

IPDET

Handbook

Module 14

Evaluation Ethics, Politics, Standards, and Guiding Principles

Introduction

You already know, as an evaluator, you will be planning, organizing, designing, collecting data, analyzing data, and presenting data. You will also have to deal with outside pressures. You might be asked to make changes to the plan, organization, or reporting of your evaluation to meet the needs of others. Sometimes these proposed modifications are welcome, but other times they may raise ethical, and/or political considerations. In this module, you will learn about ethical issues and political considerations in evaluations.

This module has three sections. They are:

- Ethical Behavior
- Politics and Evaluation
- Evaluation Standards and Guiding Principles.





Learning Objectives

By the end of the module, you should be able to:

- describe the role and value of ethics in development evaluation
- describe the role and value of standards and guiding principles in development evaluation.



Key Words

You will find the following key words or phrases in this module. Watch for these and make sure that you understand what they mean and how they are used in the course.

ethics
evaluation corruptibility
evaluation fallacies
clientism
contractualism
methodologicalism
relativism
pluralism/elitism
politics
empathy
assertiveness
standards
utility
feasibility
propriety
accuracy
service orientation
formal agreements
rights of human subjects
human interactions
complete and fair assessment
disclosure of findings
conflict of interest
fiscal responsibility
systematic inquiry
competence
integrity/honesty
respect for people
responsibility for general and public welfare



Ethical Behavior

Evaluators are often faced with difficult situations in which the right thing to do is not clear. Ethics are a set of values and beliefs that guide choices.

Ethics are complicated; no laws or standards can cover every possible situation. Behavior can be legal but still unethical (e.g., excluding the local community from decisions that affect them.) There are many gray areas. Still, evaluators are expected to conduct evaluations ethically.

Evaluation Corruptibility and Fallacies

Worthen, Fitzpatrick, and Sanders present five forms of “evaluation corruptibility”. By **evaluation corruptibility**, they mean the ways that evaluators may be convinced to go against ethical standards. They describe the following forms based on ethical compromises or distortions:

- a willingness to twist the truth and produce positive findings, due to conflict of interest or other perceived payoffs or penalties (such willingness may be conscious or unconscious)
- an intrusion of unsubstantiated opinions because of sloppy, capricious, and unprofessional evaluation practices
- “shaded” evaluation “findings” as a result of intrusion of the evaluator’s personal prejudices or preconceived notions
- obtaining the cooperation of clients or participants by making promises that cannot be kept
- failure to honor commitments that could have been honored.¹

When looking at these five forms of corruptibility, we see that some evaluators may behave in unprofessional ways.

¹ Fitzpatrick, Worthen, and Sanders, *Program evaluation Alternative approaches and practical guidelines*. pp 423 to 424.



E. R. House looks at corruptibility from a slightly different perspective. He suggests that evaluators may not be corrupt, but may have a misunderstanding about their responsibilities. He calls these fallacies about evaluation. The following are the five **evaluation fallacies** he identifies:

- **clientism** – the fallacy that doing whatever the client requests or whatever will benefit the client is ethically correct
- **contractualism** – the fallacy that the evaluator must follow the written contract without question, even if doing so is detrimental to the public good
- **methodologicalism** – the belief that following acceptable inquiry methods assures that the behavior of the evaluator will be ethical, even when some methodologies may actually compound the evaluator's ethical dilemmas
- **relativism** – the fallacy that opinion data the evaluator collects from various participants must be given equal weight, as if there is no basis of appropriately giving the opinions of peripheral groups less priority than that given to more pivotal groups
- **pluralism/elitism** – the fallacy of allowing powerful voices to be given higher priority because the evaluator feels they hold more prestige and potency than the powerless or voiceless.²

When looking at the five fallacies, we see that many times evaluators have the best intentions for doing what is right, correct, or ethical, but may have a misunderstanding about their role and/or responsibility.

² E.R. House (1995). *Principled evaluation: A critique of the AEA Guiding Principles.*, In W. R. Shadish, D. L. Newman, M. A. Scheirer, and C. Wye (Eds.). *Guiding principles for evaluators.* New Directions for Program Evaluation, no. 66. p 29.



Identifying Ethical Problems

Morris and Cohn³ conducted a survey of the members of the American Evaluation Association about their views on ethical issues. The following list of ethical problems is modified from their survey:

- Stakeholder problems:
 - Prior to the evaluation taking place, stakeholder has already decided what the findings “should be” or plans to use the findings in an ethically questionable fashion.
 - Stakeholder declares certain research questions “off-limits” in the evaluation, despite their substantive relevance.
 - Findings are deliberately modified by stakeholder prior to release.
 - Evaluator is pressured by stakeholders to alter presentation of findings.
 - Findings are suppressed or ignored by stakeholder.
 - Evaluator is pressured by stakeholder to violate confidentiality
 - Unspecified misuse of findings by stakeholder.
 - Legitimate stakeholders are omitted from the planning process.
- Other problems:
 - Evaluator has discovered behavior that is illegal, unethical, dangerous, and so on.
 - Evaluator is reluctant to present findings fully, for unspecified reasons.
 - Evaluator is unsure of his or her ability to be objective or fair in presenting findings.
 - Although not pressured by stakeholders to violate confidentiality, the evaluator is concerned that reporting certain findings could represent such a violation.
 - Findings are used to punish someone other than the evaluator.

³ M. Morris and R. Cohn (1993). “Program evaluators and ethical challenges: A national survey”. *Evaluation Review*, 17:621-642.



If evaluations are to be useful to managers, donors, participants, and citizens, then the work must be honest, objective, and fair. It is the evaluator's job to ensure that the data are collected accurately, and that data are analyzed and reported honestly and fairly. It is not surprising that some may try to influence the way information is presented or the recommendations that are made. While most evaluators would quickly recognize a bribe, it is not always easy to recognize subtle forms of influence. Offers of friendship, dinner, or recreational activities can be a kindly gesture to someone who is a long way from home. On the other hand, it can be an attempt to influence the evaluator's perspectives, and ultimately the report.

Influence at the beginning of an evaluation may be subtle. Sometimes there is pressure to avoid asking certain kinds of evaluation questions or to steer the evaluation onto less sensitive grounds. Certain issues are not brought up that might reflect negatively on the organization or the program. There may be resistance to surveying staff, program participants and/or citizens because sensitive (negative) issues might be revealed. In other situations, particular people may be excluded from meetings or interviews. Sometimes field trips are limited because of "time constraints." The evaluator must raise those issues that are being avoided and make sure that all voices are heard.

Sometimes someone provides leads about corruption and/or fraud. The evaluator has to sort out whether this information is true, an attempt to direct focus away from other issues, or an attempt by the informant to get even with someone.

The motto, "Do No Harm," applies to evaluation. Evaluations should not harm participants. People who participate should never be identified or placed in threatening situations. Protecting confidentiality is essential. But there may be situations where it is difficult.

For instance, if you are evaluating an education program and discover from several interviewees that the director is spending money for personal benefit, what do you do? What if the director is engaged in sexual harassment of staff? In either case, revealing these findings runs the risk of exposing those who reported these behaviors in confidence. On the other hand, the director's behavior is unethical, if not illegal, and may be having a negative impact on the school's performance.



Sometimes these issues can be handled in an off-the-record conversation with the director. Other times there may be little chance of bringing about a change in the director's behavior but revealing the off-the-record conversations may put people at risk. On the other hand, it may be that the people shared this information because they were hoping some one would do something. If several people reported similar information, should it go into the report?

It will be useful to maintain a written record of your findings and reactions to the off-the-record information until you decide what to do. These should be maintained separately from the evaluation material. You may find it helpful to talk with colleagues about the situation and your options.

Not only should people not be harmed who participate in the evaluation, it is important that people benefiting from the interventions not be harmed. Caution should also be taken in concluding a program does not work because the evaluation was unable to find a positive result. It may be that the evaluation design was not strong enough, not implemented well enough, or had other weaknesses that prevented it from finding positive results that actually exist.

Politics and Evaluation

Evaluation is always carried out for some purpose and/or for some person. For this reason, evaluation can be considered a political act. Webster defines the word "politic" as: "characterized by shrewdness in managing, contriving, or dealing." Here, we are not talking about government politics, but **politics** as it is used to refer to behavior that occurs when conflict is perceived to exist by at least one party in a relationship⁴.

Politics can undermine the integrity of an evaluation. Evaluations are an important source of information for those who make decisions about projects, programs, and policy. A positive evaluation can help secure more funds, and build careers for those involved in the intervention. Evaluations that identify critical problems can improve interventions and future results. It is important to recognize political activity during an evaluation and to manage the effects of evaluation politics.

⁴ A.W. Tassie, V. V. Murray, J. Cutt, and D. Gragg (1996). *Rationality or politics: What really goes on when funders evaluate the performance of fundees?* *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 25(3), September 1996, pp 347-363.



How can you identify and deal with politics in an evaluation? It will help if you have a better understanding of people, evaluation, and trust. To address politics and evaluation, we will look closer at:

- causes of politics in evaluation
- identifying political “games”
- managing politics in evaluation
- balancing stakeholders.

Causes of Politics in Evaluation

Vic Murray⁵ identifies a reason politics is inevitable in evaluation – there is so much room for subjectivity. The subjectivity leads to differences among the people involved in the evaluation. The evaluator(s), stakeholders, and evaluates often disagree at different stages of the evaluation, giving rise to political behavior. Murray describes the basis for the disagreements from “inherent problems with technical elements of evaluation methods and very common frailties in many human beings. He identifies the following questions where disagreements occur:

- What is the purpose of the evaluation?
- What will be considered a success or failure?
- So what? How will the information be used in subsequent decision-making?

Murray also gives a good description of some of the foibles (minor weaknesses) that occur in evaluations to cause a political effect. He classifies them as technical and human weaknesses.

⁵ Vic V. Murray, *Evaluation games: The political dimension in evaluation and accountability relationships*. Online at: <http://www.vserp.ca/pub/CarletonEVALUATIONGAMES.pdf> p.2-3.



Technical Weaknesses

Most evaluations work best when measured to stated goals, objectives, and standards. But the evaluators, evaluatees, and stakeholders may find it difficult to agree on what to measure.

In addition, it can be difficult to determine the focus of the evaluation. A good evaluation system will use a technique to try to identify underlying assumptions about an evaluation. They may use a “logic model” that shows the assumptions being made by the evaluation. The logic model can help identify potential conflicts before they become a political problem.

Murray identifies a second common technical problem that leads to political problems – measuring one level of an organization but generalizing about another. This causes problems when the underlying assumptions are not worked out showing the links between the performance of the individuals, programs, or functions and the organization as a whole. A logic model is one way to help identify the underlying assumptions. Most evaluation systems are unable to provide conclusive evidence of *why* the results they produce show what they conclude. Most outcomes have multiple causes. Opinions can easily differ over which ones are the most important⁶.

Human Weaknesses

Humans have psychological tendencies that can lead to politics in evaluation. Cutt and Murray⁷ identify three human factors that can affect politics:

- “Look-Good-Avoid-Blame” (LGAB) mindset
- ‘Subjective Interpretation of Reality’ (SIR) phenomenon
- trust factors.

The look-good-avoid-blame (LGAB) mindset identifies a characteristic of most humans. People want to succeed. They also want to avoid being associated with failure. Most evaluations intend to reveal problems that may exist and provide information to solve the problems. People believe that someone will be blamed for the problems that are identified and they do not want to be the one blamed. On the contrary, if the evaluation finds positive results, they want to take credit for the results.

⁶ V. Murray, *Evaluation games: The political dimension in evaluation and accountability relationships*. p. 4

⁷ James Cutt and Vic Murray, (2000). *Accountability and effectiveness evaluation in nonprofit organizations*. London: Routledge.



Whenever a LGAB situation occurs, it is likely to make the situation a political one. People will focus on what makes them look good. If there are negative outcomes, people will go to great lengths to explain the results as “beyond their control”.

The subjective interpretation of reality (SIR) phenomenon arises during the interpretation and explanation of evaluation data. Any time we look at human behavior, there are multiple variables and little control over them. For any human behavior, there are many theories to explain the behavior. Evaluators will choose the theory to base decisions upon using pre-existing beliefs and attitudes about what works. This means that evaluation results are based upon subjective interpretations.

The third factor identified by Cutt and Murray is the trust factor. It can trigger (or cause) the LGAB or SIR factors to come into play. Trust is the belief in the integrity or ability of a person. If people feel another person lacks in integrity or ability, they may mistrust that person. They may fear that this person can do them harm. Trust is measured in degrees, varying from partial trust (only in certain context or about certain matters) to full trust (in all things). When distrust occurs, it is likely that the LGAB or SIR phenomenon will cause politics to enter into the relationship.

Identifying Political Games

It is impossible to keep evaluation completely separate from politics. But there are ways evaluators can take some control over political situations. The first step is to identify some of the evaluation “political games” that people play in evaluations. Murray⁸ classifies the games by the role of the people involved.

- people being evaluated games
- evaluator games
- other stakeholder games.

⁸ V. Murray, *Evaluation games: The political dimension in evaluation and accountability relationships*. p. 4



Political Games of People Being Evaluated

Often, people being evaluated want to avoid unwanted formal scrutiny of their activities. They may respond by:

- denying the need for an evaluation
- claiming the evaluation will take too much time away from their normal workload
- claiming evaluation is a good thing, but introducing delaying tactics
- seeking to form close personal relationships with the evaluator(s) to convince the evaluator(s) to trust him or her.

Once the evaluation has begun and data are being collected, the people being evaluated may play political games by:

- omitting or distorting the information they are asked to provide so they do not look bad
- giving the evaluator(s) huge amounts of information so they have difficulty sorting out what is relevant and what is not (can be called a “snow job”).

Once the data are collected and evaluators are looking for to identify causes, and what it means, people being evaluated may respond by:

- denying the problem exists
- downplaying the importance of the problem or attributing it to others or forces beyond their control
- arguing that the information is now irrelevant because things have changed.

Political Games of Other Stakeholders

Other stakeholders may also affect the politics of an evaluation. Different stakeholders have different agendas and concerns. Stakeholders play many of the political games used by those being evaluated. If the stakeholders were not involved in the decisions on the major questions, they may decide the evaluation looked at the wrong things. In addition, they may try to get the media to criticize the organization and tell how they should have done the evaluation differently, giving conclusions to meet their own agenda.



Political Games of Evaluators

Evaluators can also play evaluation “games”. Some of the games evaluators play during the design of the evaluation are:

- insisting that evaluations be quantitative (statistics don’t lie)
- using the “experts know best” line (evaluators do not trust those being evaluated and want have them be “caught”).

During the data collection, some evaluators may subvert it by collecting their own information “off the record”. The informal information can then enter into the interpretation phase of the evaluation.

Most evaluator game playing occurs during the interpretation phase of the evaluation. Some of the games evaluators play during interpretation may be:

- not stating or shifting the measurement standards
- applying unstated criteria to decision-making
- applying unstated values and ideological filters to the data interpretation
- ignoring findings of evaluations.

Managing Politics in Evaluations

Since politics in evaluations are inevitable, it is important to learn what you can do to manage it. As you know, trust is a large part of politics. Ideally, during each phase of an evaluation, there would be open discussions giving all players involved a chance to discuss their concerns, and come to consensus about their differences. They would use logic modules and standards to discuss the evaluation and see where all stand on the important issues.⁹

⁹ V. Murray, *Evaluation games: The political dimension in evaluation and accountability relationships*. p. 8-10.



Building Trust

If trust does not exist, different players become more concerned with their own interests. They try to win the political games more often than the persons they consider the opponent.

How do you build trust? It usually takes time and many encounters among all of the players. Murray suggests that you must build trust consciously, involving all interested parties in the process, particularly those who are to be evaluated. He identifies six questions that all must have a voice deciding the answers:

- What is the purpose of the evaluation?
- What should be measured?
- What should be the evaluation methods used?
- What standards or criteria should be applied to the analysis of the information obtained?
- How should the data be interpreted?
- How will the evaluation be used?

This will help with most evaluations. But, if the evaluation involves a strong suspicion of malfeasance or willful ineptitude among the evaluatees, the evaluatees may consciously suppress or distort information. In these cases, the probable solution would be an external evaluation by professionals trained in looking for reporting errors.

You may recall that more information was covered about building trust in Module 3: Planning an Evaluation” under the topic “The World Bank on Involving Stakeholders.”

Building Logic Models

Murray discusses the importance of making sure all parties involved in the evaluation fully understand the underlying logic. He suggests the logic model is one way to articulate the logic so that there is little room for misunderstanding. Using the six evaluation questions is key for answering the questions needed to build the logic model.



Balancing Stakeholders with Negotiation

One of the biggest challenges for evaluators is dealing with multiple stakeholders. Evaluators need strong negotiating skills to manage multiple stakeholders' interests.

Anne Markiewicz¹⁰ describes a negotiation model for evaluation in two parts: principles and practice.

Principles for Negotiating Evaluation

The following is adapted from Markiewicz's list of principles for negotiating evaluations:

- recognize the inherently political nature of evaluation
- value the contribution of multiple stakeholders
- assess stakeholder positions and plan the evaluation
- assure evaluator is an active player within the stakeholder community
- develop the skills of the evaluator as negotiator responding to conflict
- develop skills in managing conflict with multiple stakeholders.

You should recall the earlier discussion of the political nature of evaluation and the value of the contribution of multiple stakeholders.

Let us look closer at the remaining principles. Markiewicz suggests one key strategy is to organize the stakeholders into reference groups, steering committees, or advisory committees to oversee the evaluation process. It is important that these groups have clearly defined roles and functions. The reference group needs to have ground rules defining how active the members are to be in the valuation process.

¹⁰ Anne Markiewicz (2005). 'A balancing act': Resolving multiple stakeholder interests in program evaluation. In *Evaluation Journal of Australasia*, Vol. 4 (new series), Nos. 1 & 2, March/April 2005. pp 13-21



According to Markiewicz, once the evaluator establishes a level of credibility and acceptance with the stakeholders, the evaluator needs skills to negotiate areas of conflict or dispute among the stakeholders. The evaluator needs to act as a catalyst to assist stakeholders at arriving at their own solutions. To do this, the evaluator needs strong communication skills. Strong communication skills include active and reflective listening, asking appropriate questions, and checking understanding. The evaluator also needs to keep the negotiation process focused, as well as to facilitate and encourage interaction among all stakeholders.

Evaluators need to develop negotiating skills. Many do not have the skills they need for negotiating. In some cases, evaluators may need to arrange for additional training and practice of negotiating skills. Another way for evaluators to develop negotiating skills is to work with peers to share experiences of conflict resolutions, both successful and unsuccessful.

Michael Q. Patton¹¹ suggests a minimum of four meetings take place, with longer-term projects requiring more meetings. During the meetings, the group would consider the following:

- first meeting: focus of the evaluation
- second meeting: methods and measurement tools
- third meeting: instrumentation developed prior to data collection
- fourth meeting: review the emergent data to find agreement on interpretations which will lead to findings

Markiewicz discusses the active role evaluators should play with stakeholders. Two characteristics she describes as valuable are to be both responsive and flexible enabling the stakeholders to engage in the process.

She also discusses the difficulties if the evaluator becomes too close and has too much interpersonal interaction with the stakeholders. Patton suggests remaining focused on the empirical process, and assisting stakeholders to do so as well. This helps keep relationships objective and avoids the intrusion of bias or misuse of findings.

¹¹ M. Q. Patton (1997). *Utilization-focused evaluation: The new century text*, 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications p 355-356.



Negotiation Evaluation Practice

Markiewicz identifies three stages to a model for evaluation negotiation. The model includes:

- initial stage: positions are put on the table
- middle stage: active negotiation
- last stage: steps are taken to reach consensus.

To use this model, the evaluation negotiator needs to have a range of skills that are both empathetic and assertive. The empathetic skills create a climate that is conducive for the negotiation process. The assertive skills provide structure to the process.

Empathy can be defined as “The process of demonstrating an accurate, non-judgmental understanding of the other side’s needs, interest, and positions”¹². They suggest two components to empathy in negotiation.

- The first component is to see the world through the eyes of the other. That is, to put themselves in the place of the other person to try to see how they feel.
- The second component of empathy is to express the other person’s viewpoint. That is, to actually state it in words.

This technique involves translating the understanding of the experience of the other into a shared response.

According to Markiewicz, empathy is an important characteristic for being able to acquire information about other’s goals, values, and priorities. Empathy becomes the catalyst for inspiring openness in others and becomes a persuasive tool for negotiating.

Once the evaluator has good understanding of the views of each stakeholder, he or she needs to paraphrase (restate) that understanding to the stakeholder¹³. Once the evaluator restates his or her understanding, the evaluator should to ask the parties if what the evaluator understood was correct and to clarify any differences. Using active and reflective listening help the evaluator pay attention to what is being said, ask appropriate questions, and check the understanding of what the stakeholders say.

¹² R. Mnookin, S. Peppet, and A. Tulumello (1996). “The tension between empathy and assertiveness”. In *Negotiation Journal*, Vol. 12. No. 3. pp 20-35.

¹³ K. Hale (1998). “The language of co-operation: Negotiation frames”. *Mediation Quarterly*, Vol 16. No. 2. pp 147-162.



Assertiveness is very different from empathy. **Assertiveness** is the ability to express and advocate for one's own needs, interest, and positions.¹⁴ In negotiating evaluations, it might also be described as facilitator authority.

As you can imagine, it can be difficult balancing between empathy and assertiveness. Mnookin, et al see empathy and assertiveness and two interdependent dimensions of negotiation behavior. When used together, they can produce substantial benefits in negotiation.

This process of empathy and assertiveness brings a better understanding of the needs of each stakeholder.

Evaluation Standards and Guiding Principles

Professional associations develop standards or guidelines to help their members make ethical decisions. Professional associations in Europe and many countries, including the United States, Canada, and Australia have established or are ethical codes for evaluators.

Currently, standards and principles developed by the American Evaluation Association are serving as the platform for other groups, such as AfrEA (African Evaluation Association), to modify and adapt to their local circumstances or situation. These two documents are:

- Program Evaluation Standards
- Guiding Principles for Evaluators.

The Joint Committee on Standards developed the Program Evaluation Standards for Educational Evaluation. They were designed to assist both evaluators and consumers in judging the quality of one particular evaluation.

The American Evaluation Association developed the Guiding Principles for Evaluators to provide guidance for evaluators in their everyday practice.

¹⁴ Mnookin, et al., "The tension between empathy and assertiveness"



The biggest difference between these two documents is their purpose. The Standards are concerned with professional performance while the Guiding Principles are concerned with professional values.

The Standards focus on the product of the evaluation while the Guiding Principles focus on the behavior of the evaluator.

Both documents inform us about ethical and appropriate ways to conduct evaluations.

Program Evaluation Standards

The Program Evaluation Standards are grouped into four categories:

- utility
- feasibility
- propriety, including
 - service orientation
 - formal agreements
 - rights of human subjects
 - human interactions
 - complete and fair assessment
 - disclosure of findings
 - conflict of interest
 - fiscal responsibility
- accuracy.

To better understand the Standards, let us look closer at each of the eight specific standards under propriety.¹⁵

- **Service orientation:** addresses the need for evaluators to serve not only the interests of the agency sponsoring the evaluation but also the learning needs of program participants, community, and society.
- **Formal agreements:** includes such issues as following protocol, having access to data, clearly warning clients about the evaluation limitations, and not promising too much.

¹⁵ American Evaluation Association Program Standards. Available online at: <http://www.eval.org/EvaluationDocuments/progeval.html>



- **Rights of human subjects:** include such things as obtaining informed consent, maintaining rights to privacy, and assuring confidentiality.
- **Human interactions:** is an extension on the rights of human subjects. It holds that evaluators must respect human dignity and worth in all interactions. No participants in the evaluation should be humiliated or harmed.
- **Complete and fair assessment:** this standard aims to ensure that both the strengths and weaknesses of a program are portrayed accurately. The evaluator needs to ensure that he or she does not “tilt” the study to satisfy the sponsor or appease other groups.
- **Disclosure of findings:** deals with the evaluator’s obligation to serve the broader public who benefit from both the program and its accurate evaluation, not just the clients or sponsors.
- **Conflict of interest:** evaluators must make their biases and values explicit in as open and honest way possible so that clients are alert to these biases that may unwittingly creep into the work of even the most honest evaluators.
- **Fiscal responsibility:** includes evaluators making sure all expenditures are appropriate, prudent, and well documented. It also includes nontrivial costs to personnel involved in that which is evaluated, including time and effort in providing, collecting, or facilitating the collection of information requested by evaluators and the time and energy expended in explaining evaluations to various constituencies.

Guiding Principles for Evaluators

The American Evaluation Association strives to promote ethical practice in the evaluation of programs, personnel, and policy. Towards that end, AEA developed Guiding Principles to assist evaluators in their professional practice.

The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation was founded in 1975 to develop standards for educational evaluation. Originally initiated by the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education, the Joint Committee now includes many other organizations in its membership. AEA is one of those organizations, and has a representative to the Joint Committee.



The Joint Committee has developed a set of standards for the evaluation of educational programs as well as for evaluating personnel.

The American Evaluation Association's (1995) Guiding Principles (listed below) contain many of the common elements now found in the various sets of ethical guidelines subsequently developed around the world.

- **Systematic inquiry:** that evaluators conduct systematic, data-based inquiries
- **Competence:** that evaluators provide competent performance to stakeholders
- **Integrity/honesty:** that evaluators ensure the honesty and integrity of the entire evaluation process
- **Respect for people:** that evaluators respect the security, dignity, and self-worth of respondents, program participants, clients, and other stakeholders with whom they interact
- **Responsibilities for general and public welfare:** that evaluators articulate and take into account the diversity of interests and values that may be related to the general public welfare.

Further information about the Joint Committee's work and requests for reprints may be addressed to: The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo MI 49008-5178, USA.

The AEA Ethics Committee oversaw a major review and update of the Principles in 2004 and subsequent vetting with the membership. The full version of the Guiding Principles is available online at

<http://www.eval.org/Publications/GuidingPrinciples.asp>.

An abbreviated version, in a tri-fold brochure form, is available free for use with clients, in the classroom, or in other professional venues. It is called the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*. This publication and further information about the Guiding Principles and the Program Evaluation Standards can be found at the AEA website, www.eval.org.

The Australasian Evaluation Society has produced a similar set of ethical guidelines for evaluators, which are available on their website at http://www.aes.asn.au/content/ethics_guidelines.pdf.

The Canadian Evaluation Society has established Guidelines for Ethical Conduct. They are available online at <http://www.evaluationcanada.ca> .



The European Evaluation Society has yet to develop a set of guidelines or principles for evaluators, but the Swiss Evaluation Society (SEVAL) has standards available on their website, <http://seval.ch/>.

The German Society for Evaluation (DeGEval) has also adopted a set of standards (<http://www.degeval.de/standards/standards.htm>).

The Italian Evaluation Association has a set of guidelines comparable to the AEA Guiding Principles (see <http://www.valutazioneitaliana.it/statuto.htm#Linee>).

The African Evaluation Association has a draft Evaluation Standards and Guidelines at: <http://www.afrea.org/>.

The AEA offers a list of many more government organizations and NGOs at the following site:

http://www.eval.org/Resources/govt_orgs_&_ngos.htm

Evaluation Ethics for the UN System

The United Nations has also addressed evaluation ethics in their *Norms for Evaluation in the UN System*¹⁶. These include:

- Evaluators must have personal and professional integrity.
- Evaluators must respect the right of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence and ensure that sensitive data cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators must take care that those involved in evaluations have a chance to examine the statements attributed to them.
- Evaluators must be sensitive to beliefs, manners, and customs of the social and cultural environments in which they work.
- In light of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender inequality.
- Evaluations sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Also, the evaluators are not expected to evaluate the personal performance of individuals and must balance an evaluation of management functions with due consideration for this principle.

¹⁶ United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), Norms for evaluation in the UN system; page 10. online at: <http://www.uneval.org/docs/ACFFC9F.pdf>



The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) has also established Standards for Evaluation in the UN System. They can be found at:

<http://www.uneval.org/docs/ACFFCA1.pdf>

The UN Standards for Evaluation include standards concerning ethics. Some relate to the norms discussed above. The following is a list of the UN standards for ethics¹⁷:

- Evaluators should be sensitive to beliefs, manners, and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relationships with all stakeholders.
- Evaluators should ensure that their contacts with individuals are characterized by respect.
- Evaluators should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants.
- Evaluators are responsible for their performance and their product(s).

¹⁷ United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), Standards for evaluation in the UN system; pages 3-23. online at: <http://www.uneval.org/docs/ACFFCA1.pdf>



Summary



In this module, you were introduced to ethical behavior and standards for development evaluation. Use the following checklist of information that you should know to help you review this module.

- describe the role and value of ethics in development evaluation
- describe the role and value of standards and guiding principles in development evaluation.



Quiz Yourself

Answer the following multiple-choice questions to help test your knowledge of ethical behavior for development evaluation.

You will find the answers to the questions on the last page of this module.

1. List **eight possible ethical problems** as identified by Morris and Cohn in their survey of the members of the American Evaluation Association.
2. List the **four categories of the Program Evaluation Standards**.
3. List the **eight specific standards under proprieties**.
4. List the **American Evaluation Association's (1995) Guiding Principles**.



Reflection

Consider what you have learned about ethical behavior in development evaluation.

- What are the advantages of having clearly defined guidelines for ethical behavior?
- How do the Standards and Guidelines differ in how they influence your evaluations?
- How do the AEA's Guiding Principles affect your work? How will you implement them? How will you assist others in implementing them?



Application Exercise: 14.1

Ethics: Rosa and Agricultural Evaluation



Instructions: Imagine Rosa calls you for advice and tells you the following story. What are the major ethical issues here and how would you advise Rosa to address them?

Rosa met with local officials, program officials, and landowners to brief them on the upcoming evaluation of the agricultural program. Over the years, the community has received substantial amount of money to build irrigation systems, buy fertilizer, build roads, and purchase equipment.

This was Rosa's first visit, but the local team member, Eduardo, had visited the area several times and knew many of the landowners. He suggested that they all go out to dinner after the presentation to begin to build rapport.

During the dinner, Rosa listened to the conversation between Eduardo and the landowners. The landowners appeared to have a close relationship with Eduardo, presenting him with a box of cigars. They discussed the needs of the area; the landowners felt that they needed more resources to effectively use the land. They wanted to bring in more equipment to replace some of the farm workers. In addition, they wanted to use more fertilizer but were prohibited because of environmental laws. Eduardo agreed and told them the upcoming evaluation could help because they could recommend that they be given an exception. The dinner ended with an invitation for Rosa to join one of the landowner's for a tour of the area, followed by lunch with his family. Rosa felt it would be rude not to accept and made plans to meet the next day. She briefly spoke with Eduardo after the dinner and asked why he agreed with the landowner. Eduardo said that he felt it would make the landowners more cooperative if they felt they would get something positive from the evaluation.

During the tour the next day, the landowner explained how hard they have worked and the progress they have made against great odds. The landowner told Rosa that he counted on her to support their efforts. If there was a negative evaluation, he and his family could not survive. As a token of his appreciation, he gave her a necklace that he said had been in his family for generations.



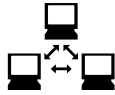
After the tour and lunch with the landowner's family, Rosa met with the program manager. He had mapped out a schedule of who she was to meet with during the three remaining days. He also set up two community meetings; these meetings included the landowners, several agricultural extension workers, several members of the business community that sell agricultural equipment and fertilizer, and several exporters of agricultural products. When asked why none of the farm workers and their families were included, she was told they did not have anything of value to contribute to evaluating the effectiveness of the project. She asked whether there were others in the community that she should talk to. She was told that the program manager had taken pains to make sure that all the right people were included so she would have an easy job in assessing the program.



Further Reading and Resources



- Cutt, James & Murray, Vic (2000). *Accountability and effectiveness evaluation in nonprofit organizations*. London: Routledge.
- Fitzpatrick, Jody L., James R. Sanders, and Blaine R. Worthen (2004). *Program Evaluation: Alternative Approaches and Practical Guidelines*. New York: Pearson Education Inc.
- Hale, K. (1998). "The language of co-operation: Negotiation frames". *Mediation Quarterly*, Vol. 16. No. 2. pp 147-162.
- House, E. R. (1995). Principles evaluation: A critique of the AEA Guiding Principles. In W. R. Shadish, D. L. Newman, M. A. Scheirer, and C. Wye (Eds.), *Guiding principles for evaluators, New Directions for Program Evaluation*, No. 66, pp 27-34. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Markiewicz, Anne (2005). 'A balancing act': Resolving multiple stakeholder interests in program evaluation. In *Evaluation Journal of Australasia*, Vol. 4 (new series), Nos. 1 & 2, March/April 2005. pp 13-21
- Mnookin, R, Peppet, S., & Tulumello, A. (1996). "The tension between empathy and assertiveness". In *Negotiation Journal*, Vol. 12. No. 3. pp 20-35.
- Morris, M. and R. Cohn (1993). Program evaluators and ethical challenges: A national survey. *Evaluation Review*; 17:621 – 642.
- Molund, Stefan and Göran Schill (2004). *Looking Back, Moving Forward: SIDA Evaluation Manual*. Stockholm, SIDA.
- Patton, M. Q. (1997). *Utilization-focused evaluation: The new century text*, 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications p 355-356.
- Tassie, A.W., Murray, V. V., Cutt, J., and Bragg, D. (1996). *Rationality or politics: What really goes on when funders evaluate the performance of fundees? Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 25(3), September, 1996, pp 347-363.



Websites

African Evaluation Association:

<http://www.geocities.com/afreval/>

American Evaluation Association: www.eval.org

AEA Guiding Principles:

<http://www.eval.org/Publications/GuidingPrinciples.asp>

Canadian Evaluation Society: www.evaluationcanada.ca

DFID on SWaps http://www.keysheets.org/red_7_swaps_rev.pdf

European Evaluation Society: www.europeanevaluation.org

Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University:

<http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/>

Government Organizations and NGOs

http://www.eval.org/Resources/govt_orgs_&_ngos.htm

Human Rights Education:

www.hrea.org/pubs/EvaluationGuide/

The Institute of Internal Auditors,

<http://www.theiia.org>

The International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions

<http://www.gao.gov/cghome/parwi/img4.html>

Linkages Between Audit and Evaluation in Canadian Federal Developments," Treasury Board of Canada

http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/dcgpubs/TB_h4/evaluation03_e.asp

Monitoring and Evaluation of Population and Health Programs, MEASURE Evaluation Project, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill:

<http://www.cpc.unc.edu/measure>

Murray, Vic V. *Evaluation games: The political dimension in evaluation and accountability relationships*.

<http://www.vserp.ca/pub/CarletonEVALUATIONGAMES.pdf>

National Aeronautics and Space Act of 1958:

<http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/pao/History/spaceact.html>

OECD DAC, Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance,

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/31/12/2755284.pdf>

OECD, DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance,

http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,2340,en_2649_3443_5_2086550_1_1_1_1,00.html

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation: Learning from Change, IDS Policy Briefing, issue 12, November 1998

<http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/bookshop/briefs/brief12.html>



Proposal for Sector-wide Approaches (SWAp)

<http://enet.iadb.org/idbdocswebservices/idbdocsInternet/IADBPUBLICDoc.aspx?docnum=509733>

UNFPA List of Evaluation Reports and Findings. United Nations Population Fund. Online:

<http://www.unfpa.org/publications/index.cfm>

United Nations Development Project Evaluation Office:

www.undp.org/eo/

United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). Norms for Evaluation in the UN System.

<http://www.uneval.org/docs/ACFFC9F.pdf>

United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), Standards for Evaluation in the UN System.

<http://www.uneval.org/docs/ACFFCA1.pdf>

World Bank: www.worldbank.org

The World Bank Participation Sourcebook. Online (HTML format):

<http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/sourcebook/sbhome.htm>



Answers to Quiz Yourself



1.

- Evaluator is pressured by stakeholders to alter presentation of findings.
- Prior to the evaluation taking place, stakeholder has already decided what the findings “should be” or plans to use the findings in an ethically questionable fashion.
- Findings are suppressed or ignored by stakeholder.
- Evaluator is reluctant to present findings fully, for unspecified reasons.
- Evaluator has discovered behavior that is illegal, unethical, dangerous, and so on.
- Evaluator is unsure of his or her ability to be objective or fair in presenting findings.
- Although not pressured by stakeholders to violate confidentiality, the evaluator is concerned that reporting certain findings could represent such a violation.
- Evaluator is pressured by stakeholder to violate confidentiality
- Unspecified misuse of findings by stakeholder.
- Findings are used to punish someone other than the evaluator.
- Findings are deliberately modified by stakeholder prior to release.
- Stakeholder declares certain research questions “off-limits” in the evaluation, despite their substantive relevance.
- Legitimate stakeholders are omitted from the planning process.

2.

- utility
- feasibility
- propriety
- accuracy



3.
 - service orientation
 - formal agreements
 - rights of human subjects
 - human interactions
 - complete and fair assessment
 - disclosure of findings
 - conflict of interest
 - fiscal responsibility
4.
 1. Systematic inquiry—that evaluators conduct systematic, data-based inquiries.
 2. Competence – that evaluators provide competent performance to stakeholders.
 3. Integrity/Honesty – that evaluators ensure the honesty and integrity of the entire evaluation process.
 4. Respect for people – that evaluators respect the security, dignity, and self-worth of respondents, program participants, clients, and other stakeholders with whom they interact.
 5. Responsibilities for general and public welfare – that evaluators articulate and take into account the diversity of interests and values that may be related to the general public welfare.

 To continue on to this
 **Module's Presentation Slides** [click here](#)

 To return to the
 **Table of Contents** [click here](#)