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A Professional Development Unit for Reflecting on Program Evaluator Competencies

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Abstract: This article describes an interactive professional development unit that engages both novice and experienced evaluators in (a) learning about the Essential Competencies for Program Evaluators (ECPE), (b) applying the competencies to program evaluation contexts, and (c) using the ECPE to reflect on their own professional practices. The article briefly summarizes current issues about program evaluator competencies and the components of effective professional development. It then describes the ECPE; the objectives, content, and process of the professional development session; and the ECPE Self-Assessment Instrument. Facilitators can adapt and use the unit in a variety of settings, including university courses and program evaluation conferences.

Keywords: *evaluator competencies; professional development; teaching of evaluation; reflection; self-assessment*

Competencies, referred to as the sine qua non of program evaluator performance (Worthen, 1999), are the essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions that evaluators need to conduct program evaluations effectively. In any field, a widely accepted core set of competencies can have relevance to a variety of practitioners. Institutions of higher learning, for example, can use competencies as external benchmarks for programmatic decision making to ensure that graduates develop the competencies to succeed in their professional endeavors. Interconnections between competencies and practice may provide an array of possible research topics for building knowledge about a field (Stevahn, King, Ghere, & Minnema, 2006). Professional organizations may use competencies as a component of credentialing, licensure, or program accreditation processes. Competencies can also be useful for focusing professional development to meet a wide array of practitioner needs, including individual use as a framework for reflecting on practice and identifying areas for professional development (Stevahn, King, Ghere, & Minnema, 2005).

Program evaluators continue to debate whether the diversity of contexts in which evaluations are conducted as well as the diversity of evaluation approaches preclude agreement on such a set of core program evaluator competencies (Smith, 1999; Worthen, 1999). To date, discussion of program evaluator competencies has frequently highlighted whether it is desirable and feasible for the field of program evaluation to develop evaluator credentialing, certification or licensure processes, or program accreditation processes (Altschuld, 1999; Worthen, 1999). These issues remain current and unresolved (Stevahn et al., 2006).

Despite the stalemate around these issues, new program evaluators continually enter the field. Some enter through university programs designed to graduate individuals with formal program evaluation degrees. Others enter the field "accidentally" because of job requirements, sometimes simply assuming evaluation responsibilities with little to no preparation. Some are aware that there are program evaluation standards and guidelines, but others are not (King, Stevahn, Ghere, & Minnema, 2001). The result is that although evaluators enter the field through many doors, there is often little direction as to how to develop as an evaluation professional once inside.

Over the past several years, we have worked on identifying and clarifying a set of competencies called the Essential Competencies for Program Evaluators (ECPE). The development process included reviewing the evaluation literature, developing a list of competencies, conducting an initial validation study of these competencies (King et al., 2001), and revising the taxonomy to more comprehensively support existing standards in an easily accessible format (Stevahn et al., 2005). The revision process included an extensive crosswalk comparison among the ECPE; *The Program Evaluation Standards*, endorsed by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994); the *Essential Skills Series in Evaluation*, endorsed by the Canadian Evaluation Society (1999); and the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*, endorsed by the American Evaluation Association, Task Force on Guiding Principles for Evaluators (1995).

The final product is a taxonomy of essential program evaluator competencies organized into six primary categories: (a) professional practice: professional norms and values; (b) systematic inquiry: the technical aspects of evaluations; (c) situational analysis: understanding and attending to the contextual and political issues of an evaluation; (d) project management: the nuts and bolts of managing an evaluation; (e) reflective practice: an awareness of one's program evaluation expertise as well as the needs for professional growth; and (f) interpersonal competence:

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Table 1
Major Categories of the Essential Competencies for Program Evaluators

Competency	Description
1.0	<i>Professional practice</i> competencies focus on the professional norms and values that are foundational for evaluation practice, such as standards and ethics.
2.0	<i>Systematic inquiry</i> competencies focus on the technical aspects of evaluations, such as design, measurement, data analysis, interpretation, and sharing results.
3.0	<i>Situational analysis</i> competencies focus on analyzing and attending to the contextual and political issues related to the evaluation, including determining evaluability, addressing conflicts, and attending to issues of evaluation use.
4.0	<i>Project management</i> competencies focus on the nuts and bolts of moving an evaluation from the initial stages through completion, including negotiating contracts, budgeting, identifying and coordinating needed resources, and conducting the evaluation in a timely manner.
5.0	<i>Reflective practice</i> competencies focus on understanding one's practice and level of evaluation expertise, including an awareness of the need for professional growth.
6.0	<i>Interpersonal competence</i> competencies focus on the people skills needed to conduct a program evaluation, such as written and oral communication, negotiation, and cross-cultural skills.

the people skills needed to work with diverse groups of stakeholders to conduct program evaluations. Table 1 briefly summarizes the six major competency categories, including examples, and the ECPE Self-Assessment Instrument presented in the appendix identifies the specific competencies within each of the six categories.

Practicing evaluators engaged in the whirlwind that is evaluation practice may perceive competencies as having little practical value. It is common to hear practitioners say that they are "nice to know" but not applicable in their dynamic and complex work environments. The purpose of this article is to describe a professional development session that engages program evaluators in using the ECPE as a tool for professional reflection. The following are the intended learning outcomes of the session:

1. to increase awareness of the essential skills, knowledge, and dispositions that program evaluators need to provide effective evaluation;
2. to understand how evaluator competencies apply to program evaluation practice;
3. to recognize the relationships between the competencies and evaluation contexts;
4. to self-assess personal program evaluation knowledge, skills, and dispositions; and
5. to initiate an individualized action plan for professional development.

As mentioned earlier, the unit uses the ECPE as a tool for professional reflection. Our intent is not to suggest that the program evaluation field has reached consensus on a single set of competencies. We recognize that this larger question continues to be a work in progress, with a variety of opinions already offered and many left to be heard. Yet we also believe that much can be gained by developing processes whereby evaluators, whether novice or experienced, work with the most current information about evaluator competencies and apply it to their individual practice.

Adult Learning and Effective Professional Development

Learning is foundational for individual, team, and organizational improvement (Argyris, 1977). A commitment to professional learning means reflecting on where one is and where one wants to go. It means being open to examining new ideas, considering their relevance and ramifications, examining new insights and understandings, and using this learning to influence action (York-Barr, Sommers, Ghore, & Montie, 2006). Most professional development for pro-

gram evaluators is focused on building the knowledge and skills needed to implement program evaluations. Less common is professional development that invites evaluators to reflect on their own practice and identify areas in which continued growth would be beneficial.

In effective professional development, the content is taught in ways that facilitate adult learning. Adults enter learning opportunities with various levels of knowledge and experiences. They typically approach new material from a problem-solving perspective, seeking to integrate new information with prior knowledge. Their reactions are shaped by previous learning. Adult learners continually grapple with questions such as How does this new information relate to what I already know? How does it relate to what I want to do? Does it challenge what I believe? and If so, how do I reconcile the differences? If adults choose to engage with new material, they can develop deeper levels of knowledge and understanding about a topic. If they choose not to engage, the learning is likely to be superficial or nonexistent (Even, 1987; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004).

Effective professional development seeks to maximize adult learning by attending to the content of what is taught, the process of how the material is taught, and the context of the development effort (Brandt, 1998). The intent is not simply to transmit information to an audience but to facilitate the learning process so that the participants make sense of what is taught in light of their own professional contexts (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). Professional development that includes meaningful content that is relevant to the audience, incorporates processes that connect previous learning with current issues or interests, and creates an environment that is conducive to learning maximizes the possibility that people will use what is taught beyond the session.

Of the major models of professional development, two are used widely and form the basis for this professional development unit. Training is the most common form (Guskey, 2000; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). Training typically involves a presenter sharing his or her expertise with an audience by presenting material. The assumption underlying training is that what is being taught is worthy of replication and that participants can learn to replicate these behaviors. A training session is designed around a set of learning objectives or outcomes. It is the role of the trainer to select and facilitate activities that support these outcomes. A major challenge is designing trainings so that what is learned extends beyond the session. Active learning strategies, such as working in small groups, are often incorporated to increase the probability that what is learned in a workshop is applied in practice.

A second common professional development model is individually guided professional development. The assumption underlying this model is that "individuals can best judge their own learning needs and are capable of self-direction and self-initiated learning" (Guskey, 2000, p. 27). Individually guided professional development builds on the premise that adults are more motivated to learn when what is being taught directly applies to their areas of interest and that they are capable of determining their own goals and selecting activities to achieve these goals (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989).

As mentioned, to maximize adult learning, effective professional development planners consider the content, process, and context of each session. Attending to these considerations in professional development that is focused on program evaluator competencies is especially important because competencies are identified by deconstructing and decontextualizing what experts in a field do. To be meaningful, the learning process must take the opposite tack and facilitate the reconstruction of the competencies into a meaningful whole by reconnecting how they apply in various contexts. By doing this, competencies shift from being a list of separate items to a resource that has direct relevance in everyday practice. For more information regarding the principles of adult learning and effective professional development, the Web site of the National Staff Development Council (<http://www.nsd.org>) provides an array of useful resources.

Table 2
Overview: Reflecting on Your Evaluation Practice

Section	Purpose	Format	Materials
Welcome (10 minutes)	To welcome the participants, introduce the facilitator, and introduce the session	Variable	Session agenda
Competencies overview (10 minutes)	To introduce the ECPE	Whole-group presentation	Major categories of ECPE (Table 1); ECPE Self-Assessment Instrument (appendix)
Case study analysis (40 minutes)	To develop a common base of knowledge that all participants can refer to by analyzing an evaluation case study using the competencies	Mixed small groups with whole-group feedback	Program evaluation case study; ECPE Self-Assessment Instrument (appendix)
Concept mapping (30 minutes)	To create a concept map that illustrates the priorities and interrelations of the competencies in different evaluation contexts	Alike small groups with whole-group feedback	Examples of concept maps (Figure 1); One set of concept mapping materials per small group, including a set of concept map strips, a large sheet of paper, and a glue stick or tape
Self-assessment (20 minutes)	To reflect on one's evaluation practice using the ECPE Self-Assessment Instrument and to create a professional development action plan	Individual reflection	Review of professional development process (Figure 2); ECPE Self-Assessment Instrument (appendix)
Closing (10 minutes)	To summarize what was learned during the session	Whole group	None

Note: ECPE = Essential Competencies for Program Evaluators.

Professional Development Unit

Reflecting on Your Evaluation Practice is a professional development unit that involves program evaluators in reflecting on how a set of program evaluator competencies applies to their own practice. The 2-hour unit has six sections: (a) welcome, (b) competencies overview, (c) application of the competencies to a case study, (d) concept mapping the competencies, (e) self-assessment and professional development planning, and (f) closing. Table 2 summarizes the purpose, instructional format, estimated time, and instructional materials of each section. Each section is next described in greater detail.

Welcome (10 Minutes)

The session is designed to involve individuals in meaningful conversation and exploration of how the competencies apply to the field of program evaluation, as well as to individual program evaluators. The design assumes that participants will benefit from applying the competencies to their own practice as well as from the experiences, insights, and questions of others. Key to achieving this outcome is the facilitator developing an atmosphere in which participants feel safe to engage in conversation and learn from one another.

The facilitator should open the session by welcoming everyone. Starting with an icebreaker activity enables participants to learn more about one another and experience the participatory nature of the session. There are two critical factors to consider when deciding on how to open the session: (a) the number of people in the audience and (b) how well the participants know one another. If there are fewer than 10 participants who work together as a team, consider a strategy

such as asking each person to give a 30-second “snapshot” response on a similar topic, such as a recent successful evaluation experience. If you have a group with 10 to 15 members, consider asking the participants to briefly share their names, work locations, and whether they would classify their professional roles as typically internal or external evaluators. If you have a larger group, consider an activity such as “like me,” in which the facilitator asks members of the audience to stand up if the phrase that is called out describes them. For example, the facilitator asks, “Who conducts program evaluations in education? In public health? In the nonprofit sector? Who views himself or herself as an internal evaluator or an external evaluator?” As each item is listed, people stand up if they feel that the item describes them. Very quickly, both the facilitator and participants have a sense of who is in the audience.

No matter how you choose to do introductions, model “brief responses” to prevent the welcome from getting bogged down in lengthy speeches. The facilitator should make mental notes of the composition of the audience, because this information will help in reorganizing the large group into smaller groups for the concept-mapping activity.

Competencies Overview (10 Minutes)

The facilitator states that the session’s purpose is for individuals to self-assess their knowledge, skills, and dispositions relative to their evaluation practice. The purposes of this section are to briefly summarize current issues in the field about competencies and to define the ECPE categories. The session is not meant to stimulate a lengthy discussion of the pros and cons of identifying program evaluator competencies. The background information simply provides a broader context for the session. Information shared in the introduction provides some background on the topic as well as references for a more in-depth understanding should a facilitator be interested in exploring the topic.

The facilitator then introduces the ECPE taxonomy. Using Table 1 as a visual aid, each of the six competency categories is described, along with examples of the types of items included in the categories. For example, the facilitator explains that the professional practice category focuses on the norms and values of program evaluation, including the application of the professional standards that are foundational for program evaluation and ethical behavior. After each of the six categories is introduced, the participants are referred to the ECPE Self-Assessment Instrument to scan the competencies within each category (see the appendix). It is not important at this point that participants develop detailed knowledge of each category, because their familiarity with the competencies will increase as they work with the instrument throughout the session.

Case Study Analysis (40 Minutes)

Relating the competencies to a case study has two purposes. First, it connects the competencies to an actual evaluation context, thereby illustrating how the competencies apply to the responsibilities and challenges in evaluation studies. Second, it provides a means for participants from diverse work environments with varying levels of experience to build a common knowledge base for talking about the competencies.

Although the entire group should read the same case study, there is no one case that must be used. Depending on the participants’ backgrounds and experiences, different case studies might be more relevant and invoke greater conversation than others. For example, a case study that illustrates complex political dynamics within an organization could be particularly useful for emphasizing the competencies of professional practice, situational analysis, and interpersonal

competence, whereas a case that includes multicultural stakeholders and concerns could focus on applying the competencies to achieve culturally competent evaluations.

When choosing case studies, facilitators should first determine the needs of their audiences. If an audience is a homogeneous group composed of evaluators who work in similar contexts and have similar roles, then using a case that mirrors the type of issues they routinely confront would be beneficial. If the participants are graduate or undergraduate students with varying levels of experience in evaluation, a case in which an evaluator must demonstrate an array of skills is appropriate. When working with students, it is good to choose cases in which situational analysis and interpersonal competence are key competencies for the evaluator, because novice evaluators are often aware of the need for evaluator competence in systematic inquiry and project management but underestimate the effect of doing situational analyses and having the interpersonal skills to work through the issues with a variety of stakeholders.

Second, it is important to identify in advance the key learning that participants should generate (Sherwood, 2005). What information should participants learn from the case study? What evaluator competencies are most evident in the case study? Clarifying this in advance ensures that the facilitator elicits them during the discussion. Third, we recommend identifying a case that is one to two pages in length, so that it can be analyzed and discussed in a limited amount of time.

Case studies can be accessed fairly easily through textbooks, journal articles, or actual evaluations in which identifying information has been masked (if appropriate). A facilitator should be prepared to augment a case if it does not include all of the key learning features that need to be emphasized. *The Program Evaluation Standards* (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994) offer numerous vignettes that are wonderfully applicable. In our professional development sessions, we frequently use "F2 Political Viability Illustrative Case 2—Description" (pp. 73-75). This case describes an internal evaluation team charged with evaluating 14 remedial and job training programs for disadvantaged youth. The case describes complex issues in which the evaluation team must analyze a situation in a highly charged political environment in a very brief period, clarify the purpose of the evaluation, use an array of interpersonal skills to maneuver through the stakeholders' concerns, manage the evaluation, and report to different audiences. The case is rich for discussing the professional practice, situational analysis, and interpersonal competence competencies. However, because little information relates to the project management or reflective practice competencies, we augment the case with an additional paragraph on the evaluation methods (e.g., the use of a mixed-methods design), project management (e.g., weekly team meetings in which the team coordinates the logistics of the evaluation), and accessing resources to complete the evaluation (e.g., the use of external experts to identify background resources and standardized instruments). Reflective practice, although not explicit in the case, is discussed as a competency that underlies professional practice in general.

To analyze a case, participants are asked to divide into groups of three to four people, individually read the case study, and then discuss the following questions:

1. What are the key issues the evaluator (or evaluation team, if applicable) confronted?
2. To what extent did the evaluator(s) resolve them effectively?
3. To what extent did the evaluator(s) apply the ECPE?
4. In what ways might knowledge about the ECPE have facilitated the evaluator's or evaluation team's work?

The small groups should discuss the case in detail for approximately 20 to 25 minutes. Afterward, the facilitator brings the participants back together for a 15- to 20-minute whole-group discussion of the same questions. The facilitator begins by asking the groups to share

their ideas on what are the key issues the evaluator(s) confronted and to what extent the evaluator(s) resolved them effectively. Prior to the session, the facilitator has completed the same analysis and is prepared to augment the discussion to ensure that all of the key findings are addressed. The facilitator then asks, "What competencies did the evaluator(s) need to have completed an effective evaluation?" This question bridges the case study analysis to the focus of the session.

Concept Mapping the Competencies (30 Minutes)

Concept maps focus on how the main components of a topic relate to each other (Posner & Rudnitsky, 1997). The purpose of the activity is for participants to process the relationships among the competencies given their work contexts and evaluator roles. In our work with competencies, we have hypothesized that although it is feasible and beneficial for the field to identify a set of essential evaluator competencies, the relative importance of these competencies varies depending on the context in which an evaluator works and the roles he or she plays. For example, an evaluator who works to develop evaluation capacity in a neighborhood organization might value interpersonal competence and situational analysis more than an evaluator who evaluates state or national policy initiatives. Or an internal evaluator in a large nonprofit organization might rely on certain competencies to a greater extent than an external evaluator who works with many organizations.

Figure 1 provides examples of two concept maps developed during a professional development session. Map A was constructed by a group of internal evaluators who worked in educational settings. On the basis of their experiences, they felt that the competencies of professional practice, interpersonal competence, and situational analysis were central to conducting effective evaluations in schools. With these competencies as a core, they then applied the competencies of systematic inquiry, project management, and reflective practice. Map B was developed by a group of external evaluators who primarily worked in the social services arena. These evaluators felt that systematic inquiry was the core of their practice and was supported by professional practice and reflective practice. With these as a foundation, they used their skills in situational analysis, interpersonal competence, and project management to carry out evaluations. Clearly, there is not one "correct" answer for how the concept maps should be constructed. Each group will create a map that participants feel best captures the priorities and relationships among the competencies.¹

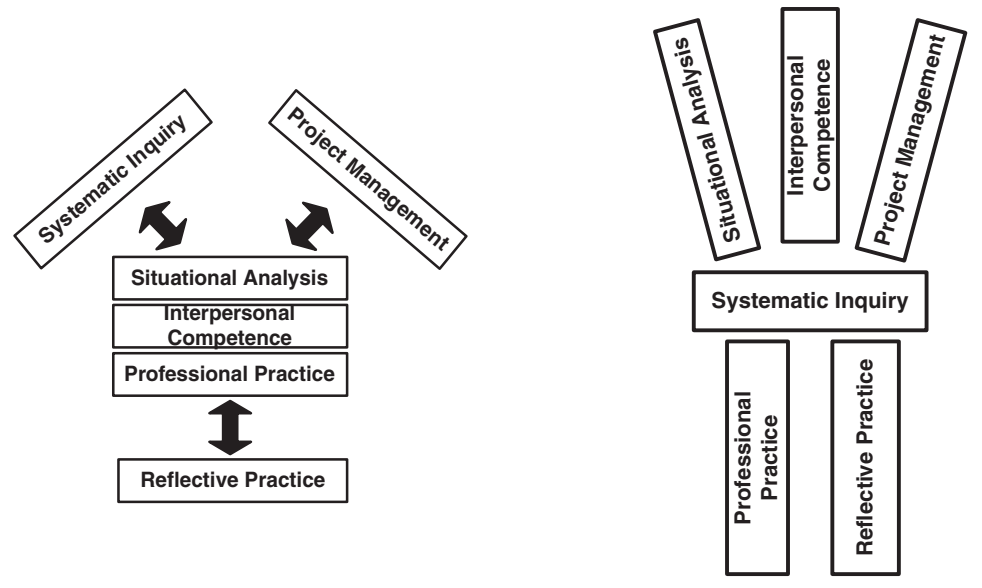
This section requires advance material preparation by the facilitator. On the basis of projected attendance, the number of small groups that will participate can be estimated. Each group will need an identical set of work materials that includes a large sheet of paper, six multicolored strips of paper (1 inch by 6 inches) with one competency category printed on each strip, and a glue stick or tape. Each team is given a set of materials and works together for approximately 15 minutes to discuss and then map how the evaluation competencies relate to their evaluation practice.

For this activity, participants need to regroup and divide into homogeneous groups of 3 to 5 people. The facilitator determines whether the groups should regroup according to the evaluators' work contexts (e.g., nonprofits, schools, government agencies) or evaluator roles (e.g., internal or external evaluators). The information shared during the welcome section helps in determining what is the best regrouping strategy to use. For example, in a large session of 50 participants from a variety of work contexts, we chose to have the groups form on the basis of their work contexts. By contrast, in a graduate course composed of 12 experienced educators, we chose to have participants regroup on the basis of whether they worked in elementary, mid-

Figure 1
Concept Mapping Using the Essential Competencies For Program Evaluators

A. Internal evaluators in education

B. External evaluators in social services



dle, or high schools. In most instances, individuals join groups that most closely align with their current practice. However, we also have had instances in which evaluators chose to join groups to explore different evaluation contexts.

Once the participants have regrouped, the facilitator states that although competencies appear linear on paper, evaluators may see different priorities and relationships among the competencies depending on the evaluation context and the role of the evaluator. Referring to Figure 1, the facilitator illustrates this idea by describing how two groups of evaluators reconceptualized the relationships among the competencies given their specific practices. After sharing the examples, each group receives one set of work materials to construct its map. The participants are asked to discuss within their small groups the relationships and priorities among the competency categories given their work situations. When completed, all of the concept maps are posted on a wall for the whole group to view. A spokesperson from each group describes its concept map and the rationale for the placement of the competencies. When completed, the facilitator briefly summarizes what was shared, such as similarities and unique features that are evident across the maps.

There are three situations when we opt to eliminate the concept-mapping activity from the workshops we facilitate. First, when there is insufficient time to complete the whole 2-hour unit, removing the actual mapping activity means that the workshop can be completed in approximately 1.5 hours. Second, we may eliminate the activity when there are fewer than six participants in the session with very heterogeneous backgrounds, because it is difficult to regroup them into meaningful small groups to develop concept maps. However, this is when knowing the audience is crucial, because the facilitator might choose to have them group by

roles (e.g., internal and external evaluators). Third, we often choose not to facilitate this section in college courses in which most of the students have had little direct experience with program evaluation. In all of these cases, we cover the section's concepts by showing the concept map illustrations and describing the maps that different groups have developed.

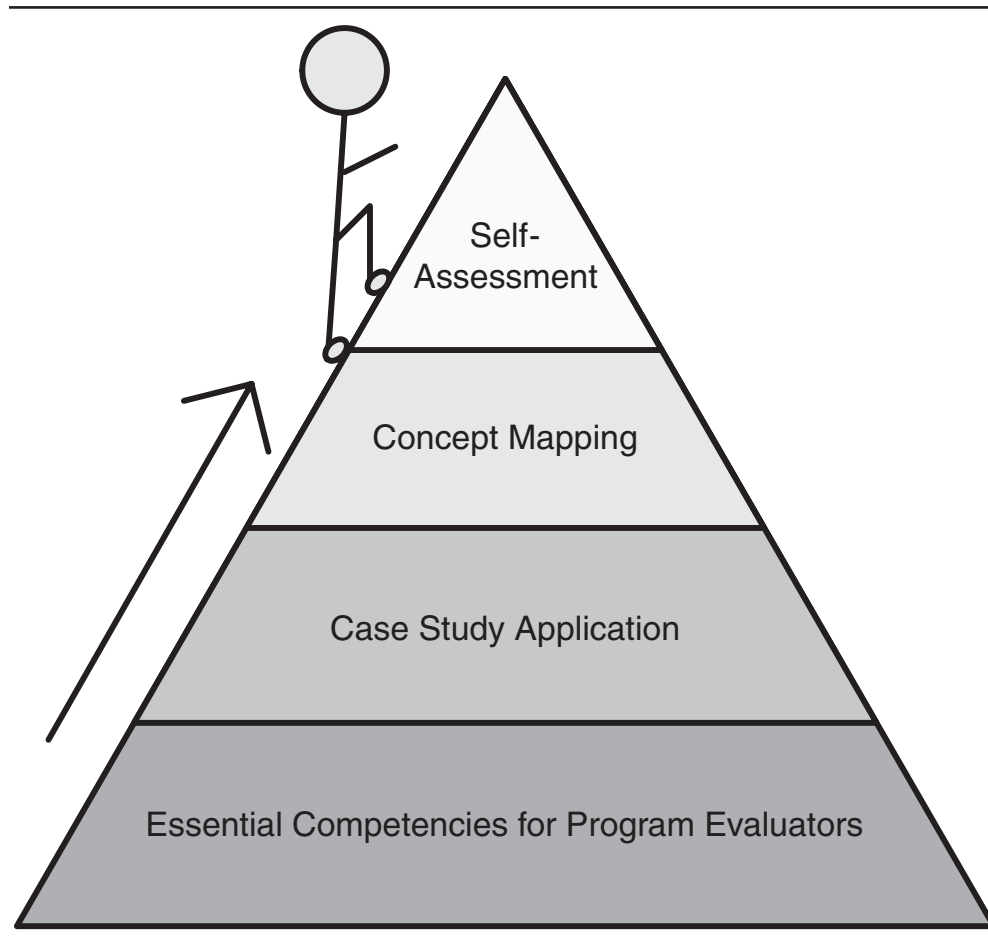
Self-Assessment (25 Minutes)

Self-assessment provides an opportunity for participants to individually reflect on their evaluation knowledge, skills, and dispositions using the ECPE Self-Assessment Instrument (see the appendix). Prior to beginning the self-assessment, the facilitator reviews what has been accomplished during the session and its relation to the self-assessment. The metaphor of "climbing a mountain" has been useful for helping groups visualize the interconnections among the activities in the professional development session (see Figure 2). At the base of the mountain, the participants learned about the program evaluator competencies that are applicable to all contexts. They are foundational no matter the program evaluation context. Slightly farther up the mountain, the competencies were applied to a case study. This section connected the competencies to evaluation practice providing a common knowledge base for reflection. Farther up the mountain, the participants explored how diverse work contexts or roles affect the interconnections among the competencies through a concept mapping activity. Finally, having reached the peak of the mountain, they will consider the individual competencies in light of their own evaluation practices and develop professional development action plans on the basis of their needs.

The facilitator refers the participants to the ECPE Self-Assessment Instrument and explains the rubric at the top of the page. The participants should individually rate themselves on each competency using the 7-point scale that begins with the entry/novice level, proceeds through the proficient/skilled level, and extends to the mastery/expert level. The self-assessment process ends with two questions designed to transfer what has been learned into a professional development action plan: What conclusions do you draw from your self-assessment? and What actions might you take based on your self-assessment? Although most participants complete the self-assessment using their current work as a frame of reference, it is possible for participants to consider the competencies in light of an area of program evaluation into which they would like to expand. For example, evaluators working in the public schools may be looking to contract with nonprofit organizations. Given the different contexts, they might rate their levels of expertise for some competencies differently.

Self-assessment is a personal process. Participants should not be asked to share how they rated themselves. The facilitator should instead debrief with the whole group using the "Learned? Affirmed? Challenged?" strategy. Participants should turn to colleagues and share something that they learned though the process, something that was affirmed, and something that challenged their thinking. After approximately 5 to 7 minutes, ask if anyone would like to share an insight with the entire group. Depending on the audience, different insights are shared. Novice evaluators have shared how they are somewhat overwhelmed with what is needed to conduct effective evaluations but how they now have a sense of what their professional strengths and needs are in achieving this goal. Experienced evaluators and participants with program experience, but not program evaluation experience, have shared how the instrument has helped them focus their next steps in meeting their professional development needs. "Accidental evaluators" who were assigned evaluation duties as part of their jobs but had no program evaluation training have shared how they feel that many of their skills in situational analysis, interpersonal competence, and project management transfer to program evaluation and their need to concentrate on systematic inquiry skills.

Figure 2
Review of the Professional Development Unit



Closing (5 to 10 Minutes)

The facilitator should close the session by recognizing that this was just a beginning for reflecting on how the competencies relate to participants' evaluation practice and professional development plans. The session and the ECPE Self-Assessment Instrument are designed to provide direction for future individually guided professional development. Offering suggestions for ways that the participants might meet their professional development needs, such as individual study, university courses, conferences, or discussions with colleagues around a common topic of interest, helps people broaden their planning options. Finally, the facilitator should thank everyone for participating both in their own learning and in the learning of others.

Conclusion

To date, we have offered all or parts of this professional development unit numerous times in professional development sessions, graduate-level seminars, and as a closing activity in intro-

ductory program evaluation courses. Participants have varied from students who are newly entering the field to those with extensive experience and who work in a variety of areas, such as education, human services, public health, and business. We have held the session with as few as 6 and as many as 60 participants. We have gathered participants' perceptions and satisfaction findings at the end of the professional development sessions, and for university courses, we have informal anecdotal student feedback. To date, however, we have not formally followed up to determine to what extent what people learned during the session was used afterward. What we do know is that feedback from these sessions has been positive, with a large majority of participants finding the topic relevant; the format engaging, with the use of a case study, small groups, and hands-on activities; and the information useful for reflecting on their own practices. Participants have shared how the concept-mapping activity provided a means for grappling with how the competencies applied to their areas of evaluation while learning from the rationales of how others mapped their competencies. They have also shared how the process was useful for clarifying which areas of professional development that they want to pursue in more depth.

In addition to using the ECPE as a framework for professional self-assessment, participants have described their interest in using the competencies to stimulate team reflection about a department's evaluation practices, to use as a guide for developing interview questions for employing or contracting with program evaluators, and as a tool for reviewing the alignment between the competencies and university program evaluation curricula. We used the participant feedback, as well as our evaluations of the effectiveness of the sessions, to fine-tune the instructional process, for example, clearly articulating each activity and developing PowerPoint slides of the content, graphics, and reflection questions for each section. In addition, the self-assessment instrument has gone through several modifications as our research efforts to identify program evaluator competencies have proceeded.

Our work has affirmed our belief that a well-designed, professional development process is a critical component in making the program evaluator competencies more meaningful to individual practice. The process provides a means for program evaluators to systematically assess the knowledge and skills that they bring to the evaluation profession and gives direction for how to address gaps they identify.

Appendix

Essential Competencies for Program Evaluators

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Entry / Novice	Proficient / Skilled			Mastery / Expert		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing awareness / building knowledge • Limited repertoire • Limited experience • Unaware of potential problems • Unaware of questions to ask 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying knowledge routinely • Basic repertoire • Moderate amount of experience • Solves problems as they arise • Aware of questions to ask and able to access resources to answer the questions 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using knowledge fluently and effectively • Advanced repertoire • Extensive experience • Anticipates problems before they arise • Poses questions to the field • Sought out for input 		

I.0 Professional Practice								
1.1.	Applies professional evaluation standards	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.2	Acts ethically and strives for integrity and honesty in conducting evaluations	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.3	Conveys personal evaluation approaches and skills to potential clients	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.4	Respects clients, respondents, program participants, and other stakeholders	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.5	Considers the general and public welfare in evaluation practice	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.6	Contributes to the knowledge base of evaluation	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

2.0 Systematic Inquiry								
2.1	Understands the knowledge base of evaluation (terms, concepts, theories, assumptions)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.2	Knowledgeable about quantitative methods	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.3	Knowledgeable about qualitative methods	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.4	Knowledgeable about mixed methods	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.5	Conducts literature reviews	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.6	Specifies program theory	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.7	Frames evaluation questions	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.8	Develops evaluation design	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.9	Identifies data sources	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

2.10 Collects data	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.11 Assesses validity of data	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.12 Assesses reliability of data	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.13 Analyzes data	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.14 Interprets data	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.15 Makes judgments	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.16 Develops recommendations	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.17 Provides rationales for decisions throughout the evaluation	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.18 Reports evaluation procedures and results	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.19 Notes strengths and limitations of the evaluation	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.20 Conducts meta-evaluations	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

3.0. Situational Analysis

3.1 Describes the program	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.2 Determines program evaluability	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.3 Identifies the interests of relevant stakeholders	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.4 Serves the information needs of intended users	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.5 Addresses conflicts	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.6 Examines the organizational context of the evaluation	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.7 Analyzes the political considerations relevant to the evaluation	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.8 Attends to issues of evaluation use	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.9 Attends to issues of organizational change	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.10 Respects the uniqueness of the evaluation site and client	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.11 Remains open to input from others	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.12 Modifies the study as needed	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

4.0 Project Management

4.1 Responds to requests for proposals	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.2 Negotiates with clients before the evaluation begins	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.3 Writes formal agreements	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.4 Communicates with clients throughout the evaluation process	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

4.5 Budgets an evaluation	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.6 Justifies cost given information needs	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.7 Identifies needed resources for evaluation, such as information, expertise, personnel, instruments	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.8 Uses appropriate technology	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.9 Supervises others involved in conducting the evaluation	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.10 Trains others involved in conducting the evaluation	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.11 Conducts the evaluation in a nondisruptive manner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.12 Presents work in a timely manner	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

5.0 Reflective Practice							
5.1 Aware of self as an evaluator (knowledge, skills, dispositions)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.2 Reflects on personal evaluation practice (competencies and areas for growth)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.3 Pursues professional development in evaluation	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.4 Pursues professional development in relevant content areas	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.5 Builds professional relationships to enhance evaluation practice	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

6.0. Interpersonal Competence							
6.1 Uses written communication skills	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.2 Uses verbal/listening communication skills	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.3 Uses negotiation skills	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.4 Uses conflict resolution skills	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.5 Facilitates constructive interpersonal interaction (teamwork, group facilitation, processing)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.6 Demonstrates cross-cultural competence	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

√ What conclusions do you draw from your self-assessment?

√ What actions might you take based on your self-assessment?

Note

1. A future step in our work is to systematically analyze participants' concept maps to see what patterns, if any, are evident across practice contexts and roles. Preliminary observations suggest that there are some differences across evaluator roles as well as some work contexts.

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