

# Evaluation of Complex Initiatives / Programs

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124 Merton St., Suite 502  
Toronto, Ontario M4S 2Z2  
Telephone: (416) 469-9954  
Fax: (416) 469-8487  
E-mail: info@cathexisconsulting.ca

## Agenda

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- Introductions
- Intro to complex evaluations
- Complex evaluation challenges
- Designing a complex evaluation
- Collecting data
- Analysing and reporting data
- Managing a complex evaluation
- Wrap-up



## Presenters

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- Martha McGuire, Cathexis Consulting
- Maximilien Tereaho Audit & Evaluation Directorate, HRSDC
- Rochelle Zorzi, Cathexis Consulting
- Anna Engman, Cathexis Consulting



## Introductions

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



# Intro to Complex Evaluations

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- Overview:
  - Factors Contributing to Complexity
  - Terminology
  - TBS Guidelines for HRMAF

What are some of the challenges?

## Small Group: Challenges and Solutions

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- Break into groups
- Refer to page 4 of work book

## Complex Evaluation Challenges

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Challenge	Some Suggested Solutions
<b>Measuring Results:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Different indicators of success</li><li>▪ Different targets across regions/sectors</li><li>▪ Different ideas on the goals and objectives of the program</li><li>▪ Timeframes are not realistic</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ A horizontal RMAF developed by all of the partners</li><li>▪ Realistic measurable results with common metrics linked to performance indicators</li><li>▪ Results chains/theory of change models</li></ul>

# Complex Evaluation Challenges

Challenges	Some Suggested Solutions
<p><b>Data collection:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Different types of data collected by different partners</li> <li>▪ Poor quality and incomplete data</li> <li>▪ Different definitions of indicators</li> <li>▪ Different information being collected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Agreed upon indicators</li> <li>▪ Mutual accountability framework with common reporting tools</li> <li>▪ Common data bases or fields that can be readily linked</li> <li>▪ Simplified administrative processes</li> <li>▪ Use external databases such as Statistics Canada for measuring long-term outcomes over time</li> <li>▪ Use case studies to provide in-depth exploration and illustration</li> </ul>

# Complex Evaluation Challenges

Challenges	Some Suggested Solutions
<p><b>Addressing horizontality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Appropriateness</li> <li>▪ Contribution to effectiveness</li> <li>▪ Effect on evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish an evaluation committee with representation from the partners (joined up evaluation)</li> <li>▪ Do rolled up evaluations</li> <li>▪ Determine which factors have 'first order' effects</li> </ul>

## Complex Evaluation Challenges

Challenges	Some Suggested Solutions
<b>Determining attribution</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>External influences</li><li>Difficulty in establishing comparison groups</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Where external factors are industry/sector specific, establish comparison groups within the industry or sector</li><li>Look for lessons rather than comparisons</li></ul>

## Designing a Complex Evaluation

- Understanding the program/initiative
- Nested logic models & theories of change
- Evaluation questions
- Common performance measures
- Data collection
- Analysis
- Reporting

## Understanding the Program

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- 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

## Nested Logic Models

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

# Theory of Change Models

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

# Different Approaches

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- Joined up
- Rolled up
- Single department



# Evaluation Questions

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- 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?

# Collecting Data

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- Meeting Standards
- Privacy & consent
- Common reporting tools / databases
- Data Collection by Staff at Multiple Sites

# Meeting Standards

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- Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation
  - Utility
  - Feasibility
  - Propriety
  - Accuracy
- Tri-Council Policy Statement
  - Respect for human dignity
  - Respect for free and informed consent
  - Respect for vulnerable persons
  - Respect for privacy and confidentiality
  - Respect for justice and inclusiveness
  - Balancing harm and benefits
  - Minimizing harm
  - Maximizing benefit

# Privacy and Consent

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- Accountability
- **Identifying purposes**
- **Consent**
- **Limiting collection**
- **Limiting use, disclosure and retention**
- **Accuracy**
- **Safeguards**
- Openness
- Individual access
- Provide recourse

## Common Reporting Tools / Databases

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- Developing common reporting tools
  - Fewer items *is* better – focus on key items
- Feasibility assessment
  - How easy is it for the sites to report the data?
  - Would it be easier to report it another way?
  - Can all sites report the same data?
  - Are all sites really reporting the same thing?
- Do a test run (or two) to identify issues



## Data Collection by Site Staff

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- Need to plan time for data collection
- Training is essential:
  - Train in a group
  - Data definitions
  - Purpose of the data
  - Who to call for help
- Quality control
  - Audits of initial data, periodic checks thereafter
  - Q&A, group discussions



# Group Exercise

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- Use the case study in Appendix E
- Refer to 16 of the workbook
- Develop a mechanism for gathering data across multiple partners for a **single performance measure**

# Analysing & Reporting Data

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- Combining databases
- Unit of analysis
- Evidence matrices

## Combining Databases: Same Fields, Different Sites

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- 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

## Combining Databases: Same Sites, Different Fields

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- Ethical issues
  - Identification of anonymous participants
  - Informed consent

## Unit of Analysis

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- What is the appropriate unit of analysis?  
Initiative / Program / Participant
- Considerations:
  - What conclusions do you want to draw?
  - Are participants' experiences comparable across sites/programs?
- Consider multiple levels of analysis & reporting

## Evidence Matrices

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- 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
  - Topics of interest or data sources in the rows
  - Different sites, participants, or programs in the columns
  - Summary of data in the cells

## Group Exercise

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- Use case study in Appendix E
- Refer to page 21
- Explore units of analysis and variables

## Managing Complex Evaluations

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- Preparation
- Analysis
- Approval
- Reporting
- Addressing Complexity
- Alternative Evaluation Delivery
- Coordination and Integration Mechanisms

## Group Exercise

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- Refer to page 25

## Wrap-Up

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- Any remaining Q&A
- Were your expectations met?
- Evaluation forms