Evaluation Use in Philanthropy

Supporting Good Evaluation

Anita Baker, Ed. D.
Beth Bruner, Bruner Foundation

Bruner Foundation
Rochester, New York

Remember, Good Evaluation Designs Include the Following

- ✓ Summary information about the program
- ✓ Questions to be addressed by the evaluation
- ✓ Data collection strategies that will be used
- ✓ Individuals who will undertake the activities
- ✓ Timeline for conducting activities
- ✓ Products of the evaluation (who will receive them and how they should be used)
- ✓ Projected costs to do the evaluation

Before you Commission Evaluation

- ✓ Talk to a few trusted grantmaker colleagues
- ✓ Think about how you will identify evaluators

  Sole Source v. Competitive Process

  - * Unrestricted v. Invited
  - * Any geographic limitations or advantages
  - * Tax or business requirements
  - * How will you attract bidders
- ✓ Determine best strategy and requirements for proposals
- ✓ Determine timeline for finding evaluators
- ✓ Determine format for response to RFP/RFQ/ Invitation
- ✓ Determine who will be involved in making the selection and what process they will follow

What to Look for in an Evaluator

- ✓ Basic knowledge of substantive area being evaluated
- ✓ Experience with evaluation (especially program evaluation)
- ✓ Good references from sources you trust
- ✓ Personal style and approach fit

Questions to Ask Evaluators

1. What do you need to know to properly design an evaluation for this program/strategy/initiative?
2. What evaluation questions would guide your effort?
3. What data collection strategies would you use to address your questions?
4. How will you handle challenges such as:
   - Implementation difficulties (e.g., delayed start-up of subject program, staffing changes)
   - Subject access/confidentiality

Questions to Ask Evaluators (Con’t)

5. What is the timeline for the evaluation?
6. Who will conduct the work and what relevant experience do they have?
7. How and when will the findings be communicated? How will you contribute to making recommendations from findings?
8. What level of financial support will you need to conduct this evaluation and how will those fees be used?

Evaluation Resources

- Independent technical assistance or evaluation consultants
- Evaluation/Research consulting firms
- Universities with graduate programs that include training or projects in evaluation

Budgeting and Paying for Evaluation

- Usually the cost to do good evaluation is equivalent to 10% – 15% of the costs to operate the program effectively.
- Most of the funds for evaluation pay for the professional time of those who develop designs and tools, collect data, analyze data, summarize and present findings.
- Other expenses include overhead and direct costs associated with the evaluation (e.g., travel, supplies, computer maintenance, communication, software)

Things Grantmakers Should Avoid When Working on Evaluation Projects

- Assuming there is a standard, fixed evaluation cost regardless of program size or complexity
- Funding an evaluation that does not clarify how evaluation funds will be used
- Agreeing to fund an evaluation design that you do not understand
- Agreeing to fund an evaluation where disbursement is not attached to deliverables

More Things Grantmakers Should Avoid When Working on Evaluation Projects

- Commissioning evaluation on a timetable that is inappropriate for the subject of the evaluation
- Commissioning an overly complicated evaluation design
- Commissioning an evaluation design with insufficient stakeholder involvement in its development

Still More Things Grantmakers Should Avoid When Working on Evaluation Projects

- Forcing evaluation of outcomes that are inappropriate or beyond the scope of the program.
- Assuming that you must ALWAYS measure outcomes, or that you must "measure everything all the time."

Staying Informed about Evaluations you are Supporting

Periodic or Mid-Point Reports

- What evaluation activities have taken place
- Any data collection or instrument development problems
- Any proposed changes to data collection timelines or strategies
- Preliminary findings where appropriate

***** Do the above only as necessary. Reports should be on a schedule that matches information needs and evaluation timeline.***

Final Status Report

- Final summary of project proceedings, and when possible assessment of budget and strategies (sometimes referred to as a “post-mortem review”).

Shared Evaluation Roles for Grantmakers, Grantees and Evaluators

- *Promote clear communication about the purposes of evaluation.*
- Design, conduct and support evaluations that are honest and that help promote reflection and sound practices.
- *Set short-term measures and milestones, but seek clarity regarding how those fit into longer-term outcomes and "the bigger picture."*
- Decide in advance how good is good enough (use prior efforts, external standards where available, agreed-upon expectations/hunches to determine reasonable targets).
- *Do peer education with colleagues and support good practice regarding evaluation.*

List of Attachments

Before you Commission Evaluation - Detailed Advice
Assessing the Potential Effectiveness of a Program Evaluation plan
Evaluation Timeline/ Level of Effort/ Budget Example
What do you do when . . . . Exercise to help you respond to common grantmaking challenges made obvious through evaluation

BEFORE YOU COMMISSION AN EVALUATION: DETAILED ADVICE

- **Talk to a few trusted grantmaker colleagues** about experiences they have had. If possible also talk to some grantees and a professional evaluator. Gather some basic advice and determine if it is relevant for your project.

- **Think about how you will identify evaluators**. Is sole sourcing an option for your project, or will a competitive process be more appropriate or advantageous? There are merits to either approach. If you want to or are required to use a competitive approach, determine how broad the competition should or must be. (Determine answers to these questions.)

  - Will an invitational approach work, or do you want unrestricted competition?
  - Are there any geographic limitations or advantages?
  - Are there tax or business requirements (for-profit./non-profit, private firm, individual, university institute or department, etc.)
  - What sources will you use to inform evaluators about your project and attract bidders (e.g., RFPs posted on your website, in publications, through your RAG, through associations)

- **Determine the best strategy and requirements for proposals**. Can you go ahead with a letter proposal, a letter of interest (LOI)? or an interview only process, or is a Request for Quotes/Qualifications (RFQ), or a full **Request for Proposal** (RFP) best? *Whatever you decide, be sure to make the request specific enough that you make your needs known, but not so detailed that the evaluator or other stakeholders have no real input into how to proceed*.

- **Determine the timeline for finding evaluators**. If you do a full, competitive proposal process, you will need to determine your sequence for announcing your competition, releasing the actual request (RFP or RFQ), conducting a bidders conference or responding to clarification requests, collecting responses, making selections (including possible “best and final” competitions or invited interviews/presentations) and notification. *Remember that good responses, especially those that are written or presented through a meeting take some time to develop – be sure to give potential contractors adequate time.*

- **Determine the format for response**. Do you need a written or oral response, or a combination? What categories of information are required and what additional materials will help. (It is always helpful to provide specific questions of interest – see following -- and parameters for response.)

- **Determine who will be involved in making the selection and how.** Do you need external reviewers? How will you manage multiple (conflicting?) reviews? If you host an interview, who needs to participate? What role can/should program staff and leaders play?

Questions to Ask Evaluators (in RFP's, RFQs or interviews)

- **What do you need to know to properly design an evaluation for this program/initiative?** (The evaluator should minimally need to know about the purpose for commissioning the work, as well as details about service delivery or other organizational structure, and scope of the project including timeframe, ballpark program budget and size of the target population. A smart evaluator will also request other background materials or perhaps even a preliminary visit.)

- **What evaluation questions would guide your effort**? (It may also be valuable to have a preliminary conversation about outcomes and indicators, or specify a whole task where the evaluator works together with program staff to clarify expected outcomes, timeframes, indicators, and important assumptions and contextual issues related to service delivery.)

- **What strategies would you use to address the evaluation questions?** (Be specific about how you would: collect and analyze data involve agency staff, why this approach makes sense or is common, whether there are any standard instruments and why they were chosen.)
- **How will you handle common challenges?** (For example, how will your evaluation design be affected by poor project implementation, which outcome measures would be appropriate if the program is not well implemented? How will you communicate this to stakeholders?) What will you do to insure necessary access to subjects and confidentiality of response?
- **What timeline will the evaluation project operate on?** (Specify in chart or calendar form, when key evaluation tasks will be completed.)

- **Who will conduct the work and what other relevant experiences do they have?** (Identify key staff and clarify their level of involvement – attach resumes and a capacity statement with descriptions of other similar projects. Be sure to get specific directions if web-site reviews are recommended. Ask about supervision if multiple evaluators are involved – who is ultimately responsible for collecting and analyzing data, verifying accuracy and reporting results? For multi-site initiatives, will any local evaluators be involved? How will they and any other staff be trained to conduct specific evaluation activities?)
- **How and when will the findings from the evaluation work be communicated** What products/deliverables will be developed? (look for multiple products where appropriate) Will the products of the evaluation have any greater usefulness? How are program managers expected to use the information obtained through the evaluation?
- **How will evaluation resources be used to complete this work including professional time, travel, other direct costs, indirect costs. (**Be sure to ask for a task-specific budget.)

** Remember, evaluation should not be viewed as in competition with program resources. Evaluations can be funded as a component of a program (using program funds) or as a separate project (using ear-marked or additional funds). A Common rule of thumb is to set aside 10 - 15% of the cost of the program, for evaluation. **

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE SELECTING A GRANTEE PROGRAM TO EVALUATE

1) Contributions to Mission or Broader Field
What is the general purpose of the proposed project and how will it contribute to grantmaker's mission? If not, are there other reasons why it should be supported? (This can also be discussed with grantee as long as they are aware of the grantmaker's mission.)

How does this project contribute to the broader field? What are the likely lessons learned?

2) Implementation and Feasibility
Does the program target population know about and want to participate in this program? Have all necessary collaborative agreements been secured?

How will you guard against implementation impediments?

3) Project Design/Staging
Describe the key components of the project and how they are integrated into the overall project design. Has a reasonable logical formulation been developed for the program?

How will the project be staged over time?

4.) Finances **(**ask if necessary)
Please clarify the following details about your projected budget: _____________________

5) Outcomes & Evaluation
How is the project expected to impact participants? How will you know when this has happened?

Assessing the Potential Effectiveness of an Evaluation Plan

PLAN COMPONENT/CONTENTS	WHAT TO LOOK FOR OR ASK ABOUT
DESCRIPTION OF SELECTED PROGRAM Paragraph or bulleted list describing how the program operates including: basic service delivery strategies who gets served, when and for how long how long the program has been operational how it was developed (new or replication) which staff are involved what the program is designed to accomplish (i.e., program and participant outcomes). **Cost Information **Embedded Logic Model(s) **Rationale for selection ** Historical information regarding program development.	Does the design of the program make sense (i.e., do the service delivery strategies make sense, are they offered in sufficient Adoses@)? If you have no idea whether the program design seems reasonable, just check to see whether it seems too complex or simple, and whether it seems like a relatively strong intervention. If not, ask for clarification. Does the selected program need to be evaluated? (Is doing so in keeping with your mission?) Are the outcomes claimed by the program the Aright@ ones B those you care about and think are impacted by the program. Ask whether there have been implementation problems with the program.
KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS *Sometimes shown as key questions and sub-questions	Are there more than two or three key questions? (Are they asked in such a way that answers will not be forgone conclusions?) Will there be data available to address the questions? Are these the questions that key stakeholders want addressed? Can the organization change the elements of the program that are being evaluated if findings suggest that it should? Can the funder influence which questions get asked?

PLAN COMPONENT/CONTENTS	WHAT TO LOOK FOR OR ASK ABOUT
DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES & ANALYSIS PLANS List or description of selected methods, who they will be used with and how often. * Rationale for why certain methods were chosen * Descriptions of specific instruments	Does the plan address the key evaluation questions? Are there multiple methods? Are data collected at multiple points in time and from multiple stakeholders? Do the selected strategies seem to make sense? > Do the proposed evaluation staff have the right skill sets to implement the proposed strategies? s there a backup plan in case there are access problems, scheduling problems or delays? Is there a role for the funder in the collection and/or analysis of data?
TIMELINE and BUDGET Task-specific projections of evaluation project calendar and evaluation project costs. * Disbursement strategy for the budget. <u>Evaluation Budget Development</u> ▶ Determine rates for all “staff” to the project. ▶ Calculate total labor costs by multiplying LOE totals by “staff” rates. ▶ Estimate other direct costs (ODC) such as copying, mail/delivery, telephone use and facilities. ▶ Estimate any travel costs. ▶ Calculate the subtotal of direct costs including labor (fringe where appropriate), ODC and travel. ▶ Estimate additional indirect (overhead) costs, where appropriate, as a percentage applied to the direct costs. ▶ Apply any other fees where appropriate ▶ Sum all project costs to determine total cost of project. ▶ Establish a payment schedule and billing system.	Does it seem like the proposed timeline is sufficient to accomplish all proposed data collection, analysis and reporting strategies? (If you’re not sure, ask the evaluator whether there will sufficient time and how they arrived at the dates and amounts of time proposed.) Are key staff assigned significant amounts of time to complete project tasks? Does the proposed timeline fit with program scheduling? Does the proposed timeline fit with funder scheduling needs? Does the budget specify the relationship between tasks and costs? Does the budget specify and distinguish labor costs, travel costs, other direct costs (including materials, postage, phone, computer etc.), and indirect (overhead) costs. Are labor rates clear and appropriate, is there any flexibility in cost items? Is the bottom line within the desired price range? Are proposed costs sufficient to cover probable expenses related to the workplan and deliverables.

PLAN COMPONENT/CONTENTS	WHAT TO LOOK FOR OR ASK ABOUT
DELIVERABLES (Products)	Are the proposed products desired? Are they likely to be utilization-friendly? Are there plans to have intermediate or preliminary products? Are there plans for multiple versions of products? Can products be available on a desirable calendar? Is there a role for the funder in the development of products?
STAFFING PLAN Description of who will be performing which tasks. Description of qualifications of key staff Description of proposed evaluation project management (including "Officer in Charge" and other key contact people). * Other organizational capacity statements are also often included here.	Does the identified staff have the right qualifications to do the work? Are those with the right qualifications assigned to take on significant elements of the work? Have the proposed staff done similar kinds of work before? Do they bring desirable expertise? Is there ample supervision for more junior staff? Is there a clear strategy described to manage the project? Are there plans for managing turnover or staffing changes?
ATTACHMENTS Logic Model(s) Resume's for key staff Instruments	

EVALUATION TIMELINE/LEVEL OF EFFORT/BUDGET: EXAMPLE

Proposed Workplan and Budget for Evaluation of the Beehives Project, Phase I		STAFF/ASSiSTANCE				
Submitted to: One Economy Submitted by: Evaluation Inc. Oct., 2009						
October 23, 2009	TIMELINE	Project Director	Project Staff	Admin. Asst.	Client Assistance	**TOTAL**
Discuss sampling and other administration strategies*	by 10/24	0.5				
Locate Host for E-Surveys	by 10/29	0.5				
Design Draft Survey Instrument						
Develop draft with questions for Beehive, Money and Jobs users	by 10/27	1				
Review with T. Burns/E. Banfield	by 10/27	see above				
Review with One Economy staff person	by 10/27					
Conference regarding revisions/piloting	by 10/27					
Address Incentives						
Meeting/Call with OE stakeholders, others re incentive choices	by 10/31	0.25			✓	
Devise incentives options plan, send to OE	by 10/31	0.25				
Conduct Mock Survey Launch						
Conduct meeting with Chris Willey via phone, re: strategy	by 10/27	0.5			✓	
Convert paper survey to electronic format	by 10/28		1			
Review and annotate mock e-survey	by 10/29	0.5				
Launch mock survey and obtain feedback	10/29 - 11/5	1	0.5		✓	
Revise and Pilot Survey Instrument						
Review and finalize electronic format	by 11/4	0.5				
Acquire pilot respondent list	by 11/5	0.5				
Launch pilot	by 11/6	0.5	0.5			
Close out pilot, produce summary report including suggested rev.	by 11/14	1	0.5			

Proposed Workplan and Budget for Evaluation of the Beehives Project, Phase I		STAFF/ASSiSTANCE				
Launch Survey for 30 Days		Project Director	Project Staff	Admin. Asst	Client Assistance	**TOTAL**
Make final revisions to survey text, launch	by 11/17		1		✓	
Develop analysis plan, obtain approvals	by 11/17	0.25				
Determine follow-up strategy	by 11/21	0.25			✓	
Survey site management	as needed	0.5	2		✓	
Conduct follow-up activities	on 12/1	1.5	1		✓	
Develop Survey Results Summary						
Draw down e-survey data	by 12/17		1			
Convert data as necessary	by 12/18	0.5	0.5			
Analyze data according to plan	by 12/22	1	1			
Produce results summary	by 12/23	2			✓	
Develop Survey Report & Executive Summary	**separate budget**					
Team Meetings/Management	ongoing	2		2		
Total Personnel		15	9	2		
Daily Rates		$650	$400	$120		
TOTAL PERSONNEL$		$9,750	$3,600	$240		$13,590
Travel (2 trips to Philly, 1 trip to DC)						$250
Other Direct Costs (duplication, postage, phone, computers $100/mo)						$300
Vendor Costs (survey service, web hosting)						$750
Incentives						$2000
SUBTOTAL OTP**						$3300
TOTAL						$16,890
* All figures are based on a census sampling strategy, with 3000 names, ** = Other than Personnel						

The following is an exercise to help you develop probable strategies for dealing with common grant-making challenges made obvious through evaluation. Minimally it is good to at least think through each of these. Optimally, it may be wise to complete a chart like this so there is a standard operating procedure, and refer to it as needed. ⇨⇨⇨

What do you do when............?

* A grantee falls far short of projected outcomes?	*Ask why?* *Ask what they could do about it and on what timetable.* *Ask if the grantee thinks the measured outcomes were appropriate.* *Ask if there were measurement or data collection problems.*
* A grantee presents a report with very positive outcomes, but not the ones they promised to deliver.	
* A grantee presents a report with very positive outcomes, but the target group is half the size of the one they originally proposed to serve (or is a different group altogether).	

* A grantee (including evaluation grantees) indicates in a status report that they had a six-month start-up delay.	
* You have two grantees with similar, decent outcomes, but you can fund only one.	
* You have an evaluator who does not produce what you contracted for.	