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By: Brett Wertz, [wertz.brett@gmail.com](mailto:wertz.brett@gmail.com) 402-440-6711

## **Session 1: Case Studies of the Use of Evaluation in Mid-Cycle of Program**

### Speakers

Amanda Bassow, NFWF  
Laura Carrier, Chesapeake Bay Foundation  
Andy Rowe, Independent Evaluator  
Zena Aldrige, EPA  
Yvonne Watson, EPA

Chesapeake Bay – largest estuary in the US. It's a complex management challenge. There is a robust federal-state partnership charged with managing the program.

Primary Management Challenge recognized by scientific community is nutrient-sediment pollution. Coming from agriculture.

The grants until evaluation ranged from 5k to 50k so not huge amounts of money. They had a few 100k grants per year for signature, showcase projects. 30-50 grants per year, they get 130 proposals per year, they are funded for 2 – 3 million per year.

In 2006 we decided to do a third-party evaluation of the program. They were interested if they were investing in the right projects, they had 500 grants on the ground. Were they achieving their intended results? Were they contributing to the greater bay restoration? Ultimately how could this federal money be used better?

Andy Rowe: NFWF – has evaluation functions and program functions. As an evaluator you are primarily responding to the program function. The evaluation function steps back a bit and lets the program evaluator watch what's going on and provide technical advice when necessary.

Essential characteristics of evaluation: Ethical, utilized, feasible, valuing, appropriate quality of information. Not agreement on all issues because it gets into technique.

In terms of utilization we're of one voice: evaluation has to be used.

If evaluation is not used, is it evaluation? What's the point? Evaluation is to make things better, if no one uses it then your project goes in the general pool of knowledge and has no contribution to making things better. Utilization is central.

We now recognize we have a broader range of influence.

Use is primarily a social undertaking. It's not a technology, it has to do with us. Our relationship with the grantees, with the evaluation adviser, etc. It's really important from the point of view of env and resource stuff to do the crosswalk to ecosystems. We now understand and accept that

ecosystems are the juncture of complex human and natural systems. An ecosystem is not a natural system alone, it's a natural and a human system. That means,

If we really paid attention to the social side... no one knows what evaluators really are. We need to pay attention to the social exchange. We really have to pay attention to the social exchange. As a result of not paying attention to it, people experience evaluation in a bad way.

How is utilization linked to ecosystems?

VISION. A major problem with the NFWF program was no one was maintaining the site. They were EXPENDITURES not INVESTMENTS, therefore many interventions were not of much use over time. So what is the vehicle we can use for doing this? Local collaboration.

Main criticism: we don't communicate the vision and the goal but we communicate advice. It is important to communicate that vision. It is a good idea to give that to the evaluate.

What big changes has NFWF made in the program?

- Rethinking the program overall. Now they have a Chesapeake bay stewardship fund that is much more than grantmaking. More focused, including a focus on community-based watershed protection.

They reframed grant program objectives, because they had viewed it primarily as a capacity building program but it invested not in organizational development but in demonstration projects that would build the capacity of projects by giving them resources. They supported new organizations but after the evaluation they started from scratch and rewrote the request for proposals. They restated the goals and objectives of the program which now fall into three broad categories: restoration, conservation, and ?

They increased the grant size. They are longer and up to 200k. They also created a smaller grant that invests in project planning (that is, if you think you have a good idea but don't know how to get it started, they will give you 30k to get it started and think about it).

With technical assistance they decided they want to have flexibility to provide additional assistance. With creativity they found they could provide additional expertise should there be any need. They partnered with another group and put out an RFP .. now they have a pool of technical assistance providers that can work with grantees who discover they have a need they didn't anticipate.

- This helps them design their monitoring strategies for their technical restoration projects.

They've ramped up site visits. Evaluation helped them learn that any site visit is better than no site visit. They put more info on the web.

Monitoring and Assessment program.

- Having an open dialog with the evaluator really was important because they thought a lot of recommendations would be financially unfeasible. Turns out they can do it and are doing it.
- They've partnered with some academic groups, UCONN, Virginia tech, etc. To develop monitoring and assessment protocols for the projects.

Standardized monitoring and assessment protocols that fit into each box, then use an army of graduate students to go out and do pre and post project site visits and use a common tool to determine whether projects are doing what they said they'd do and have qualitative measures.

- It's not about accountability or to take the money back, but it's about information, it's about knowing. If there's a difference in the impact we want to know that it might be because of the difference in the implementation.

Moving from Evaluation to Change: What worked for NFWF?

- received additional funding from EPA for innovations in reducing sediment pollution, etc.
- Helped them define their purpose a little bit differently.
- Also going thru changes with staffing in our office which creates the opportunity to embrace change. When change is happening

Three things evaluators do to get change

- Find a plausible link about what they're advising to the program. We didn't change that it's in the Chesapeake bay but we wanted to change everything else.
- We addressed the major threats, all the accountability stuff about measuring nutrients, etc. We took care of that by showing it was a pile of rubbish... ?
- Model the desired behavior. We wanted them out of their offices and on to the project sites because a major issue was maintenance of the projects and to get that the funders had to be on the ground. We showed them it was feasible and useful to do site visits as PART OF THE EVALUATION.

### **A Case study in how evaluation brought change to the environmental enforcement training program at US EPA**

Yvonne Watson, Zena Aldrige

NETI purpose is to train federal state local and tribal environmental enforcement employees in the enforcement of the nation's environmental laws.

In 2008, 13,000 employees were trained.

Why was NETI involved in a program evaluation?

- They moved offices in EPA and as a result of that the new office director set up a task force to see what are they doing well, what do they need to do better. But as a result of that

Yvonne:

EPA has been supporting this competition. A competitive proposal solicitation process that provides 200k to 300k per year to support conduct of evaluations. It's a competitive proposal solicitation process. They send out a call for proposals inviting them to suggest a program they want to have evaluated.

On average they provide 200 to 300k per year for the competition.

The ESD staff reviews proposals and makes recommendations for funding. They fund 4 to 6 evaluations per year.

They selected the NETI evaluation as one of the offices to receive funding.

Evaluations can take from 1 to 2 years and they really want client offices to understand program evaluation because they are trying to build capacity in evaluation. At the trainings they provide they have evaluation advisers all come in and begin, the kick off week, to start the evaluation

Before the evaluation... at NETI

- in the middle of the process something happened... they created a senior enforcement training council and they worked on coming up with a robust plan of how to make some serious improvements to training the enforcement personnel from around the country.
- They had a huge number of people to train and they didn't feel as though they were being very effective.
- Senior managers did not come to consensus. They shot down the changes. Basically, until someone makes us do it and forces us to do it, no thanks.

The purpose of the NETI evaluation was to see if it was meeting its goals and objectives. Was it working to build a highly skilled workforce?

- Has NETI's program contributed to a highly trained and skilled workforce?
- What can be done to improve the training program?
- How can NETI assess if it's programs are leading to better training.

Evaluation Methodology: developed a logic model; refined evaluation questions; identified data sources and collected data (quantitative and qualitative); analyzed data; written report

How and why was this implemented?

- the plan was similar to the proposal senior managers rejected but was accepted. What made the difference? The process was thoughtful and had data, numbers, info, sourced from our database.

They added a centralized way to collect info about trainings that happen at EPA. They collect a standard evaluation form for post-course evaluation. Should provide 2 or 3 data points.

Zena: I'm still surprised that we're able to get something like this done. EPA is so decentralized I'm so amazed that we're getting everyone to do the same evaluation.

Yvonne: NETI is only responsible for the design and implementation of 7 courses. Other entities buy in and use the online database and so at this point they had no leverage before to require those individuals before to collect data. As a result of this policy, everyone must collect the data.

#### The Value of Evaluation to NETI

- Improved staff's understanding of the steps in evaluation process
- Greater appreciation/value of program evaluation
- Competition process provided access to staff with knowledge of EPA's culture and evaluation expertise.
- Provided objectivity

#### The Product (Evaluation Report)

- Provided evidence of program effectiveness and areas of concern for senior managers.
- Impartial evidence to support/confirm observations made by NETI staff
- Gave concrete steps for improvement

#### Progress Next Steps

- Useful tool to introduce new manager to the merits of program
- Provided a clear pathway forward for implementation of recommendations and assessing program progress and change.

#### GRANTEE PERSPECTIVE @ CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

- Relationship w/ NFWF has been since the start of the small watershed grant program. They've received 2.8 million dollars total.
- Projects have transitioned from site specific projects with limited local impact.. now they are more targeted, more community involvement, more awareness. Now partners are more important.
- Before, there was no collaborative, active partnership. Now they really seek out partners that bring a unique talent to the project.

#### Q&A

ANDY ROWE: Build capacity of NFWF to assess, monitor and evaluate initiatives. They felt that if NFWF embraced the monitoring recommendations then they could build stuff that didn't rely on the huge Chesapeake bay model. .. ???

I had a VISION of change and transformation.

AMANDA: Andy did push us to move to find EVIDENCE that the outreach activities were actually influencing change.

- The first year we made the change (social marketing) we didn't get any proposals for it bc no one knew how to do it. Now they're funding some.

What's the resistance to logic models?

- Zena; I had been with EPA for 20 years and had never seen or heard of it. At first I thought I'd lose my mind. I never had been asked to write down everything that we do in all the ways that we do it and all the people were involved. Is that because EPA is a young agency and we've never gone that route?
- John: We tend to be more resistant to highly disciplined approaches than scientists.
- People think it's the flavor of the month. Part of the response to that is to present it as a science with a specific category so people don't look at it that way.

Logic models are the most common way to get people to articulate their...