

# Making the Most of Multisite, Multi level Evaluations

Frances Lawrenz



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

# Today's Agenda

Definitions of Evaluation

Working in a multisite, multi level context

Models related to involvement in multisite evaluations

Suggestions to increase involvement



# E'valu'ation is determining merit or worth

Evaluation is the process of  
delineating, obtaining, and  
providing useful information for  
judging decision alternatives



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

# Complements to Evaluation

- Monitoring
  - Consistent collection of data on various factors
- Performance assessment
  - Use of existing data
- Research
  - Determination of ‘truth’ or hypothesis testing
  - Questions of causality
  - Laws and conclusions vs descriptions and decisions



# Why Evaluate Programs

- Optimize and justify the program
- Quality of the program
  - how a program operates
  - how its procedures combine
- Quality of the outcomes
  - on participants
  - on students
  - on others





# Quality of the Program

- Are they doing what they said they were going to do?
- Are effective management structures in place to support participants?
- Are communication channels open and operating between providers, participants, and intermediate settings?
- Are goals understood and shared by all?
- Are personnel well qualified?
- Are interactions well planned?
- Are appropriate participants reached?
- Do the participants believe they have benefited?
- Do the participants expect to change their behavior?



# Quality of the Outcomes

- Has the behavior of the participants changed?
- Have others benefited from the changed behavior of the participants?
- Have organizations been affected?
- Have secondary behaviors changed?
- Has expected impact occurred?



# Evaluation Strategies

## Delivery of Program

- Observations
- Participant observer
- Participant opinion
- Pre-post testing
- Discourse analysis
- Phenomenological studies
- Classroom observations
- Student or teacher opinion

## Effects on Direct Recipients

## Effects on secondary units (classrooms, students)

- Ethnographies
- Student achievement
- Case studies
- Policy analysis

## Other Effects (other organizations, industry)

- Networking studies



# Challenges in Multisite Settings

- Projects vary
  - Activities – Goals –
  - Budgets -- Stakeholders
- Projects may be geographically diverse
  - Distance -- Cost
- Programs each have multiple stakeholders so the “project” becomes a key stakeholder
- Power Differentials



# What are challenges in your evals

- Think for a minute or two in silence
- Form groups of 3-4 and share challenges
- Selected groups present challenges to the full group
- Brief discussion of how some challenges might be addressed and relationship to involvement in the evaluation



# Major issue is (site) involvement

- Affects quality of data through what data to collect, how to collect it, and its quality
- Relevant models
- Participatory evaluation
- Educative, values-engaged evaluation
- Culturally responsive evaluation
- Developmental evaluation



# Participatory Evaluation (PE)

## Range of definitions

- Active participation throughout all phases in the evaluation process by those with a stake in the program (King, 1998)
- Broadening decision-making and problem-solving through systematic inquiry; reallocating power in the production of knowledge and promoting social changes (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998)





# Characteristics of PE

- 1. Control of the evaluation process** ranges from evaluator to practitioners
- 2. Stakeholder selection for participation** ranges from primary users to “all legitimate groups”
- 3. Depth of participation** ranges from consultation to deep participation

(From Cousins & Whitmore, 1998)





# Values Engaged Evaluation Greene

- Strategies contribute to excellence and equity to increase STEM participation
- Defines quality at the "intersection" of STEM content, pedagogy, and diversity
- Inclusive of and responsive to multiple perspectives and interests in STEM education while simultaneously
- mandates engagement with values of equity and justice.



# Culturally Responsive Evaluation

Hood, Mertens Hopson etc.

- Methodologically, culturally and contextually defensible policy making.
- Requires substantive understanding of the character and influences of diverse cultural norms and practices.
- Encourage *culturally sensitive* and *culturally responsive research*
- Recognize ethnicity and position culture as central to the research process.



# Developmental Evaluation (DE)

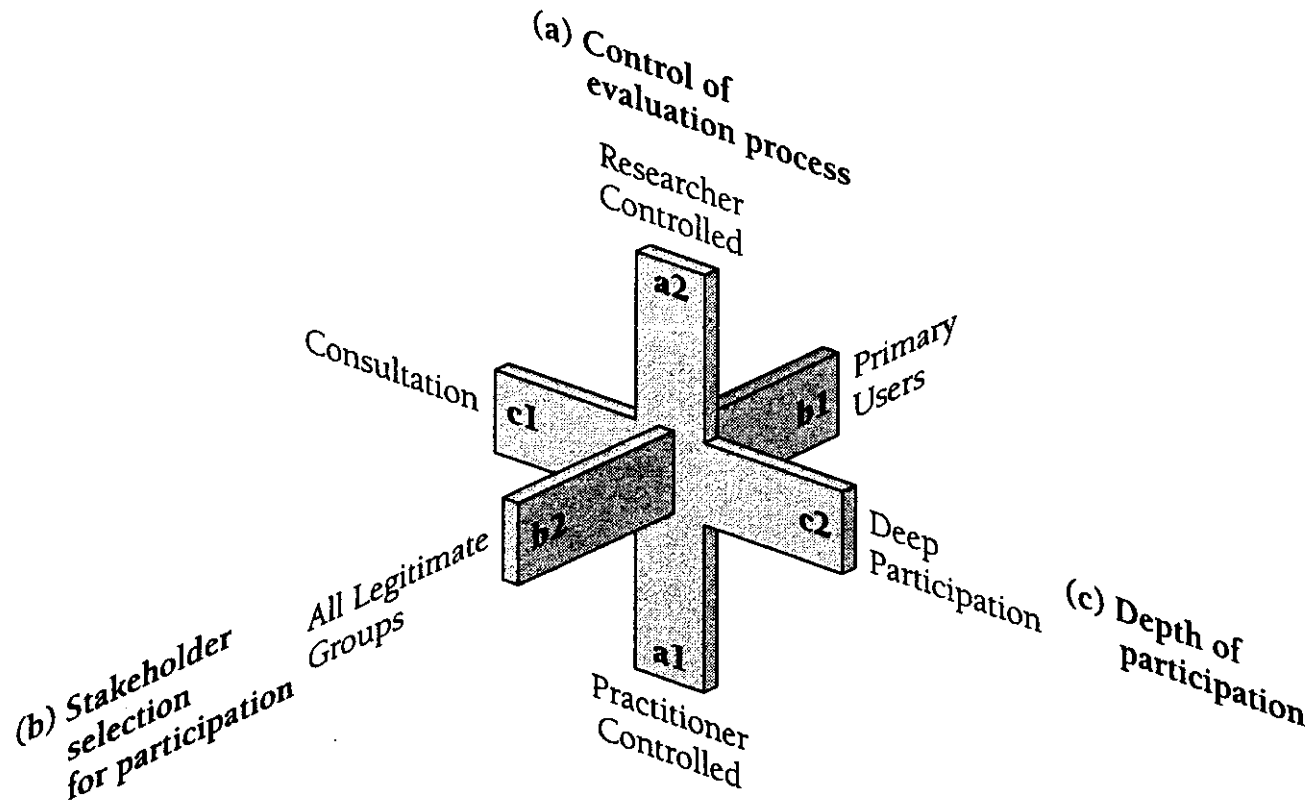
Patton

- DE is an evaluation approach that can assist social innovators develop social change initiatives in complex or uncertain environments.
- DE is particularly suited to innovation, radical program re-design, replication, complex issues, crises, etc.
- DE can frame concepts, test quick iterations, track developments, and surface issues



# Cousins & Whitmore Framework

Figure 1.1. Dimensions of Form in Collaborative Inquiry





# What fosters involvement

- Meetings of all types; face-to-face best
- Planning for use
- The mere act of providing or collecting data
- Perception of a high quality evaluation
- Convenience, practicality, and alignment of evaluation materials (e.g., instruments)
- Feeling membership in a community





# Implications for Practice

## 1. Set reasonable expectations for project staff

- Consider different levels of involvement (depth OR breadth, not both necessarily)
- Have projects serve as advisors or consultants
- Have detail work completed by others/ outsiders

## 2. Address evaluation data concerns

- Verify understanding of data definitions
- Check accuracy (Does it make sense?)
- Consider multiple analyses and interpretations



# Implications for Practice (cont.)

## 3. Communicate, communicate, communicate

- Personal contact matters

## 4. Interface regularly with the funder

- Understand the various contexts
- Garner support for the program evaluation
- Obtain help to promote involvement and use
- Represent the projects back to the funder



# Implications for Practice (cont.)

## 5. Recognize life cycles of people, projects, and the program

- Involve more than one person per project
- Understand the politics of projects

## 6. Expect tensions and conflict

- Between project and program evaluation
- Among projects (competition)
- About how best to use resources



# Implications for Practice (cont.)

7. Work to build community among projects and between projects/funder
  - Face-to-face interactions
  - Continuous communication
  - Asynchronous electronic communication
  - Explicit mechanisms for management, communication, and trust building
  - Be credible to project staff
    - Recognized expertise
    - “Guide on the side” not “sage on the stage”





# Summary

- Involvement in MSEs is different from participation in single site evaluations
- Involvement promotes higher quality evaluations and use
- There are several ways to foster participants' feelings of involvement
- Communication with participants and funders is critical





# Breakout Session Information

<b>Case Study #</b>	<b>Room</b>	<b>Facilitator</b>
1	109	Pam Bishop
2	103	Barbara Heath
3	105	Sondra LoRe
4	123	Frances Lawrenz