This is Dr. Chumney with a short introduction to the topic of program evaluation.

CONTENT OUTLINE

➢ Definition of Program Evaluation

➢ Research *vs.* Evaluation
  ❖ "Standards" in Evaluation Research

➢ Formative *vs.* Summative Evaluation

➢ Logic Models

INTRODUCTION TO PROGRAM EVALUATION

TRANSCRIPT:

The purpose of this presentation is to briefly describe what program evaluation is, how it differs from other types of research, the two primary philosophical approaches to evaluation research, and the design and use of logic models.

WHAT IS PROGRAM EVALUATION?

determination of merit, worth, significance of a program

➢ Program Evaluation ≠ Software Evaluation
- ❖ Program
  - *an intervention being delivered/implemented for the purpose of changing some outcome or set of outcomes*
    - o Intervention = organized set of activities to reach specific objectives
- ❖ Software = product/tool ≠ (intervention) program
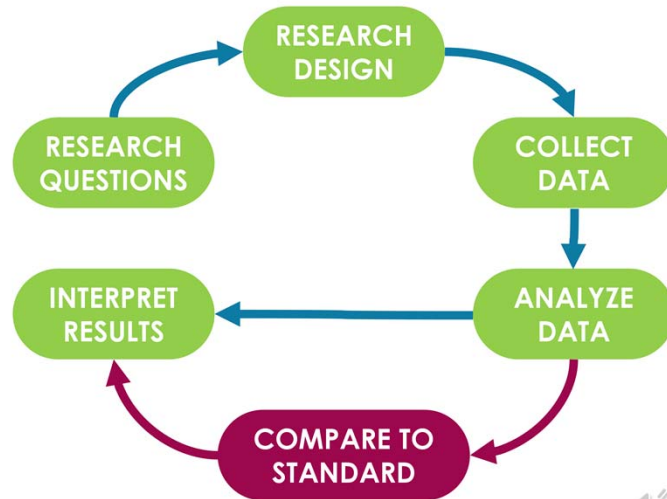
INTRODUCTION TO PROGRAM EVALUATION

TRANSCRIPT:

Evaluation is the process of determining the merit, worth, and/or significance of an evaluand. An evaluand is the subject of an evaluation, and can be a person, a program, or even an entire system. Within the context of program evaluation, the evaluand of interest is a program or intervention program of some sort.

In today's technology-driven society, there is sometimes confusion regarding the term "program." When we talk about program evaluation, a program is some intervention that is being delivered or implemented for the purpose of influencing change on some outcome or set of outcomes. This is different from the evaluation of a software program, as software is a product or tool. Yes, we can evaluation software, but that is not considered to be "program evaluation." It is important to remember that a program is essentially an intervention, that is, an organized set of activities that are implemented in a specific order or manner for the purpose of reaching specific objectives or effecting specific changes.

There is often some confusion in terms of distinguishing how evaluation is different from other types of research. It is true that both research and evaluation work use myriad research methods to answer research questions. It is also true that evaluation is just one specific type of research. The primary difference is how the data and results are used once they are obtained. In general research, we examine the results of data analyses to inform our interpretations of the meanings of the data. In evaluation, we rely on those same findings, but we compare them to a standard of some sort before formulating interpretations.

EVALUATION STANDARDS

➢ A standard is…

a criterion value/set of criteria/values to which results are compared for the purpose of answering an evaluative research question

➢ Logical Process of Setting Standards
  1. Determine which criteria are important
  2. Establish a standard for each criterion
  3. Prioritize criteria (in case some are satisfied & others are not)

Note: *these are not the same as standards for practice (guidelines provided by professional organizations)*

INTRODUCTION TO PROGRAM EVALUATION

TRANSCRIPT:

In evaluation research, a standard can be any criterion or set of criteria/values to which results of the study are compared for the purpose of answering the research question or questions.

A standard really can by any criterion or set of criteria, and so even though there are not strict guidelines about what these standard might be, there is a systematic process that is typically used to establish what the standard or standards will be for any evaluation project. This process of setting standards represents the logic inherent to the method of sound evaluation research. The first step is to determine which criteria are important. That is, what outcomes do you want to measure for the purpose of investigating any change? The second step is to decide what the standard or criterion value for each criterion will be. In the case of educational research, the standard might be 85% of 3rd graders reading at grade level. In an instance of medical research, the standard might be 100% of patients taking medication as prescribed 85% of the time. The third step is to prioritize the criteria to help guide the interpretations of the research findings. Any time we have more than one standard, we have to be prepared to accept that some standards may be met while others are not. In these instances, we want to know which standards are most important to our research question.

It is important to note that the term "standard" is also used to refer to a set of guidelines for high-quality, ethical evaluation practices.

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One of the most common ways to describe an evaluation study is by its philosophical approach. That is, whether an evaluation is formative or summative. A formative evaluation typically looks at just one small piece, a few small pieces, or some short-term goal to determine whether those smaller pieces are functioning as they should. The results of formative evaluations are often used to improve the delivery or implementation of a program.
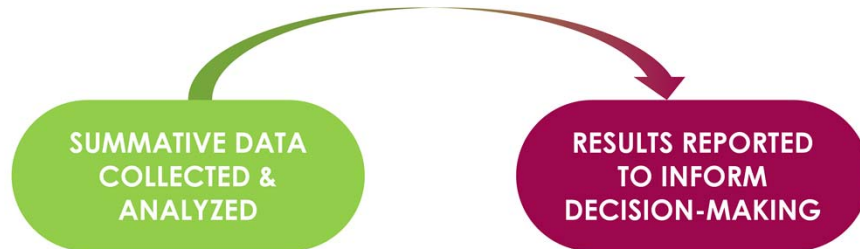
In contrast to formative evaluation research, a summative evaluation generally attempts to evaluate whether a program has satisfied or met its overall, long-term goals. The results of a summative evaluation project typically inform decisions related to taking action, such as continuing or discontinuing a program.
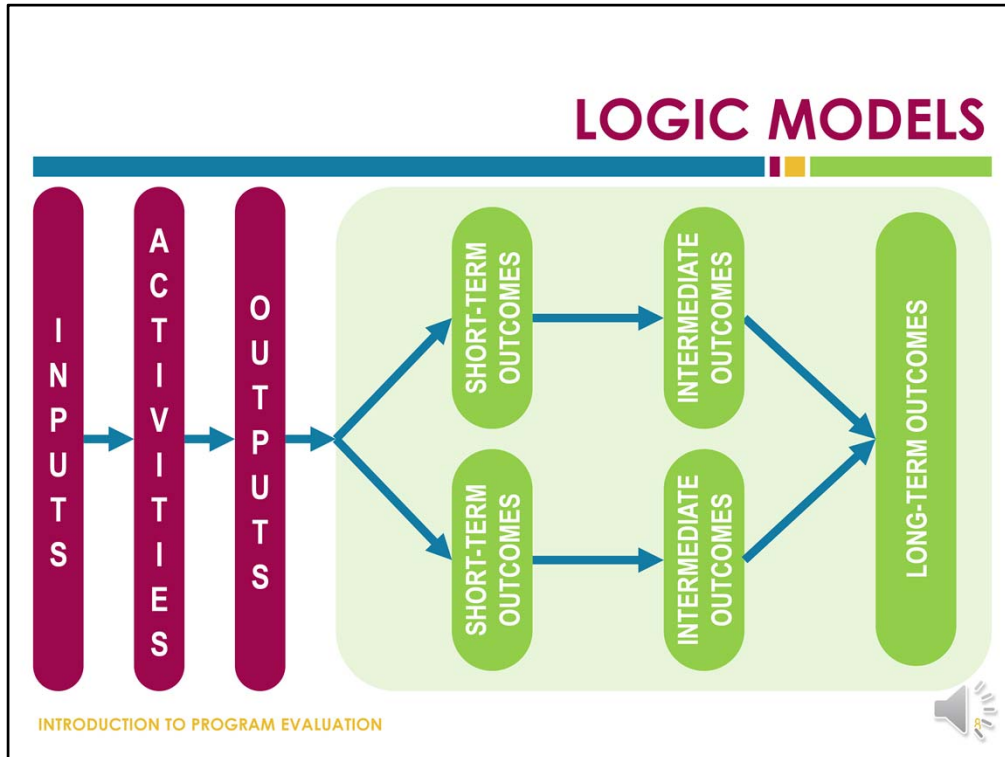
Simply put, a logic model is a concept map that describes important elements of a program and how those elements relate to each other. A typical logic model includes 6 types of elements: inputs, activities, outputs, short-term outcomes, intermediate outcomes, and long-term outcomes.
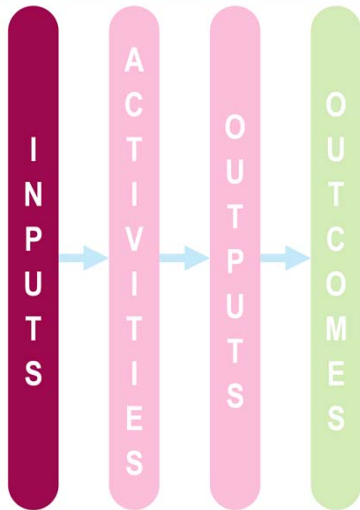
The first element included in a logic model is the inputs. The inputs are the resources that are used to implement the program. These resources that we invest in a program to make it happen include community partners, equipment, manpower, money, technology, and time.
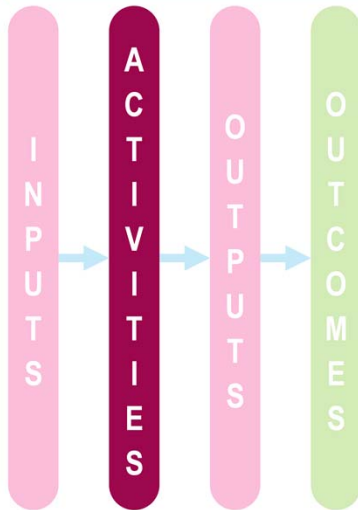
The second element included in a logic model is the activities. The activities are the actual things that we do during the implementation of a program – the conduits through which participants are involved and receive something from the intervention. What constitutes an activity can vary as greatly as the imagination allows. Some common activities include classes, meetings, service delivery, and training workshops.
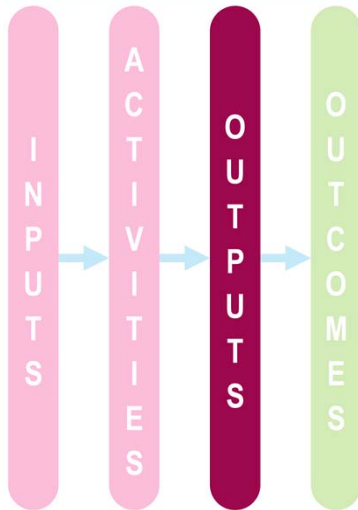
The third element included in a logic model is the outputs. Evaluation outputs are the quantifiable products that result from the activities conducted as part of the implementation of the program. Number of materials distributed and number of participants are two common outputs.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth elements included in a logic model are the short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes.
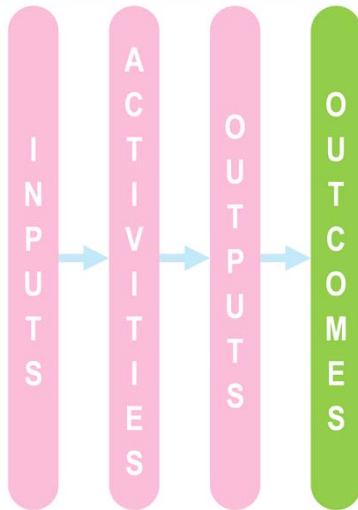
Short-term outcomes are usually classified as those changes that are expected to take place immediately as a results of the intervention or program. These types of changes can often be classified as changes in "learning" and include changes in attitudes, awareness, beliefs, knowledge, motivations, opinions, and skills.
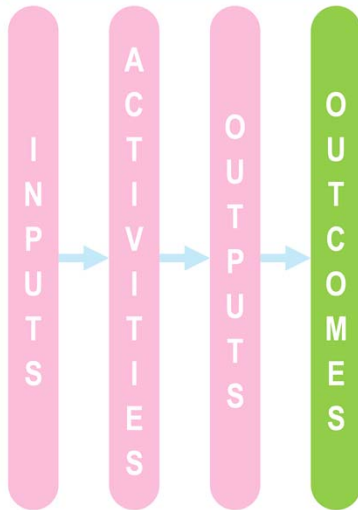
The fifth element – intermediate outcomes –are typically classified as those changes that can often be classified as changes in "actions" and include changes in behavior, policies, and practices.
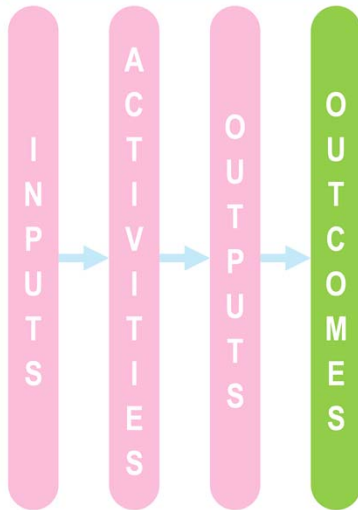
The sixth element – long-term outcomes –are typically classified as those changes that can often be classified as changes in "conditions" and include changes that have a big impact on the economy, environment, and society.