Introducing the Impact Evaluability Assessment Tool

This checklist is a tool designed to help organizations assess and discuss a program's readiness to participate in a rigorous impact evaluation, particularly using a quasi-experimental or experimental design study to measure effectiveness. It can be used for assessment, planning, and communication purposes. Rigorous impact evaluations require resources, expertise and necessary conditions as well as thorough planning and execution. This checklist covers the range of necessary elements for conducting an impact study on programs of interest. The elements are covered in groups or sections. A program may not address all items or meet all requirements noted within a section, however missing items or lack of readiness on a number of dimensions may indicate potential areas for discussion, development, or technical assistance prior to engagement in a rigorous impact evaluation.

The focus areas covered in this checklist are organized into three broad content categories: Organization Readiness; Program Readiness; and Evaluation Readiness. Each category addresses key elements of readiness. Readiness in all three areas covered is important for successful planning and implementation of an impact evaluation.

Organizational Readiness addresses intentionality, commitment and prioritization at the organization level. Core to these are existing support for evaluation, capacity building (as needed), learning, and use of data for decision making within the organization, especially at the leadership level. Additionally, organizational readiness means existence and support for the infrastructure necessary to conduct related activities within the organization.

Program Readiness addresses elements that need to be in place at the program level for conducting rigorous impact evaluations. These cover several areas: existing support for evaluation and evidence building at the program and stakeholder level, operational readiness, program scale, maturity and stability.

Evaluation Readiness addresses three areas of focus that include a history of, and focus on, evaluation, as well as the resources, structure, capacity, scope, and size to engage in rigorous impact evaluation. In addition, the program has an evaluation partner/team in place that has the experience and skills necessary for this type of evaluation.

Sources for Evaluability Checklist:

Evaluability Assessment: Examining the Readiness of a Program for Evaluation. Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center. Justice Research and Statistics Association. www.jrsa.org/jjec. May 2003.

Evaluability Assessment: A Tool for Program Development In Corrections. Patricia Van Voorhis, Professor. Division of Criminal Justice, University of Cincinnati. http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.131.362&rep=rep1&type=pdf.

Anon. 2011. "Using the Evaluability Assessment Tool. Guidance Note 11." ILO. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_165984.pdf

Sources for Proposed Evaluation Partners Checklist:

Modified from: Dunn, E. 2008. "Planning for Cost Effective Evaluation with Evaluability Assessment". USAID. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADN200.pdf

Organizational Readiness (existing support for evaluation, capacity building [as needed], learning, use of data for decision making within the organization, especially at the leadership level, and existence of requisite infrastructure to support related activities.)	*Indicate to what extent each statement is true.*			
	Not at all true	**Somewhat true**	**True**	**Not applicable**
Leadership Commitment				
There is support for the evaluation and evaluation capacity building, as needed, at the leadership level (CEO and/or Board of Directors).	❑	❑	❑	❑
Leadership demonstrates commitment to evaluation and evidence-based or data-driven decision making.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Leadership supports staff positions/activities that focus on evaluation, learning, and improvement.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Organization and its Board of Directors demonstrate interest in learning about the effectiveness of the program by rigorously evaluating program effectiveness.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Learning Environment				
The organization provides opportunities for and fosters a culture of information sharing, discussion, reflection, learning, and improvement in order to support informed decision-making and practice.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Staff makes decisions based on regular assessment and use of data, information, evidence and feedback. For example, if a program was evaluated in the past, information that came from the evaluation was utilized.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Resource Commitment				
Leadership is willing and committed to devoting necessary resources (e.g. staff positions and time and financial or other non-financial resources) to the evaluation.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Tools and Systems				
There are systems, structures, tools, and processes in place for data collection, storage, processing, analysis, and reporting.	❑	❑	❑	❑
There are systems, structures, tools, and processes in place for information sharing, reflection, knowledge building, and evaluation use.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Additional Comments:				

Program Readiness *(*existing support for evaluation and evidence building at the program and stakeholder level, operational readiness, program scale, maturity and stability.)	*Indicate to what extent each statement is true.*			
	Not at all true	**Somewhat true**	**True**	**Not applicable**
Theory of Change				
There is a coherent, logical program theory. Strategies and activities are designed to address a clearly identified and defined problem or need. There is a logical connection between the program strategies and activities and the intended outcomes or desired changes. Goals and objectives are articulated and attainable with the available resources. (The program has a logic model.)	❑	❑	❑	❑
Program participation is clearly defined and distinguishable from nonparticipation. There is no ambiguity about who is in the program and who is not.	❑	❑	❑	❑
There is a shared understanding among program leadership and staff about the core elements of the program and the context in which the program operates.	❑	❑	❑	❑
There is agreement across the program leadership and staff as to what the expected program outcomes are.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Clear Time Frame for the Program				
The intervention has a clearly defined timeframe.	❑	❑	❑	❑
There is a reasonable and shared expectation around the timeframe for when observable/measurable outcomes in the short, intermediate or long term will occur.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Support for Evaluation and Evidence Building				
The program leadership and staff have a learning agenda for the implementation and effectiveness of the program so as to inform the evaluation.	❑	❑	❑	❑
There is interest and support among stakeholders in advancing a program's level of evidence by conducting an impact evaluation. Stakeholders see the value of evaluation and have ideas about how the program could benefit.	❑	❑	❑	❑

Program Readiness *(*existing support for evaluation and evidence building at the program and stakeholder level, operational readiness, program scale, maturity and stability.)	*Indicate to what extent each statement is true.*			
	Not at all true	**Somewhat true**	**True**	**Not applicable**
Program and stakeholders are likely to agree (or are open to discussion) on what levels of evidence should be currently targeted, including the need for the development of evaluations that are designed to limit threats to internal validity[1] and/or enhance external validity[2] to the greatest extent possible.	❑	❑	❑	❑
There is allocation of a reasonable level of staff time and resources to conduct an impact evaluation at the program level.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Program Implementation				
If the program is based on a model or logical program theory, it is implemented with fidelity to that model and has a well-planned sequence of activities.	❑	❑	❑	❑
If the program is currently being adapted, it is being adapted using theory/systematically-obtained field-based knowledge, and along lines that can be quantified and documented.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Staff members are qualified and properly trained to operate the program. There are enough qualified staff members on site to implement the planned activities.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Frontline workers who deliver the services provided by the program have sufficient qualifications to execute the program. There are enough qualified frontline workers on site to successfully execute the program.	❑	❑	❑	❑
There are systems in place to track program implementation:				
• There are procedures in place to determine if the target population is being served (referral system, intake process).	❑	❑	❑	❑
• Data that track service usage is collected (attendance lists, case management logs).	❑	❑	❑	❑
• Input is sought on a regular basis to understand how participants experience the services and to identify and address any problems in a timely manner.	❑	❑	❑	❑

[1] **Definition of Internal Validity:** For a given design, the extent to which the observed difference in the average group outcomes (usually program participants versus control or comparison group members) can be causally attributed to the intervention or program. Randomized controlled trials allow for high causal attribution because of their ability to rule out alternative explanations (usually unobserved characteristics) other than the intervention as the reason for the observed affect.

[2] **Definition of External Validity:** The extent to which evaluation results, statistically, are applicable to groups other than those in the research. More technically, it refers to how well the results obtained from analyzing a sample of study participants from a population can be generalized to that population. The strongest basis for applying results obtained from a sample to a population is when the sample is randomly selected from that population. Otherwise, this generalization must be made on extra-statistical ground – that is, on a non- statistical basis.

Program Readiness *(*existing support for evaluation and evidence building at the program and stakeholder level, operational readiness, program scale, maturity and stability.)	*Indicate to what extent each statement is true.*			
	Not at all true	**Somewhat true**	**True**	**Not applicable**
Program Maturity and Stability				
The program has been in operation for a reasonable length of time and is known in the target community, or has clear evidence of both uptake and effectiveness in other, similar communities.	❑	❑	❑	❑
The program is relatively mature and stable and is not undergoing refinements or changes that are expected to occur in early stages of program development and delivery (i.e. the intervention/experiment is repeatable and likely to produce the same effects over time).	❑	❑	❑	❑
Risks/threats to program delivery (e.g. recruitment of participants/deliverers, constancy of necessary partnerships) have been identified, and risk monitoring and mitigation processes have been proposed or are currently in place.	❑	❑	❑	❑
External/contextual influences and factors are accounted for and assessed as relatively stable. These forces (e.g. policy environment) are not expected to affect the program and its participants in a significantly different way over time.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Scale/participation numbers				
The program's intentions for expanding or advancing the model/intervention are clearly planned out, and sufficiently resourced and feasible.	❑	❑	❑	❑
The program is being delivered at a scale that allows for reasonable impact measurement against a counterfactual/comparison group controlling for potential biasing factors, such as demographic characteristics of participants (i.e. there is adequate statistical power for a statistical analysis in accordance with evidence standards).	❑	❑	❑	❑

Program Readiness *(*existing support for evaluation and evidence building at the program and stakeholder level, operational readiness, program scale, maturity and stability.)	*Indicate to what extent each statement is true.*			
	Not at all true	**Somewhat true**	**True**	**Not applicable**

Additional Comments on Program Readiness:

Evaluation Readiness (Program has a history of, and focus on, evaluation, as well as the resources, structure, capacity, scope, and size to engage in rigorous impact evaluation. In addition, the program has an evaluation partner/team in place that has the experience and skills necessary for this type of evaluation.)	*Indicate to what extent each statement is true.*			
	Not at all true	**Somewhat true**	**True**	**Not applicable**
Past Evidence/Evaluation Work				
A process evaluation or implementation analysis has been (or is currently being) conducted to ensure that the program intervention is implemented as envisioned, reaching the expected target group, leading to expected results, and to assess program participation, engagement, satisfaction, quality, and efficiency. For example,	❑	❑	❑	❑
• The process evaluation showed (or shows) that the program is serving/reaching its target population.	❑	❑	❑	❑
• The process evaluation showed (or shows) that planned activities are implemented as intended; services are delivered in sufficient amount and quality.	❑	❑	❑	❑
• The process evaluation showed (or shows) that participants and other key stakeholders are satisfied with the program.	❑	❑	❑	❑
There is agreement across the program and stakeholders as well as evaluation partner(s) as to what program outcomes are, and on what types of outcomes data should be collected.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Outcomes are relevant to the services and program's objectives, and clearly expressed in the program's logic model. Outcomes may be expressed as short-term, intermediate, or long-term objectives.	❑	❑	❑	❑
• Current outcome measures are relevant and valid indicators of progress toward program objectives. For example, pre- post data show evidence that program beneficiaries experience a change in attitude, awareness, knowledge, behavior or condition.	❑	❑	❑	❑
• The program selects its current outcome measures and targets in conjunction with external standards of effectiveness.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Outcomes are defined in quantifiable, measurable terms, and procedures for measuring outcomes have been implemented.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Performance data (i.e., performance measures) are routinely collected.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Prior outcome evaluations have been conducted and there is supporting evidence that the program is producing the desired results for participants/beneficiaries, and there is a compelling case for allocating resources for conducting an impact evaluation.	❑	❑	❑	❑
There is a shared understanding regarding the existing evidence behind the intervention/model by program stakeholders and evaluation partner(s).	❑	❑	❑	❑
Evaluation Questions				

Evaluation Readiness (Program has a history of, and focus on, evaluation, as well as the resources, structure, capacity, scope, and size to engage in rigorous impact evaluation. In addition, the program has an evaluation partner/team in place that has the experience and skills necessary for this type of evaluation.)	*Indicate to what extent each statement is true.*			
	Not at all true	**Somewhat true**	**True**	**Not applicable**
Evaluation questions are clearly stated and they cover what key stakeholders (including program staff) want to learn about the program.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Evaluation questions are in line with proposed methods of evaluation and program design.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Any current evaluation questions consider both process and outcomes and seek to understand the why, how, and cause and effect of program impact.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Program Evaluation Readiness				
The program's intentions for expanding or advancing the outcomes/impacts to be measured for the current project are clearly planned out, and sufficiently resourced and feasible.	❑	❑	❑	❑
The program has capacity (expertise, skills, staff time) to conduct an evaluation internally or in partnership with an external partner, or to work with an external evaluator to plan and implement an impact evaluation.	❑	❑	❑	❑
If the evaluation will involve contracting with an external and independent evaluator, the program must have the capacity to effectively contract with and monitor work of the external evaluators such that:				
• The program has or can set clear criteria for selecting which evaluator will be hired.	❑	❑	❑	❑
• The program has or can set a clear plan for effective communication with the evaluation contractor, and means (e.g. staff time and knowledge) for monitoring evaluator activities.	❑	❑	❑	❑
• The program is capable of developing a contract that meets the needs and requirements of parties involved, which include the program itself, funding partner(s), and the evaluation partner.	❑	❑	❑	❑
The program has internal evaluation capabilities and processes in place to allow for clear communication with evaluation partner(s).	❑	❑	❑	❑
Proposed Evaluation Partner(s)				
The proposed evaluation partner has previous experience in the following sub-categories:				
• Has substantial experience with the logistics of running rigorous experimental or quasi-experimental evaluations.	❑	❑	❑	❑
• Has a team of trained and experienced evaluators.	❑	❑	❑	❑
• Is experienced with evaluations of comparable programs (similar size, scope, and focus)	❑	❑	❑	❑
• Is experienced with conducting data collection of the type anticipated for the evaluation.	❑	❑	❑	❑
• Is experienced with conducting data collection with the target population for the study.	❑	❑	❑	❑

Evaluation Readiness (Program has a history of, and focus on, evaluation, as well as the resources, structure, capacity, scope, and size to engage in rigorous impact evaluation. In addition, the program has an evaluation partner/team in place that has the experience and skills necessary for this type of evaluation.)	*Indicate to what extent each statement is true.*			
	Not at all true	**Somewhat true**	**True**	**Not applicable**
• Is experienced with the collection and analysis of impact data from more than one time point (e.g. pre-post or time series), including management of data at the level of analysis anticipated for the evaluation (e.g. individual, group, multi-level). • Has no conflicts of interest, if hired.	❑ ❑ ❑	❑ ❑ ❑	❑ ❑ ❑	❑ ❑ ❑
The proposed evaluation partner: • Is able to mobilize data collection and management teams in the regions where the study is to be conducted, with evaluators able to conduct interviews, administer surveys, and collect other forms of data. • Is able to place a qualified researcher/evaluator in charge. This individual must be willing and able to work closely with the program evaluation team and provide informed input. • Is able to provide qualified and experienced individuals to support the desired evaluation design.	❑ ❑ ❑	❑ ❑ ❑	❑ ❑ ❑	❑ ❑ ❑
The proposed evaluation partner: • Is willing to commit to a study that will most likely have multiple modes of data collection, at multiple time points. • Is willing/able to respond to requirements, criteria and input from the program, the key program funding partner, and any funding evaluation partners (e.g. in the case of multi-site evaluations of initiatives).	❑ ❑	❑ ❑	❑ ❑	❑ ❑
An appropriate or reasonable budget is available and allocated to the evaluation. The evaluation budget is adequate for the type of evaluation design envisioned and in line with expectations about the work.	❑	❑	❑	❑
There are agreements and capabilities across the program and stakeholders for developing a timeline for, and timely production of evaluation deliverables, and to publish, communicate, and/or disseminate deliverables/findings.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Specific Evaluation Requirements/Logistics/Pre-Requisites				
There is agreement and commitment from all necessary program staff and stakeholders regarding the collection and use of data that is needed for evaluation purposes, including data relating to participant/beneficiary satisfaction, outcomes and impacts.	❑	❑	❑	❑
If the program is going to rely on administrative/secondary data, access to such data is possible and the needed agreements (e.g. Memoranda of Understanding) can be secured.	❑	❑	❑	❑
If a randomized controlled trial is to be conducted, sites are on board with the approach and ready to work with evaluators to assign an eligible pool of potential participants into treatment and control groups.	❑	❑	❑	❑

Evaluation Readiness (Program has a history of, and focus on, evaluation, as well as the resources, structure, capacity, scope, and size to engage in rigorous impact evaluation. In addition, the program has an evaluation partner/team in place that has the experience and skills necessary for this type of evaluation.)	*Indicate to what extent each statement is true.*			
	Not at all true	**Somewhat true**	**True**	**Not applicable**
The program design is such that periods of baseline and follow-up data collection can be defined for evaluation purposes (i.e. participant baseline measures can be collected or obtained prior to program service delivery.)	❑	❑	❑	❑
The program (and stakeholders, if necessary) has a viable management information system, and efficient record-keeping processes. The program has a demonstrated capacity to generate data (e.g. client records, survey data, progress reports) that can be exported to others and merged for evaluation use.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Data will be effectively updated, archived, and securely stored.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Staff members are well trained to collect data and use the information system.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Risks/threats to rigorous evaluation have been identified, and risk monitoring and mitigation strategies have been proposed or are currently in place.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Human Subjects				
Requirements around human subject protection are considered and addressed in line with the proper Institutional Review Board (IRB).	❑	❑	❑	❑
The program has adequately outlined a plan for obtaining consent forms if needed as well as handling, securely storing, and sufficiently destroying personally identifiable data.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Evaluation Timeframe				
The timing of the evaluation is commensurate with the timeframe of the program and when intended outcomes can be measured or observed (e.g. longer than program intervention timeframe) and in line with the duration of the grant (i.e. before the grant period ends).	❑	❑	❑	❑
Comparison or Control Group				
There are enough individuals and/or sites participating in the program (depending on the unit at which program participation is assigned) to allow for comparison group analysis. In other words, the program is of sufficient size that can leave enough potential participants and/or sites unserved to allowing the formation of a matched comparison or randomly assigned control group of sufficient size to make statistical comparisons possible.	❑	❑	❑	❑
The comparison or control group can be formed from individuals who are within the same school, community, or other comparable grouping as the participating group.	❑	❑	❑	❑

Evaluation Readiness (Program has a history of, and focus on, evaluation, as well as the resources, structure, capacity, scope, and size to engage in rigorous impact evaluation. In addition, the program has an evaluation partner/team in place that has the experience and skills necessary for this type of evaluation.)	*Indicate to what extent each statement is true.*			
	Not at all true	**Somewhat true**	**True**	**Not applicable**
If the program cannot be assigned randomly, a sufficient sample size and amount of background data will be available for statistical adjustment and analysis during the evaluation.	❑	❑	❑	❑
If one evaluation design will not address key threats to internal validity, there is a way to construct a combined design where two or more separate study components combine to sufficiently reduce multiple threats to internal validity (e.g. History-, Time-, and Site-related factors are potential confounds, meaning they could be omitted factors that caused the results) and allow justifiable causal claims.	❑	❑	❑	❑
Additional Comments:				

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