Evaluating Complex Initiatives

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Agenda

- Introductions
- Intro to complex evaluations
- Complex evaluation challenges
- Designing a complex evaluation
  - Understanding the program
  - Determining the purpose of the evaluation
  - Data collection
  - Data analysis
  - Stakeholder engagement and reporting
  - Project management
- Wrap-up

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Presenters

- Martha McGuire, Cathexis Consulting
- Rochelle Zorzi, Cathexis Consulting
- Kate Powadiuk, Cathexis Consulting

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Introductions

- Name, affiliation
- My expectations will be met if . . .

"We have seen the emergence of a class of problems whose causes are so complex, and whose solutions are so multi-factorial, that they require a multi-agency response."
Thomas Ling, 2002

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Intro to Complex Evaluations

- Overview:
  - Background on the HRSDC Horizontal Project
  - Factors Contributing to Complexity
  - Terminology
  - TBS Guidelines for HRMAF
  - New TBS Evaluation Policy

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Background to HRSDC Project

- History
- Purpose
- What Has Happened Since

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Factors Contributing to Complexity

- Multiple partners
  - Horizontal across a government
  - Vertical between federal/provincial/municipals jurisdictions
  - Including different disciplines
- Multiple components
  - Broad initiative with many organizations responsible for implementation
- Policies, regulations and legislation with broad goals
  - Not easily measured
- Political sensitivities
  - New government
- Time Span
  - May take years to see results e.g. Population Health

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Terminology

- Complex
- Horizontal
- Joined Up
- Rolled Up
- Whole of Government
- Cluster

- Addresses common complex issues involving more than one jurisdiction, sector or discipline;
- Requires the involvement of more than one organization and/or level of government;
- Shares common goals in relation to the issues;
- Involves shared authority and responsibility among the partners; and
- Includes mechanisms for shared governance and integration.

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TBS Guidelines

- Development of the team
- Five main components of an RMAF
- General guidance
  - Get Senior Management Support
  - Assess the Relative Value of the Initiative
  - Remain Flexible
  - Set Realistic Timelines
  - Communicate/Build Consensus
  - Involve Stakeholders
  - Engage in Continuous Learning
  - Access Other Sources of Information

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What are some of the challenges?

- Go to page 7 of workbook.

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Complex Evaluation Challenges

Challenges	Some Suggested Solutions
Addressing horizontality - Appropriateness - Contribution to effectiveness - Effect on evaluation	- Establish an evaluation committee with representation from the partners (joined up evaluation) - Do rolled up evaluations - Determine which factors have 'first order' effects

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Complex Evaluation Challenges

Challenges	Some Suggested Solutions
Data collection: - Different types of data collected by different partners - Poor quality and incomplete data - Different definitions of indicators - Different information being collected	- Agreed upon indicators - Mutual accountability framework with common reporting tools - Common databases or fields that can be readily linked - Simplified administrative processes - Use external databases such as Statistics Canada for measuring long-term outcomes over time - Use case studies to provide in-depth exploration and illustration

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Complex Evaluation Challenges

Challenge	Some Suggested Solutions
Measuring Results: - Different indicators of success - Different targets across regions/sectors - Different ideas on the goals and objectives of the program - Timeframes are not realistic	- A horizontal RMAF developed by all of the partners - Realistic measurable results with common metrics linked to performance indicators - Results chains/theory of change models

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Complex Evaluation Challenges

Challenges	Some Suggested Solutions
Determining attribution is more difficult - External influences - Difficulty in establishing comparison groups	- Where external factors are industry/ sector specific, establish comparison groups within the industry or sector - Look for lessons rather than comparisons

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Complex Evaluation Challenges

Challenges	Some Suggested Solutions
Project Management - The number and complexity of activities - Size of team – ensuring consistency - Reliance on data collected by non-evaluators - Keeping	- Clear and accepted evaluation plan with scope defined - Project notebook - Communication tools

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Complex Evaluation Challenges

Challenges	Some Suggested Solutions
Being a Project Authority - Managing the expectations of a number of stakeholders - Facilitating obtaining data from a number of different sources	- Project notebook - Communication tools - An evaluation committee with representation of the key stakeholders

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Designing a Complex Evaluation

- Understanding the program/initiative
- Nested logic models & theories of change
- Common performance measures
- Evaluation questions
- Data collection plans
- Analysis plans
- Stakeholder engagement & reporting plans
- Project management plans

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Understanding the Program

- All of the components and systems
- Specific goals and objectives for each partner
- Common goals and objectives
- Roles and responsibilities of each partner
- Governance structure

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Nested Logic Models

- Overall logic model
- Logic model for each component
- Show linkages towards common outcomes

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Theory of Change Models

- Articulates the underlying assumptions of the logic model
- Should show the dynamics among the partners

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Group Exercise

- Use case study in Appendix E

- Refer to pages 9 & 55

- Create a nested logic model
  - Overall initiative
  - Canadian Regulatory System for Biotechnology

- Would a theory of change model contribute to a better understanding?

Performance Measurement Strategy

- Keep performance indicators as simple as possible – with so many players the list can grow and become unmanageable
  - Provide information about the resources required to get information on each of the indicators
  - Facilitate a session to establish priorities, having people focus on need to know vs. nice to know
- Use a group process to identify indicators for outputs and outcomes based on the logic model – but set priorities
- These can be used to develop a common data collection system

Potential Evaluation Questions

- To what extent does the complexity of the initiative effect the overall relevance, success, efficiency and cost-effectiveness?

- To what extent does the complexity of the initiative contribute to achieving more integrated and collaborative policies/programs?

- To what extent do the relationships among the partners contribute to achieving expected outcomes?

- How does the initiative compare to programs delivered by a single department?

- What are the characteristics and conditions that generally contribute to the success of the initiative, looking at the dynamics among the partners?

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Data Collection

- Common reporting forms

- Data collection by staff at multiple sites

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Common Reporting Forms

- Keep it short and simple
- Consider ways of minimizing error
- Do a feasibility assessment
- Develop tools & a data dictionary
- Do a test run (or two) to identify issues
- Electronic or paper forms?

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Data Collection by Site Staff

- Allocate staff time for data collection
- Training is key:
  - Schedule of activities
  - Data definitions
  - Purpose of the data
  - Who to call for help
- Send reminders
- Be diligent about quality control

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Group Exercise

- Use the case study in Appendix E

- Refer to p. 18 of the workbook

- Develop a mechanism for gathering data across multiple partners for <u>a single performance measure</u>

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Data Analysis

- Combining databases

- Unit of analysis

- Analytical matrices

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Combining Databases:
Same Fields, Different Sites

- Technical issues:
  - Databases need to be converted to a common format
  - Ensure field definitions are the same in all
  - Restrict to relevant fields
  - Keep a record of where each case came from
  - Keep a log of decisions made along the way

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Combining Databases:
Same Sites, Different Fields

- Ethical issues:
  - Potential to compromise anonymity
  - Informed consent

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Unit of Analysis

- What is the appropriate unit of analysis?
  Individual / Group / Program / Initiative

- Considerations:
  - At what level were the data collected?
  - What conclusions do you want to draw?
  - Are participants' experiences comparable across sites/programs?

- Consider multiple levels of analysis & reporting

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Analytical Matrices

- A tool to provide an overview of patterns across, for example, participants, sites, topics, or data sources

- Shows a summary of the data in a table so you can examine:
  - Variables of interest
  - Data sources or methods of data collection
  - Periods of time
  - Individuals or groups

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Example Evidence Matrix

	Implementation			Outcomes		
Site	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3
A – Unit 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
A – Unit 2	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
B	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
C	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
D	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
E	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

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Group Exercise

- Use case study in Appendix E
- Refer to page 20
- Explore units of analysis and variables

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Stakeholder Engagement & Reporting

- Engagement strategy
- Reporting to different audiences

Engagement Strategy

- Key questions:
  - Who needs to be engaged?
  - What sort of engagement?
  - At what point(s) in the evaluation?
  - Through what methods?
  - How long will it take?
- An engagement matrix can help you plan

Engagement Matrix

Stakeholder	Planning	Data Collection	Interim Reports	Analysis	Final Report	Utilization
Site contact person	C	F,S	I	C	I	L
…						

A = Approve (approves plans, reports, etc.)
C = Consult (solicit and consider their input)
D = Decide (makes decisions)
F = Facilitate (supports the evaluation, enables evaluation tasks to happen)
I = Inform (let them know what is happening, what the results were)
L = Lead (takes a leadership role, champions the evaluation)
S = Source (source of information/data)
W = Worker (carries out the tasks)

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Reporting to Different Audiences

- Site specific reports and aggregate reports
- Tailored reports for specific audiences vs. a more diverse report for all audiences

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Managing a Complex Evaluation

- Project notebook
- Team communication

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Project Notebook

- May include:
  - Brief project description
  - Roles & responsibilities
  - Project log (issues, decisions)
  - Evolving work plan with time lines
  - Protocols & tools for data collection/analysis
- Updated regularly
- Accessible to all team members

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Team Communication

- Clear roles & responsibilities
- Documentation of issues & decisions
- Team updates
- Progress meetings / progress reports

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Pulling It All Together

- Addressing the Challenges
- Simplifying the Complex
  - Planning
  - Data collection
  - Analysis
- Communication
- Project Management

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Wrap-Up

- Any remaining Q&A
- Were your expectations met?
  - 1 = not at all
  - 10 = completely
- Evaluation forms