Exploring Evaluation

Research Knowledge and Skill Builder
Department of Family Medicine
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Healthy and Safe Communities
Public Health Services

Land Acknowledgement

- The City of Hamilton is situated upon the traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Mississaugas. This land is covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, which was an agreement between the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek to share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. We further acknowledge that this land is covered by the Between the Lakes Purchase, 1792, between the Crown and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

- Today, the City of Hamilton is home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island (North America) and we recognize that we must do more to learn about the rich history of this land so that we can better understand our roles as residents, neighbours, partners and caretakers.

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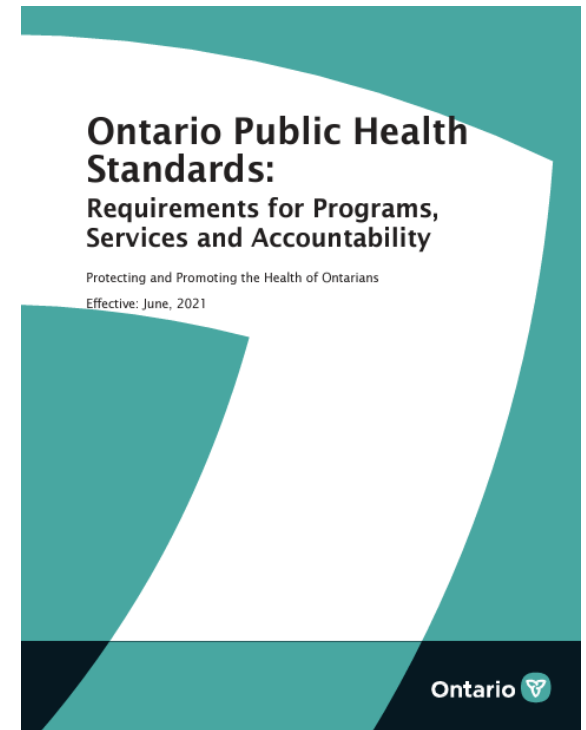**Public Health Services**

- Introduce key frameworks and terms in evaluation practice

- Describe eight challenges I have come across in my evaluation practice

- Provide guidance related to these considerations to strengthen your own evaluation practice

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How We'll Spend Our Time Together

1. **What is program evaluation? What are some frameworks for program evaluation?** (15 minutes)

2. **What challenges have I experienced in my practice, and how would I try to mitigate them in the future?** (25 minutes)

3. **Discussion and questions** (20 minutes)

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Public Health Evaluation: Ontario Context

- **Program evaluation** is "the systematic gathering, analysis, and reporting of data about a program to assist in decision-making"
    - *Needs assessment* generates information needed "to support the establishment of new programs and services"
    - *Process evaluation* assesses "whether evidence-informed programs and services are carried out with the necessary reach, intensity, and duration"
    - *Outcome evaluation* documents "the effectiveness and efficiency of programs and services"

Ontario Public Health Standards:
Requirements for Programs, Services and Accountability

Protecting and Promoting the Health of Ontarians
Effective: June, 2021

Ontario

Health Evaluation Frameworks

- A recent [scoping review](#) identified 71 frameworks that could be used for evaluating physical activity or dietary change programs
  - PHO's 10 Steps
  - RE-AIM
  - CDC Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health

Fynn, J.F., Hardeman, W., Milton, K. *et al.* A scoping review of evaluation frameworks and their applicability to real-world physical activity and dietary change programme evaluation. *BMC Public Health* **20**, 1000 (2020). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-09062-0

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Public Health Ontario's Ten Steps

1. Clarify what is to be evaluated

2. Engage stakeholders

3. Assess resources and evaluability

4. Determine evaluation questions

5. Determine methods

6. Develop evaluation plan

7. Collect data

8. Process data and analyze results

9. Interpret and disseminate results

10. Apply evaluation findings

Snelling, S. & Meserve, A. (2016). Evaluating health promotion programs. Retrieved from: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/E/2016/evaluating-hp-programs-workbook.pdf

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RE-AIM Framework

- A planning and evaluation framework to help answer **"what interventions (program or policies) work?"** considering context such as:
  - In what settings?
  - When delivered by whom?
  - For which populations and sub-groups?
  - To achieve what outcomes?
  - For what cost?
  - Under what circumstances?

Holtrop, J.S., Rabin, B.A. & Glasgow, R.E. Qualitative approaches to use of the RE-AIM framework: rationale and methods. *BMC Health Serv Res* **18**, 177 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-018-2938-8

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RE-AIM Framework

Reach

- The absolute number, proportion, and representativeness of individuals who are willing to participate in a given initiative, intervention, or program
- **Who is participating/not participating, and why?**

Effectiveness (or Efficacy)

- The impact of an intervention on important outcomes, including negative effects, quality of life, and economic outputs
- **What are the impacts? Are these the desired outcomes?**

Adoption

- The absolute number, proportion, and representativeness of settings and program implementers who are willing to initiate a program
- **Was this intervention adopted? By whom, and in what contexts?**

Adapted from:
What is RE-AIM? (2024). Retrieved from: https://re-aim.org/learn/what-is-re-aim/ &
Glasgow, R. E., Harden, S. M., Gaglio, B., Rabin, B., Smith, M. L., Porter, G. C., Ory, M. G., & Estabrooks, P. A. (2019). RE-AIM Planning and Evaluation Framework: Adapting to New Science and Practice With a 20-Year Review. Frontiers in public health, 7, 64. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2019.00064

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RE-AIM Framework

Implementation

- At the **setting level**, whether the program was implemented with fidelity by the program implementer (including consistency of delivery, time, and cost)
- At the **individual level**, whether program participants used the intervention strategies
- **How consistently is the intervention delivered? What was the uptake by participants?**

Maintenance

- The extent to which the intervention becomes engrained within organizational policies or practices
- At the **individual level**, whether the effects of the program are still effective on outcomes after 6 or more months after the most recent intervention contact
- **Was the intervention sustained?**

Adapted from:
What is RE-AIM? (2024). Retrieved from: https://re-aim.org/learn/what-is-re-aim/ &
Glasgow, R. E., Harden, S. M., Gaglio, B., Rabin, B., Smith, M. L., Porter, G. C., Ory, M. G., & Estabrooks, P. A. (2019). RE-AIM Planning and Evaluation Framework: Adapting to New Science and Practice With a 20-Year Review. Frontiers in public health, 7, 64. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2019.00064

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CDC Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health

REFERENCE CARD

Steps in Evaluation Practice	Standards for Effective Evaluation
• **Engage stakeholders** Those involved, those affected, primary intended users	
• **Describe the program** Need, expected effects, activities, resources, stage, context, logic model	• **Utility** Serve the information needs of intended users
• **Focus the evaluation design** Purpose, users, uses, questions, methods, agreements	• **Feasibility** Be realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal
• **Gather credible evidence** Indicators, sources, quality, quantity, logistics	• **Propriety** Behave legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved and those affected
• **Justify conclusions** Standards, analysis/synthesis, interpretation, judgment, recommendations	• **Accuracy** Reveal and convey technically accurate information
• **Ensure use and share lessons learned** Design, preparation, feedback, follow-up, dissemination	

(Top) A Framework for Program Evaluation. Retrieved from: https://www.cdc.gov/evaluation/framework/index.htm
(Bottom) Overview of the Framework for Program Evaluation. Retrieved from: https://www.cdc.gov/evaluation/materials/frameworkoverview.pdf.

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Frameworks Key Messages

- Program planning and evaluation are part of an iterative and ongoing cycle

- There are many frameworks that provide guidance on how to conduct program evaluations. Key themes across these frameworks include:
  - The value and importance of engaging participants, community partners, knowledge users, and other interested parties in program evaluation
  - Evaluators fully understanding the program they are evaluating
  - Tailoring the evaluation to consider the evaluation's purpose, how the results will be used, and ethics, while balancing feasibility and rigour

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Step 1: Engage Interested Participants and Partners

Challenge: Fully understanding the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of those involved in the evaluation.

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- **Set yourself up for success**
  - Book advanced meetings with project team members, read background documents, talk to folks involved, check out the program

- **Examine how your evaluation is situated within the broader community and context**
  - What harms could your evaluation cause? How can you mitigate them?
  - How are you situated relative to the evaluation (i.e., internal or external)?
  - Why is the evaluation being undertaken?
  - Who is involved in informing and making decisions about the evaluation? How well do they understand the participants? The program? The context?

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Challenge: Having a shared understanding of the program.

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Guidance: Understand the Program

- Ask a ton of questions (see previous slide!)

- Identify the **Theory of Change** for the program
  - Theory of Change explains <u>WHY</u> an intervention's activities will produce the desired outcomes
  - It is different from a **logic model**, which only shows <u>HOW</u> the program will lead to outcomes (e.g., by describing inputs and activities)

- Programs need theories of change (or, at minimum, a logic model) to be evaluated – and they don't need to be scary
  - **Implementation Failure:** Did the program fail because the theory was not implemented correctly?
  - **Theory Failure:** Did the program fail because the theory itself was not appropriate?
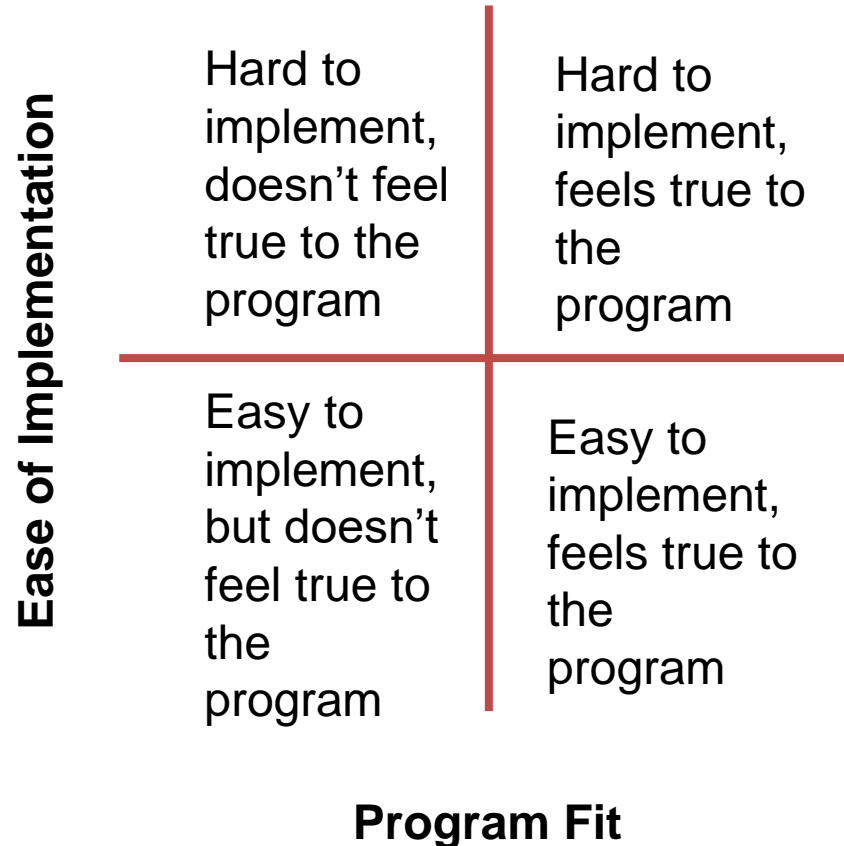
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Challenge: Scaling the evaluation.

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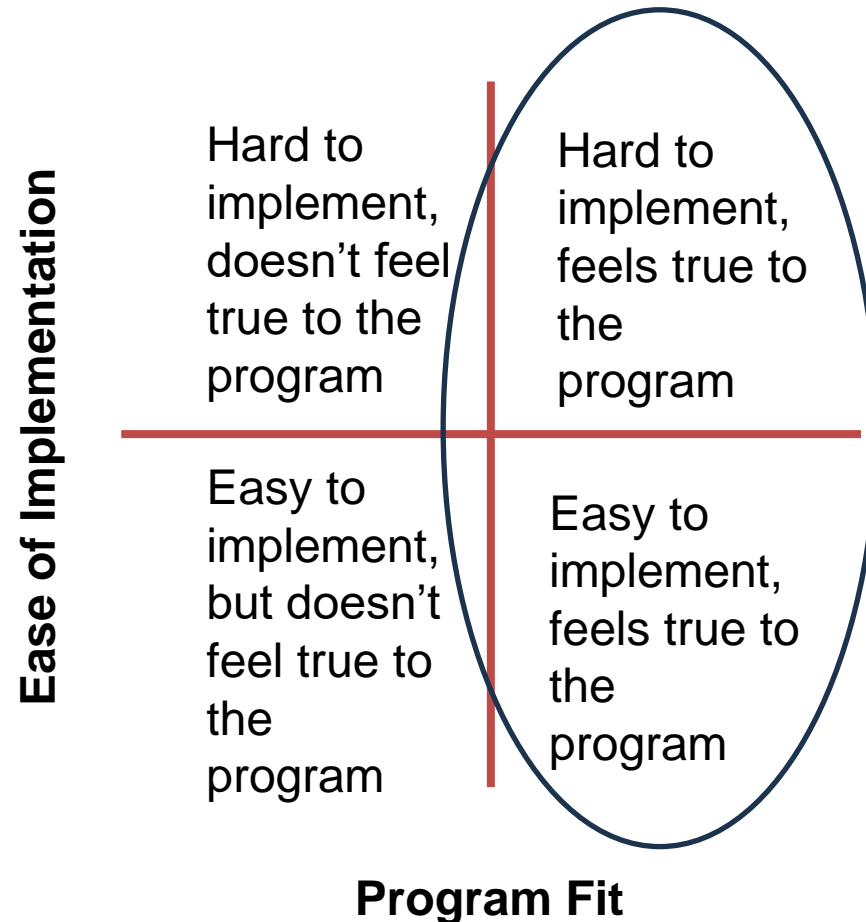**Public Health Services**

Guidance: Consider Evaluation 'Fit'

- Generally, evaluation should account for **about** 10% of the program's budget and resourcing

- Bring people with more knowledge into the evaluation planning process, such as program implementers or participants

- Ask yourself, **"Does evaluating the program in this way fit the program?"** and examining:
  - Participant comfort and safety
  - Program and evaluation timelines and resources
  - Barriers to participation in the evaluation

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Guidance: Consider Evaluation 'Fit'

	Hard to implement, doesn't feel true to the program	Hard to implement, feels true to the program
Ease of Implementation	Easy to implement, but doesn't feel true to the program	Easy to implement, feels true to the program

Program Fit

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Guidance: Consider Evaluation 'Fit'

Program Fit (x-axis)

Ease of Implementation (y-axis)

Top-left quadrant: Hard to implement, doesn't feel true to the program

Top-right quadrant: Hard to implement, feels true to the program

Bottom-left quadrant: Easy to implement, but doesn't feel true to the program

Bottom-right quadrant: Easy to implement, feels true to the program

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Challenge: Assuming methods will work in a given context.

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Guidance: Build Consensus and Be Willing to Adapt

- **When designing,** use consensus-based decision-making models to ensure that you have buy-in from everyone involved
  - **"Gradients of Agreement" technique:** Options can include things like Fully Support, Support with Reservations, Don't Like but Will Support, and Veto
  - **"High Five" technique:** Everyone holds up a finger to indicate their level of support (5-point scale)

- **During data collection,** be honest about whether you have enough information to justify your conclusions

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Challenge: Thinking enough about how I'd analyze the data before data collection.

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Guidance: Consider Data Analysis Early

- Be direct with your evaluation question(s) and data collection tools, and ensure they align
    - **Evaluation Question:** "What changed, if anything, for you, your family, and/or community as a result of this program?"
    - **Interview Question:** "On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate this program?"

- If possible, pilot data collection tools to ensure it is collecting the information you need, and adapt if required

- Build co-interpretation methods into your evaluation design, if appropriate

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Step 6: Ensure Use and Share Lessons Learned

Challenge: Communicating the right information to the right audiences.

Guidance: Thoughtful Knowledge Translation

- Approach translating evaluation findings in the same way you would any other research findings

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What's the message?

Who is the audience?

Who is the messenger?

How?

How will we know if we are successful?

Source: Lavis, J. N., Robertson, D., Woodside, J. M., McLeod, C. B., Abelson, J., & Knowledge Transfer Study Group (2003). How can research organizations more effectively transfer research knowledge to decision makers?. *The Milbank quarterly*, *81*(2), 221–172. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0009.t01-1-00052

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Knowledge Translation: Increasing Awareness

What's the message?

What are you increasing awareness about?
How will my message be best understood?

Who is the audience?

Whose awareness am I trying to increase?
Are there similarities/differences between these people?

Who is the messenger?

Who will my audience see as credible, relatable, or worthy of listening to?

How to communicate?

What product or resource should I develop?
When and where should I communicate this?

How to know if successful?

How will I know my knowledge has been translated?

Challenge: Being judicious about what is (and is not!) an evaluation finding.

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Guidance: Remember Attribution

- Participants may or may not know exactly what program they are attending or a part of (or who is funding it!)
  - Here is where direct questions come back to help you and considering "evaluation fit" to ensure that the methods align with the program (e.g., data are collected at the program itself)

- Be reasonable about what outcomes are possible because of the program
  - **Impact Evaluation:** Seeks to go beyond describing impacts that occurred in order to specifically understand the program or intervention's role in producing these impacts (i.e., establishing causality)

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Challenge: Being engaged about evaluation as the program winds down.

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Guidance: Advocate for the Value of Evaluation

- Be honest about whether the benefits of evaluating outweigh the risks
  - It may not be appropriate to e-mail participants two weeks after the program ended, but you may be able to convene a focus group of program providers to talk about lessons learned

- Advocate early and often about how evaluation can help at any point in a program's lifecycle
  - Did you know there's a type of evaluation specifically meant for emerging ideas or projects? (There is! Developmental evaluation!)

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Guidance Summary

Be clear when identifying participants, partners, and who else needs to be involved.

Understand the program as completely as you can.

Ensure the evaluation "fits" the program and context.

Build consensus and be willing to adapt your evaluation design.

Consider how you will analyze data early in the evaluation design process.

Be thoughtful when undertaking knowledge translation.

Remember attribution and be careful when making those links.

Advocate for the value of evaluation.

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- [CDC Program Evaluation](#)
- [BetterEvaluation](#)
- [AEA365 Daily Evaluation Blog](#)
- [Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation](#)
- [Ontario Public Health Evaluation Network](#)
- [CDP EvaLL](#) resources
- [CDC Introduction to Economic Evaluation in Public Health](#) course

Contact:

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QUESTIONS?