Special supplemental resource for

Utilization-Focused Evaluation, 5th edition

Workshop resource for Utilization-Focused Evaluation

ANALYZING AND ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS TO ENHANCE EVALUATION USE

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Introduction

Evaluators overwhelmingly acknowledge the importance of working with stakeholders and of focusing evaluations on optimizing intended use by intended users (Preskill and Caracelli, 1997; Fleischer, 2007), which is the guiding principle of utilization-focused evaluation (Patton, 2008). In this chapter we focus on analyzing and engaging stakeholders in order to: (1) identify who the key stakeholders are, and in particular, who the intended users are; (2) clarify the purposes and goals of the evaluation; and (3) specify which stakeholders should be worked with, in what ways, and at which stages of the evaluation process, in order to increase the chances that the evaluation serves its intended purpose for its intended users. We start from the premise that careful analysis should precede stakeholder engagement, although some engagement may be necessary in order to do good analysis.. Seven stakeholder identification and analysis techniques will be described that are particularly useful for these purposes.

The workshop resource has seven sections in addition to this brief introduction. The first involves a discussion of what is meant by the term stakeholder. Stakeholders' interests and goals may be compatible or may be in direct conflict initially, but it is

generally possible to find considerable common ground and agreement on what an evaluation's purposes are and how best to proceed. The second section summarizes what the evaluation literature says about identifying and engaging with primary intended evaluation users. In the third section we present stakeholder identification and analysis techniques . The fourth section offers additional suggestions on how to use stakeholder analysis to help determine more precisely the evaluation's mission and goals. The fifth section presents the final stakeholder analysis technique, a matrix helpful for figuring out how to engage stakeholders and for what reasons in various steps in an evaluation process. The sixth section discusses the need for flexibility, adaptability, and situational responsiveness in rapidly changing evaluation situations; our suggestions involve the need for continuing analysis and probably changing engagement tactics. The final section offers a summary and several conclusions.

Who Is a Stakeholder – and Especially a Key Stakeholder?

Attention to stakeholders in evaluation practice has gained prominence for both practical and ethical reasons. Based on the accumulated evidence, attention to, and involvement of, key stakeholders has been demonstrated to enhance the design and implementation of evaluations and the use of evaluation results in decision making (Patton, 2008, pp. 66 – 79). Beyond that, the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluations (1994) argues that several principles should guide any evaluation: utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy. Doing so would appear to be quite difficult without careful attention to stakeholders. Similarly, it would be hard to follow the Guiding Principles for Evaluators of the American Evaluation Association (AEA, 1995) without attending to stakeholders. The principles include: systematic inquiry,

providing competent performance to stakeholders, integrity and honesty, respect for people, and responsibility for the general and public welfare.

The definition of *stakeholder* is consequential as it affects *who* and *what* counts (Mitchell, Agle and Wood 1997). We therefore define stakeholders as *individuals, groups, or organizations that can affect or are affected by an evaluation process and/or its findings.* The definition is purposefully broad so that the full range of possible stakeholders is considered. Key stakeholders, and specifically primary intended users, will be a subset of this group, but who is "key" will always be a judgment call and a matter for negotiation. Beyond that, Patton (2008, p. 72) defines primary intended users as a subset of key stakeholders. They are:

> Those *specific* stakeholders selected to work with the evaluator throughout the evaluation to focus the evaluation, participate in making design and methods decisions, and interpret the results to assure that the evaluation is useful, meaningful, relevant, and credible. Primary intended users represent key and diverse stakeholder constituencies and have responsibility for transmitting evaluation findings to those constituencies for use.

Such inclusive thinking about stakeholders early on is consistent with (but broader than) the *Encyclopedia of Evaluation* definition of stakeholders as "people who have a stake or a vested interest in the program, policy, or product being evaluated…and therefore also have a stake in the evaluation" (Greene, 2005, p. 397). Greene clusters stakeholders into four groups: "(a) people who have decision authority over the program, including other policy makers, funders, and advisory boards; (b) people who have direct responsibility for the program, including program developers, administrators in the organization implementing the program, program managers, and direct service staff; (c) people who are the intended beneficiaries of the program, their families, and their communities; and (d) people disadvantaged by the program, as in lost funding

opportunities" (pp. 397-8). But others with a direct, or even indirect, interest in program (or other evaluand) effectiveness may be considered stakeholders, including journalists, members of civil society, the general public, or, more specifically, taxpayers in the case of public programs.

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Beginning by defining stakeholders broadly leads inevitably to the finding that the stakeholders of any particular evaluation will have diverse and often competing interests. No evaluation can answer all potential questions equally well. This means that some process is necessary for narrowing the range of possible questions to focus the evaluation, which in turn necessitates focusing on a narrower list of potential stakeholders that form the group of key stakeholders, and subsequently attending to the subset of key stakeholders who are primary intended users of the evaluation.

Identifying and Working with Primary Intended Users

As context for the specific stakeholder identification and analysis techniques presented in subsequent sections, we present here what research on evaluation use has revealed about identifying and working with primary intended users (Patton, 2008). Our summary is presented in the form of a set of guidelines for evaluators:

1. **Develop facilitation skills**. Evaluators need skills in building relationships, facilitating groups, managing conflict, walking political tight ropes, and engaging in effective interpersonal communications in order to work with evaluation stakeholders. Technical skills and social science knowledge aren't sufficient to get evaluations used. People skills are critical. Ideals of rational decision making in modern organizations notwithstanding, personal and political dynamics affect what really happens. Evaluators

without the savvy and skills to deal with people and politics will find their work largely ignored or, worse yet, used inappropriately.

How do you do this? Practice and feedback. Look for opportunities to observe and engage in facilitation with experienced evaluators. When you do facilitate, evaluate how it went; get formal feedback from those involved. That's how you get better.

2. **Find and train evaluation information users**. In order to work with primary intended users to achieve intended uses, the evaluation process must surface people who want to know something and are therefore willing to use information that an evaluation might provide. The number of people may vary from one prime user to a fairly large group representing several constituencies, for example, a task force of program staff, clients, funders, administrators, board members, community representatives, and officials or policy makers. One survey of evaluators indicates that *six* primary intended users is the median number typically involved directly in an evaluation project (Cousins, Donohue, and Bloom, 1996). While stakeholders' points of view may vary on any number of issues, what they should share is a genuine interest in using evaluation, an interest manifest in a willingness to take the time and effort to work through their information needs and interests. They should also be willing to take the time to be trained in evaluation options and learn enough about methods to make informed choices. Even people initially inclined to value evaluation often will still need training and support to become effective information users. If users are not willing to be trained, perhaps people whose opinions they value can be found and persuaded to convince them. If they still are not willing, the chances increase that the evaluation will not serve its stakeholders well, and indeed will be misused. (It may be more diplomatic to talk about building or increasing the capacity

to use evaluation, or supporting professional development for use rather than "training." Whatever the language, the point is to develop the mindset and skills needed to support and enhance use.)

How do you do find and train evaluation information users? Inquire into the skills, interests, and interpersonal approaches of those being considered as primary intended users. Make training primary intended users an explicit part of the evaluation design so that adequate time and resources are included in the evaluation plan.

3**. Find "tipping point" connectors.** Formal position and authority are only partial guides in identifying primary users. Evaluators must find strategically located people who are committed, competent, and connected — in short, who are *tipping point* connectors, people who are looked to by others for information (Gladwell 2002). Research on evaluation use suggests that more may sometimes be accomplished by working with a lower-level person displaying these characteristics than by working with a passive, disinterested person in a higher position. However, the lower level person needs to be able to connect with, have credibility with, and be able to influence higher level people. Evaluation use is clearly facilitated by having genuine support from the program and organizational leadership. Those people are not always the best for detailed, hands-on engagement along the way, but reaching them with findings remains essential.

How do yoy find "tipping point" connectors? Do a network analysis of those being considered as primary intended users. Ask about who is viewed as connected to whom and who has influence with key decision makers.

4. **Facilitate high quality interactions**. Quality, quantity, and timing of interactions with intended users are all important — but *quality* is most important. A

large volume of interaction between evaluators and users with little substance may backfire and actually reduce stakeholder interest. Evaluators must be strategic and sensitive in asking for time and involvement from busy people, and be sure they're interacting with the right people around relevant issues. Increased contact by itself is likely to accomplish little, nor will interaction with people not oriented toward use. It is the nature and quality of interactions between evaluators and decision makers that is at issue. Our own experience suggests that where the right people are involved, the amount of direct contact can sometimes be reduced because the interactions that do occur are of such high quality.

How do you facilitate high quality interactions? Given the evaluation situation and people involved, develop explicit criteria with the group for what constitutes high quality, then evaluate with those involved how well the process is unfolding on those criteria.

5. **Nurture interest in evaluation**. Evaluators will typically have to work to build and sustain interest in evaluation use. Identifying and working with intended users is part selection and part nurturance. Potential users with low opinions of or little interest in evaluation may have had bad prior experiences or just not have given much thought to the benefits of evaluation.

How do you nurture interest in evaluation? Find out what issues are relevant to those involved and work with them to make those issues the focus of the evaluation.

6. **Demonstrate cultural sensitivity and competence**. Involvement of stakeholders and primary intended users has to be adapted to cultural and contextual factors (SenGupta, Hopson, and Thompson-Robinson, 2004; Symonette 2004).

Respecting and honoring culture is a significant dimension of making evaluation credible to people from different backgrounds. Culture is personal. Everyone who comes to the evaluation table brings culture with them. To ignore it is to disrespect those present and imperil **use.**

How do you demonstrate cultural sensitivity and competence? Check in with those involved about priority cukltural sensitivities and issues. Don't just guess. Don't just operate out of your own stereotypes or biases. Inquire about these issues from knowledgeable people and those involved. Get feedback and use it.

7. **Anticipate turnover of intended users**. One implication of the importance of personal connections concerns the problem of turnover. Turnover in primary intended users can be the Achilles Heel of utilization-focused evaluation unless evaluators watch for, anticipate, and plan for turnover. The longer the timeframe for the evaluation, the more important it is to engage with multiple intended users, build in some overlap, and, when turnover happens, bring new people up-to-speed quickly. This will sometimes involve making some later stage design changes, if that is possible, to get their buy-in and increase their sense of ownership of the evaluation.

How do you anticipate turnover? In the initial selection of primary intended users, consider back-ups and potential substitutes. As the evaluation unfolds, check in regularly with those involved about whether their circumstances are changing. With these guidelines as context, we turn to specific stakeholder identification and analysis techniques.

Stakeholder Identification and Analysis Techniques

Practical program evaluators will find seven stakeholder identification and analysis techniques particularly useful. The techniques are:

- Basic stakeholder identification and analysis technique
- Choosing evaluation stakeholder analysis participants
- Purpose network diagram (or purpose hierarchy)
- Power versus interest grid
- Stakeholder influence diagram
- Bases of power – directions of interest diagram
- Evaluation stakeholder engagement planning matrix

In this section we discuss the first six in enough detail for readers to get a good idea of what is involved in using them. (The remaining technique is presented in a subsequent section.) As you will see, there are overlapping activities involved in using several of these techniques as they may build on previous work. Further guidance on these and additional techniques will be found in Bryson (2004a, 2004b) and Patton (2008).

All of the techniques are fairly simply in concept and easy to carry out. Most can be completed in 1 – 2 hours, although considerable additional time may be spent discussing and modifying the results. Only the choosing evaluation stakeholder analysis participants technique will take longer, but even it should not take more than a total of one or one and one-half work days to complete. The key resources need to undertake these analyses are at least some time, effort, and reasonably informed participants. For example, someone or a small analysis group must initiate the process. (Note that this analysis group will likely not be the same as the evaluation's primary intended users, a group that will be finalized as a result of the analyses.) Evaluation sponsors (i.e., persons with enough authority and/or power to insist on an evaluation) or process champions (i.e., persons who focus on managing the day-to-day effort and keeping everyone on track) may be a part of the group, or else may be identified as part of the process. The actual

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important, and suggests the order in which the techniques should be
used." Suppose we say that 1,2 3, and 7 are fundamental and will always be used to some extent. The other three (4,5, and 6) are specially useful where there is a larger number of stakeholders with important power differences. We could even group those three approaches together under a heading: Dealing with Power Differentials. That's what occurs for me in dealing with his feedback. If you agree with this approach, I can do it.

evaluator(s) also may be a part of this group, but may be selected later. Additionally, applying the techniques relies on standard facilitation materials such as flip charts, marking pens, tape, colored stick-on dots, and so on. The bottom line is that the typical necessary resource expenditures are miniscule when compared with the opportunity costs of a less than adequate evaluation performance.

After completing the techniques discussed below, it should be possible to articulate:

- who the evaluation sponsor(s) is
- who the day-to-day process champion(s) is, meaning the day-to-day evaluation process manager; this person may be the evaluator, but maybe not
- who the stakeholders, key stakeholders, and primary intended users are
- what the purpose(s) or intended use(s) of the evaluation is
- who the members are of an evaluation coordinating committee or task force, if one is to be formed
- how the different stakeholders will be involved at different stages in the evaluation process
- who the evaluator (s) is, or at least what his or her qualifications should be; and who the members of any required evaluation team might be. Note that, depending on the circumstances, this team may or may not be the same as either the initial analysis group mentioned above or the primary intended users

The Basic Stakeholder Identification and Analysis Technique

The basic analysis technique is a good place to start. The technique is an adaptation of a technique described in Bryson (2004a, 2004b). It offers a quick and useful way of identifying stakeholders and their interests in the program and/or the evaluation. The techniques also helps surface or highlight some key evaluation issues, and begins the process of identifying coalitions of support and opposition for use of the evaluation's results. Bryson (2004b) describes how this technique was used to begin evaluating the performance of a state department of natural resources in the United States, because it showed participants how existing strategies ignored important stakeholders – who refused

to be ignored – as well as what might be done to satisfy the stakeholders. The evaluation results were used to successfully bring about major changes in the organization. The technique utilizes the following steps:

- Start by assembling a small analysis group of reasonably well-informed participants who think doing a user-focused evaluation might be a good thing
- Have the group brainstorm the list of potential stakeholders
- Prepare a separate flipchart sheet for each stakeholder
- Place a stakeholder's name at the top of each sheet
- Create two columns
- Label the left-hand column "Stake or Interest in the Program," meaning what do they want to get out of the program, or what do they want the program to produce?
- Label the right-hand column "Stake or Interest in the Evaluation," that is, what do they want to get out of the evaluation, or what do they want the evaluation to produce?
- In each column, have group members enter as many possibilities as they can think of
- If appropriate, have the group examine the left-hand column and make an initial assessment of how well they think the stakeholder thinks the program is doing *from the stakeholder's point of view*, not the evaluator's or someone else's point of view. Use colored dots to indicate a stakeholder judgment of *good* (green), *fair* (yellow), or *poor* (red)
- Identify and record what can be done quickly to satisfy each stakeholder
- Identify and record longer term issues with individual stakeholders and with stakeholders as a group regarding both the program and the evaluation

Additional steps might be included such as:

- Discuss how each stakeholder influences the program and/or the evaluation
- Decide what the evaluators needs from each stakeholder
- Rank the stakeholders according to their importance to the evaluation. When doing so consider the stakeholder's power, legitimacy, and attention-getting capacity (Mitchell Agle and Wood 1997).

Choosing Evaluation Stakeholder Analysis Participants

It may be necessary to engage a larger group to do the stakeholder analyses than small group mentioned with the previous technique. Deciding who should be involved, how, and when in doing stakeholder analyses is a key strategic choice. In general, people should be involved if they have information that cannot be gained otherwise, or if their

participation is necessary to assure a successful evaluation process built on the analyses. There can be too much or too little participation, but determining the appropriate amount depends on the situation and there is little hard and fast guidance to be offered. There are likely to be important trade-offs between early and later participation in analyses and one or more of the following: representation, accountability, analysis quality, analysis credibility, analysis legitimacy, the ability to act based on the analyses, or other factors, and these will need to be thought through. Fortunately, "the choices" actually can be approached as a sequence of choices, in which first an individual, who may be the evaluator, or a small stakeholder analysis group, begins the effort by doing a prelimnary version of the basic analysis technique and/or purpose network diagram; then other participants are added later as the advisability of doing so becomes apparent.

One way to approach the task is to use a five-step process in which a decision can be made to stop any time after the first step. You might stop, for example, because you have enough information and support to proceed, timelines are short, the analyses are too sensitive, or for some other good reason. The steps are as follows:

- The evaluator or a small stakeholder analysis group initiates the process by brainstorming and simply listing all potential stakeholders. (This is the same as the first step in the basic analysis technique, so if the list has already been created, start with it.) This step is useful in helping sponsors and champions of the evaluation effort think strategically about how to proceed. This step is typically "back room" work. Necessary additional information inputs may be garnered through the use of interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, or other targeted information gathering techniques in this and subsequent steps, or in conjunction with the other techniques outlined in this workshop. The step is important not only to help make sure all stakeholders are identified, but to do so at the right level of aggregation, meaning at a level that makes sense from a strategic perspective (Eden and Ackermann 1998). For example, usually "the government" is not a stakeholder, but some parts of it, or individuals in it, might be.

- After reviewing the results of the first step, a larger group of stakeholders can be assembled. This meeting can be viewed as the more public beginning of the

evaluation effort. The assembled group should be asked to brainstorm the list of stakeholders who might need to be involved in the evaluation effort (or review and revise as necessary a previously developed list). After this work has been completed, the group should be encouraged to think carefully about who is not at the meeting who should be at subsequent meetings. The group should consider actual or potential stakeholders' power, legitimacy, and attention-getting capacity (Mitchell, Agle, and Wood 1997). The group should carefully think through the positive and negative consequences of involving – or not – other stakeholders or their representatives, and in what ways to do so.

- After these conversations have been completed, the "full" group should be assembled – the group that includes everyone who should be involved in the stakeholder analyses. The previous analyses may need to be repeated, at least in part, with the full group present in order to get everyone "on the same page" and "bought in" and to make any needed corrections or modifications to prior analyses.

- Lastly, after the full group has met, it should be possible to finalize who the primary intended users of the evaluation are and who will have some role to play in the evaluation effort, for example: sponsors and champions; the primary intended users themselves; the evaluation team, if there will be one; coordinating group or task force, if there will be one; and various advisory or support groups (Bryson 2004a, pp. 73 – 75; Patton, 2008, pp. 69-75).

Note that this staged process embodies a kind of technical, political, and ethical rationality. The process is designed to gain needed information, build political acceptance, and address some important questions about legitimacy, representation, and credibility. Stakeholders are included when there are good and prudent reasons to do so, but not when their involvement is impractical, unnecessary, or imprudent. Clearly, the choices of whom to include, how, when, and why can be quite challenging to make. There is no way of escaping the need for wise, politically savvy, and ethical judgments if a credible evaluation is to be produced that will be used as intended by its intended users.

Purpose Network Diagram

Stakeholder analyses and involvements as part of an evaluation process should be undertaken for a clear purpose and that purpose, or purposes, should be articulated as clearly and as early as possible in the process – while also understanding that purposes may change over time. The purpose network diagram can be very helpful in this regard. The technique is adapted from Bryson, Ackermann, and Eden (2007).

A purpose network (or hierarchy) diagram indicates the various inter-related purposes that the evaluation might serve. These ideally will include the overarching purposes, or mission; major subordinate purposes, or goals; and purposes subordinate to but supportive of goals, that typically would be referred to as objectives. Note that the evaluation's purpose must mesh at least in part with the interests of key stakeholders, or the evaluation process will not get off the ground, or the evaluation process and its findings will be misused or ignored. The other techniques discussed in this workshop can help assure a co-alignment of key stakeholder interests and evaluation purposes. Of particular use in this regard is the bases of power – directions of interest diagram discussed below.

Once the network of purposes is created, it typically is possible to identify the primary intended purposes or use(s) of the evaluation, at least in draft form, and to think strategically about subsequent stakeholder identification, analysis and involvement. A final version of the diagram may need to wait until some of the techniques presented later are put to use and their results assessed. In other words, the initial analysis group should consider constructing an initial purpose network diagram very early on in the process to help clarify evaluation purposes and to guide subsequent stakeholder identification, analysis, and engagement efforts. But the analysis group clearly should recognize the

tentative nature of this early diagram. The diagram should be revisited and typically revised as additional information becomes available.

The following steps are used to create a purpose network diagram:

- Prior to using the technique, analysis participants should familiarize themselves with the generic intended uses, or purposes, of evaluation discussed in the next major section. These purposes relate to: (1) the type of evaluation being undertaken, (2) the stage of a program's development, and (3) the desired outcomes of the evaluation process itself, in contrast to the findings.

- After this is done, tape four flip chart sheets to a wall to form a single surface two sheets high and two sheets wide with one-inch overlaps where they join.

- The analysis group then brainstorms a list of possible purposes (i.e., the potential set of goals, aims, outcome indicators, aspirations, mandated requirements, and critical success factors) for the evaluation and places each on a 3" by 5" self-adhesive label. Purpose statements should begin with a verb (get, produce, create, show, demonstrate, etc.) and include only a single purpose (meaning do not include "and" or "or" or "in order to" in the statement).

- The labels are then be attached to the flip chart-covered surface

- The group should then should then rearrange the labels as needed to construct a causal network (or hierarchy) indicating how purposes are linked by inserting arrows to indicate the direction of causation (or influence or support). Arrows indicate how fulfilling one purposes helps fulfill a subsequent purpose(s); in other words, the arrows go from a means to an end, or an action to an outcome, in the form of links in a chain. Arrows should be made with a soft-lead pencil so that the group can move labels around, erase arrows, or otherwise change its mind.

- Once the network (or hierarchy) is created, the group should decide which purposes are the actual primary intended and subsidiary purpose(s) of the evaluation. Note that the primary intended purpose may end up being different from what group members or other stakeholders originally thought. It is also possible – perhaps even likely – that the purpose(s) may be changed somewhat based on further stakeholder analyses.

Power Versus Interest Grid.

Power versus interest grids are described in detail by Eden and Ackermann (1998, pp. 121-125, 344-346; see also Bryson, 2004b, 340 – 343; Patton 2008, p. 80). These grids array stakeholders on a two-by-two matrix where the dimensions are the

stakeholder's interest (in a political sense as opposed to simple inquisitiveness) in the evaluation or issue at hand, and the stakeholder's power to affect the evaluation process or use of evaluation findings. Four categories of stakeholders result:

- ***Players -- have both an interest and significant power***. Players have high potential as primary intended users. These are often key stakeholders who are in a prime position to affect use, including using it themselves as well as drawing the attention of others.
- ***Subjects – have an interest but little power.*** It may be important to support and enhance Subjects' capacity to be involved, especially when they may be affected by findings, as would be program participants.
- ***Context Setters – have power but little direct interest.*** It may be important to increase the interest of Context Setters in the evaluation if they are likely to pose barriers to use through their disinterest.
- ***Crowd -- consists of stakeholders with little interest or power***. The Crowd may need to be informed about the evaluation and its findings. On the other hand, if communication is badly done, controversy may quickly turn this amorphous "crowd" into a very interested mob.

Power versus interest grids typically help determine which players' interests and power *must* be taken into account in order to produce a credible evaluation. Players, in other words, are almost by definition key stakeholders. The grid also helps highlight coalitions to be encouraged or discouraged and whose "buy in" should be sought or who should be "co-opted." Finally, they may provide some information on how to convince stakeholders to change their views. Interestingly, the knowledge gained from the use of such a grid can be used to help advance the interests of the relatively powerless subjects (Bryson Cunningham and Lokkesmoe, 2002).

A power versus interest grid is constructed as follows:

- Tape four flip chart sheets to a wall to form a single surface two sheets high and two sheets wide.

- Draw the two axes on the surface using a marking pen. The vertical axis is labeled *interest* from low to high; while the horizontal axis is labeled *power* from low to high

- The analysis group brainstorms the names of stakeholders by writing the names of different stakeholders as they come to mind on a 1.5" x 2" (2.5 cm x 5 cm) self-adhesive label, one stakeholder per label. Alternatively, if the choosing stakeholder analysis participants or basic analysis technique has been performed, the names can be taken from those lists

- Guided by the deliberations and judgments of the analysis group members, a facilitator should place each label in the appropriate spot on the grid according to the group's judgment. Labels should be collected in round-robin fashion, one label per group member, until all labels (other than duplicates) are placed on the grid or eliminated for some reason.

- Labels should be moved around until all group members are satisfied with the *relative* location of each stakeholder on the grid.

- The group should discuss the implications of the resulting stakeholder placements

Stakeholder Influence Diagram

Stakeholder influence diagrams indicate how the stakeholders on a power versus interest grid influence one another. The technique is taken from Eden and Ackermann (1998: 349-350; see also Bryson Cunningham and Lokkesmoe 2002) and begins with a power versus interest grid. Understanding influence relationship adds depth to a power versus interest grid analysis in three ways by: (1) showing: which actors are central to moving forward the evaluation process or use of findings, and which are more peripheral; (2) indicating where existing channels of influence are and where they might need to be created; and (3) clarifying where coalitions in support of the evaluation process and use of findings exist or might be formed The steps in developing such a diagram are as follows:

- The analysis group should start with a power versus interest grid and then for each stakeholder on the grid suggest lines of influence from one stakeholder to another

- A facilitator should draw in the lines with a soft-lead pencil
- Two-way influences are possible, but an attempt should be made to identify the primary direction in which influence flows between stakeholders
- Engage in a dialogue about which influence relationships exist, which are most important, and what the primary direction of influence is
- Once final agreement is reached the pencil lines should be made permanent with a marking pen
- The results and implications of the resulting diagram should be discussed, including identifying who the most influential or central stakeholders are and what the implications are for coalition formation

Bases of Power – Directions of Interest Diagram

This technique builds on the power versus interest grid and a stakeholder influence diagram and involves looking more closely at selected stakeholders in more detail, including the most influential or central stakeholders. A bases of power – directions of interest diagram can be created for each stakeholder or for a subset of stakeholders. The technique is an adaptation of Eden and Ackermann's "star diagrams" (1998: 126-128 346-349; see also Bryson, Cunningham, and Lokkesmoe 2002).

A diagram of this kind indicates the sources of power available to the stakeholder, as well as the goals or interests the stakeholder seeks to achieve or serve (see Figure 1). Power can come from access to or control over various resources, such as expertise, money and votes, network centrality, or formal authority; or from access to or control over various sanctions, such as regulatory authority or votes of no confidence (Eden and Ackermann 1998: 126-7). Directions of interest indicate the aspirations or concerns of the stakeholder. When used in the context of evaluation, the diagrams typically focus on the stakeholder's bases of power and directions of interest *in relation*

to a program (or other evaluand) and/or the evaluation; that is, they seek to identify the powers that might affect achievement of the program and/or the evaluation.

Insert Figure 1 Here – Bases of Power – Directions of Interest Diagram

There are two reasons for constructing the diagrams. The first is to help the stakeholder analysis group find the common ground – especially in terms of interest – across all or subsets of the stakeholder groups. After exploring the power bases and interests of each stakeholder, the team will be in a position to identify commonalities across the stakeholders as a whole, or across particular subgroups. Second, the diagrams are intended to provide background information on each stakeholder in order to know how to tap into their interests or make use of their power to advance the evaluation's purpose, credibility, and use.

A bases of power – directions of interest diagram may be constructed as follows:

- Attach a flipchart to a wall. Write the stakeholder's name in the middle of the sheet
- Specify whether the focus is on the stakeholder's power and interests in general, or more specifically in relation to the program or the evaluation
- The analysis group then brainstorms possible bases of power for the stakeholder and the facilitator writes these on the bottom half of the sheet
- Based on discussion within the group, arrows are drawn on the diagram from the power base to the stakeholder, and between power bases to indicate how one power base is linked to another
- The planning team then brainstorms goals or interests they believe the stakeholder has, either in general or else in relation to the program and/or the evaluation. The facilitator writes these on the top half of the sheet. Arrows are drawn from the stakeholder to the goals or interests. Arrows are also used to link goals and interests when appropriate
- A thorough discussion of each diagram and its implications should occur

Determining the Evaluation's Mission and Goals

When clarifying the evaluation's mission and goals, it is certainly useful to keep in mind a number of generic purposes or intended uses of evaluation that depend on: (1) the type of evaluation being undertaken, (2) the stage of a program's development, and (3) the desired outcomes of the evaluation process itself, in contrast to the findings. Patton identifies six generic intended uses of findings (see Table 1). These include facilitating: (1) overall summative judgment; (2) formative program improvement and learning; (3) accountability; (4) monitoring; (5) development to adapt to complex, emergent, and dynamic conditions; and (6) knowledge generation to enhance general understandings and identify generic principles of effectiveness (2008, pp. 97 – 149; see also pp. 300 – 305). Each purpose implies different primary evaluation questions, types of evaluation approaches, key factors affecting use, and – crucially – different primary intended users. The point should be clear: different purposes or intended uses entail significantly different choices along a range of dimensions. Having said that, most evaluation efforts are likely to embody some blend of purposes and only dialogue among key stakeholders, and especially among primary intended users, can settle what the precise blend should be in order to ensure an appropriate evaluation design and effective use of findings.

Insert Table 1 About Here

The stage of program development also has important implications for both the purposes and design of evaluation processes. Patton (2008, pp. 56-77) identifies eight stages of program development (see Table 2). At each stage, different kinds of evaluation questions are asked, and different kinds of evaluation processes are called for. For

example, when the program is at the needs assessment stage evaluation can be used to help determine the extent to which community needs and standards are being met. When program alternatives are being designed, logic modeling can be used to clarify causal relations among different program elements to determine which alternatives are most likely to produce the desired outcomes. When the program is in operation, formative evaluations can be used to discern what is working well and what program improvement might be made. When overall program merit and worth are being assessed, summative evaluations make sense to determine if the program should be continued, expanded, contracted, or disseminated as a best practices model for potential adoption or adaptation by others. And so on.

Insert Table 2 About Here

Finally, a number of purposes are associated with the evaluation process itself, in contrast to its findings. *Process use* refers to the impacts on those involved in the evaluation process, for example, what primary intended users learn about evaluation by being involved in the evaluation design process. Patton (2008, pp 151 – 193) identifies six different process uses that are distinct from findings uses. These include:

- Infusing evaluative thinking into an organization's culture
- Enhancing shared understandings related to the program and evaluation
- Supporting and reinforcing program interventions or treatments to increase program impact and the value of the evaluation
- Using evaluation instrumentation to focus on program priorities and increase participant learning
- Increasing participant engagement, self-determination, and commitment to the evaluation; and

- Program and organizational development in terms of capacity building, contributions beyond the specific evaluation findings, and enhancement of ongoing adaptability

Some of these purposes complicate attribution as the effects of the program become intertwined with the evaluation, in effect making the evaluation part of the intervention. In addition, in practice any actual evaluation process either intentionally or unintentionally serves a number of process purposes. Gaining clarity about the process purposes or uses to be served, in addition to the findings' uses, can lead to a greatly improved evaluation design, and to more effective engagements with stakeholders.

Any particular evaluation will need to be guided by a more specific statement of purposes than these three frameworks provide, and here is where stakeholder analyses can help. We have already discussed the purpose network diagram technique and the recommendation that one be developed very early on in the process of organizing an evaluation study. As additional stakeholder analysis techniques are used and/or as additional people are using them, additional information on purposes is likely to surface. Evaluators and those they work with should consider how new information might or should be included into the purpose network diagram to gain further clarity about evaluations purposes, goals, and objectives.

Two techniques are likely to be particularly helpful in this regard to further refining the purpose diagram: the basic stakeholder analysis technique and bases of power – directions of interest diagrams. As noted, the former technique involves gaining clarity about stakeholders' expectations of the program and/or evaluation. The latter often involves trying to gain greater understanding of stakeholders' interests more broadly. The enumerated expectations and interests may imply important purposes, goals, or objectives

for the evaluation. Once again, it is a judgment call how this information will be incorporated into the statement of the evaluation's purpose(s). Here are three examples of general purpose statesments for different kinds of evaluations undertaken three different kinds of organizations:

- Overall purpose of a federal government evaluation initiative: Improve effectiveness of programs at every level in the Department and demonstrate efficient use of taxpayer dollars in accordance with Congressional mandates and executive priorities.
- Overall purpose of evaluation in a philanthropic foundation: Support the foundation's mission attainment, build knowledge about what works and what doesn't work, and learn collaboratively with our grantees.
- Overall purpose of a non-for-profit organization's programevaluations: Improve services to those in need so as to help them improve their quality of life.

Engaging Stakeholders

All of the techniques considered so far are relevant to planning for stakeholder participation. The evaluation stakeholder engagement planning matrix helps pull this information together to help evaluators develop a carefully articulated plan for engaging or responding to different stakeholders. The matrix adapts contributions from the International Association for Public Participation, specifically their notion of a spectrum of levels of public participation (www.iap2.org), and generic steps in an evaluation process. The levels of participation range from not engaging at all through to empowerment in which the stakeholders or some subset of them are given final decision making authority. Each level implies a different kind of promise from the evaluator to the stakeholder – implicitly if not explicitly (see Table 3). The generic steps of evaluation

are: evaluation planning; evaluation design; data collection and organization; data analysis and interpretation, judgments regarding findings, and recommendations; and decision making and implementation of evaluation recommendations.

Insert Table 3 Here –Evaluation Stakeholder Engagement Planning Matrix

Note that while the majority of evaluators endorse the idea of engaging stakeholders, there are likely to be sharp differences about the advisability of involving stakeholders – other than the evaluator(s) – in the second step where choices are made regarding evaluation design, measurement and data collection methods; the third step where the data are collected and organized; and the fourth step where the data are analyzed and interpreted, judgments about findings are made, and recommendations are developed. Many would argue that only evaluation professionals may legitimately make these choices; otherwise, the merits of the evaluation are severely compromised. In addition, many evaluators believe that any decisions about recommendation adoption and implementation in the last step (what many would consider the post-evaluation phase) are beyond their purview. The matrix simply poses the question of who might or should be engaged, when, how, and why at each step, and implies that the choices should not be left to chance; and indeed, that the possible choices to be made in the last step might actually help inform those made in the earlier steps.

In other words, the participation planning matrix prompts evaluators to think about engaging or responding to different stakeholders in different ways over the course of an evaluation process and its aftermath. The same stakeholder might be engaged differently in different steps. As a result, the benefits of taking stakeholders seriously

may be gained while avoiding the perils of inappropriately responding to or engaging stakeholders. The process for filling out the matrix is as follows:

- Begin using this matrix relatively early in any evaluation effort
- Fill out the matrix with stakeholders' names in the appropriate boxes and then develop action plans for how to follow through with each stakeholder
- Cycle back and revise the matrix as the evaluation design and methods unfold

The Challenges of Stakeholder Analysis and Engagement in Turbulent and Uncertain Environments

As noted earlier, the guiding principle of utilization-focused evaluation is to design evaluations to achieve intended use by intended users. This emphasis on intentionality assumes that we can identify key stakeholders and work with them to determine evaluation purposes. However, in very turbulent situations evaluators may experience uncertain and changing political and other stakes for different stakeholders. Unanticipated factors can suddenly change the stakeholder landscape, as did the global financial melt-down in 2007 – 2009, which severely affected many non-profit programs, government agencies, and private sector initiatives. Everything was in flux. Changes in political administrations also bring huge uncertainties about what new stakeholder alignments will emerge and how those alliances, and conflicts, will affect evaluation priorities.

Evaluators in complex adaptive systems – meaning those characterized by high uncertainty and emergent self-organizing groups and organizations – will need flexibility, adaptability, and situational responsiveness to track and map any changes in stakeholders, relationships among them, and the purposes an evaluation is meant to serve. Attention to such changes provides a framework for helping understand such common evaluation issues as unintended consequences, irreproducible effects, lack of program fidelity in

implementation, multiple paths to the same outcomes, unexpected changes in program requirements, and difficulty in specifying treatment interventions – all of which are made more challenging in a dynamic stakeholder environment (Morrell 2005; Patton, 2010). In other words, while striving for intended use by intended users is the utilization-focused evaluation ideal, the realities of complex adaptive systems alert us to be attuned as well to dynamic and emergent stakeholder relationships and evaluation issues that may have been unknown and unintended at the outset of an evaluation, but which become critically important as an evaluation unfolds. Various network analysis techniques can be used to identify stakeholders and their interrelationships (the stakeholder influence diagram technique presented earlier is one) and to map any changes. See McCarty et al (2007), Durland and Fredericks (2005), and Bryson, Ackermann, Eden and Finn (2004) for more information on several of the most useful techniques. In a related vein, evaluation efforts focused on examining initiatives aimed at changing all or major part of a system probably should include as part of the evaluation work the mapping of changed relationships among key stakeholder groups, including changed relationships among those stakeholders directly involved in the evaluation.

Conclusions

The vast majority of evaluators agree that it is important to identify and work with evaluation stakeholders and to design and manage evaluation processes in such a way that they serve their intended purpose(s) for their intended users. What is generally missing from the literature, however, is practical advice on how to do. This workshop resource is intended to at least partially fill that gap.

A starting premise is that stakeholder analysis should precede stakeholder engagement, although some stakeholder engagement may be necessary to do the analysis effectively. In other words, at least some stakeholders may need to be engaged right from the start in order to have access to the information needed to fully understand stakeholders, their interests and expectations, their powers, their interrelationships, and the various roles they might need to play in order for a well-designed and utilization-focused evaluation to be assembled that serves its intended purpose for its intended users.

The techniques we offer are quite easy to use and generally take no more than an hour or two to complete, although the results may prompt considerable additional important discussion. This represents a time commitment that is a small fraction of the wasted time and opportunity costs likely to result from addressing the ill effects of *not* doing stakeholder analyses. That said, some evaluators will wonder what to do when they have little time, say a week or a month, and potential stakeholders have little time, say at most 30 to 90 minutes, to speak with evaluators during the evaluation planning and design steps. Our response is three-fold: First, take all the time you can get, and at least use the basic stakeholder analysis technique. Second, let the intended evaluation users know that the research evidence indicates they are running a serious risk of evaluation mis-use or inappropriate non-use by shortcutting stakeholder analyses. (As Yogi Berra supposedly said, “If you don’t know where you’re headed, you’ll end up somewhere else.”) And third, given the principles for evaluation espoused by the American Evaluation Association and the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, one has to wonder about the professional ethics of proceeding without doing some serious stakeholder analysis work,

Evaluators are likely to differ most on the advisability of engaging stakeholders in the following generic evaluation steps: evaluation design; data collection and organization; and data analysis and interpretation, judgments regarding findings, and evaluation recommendations. The very strong evidence on the importance and effectiveness of engaging stakeholders on improving use should certainly give pause to the naysayers against all stakeholder involvement in these steps. We believe that evaluators and intended users should at least seriously consider the pros, cons, and mechanics of engaging different stakeholders before ruling out such involvements right from the start.

We hope this workshop has provided enough information for evaluators to get a good grasp of the stakeholder analysis and engagement techniques we believe are fundamental to good utilization-focused evaluation practice. The promise of effective stakeholder analysis and engagement is that evaluation users will end up with more useful evaluations – leading to a world made better, one evaluation at a time.

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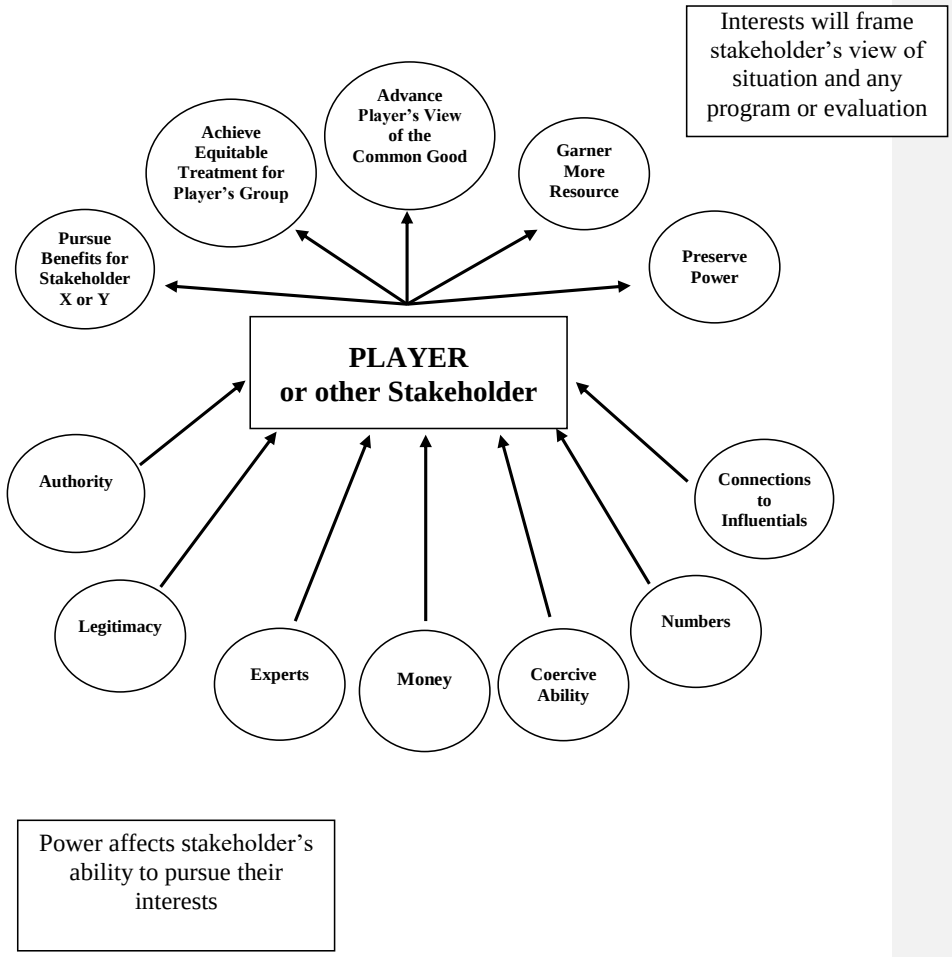
Figure 1. Generic Bases of Power – Directions of Interest Diagram



Source: Adapted from Eden and Ackermann 1998, p. 127 and Bryson Lokkesmoe and Cunningham, 2002

Table 1. Primary Purposes or Uses, and Primary Intended Users, of Evaluation Findings

Source: Adapted from Patton, 2008, pp. 139 – 141).

Evaluation Purpose	**Primary Intended Users**
Overall summative judgment of value and future of the program (or other evaluand) and model	Funders; those charged with making major decisions about the program (e.g., a board of directors); policy makers; those interested in adopting the model
Learning to improve the program in a formative way	Program administrators, staff, and participants; those immediately involved in the program
Accountability to demonstrate that resources are well-managed and efficiently attain desired ends	Those with executive, managerial, legislative, and funding authority and responsibility to make sure that scarce resources are well-managed
Monitoring to manage the program, provide routine reporting, and identify problems early on	Program managers
Development to adapt to complex, emergent, and dynamic conditions	Social innovators and others involved in bringing about changes in dynamic environments
Knowledge generation to enhance general understandings and identify generic principles about effectiveness	Program designers, planners, modelers, theorists, scholars, and policy makers

Table 2. A Developmental Stage Approach to Program Planning and Evaluation

Source: Patton, 2008; adapted from Pancer and Westhues, 1989, pp. 56-77.

Stage of Program Development	Question To Be Asked	Evaluation Function
1. Assessment of social problems and needs	To what extent are community needs and standards met?	Needs assessment; problem description
2. Determination of goals	What must be done to meet those needs and standards	Needs assessment; service needs
3. Design of program alternatives	What services could be used to produce desired changes	Assessment of program logic or theory
4. Selection of alternative	Which approach works best?	Feasibility study; formative evaluation
5. Program implementation	How should the program be put into operation?	Implementation assessment
6. Program operations	Is the program operating as planned?	Process evaluation; program monitoring; formative evaluation
7. Program outcomes	Is the program having the desired effect?	Outcome evaluation; summative evaluation
8. Program efficiency	Are program effects attained at a reasonable cost?	Cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analysis; summative evaluation

Table 3. Stakeholder Engagement Planning Matrix

Types of involvement:	Do Not Engage	Engage as Data Source	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Promise evaluator makes:		We will honor human subjects protocols and treat you and the data with respect	We will keep you informed of the evaluation's progress and findings.	We will keep you informed, listen to you, and provide feedback on how your input influenced the evaluation.	We will work with you to ensure your concerns are considered and reflected in options considered, make sure you get to review and comment on options, and provide feedback on how your input is used in the evaluation.	We will incorporate your advice and suggestions to the greatest extent possible, and give you meaningful opportunities to be part of the evaluation decision-making process.	This is your evaluation. We will offer options to inform your decisions. You will decide and we will support and facilitate implement-ing what you decide.
Those engaged are especially important and useful for…		providing needed data	disseminating findings and creating interest in the results	anticipating issues, identifying landmines, suggesting priorities, and enhancing the credibility of the evaluation.	affirming the importance, appropriateness and utility of the evaluation, attracting attention to findings, and establish credibility.	serving as primary intended users because of their high interest, interpersonal style, availability, influential positions and/or connections, and sense of ownership of the evaluation.	capacity development, using the evaluation to build their capacity to engage in evaluative thinking and practice.
STEP 1 – Evaluation Planning							
STEP 2 – Evaluation Design							

STEP 3 – Data Collection and Organization							
SSTEP 4 – Data Analysis and Interpretation, Judgments about Findings, and Recommend-ations							
STEP 5 – Decision Making and Implementation of Evaluation Recommend-ations							

Source: Adapted from Bryson (2004, p. 33), Patton (2008, p. 81), and the International Association for Public Participation's Public Participation Spectrum of levels of public participation (http://www.iaps.org/practioner tools/spectrum.html)