

Modern Program Evaluation: A Catalyst for Successful Government Programs

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*“A program is any organized or purposeful activity or set of activities delivered to a designated target group.”
(Myers, 1999)*

“Program evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming.” (Patton, 1997)

“No matter how rigorous the methods of data collection, design, and reporting are in evaluation, if it does not get used, it is a bad evaluation.” (Patton, 1997)

Introduction

Since the 1960s, program evaluation of government programs in the United States has been a very fluid and dynamic field that has seen a proliferation of theorists and practitioners. This began with the early traditional theorists of the 1960s who advocated rigorous scientific evaluation of government intervention programs established to solve social problems, such as the war on poverty, to determine what worked and what did not work. Modern theorists since the 1990s have shifted their belief that evaluations should balance the need to demonstrate effectiveness with the knowledge about how to improve and strengthen a program, and should ultimately be judged by their utility and actual use.

In this white paper, we intend to assist the modern government program evaluation practitioner in understanding that program evaluation does not and should not be conducted in a limited evaluation framework. There is more than one approach to program evaluation and the design should help to find a “better balance;” one which demonstrates a program or project’s effectiveness while also helping to understand how to improve and strengthen it. This paper describes ideas and considerations to help drive government program evaluators toward facilitating positive and proactive program management, change, and success. In this regard, this paper promotes and advocates the credibility of evaluations beyond being just a “ritual,” or worse, being ignored or perceived of little value or use by decision makers, policy advisors, and managers.

I. Historical Context of Program Evaluation in U.S. Government Programs

Humankind for centuries has been attempting to address societal challenges and problems. It was with the emergence of the sweeping, federally-funded Great Society programs of the 1960s that program evaluation in the United States had its major beginnings. These social programs were funded with enormous investments of public resources, but many of the complex problems they were designed to address did not diminish or improve as expected over time. The public and government leaders began to have apprehensions about these programs. This brought about increased pressure on the government to show evidence that funds were being spent as intended and in ways that caused desired results. This became more and more important given that limited resources had to be allocated amongst an increased number of competing programs and initiatives.

The 1960s also was a profoundly successful period for the natural sciences, particularly with the United States' most significant achievement of the decade of the first manned landing on the Moon. These programs and transformative events were very influential in establishing a fundamental faith in the natural sciences. As a result, the Federal government began adopting the scientific method to assess social programs' ability to solve society's problems. During the period of the 1960s and into the 1970s, program evaluation was predominated by the scientific method of evaluation. Practitioners focused on conducting scientific research beyond the laboratory to determine which programs worked and which did not work. Reliability and validity of collected data were crucial, while the main criterion for a quality evaluation was its methodological rigor. This required evaluators to be objective and neutral and to be focused on obtaining knowledge about results of a particular service, treatment or intervention program. This led to a preoccupation with experimental methods, numbers, statistical tools, and an emphasis on summative evaluations (aimed to determine whether or not to continue a particular program) rather than formative ones (aimed at program improvement).

This natural science model was designed to explain what happened and show causal relationships between certain results and the services aimed at producing these results. Researchers believed that by effectively

<p>Program evaluation is undertaken to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform decisions about future actions • Clarify options • Identify improvements • Provide information • Support action or change <p>Evaluation is a <u>problem solving</u> endeavor</p>	<p>Basic science (scientific method) is undertaken to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish new knowledge • Broaden or deepen existing knowledge • Test theories • Establish truth • Make generalizations <p>Research is a <u>knowledge creation</u> endeavor¹</p>
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¹ Sourced from Michael Quinn Patton's Utilization Focused Evaluation (3rd edition) (Sage Publications, 1997).

designing and conducting this type of evaluation, crucial information could be assessed about the particular impacts of a social program being studied. These made their usefulness limited, and were best suited to looking at a single (and often localized) program in a fairly controlled environment. This natural science research model was not well equipped to gain an understanding of complex, comprehensive, collaborative-driven, and stakeholder-rich programs and initiatives. As a result, evaluations conducted in the 1960s and 1970s were more focused on demonstrating the effectiveness or worth of a program and not on addressing issues of process, implementation and improvement.

Since the years of the Great Society, public and political pressure to demonstrate the worth of government programs has continued to flourish and grow, and evolve. Increasingly limited resources coupled with complex and multifaceted societal challenges, changing political climates, and shifts in public opinion about particular issues or the importance of them in daily life continues to affect and shape the program evaluation landscape. An obvious, and for many a painful, lesson society has learned over the past few decades is that we do not have the resources, and at times the technical means, to solve all of society's problems. This realization has seen a parallel movement in the government evaluation progression from the Planning-Programming-Budgeting System (PPBS) that started in the mid-1960s under the Johnson Administration, to a boon in evaluations mandated in the previous decade coming to fruition in the 1970s under the Nixon Administration, to the U.S. Government Accounting Office's (GAO) transition from focusing on financial issues toward examining program objectives and accomplishments starting in the mid-1970s. With the passage of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) in 1993, the Federal government codified a shift of the focus of government decision-making and accountability away from a preoccupation with the activities that are undertaken to a focus on the outcomes or results of those activities, thereby linking government agencies' performance results to future funding. Under GPRA, Federal agencies are now required to develop multiyear strategic plans, annual performance plans, and annual performance reports. Today, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in collaboration with all Federal agencies also assess the performance of every Federal program and hold themselves accountable for improvement. Specifically, the Program Assessment and Rating Tool (PART) is now used to help identify a program's strengths and weaknesses to inform funding and management decisions aimed at making the program more effective and outcome-oriented.² A similar movement is now being witnessed in the Federal government's business-driven approach to management practice to maximize the contribution of a Federal agency's resources, information

² For a more comprehensive discussion of the history of program evaluation in the United States, a recommended reading is Part 1, Section 1 "Social Program Evaluation: It's History, Tasks, and Theory" of William R. Shadish, Jr., Thomas D. Cook, and Laura C. Leviton's book Foundations of Program Evaluation: Theories of Practice (Sage Publications, 1991).

technology investments, and system development activities to achieve show measureable outcomes and achieve its performance goals.

Combined together, these influences and events have created a political and public landscape of increased scrutiny (including the technological means to readily obtain information and data, and scrutinize and report, particularly the Internet), increased competition for decreased levels of funding, and increased demand to demonstrate results. Today, government is still significantly influenced by the pressure to demonstrate the effectiveness of the nation's societal programs in

order to assure the Congressional and Executive branches, senior government agency officials, and the public at large that their investments are worth the cost and achieving beneficial and measurable outcomes. Therefore, more and more emphasis is placed on targeting investments – to accomplish this society and government need a better basis for deciding what, where, when, and how to invest. Most people today recognize that there is not enough funding and resources to accomplish everything society may want or require and even if there was it takes more than “throwing money at the problem” to solve society's most complex challenges. Therein lies the need to employ program evaluation to help establish a basis for making crucial decisions about what is worth doing and in what manner, closely coupled with process, implementation and other improvements to be made, to achieve intended outcomes or results. For this to be accomplished, modern program evaluation must not operate in a limited or one dimensional evaluation framework – there is no one way to do evaluation and the design of evaluations should attempt to balance the need to demonstrate effectiveness with the knowledge about how to improve and strengthen a program.

Distinguishing Between Program Evaluation and Performance Assessment

People often confuse program evaluation and performance assessment. Program evaluation is essentially a set of philosophies, techniques, and activities to determine whether a program “works” and how to improve it to ensure success. Performance assessment is designed to judge a person or organization's abilities to use specific knowledge and skills, or provide insight into a person or organization's level of conceptual and procedural knowledge and acumen.

Many modern-day practitioners since the 1990s believe in the premise that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use. Therefore, these practitioners advocate a more highly interactive, personal, and situational focused evaluation that develops working relationships or collaborations with intended users to help them determine what kind of evaluation they need. Further, they do not advocate any particular evaluation content, model, method, theory or use, but a process for helping primary users make the selection for their particular situation. In this sense, a crucial role of the

evaluator is to facilitate the evaluation process and pay close attention during evaluation design to how everything that is done, from start to finish of the evaluation process, will affect use.³

II. Common Misperceptions About Program Evaluation

It is not unusual for individuals and organizations to be dismayed about or dissuaded from the prospect of having their program undergo evaluation. To many this might falsely imply a day of reckoning to be concluded with “criticism” or “judgment.” Over the years, many myths or misperceptions have surfaced that should be “gotten out of the way” before focusing on the planning, conduct, and use of an evaluation. Holding onto these myths or misperceptions also create tremendous impediments to soliciting buy-in and formalizing evaluation into organizational and professional culture and behavior. Below are prevalent misperceptions, or excuses for not performing program evaluations, that have been quoted by various authors, practitioners, and organizations (McNamara 1-2, Owl Re 1).

I can just get the evaluation over with and be done with it! Not so. Most well planned and conducted evaluations are an ongoing process. They take time to develop and refine. Once completed, and particularly those resulting in program or process improvement and adjustment recommendations, need to be revisited and reported on over time by program administrators and implementers. The good thing here is that many of the activities to carry out an evaluation are activities that individuals already are or should be doing within their programs.

I will have to deal with a bunch of “outsiders” who will only provide me with data I don’t need and conclusions I can’t use! Not so. This was definitely a problem and criticism of traditional program evaluations of the past which focused on the rigorous scientific method. Evaluation reports tended to overemphasize summarization and generalization of vast amounts of data that tended to point out the obvious and left lingering doubt about the value and usefulness of the evaluation itself. Pioneering work of modern program evaluation theorists have shifted the focus toward utility, relevance and the users and intended use by gaining consensus on evaluation purpose and intended outcomes early in the process.

³ For an excellent overview of evaluation theorists and evolution of evaluation theory, read Chapter 2 “An Evaluation Theory Tree,” written by Marvin C. Alkin and Christina A. Christie from Alkin’s book Evaluation Roots – Tracing Theorists’ Views and Influences (Sage Publications, Inc., 2004).

I will embark upon a complex process which will require unique expertise and experience! Not so.

There are many program evaluation practitioners today that come from a plethora of educational and technical backgrounds and work experiences. You do not necessarily have to be conversant with program evaluation theories, techniques or practices. More important is the willingness of individuals to commit their time, be open to learning what is going on with the evaluation, and lend their intellectual capital, programmatic and institutional knowledge, and experiences to the effort.

I will only end up having someone judge whether my program has succeeded or failed! Not so. There is no such thing as the “perfect program.” The large and diverse number of planners, implementers, stakeholders, and overseers involved in societal programs provide the assurance that criticism, feedback and demands for improvement or adjustment will come forth whether valid or not. The process of evaluation allows programs to proactively and rationally remain open to continuing feedback and to make necessary adjustments – all the while driving toward intended and desired results. One of the positive, often unintended, benefits of program evaluation is the “eye opening” opportunity to take a step back and assess if a program is truly aligned with ultimate objectives. Often, evaluation participants do not realize that program activities may be off track since they are too close to the effort on a daily basis.

I will be handed a whole new set of requirements and activities of which significant and unavailable resources are needed! Not so. Much of what is entailed in program evaluation makes up many of the principals and practices involved in normal (and good) program management. These are activities that need to be carried out anyway to evolve programs to higher levels of success and ultimate accomplishment of their goals and objectives. If anything, programs will have the tools to enable and institutionalize routine program reviews that become part of the way business is done.

III. Understanding the Types of Evaluations and Need to be “User” Focused

Understanding the Types of Evaluations

There are numerous types of evaluations and practitioners have described and grouped them in various ways. In a nutshell, “program evaluation” is an umbrella term that encompasses several types of

evaluations, of which each has a different purpose. Four of the more common types of evaluations are needs evaluation; process evaluation; outcome evaluation; and impact evaluation.

A **needs evaluation** is commonly used during the stage of program planning, in order to help determine which program aspects or activities will be needed and for whom. A needs evaluation is valuable and prudent to undertake when developing a completely new program or when establishing new elements or components to an existing program. This type of evaluation can be particularly beneficial when new objectives, new stakeholders, new needs or services, and new resources are involved.

A **process evaluation** explores how a program is being implemented, operated, or delivered. This includes the extent to which it is proceeding as intended. A process evaluation is meant to enhance a current program by more fully understanding how it works and identifying any improvements or changes that might be necessary or meaningful to reach the program's desired results. Other names for this type of evaluation are implementation evaluation (whether a program is working as planned) and progress evaluation (whether there is progress in meeting the program's goals and objectives).

An **outcome evaluation** focuses on examining the achievements of a program. It is used to determine the overall effects or outcomes of the program in relation to program's intended goals and objectives. It is typical to look at both short-term outcomes (such as a change in knowledge) and long-term outcomes (such as a change in behavior). An outcome evaluation does not only help determine whether program goals and objectives are being or have been met, but also identify any recommendations for improvement to move toward achievement of intended results.

An **impact evaluation** goes beyond looking at change and outcomes strictly related to a particular program's participants. It is used when there is a desire or need to examine whether a particular program has had an influence on another program, negative or positive. It helps to determine whether there have been short-term or long-term unintended results or impacts on other programs, or to examine what happens when two or more programs operate in unison.

These, and other, types of evaluations can either be formative or summative in nature depending upon when the program is evaluated and how the results are used. A formative or summative evaluation also can encompass one or more of these evaluations in a single design.

A **formative evaluation** is meant to evaluate a program during its implementation. This type of evaluation attempts to provide information that can be useful or beneficial in improving program implementation during its earlier stages. A formative evaluation examines the intent of the program

and assesses various elements of program design and operation, including internal and external influences and barriers, to evaluate the chances the program has to successfully achieve its goals and objectives.

A **summative evaluation** is meant to evaluate a program at or near its conclusion. This type of evaluation attempts to determine the success of the program, whether goals have been met, the satisfaction of and benefits to stakeholders, its overall effectiveness, the end results achieved versus the cost, and whether the program should be repeated or replicated. A summative evaluation also provides policy makers, decision makers, and stakeholders with judgments about the program's merit with a focus on making decisions about program continuation, termination, expansion or adoption.

Formative Evaluation	Summative Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurs in earlier and subsequent project stages • Data collected at the beginning of or during program implementation • Constructive feedback to improve or adjust program to reach goals, objectives and results • More collaboration and involvement with implementers and stakeholders • Strengthen and improve the program being evaluated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurs in later project stages • Data collected near the end or completion of program implementation • Constructive feedback to determine whether to continue, alter, expand or abolish program • Less collaboration and involvement with implementers and stakeholders • Examine overall impact and outcomes of the program being evaluated

Keys to Effective Program Evaluation

An effective, and successful, program evaluation entails more than just collecting, analyzing and reporting on data. The results and feedback must ultimately help guide the program as it is being implemented, and clearly demonstrate that the program is accomplishing its stated goals and objectives or offer recommendations for improvement or adjustment to steer the program toward a successful conclusion. Without effective evaluation, the decision makers, policy makers and administrators may fail to document important impacts the program is having or not having on its stakeholders. Insufficient participation and incomplete or incorrect documentation will fail to result in meaningful or “doable” program improvements or adjustments. This will also inhibit cooperation and commitment to follow-up and use of the evaluation’s results and recommendations by its implementers, as well as inhibit stakeholder engagement, involvement and trust.

Several features of an effective program evaluation that should be kept in mind are outlined below. These are highlighted based on our experience conducting program evaluation, and that we feel are commonly accepted best practices and widely applicable to the spectrum of program evaluation.

- The design and implementation of the program evaluation should lead toward actionable outcomes that can result in process improvements
- There should be up-front and continuous communication, collaboration, and facilitated stakeholder engagement and participation throughout the program evaluation
- There needs to be a clear understanding and “buy in” by all participants of the benefits of performing the program evaluation
- The scope of the evaluation and its defined “boundaries” should be well planned and laid out as part of the design (what will the evaluation answer and not answer?)
- The participants need to all recognize the benefits of and be committed to constructive criticism, and unbiased and candid opinions (both internal and external stakeholders to the evaluation, as well as implementers of the program)
- There needs to be an understanding that all evaluations have assumptions and carry risks, and that these “particulars” need to be understood for the specific program being evaluated and incorporated into its design and implementation
- Their needs to be maximum effort and cooperation in accessing data and information crucial to the program evaluation; challenges in finding or obtaining necessary data and information will impact design, implementation, analysis, and expectations of evaluation results
- There needs to be a clear understanding of the value a third party can provide to the evaluation, particularly where an independent and objective assessment is desired or where facilitation of the evaluation process is necessary to guide resolution and effective incorporation of key elements of the evaluation (process and design)

Uses of Program Evaluation

There are many ways that program evaluations are used. There can be a direct use or indirect use of evaluation results. A direct use could entail a program administrator or decision maker receiving an evaluation report and on the basis of its content, results and recommendations making an informed decision. The results of evaluations will more typically have an indirect influence on decisions, but this does not diminish their necessity, value or results. An evaluation may be only one of numerous elements of information and input that will be provided or be available to program administrators and decision makers. Further, often before program administrators and decision makers receive and read a program evaluation, other policy advisors, managers, and internal and external influences will impart their ideas and opinions about content, results and recommendations. There is no doubt that other

sources of information, organizations, philosophies and beliefs, and interests will factor into how a program evaluation's format, content and results and recommendations are interpreted and used.⁴ Program evaluators and the evaluation team should strive to understand and be sensitive to these other influences.

Various Ways Program Evaluations are Used

- Program planning, development and formulation
- Program improvement
- Outcome assessment
- Effectiveness assessment
- Performance measurement
- Business process assessment
- Vision, mission, goals, and objectives setting and realignment
- Strategic planning
- Resource planning
- Relationship building
- Communications and outreach
- Program reporting and benchmarking
- Program reporting
- Meeting Federal mandates (such as PART, GPRA, CPIC, and agency annual performance reports)
- Identifying other areas (such as processes or programs) ripe for examination
- Discovering new knowledge (such as more effective practices, processes, techniques, technologies, etc.)

Regardless of these influences, the evaluation process and results should meet the information needs of program administrators and decision makers. In other words, they need fully-informed feedback about a program's operation and its effectiveness, including the need for adjustment and improvement, in order to make confident and successful decisions.

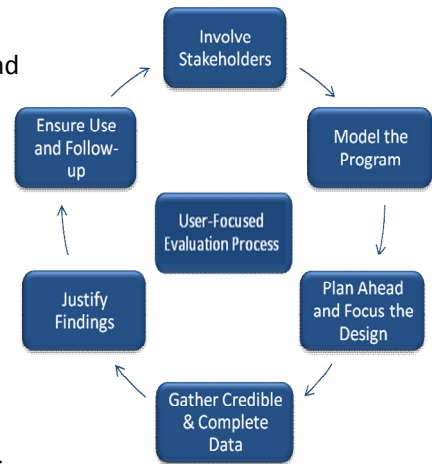
Laying the Groundwork for Effective Use of Evaluations

The results of evaluations, and most importantly their use, is not simply about making decisions. Rather, it's about informing decision makers and others about changes in their programs that will enhance efficiency and effectiveness and achieve results. Decisions can be static and one dimensional. More ideally, evaluation if properly embedded in a program is an ongoing process tightly connected to program planning, implementation and improvement. In this way, evaluation findings and recommendations can be used to revise policies, procedures, activities, and objectives to allow

⁴ For an in-depth analysis of evaluation utilization, drawn from existing studies of program evaluations conducted by humanitarian agencies and donors, but with important and relevant implications for U.S. government-based evaluations, see *Chapter 3, The Utilisation of Evaluations*, of the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action's (ALNAP) [Review of Humanitarian Action – Evaluation Utilisation](#), written by Peta Sandison.

programs to provide the best possible service to their stakeholders and meet the most desirable results. Laying the groundwork for effective use of evaluations entails keeping several factors in mind.

Initiate an up-front discussion about use. Crucial to building interest and support about evaluation findings and recommendations is to think about use at the beginning of the evaluation process. During each phase of the evaluation, including the planning, evaluating, and report writing steps, it is also crucial to discuss and re-discuss amongst stakeholders how the evaluation will be used to inform decisions and take actions.



Recognize and adapt to influences that can affect use. Numerous studies on program evaluation have articulated the many factors or “influences” inevitably have in impact on whether, how, and to what extent an evaluation will be used. It is impossible to undertake a “value-free” evaluation, and organizational, relational, or external influences are the driving forces behind this. Therefore, having some understanding of and sensitivity to these influences will help in managing risk and expectations involved in the evaluation process.

Consider “Modeling the Program” as part of the program evaluation. Where one does not exist, creating a program logic model can provide a systematic and visual depiction of a program that can support a shared framework or reference point and design of the evaluation. A logic model is a diagram or flow chart that illustrates how a program should work in theory, and has the following components: inputs/resources (money, people and equipment); activities (processes, tools, etc.); outputs (direct products of program activities); outcomes (changes in knowledge, behavior, conditions, skills, etc.); and impacts (intended and unintended change). A logic model can help answer the following questions:

- What goes into my program (inputs)?
- What does my program do (activities and outputs)?
- What are the intended results of my program (short-term and long-term outcomes)?
- What internal and external “influences” affect my program (funding, political, social, organizational, technical/technology, etc.)?

- What are my assumptions (beliefs) about the program, the stakeholders involved, and how it will function, work and be measured (vision, mission, goals, objectives, and performance measures)?

How Logic Models Can Support Evaluations

- Establish an understanding of the program before getting started with evaluation design
- Help frame questions to be addressed about program influences, activities, inputs, outputs and outcomes
- Assist in focusing evaluation design on most crucial program areas
- Aid in the identification of program audiences to be involved in and that will impact the evaluation
- Guide the establishment of measurements, particularly where not fully, clearly or adequately formulated
- Inform stakeholders with a reference point for their participation in evaluations
- Engage stakeholders early in the process
- Identify external factors that may impact the evaluation and identify mitigation strategies

Inform and involve major stakeholders. The more people are kept informed about an evaluation and have some involvement in the evaluation, the more they will perceive to have ownership of or a stake in the process and results. A useful and affective way to ensure this is to establish mechanisms and time frames for communicating about the evaluation process, including its intent, progress, and ultimately its results and recommendations. It is also crucially important to ensure a proper level of involvement in the evaluation team.

Determine how to best communicate and disseminate results. This is a crucial factor in building support for using evaluation findings and recommendations. It should be recognized that evaluation findings and recommendations can, and often should, be communicated in ways other than a written report. Therefore, the managers responsible for the evaluation and the evaluation team should think early in and throughout the evaluation process which methods will most likely and successfully get the findings and recommendations understood, supported, and used. Regardless of the method, an eye should be kept on the following: communicate results and recommendations in understandable or “layman’s” terms; focus writing or communicating on the primary audience, as opposed to trying to satisfy many different audiences; and meld results and recommendations with time frames for making decisions, taking actions and effecting change.

Embrace the commitment to follow-up. This is a crucial factor that ties in to the consideration and commitment to formalizing program evaluation in organizational culture and behavior. However, beyond that, without a commitment to follow-up there is no guarantee that a program can ensure the results of an evaluation will be used and have sustained and continuous impact. Further, if follow-up is not embraced then future evaluations of the program or other programs managed or overseen by the

organization may be negatively impacted, fail to come to fruition, and not garner the necessary trust and support from program participants and stakeholders.

Formalize program evaluation in organization culture and behavior. There are several ways to help create a culture that supports and ingrains program evaluation as part of an organization. One way is to promote, through senior management, a culture of learning by making it part of an organization's value statement. Another way is to incorporate evaluation commitment and responsibility into performance agreements and assessments. An organization also can more formally create an evaluation unit or assign one or more individuals dedicated to accountability and learning, thereby tying them closely to decision makers and program administrators. It is also crucial that evaluation funding be included in the organization as a budget line item. Lastly, but not exhaustively, an organization can link its program evaluation commitment and undertakings to its knowledge management mechanisms. This can include the organization's web site, networks and systems, and other formal and informal information dissemination mechanisms.

IV. Conclusion

Well planned, designed and implemented program evaluations can be a cornerstone for an organization to learn from its crucial work, and to adapt, improve and ensure sustained and beneficial results. There is no one size, scope or approach for conducting program evaluations. PPC's philosophy is to promote and use program evaluation to give organizations a "competitive advantage." This means helping to make better strategic decisions and improvements in the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of programs. PPC's approach is to focus on ensuring that evaluations will actually be used by:

- Balancing the need to improve (the "program") with the need to prove (its "effects")
- Carefully designing the purpose and approach of the evaluation
- Managing quality engagement and participation of all stakeholders throughout the evaluation
- Allowing sufficient time to include, involve, and obtain the necessary and valuable input of all relevant program staff and stakeholders

- Ensuring the data, information, and evidence are credible and the evaluation report is easy to read with clear, precise recommendations about who is responsible for what and when
- Treating the evaluation as a process of discovery and learning, rather than a report card
- Ensuring that the ultimate output of the evaluation is organizational learning and improvement
- Putting in place follow-up plans at the outset of the evaluation process, thereby making it a process ingrained in an organization's day-to-day operations; not an event
- Ensuring evaluators are credible, balanced and constructive
- Bringing skills to program implementers as a continuous learning and knowledge gaining endeavor

In working with clients, PPC brings value and results to program evaluations in the following ways:

- Customer-focused – we adapt our evaluations to meet the needs of the organizations involved in the program (customized, not “cookie-cutter”)
- Stakeholder-focused – we work with both the implementers and beneficiaries of programs to build better relationships, partnerships, and trust
- Use-focused – we ensure that evaluation design addresses both decision-making and policy concerns and creates stakeholder advocacy and acceptance of results and recommendations
- Results-focused – we want evaluation findings and recommendations to be understood and realized, by translating them into action plans and defining and employing better measures of success to meet program objectives
- Life-cycle focused – we look at evaluation as a cycle, not an end point, having relevance and value throughout a program's development and implementation
- Empowerment-focused: we believe in building the capacity of complex or busy organizations to undertake evaluation of their work as a routine element of their programs

We also believe in separating the process of a program from its results. This means not only determining whether the program is performing as intended (“doing things right”), but also whether the program should modify its procedures, processes and focus and direction (“doing the right things”).

PPC's approach facilitates real progress by pinpointing crucial drivers and reducing barriers; brings people together by encouraging collaborations and solidifying mutual visions; and spawns innovation by bringing neglected or unseen ideas, techniques, technologies, and improvements to light and use.

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