


# Designing Evaluations that Fit: Lessons Learned from Situational Analysis

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# Reflections & Discussion

- ▶ Why does it matter if an evaluation fits?
  - ▶ What is a good fit?
  - ▶ How does situation analysis help with getting to a good fit?
  - ▶ What is situation analysis?
  - ▶ What are some of the lessons we have learned?
  - ▶ What are some ideas about tools or strategies to use?
  - ▶ What can we do?
- 

Increasing expectations to **demonstrate results**

Assumptions & claims re: **best type** of evaluation

Some believe that **'one size'** fits most  
**BUT**

Finding the **RIGHT FIT** fit isn't  
always easy



WHY DO EVALUATIONS NEED TO FIT?

So findings will be  
**USED**



Not as  
useful as  
I hoped...



# How do you know when it fits?

## INTENDED USE BY INTENDED USERS

**“Evaluation done for an with specific intended primary users for specific, intended uses...**

**begins with the premise that evaluations should be judged by their utility & actual use...”**

**“Use concerns how real people in the real world apply evaluation findings & experience the evaluation process.”**

(Michael Quinn Patton, *Utilization -focused Evaluation*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., 2008)


**Situation Analysis is central to  
Utilization-Focused Evaluation  
(UFE) philosophy & approach**



# Evaluation 'Fitting'

- ▶ No one best approach or 'gold standard' evaluation design
- ▶ Design each evaluation to meet the specific situation & intended users' use needs

**Evaluation planning = Negotiated process  
with intended users to address intended  
uses**





# The Key to a Good Fit...

## Situation Analysis



## Responsive Evaluation Plan

# Utilization-focused Situation Analysis


## Understand factors likely to affect use

- ▶ People involved
- ▶ The evaluand
- ▶ Their situation/context


**Negotiate how to address in the evaluation**




# Intended User Factors

- ▶ Interest in the evaluation
  - ▶ Expectations & understanding re: level of evidence required
  - ▶ Willingness to commit time, energy &/or other resources
  - ▶ Position of influence
  - ▶ Decision-making structures, processes
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# Intended Use Factors

- ▶ Type of decision(s) to be made
  - ▶ What do we need to know? – the questions
  - ▶ Different intended uses with different evidence needs
  - ▶ Perspectives on what constitutes credible evidence for intended use(s)
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# Context Factors

- ▶ Size & scope of organization/program
  - ▶ Number of participants
  - ▶ Participant characteristics
  - ▶ Nature of the intervention
  - ▶ Intended outcomes
  - ▶ Political climate or considerations
  - ▶ Age & stage of the program/initiative
  - ▶ Timing of evaluation requirements
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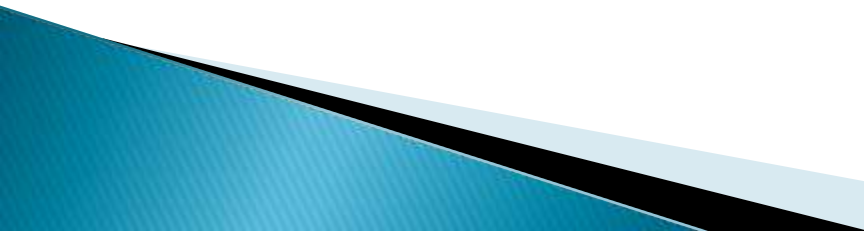
# Situational Factors Should Inform Evaluator's Response

- ▶ Clarification of evaluation purpose, intended use & questions
- ▶ Selection from the diverse menu of potential choices for:
  - Evaluation type (e.g. formative, summative, etc.)
  - Evaluation design options
  - Data collection & analysis methods
  - Reporting & communicating findings

# Lessons Learned



# Situation analysis does not just happen

- ▶ Need to be explicit and intentional about developing understanding of factors at play in each specific evaluation situation
    - Minimize risk of falling back on prior knowledge, assumptions, evaluator preferences or strengths
  - ▶ Requires consultative interactions with primary intended users
    - Willingness, time & commitment from users & evaluator
  - ▶ Requires lead time to incorporate
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# Develop intended users' situation awareness

- ▶ Intended users are knowledgeable about their program, its context & their evaluation use needs


**BUT**

- ▶ They may not be aware of the implications of situational factors for evaluation
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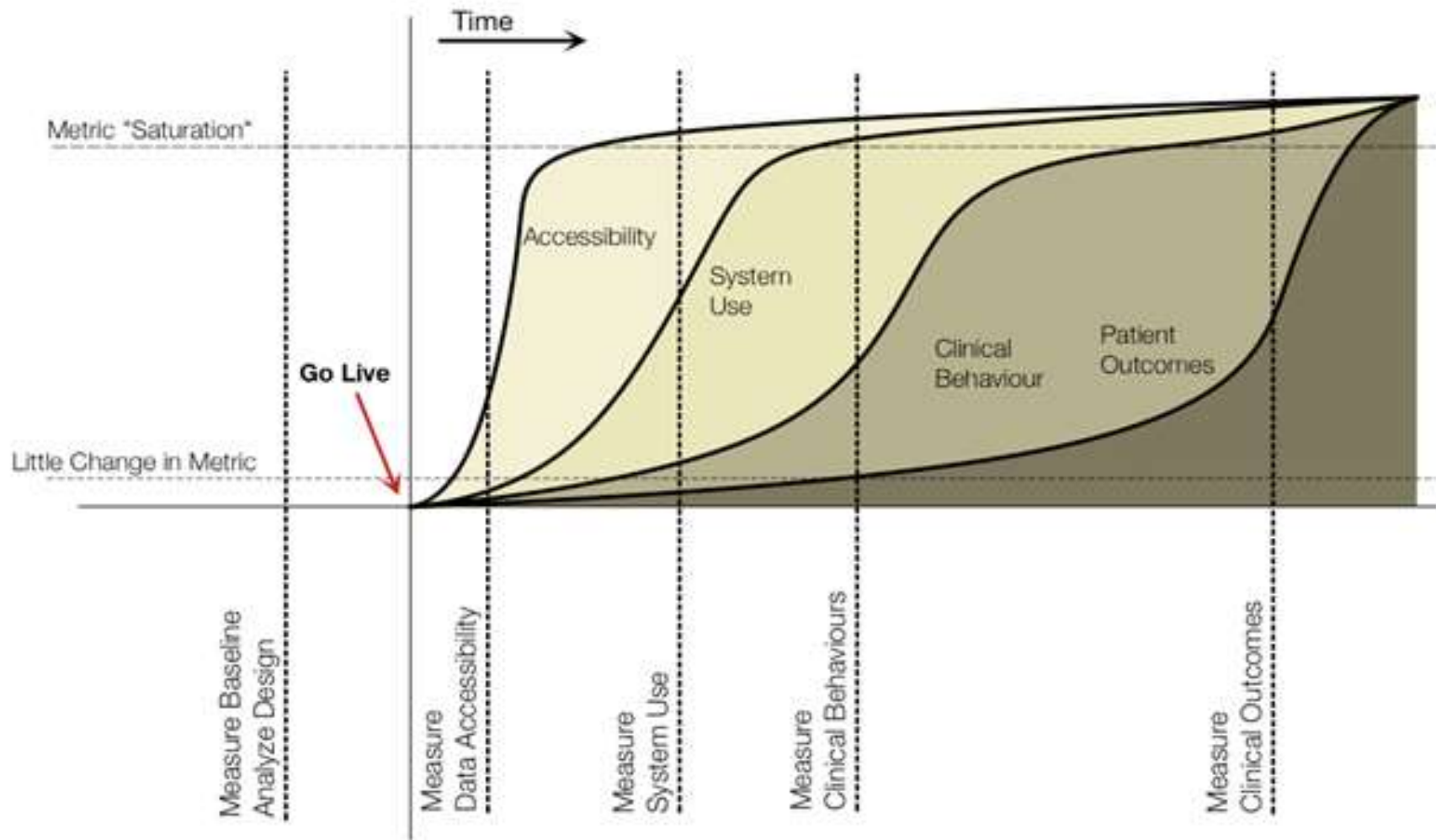
# Continue to monitor situation throughout evaluation

- ▶ Ongoing situation analysis may result in iterative evaluation planning, particularly if:
    - Significant time elapses from evaluation planning to implementation
    - Changes are made with implications for potential and/or time frame for achievement of anticipated outcomes
- 


# Tools for Situation Analysis

- ▶ Conceptual frameworks assist in developing shared understanding of situation
    - Demonstrate connections between activities and outcomes
    - Contextualize discussion of indicator & measure selection
- 


# Clinical Adoption Maturation Model (for Health Information Systems Implementation)



# Tools for Situation Analysis (cont'd)

- ▶ Evaluation Advisory group of primary intended users & other significant stakeholders
  - ▶ Key informant meetings to inform situation analysis
  - ▶ Evaluator 'orientation'
  - ▶ Your tools??
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**Evaluations planned &  
conducted without situational  
awareness are not as useful as  
they could be**



# What can we do?

## Step 1

- Acknowledge need for situation analysis

## Step 2

- Commit time & resources to integrate situation analysis into evaluation planning & entire evaluation process


## Output

- More useful, practical, accurate & ethical evaluations
- More effective use of available evaluation resources

## Outcome

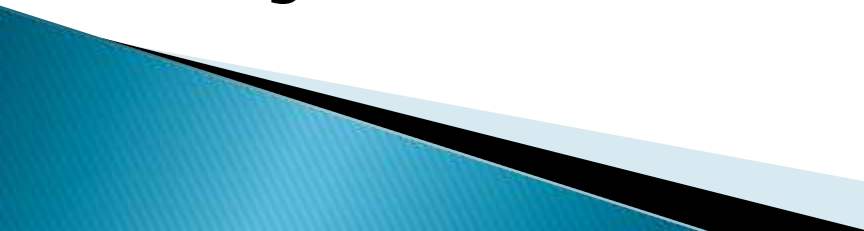
- Increased evaluation use
- Increased evaluation impact

# Discussion Questions

- ▶ What are your challenges & opportunities in designing evaluations that fit?
  - ▶ Is situation analysis routine in evaluation practice?
  - ▶ How & when do you know when an evaluation design is a good fit?
  - ▶ What are your evaluation use successes & disappointments?
  - ▶ Other questions?
- 



# Resources

- ▶ Donaldson, S.I., Christie, C.A., Mark, M.M., Eds. (2009). *What Counts as Credible Evidence in Applied Research & Evaluation Practice?*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
  - ▶ Donaldson, Stewart I.. (2007). *Program Theory-Driven Evaluation Science: Strategies & Applications*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
  - ▶ Patton, Michael Quinn. (2008). *Utilization-focused evaluation*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
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