

*Evaluability Assessment 1986-  
2006: A Literature Review*

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Evaluation Café

February 27, 2007

## Factors Leading to Literature Review

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- National focus on outcomes and measurement of impact
- Early experience with statewide evaluation of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program in Washington State
- Referred to EA literature

## Key Concerns in Evaluation Literature (1970s)

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- Congress and other policy makers critical of “useless” evaluation findings and reports
- Evaluators frustrated with the challenge of evaluating poorly conceived and ill-defined programs

*Joseph Wholey and  
colleagues at the Urban  
Institute (1979)*

Evaluability Assessment as  
part  
of a “sequential purchase of  
information”

# Sequential Purchase of Information

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- Evaluability assessment
- Rapid-feedback evaluation
- Performance monitoring
- Summative evaluation

## EA tasks (Wholey) require determining if...

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- Measurable objectives
- Objectives shared by key stakeholders
- Reasonable program structure and resources to achieve objectives
- Likelihood program managers will use evaluation results

## Methodologies (Wholey)

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- Examine program documents
- Interview key stakeholders
- Visit program

Offered as a

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Short-term, inexpensive investment to  
ensure usable evaluations



## EA Outcomes (Rutman, Smith)

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- Clarification of program goals and objectives
- Development of program theory (includes logic model and performance measures)
- Stakeholder awareness, understanding, and interest in the program

## Rog (1985)

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- Reviewed 57 EA studies obtained from Education and Health and Human Services
- Administered survey to a subset of program managers or others involved with EA to investigate variables that influenced EA utilization

## Decline in EA use (Smith, 2005)

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- Lack of clear methodology
- Ambiguous concept
- Logic model and program theory are legitimate techniques
- People conducting EA not interested in publishing findings
- Program development not a linear process

## Purpose of Literature Review

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Appraise EA practice since Rog (1985) study  
and focus on archived literature

## Search Strategy

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- Queried databases
- Used “evaluability assessment” and “pre-evaluation” as search terms
- Retained article if it in part focused explicitly on EA
- Conducted by academic, scholars, or practitioners for substantive or programmatic reasons

## Findings

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- 25 articles identified, 22 retained
- 19 articles found in a database with “evaluability assessment” as search terms
- 2 articles found through branching
- 1 article found through journal reading

## Archival Information

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- 9 articles in evaluation journals
- 9 articles in discipline specific journals
- 2 institutional reports
- 1 book chapter
- 1 AEA presentation

# Categories of Information

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- Programs, disciplines, settings
- EA models and methods
- Purposes and outcomes
- Modifications to the EA process



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Programs, Disciplines, Settings

## EA Models and Methods

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- Most articles cited well known EA authors but were not explicit about the model used
- Most studies used conventional methodologies

# Purposes and Outcomes

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- Evaluability and program improvement most common purpose
- Outcomes include program modifications, evaluation plan, logic model

## Modifications to the EA Process

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- Thurston (1991) – two studies used this model
- Van Voorhis & Brown (1996)
- Vanderheyden et al. (2006)

## Recommendations

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- Be clear about EA model in publications
- Clearly document revisions or modifications
- Compare usefulness of various EA models
- Differentiate EA from similar evaluation tools
- All studies are self-reports – develop appraisal techniques

## Recommendations Con't.

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- Evaluators work with professionals in other disciplines to ensure clear EA use
- Use well thought, consistent, logical archival approach

# *Evaluability assessment: A primer*

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***Practical Assessment,  
Research  
and Evaluation***

<http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=8&n=20>

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Questions?