

Evaluating a Nonprofit Organization: Methodological and Management Strategies from the Foods Resource Bank Evaluation



Evaluators: Thomaz Chianca and John Risley
Supervisor: Michael Scriven
Interdisciplinary PhD in Evaluation
The Evaluation Center
Western Michigan University

WMU Evaluation Café
Feb 15, 2006

The Foods Resource Bank (FRB)

- ❑ Inspired by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank
- ❑ “... a *‘Christian Response to World Hunger;’* a non-government humanitarian organization committed to providing food security in the developing world through sustainable small-scale agricultural production.”
- ❑ \$2.3 million Net Assets in 2004 (contributions, in-kind commodities, and grants).



Growing Projects, Implementing Members & Overseas Programs

- ❑ ~140 Growing Projects in at least 15 states in 2004.
- ❑ 16 Implementing Members—mostly church-related missions organizations (e.g., CWR, LWR)
- ❑ ~40 food security programs in developing countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia, Middle-East and Eastern Europe



The FRB Evaluation



- ❑ Formative purposes: provide information for FRB's new, full-time President
- ❑ Overall framework: Michael Scriven's Key Evaluation Checklist (KEC)
- ❑ Design: Surveys (GPs, IMs, OPs), Site Visits (GPs), Phone Interviews (GPs, FMs), Doc Review (FRB reports, OPs eval reports)
- ❑ Main questions: How well FRB is doing re: GPs, IMs, OPs, and Governance? How to improve GPs?

Management Issues

- ❑ Identifying values and developing the evaluation plan
- ❑ Evaluation Advisory Committee
- ❑ Reporting evaluation findings
- ❑ Metaevaluation
- ❑ Working with FRB staff



Values and the evaluation plan

- ❑ Three main values from organization's mission
- ❑ Major success criteria linked to each of the main values
- ❑ FRB components also linked to major success criteria (and proposed data sources)
- ❑ Agreement on evaluation plan before contract was signed



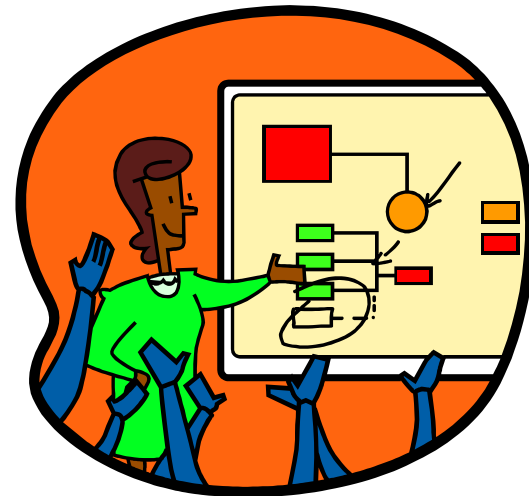
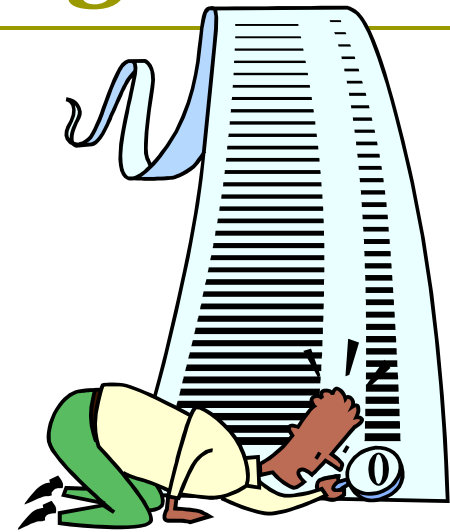
Evaluation Advisory Committee

- Stakeholders from
 - Growing projects
 - Implementing members
 - FRB staff
 - Government funder (USAID)
 - Foundation funder (WKKF)
- Good feedback early on
- Lack of commitment throughout the process



Reporting evaluation findings

- ❑ Report sent to FRB staff
- ❑ Oral presentation at FRB annual meeting
- ❑ Issues about language used in annual meeting presentation
- ❑ Be open to feedback while maintaining commitment to findings



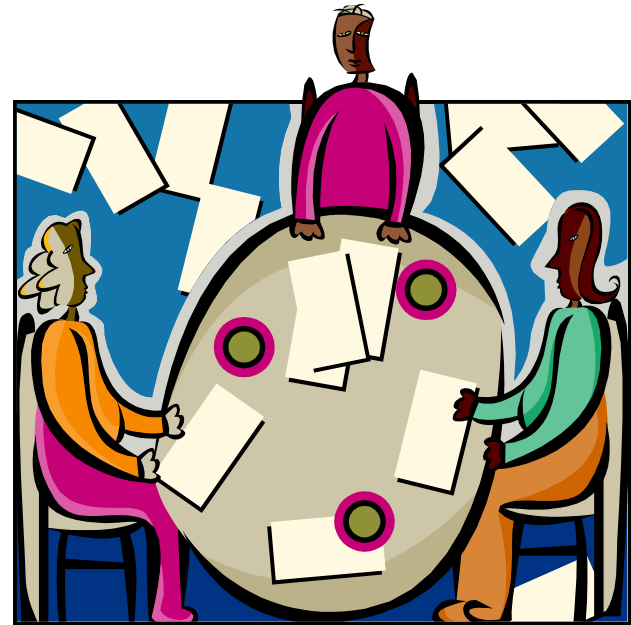
Metaevaluation

- ❑ Ideally would be an external metaevaluator
- ❑ Included a self-criticisms/caveats in place of a metaevaluation
- ❑ Included in report and presentation to FRB board
- ❑ Helps FRB's future evaluation planning



Working with FRB staff

- ❑ Staff open with information
- ❑ Helpful with increasing survey response rate
- ❑ Commitment to evaluation reinforced with funders, partners, overseas programs and growing projects



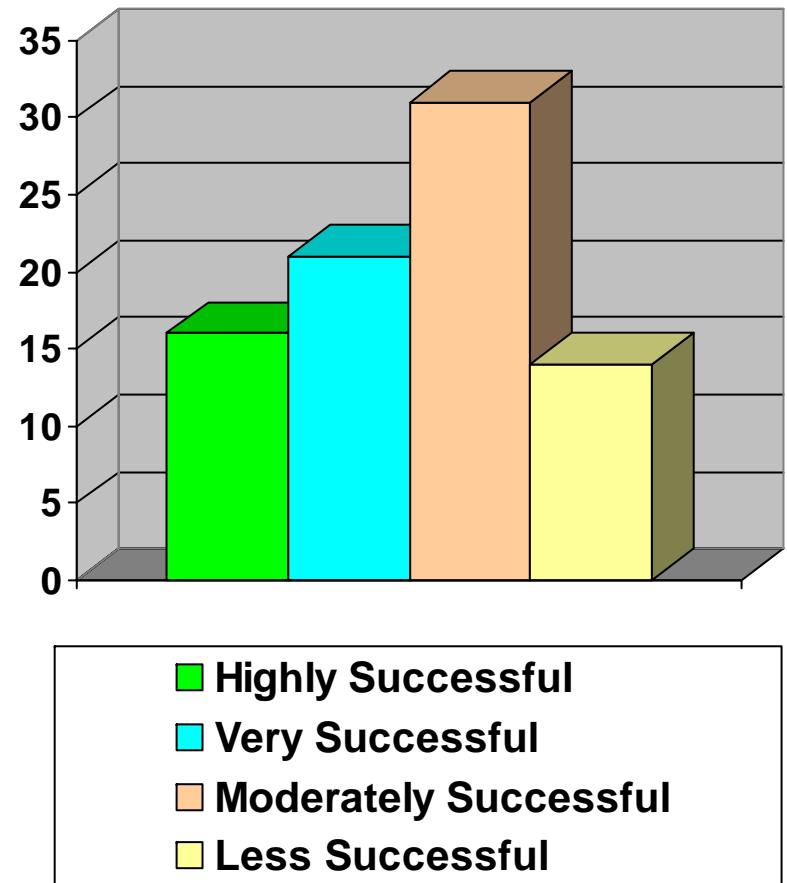
Success Case Method Component

- Purpose: Identify any organizational features and operations, and type of support received from FRB influencing Growing Projects' level of success



Screening for Success

- Source of evidence:
 - database on 86 GPs with FRB headquarters info and responses to eval survey
- Success Criteria
 - Donation: significant increase in donations over the years or high mean donation (bottom-line)
 - Sustainability: at least 2 years as a GP and intention to continue as a GP in the following year
 - Participation: increasing number of project participants



Interviews with GPs



- Random selection of:
 - 5 of 16 (31%) highly successful GPs
 - 3 of 14 (21%) least successful GPs
- Questions designed to identify convincing evidence linking behaviors and practices of project leaders with greater or lower GP success
 - Could you describe a typical week of work in the project? What exactly you do? How often? How?
 - What do you see as your most important tasks?
 - How do you know how successful you are being? What measures and feedback do you rely on?
 - How do you get and maintain people involved with the project?
 - What does the FRB field manager do to help your project succeed?
 - What kind of support from FRB would you need to continue to be successful?

Interviews with Field Managers

- All 7 field managers interviewed
- Interviews served to distinguish behaviors and tasks developed by field managers that could foster or hinder GPs' success
 - What are the 3 or 4 most critical GP leaders' tasks and behaviors that lead to the greatest success?
 - How and where should GPs spend most of their time? What is least important for them to do?
 - What do you see as your most important tasks?
 - How do you make decisions as to how and where to spend your time?
 - How do you know how successful you are being? What measures and feedback do you rely on?



Characteristics of highly successful GPs (survey)



- ❑ Comparison of 16 most successful GPs and the other 70 GPs on key aspects.
- ❑ Statistically significant differences:
 - growing and high number of active participants (especially farmers)
 - larger number of businesses and churches involved with GPs (especially urban churches)
- ❑ Other important differences:
 - slightly wealthier communities (about \$2,000 higher median household income)
 - leadership committees in place (21% more than in less successful GPs)
 - greater participation of farmers and clergy (5% and 9%, respectively)
 - slightly higher percentage of donations to FRB (3% coming from crops)

Secrets for GP success (interviews)

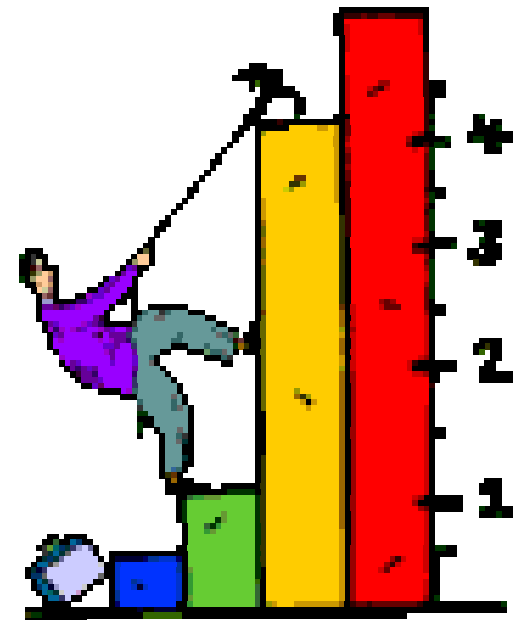
- ❑ Establishing effective communication with project participants (or potential participants) and donors (or potential donors)
- ❑ Having lay people leading the project
- ❑ Dividing tasks among the members of the leadership committee
- ❑ Promptly covering small farmers' expenses
- ❑ Getting a wide variety of organizations involved
- ❑ Networking with other GPs
- ❑ Using FRB mission to attract more people
- ❑ Inclusive and diverse group of participants
- ❑ Always open to new participants
- ❑ Innovating in fundraising



Challenges for Success

- ❑ Lack of a leadership committee and dependence on external leadership (pastors or FRB field managers)
- ❑ Limited collaboration between participating churches
- ❑ Lack of mission-oriented church members

Great corroboration with previous findings!!!



Successful Field Managers

- ❑ Linking FMs and highly successful GPs
- ❑ Good news: 6 of 7 FMs supervise at least one highly successful GP
- ❑ Identification of 12 key roles played by FMs with GPs
- ❑ Most successful FMs:
 - Maintaining existing GPs:
 - ❑ *Literature and contacts*
 - ❑ *Inputs and guidance on communicating work*
 - Identifying new opportunities:
 - ❑ *Persistency*
 - ❑ *Dealing with frustration*
 - ❑ *Being attentive 24/7*
 - ❑ *Contacting the right people*
 - Using clear outcome measures to assess own work



Summing up SCM component payoff

- ❑ Distribution of level of success of GPs
- ❑ Main characteristics/secrets of success of highly successful GPs
- ❑ Challenges for increasing success
- ❑ List of activities performed by FRB field managers supporting most successful GPs
- ❑ Main characteristics/secrets of success of most successful FMs

