Evaluative Thinking

Identifying Assumptions

ET WORKSHOP

ROUND 1 • GROUP 2
Why am I here?

I believe that evaluative thinking can make more effective those who are deeply committed to and authentically engaged in making the world a better place. Through [these workshops] I aspire to make my own small contribution toward realizing the vision of an experimenting global community, one characterized by commitment to reality-testing, respect for different perspectives, and open dialogue about evidence – a world in which ongoing learning is valued and practiced, and knowledge is generated and used.

Michael Quinn Patton
Program evaluation consultant
Introductions

Please share:

• Your name
• Your project(s)/area of work
• When you hear the word ???, what comes to mind?
## ET Workshop Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target audience</th>
<th>Round 1 Identifying Assumptions</th>
<th>Round 2 Seeking Evidence</th>
<th>Round 3 Taking Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Field-based staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Senior program staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Country leadership</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
ET Workshop Series

NINE WORKSHOPS IN ALL: 1 PER GROUP PER ROUND

GROUP 1
FIELD-BASED STAFF

GROUP 2
SENIOR PROGRAM STAFF

GROUP 3
COUNTRY LEADERSHIP

ROUND 1

• Introduction to Evaluative Thinking
• Identifying assumptions
• Multiple perspectives
• Theory of Change (ToC) Pathway Models

ROUND 2

• Using the ToC Pathway Models to determine learning plan scope
• Posing learning questions
• Components of a learning plan
• Learning plan alignment

ROUND 3

• Making meaning from results
• Participatory analysis
• Making informed decisions (utilization)
• Communicating results
A little housekeeping…

- Shared norms for the workshop
- Consent form and pre-workshop survey
- Post-workshop survey

Feel free to ask questions any time!
Workshop Goals

You will…

1. Understand what evaluative thinking is, why it is important and how to practice it
2. Practice developing ToC Pathway Models
3. Learn about how to work with assumptions, including turning assumptions into questions
4. Identify barriers to ET and ways to overcome them
5. Leave feeling motivated, with a new perspective on MEAL, so that you can continue to make the greatest impact with your program(s)
Workshop Outputs

You will leave this workshop with…

1. A *draft* theory of change (in the form of a Pathway Model) for your project, in line with the new MEAL Procedure 1.1.

2. A learning-to-action plan for incorporating ET into your everyday work.
Your Workshop Goals

What would YOU like to get out of this workshop?

“For me, this workshop will be a success if…”

1. Jot down up to three ideas on a piece of paper.
2. Share: As we go around the room, select one goal to share that has not been shared by someone else.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Task</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30am</td>
<td>Introductions and goals, consent form and pre-workshop survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:15am</td>
<td>World café</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00am</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15am</td>
<td>Introduction to ET and assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45am</td>
<td>Scenario analysis, Thinking hats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00pm</td>
<td>Introduction to program context and assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30pm</td>
<td>Critical review of anonymous program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:45pm</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00pm</td>
<td>Share results of critical review</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:30pm</td>
<td>Reflect and debrief</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:00pm</td>
<td>Close</td>
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</table>
World Café

1. How do you currently *learn* about your program and how well it is working?

2. In your current work how do MEAL activities contribute to individual and organizational learning?

3. What role do field staff play in MEAL? How could this be improved so they can more easily contribute to organizational learning?
Break
What is Evaluative Thinking?
The motorcycle is the project; the sidecar is MEAL, traditionally seen as slightly separate, an extra burden, though part of the project. Think of ET as the gasoline that runs the bike and sidecar.
What is Evaluative Thinking?

Overcoming our own prejudices and our avoidance of the truth.

If I say “doctor”, what image comes to mind?

What about “hairstylist”?
What is Evaluative Thinking?

“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”

Michael Quinn Patton
Preface to 2014 InterAction Report, Embracing Evaluative Thinking for Better Outcomes: Four NGO Case Studies
Evaluative Thinking: Formal definition

ET 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:

1. Identifying assumptions
2. Posing thoughtful [learning] questions
3. Pursuing deeper understanding through reflection and multiple perspective taking
4. Making informed decisions in preparation for action

(BUCKLEY, ARCHIBALD, HARGRAVES & TROCHIM, 2015)
Further Reading

Begin by distinguishing evaluative thinking from doing an evaluation. Evaluation is an activity that produces reports; evaluative thinking produces effective organizations. Evaluative thinking is systematic, intentional and ongoing attention to expected results. It focuses on how results are achieved, what evidence is needed to inform future actions and how to improve future results.

Michael Quinn Patton
Program evaluation consultant
Embedded ET creates lasting impact

Evaluative thinking is most meaningful when it is embedded in an organization’s culture … Evaluative thinking is what characterizes learning organizations.

Michael Quinn Patton
Program evaluation consultant
Embedded ET creates lasting impact

Infusing evaluative thinking into organizational culture involves examining how decision makers and staff incorporate evaluative inquiry into everything they do as part of ongoing attention to mission fulfilment and continuous improvement. It is mainstreamed and becomes central to the work, rather than an add-on, and it is a matter of meaningful reflection and learning, rather than a compliance mandate.

Michael Quinn Patton
Program evaluation consultant
Critical Thinking vs. Evaluative Thinking

Critical thinking: Using careful analysis to form a judgement; not taking things at face value.
Critical Thinking vs. Evaluative Thinking

Evaluative thinking is critical thinking plus ... proactive behaviors such as ...

• Posing questions
• Seeking evidence
• Deciding to act (or not act) based on evidence
Evaluative Thinking: Where it fits in

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
What does Evaluative Thinking sound and look like?

Photo by CRS staff
Evaluative Thinking:
What it sounds and looks like in a program work context

Things you may hear:
- 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?
- “Different community members perspectives on this are X, Y, and Z...”

Things you may see:
- More evidence gathering and sharing
- More feedback (all directions)
- Reflective conversations among staff, beneficiaries, leadership, etc.
- More ToCs/illustrating thinking
- More motivation to do systematic MEAL work
- Program evolution
- More effective staff and programs
- Greater field staff influence over project decisions
Why is Evaluative Thinking crucial?

Continuous reflection and learning allows us to respond and adapt.

In other words…

We can improve our work more efficiently in order to make a larger impact.
Why is Evaluative Thinking crucial?

We can minimize risks associated with relying on our assumptions. Every assumption represents a risk. Some assumptions/risks are more critical than others. Evaluative thinking allows us to manage these risks.
Why is Evaluative Thinking crucial?

Use!

How evaluations are used affects the spending of billions of dollars to fight problems of poverty, disease, ignorance, joblessness, mental anguish, crime, hunger and inequality.
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.
Calls for changes in how we work
Learning to think evaluatively

Experience in thinking can be won, like all experience in doing something, only through practice.

HANNAH ARENDT
PHILOSOPHER
Learning to think evaluatively

• Anyone can do it, but it is not trivial and requires regular practice

• Enable regular practice with a checklist that prompts ET anywhere and everywhere

• Requires a “safe space” for questioning, identifying assumptions, making suggestions

• Start with small changes and ramp up (can’t change the culture of a program or organization over night), e.g. discuss ET experiences in team meetings

• Don’t be shy to try it alongside peers and colleagues – no ideas are wrong, it’s just that some may turn out to be better than others
Principles for Promoting ET

Maximize intrinsic motivation

Incorporate incremental experiences
(Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Brookfield, 2012).

Evaluative thinking is not a born-in 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 (Brookfield, 2012; Ericsson & Charness, 1994).

Evaluative thinkers must be aware of—and work to overcome—assumptions and belief preservation (Brookfield, 2012; Lord et al., 1979; Nkwake, 2013).

In order to best learn to think evaluatively, the skill should be applied and practiced in multiple contexts and alongside peers and colleagues (Bransford et al., 1999; Brookfield, 2012; Foley, 1999; Halpern, 1998; Simon, 2000).

Anyone can do it!

Everyone should do it!
ET Strategies and Activities

1. Create an intentional learning environment (be constantly alert for opportunities to use ET)

2. Establish a habit of setting aside small amounts of time to focus on ET (5 minutes at the end of an already established meeting)

3. Use role-play or simulation when planning MEAL work

4. Use diagrams or illustrations to depict thinking when communicating with colleagues and stakeholders

5. Engage in supportive, critical peer review of own and others’ work

6. Get involved in MEAL work
Identifying Assumptions

An assumption is an idea, thought or belief that is taken for granted or taken as a given. There are:

- **Explicit** assumptions that have been identified and that one is fully aware of; and

- **Implicit** assumptions that influence someone without her or him being aware of it.
Are assumptions always bad?

No! Assumptions are a necessary part of survival. We ALL make assumptions.

The important thing is to identify assumptions and be conscious about choosing to accept them, seeking evidence for them, or planning to work around them as needed.
Types of Assumptions

- Causal
- Prescriptive
- Foundational
Causal Assumptions

• About how different parts of the world work and about the conditions under which these can be changed.

• How will program outputs turn into intended outcomes? e.g., *If we offer this program, then participants will learn something new.*
Prescriptive Assumptions

• About what we think ought to or should be happening in a particular situation.

• What is the most appropriate program/policy strategy alternative? e.g., All projects must have a gender component.
Foundational Assumptions

- Deeply held beliefs about the world, like a worldview.

- What implicit perspectives or theories of knowledge, and of reality, guide your work? What global geopolitical and cultural trends affect your thinking without you usually being aware of it? e.g., Scientific knowledge is fundamentally better than indigenous knowledge.
### Turn and Talk
Assumption Brainstorm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Causal</th>
<th>Prescriptive</th>
<th>Foundational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Everyday life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) The media or government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3) Project implementation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Scenario Analysis

Read the provided scenario.

With your group, discuss the following:

• What assumptions – explicit and implicit – do you think the characters are operating under? Can you list at least three assumptions for each character?

• What alternative approaches or interpretations could these characters have used if they were aware of their assumptions? What questions might they need to answer?

• What foundational assumptions are these characters operating under?
Thinking Hats

Positive
“Big Picture”
Negative

Creative
Factual
Emotional
Thinking Hats

**Managing** (Blue) – What is the subject? What are we thinking about? What is the goal?

**Information** (White) – Considering purely what information is available, what are the facts?

**Emotions** (Red) – Intuitive or instinctive gut reactions or statements of emotional feeling (but not any justification).

**Discernment** (Black) – Logic applied to identifying reasons to be cautious and conservative.

**Optimistic response** (Yellow) – Logic applied to identifying benefits, seeking harmony.

**Creativity** (Green) – Statements of provocation and investigation, seeing where a thought goes.
Thinking Hats

• Select which thinking hat you would like to wear for this activity. Make sure each member of your group is “wearing” a different color hat.

• Review ToC Pathway Model developed by your peers

• Take turns commenting on the model from the perspective of the role (hat) you have chosen.

• Be prepared to report out on the various ideas that are discussed.
Stakeholder Analysis
Turn and Talk
Stakeholders Analysis and ET

• Why is considering stakeholder perspectives important for ET?
• Think of two examples of when you have been informed by a stakeholder’s perspective.
• Give an example of a time when two stakeholders had differing perspectives.
Bottle Race
# Context and Assumptions Brainstorm

## Context

The physical, social and economic environment in which a program takes place

**Women in the community are expected to undertake many household tasks (e.g. child care, cooking meals, etc.)**

## Assumptions

Implicitly or explicitly accepted ideas about how and why a program works

**Women in the community will be able to find childcare in order to attend the program**
Project context: People-Place-History

How does context affect your ability to implement your program?

What is it about people, place and history that affects (helps or hinders) your program?

People-Place-History

With your group, brainstorm the key aspects of your program’s context (people, place and history). Organize the results of your brainstorm onto chart paper as illustrated on the right.
Example Program Proposal

• Read over the provided program materials

• Discuss the following:

  1. Overall impressions of the program
  2. Things that have been well thought-out/planned
  3. Thoughts about the program’s stakeholders and context
  4. Assumptions and questions

• Write a brief recommendation to the implementers of this program that includes:

  a. One compliment (something they have done well)
  b. Three assumptions (including at least one prescriptive and one foundational assumption) that the program is working under that need to be discussed
  c. Three important learning questions that the program may want to address
Break
Share out:
Large group debrief of Critical Review

• One representative from each group should share their recommendations with the larger group.

• As you listen to each presentation, think critically about each set of recommendations: What is feasible? How would you use this set of recommendations if this was your program?
Any questions?

• If you have any questions about what we talked about today that you would like us to address tomorrow, please write them on Post-it notes and stick them to the chart paper on your way out.
Handouts from Day 1

• Consent form
• Pre-workshop survey
• What is ET?
• What does ET sound and look like?
• The MEAL system

• Principles for promoting ET
• Assumptions defined
• Scenario analysis
• Example program proposal
• Program proposal review guidance
Have a great evening!
See you tomorrow
Good morning!
Questions and Feedback from Day 1

Did we achieve our goals?
Turn and Talk

• What is ET? How would you explain it to a child?
• How are ET and learning related?
• What is an assumption?
• Why are assumptions important to identify?
# Agenda

## Day 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Task</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30am</td>
<td>Simple scenario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:15am</td>
<td>Agenda, goals for the day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.30am</td>
<td>Introduction to theories of change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00am</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15am</td>
<td>Program mission statement, Develop TOC PMs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30am</td>
<td>Stakeholder perspectives on theories of change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00pm</td>
<td>Brainstorm context and assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:15pm</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30pm</td>
<td>Turning assumptions into questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30pm</td>
<td>Reflect and debrief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00pm</td>
<td>Close</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Simple Scenario
Theory of Change Pathway Models
Theory of Change Pathway Models

• Tell the story of your program
• Capture complexity
• Follow a believable sequence
• Are used for planning and MEAL
• Have an evaluative thinking process use
Theory of Change Pathway Models
Theory of Change Pathway Model

**ACTIVITIES**
- Increase Knowledge
- Change Attitudes
- Increase Skills
- Change Behaviors
- Overcome Barriers
- Share with Peers
- Community Improves

**SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES**
- Workshops 1 and 2
- Follow-up

**MID-TERM OUTCOMES**
- Increase Knowledge
- Change Attitudes
- Increase Skills
- Change Behaviors
- Overcome Barriers
- Share with Peers
- Community Improves

**LONG-TERM OUTCOMES**
- Strategic Objectives
Some interventions are not especially complicated ...
Theory of Change Pathway Model

… but some are more complicated!

Theory of Change – UBALE Project, Malawi
How ToC Pathway Model and Proframe relate

PROFRAME

- Inputs
- Assumptions
- Indicators
- Measurement

ToC PATHWAY MODEL

- Causality/Program Theory
- Shows “sub-programs”
- Identifies questions
- Tells “story” graphically

Core program model elements: Activities, outputs, intermediate results, strategic objectives
Theory of Change Pathway Models

Understanding what is *really* going on!

- Participants register for workshop
- Participants attend workshop
- Facilitators provide written resources
- Participants change their behavior
  - Participants’ knowledge increases
  - Participants gain skills necessary for change
  - Participants’ motivation to change increases
Break
Program Mission Statement

Before you start building your model … Clarify and make explicit what the overall purpose of your program is?

- Take 5 minutes to compose one sentence that summarizes the purpose of your program

- Turn and talk to a neighbor in your program group. How are your sentences the same? How are they different? What explains these differences? How will you represent these differences in the model?

Consider these ideas as you look at your strategic objectives…
Notes for developing ToC Pathway Models

There may be …
• More than one arrow coming FROM an Activity or Output/IR/SO
• More than one arrow going INTO an Output/IR/SO
• Arrows AMONG Output/IR/SOs in a column (Outputs leading to other Outputs, IRs to IRs, etc.)
• Arrows in both directions between two Outputs/IRs/SOs.

There should NOT be …
• An Output/IR/SO with no arrow leading to it
• An Activity with no arrows leading from it
Notes for developing ToC Pathway Models

• Are there any Activities that are not connected to any Outputs/IRs/ SOs?
• Are there any Outputs/IRs/SoS that are not connected to any Activities?
• If yes, why do these gaps exist? Was something simply left out of the model, or is there a program Activity that does not really address the program goals?
• Is the program expected to lead to a particular Output/IR/SO, but does not actually include an Activity that would result in that Output/IR/SO?
Notes for developing ToC Pathway Models

Using your ToC Pathway Model to ‘tell the story’:

• We have created a set of index cards for you based on your existing program’s Proframe

• You will need to:
  • Add links
  • Add cards
  • Remove or revise cards (use the back if you can)
  • Change the color (category) of a card

• Outputs/short-term outcomes seem to be missing. When brainstorming these, think about knowledge, skills and attitudes
Developing ToC Pathway Models
Stakeholder Perspectives on your ToC Pathway Model

- Let’s brainstorm the key stakeholders for your project
- Review your model from the perspectives of the four key stakeholders we have chosen. What new insights can you identify? Make appropriate revisions to your model.
Lunch
Portrait Race
Program Assumptions

- Prescriptive Assumptions
- Foundational Assumptions
- Causal Assumptions
- Activities
- Outcomes
- Program

Foundational Assumptions

Prescriptive Assumptions
Program Assumptions

• Now that you have had some practice identifying assumptions, try focusing on your program or project.
• Brainstorm as many assumptions (including causal, prescriptive and foundational) as you can.
• Assign one notetaker and record the output of your brainstorm on chart paper.
Break
Reflections on the ToC Pathway Model Process

• How hard/easy was the ToC Pathway Model process? Why?
• What helped or hindered the process?
• What is valuable about developing the ToC Pathway Model? Giving feedback?
• How do you think you can use it in your work?
Appreciative Pause

Consider and identify:

• A comment that opened up a whole new line of thinking.
• A comment that helped identify an assumption.
• A comment that identified a gap in reasoning that needed to be addressed.
• A new idea that was intriguing and had not been considered before.
• A comment showing the connection between two other ideas or contributions when that connection hadn’t been clear.
Handouts from Day 2

• Simple scenario
• ToC Pathway Models
• Notes for developing ToC Pathway Models
Any questions?

• If you have any questions about what we talked about today that you would like us to address tomorrow, please write them on Post-it notes and stick them to the chart paper on your way out.
Have a great evening!
See you tomorrow
Good morning!
Questions and Feedback from Day 2

Did we achieve our goals?
Turn and Talk

• What is a ToC Pathway Model?
• How would you explain it to a child?
• When might you choose to use Thinking Hats as a thinking tool?
When would you *not* use Evaluative Thinking?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30am</td>
<td>Goals for the day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:15am</td>
<td>Thinking hats, ToC Pathway Model review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15am</td>
<td>Introduction to working with questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30am</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45am</td>
<td>Question sort: To act or not to act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30am</td>
<td>Learning plan recommendations: MEAL memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:00pm</td>
<td>Role-play: ET conversations, Learning-to-action plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:15pm</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30pm</td>
<td>World café: Being an ET champion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30pm</td>
<td>Reflect and debrief, post-workshop survey</td>
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<td>4:00pm</td>
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</table>
Thinking Hats

Positive

“Big Picture”

Negative

Creative

Factual

Emotional
ToC Pathway Model Review

Use the ToC Pathway Model Review Guidance handout to help you consider things like:

• What assumptions are being made?
• Which pathways seem “key”?
• Are the outcomes described/defined in the way you would describe/define them?
• Which nodes and/or links have existing evidence (formal or informal)
• Which nodes and/or links do you see as in need of evidence?
Using the ToC Pathway Model to select guiding questions

Selecting guiding questions for your MEAL work is like panning for gold...

Your ToC Pathway Model is like a river – a flow of logic that tells the story of your program.
Within that logical flow there are a few items – like nuggets of gold – that are the most valuable areas of your model on which to focus your MEAL work.

We use ET, like a gold pan, to help us find and focus in on these most critical pieces.
Using ToC models to turn assumptions into questions

Activities | Outputs | Intermediate Results | Strategic Objectives
--- | --- | --- | ---
WORKSHOP 1 | INCREASE KNOWLEDGE | SHARE WITH PEERS | COMMUNITY IMPROVES
WORKSHOP 2 | INCREASE SKILLS | OVERCOME BARRIERS
FOLLOW-UP | CHANGE ATTITUDES | CHANGE BEHAVIORS

Activities:
- WORKSHOP 1
- WORKSHOP 2
- FOLLOW-UP

Outputs:
- INCREASE KNOWLEDGE
- INCREASE SKILLS
- CHANGE ATTITUDES
- CHANGE BEHAVIORS
- SHARE WITH PEERS
- OVERCOME BARRIERS

Intermediate Results:

Strategic Objectives:
- COMMUNITY IMPROVES
Theory of Change Pathway Models

Understanding what is *really* going on!

- Participants register for workshop
- Participants attend workshop
- Facilitators provide written resources
- Participants change their behavior
- Participants’ knowledge increases
- Participants gain skills necessary for change
- Participants motivation to change increases
Assumption-Question-Evidence Loop
Assumption-Question-Evidence Loop

Assumption: Transportation is a significant barrier to participants having adequate access to the resources provided by our program.

Evidence: There are several significant barriers to participants’ access to the resources provided by our program, including lack of transportation.

Question: Why do 70% of our participants lack adequate access to the resources provided by our program?
Posing Learning Questions
Posing Learning Questions

Questions give you the power to potentially make claims about the impacts of your program; but they can also be limiting.

Consider the difference between these two questions:

- Do participants have adequate access to the resources provided by our program?
- Do women in the community have equal access to our program (compared to men)?
### Turning Assumptions into Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This ET workshop will contribute to a change in ET habits among participants.</td>
<td>Do ET workshop participants change their habits after participating?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handwashing is a critical component of personal hygiene.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants have adequate access to the resources provided by our program.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question Brainstorm

Return to the list of assumptions you brainstormed about your program.

For the sake of practice only, in the next few minutes, turn as many of these assumptions into questions as you can.

Work as a group and take notes.

We will count them up at the end to see which group came up with the most questions based on assumptions.
Break
Working with questions: Putting ET to use

- Reflect on identified assumption, pose question
- Less formal evidence gathering needed
- Formal evidence gathering needed
- Internally credible evidence
- Systematic, externally credible evidence
- Logical conclusion
- Immediate adaptation
- Modification/program plan review
- Strategic decision making
- Do nothing

No evidence needed
Considerations for sorting questions and assumptions

• What is already known about the program, its participants and/or its context

• What kind of evidence would be credible, and to whom, in addressing each assumption

• What resources are available

• What sources of evidence are available and to whom
Working with questions: Putting ET to use

- ASSUMPTIONS/QUESTIONS
  - **DO NOTHING** (NO ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE NEEDED BEFORE PLANNING FOR ACTION OR INACTION)
  - **DO A LOT** (FORMAL EVIDENCE GATHERING)
  - **DO A LITTLE** (LESS FORMAL EVIDENCE GATHERING)
# Question Sort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No evidence needed at this time</th>
<th>Less formal evidence gathering</th>
<th>Formal evidence gathering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Will the store have healthy food?</td>
<td>Do I have money in my wallet?</td>
<td>Which healthy foods are best for me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would a change in behavior be beneficial to participants?</td>
<td>Are potential participants choosing to participate in the program?</td>
<td>Are participants who are engaged and motivated to participate also motivated to change their behavior?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question sort

- Return to your list of questions (and/or assumptions) about your program.
- Using chart paper, create a table like the one on the previous slide.
- With your group, sort the questions into the three categories.

You may disagree with your team members! Listen carefully to understand the thinking behind someone else’s decision. Are you convinced? Can you (respectfully) convince them?
Appreciative Pause

Step back for a moment…
Thank your group members for their thoughts and contributions to this discussion.

• What did this activity bring up for you?
• How has this activity affected the way you think about MEAL (if at all)?
• Do you have any additional thoughts about ET after doing this activity?
MEAL Memo

Work with a partner:

1. Pretend you are in charge of all MEAL work for your project
2. Write a memo that outlines what you would like to be done

- What questions would you like to see addressed?
- What type(s) of evidence would you like to see?
- How will results be used?
- Who should do all of this? When?
Lunch
Follow the Leader
ET conversations with stakeholders

1. Draw a stakeholder card. This is the stakeholder you will pretend to be.

2. Find a partner (someone outside your group).

3. Role-play a discussion with your partner:
   - What is ET?
   - Is it important? Why?
   - How should it be practiced?
Discussion

• Is it difficult to describe ET? Why?
• Why might it be important to talk to stakeholders about evaluative thinking/reflective practice?
Barriers to ET

1. Large group brainstorm: Barriers
2. Identify themes
3. Assign each group one theme to focus on
4. Small group brainstorm: Strategies for overcoming barriers
5. Present your barrier and three possible alternative strategies for overcoming that barrier to the large group
Learning-to-Action Plan
ET personal plan

- How does what we are doing connect to our goals?
- What assumptions are we making?
- How do we know this is working?
Break
World Café

1. What does it mean to be a champion of ET?

2. What are the top three practical suggestions you would make, and to whom in particular, for improving the culture of ET at CRS?

3. What are some strategies for talking with colleagues, beneficiaries, supervisors, funders, etc. about ET, MEAL and learning?
Handouts from Day 3

- Thinking Hats
- ToC Pathway Model review guidance
- Question sort
- MEAL memo
- Learning-to-action plan
- Post-workshop survey
## Organizing your ET notebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1 Handouts</th>
<th>Day 2 Handouts</th>
<th>Day 3 Handouts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consent form</td>
<td>Simple scenario</td>
<td>Thinking hats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-workshop survey</td>
<td>ToC Pathway Models</td>
<td>ToC Pathway Model review guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is ET?</td>
<td>Notes for developing ToC Pathway Models</td>
<td>Question sort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does ET sound and look like?</td>
<td></td>
<td>MEAL memo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The MEAL system</td>
<td></td>
<td>Learning-to-action plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles for promoting ET</td>
<td></td>
<td>Post-workshop survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ET strategies and activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifying assumptions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario analysis</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thinking hats</td>
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<tr>
<td>Example program proposal</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Program proposal review guidance</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Post-Workshop Survey

• Please fill out the Post-Workshop Survey
Next time…

- Seeking evidence!
- Developing learning plans from good questions
- Credibility and methodological considerations
- Planning for useful results
Thank you!
References


