Promoting Utilization of Evaluation
NFWF Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grant Program

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ARCeconomics

Essential Characteristics of Evaluation	Degree of Agreement	Source of Variation
Ethical	Full	Adapt evaluation to context (e.g. culturally appropriate
Utilized	Full	Approach
Feasible	Mostly	Purpose of evaluation, predisposition of evaluator
Valuing (attributable incremental effects)	Moderate	Methods (e.g. RTP) and focus (e.g. performance management, developmental evaluation)
Appropriate quality of information (valid, reliable and credible)	Moderate	Methods (e.g. quantitative / qualitative)

If a tree falls in the woods does anyone hear it?

If evaluation is not used it is not evaluation?

Use is now being regarded as *influence*

In pursuit of improved endeavors

Understand intended use by principle users

Engage principle users in evaluation

Evaluation credible to principle users

Evaluator tends to the social exchange with users and others associated with the endeavor

Key references:

Michael Quinn Patton *Utilization Focused Evaluation Sage 2008 4th ed.*

Michael Quinn Patton Utilization Checklist www.wmich.edu/evalctr /checklists/ufechecklist.htm

Michael Scriven Key Evaluation Checklist 2007 www.wmich.edu/evalctr /checklists/kec_seb07

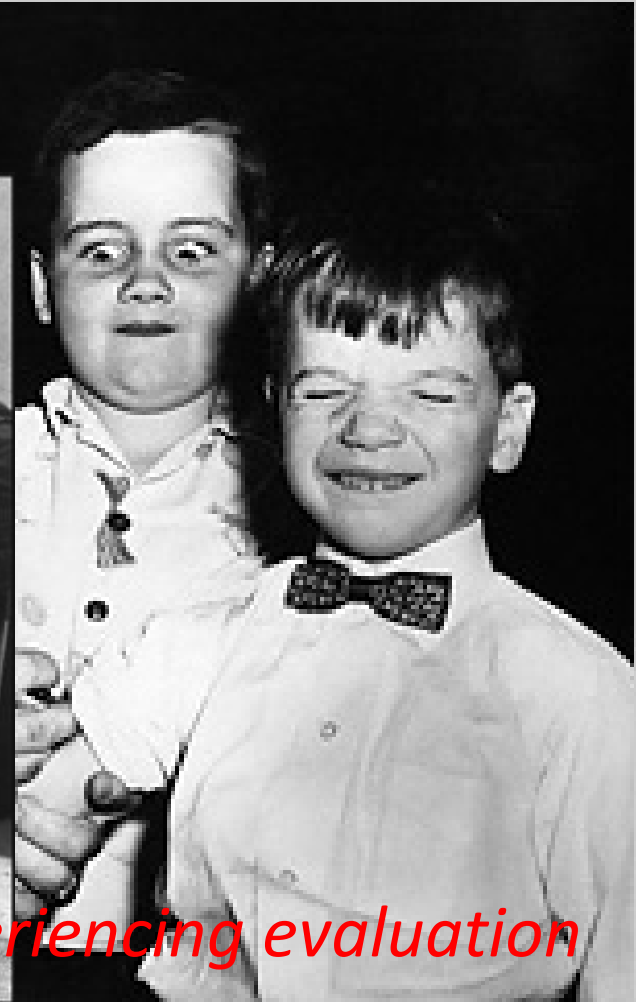Karen Kirkhart (2000) Reconceptualizing Evaluation Use – *New Directions* 88 pp. 5-26

Use is primarily a social undertaking

Ecosystems now understood as the intersection of complex natural and human decisions

Similar to natural scientists, when accorded a choice, evaluators focus most intensely on the technical elements

Factors affecting use / influence are part of the social exchange between users and evaluators

You would think a focus on social exchange by evaluators would lead to different results

Usual view of evaluators

Experiencing evaluation

Vision *was local collaborations would be the vehicle for design, implementing and most importantly sustaining and expanding investments.*

Goal *– the advice would be to implement strategies largely already agreed to improve the approach*

Advice
Expand community conservation and approach to local capacity building
Expand the range and type of grants to provide smaller ($30K) and larger ($100K) grants and in some settings even larger (e.g. multi region) grants. SWGP also initiate longer term grants for monitoring expertise
Planning grants as a mechanism to build local collaborations to implement and sustain investments
Independent monitoring of key natural and social outcomes in collaboration with local organizations to provide evidence and build local capacity
Continue to improve efficiency of grant making

Link major required changes to existing ethic of the program – sometimes a "thin tissue of lies"

> *We paced introduction of our major change (social elements) into the SWGP endeavor; provided multiple messages around this theme with growing sophistication of potentially beneficial new roles*

Address major threats to utilization

Demonstrated to NFWF Trustees and SWGP partners that change in nutrients was not a valid approach to measuring performance of smaller area interventions supported by the SWGP

Model desired behavior

> *Evaluation was almost the first time anyone associated with the SWGP visited most project sites – and grantees cooperated and appreciated the effort*

Credible – *major changes were built on existing approach of the SWGP (community conservation)*

Feasible – *demonstrated feasibility of monitoring, with site visits to a large proportion of grantees*

Address threats to use - *Provided evidence that a key threat to use favored by controlling stakeholder group was inappropriate*

Engagement *with the evaluation – Was admirably initiated by NFWF and partners, we only had to comply*

Quality – *We ensured that the quality of the evaluation evidence was appropriate and also credible*