Developing and Using Evaluation Checklists to Improve Evaluation Practice

Wes Martz, Nadini Persaud, & Daniela Schröter
Overview of Session

Introduction to evaluation checklists

Development and validation of checklists
- Organizational Effectiveness Evaluation Checklist
- Sustainability Evaluation Checklist
- Cost Analysis Checklist

Lessons learned
## Evaluation Checklists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laundry list</td>
<td>Grocery lists, travel lists, party planner list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential</td>
<td>Flight crew checklist, product assembly checklist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iterative</td>
<td>Medical procedures lists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Several evaluation checklists (e.g., KEC, OEC, SEC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic</td>
<td>Psychological assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMlist</td>
<td>Rating sheets in contests, Personnel selection qualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sections in evaluation checklists (e.g., KEC, OEC, SEC)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Why use checklists?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Consolidate vast knowledge in a parsimonious manner</td>
<td>• Overuse (fatigue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improve task performance</td>
<td>• Unnecessary barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reduce influence of halo and Rorschach effects</td>
<td>• Tunnel vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reduce resource use</td>
<td>• Inappropriate use</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wes Martz, Ph.D.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATION CHECKLIST (OEC)
• Organizational evaluation process framework
• Iterative, explicit, weakly sequential
• Six steps, 29 checkpoints
• Criteria of merit checklist
  – 12 universal criteria of merit
  – 84 suggested measures
OEC Validation Process

- **Phase 1: Expert panel review**
  - Critical feedback survey
  - Written comments made on checklist

- **Phase 2: Field test**
  - Single-case study
  - Semi-structured interview
Expert Panel Overview

• Study participants
  – Subject matter experts (organizational and evaluation theorists)
  – Targeted users (professional evaluators, organizational consultants, managers)

• Review OEC for providing critical feedback
• Identify strengths and weaknesses
• Complete the critical feedback survey
• Write comments directly on the checklist
Expert Panel Data Analyses

- Critical feedback survey
  - Descriptive statistics
  - Parametric and nonparametric analysis of variance
- Written comments on checklist
  - Hermeneutic interpretation
  - Thematic analysis to cluster and impose meaning
  - Triangulation across participants to corroborate or falsify the imposed categories
• Evaluation client was a for-profit organization
• Conducted evaluation using revised OEC
• Strictly followed the OEC to ensure fidelity
• Post-evaluation semi-structured client interview
• A formative metaevaluation to detect and correct deficiencies in the process
Observations from Field Test

- Structured format minimized “scope-creep”
- Identified several areas to clarify in OEC
- Reinforced need for multiple measures, transparency in standards
- Minimal disruption to the organization
• Strengths
  – Relatively quick validation process
  – Based on relevant evaluative criteria
  – Features a real-world application

• Weaknesses
  – Single-case field study
  – Selection of the case study
  – Selection of the expert panel members
Daniela Schröter, Ph.D.

SUSTAINABILITY EVALUATION CHECKLIST (SEC)
SEC Overview

Introduction: Purpose, Intended Users, Characteristics, Key Concepts

Part A - General Considerations in Evaluation: Grounding the Evaluation, About the Evaluand, General Procedures for Evaluation

Part B: Criteria in Sustainability Evaluation: Criteria of Merit, Criteria of Worth, Criteria of Significance

Appendices: Glossary, References
SEC Development & Validation

Development

• Literature-based development imbued with iterative feedback from experts and practitioners
• Continuous process

Validation

• Nonexperimental, exploratory, mixed method study
• Systematic feedback on checklist accuracy and utility via
  – Self-administered Web-based questionnaire (N=106)
  – Expert interviews (N=10)
  – Email (N=5+)
SEC Validity Study: Analytic Framework

1. Respondents by Response Medium
   - Questionnaire
     - E-mail
     - Interview

2. SEC Validity Rating Scales
   - Item Analyses
     - Accuracy
     - Utility
     - Other
   - Descriptive Statistics

3. Qualitative Results
   - Cross-Item Analysis
   - Weaknesses
   - Cross-Case Analysis
     - Strengths
     - Recommendations
   - Cross-Section Analysis

4. Triangulation

5. Summary and Implications
Cross-item Analysis

- Reconsiderations
  - Selectivity
  - Overlaps
  - Parts/sections
  - Clarity

- Open questions/concerns
  - Length
  - Users
  - Selectivity
  - Formatting

- Specifications
  - Clarifications
    - New dimensions
  - Supplementary materials

- Language
  - Concepts
  - SEC-Methods
  - Detail
  - Density
  - Structure

- Comprehensiveness
  - Content/Concept
  - Contribution
  - Detail/Generality
  - Food for thought
  - Holisticity
  - Structure
  - Clarity

- Utility
  - Guidance/User guide
  - Supplementary materials
  - New dimensions
  - Clarifications
  - Specifications
  - Impaired/disabled users
  - Application

Omissions
Commissions
Confusions
Errors/Problems
Strengths
Suggestions

Tensions between generality and specificity, necessity and sufficiency, complexity and simplicity
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Relatively quick validation process, but long development process</td>
<td>• Development limited by time and resource constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Validation based on relevant evaluative criteria and open to critical feedback</td>
<td>• Validation limited to content and perceived utility, though evidence of use exists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Feedback from a highly diverse group of experts and practitioners</td>
<td>• SEC application limited to volunteers, resulting in lack of systematic information about application</td>
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Nadini Persaud, Ph.D.

COST ANALYSIS CHECKLIST
“Demonstration of a positive result, even one that is statistically significant and casually linked to a program, is not sufficient in itself to logically justify continuation of the program” (Weiss, 1998, p. 246).

Knowing that a program is responsible for certain outcomes is of little value if cost is not taken into account.

**IMPORTANT QUESTION IN A POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT:**

“How cost-effective is the program compared to similar programs.”
“. . . Not widely used at present among evaluators, in comparison with economists” (Levin, 2005, p. 90).

“. . . Efficiency analyses is a logical follow-on from evaluation, it is a specialized craft that few evaluators have mastered” (Weiss, 1998, p. 247).

“The different methods for valuing and comparing costs, so familiar to auditors and accountants and economists, should be seriously studied by evaluation students….question in a political environment…is, What is the program or system’s cost-effectiveness, compared with other programs or systems” (Chelimsky, 1997, p. 65).

Economic rates of return computations are “... not done at all, or done only superficially” (Cracknell, 2000, p. 142).

Imperative that evaluators develop cost analysis skills so that they can demonstrate why one program is better than the other (Royce et al., 2001).

Many evaluators practically ignore costs and are not even familiar with the sources that should be tapped to obtain cost information (Rossi et al., 2004).
Cost Analysis Checklist

SECTIONS

1. Types of costs and benefits
2. Other issues that need to be considered in cost analysis
3. Valuing cost and benefits
4. The discount rate
5. Cost analysis methodologies
6. Reporting
Costs Identification Model

Volunteers:
2 Career Counselors
@ 2 hrs/wk
* 12 weeks
Benefits Identification Model

The Benefits Identification Model is a framework used to categorize and prioritize potential benefits. It considers three dimensions:

1. **Benefits When**:
   - Immediate
   - Short Term
   - Medium Term
   - Long Term
   - Anticipatory

2. **Benefits To Whom**:
   - Upstream Impactees
   - Midstream Impactees
   - Downstream Impactees
   - Direct Downstream Impactees
   - Indirect Downstream Impactees

3. **Type of Benefit**:
   - Monetary Quantifiable
   - Nonmonetary Quantifiable
   - Nonmonetary Qualitative

The model is designed to help identify and prioritize benefits that can be achieved in different contexts and timeframes, leveraging various impactees and types of benefits.
Development and Validation

LESSONS LEARNED
Lessons Learned

- Checklist development should address unique attributes of the evaluand
- Sampling frame is critical
- Checklist validation should be grounded in theory, practice, and use
- Mixed method approach provides increased confidence in validation conclusions
- All checklists are a “work-in-process”
Thank You!

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