BetterEvaluation

Synthesize data from one or more evaluations

Combine data to form an overall assessment of the merit or worth of the intervention, or to summarize evidence across several evaluations.

1. Synthesize data from a single evaluation
How will you synthesize data from a single evaluation?

Processes

Consensus Conference: a process where a selected group of lay people (non-experts) representing the community are briefed, consider the evidence and prepare a joint finding and recommendation.

Expert Panel: a process where a selected group of experts consider the evidence and prepare a joint finding.

Techniques

Cost Benefit Analysis: compares costs to benefits, both expressed in monetary units.

Cost-Effectiveness Analysis: compares costs to the outcomes expressed in terms of a standardized unit (eg additional years of schooling).

Cost Utility Analysis: a particular type of cost-effectiveness analysis that expresses benefits in terms of a standard unit such as Quality Adjusted Life Years.

Multi-Criteria Analysis: a systematic process to address multiple criteria and perspectives.

Numeric Weighting: developing numeric scales to rate performance against each evaluation criterion and then add them up for a total score.

Qualitative Weight and Sum: using qualitative ratings (such as symbols) to identify performance in terms of essential, important and unimportant criteria

Rubrics: using a descriptive scale for rating performance that incorporates performance across a number of criteria.

Value for Money: a term used in different ways, including as a synonym for cost-effectiveness, and as systematic approach to considering these issues throughout planning and implementation, not only in evaluation.

Approaches

Social Return on Investment: a systematic way of incorporating social, environmental, economic and other values into decision-making processes

Examples of overall judgement as success or failure:

	Achieved all intended outcomes	Achieved some intended outcomes	Significant negative outcomes	Overall performance
Scenario 1	✓	–	✗	SUCCESS
Scenario 2	✗	✗	✓	FAIL
Scenario 3	✗	✓	✗	?
Scenario 4	✓	–	✓	?

2. Synthesize data across evaluations
Do you need to synthesize data across evaluations? If so, how should this be done?

Best evidence synthesis: a synthesis that, like a realist synthesis, draws on a wide range of evidence (including single case studies) and explores the impact of context, and also builds in an iterative, participatory approach to building and using a knowledge base.

Meta-analysis: a statistical method for combining numeric evidence from experimental (and sometimes quasi-experimental studies) to produce a weighted average effect size.

Meta-ethnography: a method for combining data from qualitative evaluation and research, especially ethnographic data, by translating concepts and metaphors across studies.

Rapid evidence assessment: a process that is faster and less rigorous than a full systematic review but more rigorous than ad hoc searching, it uses a combination of key informant interviews and targeted literature searches to produce a report in a few days or a few weeks.

Realist synthesis: synthesizing all relevant existing research in order to make evidence-based policy recommendations.

Systematic review: a synthesis that takes a systematic approach to searching, assessing, extracting and synthesizing evidence from multiple studies. Meta-analysis, meta-ethnography and realist synthesis are different types of systematic review.

Vote counting: comparing the number of positive studies (studies showing benefit) with the number of negative studies (studies showing harm).

3. Generalize findings
How can the findings from this evaluation be generalized to the future, to other sites and to other programs?

Analytical generalisation: making projections about the likely transferability of findings from an evaluation, based on a theoretical analysis of the factors producing outcomes and the effect of context. Realist evaluation can be particularly important for this.

Statistical generalisation: statistically calculating the likely parameters of a population using data from a random sample of that population.

Approaches

Positive Deviance: Involves intended evaluation users in identifying 'outliers' – those with exceptionally good outcomes - and understanding how they have achieved these.

Horizontal Evaluation: An approach that combines self-assessment by local participants and external review by peers

Find options (methods), resources and more information on these tasks and approaches online at
http://betterevaluation.org/plan/synthesize_value