
Evaluating Educational and Social Programs

Evaluation in Education and Human Services

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Evaluating Educational and Social Programs:

Guidelines for Proposal Review,
Onsite Evaluation, Evaluation Contracts,
and Technical Assistance

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PREFACE

During the past two decades, evaluation has come to play an increasingly important role in the operation of educational and social programs by national, state, and local agencies. Mandates by federal funding agencies that programs they sponsored be evaluated gave impetus to use of evaluation. Realization that evaluation plays a pivotal role in assuring program quality and effectiveness has maintained the use of evaluation even where mandates have been relaxed.

With increased use -- indeed institutionalization -- of evaluation in many community, state, and national agencies, evaluation has matured as a profession, and new evaluation approaches have been developed to aid in program planning, implementation, monitoring, and improvement. Much has been written about various philosophical and theoretical orientations to evaluation, its relationship to program management, appropriate roles evaluation might play, new and sometimes esoteric evaluation methods, and particular evaluation techniques. Useful as these writings are, relatively little has been written about simple but enormously important activities which comprise much of the day-to-day work of the program evaluator. This book is focused on some of these more practical aspects that largely determine the extent to which evaluation will prove helpful.

We deal in this volume with only four ways in which evaluation can be used to develop and maintain sound educational and social programs: (1) the use of evaluation to review and strengthen proposals for funding; (2) the use of onsite evaluation to strengthen and/or judge on-going programs; (3) procedures for establishing formal evaluation agreements or contracts; and (4) the provision of technical assistance to enable program administrators and staff members to improve both their program proposals and project operation. These four uses of evaluation are central to efforts of any agency or individual concerned with the administration or review of programs in education, health and human services, and other areas with high priority in a society's social agenda.

This book is unashamedly practical. We eschew here the theoretical discussions we may view as appropriate elsewhere. Instead, our intent has been (1) to provide straightforward discussion of how evaluation, applied to proposal reviews, onsite visits, and technical assistance, might serve to improve programs and projects, and (2) to provide guidelines for how to develop and use evaluation contracts that will assure that those evaluation activities will be effective. To make our discussions directly applicable, we provide specific guidelines, propose step-by-step procedures, and present many models and actual instruments that can be adapted by the reader.

This book is intended to serve two general audiences. First, it should be of great use for those persons responsible for the administration or operation of virtually any funded educational or social program or project. Second, it is aimed at the evaluation practitioners charged with reviewing and judging those programs. Within these broad audiences, this book

PREFACE

should prove especially helpful to external proposal review panels, onsite evaluators, evaluation contractors and technical assistance providers and recipients. We hope this book proves as useful to these audiences as have the draft materials and training manuals from which we have drawn many of our examples and which have prompted colleagues to urge us to prepare this volume.

Blaine R. Worthen
Karl R. White

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