



STRENGTHENING EVALUATION LITERACY | DEMYSTIFYING PARTICIPATORY AND COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES TO EVALUATION

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Over time reframing evaluation in our work to be more participatory and collaborative leads to higher levels of learning, strengthened community relations and greater transparency.

Navigating the sea of evaluation literature and tools can be a daunting task. There are numerous approaches, types, methods, tools, language and processes. These sometimes feel like an impossible puzzle to figure out. Additionally, often organizational leaders, staff, funders, and community stakeholders are asked to participate in one way or another in deciding several necessary factors about its implementation. They also often have the overwhelming task of making decisions about who should lead and be involved; how should it be approached; what should the focus be; what resources are needed; and when should it be done? The list of questions can go on and on until the towel gets thrown in, or a complex web of concepts and plans eats away at the resources allocated to do this.

In the case of evaluation planning when it is limited to only one or two decision-makers what stakeholders may miss out on is the opportunity to critically reflect and learn from the development and design process. Often times, it is the brainstorming, testing and revising an evaluation plan, process and framework that enables the critical inquiry process to flourish and creates opportunities for learning.

Often, simply having the language, concepts and basic understanding of evaluation approaches helps decision-makers discuss and identify how participatory and collaborative approaches to evaluation are not only valuable, but also how these may respond to the unique contexts in which evaluations are being planned. The goal of the paper is multi-faceted, these are:

1. To reflect of the best thinking and principles which strengthen evaluation processes at the community level
2. To increase evaluation literacy amongst community changemakers

3. To enable more informed decision-making processes about evaluation best thinking and principles out there aimed at strengthening evaluation processes at the community level.

Overall, the paper will establish a basic foundation from which to navigate around the sea of information out there about participatory and collaborative approaches to evaluation, and the basic foundations for understanding the value of these types of approaches to designing long term learning and social transformation within organizations and among stakeholders to strengthen community initiatives and better understand their impact.

When we look more closely at participatory and collaborative approaches to evaluation, we can begin to see how they complement conventional evaluation practices; making them more practical, strategic, learning-oriented, inclusive, transparent, ethical, and engaging while positioning community stakeholders within the process either at the centre or as an integral part of the evaluation team.

Gaining some level of literacy about these approaches and quite possibly applying some of this new knowledge to your work, is a step in the right direction.

WHY IS LITERACY ABOUT EVALUATION IMPORTANT?

There are several reasons why evaluation literacy is important among community organizations and change makers, especially when leaders and staff are often working with external evaluation professionals. Whether considering evaluation strictly as a means to achieving a level of accountability, or exploring its value for learning, strategic planning or scaling interventions with a goal of sustainable systems change, evaluation work within the non-profit sector or at the community level has been considered burdensome, yet important.

Traditionally this notion of evaluation as burdensome but necessary generally tends to fall into this particular category of work when evaluation is solely seen as a commitment to government donors, foundation funding, and philanthropic community engagement. Evaluation reporting has typically been a necessary condition on the part of non-profit, non-governmental organizations to ensuring community interventions were financially supported, and enabled them to make considerable changes within their socio-economic, health, education or other sectors of work that needed attention.

MOVING FROM CONVENTIONAL TO EVALUATIONS THAT ARE PARTICIPATORY AND COLLABORATIVE

Evaluation for Accountability and Reporting

Conventional assessment of community work was deemed important as a means for reporting to funders about how the donations and granting they provided were used, and answering in what ways has financial accountability been achieved. Sometimes it was used to assess whether the

interventions being funded were achieving results within a very defined set of measurements, predominantly quantitative in nature. Although this 'looking back' approach was deemed 'robust' and considered scientific as it usually relied heavily on statistical quantitative data collection tools and analysis, it was actually fairly limited in scope as evaluation became more popularised as a means to better understand what type of impact social, economic and health-focused interventions were having on communities.

We started becoming more interested in how evaluations have the ability to act not only as an assessment process but also work to inform about changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. Quantitative approaches were only able to provide evidence about part of a story. Further, conventional evaluation approaches tended to reject the involvement of stakeholders participating as members of an evaluation team. Hands-off, *distanced* evaluations, (O'Sullivan, 2012, p. 518) meaning those that were managed and led by external, independent evaluation teams alone, without the support and participation of stakeholders. The idea behind this was that the more distance placed between the evaluators and the intervention, the more rigorous and robust the results would be, and the higher the accountability would be. This is not to paint a negative picture of the more traditional, scientific evaluation methods, it was the view that summarily assessing programs, projects, and other interventive work was equal to understanding the value of this work.

As far back as the 1970s, evaluation professionals have been critically examining the role of people's participation in social and development interventions. Stemming from international development contexts, where social and aid development were increasingly shifting from a 'colonial' mindset of applying interventions to a situation to a mindset of adapting interventions to a context with the involvement of local stakeholders and beneficiaries in the implementation of the intervention.

“Evaluation professionals have been critically examining the role of people's participation in social and development interventions”

What became evident was that the more local stakeholder populations became involved in the interventions taking place in their communities, the more these interventions were producing better, more sustainable results.

“[N]umerous multilateral, bilateral and national donors and government departments [began] increasingly highlighting people's participation and consequently participatory research as one, if not the primary method to be adopted in the planning, implementation and evaluation of development interventions (Emmett 2000)” (Hart, 2008: p. 5).

Storytelling and Reflexivity Growing in Evaluation for Impact

The early 1990s showed that participatory approaches and qualitative methods were increasing as sector-wide trends in evaluation as well as in other community-based development practice areas. Research and field work in evaluation became even more focused on trying to better understand and strengthen ways of doing evaluation that would stretch beyond the needs of funding institutions and agencies, and reach a point of using evaluation as a way of understanding promising practices and how our work is actually leading to social change, to understanding what is the impact of the social change work we are doing and how can we establish evidence, measurements and a strategic approach to sustaining this work while at the same time broadening our organizations' reach across communities.

Today, we are continuously shifting from thinking about conventional evaluation practices solely focused on accountability and are moving towards a culture of evaluation aimed at studying impact, the way transformation is happening, what can we do to replicate what we do, and learn from what we do to make it better.

There is a continuous critical reflection and inquiry about whether our interventions are not only working and producing intended results, but as well we are aiming to take this step further to assess outcomes from these experiences that can be used to develop processes that can contribute to strategic learning and greater systems change.

In 1975, the Joint Committee for Standards in Educational Evaluation (JCSSEE), a coalition of professional associations in the United States and Canada concerned with the quality of evaluation" established and agreed to a set of program evaluation standards that are still broadly adhered to today¹. Conventional methods and processes are very important and remain so today. High quality evaluations, whether conventional and independent, or participatory and stakeholder-involved should follow these same foundational standards (which are also codes of conduct among professional evaluators) employed by, for example the Canadian Evaluation Society², the American Evaluation Association standards³, or international standards of the OECD-DAC⁴ that focus on, for example – ensuring high quality evaluation of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of interventions. Although these are mainly and for the most part designed with program evaluation in mind, these are a foundational necessity that require new ways of thinking to challenge the status quo while at the same time not disregarding positive practices and quality standards.

Stakeholder-oriented engagement in evaluation practice automatically forces us to critically reflect on new ways of thinking and doing that challenge the status quo of long-standing, widely

¹ Taken from the CES website at: <https://evaluationcanada.ca/news/9493> "The CES has been a member since its inception and is currently the only Canadian organization among the 14 member organizations. The Joint Committee has published three sets of standards for evaluations: The Personnel Evaluation Standards (2nd Ed.) The Program Evaluation Standards (3rd Ed.) The Classroom Assessment Standards for PreK-12 Teachers"

² <https://evaluationcanada.ca/program-evaluation-standards>

³ <https://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51>

⁴ <https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/qualitystandards.pdf>

accepted colonial, old world biases, traditions and power relations and introduces more inclusive, diversity-oriented and culturally and gender-responsive/grounded work that needs to ensure that evaluations are designed with these critical areas of inquiry stream-lined into evaluative thinking. By paying more attention to how narratives play a role in helping us understand impact, and that human experience within systems is a greatly influential element within systems change work, we can continue adding to these standard areas of practice the important outcomes from critical inquiry about the legacy, participation and future considerations of what these interventions have and can contribute to our communities.

STRENGTHENING OUR EVALUATION LITERACY ABOUT FINDINGS AND PROCESS

Today, we are gaining better insights into how valuable evaluation is not only as a vehicle to understanding accountability but as well to strengthen and improve program design, relationships among community stakeholders.

“Evaluation in its simplest form is about understanding the effect and impact of a programme, service or indeed a whole organisation. Evaluation as a practice is not so simple however, largely because in order to assess impact, we need to be very clear at the beginning what effect or difference we are trying to achieve.” (Harger-Forde, 2012: p.5)

If we are to understand evaluation practice and usefulness in this light, then we are also able to understand what evaluation offers community development in terms of illuminating the impact of programs, the principles and more specific outcomes and goals of the work itself. It is not only that we are seeing the value, we are also understanding the necessity; and therefore, over the long-term, how models of evaluation that encourage participation and collaboration among the various stakeholders in communities can be an essential opportunity to building capacity and sustain a process of continuous critical reflection and learning with the aim of deepening community engagement.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Rogers et al. speak of several ways in which organizations and community stakeholders can use findings from evaluations: instrumentally, symbolically and conceptually (Rogers et al., 2019: p. 3).

Instrumental Use of Findings “relates to uptake of evaluation recommendations and use of findings (Vo, 2015)”.

Symbolic Use of Findings “relates to occasions when evaluation findings are used to bolster and provide legitimacy for decisions (Kirkhart, 2000)”.

Conceptual Use of Findings “refers to the subtle process whereby knowledge gained from multiple evaluations occurs over several months or years to change opinions, deepen understanding, and influence decision making on conscious and subconscious ways (Weiss, 2000)”.

Another form of evaluation use identified by Rogers et al. is that referred to as ‘**process use**’ which is stemming out of the work of Michael Quinn Patton (2008), defining process use as ‘individual changes in thinking and behaviour that occur among those involved in the evaluation as a result of the learning that occurs during the evaluation process’ (p. 155)”(Rogers et al., 2019: p. 5).

EVALUATION PROCESS

Process use relies significantly on participatory evaluation approaches where evaluation becomes the vehicle for encouraging critical reflection and changes in behaviour at a formative stage; which, can take place several times and specific intervals throughout the evaluation process. Some key process uses are identified below.

Learning for learning sake: “Researchers have found that engaging people in evaluation processes enhances organizational capacity for evaluation and organizational learning...undertaking an intentional evaluation capacity building approach to systematically embed processes”(p. 5) that will strategically lead to direct changes to strengthen a program or intervention.

Strengthening networks and relationships: Evaluation is an efficient way for “rapidly interacting with many people, and hence an opportunity” to strengthen and build networks and relationships. (Forss et al., 2002: p. 34)

Establishing a shared understanding and common ground: The usefulness of an evaluation tends to hinge on the quality of the communication among the various members of an evaluation team and the numerous stakeholders involved (p. 35). It is not only about communication skills at a general level, communication within evaluation settings requires an auto-reflective capacity, to be able to be self-aware as an evaluator of potential biases, as well as conscientious of diversity and cultural differences, to name a few. These are foundational in the evaluation team’s capacity to gain trust, obtain consent and document data.

By recognizing the valuable uses of evaluation as indicated above, also comes the realization that evaluation literacy among community organizations and changemakers across sectors is also essential to knowing whether the value lies solely in the findings resulting from an evaluation, or is also the result of the process through which the evaluation is taking place. Either one or both have the potential to lead to new learnings, strategies and shifts in the way the work is being rolled out, thereby contributing not only in producing evidence of impact from completed programs or community interventions, but as well in producing change itself.

SO WHAT ABOUT EVALUATION IS PARTICIPATORY AND COLLABORATIVE?

According to the 2008 Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary:

- **Participation** is “[c]haracterized by, the act of taking part in something”.
- **Collaboration** is described as something that is “the action of working with someone to produce or create something”.
- **Empowering** means to “give (someone) the authority or power to do something”.
- **Evaluation is characterized as meaning** “the making of a judgment about the amount, number, or value of something; assessment”.

As we put these together the emergent statement clearly indicates that evaluation produced or conducted by two or more parties involving members of the general public working together to take part in making judgements about the amount, number or value of something is collaborative and participatory. In theory, taking this at face value seems fairly straightforward; however, in practice, in the field there are so many differing experiences, views, perspectives, attitudes, beliefs, values, explanations and ways of doing things, that makes making these ‘judgements about something’ a complicated task of sifting through interpretations, definitions, types, methodologies, paradigms and modalities before we can even get to it.

In the past couple of decades in particular, participatory and collaborative approaches to evaluation slowly became more and more popularized by professional evaluation practitioners and researchers. However, the conversation and ways in which participatory and collaborative approaches are being defined in the sector as a whole can be overwhelming and confusing, even to seasoned evaluation practitioners. Based on a review of the literature, often these terms are interchanged and used to describe several types of evaluation methodologies. Although there are agreed upon standards for conducting evaluation, and clearly defined principles grounding various methodologies of participatory and collaborative evaluation practices, a dialogue continues among scholars and practitioners about for instance how the depth of participation and type of collaboration should be considered.

From a theoretical standpoint, there is much debate over what distinguishes stakeholder- or participant-oriented evaluation approaches from each other. Several practitioners and scholars have been caught up in this conversation, and as a result, have engaged in some deep, critically-reflective studies that have produced some interesting variations of understanding about how evaluation methodologies and the quality of evaluations can be altered by different levels of participation and engagement at different moments in the evaluation cycle.

As O’Sullivan clearly points out in her article on stakeholder-oriented evaluation approaches: “while Collaborative Evaluation is a term widely used in evaluation, its meaning varies considerably. Often used interchangeably with participatory and/or empowerment evaluation, the terms can be used to mean different things, which can be confusing” (p. 519).

“**While Collaborative Evaluation is a term widely used in evaluation, its meaning varies considerably**”

In this, she introduces the idea that engagement of stakeholders in evaluation processes can be viewed along a sliding scale, and that a constant factor that defines all types, whether deeply participatory or from an approach that is collaborative, there is “a strong appreciation for stakeholder involvement in evaluation and a desire for evaluation results to be useful”(p. 519).

Although there are nuanced differences between these various stakeholder-oriented approaches, **a consistent element among them is the strong appreciation of centering stakeholders as a part of the evaluation team, whether it be at the level of designing and developing the evaluation process, tools or involved in data collection, analysis and reporting.** It is in the implementation of conventional evaluation practices that participatory and collaborative approaches can be infused. The innovation of how this occurs whether through new and exciting data collection methods, or through new ways of sharing analysed data and narratives, these are at the discretion of the decision-makers in terms of what is deemed vital to producing the most appropriate evaluation plan and framework for the context and situation. Within a participatory and collaborative context, these decision-makers are often inclusive of those stakeholders that will most likely be the adopters of the evaluation process and findings.

A clear priority for these approaches is to establish evaluation ownership among stakeholders as a means to ensuring that the outcomes of the evaluation will be used and establish opportunities for strategic learning to occur, both of which have the intention of social transformation through community interventions meant to address social issues.

Before furthering this discussion, it would be useful to highlight the different understanding and rationale among conventional evaluation and those influenced by the thinking regarding collaborative and participatory techniques and process.

Table 1: Conventional vs. Participatory and Collaborative Evaluation Approaches ⁵

	Conventional Evaluation	Participatory evaluation & Collaborative Approach to Evaluation
Why do it?	To ensure accountability, usually summative to determine if funding should continue to support intervention.	To empower local stakeholders and beneficiaries to take control of the outcomes and learning and implement changes that are necessary. To strengthen relationships among collaborators and ensure that adoption of outcomes is more plausible. To ensure accountability and transparency.
Who is leading?	External evaluation professionals, Senior managers	Community organization(s), stakeholders, facilitator (often an evaluation professional/expert).
Who is involved?	Beneficiaries and stakeholders involved in information gatherings as informants only	
When does the evaluation take place?	Primarily upon completion, and sometimes mid-way.	Continuous planning, implementation, follow up, follows a more strategic cycle of evaluation inclusive of development and design phase parallel to intervention design. Considers monitoring process an important aspect of the evaluation design.
How measurement is defined?	Externally defined, mainly quantitative, cost-related, indicators, cost-related. Using 'scientific objectivity' where distancing of evaluator from participants/target of evaluation is valued, uniform procedure, limited access to results, non-transparently.	Internally defined indicators, shared measurement concepts and metrics, auto-evaluative, qualitative methods valued, participatory tools for data collection and analysis valued, transparency and accountability valued, results presented and discussed during evaluation process.
What is it about?	Predetermined indicators of success that are associated mainly with cost and implementation outputs	Defining and designing indicators is a shared process by a team of stakeholders and evaluation professionals taking on different roles depending on the type of participatory or collaborative evaluation approaches selected

DEMYSTIFYING POPULAR PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES IN THE EVALUATION FIELD

Collaborative Approaches to Evaluation, J. Bradley Cousins

As a result of a multi-year research project involving feedback from 320 evaluators from across North America and globally practicing some form of CAE, Cousins' et al were able to develop a foundational study illuminating the value and benefits of adopting CAEs as a means to assessing community change interventions. ^{6 7}

⁵ Synthesized from multiple sources including (Narayan-Parker, 1993; Fetterman et al. 2018; Cousins (Ed.) 2020; O'Sullivan, 2012)

⁶ Taken from: https://evaluationcanada.ca/sites/default/files/20170131_caebrochure_en.pdf

⁷ For detailed information about the study and its rationale see:

What are Collaborative Approaches to Evaluation (CAE)?

“CAE is a class of evaluation approaches where evaluators work together with members of the program community (stakeholders) to implement evaluations and produce evaluative knowledge about programs, projects, strategies, and/or other interventions. The CAE principles are premised on the understanding that context matters and that any CAE project should be collaboratively designed and developed on the basis of stakeholder information needs and interests.” (J.B. Cousins, E. Whitmore, L. Shulha, H. Al Hudib, & N. Gilbert, 2015)

Adopting the language of Collaborative Approaches to Evaluation (CAE)

Recent studies by scholars and practitioners are delving deeper into further addressing the concepts and practices of a variety of evaluation approaches involving levels of participation and involvement of evaluation practitioners, and non-evaluation practitioners working together to produce evaluative knowledge (Cousins, 2020: p.6).

As outlined in the book recently published by SAGE publications as part of their Evaluation in Practice Series, collaborative approaches to evaluation is an umbrella term encompassing a wide range of evaluation approaches, some of which are well-respected, well-known evaluation methodologies that have been widely accepted as more common practice today to assess community interventions and systems change strategies.

- Collaborative Evaluation
- Contribution Analysis
- Culturally Responsive Evaluation
- Deliberative Democratic Evaluation
- Developmental Evaluation
- Empowerment Evaluation
- Indigenous Evaluation Framework
- Most Significant Change Technique
- Rapid Rural Appraisal
- Participatory Action Research
- Participatory Evaluation
- Principles-Focused Evaluation
- Stakeholder-Based Evaluation
- Transformative Research and Evaluation
- Utilization-Focused Evaluation

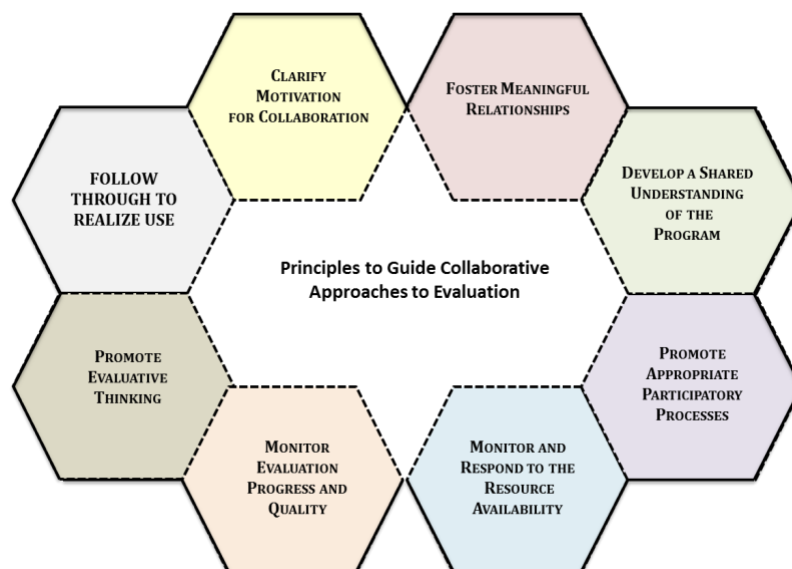
The list is taken directly from the list outlined in the book on p. 6 of Cousins’ book.

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- Cousins, J.B., Whitmore, E., & Shulha, L., (2013). Arguments for a common set of principles for collaborative inquiry in evaluation. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 34(1), 7-22.
 - Shulha, L., Whitmore, E., Cousins, J.B., Gilbert, N. & Al Hudib, H. (2016). Introducing evidence-based principles to guide collaborative approaches to evaluation: Results of an empirical process. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 37(2), 193-217.

PRINCIPLES GUIDING COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES TO EVALUATION ACCORDING TO J. BRADLEY COUSINS

How are CAE principles intended to be used and applied?

Figure 1: Principles of Collaborative Evaluation Approaches.



Taken from: https://evaluationcanada.ca/sites/default/files/20170131_caebrochure_en.pdf

As outlined in the principles presented above, it is clear that when engaging collaborative approaches to evaluation, there is a circular prioritization of the need for exceptionally strong facilitation and communication skills to not only support and value the standards of practice and principles but as well to ensure that the focus of the evaluation is well-formulated, planned and implemented. This is not only relevant to the CAEs showcased by J. Bradley Cousins et al., but as well clearly foundational to the work of practitioners and researchers David Fetterman, Liliana Rodríguez-Campos, Ann Zukoski et al.

The next section further defines the centralized value of evaluation professionals' roles and the roles of stakeholders in highly participatory and engaging evaluation processes.

PARTICIPATORY, COLLABORATIVE AND EMPOWERMENT EVALUATION ACCORDING TO DAVID FETTERMAN ET AL.

In 2018, David Fetterman, Liliana Rodriguez-Campros and Ann Zukowski's published a book entitled Collaborative, Participatory, and Empowerment Evaluations: Stakeholder Involvement Approaches. For evaluation scholars and practitioners alike, it provides comprehensive insights

into these different approaches from the foundational principles, to the roles of the evaluators. Also sharing insights into the roles of those organizational staff, or community intervention implementing team members for each of the three approaches.

Figure 2: Role of the professional evaluator in each participatory approach outlined by Fetterman et al.

Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct • Accountable • In-charge of the overall evaluation. • Making all final decisions about planning, design, implementation and reporting with the support and input of collaboration members (CMs) which can include a range of stakeholders from program staff, to community intervention team and participants.
Participatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jointly shares the control of the evaluation with a range of program staff or community intervention implementing team • Together leading and controlling a shared process for decision-making, planning, design, implementation and reporting
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts as 'critical friend' or evaluation advisor • Working side by side with the program staff or community intervention implementing team • Gets involved as a facilitator to raise questions and create an environment that is critically reflective • Does not control of the decision-making, planning, design, implementation and reporting. • Only gets involved to the extent that they are asked to do so.

Fundamental principles unique to each of the participatory approaches outlined above and below provide a clearer picture of what value these each can bring to an evaluation context. Not only does the table express the specific principles outlined for each approach, it also clarifies the complementarity of these approaches to community engagement work. Inherent in these approaches are the important elements to strong community change work. Evaluation becomes a critical component ensuring that community change work is both effective and ethical.

PRINCIPLES GUIDING COLLABORATIVE, PARTICIPATORY, AND EMPOWERMENT EVALUATION ACCORDING TO DAVID FETTERMAN ET. AL

Table 2: Principles summarized for each approach as outlined by Fetterman et al.

Collaborative Evaluation	Participatory Evaluation	Empowering Evaluation
<p>Development. Uses training and mentorship (i.e., workshops, seminars, coaching) to enhance educational learning and self-improvement</p> <p>Empathy. Displays sensitivity, understanding, and a thoughtful response toward the feelings or emotions of others.</p> <p>Empowerment. Develops a sense of self-efficacy by delegating authority and removing any possible obstacles (i.e., feelings of inadequacy) that might limit the attainment of established goals</p> <p>Involvement. Constructively combines forces (i.e., strengths and weaknesses) in a feasible and meaningful way for all involved. Varied levels of involvement among those collaborating in the effort.</p> <p>Qualification. Clearly outlines levels of knowledge and skills needed to achieve an effective collaboration. Supports preparation for dealing with relevant performance issues that are directly affected by the individuals' backgrounds.</p> <p>Social support. Management of relationships with others to establish a sense of belonging and a holistic view of social-related issues. Ability to develop productive networks in order to find solutions in a collaborative way.</p> <p>Trust. Firmly establishes confidence in, or reliance on the sincerity, credibility, and reliability of everyone involved in the collaboration. Although a high level of trust must exist for a successful collaboration, trust take time to build and can be eliminated easily.</p>	<p>Participant focus and ownership. Seeks to create structures and processes to engage and create ownership among all key stakeholders.</p> <p>Inclusion. Seeks to honour perspectives, voices, and knowledge of those with lived experience and participating in the evaluation</p> <p>Negotiation and a balance of power. Commitment among participants to work together to decide on the evaluation approach. Creation of a balance of power among team members and the evaluator to determine each step of the evaluation process.</p> <p>Learning. Together determine what is working about a program and what is not working, and together they determine what actions are needed to improve the program functioning and outcomes.</p> <p>Flexibility. The evaluation approach will change based on resources, needs, and skills of participants.</p> <p>Focus on action planning. The main purpose of participatory evaluation is to identify points of action to improve program implementation.</p>	<p>Improvement. Designed to help people improve program performance; it is designed to help people build on their successes and re-evaluate areas meriting further attention.</p> <p>Community ownership. Values and facilitated community control; use and sustainability are dependent on a sense of ownership</p> <p>Inclusion. Invites involvement, participation and diversity; contributions come from all levels and walks of life.</p> <p>Democratic participation. Participation and decision-making should be open and fair.</p> <p>Social justice. Evaluation can and should be used to address social inequalities in society</p> <p>Community knowledge. Respects and values community knowledge</p> <p>Evidence-based strategies. Respects and uses the knowledge base of scholars (in conjunction with community knowledge)</p> <p>Capacity building. Is designed to enhance stakeholders' ability to improve program planning and implementation</p> <p>Organizational learning. Data should be used to evaluate new practise, inform decision-making and implement programs practices; empowerment evaluation is used to help organizations learn from their experience (building on successes, learning from mistakes, and making midcourse corrections)</p> <p>Accountability. Is focused on outcomes and accountability, empowerment evaluation function within the context of existing policies, standards and measures of accountability and asks "Did the program initiative accomplish its objectives?"</p>

A NATURAL FIT WITH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES

Conventional evaluation serves an important purpose of seeking to understand accountability and to enable clarity and evidence of change resulting from the implementation of programs and/or interventions; however, integrating participatory and/or collaborative approaches and techniques to evaluation work aims to deepen and critically address social transformation at another level. Delving more deeply into critically trying to understand community change work from both qualitative, and quantitative perspectives can help us to understand not only the summative outcomes of the work we do, but support our understanding of contributions made, factors other than the intervention that might be contributing to its successes or failures, levels of engagements by community stakeholders, and possibly what limits or encourages this participation.

These examples highlight not only the end goal of an evaluation process but as well that the practice of evaluation support the critical learning throughout the duration of a project and allow for corrections to be made while on course. Evaluation in itself can also then be seen as an important process that serves to strengthen the capacity of those involved as well as shed light and present findings that will support the strategic decision-making and future considerations for tackling important issues being addressed.

CONCLUDING WITH SOME T.L.C CRITERIA/MODEL AT THE ROOT OF PARTICIPATORY AND COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES TO EVALUATION

As evaluation continues to propel into a complex space of systems change work, social innovation and impact study of socially transformative interventions, evaluation also becomes even more reliant on strong relationships, positive communication skills, and responsive to establishing clear foundations in which assessment and critical inquiry is taking place. Evaluation requires a more in-depth look into what type of criteria are necessary to support the important principles outlined in participatory and collaborative evaluation processes.

What I am coming to understand as I delve more deeply into exploring the discourse and practices within these methodologies, is that at their core there needs to be capacity and examination of how transparency, learning and consent are vital to the evaluative process. These three specific criteria of Transparency, Learning and Consent, which I am referring to as the T.L.C. Evaluation Criteria/Model are a foundational trifecta for all participatory, collaborative and other stakeholder-oriented process. The T.L.C. Evaluation Criteria/Model is something that over the next long while, I will be reflecting on, deconstructing and exploring further over the next year.

By definition, participatory and collaborative approaches to evaluation work aims to produce findings and create processes for encouraging sustainable community health and well-being, development and growth. It aims to not only to support but also to strengthen community relationships and as a result community change work by adhering to principles of participation

and collaboration that rely on positive transparency, deeper critical learning and a continuous process of informed consent help to define the value of evaluation within its own parameters of implementation as well as strengthening community as an ‘unintended outcome’.

ABOUT PAMELA TEITELBAUM

Pamela is a Consulting Director of the Tamarack Institute’s Evaluating Impact Practice Area. She is passionate about supporting and facilitating an interplay of learning and evaluation that creates transformative experiences aimed at developing healthy, equitable, gender-responsive and rights-based communities.



Pamela believes that increasing access and awareness about evaluation strategies, methodologies and processes leads to more critical, collaborative and long-term community change. By increasing capacity of communities to engage in and employ strategically-designed evaluation and learning practices, more possibilities are created for stakeholders and beneficiaries to experience the value of community changes and how they lead to effective, efficient and impactful outcomes.

In 2010, Pamela founded a consulting company specializing in evaluating and supporting capacity building, educational design, training, monitoring and evaluation, social policy research and community engagement. With over 20 years of experience designing and facilitating training, leading social policy research and evaluation processes, she has worked extensively within the international and Canadian NGO sector in the fields of international human rights education, gender equality, and community development.

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