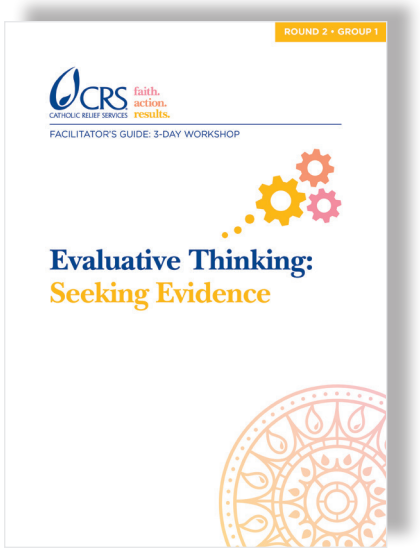
ROUND 2 • GROUP 1

CRS CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES faith. action. results.

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE: 3-DAY WORKSHOP

Evaluative Thinking: Seeking Evidence



A note on sources

Some of the material in the guide is not the intellectual property of CRS and has been used with permission. In cases where the material does not belong to CRS, it is clearly indicated with an asterisk and referenced at the bottom of each page. If reusing, please seek appropriate permissions and reference accordingly.

Authors

Guy Sharrock
Jane Buckley
Tom Archibald

CRS CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES faith. action. results.

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.

Catholic Relief Services
228 West Lexington Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-3413
1.410.625.2220
crs.org

Acronyms

CRS	Catholic Relief Services
ET	evaluative thinking
LQ	learning question
MEAL	monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning
NGO	nongovernmental organization
ToC	theory of change

Contents

Seeking Evidence

3-DAY WORKSHOP

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 evaluative thinking across an organization and, in turn, increase the quality and efficiency of program planning and MEAL work generally. The workshops are organized into three rounds. Each round includes an in-person workshop facilitated by an ET specialist or MEAL professional and is intended to be presented annually (although this is not obligatory) over 3 years. The workshops are also differentiated by group. These groups refer to positions within the organizational hierarchy. 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 2, Group 1 (the second workshop for senior program staff). The overall goal of this 3-day workshop is to use ET and previously created theory of change Pathway Models, to shift program teams from program description to developing learning plans. Participants will hone their ET skills while working on this task, including identifying assumptions, taking perspectives, and making informed decisions.

Learning objectives

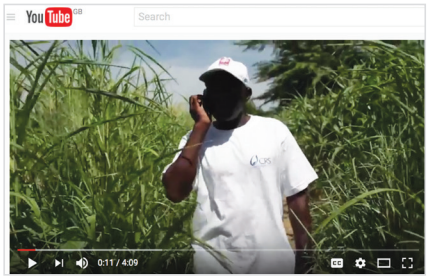
As a result of participating in this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Use their ToC Pathway Model to establish a focus and scope for a learning plan
- Select and develop learning questions
- Maintain internal alignment while developing a project learning plan
- Critique peer learning plans
- Plan for promoting ET in their day-to-day contexts, including overcoming barriers

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

DAY 1

TIME	TASK	ACTIVITY DESCRIPTIONS	HANDOUTS
9:00am	Introductions and goals		• Consent form • Pre-workshop survey
9:15am	ET review and activity report	• ET activity report	• What is ET? • The MEAL system • ET strategies and activities • ET activity report guidance
10:30am	Break		
10:45am	Revisiting the ToC Pathway Models		• ToC Pathway Models • Notes for developing ToC Pathway Models
12:30pm	Lunch		
1:30pm	Revisit and revise assumptions	• Revisit and revise assumptions	• Identifying assumptions
2:30pm	Break		
2:45pm	Introduction to mining the model	• Mining the model	• Mining the model
4:00pm	Reflect and debrief		
4:30pm	Close		

DAY 2

9:00am	Goals for the day		
9:15am	Finish mining the model		
10:00am	Introduction to learning plans and learning questions		
10:30am	Break		
10:45am	Developing learning questions	• Developing learning questions	• Guidance for wording learning questions • Developing learning questions • Key constructs and measurement
12:00pm	Lunch		
1:00pm	Alignment, developing learning plans	• Learning plan purpose statement	• Alignment defined • Learning plan purpose statement
2:15pm	Break		
2:30pm	Developing learning plans	• Learning plan development	• Project learning plan • Learning plan template • Learning plan template: Table format
4:00pm	Reflect and debrief		
4:30pm	Close		

DAY 3

9:00am	Goals for the day		
9:15am	Learning plan peer review	• Learning plan peer review	• Learning plan review guidance
10:15am	Break		
10:30am	Learning plan utilization		
11:00am	Learning plan simulation	• Learning plan simulation	• Learning plan simulation
12:30pm	Lunch		
1:30pm	Overcoming barriers to ET	• Overcoming barriers to ET	• Overcoming barriers to ET • Principles for promoting ET
2:30pm	Break		
2:45pm	Being an ET champion	• World café • Learning-to-action plan	• Learning-to-action plan
4:00pm	Reflect and debrief, post-workshop survey		• Post-workshop survey
4:30pm	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

Day 1

Consent form (See Appendix)
Pre-workshop survey (See Appendix)
What is evaluative thinking?
ET strategies and activities
ET activity report guidance
The MEAL system
Theory of Change Pathway Models
Notes for developing ToC Pathway Models
Identifying assumptions
Mining the model

Day 2

Guidance for wording learning questions
Developing learning questions
Key constructs and measurement
Alignment defined
Learning plan purpose statement
Project learning plan
Learning plan template
Learning plan template: Table format

Day 3

Learning plan review guidance
Learning plan simulation
Overcoming barriers to ET
Principles for promoting ET
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

ET Strategies and Activities*

1. Create an intentional ET learning environment	**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	**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 playing when planning evaluation work	**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	**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	**a.** Review peer theory of change Pathway Models (help identify leaps in logic, assumptions, strengths, 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	**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)

ET Activity Report Guidance*

We would like to hear from you about your current interpretation of ET and any ET-related activities you have been engaged in since we last met. To that end, we would like you and your team to consider the questions below. Some of the questions may be more applicable to you or your group. Please feel free to focus on whichever is most appropriate for you and please be as specific as possible. However, please be sure to address the two questions highlighted in bold.

1. **What do you see as your team's/home office's current understanding/definition of ET?**
2. What ET work/activities have you done so far?
3. What has gone well?
4. What has not worked?
5. How have you modified/developed ET activities, if at all?
6. What contextual contributors to ET practices have you noticed/experienced?
7. **What contextual barriers to ET practices have you noticed/experienced?**
8. What have you imagined doing in the future to foster a culture of ET?
9. What could CRS country program leadership do more or less of to foster a culture of ET?
10. If you were asked to name up to three good ET practices that have taken place since we last met, what would they be?

As you generate answers to any of these questions, record them on a Post-it note (one idea/answer per Post-it).

* Developed by Jane Buckley and Guy Sharrock

The MEAL System*

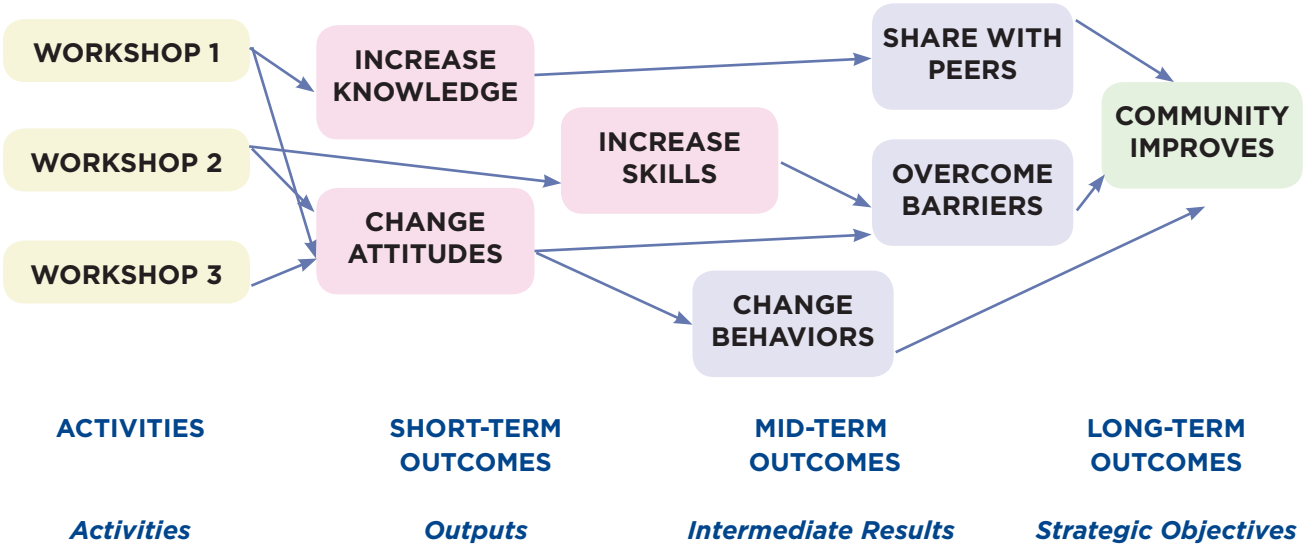
This diagram shows the key ways in which monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and accountability and learning (A&L) work together in a MEAL system.

* CRS

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: • Workshop on [topic] • Site tour(s) • Materials development	Examples: • Increased knowledge • Improved skills • Improved attitudes	Examples: • Participants apply knowledge to outside contexts • Participants adopt and use new methods	Examples: • Change in knowledge of the broader population • Increased economic stability



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

Notes for developing ToC Pathway Models*

1. MODEL COMPONENTS

- ***Activities*** are things done by program staff that reach participants or targeted audiences.
- ***Outputs*** *(short-term, or ST, outcomes)* are learning connected to activities, resulting in changed awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills, opinions, aspirations and motivations; these are the first set of outcomes that might be observed.
- ***Intermediate Results*** *(mid-term, or MT, outcomes)* are effects connected to activities or outputs, including changes in behavior, practice, action or decision making, policies or social action; these are a bridge between outputs and strategic objectives.
- ***Strategic Objectives*** *(Long-term, or LT, outcomes)* are ultimate impacts, connected to outputs or intermediate results, on social, economic, civic, or environmental conditions; these are the last or 'highest' set of outcomes that might be observed.

2. NOTES ON MODEL BUILDING

There may be ...

- More than one arrow coming FROM an activity or outcome (outputs, IRs, and SOs)
- More than one arrow going TO an outcome
- Arrows AMONG outcomes in a column (outputs leading to other outputs, IR to other IR, etc.)
- Arrows in BOTH DIRECTIONS between two outcomes

There should NOT be ...

- An outcome with no arrow leading to it
- An activity with no arrows leading from it

Ideal level of detail? – It depends on how you intend to use the model and who you intend to share it with.

Look at the completed Pathway Model and ask:

- Are there any activities that are not connected to any outcomes?
- Are there any outcomes that are not connected to any activities? If yes, why do these gaps exist? Was something simply left out of the model?
- Is the program expected to lead to a particular outcome, but does not actually include an activity that would result in that outcome?

* Hargraves et al (2015)

Identifying Assumptions*

Program **assumptions** are beliefs about the program and how it will occur. Basic assumptions that are often made about programs include things like, "there is a need for this program," "there will continue to be interest in this program," "this program will be funded." However, program assumptions can, and should, be much more specific than this. For example, "We assume that hands-on field-based activities engage young farmers most effectively." Assumptions like this are often so deep-rooted that they are hard to identify.

- **Explicit** assumptions are those that an individual is fully aware of; and
- **Implicit** assumptions are those that influence someone without them being aware of it.

Why is it important to identify program assumptions?
Identifying program assumptions is important for several reasons. First, assumptions are an inevitable yet essential part of the thinking behind any program. As such, it is important to identify them in order for outsiders to fully understand the program and why it is conducted in the way that it is. Second, program assumptions are legitimate and potentially important focal points for evaluative thinking and learning. For example, if it is assumed that mothers will adopt new hygiene behaviors within a certain time period, we need to check that does actually happen. Providing evidence to support a program assumption helps build the foundation of evidence for the overall logic of the program. Finally, program assumptions can help account for monitoring and evaluation results. For example if the results appear to be "negative" or "below target" the explanation may be that one or more of the assumptions are not accurate.

Remember:
Assumptions are not always "bad." We all make assumptions all the time. The important thing is to identify our assumptions and make a thoughtful choice about how we are going to handle them (Accept? Deny? Question and seek evidence?).

* Developed by Tom Archibald

Mining the Model*

The steps below guide you through a series of questions to identify important considerations prior to selecting priority learning questions. When finished, step back and weigh the MEAL priorities that have emerged and assess what would be the best feasible purpose(s) for the coming evaluation cycle.

1. **What does the model show you about key program outcomes?** Use one color marker to circle key outcomes – ones that have a lot of arrows going into them or out of them, or both. For example, look for:
   - **Prime destinations** (outcomes that have a lot of arrows going *into* them)
   - **Gateways** (outcomes with lots of arrows going *out from* them)
   - **Hubs** (outcomes with lots of arrows going *in and out*)

2. **What are some key links?** Some things are important even if there are not a lot of arrows going in or out of them. Each arrow, or link, represents some change that your program leads to or contributes to. Which ones do you think are important in the program? Mark these key links with a second color marker.

3. **What are the key pathways, or main storylines in the model?** Think about what is essential to the way your program works and succeeds – the main story lines. (If you had to strip down your model to just a few through-lines, which story lines would you insist on keeping?) Mark one or two of these key pathways with a third color marker.

4. **Thinking about your key pathways, what assumptions are you making?** Are there assumptions (or notes about context) that would be essential to point out in order for an outsider to understand (and buy into) the program theory?

5. **Identify key external stakeholders and their priorities:** List one to three key external stakeholders to your program (ones you are likely to report to in the coming year, or ones involved in important decisions about the program):

   A. _____

   B. _____

   C. _____

Think about what each of these stakeholders cares most about in your program. Mark the external stakeholder priorities by writing the letter for each stakeholder next to the nodes or links that they are most interested in.

6. **Mark important internal priorities, if any.** Mark one or two nodes that are of particular importance to you – these are internal stakeholder priorities. Put a star or asterisk next to these.

7. **Which nodes and/or links have existing evidence?** This could include existing evaluation data (formal or informal, quantitative or qualitative), or existing research literature.

8. **Which nodes and/or links do you see as in need of evidence?**

Having completed this process, you are now better placed to identify priority learning questions to take forward.

* Hargraves et al (2015)

Guidance for Wording Learning Questions*

Learning questions are the starting point for gathering evidence for assumptions made in your theory of change. For example, you might want to know:

- *"Are our activities being implemented well?"*
- *"Do our activities have an effect on desired outcome Y?"*

Note: Learning questions are *not* the same as survey questions or things you would directly ask participants, such as:

- "How often do you participate in our program?"
- "Are you satisfied with the program?"

It is crucial to be cautious with the wording of learning questions. The words you choose will determine the evidence-collection method you will use and the claims you will be able to make based on the evidence you collect and later analyze and interpret; for example, a common claim could be something like "Our program's training activities are associated with an increase in participants' knowledge."

Consider the difference between these two questions:

1. Do participants in my program have access to healthy foods?
2. After completing my program do participants report that they can identify sources of healthy food in their community?

- How might the evidence-collection strategy be different for these two questions?
- How would the claims you would be able to make as a result of collecting evidence for each of these questions differ?

* Trochim et al (2012)

Developing Learning Questions*

Program Name: _____

Part I: Brainstorm what you would like to know, and what you would like to claim, about your project:

1. Briefly identify or describe the element(s) of your ToC Pathway Model (activities, outputs, links, etc.) or project that you will focus on.
2. In your own words, what would you like to know about this aspect of your project?
3. In your own words, what are the claims you would like to make about this aspect of your project?

Begin developing draft learning questions on the back of this page:

Part II: On the lines below, develop draft questions that could potentially guide future MEAL work. For each draft question, consider the claim you would be able to make if you answered that question.

Example learning question: *Are program participants more engaged with their community after participating in the program than before?*

Possible claim: *Program participants are more engaged with their community after participating in the program.*

Q1: _____

Possible claim: _____

Q2: _____

Possible claim: _____

Q3: _____

Possible claim: _____

Q4: _____

Possible claim: _____

* Modified from **Developing Evaluation Questions**

Key Constructs and Measurement*

Goal: Brainstorm measurement approaches while maintaining alignment with learning questions.

Instructions: For each learning question, identify the construct(s). *("Construct" refers to the thing you wish to measure; it is the sometimes hard-to-define idea or variable in your learning question. For example, "knowledge", "engagement", "uptake" and "interest" are all constructs commonly found in program evaluation learning questions.)* For each construct, brainstorm as many indicators and possible measurement tools as you can; you can select from these options later.

EXAMPLE:

Learning question: Do program participants have access to healthy foods (as defined by the nutritional guidelines)?			
Construct to be examined	**How do you define this construct?**	**How do you know it when you see it? (What are some possible indicators?)**	**How might it be measured? (What tool(s) would you need to capture it?)**
Access to healthy foods	**Ability to obtain foods that have been identified as healthy by the nutritional guidelines**	**Participants have healthy foods in their home**	**A checklist of foods that would be used during a home visit/observation**

Learning question:			
Construct to be examined	**How do you define this construct?**	**How do you know it when you see it? (What are some possible indicators?)**	**How might it be measured? (What tool(s) would you need to capture it?)**

Learning question:			
Construct to be examined	**How do you define this construct?**	**How do you know it when you see it? (What are some possible indicators?)**	**How might it be measured? (What tool(s) would you need to capture it?)**

* Hargraves et al (2015)

Alignment Defined*

Several aspects of a project learning plan help determine how credible the results will be. One important pillar of credible results is the alignment between the learning questions (and implied claims) and the strategy for collecting evidence to address these questions. A plan is "aligned" when the methods proposed will lead to the collection of the evidence/ data that will allow the learning question to be credibly addressed.

In other words: A project learning plan is well aligned when the learning question, methodology, analysis and intended claim "match up."

This plan outline is aligned:

Question	Method	Intended Claim
Is participation in our program associated with an increase in knowledge?	Measure knowledge using a survey both before (pre-) and after (post-) the program	Participants demonstrated an increase in knowledge after participating in the program when compared to before the program

This plan outline is NOT aligned:

Question	Method	Intended Claim
How do participants intend to change their behavior after participating in my program?	Post-program focus group	Participants change their behavior as a result of participating in my program

* Trochim et al (2012)

Learning Plan Purpose Statement*

The project learning plan purpose statement should provide a short description of your learning effort. It should describe what is and is not being investigated and the goal/purposes of the work. It sets boundaries by identifying the program elements and timeframe being considered, which audiences are being addressed, and which goals or objectives are of most interest.

Example for a local-use/less formal project learning plan:
The purpose of this project learning plan is to assess the extent to which participants in the Forest Owners Workshop feel supported and well-equipped to share their forestry knowledge with other forest owners in their local communities. Considerations within the scope of the current plan include program structure and processes, curricular choices, and short-term outcome evidence gathering. Other means of supporting forest management volunteers, such as our newsletter and quarterly conference calls, will not be assessed. Likewise, the program's long-term impacts will not be directly addressed. The results of this effort will be used to inform changes and additions to next year's program plan.

Example for an external-use/more formal project learning plan:
The purpose of this project learning plan is to assess the effectiveness of the Master Forest Owners (MFO) Workshop in supporting and prompting MFO volunteers to extend their knowledge to other forest owners in their local communities. A secondary purpose is to provide documentation and assessment information for use by those considering replicating the model with other forest owner groups. Considerations include assessment of contextual factors that may affect program effectiveness and medium- and long-term impacts. Other means of supporting forest management volunteers, such as our newsletter and quarterly conference calls, will not be assessed. The results of this effort will be used to report to funders as well as to inform the broad strategic plan for this program.

* Trochim et al (2012)

Project Learning Plan*

A project learning plan is a document that guides the implementation of an evidence-gathering strategy. It includes a description of the program or project, the ToC Pathway Model, the overall goal of the plan, the learning questions, and a detailed description of the evidence-gathering strategy (sample, measurement, measures, design, analysis plan, etc., as applicable).

Depending on the goal, the plan may be implemented by project staff or external parties, but project staff should always have a voice in developing the plan.

WHY
Why have you chosen this subject for learning? Why are you collecting evidence? To explore assumptions, check for implementation fidelity? Prove a connection between activities and outcomes? How will the results be used? *Include your ToC Pathway Model and/or description, your purpose statement.*

WHAT
What evidence are you looking to collect? What are the constructs you are looking for evidence of? *Include your learning questions and definitions of constructs.*

WHO
Who will collect evidence? Program staff? Outside evaluators? Who will the evidence be collected from? Participants? Existing data sources? Third parties? *Include sampling plan, staffing plan.*

HOW
How will you collect the evidence? What tools will you need, if any? How will the data/evidence be recorded and stored? *Include data collection plan, data management plan.*

WHEN
What is the timeline for this effort? When will the tools be developed? When will the data/evidence be collected? Before and after? After only? As possible? *Include timeline, design.*

OTHER
How much will this cost? Who "owns" this learning plan?

* Developed by Jane Buckley

Learning Plan Template*

Date: _____

Title of program: _____

Name of person(s) developing this plan: _____

Project description (attach ToC): _____

_____

_____

Project learning purpose statement (focus on WHY, intended claims and uses): _____

_____

_____

Learning questions: _____

_____

_____

Construct(s) to be measured: _____

_____

_____

WHAT evidence will be gathered and HOW will it be captured (list any/all tools needed)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Method and/or approach

WHEN and from WHOM will evidence be gathered?

_____

_____

_____

_____

WHERE, WHEN and HOW will evidence be stored and managed?

_____

_____

_____

_____

WHERE, WHEN and HOW will evidence be analyzed and reported (as applicable)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Timeline:

* Developed by Jane Buckley

Learning Plan Template: Table format

Question	Measurement *(How?)*	Sample *(Who?)*	Design *(When?)*	Notes on Analysis/ Data Management
1.				
2.				
3.				

Learning Plan Review Guidance*

Instructions:

1. Read through the entire plan
2. Provide feedback as directed below:

Section-by-section assessment:

Program/project description
The program description should be clear, concise, and should have enough information to give outsiders a good understanding of the program. Ideally it should include information about participants (number, age, background if relevant); main program activities and overall goals; basic information about how the program is implemented (setting, frequency, who leads it, and so on, as appropriate); and about the history or community context of the program.

Purpose statement
The project learning plan purpose statement serves almost as an executive summary of the plan. It should describe briefly the overall goal of the planned work. It should identify the specific program elements that are the focus, and should articulate how the results are intended to be used. *Reviewers, please comment on whether the learning goals seem appropriate given stakeholder needs, available resources, and anything else that seems relevant.*

Learning questions
Learning questions form the basis of the entire learning plan, so this section is critical. The questions should be clear, specific and formatted properly. They should be consistent with the purpose statement. The questions should be clearly related to the program's ToC Pathway Model. *Reviewers, attempt to assess feasibility – is the number and difficulty level of the questions likely to be manageable?*

Evidence-gathering strategy

What and How

For each learning question, the method(s) or tools that will be used to capture the necessary evidence should be listed (along with other relevant details) and should clearly indicate the focal construct (what will the obtained information be about?) Reviewers should comment on whether the evidence-gathering strategy is well aligned with the learning question, and whether it appears to fit the program and stakeholder needs.

Who and When

This section should lay out the sequence of evidence-gathering activities (who will evidence be collected from and when) clearly and concisely. *Reviewers, comment on whether the plan is appropriate and sufficient for generating evidence for the learning question(s) and overall purpose.*

Evidence storage and use

Evidence management

The learning plan should include a description of how evidence will be collected, handled, and stored; and (if applicable) how the data will be coded or scored. This information may be included in or distributed across the measures and analysis sections of the plan. *Reviewers, comment on the completeness, clarity and quality of this aspect of the plan.*

Reporting

The reporting section should describe how the results of the learning plan will be shared, for both internal and external purposes as applicable. Formal and informal reporting should be included, and the format, timing and frequency should be indicated. It can be helpful to organize this section by evaluation question but this is not the only option. However it is organized, the section should be clear and concise and should cover all the evaluation questions. The reporting plan should fit and fulfill the purpose and scope of the current evaluation.

* Modified from Trochim et al (2012)

Learning Plan Simulation*

CRITICAL REVIEW: MAKING MEANING AND UTILIZATION

Program description
The Community and Economic Vitality (CEV) education program is designed to educate community members and leaders in an effort to promote effective leadership and decision making (community development) so that the community has the best chance for overall health and economic stability.

Learning questions

- LQ1. How well are community and resource educators **implementing** the CEV education program?
- LQ2. What is the extent and nature of **support** in the community for CEV educational initiatives?

Project learning plan summary/purpose statement
The purpose of this learning plan is to get an idea (early in the program implementation process) of how well the program is being implemented and how well it is being received by community member participants. To explore this, program staff will conduct a focus group discussion with a group of volunteer program participants who are willing and available to offer feedback about the program so far. Results will serve as the basis for a set of recommendations to program managers about if and how the program might be improved in the immediate future. This effort does not address or attempt to measure any of the program's intended outcomes, nor are the results of this focus group discussion intended to be used for any large-scale changes to the fundamental design or logic of the program.

Response rate
13 out of 42 program participants participated in the focus group.

See survey questions on next page.

* Cornell Cooperative Extension, Community and Economic Vitality Program (2014), edited by Jane Buckley

Survey questions

1. In your own words, how would you describe the purpose of the CEV education program?

2. Thinking back on the CEV education events you have attended, how well did those go? What changes could be made to make these events better?

3. Do you think the CEV educators who have been conducting these events are doing a good job so far? What could they do to improve?

4. What do you hope to get out of participating in the CEV education program?

5. How do you think your community members feel about the CEV education program?

6. What might the CEV education program do to increase community support?

Overcoming Barriers to ET*

Barrier to ET:	
Description/definition	**Specific strategy(ies) to overcome**
Barrier to ET:	
Description/definition	**Specific strategy(ies) to overcome**

* Developed by Jane Buckley

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)

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

ET Activity Report*

OBJECTIVE: Participants will reflect and report on their ET insights and work since the last ET workshop.

45 MINUTES

SMALL GROUPS (2-5 PEOPLE)

INTENDED PARTICIPANTS

Those who participated in the previous workshop. Any who did not attend the previous workshop should be encouraged to listen and contribute if possible.

MATERIALS

- One copy per participant of the handout *ET Activity Report Guidance*
- Post-it notes
- Ten sheets of chart paper, each with one of the ten prompt questions from the worksheet written at the top
- Chart paper and marker to record comments during the debrief

STEPS

1. Distribute the activity handout.
2. Each group should select one person to be the notetaker. This person will be responsible for making sure their group members' ideas are recorded on Post-it notes as described below.
3. Ask groups to discuss the prompts listed on the handout one at a time (first 20-25 minutes). Some groups may focus on one or two prompts and skip others. This is ok. However, the first and seventh prompts should be addressed by every group.
4. As group members respond to the prompts, individual ideas/points should be recorded on Post-it notes. *Ensure that only one idea is recorded per Post-it.*
5. The notetaker should organize these notes by the prompt they correspond to in readiness for posting onto the sheets of chart paper around the room.
6. For the last 5 minutes of the discussion time, participants should add their Post-it notes to the corresponding sheets of chart paper around the room.
7. Ask for ten volunteers to stand at each of the sheets of chart paper. They will summarize and share the responses collected on the prompt they represent.
8. Facilitate any emerging questions or discussion while ensuring time remains to address all prompts.
9. For Prompt 7 (contextual barriers to ET), take the extra step of sorting the responses into themes. These might include things like "time," "lack of opportunities to communicate" or any other thematic categories that best capture the responses provided. **You will return to these themes on Day 3**.

APPROACH

- This open-ended discussion is not just an opportunity to report out. It is primarily designed as an opportunity for participants to be further informed and motivated to practice and promote ET in their everyday work life. To that end, the approach to the debrief should be positive: "How might these challenges be addressed?" or "How might you make this idea work in your context?"

TIPS

- Make sure that staff who were not present in the previous round do not all end up in the same group.
- Groups do not need to be organized by program or project team. In fact this activity presents a good opportunity to have mixed groups.

* Developed by Jane Buckley and Guy Sharrock

Revisit and Revise Assumptions*

OBJECTIVE: To remind Round 2 participants of the importance and skill of identifying program assumptions. Because participants will, in part, use their ToC Pathway Model to do this activity, it also serves as an opportunity to delve deeper into and review a model that may have been created, or revised as part of a periodic review process, up to a year before. This will allow participants to identify how their thinking about the program may have changed and any new assumptions they are making based on new insights or information.

60 MINUTES

SMALL PROGRAM OR PROJECT GROUPS

INTENDED PARTICIPANTS

All workshop participants working as part of a program or project team.

MATERIALS

- One copy per participant of the handout *Identifying Assumptions*
- Chart paper and marker to make notes

STEPS

1. After reintroducing assumptions, distribute a copy of the handout to each participant.
2. Describe the objective of the activity. Remind participants that this is an opportunity to review their model as much as it is an opportunity to identify new assumptions about their program.
3. Ask each group to assign one notetaker who will list the identified assumptions on chart paper.
4. Ask each group to look closely at their ToC Pathway Model and think carefully about (parts of) their program. Then, brainstorm as many assumptions about the program (all types) as they can.
5. Allow 30 minutes of brainstorming time.
6. Allow 15 minutes of debrief time, during which groups report on some or all of the following:
   - (New), key assumptions they have identified
   - How, if at all, their thinking about the program has changed since Round 1
   - Revisions they would like to make to their Pathway Model after doing this exercise

APPROACH

- This activity has two purposes. The first is to remind participants about the importance of assumptions and how to identify them. The second is to re-engage participating groups with their ToC Pathway Model. There is a reasonable chance that many participants will not have taken the time to think deeply about their model since the last workshop. In order for the rest of this workshop to be successful, groups need to be totally familiar with their model and in ET mode. This activity should, ideally, accomplish both.

TIPS

- The facilitator(s) should allow the groups to work mostly independently during the brainstorm time and should only intervene if a group seems to have stalled.
- The key to facilitating this activity is in the debrief. Depending on what groups report, be sure to take opportunities to reinforce the importance of assumptions, what counts as an assumption, and how identifying assumptions can influence the way we think about our program(s) and their ToCs.

* Developed by Jane Buckley and Guy Sharrock

Mining the Model*

OBJECTIVE: To provide a step-by-step process for using ET to establish the focus and scope of a potential learning plan directly from the program or project's previously developed ToC Pathway Model. Participants will carefully reconsider several of the concepts covered in Round 1 (stakeholders, assumptions, context, etc.) to make several strategic decisions about how to narrow down their focus for learning planning.

60+ MINUTES

SMALL GROUPS
(2-5 PEOPLE PER TABLE)

INTENDED PARTICIPANTS

For all workshop participants working as part of a program or project team

MATERIALS

- Previously created ToC Pathway Models
- One copy per participant of the handout *Mining the Model*
- Post-it notes (one pad per group)
- One set of markers (with at least three colors) per group

SET-UP

Each participating group will need to have a complete (though not necessarily perfect) ToC PM.

STEPS

1. Distribute copies of the handout *Mining the Mode*l, Post-it notes and markers to each group.
2. Describe the objective of the Mining the Model activity to participants.
3. Allow at least 45 minutes of work time.

APPROACH

The Mining the Model activity represents a crossroads between the very practical objective of the ET workshops to help participants develop learning plans and the more foundational goal of practicing and building ET skills. The conversations that group members will have will be evaluative in nature and will encourage the core ET skills of identifying assumptions, gaining insights through multiple perspective taking, posing thoughtful questions, and making careful decisions.

TIPS

- The facilitator(s) will need to circulate between groups. This is an activity that facilitators will need to "dive into." Don't be afraid to insert yourself into a group and their conversation, ask probing questions, and make suggestions. Each group will need an outside perspective.
- Groups must complete each step. However, if they choose to work out of order or spend more time on one item than another, that is ok.
- Note that the handout does not include the final step of establishing (circling) the intended scope for the learning plan. The facilitator may decide to add this as a final step, or may wish to have a debrief or other discussion before asking groups to make that final decision.

* Trochim et al (2012)

Developing Learning Questions*

OBJECTIVE: To practice developing questions about one's program that may be actionable, including serving as learning questions for formal evaluation work.

60 MINUTES

INDIVIDUALS (MAY SHARE THINKING WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS)

INTENDED PARTICIPANTS

Program managers and field-based staff

MATERIALS

- Handouts: *Guidance for Wording Learning Questions*, *Developing Learning Questions* and *Key Constructs and Measurements*
- Question and claim slides

STEPS

1. Introduce the activity, including a clear description of the goal.
2. Allow 20 minutes for participants to complete Part I of the handout individually.
3. Using the provided slide deck, briefly describe the relationship between questions and claims.
4. Allow 30 minutes for individuals to complete Part II of the handout.

APPROACH

- This activity is designed to strengthen participants' natural questioning tendencies, allowing them to ask whatever they want to about their own program.
- The fact that this activity is done individually is important. It highlights the fact that each staff member has different questions about their program.
- Part II of the handout begins to demonstrate how a question can guide a MEAL plan.

TIPS

- The facilitators *do not* need to circulate during this activity. It is important that participants feel free to pose whatever questions they would like to; there are no wrong answers. Therefore, facilitators should simply make themselves available to answer any questions about the activity.
- This activity is a question-developing exercise. Therefore, even though you may hint at implications for evidence gathering (in order to answer these questions), help participants stick with the questions for now.
- Prior to this activity, participants should have had an opportunity to brainstorm assumptions about their program. Suggest to participants that these assumptions are a good place to start when brainstorming questions. Just as questions can be turned into claims, assumptions can be turned into questions.

* Trochim et al (2012)

Learning Plan Purpose Statement*

OBJECTIVE: To briefly describe the goals and approaches of the intended learning plan, as well as give an explanation of any choices that have already been made about the focus of the learning plan and what it will include. The purpose statement can be thought of as the executive summary of the intended learning plan.

30-45 MINUTES

IN PROGRAM OR PROJECT GROUPS

INTENDED PARTICIPANTS

For all workshop participants working as part of a program or project team

MATERIALS

- One copy per participant of the handout *Learning Plan Purpose Statement*
- Pen and paper or laptop on which to write the purpose statement

STEPS

1. Distribute copies of the handout *Learning Plan Purpose Statement* to each participant.
2. Describe the objective of the activity to participants.
3. Allow at least 30 minutes of work time.

APPROACH

- This task represents a formal transition between analyzing and describing the program and developing a learning plan. It offers the opportunity for participating groups to summarize the work they have done so far, including the logic illustrated, assumptions identified and decisions made. It then asks participants to anticipate the decisions they will be making over the course of the learning plan development process.

TIPS

- The program modeling and "mining the model" steps – and the resulting priorities and considerations – form a strong foundation for determining learning plan scope and identifying the intended learning questions. All of this will contribute to a succinct, well-defined learning plan purpose statement.
- It can be very difficult to anticipate all of the decisions that will need to be made as part of the learning plan development process. Facilitators should assure participants that they should not try to work out all the details of their anticipated learning plan at this point. Rather they should try to provide an overview of their intended approach based on what they have identified so far. This may include different things for different groups.

* Trochim et al (2012)

Learning Plan Development*

OBJECTIVE: To outline a plan for collecting the information necessary to address the learning questions selected by the program team. This includes what information needs to be collected, when and how it should be collected (including from whom), and how the program team intends to use the information.

90+ MINUTES

IN PROGRAM OR PROJECT GROUPS

INTENDED PARTICIPANTS

For all workshop participants working as part of a program or project team

MATERIALS

- One copy per participant of the handouts *Learning Plan Template* and *Learning Plan Template: Table Format*
- For reference: One copy per participant of the handout *Project Learning Plan*
- Pen and paper or laptop on which to write the purpose statement

STEPS

1. Distribute copies of each handout to every participant.
2. Describe the objective. Use the *Project Learning Plan* handout to go over the questions that teams should consider as they complete the *Learning Plan Template*.
3. Walk through the handout *Learning Plan Template: Table Format* and suggest that this may be a useful tool for thinking through how each learning question should be addressed.
4. Allow as much work time as necessary for each group to completely outline a learning plan for each of their learning questions.

APPROACH

- This activity has two purposes. The first is to practice the good thinking (ET) that goes into making decisions related to planning for MEAL. The second is to develop a real plan for evidence collection that will be immediately useful to workshop participants. Even in the case of a very straightforward question, the learning plan is a useful tool for guiding systematic thinking, decision making and record keeping. The idea is that the *Learning Plan Template* should be easy to use and applicable to everyone.

TIPS

- The facilitator(s) will need to actively rotate between groups during this work time. This is an activity that facilitators will need to "dive into." Don't be afraid to insert yourself into a group and their conversation, ask probing questions, and make suggestions. Each group will *need* an outside perspective on their thinking.

* Developed by Jane Buckley

Learning Plan Peer Review*

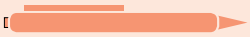
OBJECTIVE: To enable participants to use evaluative thinking skills to critically review a peer program or project's learning plan. In particular, participants will critically review the internal alignment of the plan, the plan's overall ability to address the proposed learning questions and the feasibility and utility of the plan for the program or project.

60 MINUTES

IN PROGRAM OR PROJECT GROUPS (2-5 PEOPLE)

INTENDED PARTICIPANTS

For all workshop participants working as part of a program or project team



MATERIALS

- One copy per participant of the handout *Learning Plan Review Guidance*
- Completed *Learning Plan Template* and *Learning Plan Template; Table format* for each participating group

STEPS

1. Distribute copies of the handout to each participant.
2. Describe the objective of the activity to participants.
3. Assign each group a peer review partner group. Do not simply ask each group to review the group to their right or left. It is important that groups can share their feedback with each other at the end of the activity.
4. Ask each group to identify a notetaker who will be responsible for general notetaking as well as filling out the *Learning Plan Review Guidance* handout.
5. Allow sufficient time for groups to conduct the review (20-30 minutes).
6. Allow sufficient time for groups to share their feedback with their peer group (20 minutes).
7. Conduct a debrief.

APPROACH

- This activity is designed to build a basic and fundamental ET skill—the ability to critique—as well as offer real, usable feedback for programs engaged in the learning planning process. Participants should also be encouraged to consider how the program described in the materials is similar or dissimilar to their own program.
- The act of critiquing a peer group's learning plan should inspire insights about how the reviewer might review their own plan as well.

TIPS

- The facilitator(s) should circulate. Move around 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.
- Facilitators should look for (and use) opportunities to push groups further. Try using opening questions like:
    - Do you think this plan is well aligned? Why or why not?
    - What do you think this program's key stakeholders would think about this plan?

* Modified from Trochim et al (2012)

Learning Plan Simulation*

OBJECTIVE: To use an anonymous learning plan, including the corresponding measurement tool, to better understand the importance of internal alignment, careful planning, and looking ahead to the utility of results.

90 MINUTES

GROUPS OF 2-5 PEOPLE (NOT NECESSARILY IN PROGRAM TEAMS)

INTENDED PARTICIPANTS

For all workshop participants

MATERIALS

- One copy per participant of the handout *Learning Plan Simulation*

STEPS

1. Distribute a copy of the *Learning Plan Simulation* handout to each participant.
2. Describe the objective of the activity to the participants.
3. Facilitate this activity in three parts according to the corresponding slides:
   - The program description, learning questions and purpose statement
   - The focus group guide
   - The learning plan overall

APPROACH

- This activity is designed to build basic and fundamental ET skills—critique and anticipating the effects of various decisions. Participants should also be encouraged to consider how the program described in the materials is similar or dissimilar to their own program and whether they might be vulnerable to the same pitfalls.

TIPS

- This activity, unlike many others in this workshop series, should have a heavier focus on large group discussion. For each of the three steps, the groups should be given time to read through the simulation and form their own impressions, but the bulk of the discussion and reflection should happen in the larger (or plenary) group.

* Developed by Jane Buckley

Overcoming Barriers to ET*

OBJECTIVE: To generate strategies for overcoming the barriers to ET previously identified by workshop participants.

60 MINUTES

GROUPS OF 2-5 PEOPLE

INTENDED PARTICIPANTS

All ET workshop participants

MATERIALS

- One copy per participant of the handouts *Overcoming Barriers to ET* and *Principles for Promoting ET*
- A list of barriers (themes) generated on Day 1 of the workshop (see *Tips* below for example themes)
- One sheet of blank chart paper for each barrier/theme on which to list possible strategies for overcoming that barrier
- One marker per group

SET-UP

For this activity, participants must be divided into groups of 2-5 based on the number of barrier themes generated on Day 1. Each group should be assigned one or two (no more than two) barriers to consider.

STEPS

1. Divide participants into groups as per the *Set-up* instructions above.
2. Distribute copies of the *Overcoming Barriers to ET* and *Principles for Promoting ET* handouts to each participant, and one sheet of chart paper and a marker to each group.
3. Describe the objective of the activity to participants. Each group should only brainstorm strategies for overcoming the barrier(s) they have been assigned. These strategies should be listed on the chart paper provided.
4. Facilitate a debrief, allowing each group to describe several (likely not all) of the strategies for overcoming barriers that they have generated.

APPROACH

- The purpose of this exercise is to anticipate and address barriers to practicing and promoting ET before participants experience them or are able to use them as an excuse.
- Participants are the most expert about what barriers they have faced or are likely to face, as well as the best strategies for overcoming them. It is much more likely that participants will overcome barriers to ET if they themselves have identified those barriers and the strategies for overcoming them.
- Participants are more likely to be inspired by the creative, context-appropriate suggestions of their peers than by the generic suggestions of the facilitator.

TIPS

- Consider using some or all of the themes identified under "Enabling Environment / Culture" in USAID's Collaborating-Learning-Adapting Framework: 1. (Lack of) Openness, 2. (Challenges in) Relationships and Networks, 3. (Absence of) Continual Learning and Improvement. See USAID Learning Lab: **https://usaidlearninglab.org/lab-notes/exploring-cla-framework**
- Ask participants to think creatively but also realistically, and to consider strategies for different time frames – not everything can be solved in a year.
- During the debrief, ask participants to comment on if/how the strategies presented would work for them.

* Developed by Jane Buckley

World Café*

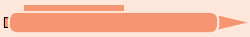
OBJECTIVE: To get participants thinking and talking about "big-picture" ideas.

45 MINUTES

IN THREE GROUPS

INTENDED PARTICIPANTS

All ET workshop participants



MATERIALS

- Three pieces of chart paper (one for each prompt on the *World Café* slide)
- Three different colored markers

SET-UP

Divide all the participants into three groups. Because this activity is not program specific, it is an opportunity to group people differently. For example, you could ask participants to count off by threes, then group the ones together, twos together and threes together.

STEPS

1. Introduce the activity, including a clear description of the goal.
2. Give each group a piece of chart paper and a marker.
3. Assign each group one of the three prompts on the slide. Ask them to write (shorthand is fine) the prompt at the top of the piece of paper.
4. Each group should then spend 10 minutes discussing the prompt they have been assigned.
5. After about 9 minutes have passed, give a 1-minute warning.
6. At the end of 10 minutes, ask the groups to stand up, leave their marker and paper where they are, and rotate (as a group) to the next prompt in clockwise order.
7. Repeat steps 3 to 5.
8. When each group has had a chance to respond to each prompt, gather the large group together for a roughly 15-minute discussion. Working through each prompt, ask participants to share the most salient points that arose in their small-group discussions.

APPROACH

- The World Café is an activity often used at the beginning or end of a workshop. It is a good tool for prompting open-ended, big-picture thinking. To that end, it is important to be inclusive of all ideas that arise.
- This may be your first opportunity to demonstrate to participants that they all have an important voice at this workshop and in their program's MEAL work. Be explicit about wanting everyone's ideas to be represented in the notes that result from this activity.
- When used at the beginning of a workshop, the World Café can be an efficient way of previewing the concepts that you will cover in subsequent slides and activities.

TIPS

- At the first rotation, ask groups to briefly review what the previous group recorded so that they do not duplicate it.
- Circulate between the groups to ensure that participants understand the language used in the prompts. Try NOT to join the conversation, or provide ideas. Reserve this only for groups who have truly stalled their conversation.

* Brown and Isaacs (2005)

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.

* 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 3 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 it 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 5 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 3 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 of 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:

- ☐ Community Partner
- ☐ Program Staff
- ☐ Program Manager
- ☐ Country Leadership
- ☐ MEAL Specialist
- ☐ 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?)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Collect informal evidence (not part of formal MEAL plan) about your program	☐	☐	☐	☐
Identify assumptions about the way your program is planned?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pose questions about your program in a meeting or conversation with colleagues?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Refer to your program's ToC in conversation with colleagues and/or program stakeholders?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use diagrams or illustrations to communicate your thinking to a colleague	☐	☐	☐	☐
Seek evidence to support claims made by colleagues and/or program stakeholders?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ask colleagues to identify assumptions you might be making?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Talk to your program stakeholders (participants, colleagues, leadership, etc.) about evaluative thinking?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Consider how various program stakeholders might view and/or think about your program?	☐	☐	☐	☐

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?

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO RESPOND

References

Baker, A. & Bruner, B. (2012). *Integrating evaluative capacity into organizational practice*. Cambridge, MA: The Bruner Foundation.

Bennett, G. & Jessani, N. (Eds.). (2011). *The knowledge translation toolkit: Bridging the know-do gap: A resource for researchers*. New Delhi, India: Sage.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Brookfield, S. (2012). *Teaching for critical thinking: Tools and techniques to help students question their assumptions*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Brown, J. & Isaacs, D. 2005. *The World Café: Shaping our futures through conversations that matter*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Buckley, J., Archibald, T., Hargraves, M. & Trochim, W. (2015). Defining and teaching evaluative thinking: Insights from research on critical thinking. *American Journal of Evaluation* Vol 36, Issue 3, 2015.

De Bono, E. (2010). *Six thinking hats*. London: Penguin.

Hargraves, M., Buckley, J., Johnson, M. and Archibald, T. (2015). *Review guide for Pathway Models*. From: **The Netway** (Software for Evaluation Planning)

Patton, M. Q. (2005). **In conversation: Michael Quinn Patton**. Interview with Lisa Waldick, from the International Development Research Center.

Patton, M. Q. (2007). Process use as a usefulism. In J. B. Cousins (Ed.), Process use in theory, research, and practice. *New Directions for Evaluation* Vol. 116, pp. 99–112. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Patton, M. Q. (2010). Incomplete successes. *The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, 25, 151–163.

Patton, M. Q. (2011). *Developmental evaluation: Applying complexity concepts to enhance innovation and use*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Rist, R. C. & N. Stame (Eds.). (2011). *From studies to streams: Managing evaluation systems* (pp. 3-22). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Trochim, W., Urban, J. B., Hargraves, M., Hebbard, C., Buckley, J., Archibald, T., Johnson, M. & Burgermaster, M. (2012). ***The guide to the systems evaluation protocol*** (V2.2). Ithaca, NY.

Wind, T. & Carden, F. (2010). Strategy evaluation: Experience at the International Development Research Centre. In P. A. Patrizi & M. Q. Patton (Eds.), Evaluating strategy. *New Directions for Evaluation* (Vol. 128, pp. 29–46). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

faith. action. results.

Catholic Relief Services, 228 West Lexington Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21201-3443
crs.org

CRS
CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES