

Evaluation in Philanthropy

Basic Concepts for Grantmakers



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Evaluation in Philanthropy

Evaluation in philanthropy is systematic information gathering and study of grantmaker-supported activities that informs learning and drives improvement.

Evaluation includes both intentional learning about the results of a grantmaker's work and applied study of supported projects.

Adapted from GEO, Evaluation in Philanthropy 2009

Evaluation Is:

- A way to advance understanding
- An ongoing process
- A means to obtain real-time answers to guide decisions

GEO, Evaluation in Philanthropy 2009

Purposes of Evaluations Conducted for and of Grantmakers

Evaluations are conducted to:

- ➔ Render judgment, provide accountability, inform decisions related to grantmaking (about grantee and grantmaker actions)
- ➔ Facilitate improvements, grantee or grantmaker performance and learning
- ➔ Generate knowledge, program model development and replication, root problems and solutions, mobilize resources to address problems



Types of Evaluation

1. **Monitoring:** Tracking progress through regular reporting. Usually focuses on activities and/or expenditures.
2. **Formative Evaluation:** An evaluation that is carried out while a project is underway. Often focuses on process and implementation and/or on more immediate or intermediate outcomes.
3. **Summative Evaluation:** An evaluation that assesses overall outcomes or impact of a project after it ends.



Monitoring

Monitoring is the most widely used evaluation process, usually focused on whether funds were spent as intended. Types include:

- Grantee self-report
- Program Officer reports to the board

Monitoring is sufficient when:

- It satisfies the evaluation questions
- Further evaluation is not cost-effective or necessary

Examples of when to use monitoring:

- Small contributions to large undertakings
- Start-up grants to initiate imported programs
- Contributions to continuation of established programs



Formative Evaluation

(Provides a sense of how we are doing along the way)

Formative Evaluation informs mid-course corrections. It is a key element of many program evaluations such as:

- Grantee/program or strategy implementation reports
- Reports on short-term or interim indicators of success
- Reports on robustness of fund development efforts
- Reports on broader Foundation measures such as grantee service and investment performance

There is no absolute link between effective implementation and outcomes, but the absence of desired progress is meaningful.

Summative Evaluation

Summative Evaluation is most commonly conducted at the individual grant level. Many program evaluations have both formative and summative components.

CAUTION: *Without a well-developed strategy that provides a framework to link every individual grant together around a concrete and measurable goal, it is very difficult to combine separate grant results into a single evaluative process.*

Kramer 2004

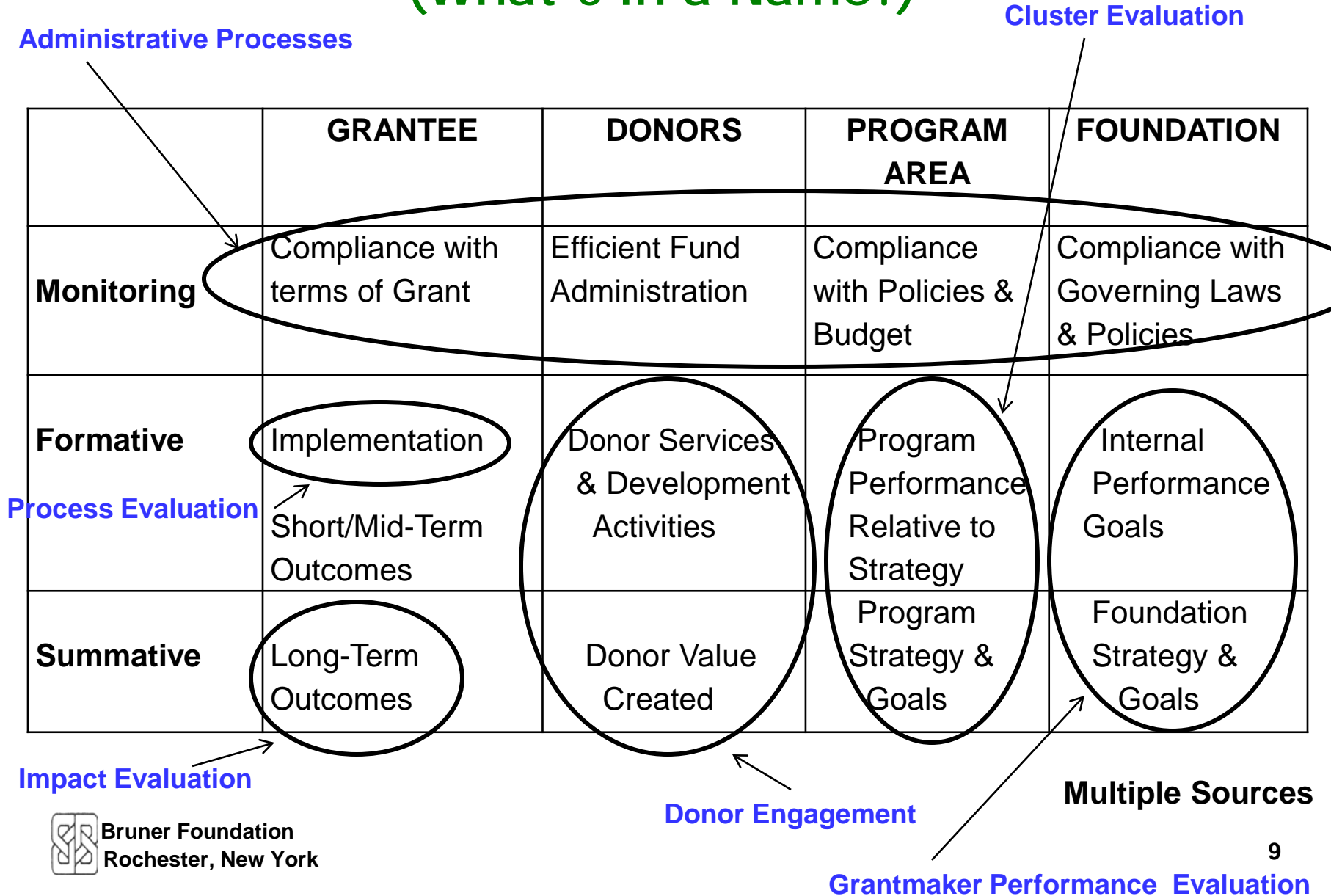
Types and Focuses of Evaluation

	GRANTEE	DONORS	PROGRAM AREA	FOUNDATION
Monitoring	Compliance with terms of Grant	Efficient Fund Administration	Compliance with Due Diligence Policies and Budget	Compliance with Laws & Policies that Govern the Foundation
Formative	Implementation Short/Mid-Term Outcomes	Donor Services & Development Activities	Program Performance Relative to Strategy	Internal Performance Goals
Summative	Long-Term Outcomes	Donor Value Created	Program Strategy & Goals	Foundation Strategy & Goals

Adapted from Kramer, 2004

Types and Focuses of Evaluation

(What's in a Name?)



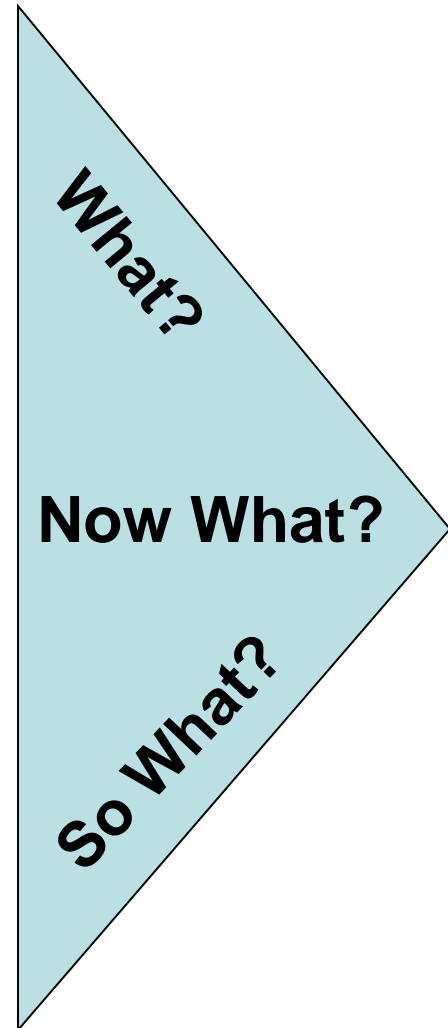
Getting Started

- ✓ Why evaluate?
- ✓ What to evaluate? (More specifically, what are the key Evaluation Questions to address?)
- ✓ How to evaluate?
- ✓ Who should evaluate?
- ✓ When to evaluate?
- ✓ How to use the findings?

What is an Evaluation Design?

An Evaluation Design communicates plans to evaluators, program officials and other stakeholders.

Evaluation Designs help evaluators and their partners think about and structure evaluations. And help them answer 3 critical questions.



Good Evaluation Designs Include . . .

- ✓ Summary Information about the program
- ✓ The questions to be addressed by the evaluation
- ✓ The data collection strategies that will be used
- ✓ The individuals who will undertake the activities
- ✓ When the activities will be conducted
- ✓ The products of the evaluation (who will receive them and how they should be used)
- ✓ Projected costs to do the evaluation

Evaluation Questions . . .

- ✓ Focus and drive the evaluation
- ✓ Should be carefully specified and agreed upon in advance of other evaluation work
- ✓ Generally represent a critical subset of information that is desired (i.e., you can't ask about everything, so you must choose what is most needed)

Evaluation Questions: Criteria

- It is possible to obtain data to address the questions.
- There is more than one possible “answer” to the question.
- The information to address the questions is wanted and needed.
- It is known how resulting information will be used internally (and externally).
- The questions are aimed at changeable aspects of activity.



Evaluation Questions: Advice

- Limit the number of evaluation questions, (between two and five is optimal).
- Keep it manageable so you have time and resources to collect and analyze data to answer each question.

Evaluation Questions:

An Example for Grantee Programs

Evaluation Questions	Data Collection/Protocol Questions
<p>How and to what extent has the program met its implementation goals?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What does the X program do best? What is your greatest concern? 2. Do staff communicate with clients and caregivers as often as required? 3. Did clients receive all the services promised in the program brochure? 4. How knowledgeable are staff about the issues clients face?
<p>What impact has the program had on participants?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you know more about X now than before the program. 2. Have you changed the way you proceed with or address X since you have been in the program? 3. How would you rate this program overall?



Evaluation Questions:

Grantee Feedback, Assessment of Giving Examples

Evaluation Questions	Data Collection/Protocol Questions
How effective is our organization as a grantmaker and community partner?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How responsive was the grantmaker to your questions and overall request? (timeliness, professionalism, helpfulness)2. How clear were the application materials?3. How much do you agree that the mission and interests of the grantmaker were clear?4. How much do you agree that the grantmaker is an asset to the community?
How and to what extent are local grantmakers changing their investments in our community?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Compared with 2008, what will funders do with their grantmaking budgets in 2009? Increase, decrease, or hold steady?2. Are you aware and/or have you been involved in the process of changing grantmaking strategies? What will/should be emphasized and/or deemphasized?



Evaluation Questions: Grantmaking Process Assessment Example

Evaluation Questions	Data Collection/Protocol Questions
<p>1. How effective was the grantee selection process in application?</p> <p>2. How do key personnel at the Foundation view the current selection process?</p> <p>3. To what extent did the 2008 grants reflect understanding and appropriate use of the approved grantee selection?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How true were the following statements? I understood the new grantee selection process; I adhered to new grantee selection standards; I thought standards were fair for all grantees.2. How true do you think the above were for your grantmaking team?3. What types of organizations were hard to select given the new selection process?4. What types of organizations were left out of our grantmaking based on the new process?



What about Evaluation Stakeholders?

Evaluation stakeholders include decision-makers, information-seekers, and those directly involved with the subject of the evaluation.

- Most programs/strategies have multiple stakeholders.
- Stakeholders have diverse, often competing interests.
- All evaluations are partly social (i.e., involve humans), partly political (i.e., require careful identification of stakeholders) and partly technical.



Who are Evaluation Stakeholders?

- ✓ Organization officials
- ✓ Program staff
- ✓ Program clients or their caregivers
- ✓ Program funders
- ✓ Donors
- ✓ Board members/trustees
- ✓ Other grantmakers

Note: stakeholders listed in blue are especially important to Grantmakers.

Grantmakers' Views of Evaluation are Changing

- From proof to improvement
- From attribution to contribution
- From learning alone to learning with others
- From individual grants to systems, initiatives, capacities
- From obscuring to embracing failure
- From perfect knowledge to timely information

GEO, Evaluation in Philanthropy 2009

Elements of Supportive Evaluation Environments

- Organizational culture and processes translate information into action
 - culture where learning is rewarded, failure valued
 - time and resources are available for staff to engage in evaluation; overarching evaluation plans are in place
- Key leaders and other decision-makers (e.g., Executive Directors, Board Chairs) are directly involved in evaluation and learning
- Straightforward, manageable evaluations with specific measurement goals are undertaken
- Results and action plans are communicated using targeted, compelling methods

List of Attachments

Distinguishing Between Evaluation and Research

Different Evaluation Purposes Require Different Evaluation Questions

History of Evaluation

Useful Evaluation Terms

Evaluation in Philanthropy, Selected References for Funders

Evaluation Bibliography

Distinguishing Between Evaluation and Research

Program evaluation and research are similar, but they have different objectives and data standards. They are also different in size and scope. The following table shows important differences between them.

	Evaluation	Research
Objectives	Change and action oriented, aimed at determining impact	Aimed at causality, testing theory
Data	Evidentiary data	Very precise measurements
Numbers of Subjects	Program target groups or samples of target groups (sometimes very small)	Usually study of samples from fairly large populations
Standards	Usefulness, practicality, accuracy, ethicalness	Truth, causality, generalizability, theory
Costs	Range from minimal to fairly substantial	Usually, high costs
Stakes/Scope	Fairly low stakes, fairly narrow scope (the program)	Very high stakes (e.g., human life or health,
Focus	Whether something is being done well, not necessarily better. Should focus on context, activities, outcomes of participants	Determining the best treatments, solutions, etc. Can include community indicators where appropriate.
Use	Should not be conducted unless there is real opportunity to use the results	Sometimes conducted when the use is uncertain.

Different Evaluation Purposes Require Different Evaluation Questions

PURPOSE	QUESTIONS
<p>Rendering Judgments</p> <p>[Some need met, some goal attained, some standard achieved. Must specify criteria for judgment in advance.]</p>	<p>To what extent did the program work? Should the program be continued/ended? Was implementation in compliance? Were funds used appropriately, for intended purposes? To what extent were desired client outcomes achieved?</p> <p><i>Are the grants we're making producing the results we think they are?</i> <i>Are the grants we're making consistent with board intentions?</i> <i>How good a job are we doing in attracting and sustaining financial support?</i> <i>Are we dedicating sufficient resources to adequately influence the problems we are trying to address?</i> <i>How and to what extent has this initiative contributed to community and overall Foundation outcomes?</i></p>
<p>Facilitating Improvements</p> <p>[Using information to monitor program efforts and outcomes regularly over- time to provide feedback to improve implementation, to fine-tune strategies and to make sure that participants are progressing toward desired outcomes.]</p>	<p><i>What are the (program's) strengths and weaknesses?</i> How and to what extent are participants progressing toward desired outcomes? Which types of participants are making good progress and which aren't? What kinds of implementation problems have emerged, and how are they addressed? <i>What's happening that wasn't expected?</i> <i>Where can efficiencies be realized?</i> <i>What new ideas are emerging that can be tested?</i> What are staff and participant perceptions of the program?</p> <p><i>How satisfied are grantees, grantseekers, and donors/potential donors with their interactions with our organization?</i> <i>To what extent is our grantmaking coordinated?</i> <i>Is our grantmaking organization governed or managed as well as it could be?</i></p>
<p>Generating Knowledge</p> <p>[Conceptual rather than instrumental use of findings.]</p>	<p>How is the program model actually working? What types of interventions are being used? What types of outcomes can be expected? How do you measure them? <i>What are the lessons learned?</i> What policy options are suggested by the findings? <i>How willing are donors to support our causes?</i></p>

Items in blue font are examples of questions grantmakers might ask.

HISTORY OF EVALUATION

Late 1950's - early 1960's	Evaluation mainly focused on educational assessment , conducted by social science researchers in a small number of universities and organizations.
Mid- 1960's, the Johnson Era	The War on Poverty and the Great Society programs of the 1960's spurred a large investment of resources in social and educational programs. Senator Robert Kennedy, concerned that federal money would be misspent and not used to help disadvantaged children delayed passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) until an evaluation clause was included. The resulting bill required submission of an evaluation plan by local education agencies, and summary reports by state agencies. As a result, evaluation requirements became part of every federal grant. (Early expectations were that <i>evaluation would illuminate the causes of social problems and the clear and specific means with which to fix such problems.</i>)
Mid-1970's	Two US-based professional evaluation associations emerged in 1976: the Evaluation Network -- mostly university professors and school-based evaluators), and the Evaluation Research Society -- primarily government-based and university evaluators. (<i>In 1985 these two organizations merged to form the American Evaluation Association, AEA, www.eval.org, which now has more than 3700 members worldwide.</i>)
Throughout 1970's and 1980's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing concerns voiced about the utility of evaluation findings and the use of experimental and quasi-experimental designs. • Huge cuts in social programs during Regan presidency, resulted in less government involvement, diminished or removed evaluation requirements from federal grants. • Many school districts, universities, private companies, state education departments, the FBI, the FDA and the General Accounting Office (GAO) developed internal evaluation units.
1990's	Increased emphasis on government program accountability and a movement for organizations to be lean, efficient, global and more competitive. Evaluation became commonly used not only as part of government mandates, but also to improve program effectiveness, enhance organizational learning, and inform allocation decisions in a wide variety of both public and private organizations. A number of Foundations created internal evaluation units, provided support for evaluation activities or both.
2000 - Present	Increasing and sustained interest in participatory, collaborative and learning-oriented evaluations. National evaluation associations being established throughout the world.

Preskill and Russ-Eft, 2005

Useful Evaluation Terms

Assessment - is a synonym for evaluation, but often used to refer to a technique (e.g., practical assessment) or a mini-study.

Benchmarks - performance data used for comparison purposes. They can be identified from your program's own prior data or relative to performance in the field.

Compliance/Monitoring - type of evaluation where evaluation questions are focused on adherence to pre-specified procedures.

Comparison Groups are non-participants who are identified as a reference for comparison (e.g., individuals at different sites).

Control Groups - are non-participants who are usually identified in the use of an experimental design, ideally on an over-subscribed program (i.e., where there are more participants than slots). The treatment or experimental group actually participates in the program and the control group, although eligible and similar, does not receive or participate in the program. Results of treatment and control group outcomes are then compared to determine program contribution to outcomes.

***** WARNING -- Comparisons must be conducted very carefully.

Extrapolation - modest speculations on the likely applicability of findings to other situations under similar, but not identical conditions. Extrapolations are logical, thoughtful, and problem-oriented rather than purely empirical, statistical and probabilistic.

Formative Evaluations - focus on ways of improving and enhancing programs, and are conducted in the early or ongoing stages of a program.

Generalize - to assign qualities based upon group membership, or to make inferences about groups or programs based on the outcomes of a sample or subset of members.

Goals - are conditions (usually broad) that programs are working toward (e.g., to promote well-being).

Indicators - observable, measurable characteristics of changes that represent elements of an outcome (e.g., normal birth weight is an indicator of a healthy baby outcome).

Needs Assessments - determine whether existing services are meeting needs, where there are gaps in services and where there are available resources. These are often conducted prior to initiation of an evaluation or in response to evaluation findings.

Objectives - something that is worked for or strived for, which can be observed or measured.

Outcomes - results for participants, during and/or after participation in a program

Outputs - products of a program's activity (e.g., # of sessions held, # of participants served).

Qualitative Data - consist of detailed description of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs and thoughts; and excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records and case histories. Qualitative data collection methods permit the evaluator to study selected issues in depth and detail and typically produce a wealth of detailed data about a much smaller number of people and cases.

Quantitative Data - come from questionnaires, tests, standardized observation instruments, and program records. Quantitative data collection methods permit the complexities of the world to be broken into parts and assigned numerical values. To obtain quantitative data it is necessary to be able to categorize the object of interest in ways that permit counting.

Random Assignment - a technique which allows program providers to randomly divide participants into treatment (those who get services) and control groups (those who don't).

Reliable Measures - those which can be repeated under similar conditions.

Research - in social science is also a systematic collection of information, but it is undertaken to discover new knowledge, test theories, establish universal truths and generalize across time and space.

Summative Evaluations - are aimed at determining the essential effectiveness of a program. They are especially important in making decisions about terminating, maintaining or extending a program.

Triangulation - multiple streams of information obtained by either collecting different kinds of data about the same subject, using different workers to complete the same tasks; using multiple methods to obtain data; using multiple perspectives to analyze information.

Valid Measures - those which accurately measure what they are intended to measure. (Warning, this is difficult to test. For most social and behavioral variables, no agreed upon testing standards exist).

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A Funder's Guide to Evaluation: Leveraging Evaluation to Improve Nonprofit Effectiveness, by Peter York, (Fieldstone Alliance, 2005)

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Patton, M. Q. (2008) *Utilization-Focused Evaluation: 4th Edition* (Sage Publications)

General Evaluation Books

The following all provide good introductions to, and practical guides on, evaluation (books with an "*" are strongly recommended).

Community Impact Evaluation, by Nathanie; Litchfield (University College, London Press -- UCL Press, 1996)

Empowerment Evaluation: Knowledge and Tools for Self-assessment and Accountability, by D.M. Fetterman, S. Kaftarian, and A. Wandersman, (Sage Publications, 1996)

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Evaluation, 2nd Ed., by Carol H. Weiss (Prentice Hall, 1997)

Evaluation: A Systematic Approach, 7th Ed., by Peter Rossi and Howard Freeman (Sage Publications, 2004) (textbook)

Evaluation for the 21st Century, by Eleanor Chelimsky and William R. Shadish (Sage Publications, 1997) (A reader)

Evaluation in Organizations: A Systematic Approach to Enhancing Learning, Performance, and Change, by D. Russ-Eft and H. Preskill, 2nd Edition (Basic Books 2009)

Evaluation Strategies for Communicating and Reporting: Enhancing Learning in Organizations, by R. Torres, H. Preskill and M. Piontek, Sage Publications, 2004.

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