



Wholey-Hatry-Newcomer: Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation, Second Edition
BUS000 (Business)
NP0000 (Nonprofit Management)
NPX100 (Nonprofit Management)
NP0400 (Analysis and Evaluation of Programs)

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Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation, Second Edition
by

Joseph S. Wholey, University of Southern California, Harry P. Hatry, The Urban Institute,
Washington, D.C., Kathryn E. Newcomer, George Washington University

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

School of Public Policy and Public Administration

Course Title: Public and Non-Profit Program Evaluation

Course

Description: This course is intended to give the student an appreciation of the contributions and limitations of public and non-profit program evaluation, and a familiarity with the basic skills needed to conduct evaluations. Emphasis will be given to coping with the conceptual, methodological, organizational, political, and ethical problems which face evaluators. The various tasks facing evaluators, from developing the questions to presenting the data, will be discussed. The specific issues addressed in class sessions are noted on the attached class schedule.

Prerequisites: Preferably a basic course on research methods

Required

Textbooks: Joseph Wholey, Harry Hatry, and Kathy Newcomer The Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation, Jossey-Bass, 2004.

Allan Kimmel, Ethics and Values in Applied Social Research, Sage 1988.

And GAO reports provided by the instructor.

Course Objective: The primary course objective is to familiarize students with the quite diverse investigative activities labeled as program evaluations, and the many steps involved in their implementation. The use of performance measurement and its relationship to program evaluation is also explored in some depth. The various designs available for program evaluations, including such variants as evaluability assessments, process evaluations, and meta-evaluations, are first examined. Issues which evaluators must address in implementing these designs, ranging from the more philosophical ethical issues to the more mundane methodological issues, such as ensuring reliable data collection, are then explored. The tasks of interpreting evaluation results and reporting utilization-focused findings in political settings are also examined.

Method of Instruction:

The tasks and constraints facing professionals involved in the design and implementation of program evaluations are explored by class participation in both in-class and written exercises. Questions and problems facing both evaluators and managers of programs being evaluated are examined.

Assigned Readings:

Assigned readings are selected to give students a representative sample of the professional evaluation literature, as well as to expose them to the sorts of issues which arise in the context of real life evaluations.

Assignments:1.

Readings and Critiques: Students are expected to have read required readings prior to the class meeting for which they are listed. Class discussion on the required readings will affect course grades, especially in borderline cases. Students will also review critically; 1) one article reporting on an evaluation from the Evaluation Review (or another journal of greater interest to the student); and 2) an evaluation report selected by the student. For each they should prepare a one-page critique (10% of grade).

The one-page critiques of the evaluation and the article in a professional journal should be prepared in the following format:

- 1) a brief description of the focus and findings;

- 2) identification of the key evaluation questions addressed;
- 3) a brief summary of the research design and data collection methods used; and
- 4) a systematic list of threats to the: measurement validity, internal validity, external validity, statistical conclusion validity, and reliability of the findings. Note that the threats should be clearly presented, for example do not simply state “Hawthorne Effect,” but clarify how/why that threat occurred.

2. In-Class Exercises and Debates: In-Class exercises will be held in class throughout the semester. Class debates over ethical issues in program evaluation also will be held throughout the semester and require either oral preparation, or written papers. Students will be graded on their participation in the exercises and debates (accounting for 10% of course grade).

3. Exam: One take home essay exam, contributing 40% to the course grade.

4. Applied Research Project: Members of the class will be invited to participate in a program evaluation project during the semester. (Option A.) Students choosing not to participate in an evaluation project are required to prepare an evaluation design for an actual program (see option B). This paper contributes 40% to the course grade. **If a student chooses Option B they must obtain approval before beginning work. This paper is due no later than May 7 unless a prior agreement on a later due date is negotiated with the instructor.**

PLEASE DO NOT GIVE YOUR REPORT TO THE CLIENT UNTIL THE INSTRUCTOR HAS REVIEWED IT.

OPTION A

Student groups may respond to a request from a nonprofit organization in the D.C. community anxious to receive evaluation technical support. Some of the requests will entail a specific project such as a one-shot customer survey, but many could result in development of a design, in which case, the requirements of Project B will apply.

The instructor will provide the list of requests during the first week of the semester and will facilitate initial contacts. Once a student group decides to work with a nonprofit, they should submit a brief **statement of the work** (2 pages) to be performed first to the instructor, and then, upon securing her approval, to the management of the nonprofit organization.

The **Statement of the Work** should include:

- 1) a concise description of the evaluation questions that the primary stakeholders have identified;
- 2) a description of the methodology to be employed by the students to address the evaluation questions;
- 3) identification of specific tasks to be accomplished;
- and 4) a time line depicting deadlines for the tasks identified in #3.

The written product will be submitted first to the instructor for suggestions, and then to the nonprofit agency requestor. **The report should have all of the components listed for Option B in this syllabus**, except for a proposed budget if no further evaluation work is proposed.

OPTION B: EVALUATION DESIGN

This project is designed to provide you with on-the-job training. You are asked to develop a scoping and evaluation design paper for a program. You will conduct the scoping activities but will only propose the evaluation; you are not expected to conduct the actual evaluation itself.

Scoping out the evaluation entails collecting information on the program through interviews with key contacts (decision-makers, staff, etc.) on current information needs, and conducting a synthesis of past related research and evaluation studies. With the focus of the evaluation identified, the project will then involve laying out an evaluation design, data collection plan, analysis plan, and briefing and presentation plan. The design should be developed with clear awareness of the political aspects of the situation and tailored to the needs of the agency leadership. Strategies for encouraging the use of the resulting evaluation findings also should be discussed.

The suggested outline for the paper is as follows:

- I. **Executive Summary**
- II. **Background:** Description of the scoping activities, including brief description of the program, the individuals interviewed; synthesis of past research and evaluation findings; inclusion of relevant literature on the program.
- III. **Research Questions:** The issues that have been identified and the specific questions that appear most appropriate to address now.
- IV. **Proposed Research Design:** A brief summary of the design(s) to be taken, including the concepts and variables, the theory underlying the policy/program, etc. A **logic model** of the program/policy must be developed and presented.
- V. **Proposed Data Collection Plan:** The sources of data available, measures, data collection methods, sampling procedures; also should include concerns re: validity, reliability, and overall quality of data.
- VI. **Proposed Data Analysis Plan:** Proposed analytic strategies.
- VII. **Proposed Presentation and Utilization Plan:** Strategies for presenting the results to key stakeholders and decision-makers and strategies for facilitating utilization.

- VIII. Potential Problems and Fall-back Strategies:** Identify the potential problems that may arise in conducting the evaluation and the strategies that will be used to either avoid the problem or deal with its occurrence.
- IX. Proposed Budget, Budget Narrative, and Workplan (Budgetary estimates may range from specific to general depending upon the complexity of the proposed project.)**

Class Schedule and Assignments

Session 1

Introduction to the Course and Overview of the Field of Program Evaluation

Readings:

Newcomer, Wholey and Hatry, Introduction to Handbook.

Questions:

- What is program evaluation? What types of studies and analytical support fall under this rubric?
- How does program evaluation differ from other forms of analysis?
- What are the different approaches to evaluation?
- How did evaluation evolve?
- Where does evaluation take place and who conducts evaluations?
- What are some of the more critical issues that face the evaluation profession?
- Who are “professional evaluators?”
- What is the status of program evaluation in other nations, e.g. performance auditing?
- What role does program evaluation play for international funders, e.g. the World Bank?
- How do current performance measurement efforts relate to program evaluation?

Session 2

The Front End of Evaluation: Establishing Objectives for Evaluation Work

Readings:

McLaughlin and Jordan (Ch. 1)
Wholey (Ch. 2)

GAO Report, “Program Evaluation: Improving the Flow of Information to Congress,” (GAO/PEMD-95-1). (provided)
GAO Yellowbook sections (provided)
Evaluation Standards (provided)

Questions:

- What role should staff and external stakeholders play in evaluation?
- What role can the evaluator play in program development and design?
- What pre-design steps are desirable for the evaluator to take?
- What is the program theory? How can it be developed and refined?
- What is logic modeling?
- How might logic models guide evaluation?
- What is evaluability assessment? What are the steps? How can it be used to guide evaluation? How can it be used as a management tool?

Session 3

Defining the Focus for Evaluation in Public Non-profit Agencies

Readings:

Kopczynski and Pritchard (Ch. 23)

Questions:

- How do you determine what is to be evaluated? How do you determine the scope of the effort?
- How do you diagnose the problem and begin to formulate the research question(s)?
- How do you develop a conceptual framework?
- How do you assess needs? What are the different strategies?
- How can program goals and objectives be measured? How do you handle multiple objectives?
- How do you increase participation of stakeholders in evaluation design?
- What impact does having multiple funders have on evaluation efforts for nonprofits?
- What role should stakeholders play in scoping the evaluation?
- How might you anticipate usefulness?

Session 4

Evaluating Implementation and Process, and Program Monitoring

Readings:

Love (Ch. 3)

Questions:

- What is program monitoring?
- How should formative evaluations be designed?
- How do you measure program implementation?
- How should feedback be incorporated in an implementation study?
- How should an implementation study be linked with an outcome study?

Session 5

Performance Measurement and Program Evaluation

Readings:

Poister (Ch. 4)

Questions:

- What is performance measurement?
- What are the challenges to measuring performance?
- What is outcome monitoring?
- How might performance measurement and program evaluation be most effectively coordinated?
- What is the “balanced score card” as currently applied in government and nonprofits?

Session 6

The Political and Institutional Context for Evaluation: Building Evaluation Capacity

Readings:

Newcomer and Scheirer PricewaterhouseCooper’s Report (provided)
Gormley (Ch. 22)

Questions:

- What difference does the source of evaluation expertise make in terms of approach, methods and use?
- How do auditors approach evaluation?
- What skills are required for effective evaluation practice and for oversight of contracted evaluation work?
- How does organizational culture shape evaluation capacity?

Session 7

Outcome and Impact Evaluation

Readings:

Reichardt and Mark (Ch. 5)
St. Pierre (Ch. 6)

Critique due of an Evaluation Study Conducted of a government agency.

Questions:

- *What are the commonly used designs to measure program outcomes?
- *What are the considerations in selecting an evaluation design?
- *How do the evaluators weigh the tradeoffs in various designs?
- *What strategies are available for controlling or ruling out various rival explanations?
- *What designs are applicable for longitudinal data?

Session 8

Field Research, Case Studies, and Meta-Evaluation

Readings:

Nightengale and Rossman (Ch. 13)
Caudle (Ch. 15)
Boruch and Petrosino (Ch. 7)

Questions:

- What are the different types of case studies that can be conducted?
- What are the sources of evidence for a case study?
- What analytic methods are available for case studies?
- What is the role of program theory in conducting analyses?

- What is meta-evaluation (evaluation-synthesis) and how is it best conducted?

Session 9

Ethical and Legal Dilemmas

Readings:

Kimmel, entire book

Questions:

- What protections should be given to participants in an evaluation?
- What procedures are possible in ensuring confidentiality?
- What procedures can be developed for maintaining the credibility and fairness of the evaluation?
- What are the essential elements and desired format for informed consent agreements?
- What are Institutional Review Boards and why are they important?

Session 10

Data Collection and Measurement Issues in Program Evaluation

Readings:

Greiner (Ch. 8)
Averch (Ch. 10)
Turner and Zimmerman (Ch. 11)
Goldenkoff (Ch. 12)
Hatry (Ch. 14)

Questions:

- What is involved in planning data collection and analysis?
- What are the relative advantages of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods?
- What are the considerations in using existing data?
- What procedures can enhance reliability and validity of measurement?
- What advice does Patton give to evaluators conducting qualitative research?
- What are “multi-method” evaluations?

Session 11

Designing Effective Survey Instruments and Using Focus Groups

Readings:

Newcomer and Triplett (Ch. 9)

Critique due of an article in professional journal approved by instructor.

Questions:

- What design characteristics bolster the validity of survey instruments?
- How are program participants most effectively surveyed?
- When are focus groups most helpful?
- How should focus groups be designed and implemented?

Session 12

Data Analysis and Reporting

Readings:

Newcomer and Wirtz (Ch. 16)

Berger (Ch. 17)

Kee (Ch. 18)

Hatry and Newcomer (Ch. 19)

Grob (Ch. 21)

Questions:

- What are characteristics of effective data presentation?
- What are rigorous procedures for analyzing qualitative data?
- How should results be displayed?
- How are “null results” most appropriately reported?
- What are the strategies for developing useful recommendations?

Session 13

Utilization of Evaluation Results

Readings:

Hatry, Wholey, and Newcomer (Ch. 24)

Questions:

- What factors influence utilization of evaluation results?
- What are the various types of utilization? How can they be measured?
- What can be done during evaluation design and implementation to enhance utilization?

Session 14

Managing Evaluation Studies and Final Exam Due

Readings:

Bell (Ch. 20)

Questions:

- * What resources should be considered in scoping out an evaluations?
- *What methods can be used to track and manage resources?
- *What constraints are unique to in-house evaluations?
- *What are advantages to in-house and contracted out evaluations?

Session 15

Course Overview and Applied Research Project Due.