

Final meeting: ESF MOForum on Evaluation of Funding Schemes and Research Programmes

16 – 17 November 2009 Dublin, Ireland

Theme 1: Good Practice for Devising and Implementing Evaluation Strategies

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Good Practice for Developing Strategies for the Evaluation of Funding Programmes

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Whose best practice?

- For commissioners of evaluations
 - who may be evaluators some of the time (internal evaluators)
- For evaluators
 - who may be full time or part time
- Two sides of the same coin?
- Both have control over the evaluation
 - Better have them working together?

Why Evaluation?

- Tests fitness for purpose of institutional frameworks, assesses value for money
 - Allows us to make qualified judgements about relative achievement of science and scientists – part of the management of science by scientists and funders
- Contributes to our understanding of scientific enquiry
 - How is science done, what are the characteristics of a scientific field – (your field) *growth, decay, dependence on other fields*

Evaluation – Organisational Priority?

- Costly “non-core”
- Ex post (how can it be relevant to the future?)
- Interfering (interacting!) science, scientific and wider communities
- Evaluation is not neutral – it means applying criteria

What makes Evaluation challenging?

- Phenomena are *complex* – uncertain outcomes
- List of actions – lots of types of linked activities
- There funding modes (7) and there are aspects to each mode with quality control dimension
 - publicity, recruitment, applications, review (peer / expert review, real time monitoring / management, dissemination)
- Evaluation => research?
- But resistant phenomena
 - Ethical: “do no harm”
 - Practical: “double blind trials”
 - Political: “antipathy

What makes Evaluation even more challenging?



A Gaming environment

- Expect gaming by:
 - Researchers -
 - Citation clubs – ?Chaos Solitons and Fractals ?
 - Journals -
 - Folia Phoniatica et. Logopaedica

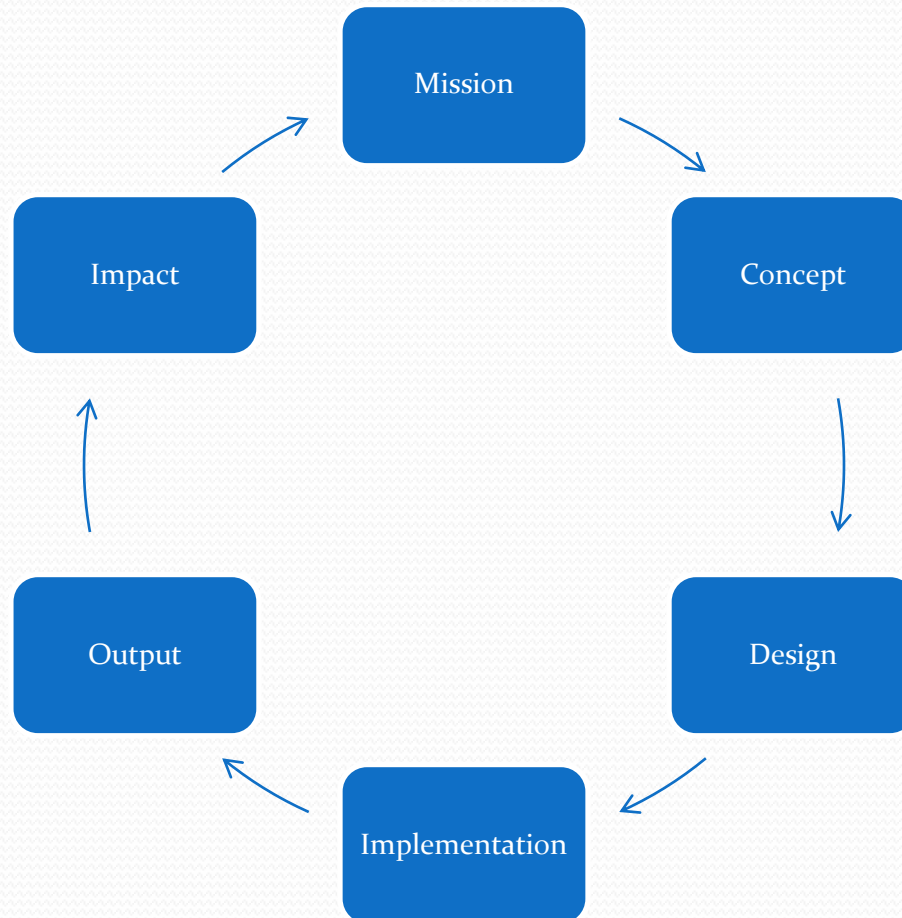
- *Evaluators trying to impress funders?*

Evaluation: supply chains and eco-systems

- Interdependencies of activities - missions
 - Variety of standards - measures (policy mix)
 - Linkages between actors and flows - material
 - Multiple users of evaluation findings – messages
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- Best practice involves a strategic view - coordination

Mission: A Context of Evaluation



Implication, Consistency and Causation

- Does the mission imply the concept
 - Programme, infrastructures,
 - Does the design follow the concept?
 - Is the design implemented as intended?
 - Does the implementation cause the outputs?
 - Do the outputs cause the impacts?
 - Are the impacts consistent with the mission?
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- => change of Mission, change of Concept?

Measures

- Whose measures? Yours or Theirs?
- Evaluator discretion – relies upon:
 - professional expertise
 - contribution of evaluation community
- Ensure relevant comparisons with other organisations and their activities
- Remember – the community can come up with its own measures
 - Hirsch
- Meta- analysis?

Materials (Data)

- Availability
- Coverage
- Timeliness
- External access
- Impact - accumulate
- Non-invasive methods (c.v. analysis)
- Quality control within the funding organisation – publication records –
- Grant rules to help with attribution
- Sharing data with other funding bodies?

Messages

- Who should hear? How do they listen?
 - Decide at the outset
- Openness - “evaluator chicken”?
- Evaluators and Evaluation community
 - Commit at the start to create trust
 - Accept critically methodological developments
 - Encourage publication in the literature

Best Practice - Strategy

- Evaluation should serve Mission
 - Interventions are consistent
- Measures
 - Broad enough to capture desired and unintended effects
 - Above all - relevant to the Mission
- Material
 - Available in time to evaluation, give and support access to data
- Messages
 - Determine use from beginning – gives confidence to evaluation

Best Practice: Some Tactics?

- Put the Board off –
 - Better to be late and right than early and wrong
- Dialogue with the Evaluation – this is research
 - You can provide context - you know your Programmes



Thank you