

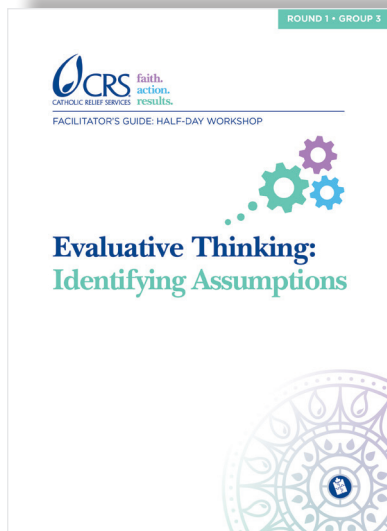


FACILITATOR'S GUIDE: HALF-DAY WORKSHOP



Evaluative Thinking: Identifying Assumptions





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Catholic Relief Services is the official international humanitarian agency of the United States Catholic community. CRS' relief and development work is accomplished through programs of emergency response, HIV, health, agriculture, education, microfinance and peacebuilding. CRS eases suffering and provides assistance to people in need in more than 100 countries, without regard to race, religion or nationality.

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Acronyms

CRS	Catholic Relief Services
ET	evaluative thinking
ICT	information and communications technology
MEAL	monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning
NGO	nongovernmental organization
SMILER	simple measurement of indicators for learning and evidence-based reporting
ToC	theory of change

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Identifying Assumptions

HALF-DAY WORKSHOP (3.5 HOURS)

There is a paradigm shift taking place in the aid sector away from a predominantly linear-based model of change to one that is more dynamic, reflective and responsive. The evaluative thinking (ET) workshop series is designed to promote ET across an organization and, in turn, increase the quality and efficiency of program planning and MEAL work generally. These in-person workshops are organized into three groups, each intended to be presented annually (although this is not obligatory) over 3 years and facilitated by an ET specialist or MEAL professional. The workshops are also differentiated by group. These groups refer to positions within the organization. Group 1 refers to field-based staff, Group 2 to senior program staff and Group 3 to country leadership.

The following workshop is for Round 1, Group 3 (the first workshop for country leadership). The overall goal of this half-day workshop is to introduce to leaders the idea of ET and the critical role it plays in program planning and evaluation work, as well as to provide some concrete and practical strategies for promoting and supporting ET.

Learning objectives

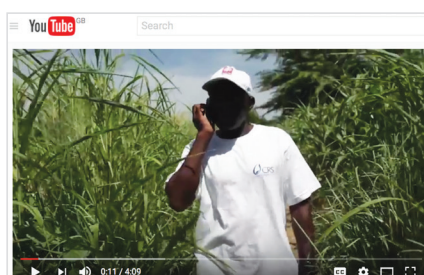
As a result of participating in this workshop, country leadership will be able to:

- Talk about and explain ET to others
- Practice ET habits themselves
- Open evaluative conversations with program managers in a safe and productive way
- Offer suggestions to program managers and MEAL leadership on how and why to promote ET
- Read, review and support learning related to theory of change Pathway Models
- Promote and support ET among leadership peers and staff
- Identify ways to respond to the MEAL Competency Model, Competency No. 6: Analysis and critical thinking

In this workshop package you will find:

- A facilitator's agenda
- Slides to present during the workshop (including speaking notes)
- A set of handouts
- Descriptions of how to facilitate each activity
- Workshop planning tips

Watch an overview on evaluative thinking [here](#).



Further videos on YouTube

[Introducing Evaluative Thinking](#)

[Theory of Change Pathway Models](#)

[Discovering Assumptions](#)

[Developing Project Learning Plans](#)

[Making Informed Decisions](#)

Workshop Planning Tips

When planning a workshop, as in planning a program or MEAL work, it is important to allow sufficient time and effort to be thorough in the fine details of the event. To run a successful workshop, there is a lot you need to prepare besides slides and handouts. These planning tips have been developed by experienced evaluative thinking workshop facilitators who have yet to host a flawless workshop!

Consider ET workshop readiness

Before you plan an ET workshop, think evaluatively. Why do you want to plan this workshop? What issue(s) are you seeking to address? When it comes to MEAL work, how intrinsically motivated are members of your organization? Is your program or organization ready to learn about ET? Will there be interest? Are potential participants likely to be engaged by the activities? Is the leadership supportive (will they allow staff to take time away from their regular work)? Is there a need to do a better job with MEAL? The answers to these questions will affect the way you approach planning (see *Responsive facilitation* below).

Participants

Each of the workshops in the ET workshop series is designed for a large group (10-30 people). Most of the activities that make up the workshops are designed for small working groups (3-5 people). When thinking about how many participants to recruit, first consider how many facilitators you will have. Even an expert facilitator working alone should not plan to facilitate more than 4 small groups (12-20 people) at a time. The more facilitators there are, the more groups you can accommodate. However, contrary to the “the more the merrier” idiom, there are diminishing returns to adding more participants and facilitators. It is important that, during large group discussions, all participants can hear each other and feel comfortable enough to share their ideas with a room full of their peer colleagues. Consider issues of office hierarchy when deciding who should attend which workshop, and how the meeting dynamics may differ with, say, junior and senior staff participating in the same workshop.

The next consideration for participant recruitment should be area of work. The workshop series is broken up by “Group.” Group 1 workshops are designed for field-based staff, Group 2 workshops for senior program staff and Group 3 workshops for organizational (country) leadership. For the Group 3 workshop, you will likely generate a shortlist (5-12) of people you would like to recruit. For Groups 1 and 2, you may have to select from a larger population. Consider area of work. Is there one large program that has 4-6 components with its own focused staff members? If so, you can plan for and recruit group members based on this structure. Alternatively, the organization may have a set of 4-6 smaller programs, each with its own staff. This is another excellent way to think about organizing your workshop and recruiting participants. Avoid recruiting participants to be part of a workshop working group that will be focused on a program that they don’t work on. These workshops work best if the activities are authentic; meaning, for example, that participants build theory of change Pathway Models for the program that they actually work on.

Location

Where will you host your workshop? You want to select a location that is affordable and accessible to participants, but also separate enough from their typical work location to avoid distraction and allow for focus on the workshop. In addition, you will also need somewhere that provides some basic workshop amenities: ability to project slides, internet and wifi access, access to refreshments for snack and lunch breaks, and tables and chairs that can accommodate group work. A location that provides access to a printer/photocopier is not a necessity, but certainly a bonus. If you are planning to conduct one of the workshops that involves developing a ToC Pathway Model, you will also need wall space to hang large format paper that participants will need to write on.

Materials

Activity-specific materials are listed in the activity description documents. In addition to these specific items, there are general supplies that the facilitator should have on hand for each workshop:

- Unlined flipchart paper (large format paper that can be used for large group discussions as well as model building)
- Markers (in a variety of colors – a set of four for each group is a good idea)
- Multicolored Post-it notes and/or index cards
- Yarn to serve as a connecting line between objectives in a ToC or Pathway model
- Scissors

- Tape (for hanging chart paper on the wall)
- A pen for each participant
- A camera for recording Pathway Models, brainstorming notes, group work, etc.
- A hole punch if participants wish to insert handouts into their workshop binder
- If you have one, consider taking a “sticky wall”; You never know when it might come in handy!

Timing

There are three types of timing issues to consider: frequency of the workshops over time, timing the workshop within the year, and allocating time on the day for the various activities on the workshop agenda.

The early ET workshops were held on an annual basis. While this worked well for the staff concerned it does not imply that an annual frequency is the only way to organize ET capacity strengthening. You could conduct all three rounds over a shorter space of time, perhaps to try and develop a greater sense of momentum. This decision must be made locally with full awareness of other demands on participants’ time.

Selecting the month and week to schedule your workshop is important. Minimize the burden on participants by selecting a slower time in their program work cycle. It may be a good idea to talk to staff members from each Group in the organization hierarchy to get an idea of what will work best for everyone.

Timing the hours in a workshop day can be one of the most challenging parts of facilitation. Starting and ending on time, while allowing for productive and engaging discussion is often a difficult balance. Two simple tips may help:

1. **Build extra time into the agenda.** The extra 30 minutes at the beginning and end of the day will ensure that the workshop can start on time and that any “housekeeping” items can be addressed, and should ease any concern about running a few minutes over time on any activity or discussion.
2. **Be flexible.** Remember that getting through the agenda is secondary to participants’ learning to think evaluatively. Be responsive – if you are having a very insightful, engaging and productive discussion, let it go on a few extra minutes. If the discussion has waned or feels tedious, move on. Perhaps you will use this time for a productive discussion in the next activity.

Responsive facilitation

The most important characteristics of a good facilitator (like a good program implementer) are responsiveness, timeliness and the ability to adapt. While the materials in this planning package are designed to allow any facilitator in any organization to implement the same set of workshops, each individual workshop implementation should be unique. The context in which the workshop takes place, the individual participants and facilitators, the programs represented, and the dynamics of different groups each significantly affect the way a workshop, or any individual activity, should be facilitated. Workshop facilitators have to be perceptive and open to feedback. They should constantly ask themselves questions like:

Are participants engaged? If not, how can I help them get engaged? What is their current knowledge/skill group? What is the next step in building their knowledge or skill? Is there an individual in the group that is dominating the others? How can I provide an opportunity for others to contribute? Am I asking participants to do something that is culturally insensitive?

General facilitation tips

- **Focus on preparation:** Have all of the handouts photocopied and in order, other materials organized, and run through the slides on your own as well as with any peer facilitators before workshop day.
- **Be timely:** Take seriously the start and finish times each day and, if possible, after the breaks. It is only fair to those who arrive on time that you should start and finish at the time you previously agreed.
- **Be flexible:** This is worth stating again. If you are not making adjustments to your agenda, you are probably not being as responsive to your participants as you should be. Allow time at the end of each day to reflect and adapt existing plans.
- **Don’t talk too much:** Some “lecturing” is unavoidable, but try to minimize time spent in this way. Research shows that people learn best when they are constructing their own knowledge (via discussion, and thinking activities) rather than having it delivered to them.

Facilitator's Agenda

TIME	TASK	ACTIVITY DESCRIPTIONS	HANDOUTS
8:30am	Introductions and goals		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent form • Pre-workshop survey
9:00am	Defining and defending ET		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is evaluative thinking? • Principles for promoting ET
9:30am	Theory of change Pathway Models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ToC Pathway Model Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ToC Pathway Models • ToC Pathway Model review guidance • Example model: Reaching for their potential
10:00am	Break		
10:15am	Strategies for supporting ET work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical conversation role-play • Learning-to-action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical conversation role-play • ET strategies and activities • Learning-to-action plan
11:30am	Reflect and debrief		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-workshop survey
12:00pm	Close		

Note to facilitators: The timing of activities (length of time required for each activity as well as their sequence) are suggestions only, based on prior experience and a broad set of priorities. It is often the case that a particular group may need more or less time for a particular task. The facilitator should (a) set their priorities ahead of time so that, in the moment, a quick decision can be made about whether to slow things down or move things along and (b) be prepared to be flexible and make adjustments on the fly. It is good practice to, at the end of each day, review the agenda for the next day, making adjustments based on predetermined priorities and what has been accomplished so far.

HANDOUT LIST

Consent form (See Appendix)
Pre-workshop survey (See Appendix)
What is evaluative thinking?
Principles for promoting ET
ToC Pathway Models
ToC Pathway Model review guidance
Example model: Reaching for their potential
Critical conversation role-play
ET strategies and activities
Learning-to-action plan
Post-workshop survey (See Appendix)

What is Evaluative Thinking?

Evaluative thinking is a relatively new idea in the field of MEAL. Here are some definitions:

Evaluative thinking is critical thinking applied in the context of evaluation (or MEAL), motivated by an attitude of inquisitiveness and a belief in the value of evidence, that involves: identifying assumptions, posing thoughtful questions, pursuing deeper understanding through reflection and perspective taking, and making informed decisions in preparation for action.

Buckley, J., Archibald, T., Hargraves, M., & Trochim, W. (2015). Defining and Teaching Evaluative Thinking: Insights from Research on Critical Thinking. *American Journal of Evaluation*

* In the above definition, we define evaluation very broadly, encompassing all MEAL activities and even other reflective professional practice.

Evaluation is an activity. Evaluative thinking is a way of doing business. This distinction is critical. It derives from studies of evaluation use. Evaluation [or MEAL] is more useful—and actually used—when the program and organizational culture manifests evaluative thinking.

Patton, M. Q. (2014). 'Embracing Evaluative Thinking for Better Outcomes: Four NGO Case Studies'. InterAction report.

A large portion of the capacity necessary to undertake good MEAL involves evaluative thinking.

MEAL requires:

- Knowledge: understanding of the “how” and “why” of basic MEAL concepts, terms, methods and resources
- Working skills: observation, analysis, communication, etc.
- Thinking skills: reflection, questioning, strategizing, mental modeling, perspective taking, decision making, the ability to identify assumptions
- Attitudes: belief in the value of MEAL, an intrinsic motivation to pursue evidence

Evaluative
thinking

You know evaluative thinking is happening when you hear things like:

“Why are we assuming X?”

“How do we know X?”

“What evidence do we have for X?”

“What is the thinking behind the way we do X?”

“How could we do X better?”

“How does X connect to our intended outcomes?”

“Stakeholder X’s perspective on this might be Y!”

You know evaluative thinking is happening when you see things like:

- More evidence gathering (formal and informal)
- More feedback (all directions)
- Reflective conversations among staff, beneficiaries, leadership, etc.
- More model making/illustrating thinking
- More motivation to do formal evaluation work
- Program evolution/adaptation
- More effective staff and programs

Principles for promoting ET*

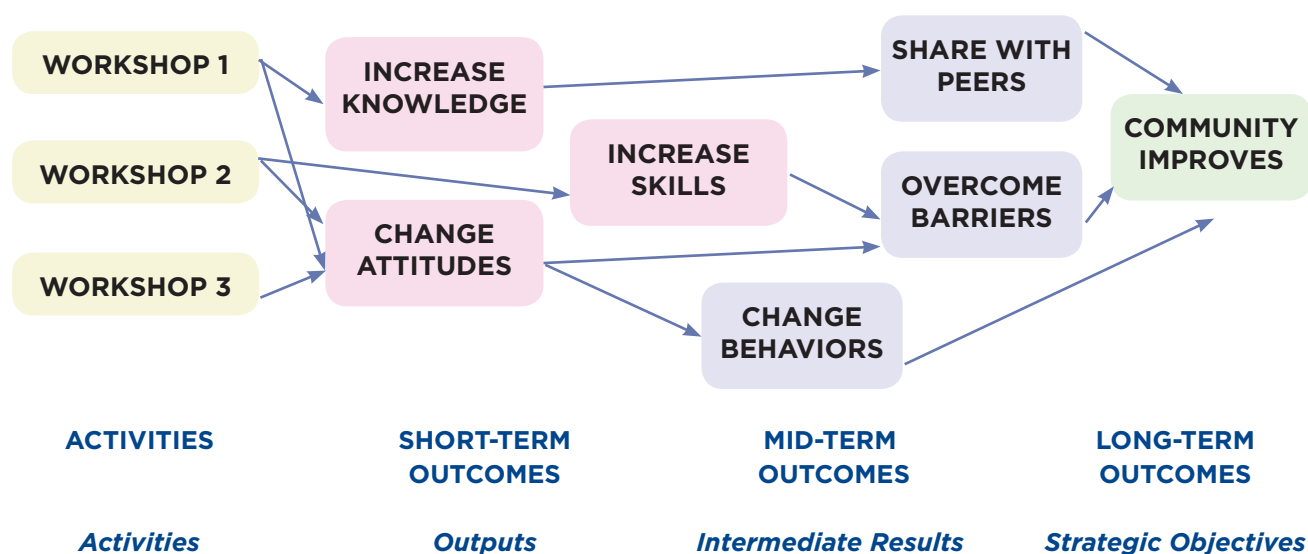
- I. ***Promoters of evaluative thinking should be strategic about engaging learners in evaluative thinking processes in a way that builds on and maximizes intrinsic motivation.*** If staff members in an organization dislike MEAL, yet demonstrate intrinsic motivation to critically reflect on their program's successes and failures as they drive back to the office from a program site together, ET promotion should focus on those naturally occurring discussions as a key starting point.
- II. ***Promoting evaluative thinking should incorporate incremental experiences, following the developmental process of "scaffolding".*** A good walker should be coached through progressively more challenging walks and hikes rather than launched immediately into extreme long-distance hikes in difficult terrain. Incremental skill-building is especially important because ET can involve a potentially risky (emotionally or politically) questioning of foundational assumptions. To put this principle into practice, efforts to promote ET should begin by focusing on generic or everyday examples before questioning the philosophical assumptions that may be fundamental to an organization's theory of change.
- III. ***Evaluative thinking is not an innate skill, nor does it depend on any particular educational background; therefore, promoters should offer opportunities for it to be intentionally practiced by all who wish to develop as evaluative thinkers.*** If an organization's leader asserts that ET is important, yet does not provide opportunities for staff to learn about and practice it, little or nothing will change. Also, efforts to promote ET should not be limited to staff with evaluation responsibilities; ideally, all members of an organization should have the opportunity to think evaluatively about their work.
- IV. ***Evaluative thinkers must be aware of—and work to overcome—assumptions and belief preservation.*** Promoters should offer a variety of structured and informal learning opportunities to help people identify and question assumptions.
- V. ***In order to learn to think evaluatively, the skill should be applied and practiced in multiple contexts and alongside peers and colleagues.*** ET can and should be practiced individually, yet applying this principle can leverage the benefits of social learning and help people move away from the notion that ET is done only by MEAL experts and only during formal evaluation events.

* Buckley et al (2015)

ToC Pathway Models*

A theory of change (ToC) Pathway Model is a graphical representation of the relationships between the activities, outputs and outcomes that make up a program or project. Its format is unique in that it illustrates the individual relationships between particular activities and outcomes, instead of just listing them in columns for example. ToC Pathway Models communicate the “story” of a program, that is, the ways in which the program planners imagine the effect of the program activities on the program’s intended results. ToC Pathway Models can also be used to inform the scope and questions that guide the evaluation of the program being modeled.

Activities	Outputs	Intermediate Results	Strategic Objectives
... are the primary mechanisms by which program outcomes are achieved. They are often conducted or implemented by program staff.	... are changes directly connected to activities, typically including awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and skills; these are the first set of outcomes that might be observed following the intervention of an activity(s).	... are changes directly connected to activities, short- or other mid-term outcomes, typically including behavior, or decision making; these are a bridge between outputs and strategic objectives.	... are ultimate changes or impacts, directly connected to mid- or other long-term outcomes, typically including social, economic, civic, or environmental changes.
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop on [topic] • Site tour(s) • Materials development 	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased knowledge • Improved skills • Improved attitudes 	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants apply knowledge to outside contexts • Participants adopt and use new methods 	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in knowledge of the broader population • Increased economic stability



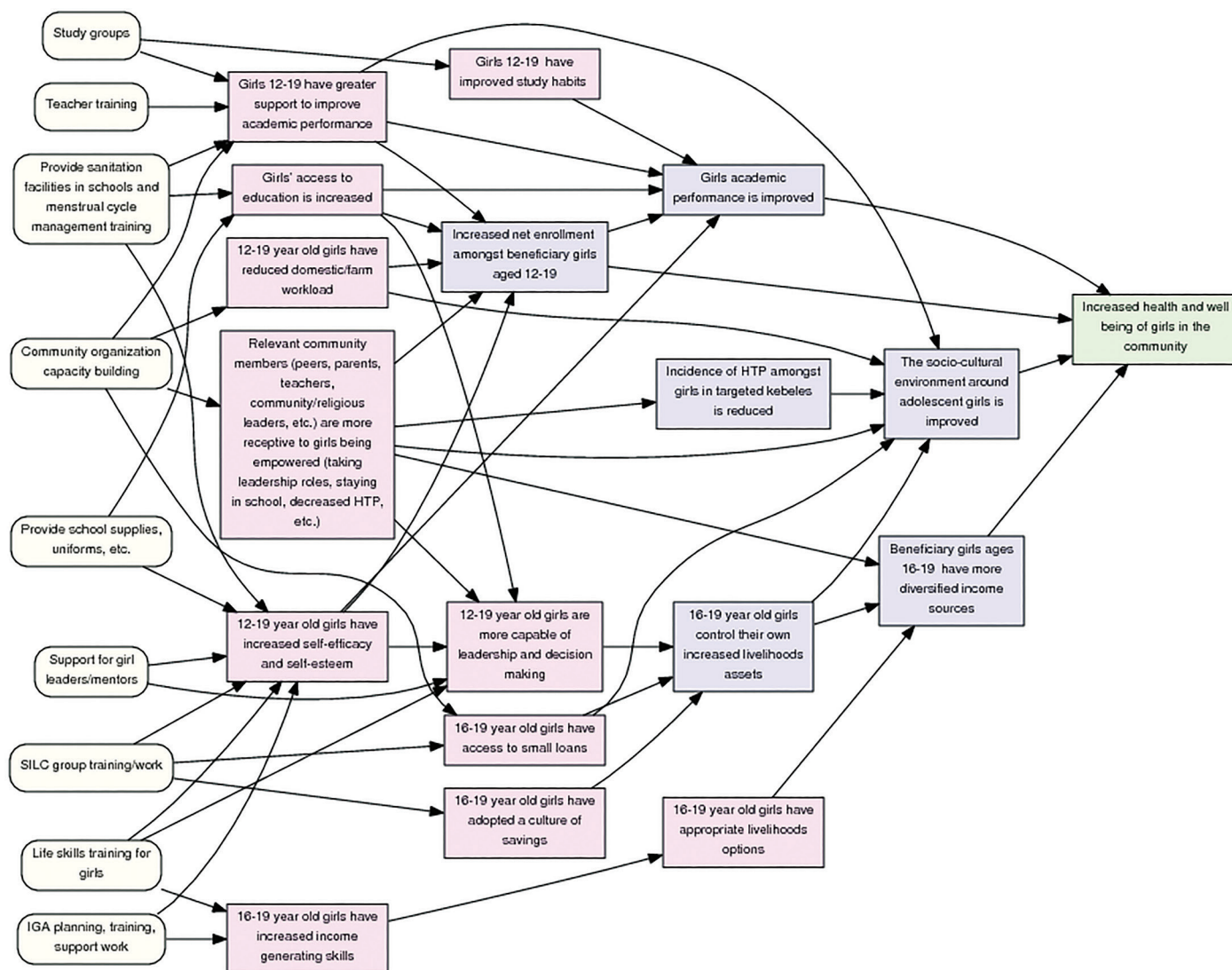
* Modified from Netway's [Logic Model Definitions and Guidance](#)
Trochim et al (2012)

ToC Pathway Model review guidance*

1. Look for good ideas and note/highlight them. These might include particularly good or novel outcomes, good links, whatever deserves acknowledgment and recognition.
2. If you see big leaps in logic, add a brief note with a suggestion if possible. A big leap is where there is an arrow from an activity all the way to an intermediate result or strategic objective, or an output all the way to a strategic objective, etc. It could also be a one-step arrow if there's a big leap of logic, which often indicates something is being skipped over.
3. If you see something that makes you wonder how the program defined an issue, add a brief note with a suggestion if possible.
4. If you see something that is likely to be confusing to an outsider, or that could be worded more clearly, mark it and add a brief note with a suggestion if possible.
5. From your own perspective and what you know of the key stakeholders' perspectives, think about whether the model captures a full view of the program. If necessary, propose an additional outcome or activity.
6. Look for themes or common threads among outcomes and make a note of them.
7. If you think there is a key assumption being made that may have been missed, make a note.
8. If you think there is a key contextual factor that should be mentioned, make a note.
9. Step back and think about the model overall. Prepare some comments and observations to share as appropriate.
10. Which outcomes have existing evidence?
11. Which outcomes do you think need more evidence?

* Hargraves et al (2015)

Example model: Reaching for their potential*



Activities

Outputs

Intermediate Results

Strategic Objectives

* CRS Ethiopia

Critical Conversation Role-play*

Background: In this scenario, the program manager is asking the program staff person to implement a new program based on evidence of effectiveness from a context that is dissimilar from the one in which they are working. The new program is designed to help women in the community who are unemployed find employment. It involves:

- Training for interviews
- A job fair where women can meet potential employers
- Resources designed to help women address gender bias that exists in the job market

The program staff person knows that the following local contextual factors will serve as potential barriers to this program:

- Women in this community are the exclusive providers of childcare
- Women in this community generally do not have access to transportation

Roles:

- Program manager: Closely connected to organizational interests
- Program staff person: Closely connected to the community context
- Referee/observer: Play close attention to what makes this conversation productive or unproductive

Role play:

Spend a few minutes thinking about the role you will be playing, and the issues that you think would be raised by the character whose role you are playing. Have a conversation (in character) about whether and how to proceed with the implementation of this program.

NOTE: Both the program manager and the program staff person should act as evaluative thinkers in this scenario.

* Developed by Guy Sharrock

ET Strategies and Activities*

1. Create an intentional ET learning environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Display logic models in the workplace—in meeting rooms, within newsletters, etc. b. Create public spaces to record and display questions and assumptions. c. Talk about the importance of evaluative thinking with colleagues. d. Highlight the learning that comes from successful programs and evaluations and also from “failures” or dead ends.
2. Establish a habit of scheduling meeting time focused on ET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Have participants “mine” their logic model for information about assumptions and how to focus evaluation work (for example, by categorizing outcomes according to stakeholder priorities). b. In meetings, use opening questions to start an ET discussion, such as, “How can we check our assumptions for accuracy?”; “What plausible alternative explanations are there for this finding?” c. Engage in critical debate on a neutral topic. d. Develop a meeting checklist that intentionally incorporates time and approaches to encourage ET. e. Make time immediately after a community meeting to reflect on what was said and discussed. f. Make time at the end of a field visit before heading back to the office.
3. Use role-play when planning evaluation work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Conduct a scenario analysis (have individuals or groups analyze and identify assumptions embedded in a written description of a fictional scenario). b. Take on various stakeholder perspectives using the “thinking hats”, or other similar, method in which participants are asked to role-play as a particular stakeholder. c. Invite people to play the role of critic in a discussion. d. Conduct an evaluation simulation (simulate data collection and analysis for your intended evaluation strategy).
4. Use a diagram or illustration to explain thinking with colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Have teams or groups create theory of change Pathway Models together. b. Diagram the program’s history. c. Create a system, context and/or organization diagram.
5. Engage in supportive, critical peer review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review peer theory of change Pathway Models (help identify leaps in logic, assumptions, strengths in their theory of change, etc.). b. Use the Critical Conversation Protocol (a structured approach to critically reviewing a peer’s work through discussion). c. Take an appreciative pause (stop to point out the positive contributions, and have individuals thank each other for specific ideas, perspectives or helpful support).
6. Engage in MEAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure that all evaluation work is participatory and that members of the organization at all levels are offered the opportunity to contribute their perspectives. b. Encourage members of the organization to engage in informal, self-guided evaluation work. c. Access tools and resources necessary to support all formal and informal evaluation efforts (including the support of external evaluators, ECB professionals, data analyzers, etc.).

* Buckley et al (2015)

Learning-to-Action Plan*

Purpose of exercise: To help you apply the lessons and skills learned here to your work.

Your name: _____

Your program: _____

Think about what you learned in this workshop. Which practices can you use in your program?

Name three specific things you will do to promote ET in your program work within the next month.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

How do these practices fit with existing activities or approaches in your program?

How will you implement these changes over the next month?

Name three specific things you will do in the long-term, beyond the next 3 months, to promote ET in your program work:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

How do these practices fit with existing activities or approaches in your program?

What resources do you have in your organization to support the adoption of new practices in your program? Think about the people, processes and materials available.

* Tom Archibald (2016) Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

ToC Pathway Model Review*

OBJECTIVE: To use evaluative thinking skills to critically review an “anonymous” or peer Pathway Model. In particular, they will identify assumptions and leaps in logic, and pose questions about the program. Participants will complete this activity with an understanding of the “evaluative value” of ToC Pathway Models and related work.



45 MINUTES



**SMALL GROUPS
(2-5 PEOPLE PER TABLE)**

INTENDED PARTICIPANTS

Any/all members of a program or organization. Participants should have some basic knowledge of how to read ToC Pathway Models.



MATERIALS

- One copy per participant of the handout *ToC Pathway Model Review Guidance*
- One large format copy to share, or one page-size copy per participant of the ToC Pathway Model to be reviewed (If using an “anonymous” program model, the content should be understandable to participants)
- Chart paper and marker to record comments during the plenary “debrief”

STEPS

1. Introduce the activity, including a clear description of the goal.
2. Distribute handout and ToC Pathway Model to be reviewed.
3. Ask each group to assign a note taker. This person should take note of all suggestions for addition and revision to the model in enough detail and clarity so that they can be shared with the members of the group whose work is being reviewed.
4. Participants take approximately 2 minutes to read the model silently to themselves.
5. Groups take 30 minutes to discuss their responses to the provided questions/prompts (while the note taker takes notes).
6. Groups then share the results of their discussion with the facilitator and any other groups via a large group “debrief” (10 minutes). Notes are taken on chart paper.

APPROACH

- This activity is designed to build a basic and fundamental ET skill, namely the ability to critique. The focus should be on practicing ET skills rather than on the particular content of the model.
- Ideally, participants will be conscious of their ET practice, and will push themselves to offer alternatives, uncover less obvious assumptions etc.
- Participants should, instinctively, put themselves in the “shoes” of the authors of the model, that is thinking about how would they have built this model differently? Would they be able to offer the same types of critiques to their peers? Themselves?

- This kind of critical review of a ToC Pathway Model is a type of “evaluation” that can, theoretically, be acted upon. For example, in reviewing a model, you may realize that an important activity needs to be added to the program in order for the ToC to be plausible.

TIPS

- The facilitator(s) should “float” during this activity. Meaning, move about the room and listen in on each conversation. It is important that the facilitator allow each group to have some “unobserved” work time, as some participants are more likely to open up when the facilitator is not listening in. It is also important that no group be completely ignored, as they may get off track or mired down in details.
- During the 30 minute work period, groups may not get to all of the items on the handout. That is OK. However, it is important that each group experience a variety of approaches to conducting a ToC critique (as represented on the handout). Therefore, if the facilitator notices that a group has “stalled” on one point, they should help the group summarize their reflections so far and move on to another prompt.
- Facilitators should look for (and use) opportunities to push groups further. Try using opening questions like:
 - What makes you wonder about that assumption?
 - What foundational assumptions may be underlying the leaps in logic you are identifying?

* Trochim et al (2012)

Critical Conversation Role-Play*

OBJECTIVE: To highlight sociocultural barriers to ET and organizational learning. This activity should give participants a better understanding of the power dynamics within their organization, how knowledge is gained and transferred, and what some of the barriers to these conversations might be. Increasing awareness in this way will help participants who are seeking to promote ET within their working environment.



30 MINUTES



**GROUPS OF THREE
(IN QUIET LOCATION)**

INTENDED PARTICIPANTS

Any/all members of a program or organization. Note: The experience will vary based on where the participant is in the organizational hierarchy. Therefore, this activity is NOT recommended for mixed hierarchical groups (managers and staff in the same room)



MATERIALS

- One copy per participant of the handout *Critical Conversation Role-play*
- Pen and paper/notebook for each referee/observer (1 per group) to take notes

STEPS

1. Introduce the activity, including a clear description of the goal.
2. Create groups of three (good practice would be to make these different from previous ones).
3. Distribute the handout and review the steps. Highlight the referee/observer role and their notetaking task.
4. Ask groups to assign roles to each individual.
5. Groups take 20 minutes to role-play according to the handout instructions.
6. Groups then share their reflections on the role-play experience with the facilitator and any other groups via a large group debrief (about 10 minutes).

APPROACH

- This activity is designed to build the basic and fundamental ET skill of perspective taking and highlight a critical barrier to ET and learning (organizational culture/power dynamics).
- Ideally, participants will gain new understanding and respect for their colleagues and their unique perspective on and knowledge of the program.

TIPS

- The facilitator(s) should circulate, moving around the room and listening in on each conversation. It is important that the facilitator allow each group to have some unobserved work time, as some participants are more likely to open up when the facilitator is not listening. It is also important that no group be completely ignored, as they may go off track or get mired down in details.
- Facilitators should look for (and use) opportunities to push groups further. Prompt participants who are role-playing to dig deeper into the perspective of their character. Prompt the observer to consider how the divergent perspectives represented are affecting the outcome of the conversation.
- In the large-group discussion, point out the sociocultural barriers to ET and learning. How do these play out in this organization (in reality). What can be done to overcome this?

* Developed by Guy Sharrock

Learning-to-Action Plan*

OBJECTIVE: To increase the likelihood that participants adopt evaluative thinking activities and habits into their work by asking them to state (in writing) which behaviors they intend to engage in. This activity is also a data collection tool for research on/evaluation of the ET workshop(s).



30 MINUTES



INDIVIDUALLY

INTENDED PARTICIPANTS

All ET workshop participants



MATERIALS

- One copy per participant of the handout *Learning-to-Action Plan* **OR** computer access to the online version of same handout

STEPS

1. Introduce the task, including a clear description of the goal and your intention to collect (and/or make a copy) of their responses
2. Distribute the handout and briefly preview items
3. Give individuals as much time as necessary to completely fill out the form (it typically does not take more than 15 minutes)
4. If possible, make a copy of all completed forms and return to participants so that they have a written record of what they intended to do.

APPROACH

- This task is designed to be treated as an informal “contract”. After 3 months, facilitators will ideally follow up with participants, either in person or electronically, to see how they did with implementing the specific activities they indicated that they had intended to do.

* Developed by Tom Archibald (2016) Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Surveys and consent

As part of this package of materials for facilitating an ET Workshop, we have included tools that can be used to measure the types and frequency of evaluative thinking behaviors that participants are engaged in both before and after participating in a workshop. As a facilitator, it is up to you to choose if and how you will use these tools. If you do distribute the survey, it is important to obtain consent (using the consent form provided) and follow any applicable guidelines or protocols related to human subjects in your context.

Though there is no formal plan to do so now, there may be an effort in the future to share data collected using this survey across contexts. In that case, you may receive a request to share the data you collect, but would not be required to do so.

Consent Form

Dear Evaluative Thinking Workshop Participant,

Thank you so much for participating in this workshop. We really look forward to learning with you over these next three days. To help us learn, we would like to collect some data from you before and after the workshop. This will help us to put into practice the type of evaluative thinking that we will be talking about. We really would appreciate if you could fill out the attached form. Your data and insights will be used to improve the program and to contribute to the research knowledge on evaluative thinking.

If you are willing to participate in this evaluation of the workshop, please review and sign this form below and fill out the survey attached. This should take about five minutes to complete.

I. Purpose of this research project

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the evaluative thinking workshop to improve the program and to contribute to the knowledge base about evaluative thinking.

II. Procedures

This study consists of a pre-survey, a post-survey (at the end of the workshop) and a follow-up survey that will be emailed to you after three months.

III. Risk

There are no anticipated risks to you as a result of participating in this study. Your decision whether to participate in the study or not will have no impact on your participation in the training program.

IV. Benefits

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in the study, although the knowledge generated could be beneficial to your organization.

V. Extent of anonymity and confidentiality

Your participation in this study will be kept confidential and identifying information will be removed from any data to be analyzed. It is possible that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Virginia Tech may view this study's collected data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. Compensation

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study in any way. There will be no monetary or academic gain for participating in this study.

VII. Freedom to withdraw

You are free to withdraw from this study at any time; to do so, please notify the investigators at the contact information below.

VIII. Subject's responsibilities and permission

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have read this Informed Consent Form and the conditions of this project. By signing here, I offer my consent to participate in this evaluation.

Full name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Should you have any questions about this research or its conduct, you may contact either of the following:

- Investigator: Tom Archibald, +001-540-231-6192, tgarch@vt.edu
- Chair, IRB: David M. Moore, +001-540-231-4991, moored@vt.edu

Pre-Workshop Survey

Welcome to the Catholic Relief Services Evaluative Thinking Pre-Workshop Survey. This survey is meant to serve as a baseline for your knowledge about evaluative thinking. Please take your time and answer the questions to the best of your ability. It should take 5 to 10 minutes to complete. Thank you for your time and participation!

1. Which of the following best describes your professional role? Check all that apply:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Partner | <input type="checkbox"/> Program Staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Program Manager | <input type="checkbox"/> Country Leadership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MEAL Specialist | <input type="checkbox"/> Administration |

2. How long have you worked in this role (please round to the nearest whole number)

years

3. Is this your first ET workshop?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

If “No”, how many workshops have you attended previously

One Two If more than two, how many? _____

4. Consider the following behaviors. How often do you:

	Never	Less than once a month	One to three times a month	Once a week or more
Have a reflective conversation with a colleague about your program (e.g. why do you think we are noticing this outcome?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collect informal evidence (not part of formal MEAL plan) about your program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify assumptions about the way your program is planned?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pose questions about your program in a meeting or conversation with colleagues?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Refer to your program's ToC in conversation with colleagues and/or program stakeholders?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use diagrams or illustrations to communicate your thinking to a colleague	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seek evidence to support claims made by colleagues and/or program stakeholders?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ask colleagues to identify assumptions you might be making?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Talk to your program stakeholders (participants, colleagues, leadership, etc.) about evaluative thinking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider how various program stakeholders might view and/or think about your program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Please answer the following questions in reference to the barriers to engaging with ET and the supports for using ET in your work.

	Prohibitive barrier	Neither barrier, nor support			Enabling support
	1	2	3	4	5
Cultural context (local community, country-wide norms, etc.)					
Program leadership					
Country leadership					
Personal motivation					
Personal skills					
Program culture (staff and management)					
Organization culture					
Peer colleagues					
Funder requirements					

	Very Frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Very Rarely	Never
I discuss evaluation strategies with my colleagues.						
I am eager to engage in evaluation.						
Diagrams and/or illustrations help me think about ideas.						
I am wary of claims made by others without evidence to back them up.						
I describe the thinking behind my decisions to others.						
I take time to reflect on the way I do my work.						
I try to convince others that evaluation is important.						
I consider alternative explanations for claims.						
I brainstorm with colleagues to develop plans and/or ideas.						
I believe evaluation is a valuable endeavor.						
I use diagrams and/or illustrations to clarify my thoughts.						
I suggest alternative explanations and hypotheses.						
I reflect on assumptions and claims I make myself.						
I pose questions about assumptions and claims made by others.						
I enjoy discussing evaluation strategies with colleagues.						
I describe the thinking behind my work to my colleagues.						
I offer evidence for claims that I make.						
I use diagrams and/or illustrations to communicate my thinking to others.						

Post-Workshop Survey

Thank you for participating in the Evaluative Thinking workshop. We'd like feedback on your experience with the aim of improving future learning events such as this.

1. Thinking of your various work activities and your organization, please read each of the statements below and check the appropriate box to indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. This workshop will be helpful to me in my work.						
2. I enjoyed this workshop.						
3. The level of material presented in this workshop was too difficult for me to understand.						
4. Through this workshop, I learned how to do better MEAL.						
5. Through this workshop, I gained a better understanding of what evaluative thinking is.						
6. Through this workshop, I learned something new about why evaluative thinking is important.						
7. I am an evaluative thinker.						

2. What was most valuable to you about the Evaluative Thinking workshop?

3. What was least valuable to you about the Evaluative Thinking workshop, and why?

4. What suggestions do you have to make this workshop better?

5. What assumptions do you think the facilitators held that had a negative effect on the workshop?

6. What assumptions do you think the facilitators held that had a positive effect on the workshop?

7. What other comments do you have about the Evaluative Thinking workshop?

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