Developing Recommendations

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Canadian Evaluation society Conference, Halifax, May 2019

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Introduction

- This presentation is about developing effective recommendations

- This is based on our own experience as evaluators and some readings on the topic

- Recommendations are a key element for evaluators who strive to be agents of changes

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Types of recommendations

Type of Issue	Type of Recommendation
Program does not work, program theory not demonstrated	Overhaul of the approach, stop the program
Theory demonstrated, program can be improved:	
Program has problems, issue is known, not sure solution	Needs to be fixed, no solution provided. Not ideal, but better than proposing and un-tried solution with no buy-in.
Program has problems, issue is known with potential solution	This needs to be fixed, suggest a pilot or trial run, experiment
Program has problems, issues is known, with known solution	This needs to be fixed, here is how
Compliance	Process/procedure
Performance measurement	Review of logic model, performance measurement framework, data management

Features of effective recommendations

- **P**riority-driven

- **A**ctionable

- **S**pecific

- **S**upported by evidence or a recognized good practice

- **S**upported by management

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How to develop them?

Evaluators need to identify issues, their causes and ideally, potential solutions

- Solutions (recommendations) should be based on…
    - In-depth understanding of issues
    - known and evidence-based best practices and/or
    - Advice from experts
- The faster you can diagnose issues, the better. Should be identified at the framework stage and reflected in the evaluation issues. If issues are known upfront, evaluation design can reflect this, to:
    - gather <u>evidence</u> to confirm the issues and their importance
    - conduct literature review/scan/research on best practices to identify alternatives and solutions

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Engagement with Programs

- Why? Evaluators are rarely experts or aware of all aspects of a program, including ongoing developments

- Typical approach is to present findings and draft recommendations during a formal presentation

- Good practice: discuss findings and potential recommendations with senior staff during interviews near the end of the fieldwork. Key informant interviews provide a comfortable non-threatening environment to discuss problems and potential solutions.

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Conclusion

- Many (most?) evaluators are not experts in program design and management. We are good at measuring things, not necessarily at fixing them

- Process to develop recommendations should reflect that and involve a process to find the right recommendations and to obtain buy-in

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We forward to your feedback!

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