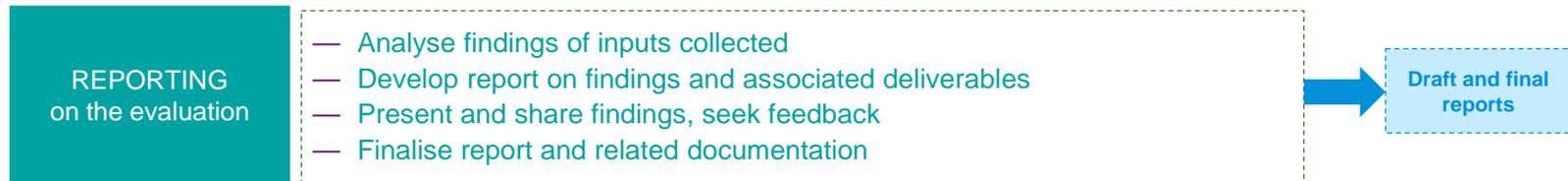
A few pointers:

- Allow sufficient time for analysis and theming, and subsequent write-up

- Often useful to hold a Preliminary Findings Workshop with client(s) prior to finalising the write-up

- Potentially prepare data as appendices first, so they can be drawn on to tell the story, but stand alone as a record of the evidence

- Approach/methodology to be explicit (and any limitations to scope or findings)

- In general, find ways to share findings broadly and in formats that are most useful for readers, e.g.:

  - Busy readers love Executive Summaries, visuals and short, punchy reports;

  - Researchers/methodologists may seek to carefully review the evidence base/methods/samples.

Source: http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/docs/evaluation_reporting_guide.pdf

4. Building evaluators skills

Build your understanding and skills in consulting

The Australasian Evaluation Society outlines competencies that evaluators should seek to develop over time:

1. **Evaluative Attitude and Professional Practice:** self-reflection and on-going professional development critical to the broad role of evaluators. This set of knowledge, skills and attitudes influence other competency groups.

2. **Evaluation Theory (Theoretical Foundations, Evaluative Knowledge, Theory and Reasoning):** theoretical foundations of evaluation, which are distinct from other forms of inquiry.

3. **Culture, Stakeholders and Context:** The evaluator is surrounded by, and works within, a multiplicity of value perspectives, including cultural, social and political. These value perspectives are embedded within the 'evaluand' (thing being evaluated), the context within which an evaluand exists, and in the perspectives of evaluation commissioners and stakeholders. The evaluator must be cognisant of, and responsive to, value perspectives.

4. **Research Methods and Systematic Inquiry:** knowledge and skills in research methods and systematic inquiry to collect valid and reliable data on which evaluative judgements can be based. This competency covers the knowledge and skills evaluators need to conduct systematic inquiry in an evaluation.

5. **Project Management:** the project management skills that evaluators need to effectively negotiate, scope, manage and complete evaluations.

6. **Interpersonal Skills:** the interpersonal skills evaluators need to communicate effectively with clients, consumers and other stakeholders in an evaluation.

7. **Evaluation Activities:** the competency groups above culminate in a set of competencies focused on the tasks an evaluator needs to carry out in the course of an evaluation.

Available at: http://www.aes.asn.au/images/stories/files/Professional%20Learning/AES_Evaluators_Competency_Framework.pdf
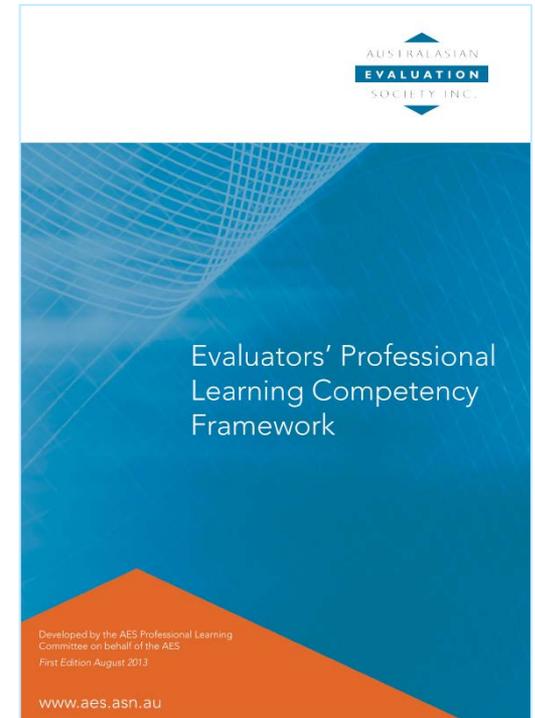
Where can I learn more?

Further Information/Resources

— Australasian Evaluation Society (http://aes.asn.au/)

— American Evaluation Society (http://www.eval.org/)

— Better Evaluation (online resources)
   (http://betterevaluation.org/)

— Research methods knowledge base (techniques)
   (http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/intreval.php)

— World Bank: Independent Evaluation Group
   (https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/evaluators)

— OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation
   (http://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/)

— CDC Program Performance and Evaluation Office
   (https://www.cdc.gov/eval/)

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