Evaluator Self-Assessment

INTRODUCTION

Program evaluation is fundamentally an inquiry process. This self-assessment encourages evaluators to systematically reflect on – to inquire about – their own capacity to conduct high-quality program evaluations. It is important to remember:

- While not exhaustive, the assessment is an extensive list of evaluation activities. It is unlikely that an evaluator will be an expert on every item in this assessment.
- Because the program evaluation field is broad and rapidly advancing, an assessment of "expert" at one point in time does not indicate an end point – **as evaluators we should be continually learning and integrating what we learn into our professional activities**.
- As such, this self-assessment should be **viewed as a tool to support professional development** rather than as a basis for personnel actions such as hiring and promotions.

CDC Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Framework for program evaluation in public health. MMWR 1999;48(No. RR-11):1-40.

The CDC Framework for Evaluation in Public Health provides the general structure for this assessment.
- **Section 1:** The **Foundations** section includes The Program Evaluation Standards, which are at the center of the framework, as well as other fundamental elements of good evaluation practice.
- **Section 2:** The **Skills** section follows the steps of the framework, with an additional section for evaluation management tasks.
- Though it is organized around the Framework, the self-assessment includes tasks that represent all the competencies included in the American Evaluation Association's evaluator competencies.

USING THE EVALUATOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

The self-assessment can be completed in about 20 minutes, though you may wish to take more time to review your evaluation skills and needs in greater detail.

In the **Foundations** section, rate your **knowledge** of the field's fundamental documents and practices.

In the **Skills** section, rate your **competence** in each activity as well as its **importance** to your professional goals. You may want to think about this in terms of your current position *or* your long-term career goals, making sure to note which you choose. A few things to keep in mind in selecting your ratings:

- Think back to specific instances when you used a particular skill, whether successfully or not. How did that experience influence your rating? Reflect as you rate and highlight important observations that may inform your professional development activities.
- The list of skills is extensive (but not exhaustive), and you may not need some of these skills in your current position or at all during your career. Similarly, not every evaluation will demand all these skills of an evaluator or evaluation team.
- The number of items in each step is not indicative of that step's importance.
- You may wish to review The American Evaluation Association's **Guiding Principles for Evaluators** as background for your reflection. The **five principles** are
    - systematic inquiry,
    - competence,
    - integrity
    - respect for people, and
    - common good and equity.

At the **end of the document** you will use the assessment results to identify your most pressing **professional development needs** and also the **strengths you want to develop further**. Done regularly (e.g., annually), this assessment can guide your growth as an evaluator.

Note: **This self-assessment is** *not* **an appropriate "checklist" for judging employee performance. It is a tool to support evaluator learning.**

Program evaluators should be knowledgeable about these foundations of our profession.
Items a – d are **relevant for all CDC staff engaged with program evaluations**, even if they don't call themselves evaluators.

Assess your level of *knowledge* for each item, using a 1 to 5 Likert-type scale with the following anchors:

1 = No knowledge
 To
5 = Expert (my expertise is well-known and I'm sometimes consulted by others to assist them)

	Knowledge (No knowledge – Expert)				
a. American Evaluation Association Guiding Principles for Evaluators (systematic inquiry, competence, integrity, respect for people, common good and equity)	1	2	3	4	5
b. Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation's Program Evaluation Standards (Utility, Feasibility, Propriety, Accuracy, Evaluation Accountability)	1	2	3	4	5
c. American Evaluation Association's Statement on Cultural Competence	1	2	3	4	5
d. CDC Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health	1	2	3	4	5
e. Various theories and approaches to evaluation (e.g., utilization-focused, participatory, theory-driven)	1	2	3	4	5
f. Opportunities and resources to maintain or enhance my evaluation skills	1	2	3	4	5
g. Techniques for routinely reflecting on personal competence and perspectives, areas for growth, and implications for professional practice	1	2	3	4	5
h. Formal or informal networks of evaluation peers	1	2	3	4	5

Assess your level of *competence* for each item, using a 1 to 5 Likert-type scale with the following anchors:
> **1 = Not at all competent**
> To
> **5 = Expert** (my expertise is well-known and I'm sometimes consulted by others to assist them)

Rate the *importance* of each item for your current position *or* your long-term professional goals, using a 1 to 5 Likert-type scale with the following anchors:
> **1 = Not at all important**
> To
> **5 = Critical importance**

Step 1: Engage Stakeholders	Competence (Not at all – Expert)	Importance (Not at all – Critical)
a. Involving stakeholders in the evaluation planning process and throughout implementation, as appropriate	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
b. Describing the benefits and uses of program evaluation to program staff and other stakeholders	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
c. Explaining evaluation concepts, terms, and standards	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
d. Distinguishing program evaluation from other similar/related activities (e.g., program monitoring, audits, performance reviews, surveillance, research)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
e. Identifying and understanding the evaluation context (e.g., environment, stakeholders, organization, culture, values, politics, and power)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
f. Engaging stakeholders to discuss evaluation purpose, user(s), and use of the evaluation and its findings	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
g. Recognizing and using strategies to reduce "evaluation anxiety" in stakeholders	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
h. Facilitating constructive interpersonal interactions, including:		
Establishing and maintaining teamwork	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Soliciting and listening to a variety of perspectives	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Negotiating among diverse stakeholders	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Demonstrating cross-cultural competence	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Resolving conflict	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
i. Assessing the evaluability of the program	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Step 2: Describe the Program	Competence (Not at all – Expert)	Importance (Not at all – Critical)
a. Identifying the appropriate descriptive tools to describe the program (e.g., narrative description, logic model, system map)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Step 2: Describe the Program	Competence (Not at all – Expert)	Importance (Not at all – Critical)
b. Identifying documents and materials useful for creating a program logic model or roadmap (e.g., mission, vision, program description, existing logic model)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
c. Incorporating multiple stakeholder perspectives into the program roadmap or description	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
d. Conducting a review of the literature when appropriate	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
e. Creating a program logic model or roadmap	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
f. Understanding appropriate level of detail for the logic model	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
g. Identifying the program's "accountable outcome(s)" (i.e., outcomes the stakeholders expect the program to achieve)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
h. Assessing program's stage of development (e.g., pilot, established, ending)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
i. Identifying assumptions underlying logic models, including how activities are expected to produce outcomes (i.e., the program's "if-then" logic)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
j. Identifying gaps in program logic	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
k. Identifying contextual factors that affect program implementation	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
l. Identifying potential unintended consequences of the program (positive and negative)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Step 3: Focus the Evaluation Design	Competence (Not at all – Expert)	Importance (Not at all – Critical)
a. Using program description/logic models to guide the development of evaluation questions	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
b. Delineating the scope/boundaries of the evaluation (i.e., identifying what's critical to include in a particular evaluation)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
c. Formulating meaningful evaluation questions that capture stakeholder needs	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
d. Choosing an evaluation design best suited for your evaluation questions, considering factors such as the range of study designs and methods, resources available, levels of evidence needed	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
e. Using the program evaluation standards to inform design and implementation decisions	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
f. Ensuring evaluation plan aligns with evaluation purposes	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
g. Planning studies with various evaluation designs, specifically		
Experimental	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Quasi-experimental	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Step 3: Focus the Evaluation Design	Competence (Not at all – Expert)	Importance (Not at all – Critical)
Non-experimental	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
h. Designing studies using		
Quantitative methods	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Qualitative methods	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Mixed methods	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
i. Understanding the values and beliefs that influence design and methodological choices	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Step 4: Gather Credible Evidence	Competence (Not at all – Expert)	Importance (Not at all – Critical)
a. Implementing studies with different designs such as:		
Experimental design	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Quasi-experimental design	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Non-experimental/observational design	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
b. Assessing whether existing indicators will suffice or whether new ones must be developed to answer evaluation questions	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
c. Developing indicators	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
d. Identifying existing monitoring data/systems that can provide input into the evaluation	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
e. Designing data collection protocols	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
f. Developing data collection instruments for evaluation purposes:		
Questionnaires and surveys	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Interviews	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Focus groups	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Observations	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Documents and records	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ethnographies, oral history, and case studies	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
g. Adapting existing data collection instruments for evaluation purposes	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
h. Piloting and revising data collection instruments	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
i. Identifying and using existing data for evaluation purposes (e.g., surveillance, program monitoring systems, program documents, medical records)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
j. Assessing data quality (completeness, validity, etc.)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
1 Identifying the need for relevant approval packages and preparing them (e.g., Institutional Review Board [IRB], Paperwork Reduction Act [PRA] – Information Collection Request [ICR])	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Step 4: Gather Credible Evidence	Competence (Not at all – Expert)	Importance (Not at all – Critical)
2 Creating and maintaining secure databases		
Quantitative	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Qualitative	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
1 Cleaning data		
Quantitative	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Qualitative	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2 Collecting data using:		
Questionnaires and surveys	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Interviews	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Focus groups	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Observations	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Documents and records	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Ethnographies, oral history, and case studies	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Step 5: Justify Conclusions	Competence (Not at all – Expert)	Importance (Not at all – Critical)
a. Coding quantitative data and developing codebooks	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
b. Identifying appropriate data analysis software	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
c. Using data analysis software		
Quantitative data (e.g., SAS, SPSS, Stata, R)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Qualitative data (e.g., Atlas.ti, MAXQDA, NVivo)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
d. Analyzing quantitative data using statistics such as:		
Descriptive statistics	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Correlational (e.g., Pearson, Spearman, chi-square)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Comparison of means (e.g., paired t-test, independent t-test, ANOVA)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Regression (e.g., simple, multiple, logistic)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Non-parametric tests (e.g., Wilcoxon rank-sum, Wilcoxon sign-rank, sign test)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
e. Analyzing qualitative data, including:		
Understanding methods for developing coding systems (e.g., inter- and intra-rater reliability)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Applying appropriate analysis approaches (e.g., grounded theory, comparative analysis)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Creating codebooks and coding for themes		

Step 5: Justify Conclusions	Competence (Not at all – Expert)	Importance (Not at all – Critical)
f. Using data visualization techniques to clearly communicate findings and support interpretation	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
g. Interpreting and synthesizing evaluation findings with stakeholders, including accounting for program and evaluation context	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
h. Working with stakeholders to interpret evaluation findings and make judgments based on findings	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
i. Formulate actionable recommendations based on evaluation findings	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
j. Working with stakeholders to address negative or unexpected findings	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Step 6: Ensure Use and Share Lessons Learned	Competence (Not at all – Expert)	Importance (Not at all – Critical)
a. Summarizing the evaluation and its findings in user-friendly products	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
b. Tailoring the presentation of evaluation findings to multiple audiences:		
Program staff	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Senior leadership and decision makers	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Community groups	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Other key stakeholders (specify: _____)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
c. Using a variety of formats to communicate evaluation findings and recommendations		
Oral presentations	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Webinars	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Reports	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Newsletters	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Peer-reviewed papers	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
d. Developing action plans based on evaluation findings	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
e. Working with stakeholders to integrate evaluation findings into program planning	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Managing Evaluations	Competence (Not at all – Expert)	Importance (Not at all – Critical)
a. Budgeting for evaluation	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
b. Identifying the appropriate mix of skills needed for a specific evaluation (e.g., interpersonal, technical)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Managing Evaluations	Competence (Not at all – Expert)	Importance (Not at all – Critical)
c. Hiring or contracting for evaluations	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
d. Establishing feasible scope and timeline	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
e. Establishing and using systems to document evaluation implementation (e.g., documenting processes, procedures, and decisions)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
f. Monitoring and communicating progress to stakeholders	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
g. Addressing ethical issues that arise	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
h. Addressing political issues that arise	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
i. Planning with stakeholders for use of evaluation findings	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
j. Evaluating your evaluation (meta-evaluation)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

In addition to the above skills, what other skills do you possess that are useful in evaluating programs (e.g., using systems thinking, plain language writing)?

Now that you've completed the self-assessment, review your responses to the **Foundations** and **Skills** sections and use the results to identify the following:
- A. The **evaluation foundation areas** you're less familiar with and would like to learn more about
- B. Your top **five strengths** to build on and share with colleagues
- C. The top **five areas in which you would like to improve** your knowledge and/or skills (typically your lowest level of ability and highest level of importance).

You can use this information to talk with your supervisor and/or mentor to identify and prioritize professional development resources and activities, as well as opportunities to use your strengths.

A. Foundations to learn more about and apply in my evaluation activities:

B. My top strengths:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

C. My top areas for professional development:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

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