Evaluation During Disasters: Considerations in the Context of COVID-19

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Current Evaluation Concerns

• American Evaluation Association’s Disaster and Emergency Management Evaluation Committee sponsored Town Halls to discuss evaluation concerns

• Conducted 2 Town Halls with 100+ Evaluators

• Emerging themes from the included:
  • Pace and scale unprecedented
  • Uncertainty of disaster and conflicting communications
  • Impact on community (vulnerable populations)
  • Impact on businesses (social distancing)
  • Rapid change to on-line communications
  • Data gathering and sharing issues
  • Changing role of evaluator in the response and recovery
Role of Evaluator in Real-time Evaluation

- Also known as: Developmental Evaluation, Adaptive Evaluation, Emergent Evaluation, Action Evaluation
- The evaluator helps to inform responsive and adaptive development of the training program in an uncertain environment in real time
- Evaluation becomes integrated into the DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS of the training program
- Evaluator works collaboratively with the training program developers to conceptualize, design, and test approaches in an on-going process of adaptation, intentional change, and development
Real Time Evaluation

Purpose: Development (not improvement): Developing COVID-19 Tools in a turbulent environment (disaster); exploring real-time solutions and generating innovative interventions for those in need

Challenge: Uncertainty, Complexity, Fluidity - Existing training and related resources may no longer be effective as conditions change (turbulence, instability, uncertainty, dynamic)

Implications: Real time - Planning, execution, and evaluation occur simultaneously (rapid feedback, adaptation, and agile/nimble response) adapt planning and response strategically AS THE CRISIS UNFOLDS
Evaluation: Traditional vs Developmental

Learning to respond to lack of control and stay in touch with what’s unfolding and thereby respond strategically.

Evaluation supports ongoing learning.

Position evaluation as internal, team function integrated into action and ongoing interpretive processes.

(Rettig, 2017)
Developmental vs. Formative vs. Summative

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<tr>
<th>Developmental</th>
<th>Formative</th>
<th>Summative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program is innovating and in development:</td>
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<td>Try developmental evaluation</td>
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<td>Question: What is it?</td>
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<td>Decision point: Your program changing from adaptive and emergent to more stable and consistent? Remember some programs may never move to this phase instead continuing to adapt and innovate.</td>
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<td>Program is forming and under refinement:</td>
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<td>Try formative evaluation</td>
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<td>Question: Is it working?</td>
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<td>Decision point: Are you confident that your program has become stable and fine-tuned? Are you ready to stop revising and judge its impact or worth?</td>
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<td>Program is stabilising and well established:</td>
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<td>Try summative evaluation</td>
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<td>Question: Did it work?</td>
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<td>Source: Adapted from Preskill &amp; Beer (2012)</td>
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Developmental Evaluation: Gulf Responder Resiliency Training

- Conducted in different geographic regions with different target audiences and different disaster events
- Major stakeholders actively involved in development, implementation, and evaluation of trainings
- Evaluation conducted early on in the training design and feedback of effective principles used in each iteration of development
- Build relationships and trust with various stakeholders to gather information and refine curriculum
- Creating balance between standardized training and flexibility to tailor training to meet needs (adaptability)
Utilization-focused Developmental Evaluation

Training Course:
- Disaster Worker Resiliency Training
- Disaster Supervisor Resiliency Training

Disaster Event:
- Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill
- Hurricane Sandy

Region/Target Audience:
- Gulf South Region: New Orleans and Houma, LA
- North East Region: New York/New Jersey
Training Met Needs of Target Audience
Trainee Ratings

DSRT NY/NJ
DSRT Gulf
DWRT NY/NJ
DWRT Gulf

Sarpy, 2017
Training Overall Was Effective

Trainer Ratings

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

DSRT NY/NJ

DSRT Gulf

DWRT NY/NJ

DWRT Gulf

SOMEWHAT
AGREE
STRONGLY

Sarpy, 2017
Stakeholder Feedback

“Thank you everybody for sharing knowledge, what a pleasure is to meet and create new alliances to promote growth, and empowerment of our organizations, our communities. I really want to thank all in the group for adjusting to the language barriers that our members face, and for providing positive reinforcement and an open space where you helped in the encouragement of open dialogue while addressing language barriers. They all left the training with an immense amount of knowledge, with a thirst to continue learning, and empowered within themselves to continue learning and sharing the knowledge that they have gained.”

GRRTP Trainer from Make the Road New York
Questions