23. UTILIZATION-FOCUSED EVALUATION

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How evaluations are used affects the spending of billions of dollars to fight the problems of poverty, disease, ignorance, joblessness, mental anguish, crime, hunger, and inequality. How are programs that combat these societal ills to be judged? How does one distinguish effective from ineffective programs? And how can evaluations be conducted in ways that lead to use? How do we avoid producing reports that gather dust on bookshelves, unread and unused? Those are the questions this chapter addresses, not just in general, but within a particular framework: utilization-focused evaluation.

WHAT IS UTILIZATION-FOCUSED EVALUATION?

Utilization-focused evaluation begins with the premise that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use; therefore, evaluators should facilitate the evaluation process and design any evaluation with careful consideration of how everything that is done, *from beginning to end,* will affect use. Nor is use an abstraction. Use concerns how real people in the real world apply evaluation findings and experience the evaluation process. Therefore, the *focus* in utilization-focused evaluation is on *intended use by intended users.*

In any evaluation there are many potential stakeholders and an array of possible uses. Utilization-focused evaluation requires moving from the general and abstract, i.e., possible audiences and potential uses, to the real and specific, i.e., actual primary intended users and their explicit commitments to concrete, specific uses. The evaluator facilitates judgment and decision making by intended users rather than acting

as a distant, independent judge. Since no evaluation can be value-free, utilization-focused evaluation answers the question of whose values will frame the evaluation by working with clearly identified, primary intended users who have responsibility to apply evaluation findings and implement recommendations. In essence, I argue, evaluation use is too important to be left to evaluators.

Utilization-focused evaluation is highly personal and situational. The evaluation facilitator develops a working relationship with intended users to help them determine what kind of evaluation they need. This requires negotiation in which the evaluator offers a menu of possibilities within the framework of established evaluation standards and principles. While concern about utility drives a utilization-focused evaluation, the evaluator must also attend to the evaluation's accuracy, feasibility, and propriety (Joint Committee on Standards, 1994). Moreover, as a professional, the evaluator has a responsibility to act in accordance with the profession's adopted principles of conducting systematic, data-based inquiries; performing competently; ensuring the honesty and integrity of the entire evaluation process; respecting the people involved in and affected by the evaluation; and being sensitive to the diversity of interests and values that may be related to the general and public welfare (AEA Task Force, 1995).

Utilization-focused evaluation does not advocate any particular evaluation content, model, method, theory, or even use. Rather, it is a process for helping primary intended users select the most appropriate content, model, methods, theory, and uses for their particular situation. Situational responsiveness guides the interactive process between evaluator and primary intended users. Many options are now available in the feast that has become the field of evaluation. In considering the rich and varied menu of evaluation, utilization-focused evaluation can include any evaluative purpose (formative, summative, developmental), any kind of data (quantitative, qualitative, mixed), any kind of design (e.g., naturalistic, experimental), and any kind of focus (processes, outcomes, impacts, costs, and cost-benefit, among many possibilities). It is a process for making decisions about these issues in collaboration with an identified group of primary users focusing on their intended uses of evaluation.

A psychology of use undergirds and informs utilization-focused evaluation. In essence, research and my own experience indicate that intended users are more likely to use evaluations if they understand and feel ownership of the evaluation process and findings; they are more likely to understand and feel ownership if they have been actively involved; and by actively involving primary intended users, the evaluator is training users in use, preparing the groundwork for use, and reinforcing the intended utility of the evaluation every step along the way.

What is program evaluation? I offer the clients with whom I work the following definition:

Program evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness and/or inform decisions about future programming. *Utilization-focused program*

evaluation (as opposed to program evaluation in general) is evaluation done for and with specific intended primary users for specific, intended uses.

The general definition above has three interrelated components: (1) the systematic collection of information about (2) a potentially broad range of topics (3) for a variety of possible judgments and uses. The definition of utilization-focused evaluation adds the requirement to specify intended use by intended users. This matter of defining evaluation is of considerable import because different evaluation approaches rest on different definitions. The use-oriented definition offered above contrasts in significant ways with other approaches (see Patton, 1997, p. 23–25).

FOSTERING INTENDED USE BY INTENDED USERS: THE PERSONAL FACTOR

The First Step in Utilization-Focused Evaluation

Many decisions must be made in any evaluation. The purpose of the evaluation must be determined. Concrete evaluative criteria for judging program success will usually have to be established. Methods will have to be selected and timelines agreed on. All of these are important issues in any evaluation. The question is, Who will decide these issues? The utilization-focused answer is *primary intended users of the evaluation.*

Clearly and explicitly identifying people who can benefit from an evaluation is so important that evaluators have adopted a special term for potential evaluation users: *stakeholders.* Evaluation stakeholders are people who have a stake—a vested interest—in evaluation findings. For any evaluation there are multiple possible stakeholders: program funders, staff, administrators, and clients or program participants. Others with a direct, or even indirect, interest in program effectiveness may be considered stakeholders, including journalists and members of the general public, or, more specifically, taxpayers, in the case of public programs. Stakeholders include anyone who makes decisions or desires information about a program. However, stakeholders typically have diverse and often competing interests. No evaluation can answer all potential questions equally well. This means that some process is necessary for narrowing the range of possible questions to focus the evaluation. In utilization-focused evaluation this process begins by narrowing the list of potential stakeholders to a much shorter, more specific group of primary intended users. Their information needs, i.e., their *intended uses,* focus the evaluation.

Beyond Audience to the Personal Factor

Different people see things differently and have varying interests and needs. I take that to be on the order of a truism. The point is that this truism is regularly and consistently ignored in the design of evaluation studies. To target an evaluation at the information needs of a specific person or a group of identifiable and interacting persons is quite different from what has been traditionally recommended as "identifying the audience" for an evaluation. Audiences are amorphous, anonymous entities. Nor is it sufficient to identify an agency or organization as a recipient of the evaluation report. Organizations are an impersonal collection of hierarchical

positions. People, not organizations, use evaluation information—thus the importance of the personal factor.

The personal factor is the presence of an identifiable individual or group of people who personally care about the evaluation and the findings it generates. The personal factor represents the leadership, interest, enthusiasm, determination, commitment, assertiveness, and caring of specific, individual people. These are people who actively seek information to make judgments and reduce decision uncertainties. They want to increase their ability to predict the outcomes of programmatic activity and thereby enhance their own discretion as decision makers, policy makers, consumers, program participants, funders, or whatever roles they play. These are the primary users of evaluation.

Though the specifics vary from case to case, the pattern is markedly clear: Where the personal factor emerges, where some individuals take direct, personal responsibility for getting findings to the right people, evaluations have an impact. Where the personal factor is absent, there is a marked absence of impact. Use is not simply determined by some configuration of abstract factors; it is determined in large part by real, live, caring human beings.

Support for the importance of the personal factor is evident in the work of the Stanford Evaluation Consortium, one of the leading places of ferment and reform in evaluation during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Cronbach and associates in the Consortium identified major reforms needed in evaluation by publishing a provocative set of 95 theses. Among their theses was this observation on the personal factor: "Nothing makes a larger difference in the use of evaluations than *the personal factor*— the interest of officials in learning from the evaluation and the desire of the evaluator to get attention for what he knows" (Cronbach and Associates, 1980, p. 6; emphasis added).

The importance of the personal factor in explaining and predicting evaluation use leads directly to the emphasis in utilization-focused evaluation on working with intended users to specify intended uses. The personal factor directs us to attend to specific people who understand, value, and care about evaluation, and further directs us to attend to their interests. This is the primary lesson the profession has learned about enhancing use, and it is wisdom now widely acknowledged by practicing evaluators (see Cousins & Earl, 1995).

Utilization-focused evaluation is often confused with or associated with decision-oriented approaches to evaluation, in part, I presume, because both approaches are very concrete and focused, and both are considered "utilitarian." Ernest House (1980) wrote an important book categorizing various approaches to evaluation in which he included utilization-focused evaluation among the "decision-making models" he reviewed. The primary characteristic of a decision-making model is that "the evaluation be structured by the actual decisions to be made" (p. 28). I believe he incorrectly categorized utilization-focused evaluation because he failed to appreciate the distinct and critical nature of the personal factor. While utilization-focused evaluation includes the option of focusing on decisions, it can also serve a variety of other purposes depending on the information needs of primary intended users.

That is, possible intended uses include a large menu of options. For example, the evaluation process can be important in directing and focusing how people *think about* the basic policies involved in a program, what has come to be called conceptual use; evaluations can help in fine-tuning program implementation; the process of designing an evaluation may lead to clearer, more specific, and more meaningful program goals; and evaluations can provide information on client needs and assets that will help inform general public discussions about public policy. These and other outcomes of evaluation are entirely compatible with utilization-focused evaluation, but do not make a formal decision the driving force behind the evaluation.

What was omitted from the House classification scheme was an approach to evaluation that focuses on and is driven by the information needs of specific people who will use the evaluation processes and findings. The point is that the evaluation is *user-focused*. Utilization-focused evaluation, then, in my judgment, falls within a category of evaluations that I would call, following Marvin Alkin (1995), user-oriented. This is a distinct alternative to the other models identified by House. In the other models the content of the evaluation is determined by the *evaluator's* presuppositions about what constitutes an evaluation: a look at the relationship between inputs and outcomes; the measurement of goal attainment; advice about a specific programmatic decision; description of program processes; a decision about future or continued funding; or judgment according to some set of expert or professional standards. In contrast to these models, user-focused evaluation describes an evaluation process for making decisions about the content of an evaluation—but the content itself is not specified or implied in advance. Thus, any of the eight House models, or adaptations and combinations of those models, might emerge as the guiding direction in user-focused evaluation, depending on the information needs of the people for whom the evaluation information is being collected.

Attending to primary intended users is not just an academic exercise performed for its own sake. Involving specific people who can and will use information enables them to establish direction for, commitment to, and ownership of the evaluation every step along the way, from initiation of the study through the design and data collection stages right through to the final report and dissemination process. If decision makers have shown little interest in the study in its earlier stages, they are not likely to suddenly show an interest in using the findings at the end. They won't be sufficiently *prepared* for use.

No evaluation can serve all potential stakeholders' interests equally well. Utilization-focused evaluation makes explicit whose interests are served—those of explicitly identified primary intended users.

FOCUSING EVALUATIONS: CHOICES, OPTIONS AND DECISIONS

Variable Evaluator Roles

Different types of and purposes for evaluation call for varying evaluator roles. Gerald Barkdoll (1980), as associate commissioner for planning and evaluation of the U.S.

Food and Drug Administration, identified three contrasting evaluator roles. His first type, "evaluator as scientist," he found was best fulfilled by aloof academics who focus on acquiring technically impeccable data while studiously staying above the fray of program politics and utilization relationships. His second type he called "consultative" in orientation; these evaluators were comfortable operating in a collaborative style with policymakers and program analysts to develop consensus about their information needs and decide jointly the evaluation's design and uses. His third type he called the "surveillance and compliance" evaluator, a style characterized by aggressively independent and highly critical auditors committed to protecting the public interest and assuring accountability (e.g., Walters, 1996). These three types reflect evaluations historical development from three different traditions: (1) social science research, (2) pragmatic field practice, especially by internal evaluators and consultants, and (3) program and financial auditing.

When evaluation research aims to generate generalizable knowledge about causal linkages between a program intervention and outcomes, rigorous application of social science methods is called for and the evaluator's role as methodological expert will be primary. When the emphasis is on determining a program's overall merit or worth, the evaluator's role as judge takes center stage. If an evaluation has been commissioned because of and is driven by public accountability concerns, the evaluator's role as independent auditor, inspector, or investigator will be spotlighted for policymakers and the general public. When program improvement is the primary purpose, the evaluator plays an advisory and facilitative role with program staff. As a member of a design team, a developmental evaluator will play a consultative role. If an evaluation has a social justice agenda, the evaluator becomes a change agent.

In utilization-focused evaluation, the evaluator is always a negotiator—negotiating with primary intended users what other roles he or she will play. Beyond that, all roles are on the table, just as all methods are options. Role selection follows from and is dependent on intended use by intended users.

Consider, for example, a national evaluation of Food Stamps to feed low income families. For purposes of accountability and policy review, the primary intended users are members of the program's oversight committees in Congress (including staff to those committees). The program is highly visible, costly, and controversial, especially because special interest groups differ about its intended outcomes and who should be eligible. Under such conditions, the evaluation's credibility and utility will depend heavily on the evaluator's independence, ideological neutrality, methodological expertise, and political savvy.

Contrast such a national accountability evaluation with an evaluator's role in helping a small, rural leadership program of the Cooperative Extension Service increase its impact. The program operates in a few local communities. The primary intended users are the county extension agents, elected county commissioners, and farmer representatives who have designed the program. Program improvement to increase participant satisfaction and behavior change is the intended purpose. Under these conditions, the evaluation's use will depend heavily on the evaluator's rela-

tionship with design team members. The evaluator will need to build a close, trusting, and mutually respectful relationship to effectively facilitate the team's decisions about evaluation priorities and methods of data collection, and then take them through a consensus-building process as results are interpreted and changes agreed on.

These contrasting case examples illustrate the range of contexts in which program evaluations occur. The evaluator's role in any particular study will depend on matching her or his role with the context and purposes of the evaluation as negotiated with primary intended users.

Situational Evaluation

There is no one best way to conduct an evaluation. This insight is critical. The design of a particular evaluation depends on the people involved and their situation. *Situational evaluation* is like situation ethics (Fletcher, 1966), situational leadership (Blanchard, 1986; Hersey, 1985), or situated learning: "Action is grounded in the concrete situation in which it occurs" (Anderson, Reder & Simon, 1996, p. 5). The standards and principles of evaluation provide overall direction, a foundation of ethical guidance, and a commitment to professional competence and integrity, but there are no absolute rules an evaluator can follow to know exactly what to do with specific users in a particular situation. That is why Newcomer and Wholey (1989) concluded in their synthesis of knowledge about evaluation strategies for building high-performance programs: "Prior to an evaluation, evaluators and program managers should work together to define the ideal final product" (p. 202). This means *negotiating* the evaluation's intended and expected uses.

Every evaluation situation is unique. A successful evaluation (one that is useful, practical, ethical, and accurate) emerges from the special characteristics and conditions of a particular situation—a mixture of people, politics, history, context, resources, constraints, values, needs, interests, and chance. Despite the rather obvious, almost trite, and basically commonsense nature of this observation, it is not at all obvious to most stakeholders who worry a great deal about whether an evaluation is being done "right." Indeed, one common objection stakeholders make to getting actively involved in designing an evaluation is that they lack the knowledge to do it "right." The notion that there is one right way to do things dies hard. The right way, from a utilization-focused perspective, is the way that will be meaningful and useful to the specific evaluators and intended users involved, and finding that way requires interaction, negotiation, and situational analysis.

Utilization-focused evaluation is a problem-solving approach that calls for creative adaptation to changed and changing conditions, as opposed to a technical approach, which attempts to mold and define conditions to fit preconceived models of how things should be done. Utilization-focused evaluation involves overcoming what Brightman and Noble (1979) have identified as "the ineffective education of decision scientists." They portray the typical decision scientist (a generic term for evaluators, policy analysts, planners, and so on) as

hopelessly naive and intellectually arrogant. Naive because they believe that problem solving begins and ends with analysis, and arrogant because they opt for mathematical rigor over results. They are products of their training. Decision science departments appear to have been more effective at training technocrats to deal with structured problems than problem solvers to deal with ill-structured ones. (p. 150)

Narrow technocratic approaches emphasize following rules and standard operating procedures. Creative problem-solving approaches, in contrast, focus on what works and what makes sense in the situation. Standard methods recipe books are not ignored. They are just not taken as the final word. New ingredients are added to fit particular tastes. Home-grown or locally available ingredients replace the processed foods of the national supermarket chains, with the attendant risks of both greater failure and greater achievement.

Being Active-Reactive-Adaptive

I use the phrase "active-reactive-adaptive" to suggest the nature of the consultative interactions that go on between evaluators and intended users. The phrase is meant to be both descriptive and prescriptive. It describes how real-world decision making actually unfolds. Yet, it is prescriptive in alerting evaluators to consciously and deliberately act, react, and adapt in order to increase their effectiveness in working with stakeholders.

Utilization-focused evaluators are, first of all, active in deliberately and calculatedly identifying intended users and focusing useful questions. They are reactive in listening to intended users and responding to what they learn about the particular situation in which the evaluation unfolds. They are adaptive in altering evaluation questions and designs in light of their increased understanding of the situation and changing conditions. Active-reactive-adaptive evaluators do not impose cookbook designs. They do not do the same thing time after time. They are genuinely immersed in the challenges of each new setting and authentically responsive to the intended users of each new evaluation.

This active-reactive-adaptive stance characterizes all phases of evaluator-user interactions from initially identifying primary intended users, to focusing relevant questions, choosing methods, and analyzing results. All phases involve collaborative processes of action-reaction-adaption as evaluators and intended users consider their options. The menu of choices includes a broad range of methods, evaluation ingredients from bland to spicy, and a variety of evaluator roles: collaborator, trainer, group facilitator, technician, politician, organizational analyst, internal colleague, external expert, methodologist, information broker, communicator, change agent, diplomat, problem solver, and creative consultant. The roles played by an evaluator in any given situation will depend on the evaluation's purpose, the unique constellation of conditions with which the evaluator is faced, *and the evaluator's own personal knowledge, skills, style, values, and ethics.*

Being active-reactive-adaptive explicitly recognizes the importance of the individual evaluator's experience, orientation, and contribution by placing the mandate

to be "active" first in this consulting triangle. Situational responsiveness does not mean rolling over and playing dead (or passive) in the face of stakeholder interests or perceived needs. Just as the evaluator in utilization-focused evaluation does not unilaterally impose a focus and set of methods on a program, so too the stakeholders are not set up to impose their initial predilections unilaterally or dogmatically. Arriving at the final evaluation design is a negotiated process that allows the values and capabilities of the evaluator to intermingle with those of intended users.

The utilization-focused evaluator, in being active-reactive-adaptive, is one among many at the negotiating table. At times there may be discord in the negotiating process, at other times harmony. Whatever the sounds, and whatever the themes, the utilization-focused evaluator does not sing alone.

One central value that should undergird the evaluator's active-reactive-adaptive role is respect for all those with a stake in a program or evaluation. In their seminal article on evaluation use, Davis and Salasin (1975) asserted that evaluators were involved inevitably in facilitating change and "any change model should . . . generally *accommodate* rather than *manipulate* the view of the persons involved" (p. 652). Respectful utilization-focused evaluators do not use their expertise to intimidate or manipulate intended users.

User Responsiveness and Technical Quality

User responsiveness should not mean a sacrifice of technical quality. A beginning point is to recognize that standards of technical quality vary for different users and varying situations. The issue is not meeting some absolute research standards of technical quality but, rather, making sure that methods and measures are *appropriate* to the validity and credibility needs of a particular evaluation purpose and specific intended users.

Jennifer Greene (1990) examined in depth the debate about "technical quality versus user responsiveness." She found general agreement that both are important, but disagreements about the relative priority of each. She concluded that the debate is really about how much to recognize and deal with evaluation's political inherency: "Evaluators should recognize that tension and conflict in evaluation practice are virtually inevitable, that the demands imposed by most if not all definitions of responsiveness and technical quality (not to mention feasibility and propriety) will characteristically reflect the competing politics and values of the setting" (p. 273). She then recommended that evaluators "explicate the politics and values" that undergird decisions about purpose, audience, design, and methods. Her recommendation is consistent with utilization-focused evaluation.

PROCESS AND PREMISES OF UTILIZATION-FOCUSED EVALUATION

The Flow of a Utilization-Focused Evaluation Process

Exhibit 1 presents a flowchart of utilization-focused evaluation. First, intended users of the evaluation are identified. These intended users are brought together or organized in some fashion (e.g., an evaluation task force of primary stakeholders), if

possible, to work with the evaluator and share in making major decisions about the evaluation.

Second, the evaluator and intended users commit to the intended uses of the evaluation and determine the focus of the evaluation. This can include considering the relative importance of focusing on attainment of goals, program implementation, and/or the program's theory of action. The menu of evaluation possibilities is vast, so many different types of evaluations may need to be discussed. The evaluator works with intended users to determine priority uses with attention to political and ethical considerations. In a style that is active-reactive-adaptive and situationally responsive, the evaluator helps intended users answer these questions: Given expected uses, is the evaluation worth doing? To what extent and in what ways are intended users committed to intended use?

The third part of the process as depicted in the flowchart involves methods, measurement, and design decisions. A variety of options are considered: qualitative and quantitative data; naturalistic, experimental, and quasi-experimental designs; purposeful and probabilistic sampling approaches; greater and lesser emphasis on generalizations; and alternative ways of dealing with potential threats to validity, reliability, and utility. More specifically, the discussion at this stage will include attention to issues of methodological appropriateness, believability of the data, understandability, accuracy, balance, practicality, propriety, and cost. As always, the overriding concern will be utility: Will results obtained from these methods be useful—and actually used?

Once data have been collected and organized for analysis, the fourth stage of the utilization-focused process begins. Intended users are actively and directly involved in interpreting findings and making judgments based on the data and generating recommendations. Specific strategies for use can then be formalized in light of actual findings and the evaluator can facilitate following through on actual use.

Finally, decisions about dissemination of the evaluation report can be made beyond whatever initial commitments were made earlier in planning for intended use. This reinforces the distinction between intended use by intended users (planned utilization) versus more general dissemination for broad public accountability (where both hoped for and unintended uses may occur).

While the flowchart in Exhibit 1 depicts a seemingly straightforward, one-step-at-a-time logic to the unfolding of a utilization-focused evaluation, in reality the process is seldom simple or linear. The flowchart attempts to capture the sometimes circular and iterative nature of the process by depicting loops at the points where intended users are identified and again where evaluation questions are focused. For the sake of diagrammatic simplicity, however, many potential loops are missing. The active-reactive-adaptive evaluator who is situationally responsive and politically sensitive may find that new stakeholders become important or new questions emerge in the midst of methods decisions. Nor is there a clear and clean distinction between the processes of focusing evaluation questions and making methods decisions.
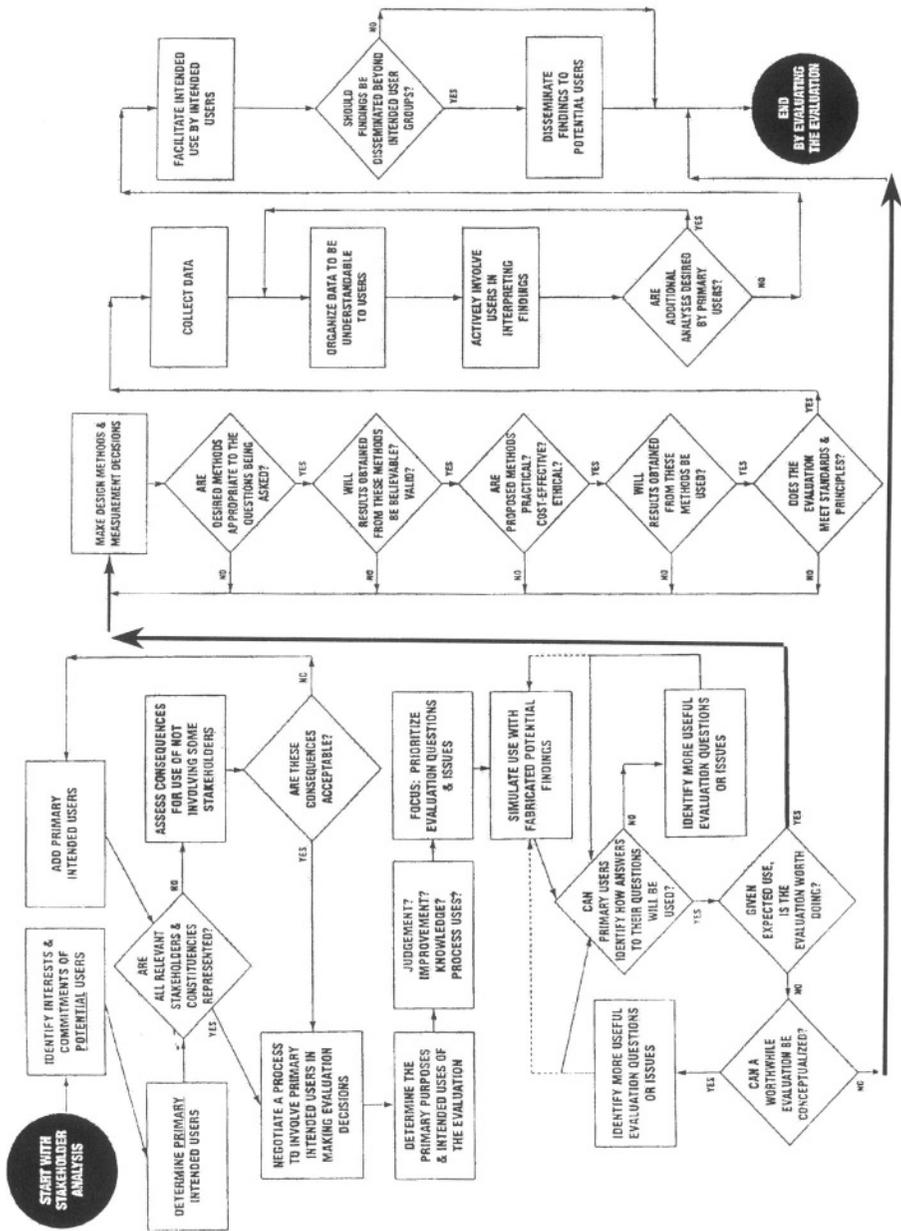
The real world of utilization-focused evaluation manifests considerably more complexity than a flowchart can possibly capture. The flowchart strives to outline the basic logic of the process, but applying that logic in any given situation requires flexibility and creativity.

The Achilles' Heel of Utilization-Focused Evaluation

Achilles' fame stemmed from his role as hero in Homer's classic, the *Iliad.* He was the Greeks' most illustrious warrior during the Trojan War, invulnerable because his mother had dipped him in the Styx, the river of the underworld across which Charon ferried the dead. His heel, where she held him in the river, was his sole point of vulnerability and it was there that he was fatally wounded by an arrow shot by Paris.

The Achilles' heel of utilization-focused evaluation, its point of greatest vulnerability, is turnover of primary intended users. The process so depends on the active engagement of intended users that to lose users along the way to job transitions, reorganizations, reassignments and elections can undermine eventual use. Replacement users who join the evaluation late in the process seldom come with the same agenda as those who were present at the beginning. The best antidote involves working with a task force of multiple intended users so that the departure of one or two is less critical. Still, when substantial turnover of primary intended users occurs, it may be necessary to reignite the process by renegotiating the design and use commitments with the new arrivals on the scene.

Many challenges exist in selecting the right stakeholders, getting them to commit time and attention to the evaluation, dealing with political dynamics, building credibility, and conducting the evaluation in an ethical manner. All of these challenges revolve around the relationship between the evaluator and intended users. When new intended users replace those who depart, new relationships must be built. That may mean delays in original timelines, but such delays pay off in eventual use by attending to the foundation of understandings and relationships upon which utilization-focused evaluation is built.

Fourteen Fundamental Premises of Utilization-Focused Evaluation

The premises of utilization-focused evaluation will seem obvious to some, of dubious merit to others. To some extent, the rationales for and evidence supporting these various premises have been articulated throughout this paper. Here, however, I offer 14 fundamental premises of utilization-focused evaluation.

1. Commitment to intended use by intended users should be the driving force in an evaluation. At every decision point—whether the decision concerns purpose, focus, design, methods, measurement, analysis, or reporting—the evaluator asks intended users, "How would that affect your use of this evaluation?"

2. Strategizing about use is ongoing and continuous from the very beginning of the evaluation. Use is not something one becomes interested in at the end of an evaluation. By the end of the evaluation, the potential for use has been largely deter-

mined. From the moment stakeholders and evaluators begin interacting and con-ceptualizing the evaluation, decisions are being made that will affect use in major ways.

3. The personal factor contributes significantly to use. The personal factor refers to the research finding that the personal interests and commitments of those involved in an evaluation undergird use. Thus, evaluations should be *specifically* user-ori-ented—aimed at the interests and information needs of specific, identifiable people, not vague, passive audiences.

4. Careful and thoughtful stakeholder analysis should inform identification of primary intended users, taking into account the varied and multiple interests that surround any program, and therefore, any evaluation. Staff, program participants, directors, public officials, funders, and community leaders all have an interest in eval-uation, but the degree and nature of their interests will vary. Political sensitivity and ethical judgments are involved in identifying primary intended users and uses.

5. Evaluations must be focused in some way; focusing on intended use by intended users is the most useful way. Resource and time constraints will make it impossible for any single evaluation to answer everyone's questions or to give full attention to all possible issues. Because no evaluation can serve all potential stake-holders' interests equally well, stakeholders representing various constituencies should come together to negotiate what issues and questions deserve priority.

6. Focusing on intended use requires making deliberate and thoughtful choices. There are three primary uses of evaluation findings: judging merit or worth (sum-mative evaluation), improving programs (instrumental use), and generating knowl-edge (conceptual use). In addition, there are four primary uses of evaluation *processes*: enhancing shared understandings, reinforcing interventions, supporting participant engagement, and developing programs and organizations. Uses can change and evolve over time as a program matures.

7. Useful evaluations must be designed and adapted situationally. Standardized recipe approaches will not work. The relative value of a particular utilization focus (premise 9) can only be judged in the context of a specific program and the interests of intended users. Situational factors affect use. These factors include community variables, organizational characteristics, the nature of the evaluation, evaluator credibility, political considerations, and resource constraints. In conducting a utilization-focused evaluation, the active-reactive-adaptive evaluator works with intended users to assess how various factors and conditions may affect the potential for use.

8. Intended users' commitment to use can be nurtured and enhanced by actively involving them in making significant decisions about the evaluation. Involvement increases relevance, understanding, and ownership of the evaluation—all of which facilitate informed and appropriate use.

9. High quality participation is the goal, not high quantity participation. The quantity of group interaction time can be inversely related to the quality of the process. Evaluators conducting utilization-focused evaluations must be skilled group facilitators.

10. High quality involvement of intended users will result in high quality, useful evaluations. Many researchers worry that methodological rigor may be sacrificed if nonscientists collaborate in making methods decisions. But, decision makers want data that are useful *and* accurate. Validity and utility are interdependent. Threats to utility are as important to counter as threats to validity. Skilled evaluation facilitators can help nonscientists understand methodological issues so that they can judge for themselves the trade-offs involved in choosing among the strengths and weaknesses of design options and methods alternatives.

11. Evaluators have a rightful stake in an evaluation in that their credibility and integrity are always at risk, thus the mandate for evaluators to be active-reactive-adaptive. Evaluators are active in presenting to intended users their own best judgments about appropriate evaluation focus and methods; they are reactive in listening attentively and respectful to others' concerns; and they are adaptive in finding ways to design evaluations that incorporate diverse interests, including their own, while meeting high standards of professional practice. Evaluators' credibility and integrity are factors affecting use as well as the foundation of the profession. In this regard, evaluators should be guided by the profession's standards and principles.

12. Evaluators committed to enhancing use have a responsibility *to train users* in evaluation processes and the uses of information. Training stakeholders in evaluation methods and processes attends to both short-term and long-term evaluation uses. Making decision makers more sophisticated about evaluation can contribute to greater use of evaluation over time.

13. Use is different from reporting and dissemination. Reporting and dissemination may be means to facilitate use, but they should not be confused with such intended uses as making decisions, improving programs, changing thinking, empowering participants, and generating knowledge (see premise 6).

14. Serious attention to use involves financial and time costs that are far from trivial. The benefits of these costs are manifested in greater use. These costs should be made explicit in evaluation proposals and budgets so that utilization follow through is not neglected for lack of resources.

CONCLUSION

The results of any particular effort cannot be guaranteed. Each evaluation being a blend of unique ingredients, no standardized recipe can assure the outcome. We have only principles, premises, and utilization-focused processes to guide us, and we have much yet to learn. But, the potential benefits merit the efforts and risks involved. At stake is improving the effectiveness of programs that express and embody the highest ideals of humankind.