
Evaluation as Social Research

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Ultimately we must ask how the world is different because of this undertaking and is it different in ways that were intended by national and state policy or by the principal investigators?

The Plan

- Is there a plan? Is the plan reviewed and revised routinely? What are the main external contingencies for success of the undertaking?
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Processes

- ❑ Are the objectives and quality standards specified for all aspects of the plan?
 - ❑ Is there a planning and revision process that-- from a policy, technical or resource perspective-- involves the necessary people?
 - ❑ Do the necessary people have a good idea of their roles and responsibilities under the plan and do they have the necessary expertise?
 - ❑ Are organizational structures specified and clear to all participants? Do they work?
 - ❑ Do high quality communication structures exist among the participants and do structures and resources exist to routinely communicate aspects of the undertaking to external audiences? Do these structures work?
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Inputs

- Are the available resources (or resources allocated) adequate for the task at hand? Is the nature and source of needed resources specified?
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Outputs

- ❑ Were the intended products and reports-- including problem-centered knowledge and technology, ideas driving creative new questions, technical and organizational skills for specific participants, new policy, intellectual property, and evaluation reports – produced on times specified, on budget, complete, and useful for the audiences specified? Each of these products has an associated bundle of plans, activities, etc.
 - ❑ Were useful unintended products exploited and other error kept at acceptable, agreed-upon levels? How? What procedures were in place?
 - ❑ Is the global evaluative judgment grounded in evidence drawn from the study of the actual product-driven work and social interaction during the course of the undertaking?
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The Data

- Types of Evaluation Data
 - Counts
 - Samples
 - Discursive
 - Nominal
 - Ordinal
 - Continuous
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The Data

- Sources of Evaluation Data
 - Administrative
 - Archival
 - Other collections
 - Original Collection (from “those supposed able to answer”)
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The Data

- Data Problems, especially for EPSCoR Evaluations, and some strategies for overcoming them
 - Small numbers
 - Data collection and processing times
 - Confidentiality laws
 - Decentralization of higher education and its institutions
 - Corporate proprietary and secrecy practices
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Lessons

Data are:

- Expensive
 - Must be gathered and maintained by the organization itself
 - or re-gathered every reporting cycle
 - Must be selected with an eye to the audience for reports as well as other suitability criteria
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Lessons

- Adoption of a Quality Management Program deals with the longer term data issue and is necessary to any serious state sustainability program.
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