

# Evaluating Complex Initiatives

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# Agenda

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- Introductions
- Intro to complex evaluations
- Complex evaluation challenges
- Designing a complex evaluation
  - Understanding the program
  - Determining the purpose of the evaluation
  - Data collection
  - Data analysis
  - Stakeholder engagement and reporting
  - Project management
- Wrap-up

# Presenters

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- Martha McGuire, Cathexis Consulting
- Rochelle Zorzi, Cathexis Consulting
- Kate Powadiuk, Cathexis Consulting

# Introductions

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- Name, affiliation
- My expectations will be met if . . .

**“We have seen the emergence of a class of problems whose causes are so complex, and whose solutions are so multi-factorial, that they require a multi-agency response.”**

*Thomas Ling, 2002*



# Intro to Complex Evaluations

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- Overview:
  - Background on the HRSDC Horizontal Project
  - Factors Contributing to Complexity
  - Terminology
  - TBS Guidelines for HRMAF
  - New TBS Evaluation Policy

# Background to HRSDC Project

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- History
- Purpose
- What Has Happened Since

# Factors Contributing to Complexity

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- Multiple partners
  - Horizontal across a government
  - Vertical between federal/provincial/municipals jurisdictions
  - Including different disciplines
- Multiple components
  - Broad initiative with many organizations responsible for implementation
- Policies, regulations and legislation with broad goals
  - Not easily measured
- Political sensitivities
  - New government
- Time Span
  - May take years to see results e.g. Population Health



# Terminology

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- Complex
  - Horizontal
  - Joined Up
  - Rolled Up
  - Whole of Government
  - Cluster
- Addresses common complex issues involving more than one jurisdiction, sector or discipline;
  - Requires the involvement of more than one organization and/or level of government;
  - Shares common goals in relation to the issues;
  - Involves shared authority and responsibility among the partners; and
  - Includes mechanisms for shared governance and integration.

# TBS Guidelines

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- Development of the team
- Five main components of an RMAF
- General guidance
  - Get Senior Management Support
  - Assess the Relative Value of the Initiative
  - Remain Flexible
  - Set Realistic Timelines
  - Communicate/Build Consensus
  - Involve Stakeholders
  - Engage in Continuous Learning
  - Access Other Sources of Information

# What are some of the challenges?

- Go to page 7 of workbook.

# Designing a Complex Evaluation

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- Understanding the program/initiative
- Nested logic models & theories of change
- Common performance measures
- Evaluation questions
- Data collection plans
- Analysis plans
- Stakeholder engagement & reporting plans
- Project management plans

# Understanding the Program

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- All of the components and systems
- Specific goals and objectives for each partner
- Common goals and objectives
- Roles and responsibilities of each partner
- Governance structure

# Nested Logic Models

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- Overall logic model
- Logic model for each component
- Show linkages towards common outcomes

# Theory of Change Models

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- Articulates the underlying assumptions of the logic model
- Should show the dynamics among the partners

# Group Exercise

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- Use case study in Appendix E
- Refer to pages 9 & 55
- Create a nested logic model
  - Overall initiative
  - Canadian Regulatory System for Biotechnology
- Would a theory of change model contribute to a better understanding?

# Performance Measurement Strategy

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- Keep performance indicators as simple as possible – with so many players the list can grow and become unmanageable
  - Provide information about the resources required to get information on each of the indicators
  - Facilitate a session to establish priorities, having people focus on need to know vs. nice to know
- Use a group process to identify indicators for outputs and outcomes based on the logic model – but set priorities
- These can be used to develop a common data collection system

# Potential Evaluation Questions

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- To what extent does the complexity of the initiative effect the overall relevance, success, efficiency and cost-effectiveness?
- To what extent does the complexity of the initiative contribute to achieving more integrated and collaborative policies/programs?
- To what extent do the relationships among the partners contribute to achieving expected outcomes?
- How does the initiative compare to programs delivered by a single department?
- What are the characteristics and conditions that generally contribute to the success of the initiative, looking at the dynamics among the partners?

# Data Collection

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- Common reporting forms
- Data collection by staff at multiple sites

# Common Reporting Forms

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- Keep it short and simple
- Consider ways of minimizing error
- Do a feasibility assessment
- Develop tools & a data dictionary
- Do a test run (or two) to identify issues
- Electronic or paper forms?

# Data Collection by Site Staff

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- Allocate staff time for data collection
- Training is key:
  - Schedule of activities
  - Data definitions
  - Purpose of the data
  - Who to call for help
- Send reminders
- Be diligent about quality control

# Group Exercise

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- Use the case study in Appendix E
- Refer to p. 18 of the workbook
- Develop a mechanism for gathering data across multiple partners for a single performance measure

# Data Analysis

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- Combining databases
- Unit of analysis
- Analytical matrices

# Combining Databases: Same Fields, Different Sites

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- Technical issues:
  - Databases need to be converted to a common format
  - Ensure field definitions are the same in all
  - Restrict to relevant fields
  - Keep a record of where each case came from
  - Keep a log of decisions made along the way

# Combining Databases: Same Sites, Different Fields

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- Ethical issues:
  - Potential to compromise anonymity
  - Informed consent

# Unit of Analysis

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- What is the appropriate unit of analysis?  
Individual / Group / Program / Initiative
- Considerations:
  - At what level were the data collected?
  - What conclusions do you want to draw?
  - Are participants' experiences comparable across sites/programs?
- Consider multiple levels of analysis & reporting

# Analytical Matrices

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- A tool to provide an overview of patterns across, for example, participants, sites, topics, or data sources
- Shows a summary of the data in a table so you can examine:
  - Variables of interest
  - Data sources or methods of data collection
  - Periods of time
  - Individuals or groups

# Example Evidence Matrix

	Implementation				Outcomes		
Site	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3		Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3
A – Unit 1	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
A – Unit 2	✗	✓	✓		✗	✓	✓
B	✓	✓	✓		✗	✓	✓
C	✗	✗	✓		✗	✗	✓
D	✓	✓	✗		✓	✓	✗
E	✗	✗	✗		✗	✗	✗

# Group Exercise

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- Use case study in Appendix E
- Refer to page 20
- Explore units of analysis and variables

# Stakeholder Engagement & Reporting

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- Engagement strategy
- Reporting to different audiences

# Engagement Strategy

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- Key questions:
  - Who needs to be engaged?
  - What sort of engagement?
  - At what point(s) in the evaluation?
  - Through what methods?
  - How long will it take?
- An engagement matrix can help you plan

# Engagement Matrix

Stakeholder	Planning	Data Collection	Interim Reports	Analysis	Final Report	Utilization
Site contact person	C	F,S	I	C	I	L
...						

A = Approve (approves plans, reports, etc.)

C = Consult (solicit and consider their input)

D = Decide (makes decisions)

F = Facilitate (supports the evaluation, enables evaluation tasks to happen)

I = Inform (let them know what is happening, what the results were)

L = Lead (takes a leadership role, champions the evaluation)

S = Source (source of information/data)

W = Worker (carries out the tasks)



# Reporting to Different Audiences

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- Site specific reports and aggregate reports
- Tailored reports for specific audiences vs. a more diverse report for all audiences

# Managing a Complex Evaluation

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- Project notebook
- Team communication

# Project Notebook

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- May include:
  - Brief project description
  - Roles & responsibilities
  - Project log (issues, decisions)
  - Evolving work plan with time lines
  - Protocols & tools for data collection/analysis
- Updated regularly
- Accessible to all team members

# Team Communication

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- Clear roles & responsibilities
- Documentation of issues & decisions
- Team updates
- Progress meetings / progress reports

# Pulling It All Together

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- Addressing the Challenges
- Simplifying the Complex
  - Planning
  - Data collection
  - Analysis
- Communication
- Project Management

# Wrap-Up

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- Any remaining Q&A
- Were your expectations met?
  - 1 = not at all
  - 10 = completely
- Evaluation forms