Ethical challenges for evaluators

September 2018

Centre for Evaluation and Research

Victorian Department of Health and Human Services

Who we are

Dept of Health and Human Services - Centre for Evaluation and Research

Capacity building

- Provide expert advice on evaluation to program and policy areas to build internal evaluation capacity

- Deliver evaluation training

- Provide evaluation policies, guidelines and templates

Strategic delivery

- Conduct internal evaluations across health and human services to improve the evidence base for our programs and policies

- Conduct program, investment logic mapping and literature reviews to support evaluation scoping
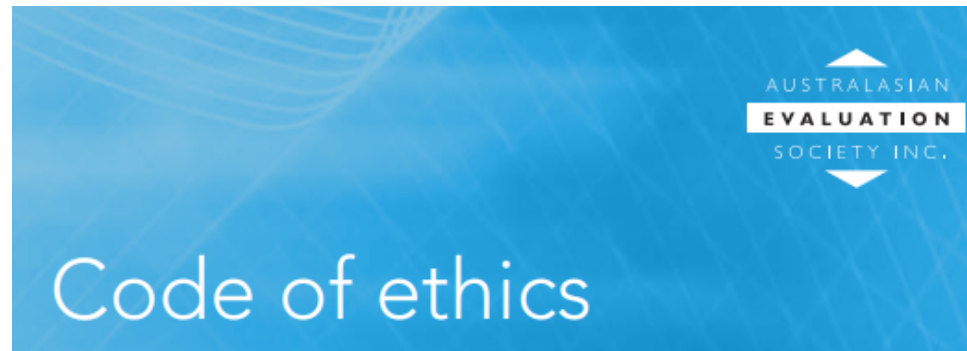
Presentation overview

Why is ethics important?

What are the key challenges we are facing?

Strategies to reduce ethics approval barriers

Navigating ethics for co-design

Navigating ethics for data linkage

Why is ethics important?

Code of ethics

AUSTRALASIAN
EVALUATION
SOCIETY INC.

Risks of not seeking formal ethics approval:

- Reduces the ethical rigour of a research design or methodology

- Limits opportunities to hear from service recipients

- Restricts opportunities to publish results to inform stakeholders and the public

- Decreases opportunities to use important data sources such as linked data

The problem for the department

Inadequate ethics processes were identified as a **roadblock** to the delivery of efficient evaluation and co-design projects across the department.

Four major challenges were identified:

1.   **Limited capacity of the DHHS ethics secretariat**

2.   **The lengthy review process required with no low risk stream**

3.   **The absence of ethics guidelines**

4.   **Minimal HREC meetings (eight per year)**

What ethical challenges have you experienced?

- What other ethical challenges have you experienced?
- Talk to the person next to you and explain in a few words the biggest ethical challenge you have faced as an evaluator

The Departmental ethics review

Review of Ethics Guidelines and
Procedures

May 2017

What did we find?

- Staff required more guidance and support

- A low risk ethics stream was required to improve efficient processing

- Timeframes for the process needed to be improved

- The HREC required more diverse cultural and research expertise

Recommendations

Ethics guidance — Develop easily accessible guidance materials to assist staff to navigate ethics requirements

Appropriate secretariat staff — Provide appropriate staffing of the Secretariat to enhance their capacity to review full ethics applications before they are submitted to the HREC

Low-risk process — Develop a low-risk process for projects that do not require full ethics review

Expand HREC membership — Expand HREC membership to include members with research expertise from a range of cultural backgrounds and diverse subject matter

Case study – lack of cultural representation on the HREC

The DHHS HREC requested a methodology to engage Aboriginal communities be amended, despite the methodology being culturally appropriate.

Case study – long timeframes for low-risk

A low-risk co-design application took three months for approval, significantly delaying the design phase of the project.
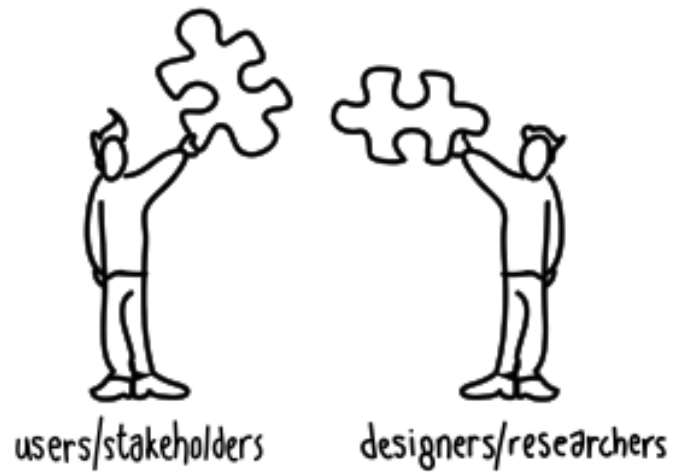
Where are we now?

Ethics guidelines developed for staff

Increased staffing of the Secretariat

Broader membership of the HREC

Low-risk stream in development

Navigating grey areas in ethics

Co-design

users/stakeholders   designers/researchers

Linked data

Co-design

CONDITIONS + BEHAVIOURS OF CO-DESIGN

FOCUS ON HUMAN VALUES

CREATE CLARITY FROM COMPLEXITY

SAFE TO FAIL

LICENCE TO EXPLORE

RADICAL COLLABORATION

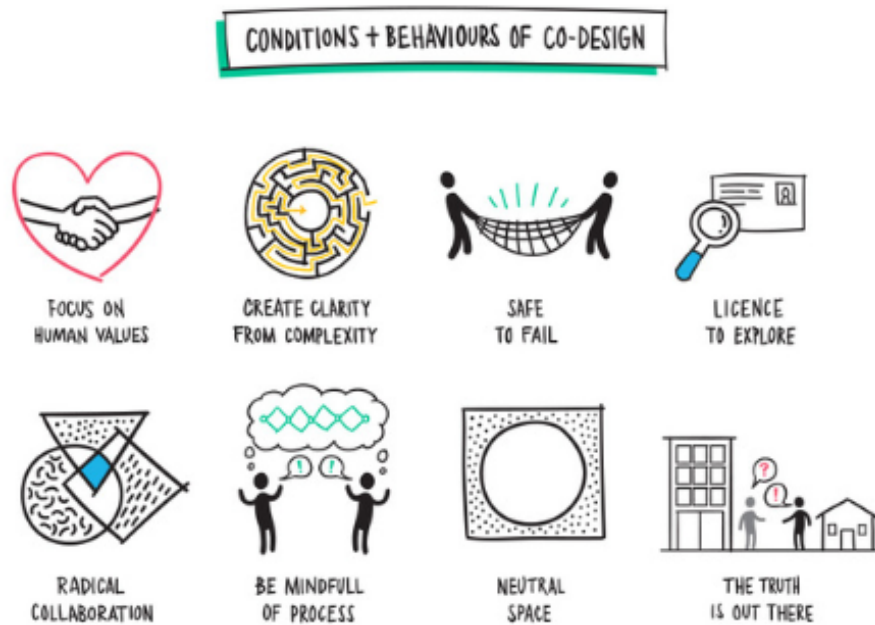BE MINDFULL OF PROCESS

NEUTRAL SPACE

THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

Image from Auckland Co-design Lab

Three principles:

Acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of research approaches

Establish ground rules for co-design applications on how to judge when co-design becomes research
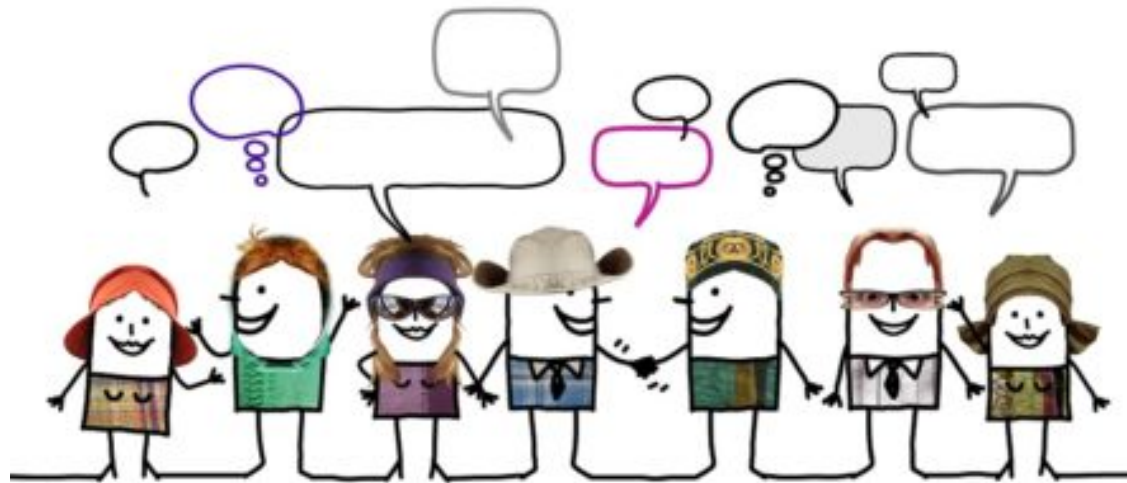
Highlight the benefits of power sharing

Data linkage and privacy

DHHS have faced long time delays in obtaining privacy approval for conducting surveys with clients and linking their data back to administrative data bases

In Summary

Ethics and privacy requirements are important but we need to continue to navigate new ways to ensure they don't inhibit our evaluation and research work

Thank you

Centre for Evaluation and Research

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