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Session 5: Using Evaluations to Improve Programs

"An Early Evaluation of NOAA's Habitat Matrix Program"
Bruce McDowell, NAPA

- www.napawash.org ←Report available (not yet published)
- NAPA: National Academy of Public Administration – management advising
- Assignment: Perform 1st outside, independent evaluation of NOAA's Habitat Matrix Program (6 component projects/programs)
    o For OMB's PART requirement
    o To improve program performance
    o To finish constructing the program
- Approach/Methodology: "Immersion" into Matrix programs
    o HQ briefings
    o field interviews (video conference between 7 regions)
    o document reviews (program's charter, "accomplishment reports"
    o prior evaluations of component parts)
    o data calls
    o Academy Panel meetings (program leaders and stakeholders)
    o Full-day facilitation workshops with 6 Matrix program leaders – considered potential common performance measures (from 19 laws)
- Six Matrix programs: habitat protection; habitat restoration; Chesapeake Bay Office; Damage Assessment, Remediation, & Restoration; Marine Debris (ex: Great Pacific Garbage Area – evaluators question whether it's worth the energy to clean it up); Aquatic Invasive Species
    o 29 pages of detailed legislative "mandates"
- 'Goals Structure' of the 19 laws governing the things in the Matrix
    o Has problems with "outcomes" – how to measure, how to use, etc.
    o NAPA's created 'Program Structure' = NAPA's Logic Model of the 19 laws governing the Matrix
- Challenge: NOAA is "disconnected from the outcomes" because its goal is to influence government agencies to use their science
- Analysis of Existing Performance Measures:
    o NOAA doesn't have current ability to measure outcomes or progress towards outcomes
    o Targets for measuring progress not based on environmental results
- Findings:
    o Programs are still administratively managed
    o Most rely on success from actions by others
    o Responsibilities far outstrip resources
    o Disconnect between outcome goals and current activities
        ▪ Just starting to use Logic Models to fix this problem
    o Organized feedback from stakeholders is rare

- Recommendations:
  - Establish overarching statutory framework toward ecosystem health, rather than 19 separate laws
  - Strengthen outcome-oriented goals and targets
  - Increase scientific support for habitat assessments and progress reporting
  - Work more closely with stakeholders on large-scale watershed planning (ecosystem health)
  - Prioritize spending to optimize ecosystem health
- **Evaluation's Values to NOAA**
  - **Fulfill OMB Requirement**
  - **Build more cohesive Matrix management team**
  - **Refine program's Logic Model**
  - **Reformulate Program's legislative foundation**
  - **Provide a stronger basis for budget formulation and justification**
  - **Strengthen relationships with stakeholders**
  - **Systematize the use of evaluations by the program's management team**
    - **Make evaluation sustainable across NOAA**

"The Value of Process Evaluation: Risk Reduction Measures for Pesticide Products Could be Implemented up to Four Years Sooner"
Debra Kemp, Abt Associates
Peter Caulkins, EPA

- External evaluation of Pesticides Program
  - To identify causes of delay in product reregistration
  - To identify opportunities for innovation and streamlining to make process more efficient
  - To ensure timelier implementation of required risk mitigation measures for pesticide use
- Background:
  - Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA)
    - Need comprehensive review of all pesticide active ingredients registered before November 1984
  - Reregistration Eligibility Decision Documents (REDs)
    - Document decision on necessary mitigation for each active ingredient
    - 600 active ingredients subject to reregistration
    - Deadlines for completion of REDs in statute
- Overview of Process:
  - Reregistration of an active ingredient ends with a signed RED (2-3 years)
  - Issue Data Call-In (DCI)
  - Evaluate registrant data
  - Review and approve label
  - Output: Stamped label
- Methodology:
  - Identify evaluation questions (looking for duplications, etc.)

- o Logic Model (key program considerations – environmental benefit)
- o Reviewed related evaluations (1st time done)
- o Conduct 30 interviews with OPP staff
- o Conduct audit of acute toxicity and product chemistry reviews
- o Case studies on specific REDs
- Duration of Process:
  - o Universe of products (concern=lagging):
    - ▪ ~7300 completed as REDs (38% of universe)
  - o Average time to reregister products
    - ▪ Median 30 months
- Evaluation Findings:
  - o Identified delays and inefficiencies in many steps in the process
  - o Inefficiencies in OPP's data management and communication
    - ▪ No central management of this project
  - o Four streamlining initiatives piloted by OPP
    - ▪ Establish "SWAT Teams" to reduce backlog
    - ▪ Batch data requirements where feasible
    - ▪ Implement RED-specified mitigation prior to product reregistration
    - ▪ Provide streamlined packages for label review
      - Communication between involved divisions
- Conclusions of Evaluation:
  - o Delays with REDs
    - ▪ Known, unresolved issues
    - ▪ Errors, issues raised in public comment
  - o Problems, bottlenecks, duplications of effort
    - ▪ DCI process
    - ▪ Label reviews
    - ▪ Info management
    - ▪ Resources and priorities
  - o Delays from external entities or considerations
    - ▪ Several OPP divisions participate
- Recommendations:
  - o OPP has adopted 17 of 21 recommendations
  - o Examples:
    - ▪ Revise approach for DCI justification
    - ▪ Improve transition of cases through streamlines label packages
    - ▪ Incorporating product reregistration into performance standards
- Mr. Caulkins had not anticipated how important communication would be
- Results: significant increase in product reregistration decisions in recent years (huge jump since '05) with same level of resources – "The numbers speak for themselves"
  - o Now have monthly meeting between divisions on product reregistration
  - o Division directors now required to have measurement of product reregistration in their performance standards
- **Value to EPA OPP:**
  - o **Expect to complete product reregistration sooner than previously estimated – implement risk mitigation measures on label sooner!**

- - **Information to help better allocate resources and staff**
  - **Improved communication**
- Mr. Caulkins: "When you define the problem quantitatively, all of a sudden you've got the elephant in the room and it can't be ignored"; Now can make and track progress; "Evaluation has become an essential tool"