

C2D2 Dialogue on Evaluation

August 17, 2010 Teleconference for the C2D2 Evaluation Project

Purpose of evaluation project: To strengthen practice through more work on evaluation. To build the praxis of evaluation

In preparation for this call, participants were asked to help shape the agenda by providing the following information:

1. In no more than 2 sentences, tell us who you are and what you do. (This will be shared with other participants in advance of the meeting so that we don't need to spend too much time with introductions. Please let us know if you do **not** want your email address shared with others.)

2. Which of the following best captures your interest in this conversation on evaluation? (Please select no more than 2 responses).

- Improving the practice of dialogue and deliberation
- Making the case for dialogue (Please specify target audience, e.g. my organization, funders, policy-makers, others)
- Learning what works and what doesn't
- Connecting practitioners and researchers/academics
- Better understanding the links, if any, between dialogue and policy making
- Performance measures
- Other ideas, please specify:

3. How would you suggest our calls get structured for effective learning and sharing of ideas? (Please select no more than 2 responses.)

- Case studies of formal evaluations
- Sharing stories about what has worked and what hasn't
- Sharing of tools and approaches to evaluation
- Addressing specific questions/issues around evaluation
- Other ideas, please specify:

4. Any other thoughts/reflections you'd like to share on evaluation of dialogue and deliberation?

Draft principles for evaluation

We then put forward a number of principles which we feel underpin evaluation, and inviting discussion around them.

1. Evaluation is a process, not a tactic.
 - a. Need for integrity in evaluation; reflect what we know and need to know.
2. Good practice means considering and incorporating evaluation from the beginning of the project.
 - a. Evaluation should be thought about from the beginning.
 - b. It is part of the thinking, rather than something that gets added on at the end
 - c. Is a strategic element, rather than a single event.
 - d. Tie it to the objective, look to where the data sources are going to be.
 - e. Connect it to the principles, both of D&D and of the organization
3. Quantitative and qualitative methods are equally valued.
4. Evaluation should include a learning focus (*but whose learning?*).
 - a. Don't always evaluate the same things
 - b. May have a completely different impact than you thought
 - c. Check in with multiple perspectives throughout the process
 - d. Measuring from multiple perspectives as well
5. Evaluation includes consideration of the context and of the model of action/change the deliberation and dialogue process is embedded in.
 - a. Evaluation needs to take into account the reality of uncertainty, could be measuring the short term impact, iteratively to shape the longer term future policy.
 - i. Uncertainty
 - ii. Long term vs short term
 - iii. Open – not set out to prove a conclusion that we already thought of. Or just fulfill previously set expectations
6. Evaluation is not values-free.
7. Evaluation should uphold the principles of D&D in its design and implementation.
 - a. Should involve participants in the process

8. Evaluation should be responsive to needs of project sponsors, as well as the advance of the field.

Additional considerations/comments/questions:

- Need to make the evaluation public. Not just about doing the evaluation, and writing up the report, but in order to advance the field, the evaluation has to get out there. Especially when an evaluation is not as rosy as a sponsor or participant wants. Be transparent in the evaluation, as it increases the accountability. Evaluation should be accountable to all the parties (sponsor and participants), and the larger D&D community. Provide an evaluation summary, to reduce issues around confidentiality.
 - a. If you negotiate the terms of the engagement include a clause of confidentiality, then you can't disclose
 - b. Include what worked and what didn't work.
 - c. Evaluation of a particular process vs evaluation across multiple processes – we should each take more responsibility for looking at the multiple processes question.
- What about power? Without some acknowledgement of where the power lies in the decision making process, things can be quickly undermined in evaluation. Be clear about what is up for decision making, and what the input is for? There are places where power can be reckoned with, and if so there are possibilities, those power holders can be aligned with the process.
 - a. Through context, evaluation can respond to the power dynamics
- External or internal? Answer: both, everything.
- Overlap, but not synonymous with making a case.
- What does it mean that evaluation is not a tactic? Answer: it should be integrated into the project plans from the start, not added on at the end. Should be strategic.
- Health Canada ties evaluation to the objective that we set for the public involvement plan, and to the organization's principles.
- Need to factor in uncertainty and ambiguity. Distinguish if we are measuring impact on short term or long term, process or content, etc.
- Are there process and outcome evaluation pieces
- Split first principle into two. Tactic – there is a need for integrity. And, add 'evaluation should be responsive to the needs of project clients and to advancement of the field.'
- Thirdly, remove the “(or at least not run contrary to)” because D&D values should drive our work across the field
- Who is learning? Should be learning and measuring from multiple perspectives.
- Confidentiality may hold back the results
- Evaluation should be accountable to hosts, participants, wider field
- Draw lessons from across evaluations
- HRSDC has a stakeholder relations planners guide and tool kit which has just been released.
- Reasons for evaluation to build a case are different than host's needs.

Why do we want to do evaluation to build a case?

- The needs of evaluation for government vs the dialogue community. Justifying funding and programs. Different than using evaluate to stimulate participation. Now, over time, we have evolved to where we involve people. There has been change. We understand need for CE, but when rubber hits the road, CE isn't equally valued.
- There are different drivers for evaluation, and these will have to come into play when we use these principles.
- Want to develop indicators for evaluation, so we can compare from evaluation to evaluation.
- The weakness, or the lack of info, of the practice seems to make it more difficult to encourage funders to support and engage in D&D work.
- First there has been a lack of evaluation, it hasn't been shared, and needs more rigour and intentionality. It is complex, demanding. Only recently have we seen frameworks. To do it well takes resources and expertise. Difficulty of measuring subjective things. Opinion changes, attitude changes; measuring this change is expensive and time consuming.
- A new view needs to be taken, we have been talking about critique and checking for failure. Instead use evaluation to generate success. Try to get at unintended impacts. Use it to find out what is new, emerging, innovative. Use it to leverage opportunity to expand. There is a creative and new way to look at things.
- Nimble aspect of evaluation.
- Have some principles or questions that are applied everywhere - what we can contribute at the very basic level. Were the people most affected by the issue in the room? Was there an active exploration of the issue. There should be a list of 10 questions that always get asked, these should relate back to the principles. What have you learned? Did participating allow me to learn other perspectives? Did it change your own views?
- Should develop a tips sheet to help people think about their evaluation.
- Process vs Outcome pieces.

What should be our next steps, including Key Areas of Inquiry

Purpose: Discussion and common ground on moving the exploration forward

- Comparability – common questions would help. Begin to articulate the obstacles to comparability. Apples to apples, or at least explain that you are comparing apples to pears. People always end up recreating the whole process, they need to base it on their own community, so they throw the baby out with the bathwater. How do you compare briefs prepared by academics vs anecdotal information gathered by practitioners.
- Audience for Evaluation – Kinds of evaluation evidence that are persuasive to our sponsors. Some sponsors can deal with long narrative evaluation, others want a quick and dirty chart.
- Formative vs summative –
- Was it transparent, was it open, did it build capacity? Use a menu format.
- In filtering and summarizing anecdotal feedback, is problematic.

- As we are talking about use of evaluation, build support within this network to look at the change that follows an evaluation.
- How do we build the evidence base to drive decisions? How do we evaluate the process after the evaluation – what was the impact of the evaluation. See case studies or tips on how to manage the change after the evaluation.
- Connect with Teresa at PRI – doing an evaluation research project, focused on space stage process. The Case – look at the evidence base out there already. Emerging Practices within Evaluation. Will distill common elements i.e. dialogue, long term objectives.
- Align ourselves with the larger principles of D&D through NCDD (especially as it was done collaboratively) and IAP2
- Observation – somehow the phrase “making with case for D&D” sounds like a foregone conclusion. Evaluation is important for us to test our own assumptions, of the value of D&D. I hear it as education. D&D is about creating the space.

Next Steps

- Put material on our website to gather stories. Build up the content on the website.
- Circulate notes of this call and encourage people to reflect and write about them.
- Logistics – do people want to have a call, and if so, how would it be structured.
- Work from these principles, and post some basic questions. Would be a good focus for further discussion.
- Find Julie Abelson’s framework (connected to LHINs)