Evaluation Capacity Diagnostic Tool

This Evaluation Capacity Diagnostic Tool is designed to help organizations assess their readiness to take on many types of evaluation activities. It captures information on organizational context and the evaluation experience of staff and can be used in various ways. For example, the tool can pinpoint particularly strong areas of capacity as well as areas for improvement. It can also calibrate changes over time in an organization's evaluation capacity. In addition, this diagnostic can encourage staff to brainstorm about how their organization can enhance evaluation capacity by building on existing evaluation experience and skills. Finally, the tool can serve as a precursor to evaluation activities with an external evaluation consultant.

This tool is intended to be completed by the person within your organization who is most familiar with your evaluation efforts. Within small organizations, it is possible that the director or CEO might be the most appropriate person. This tool can be self-administered, but could also be completed with the assistance of an external evaluation consultant. Ideally, your organization should plan to self-administer the diagnostic and then have a follow-up conversation with an external consultant to determine the areas that your organization might focus its evaluation capacity building efforts. This tool can be administered at a certain point in time or at multiple points in time to determine changes in evaluation capacity.

NOTE: Quantifying the dimensions of capacity is very difficult. In addition, self-assessments often indicate a higher level of capacity than actually exists; respondents are not always aware of how much room there is for improvement. For example, an organization might think that it has effective knowledge, systems and practices in place, but once it learns about other tools or practices, it might realize that its current capacity is not as strong as it originally thought. The results of this exercise should also be interpreted in the context of the organization's scope and stage of development.

DIAGNOSTIC

Instructions: Choose your level of agreement with the following statements. After each section, add up your total score in the grey rows.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT					
Organizational Culture & Practice Around Evaluation					
1. Our organization sees **evaluation** as a tool that is **integral to our work**.	4	3	2	1	
2. Our organization **models a willingness to be evaluated** by ensuring that evaluations, both their process and findings, are routinely conducted and visible to others within and outside of our organization.	4	3	2	1	
3. Our organization has an **effective communication and reporting capability** to explain evaluation processes and disseminate findings, both positive and negative, within and outside of our organization.	4	3	2	1	
4. Our organization **promotes and facilitates internal staff members' learning and reflection** in meaningful ways in evaluation planning, implementation and discussion of findings ("learning by doing").	4	3	2	1	
5. Our organization **values learning**, as demonstrated by staff actively asking questions, gathering information, and thinking critically about how to improve their work.	4	3	2	1	
Sectional Score					
Organizational Commitment & Support for Evaluation					
6. **Key leaders** in our organization **support evaluation**.	4	3	2	1	
7. Our organization has established **clear expectations for the evaluation roles** of different staff.	4	3	2	1	
8. Our organization ensures **that staff have the information and skills that they need** for successful participation in evaluation efforts (e.g., access to evaluation resources through websites and professional organizations, relevant training).	4	3	2	1	

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
9. Our organization allows **adequate time and opportunities to collaborate on evaluation activities**, including, when possible, being physically together in an environment free from interruptions.	4	3	2	1	
10. Our organization provides **financial support** (beyond what is allocated for evaluation through specific grants) **to integrate evaluation** into program activities.	4	3	2	1	
11. Our organization has a **budget line item** to ensure ongoing evaluation activities.	4	3	2	1	
12. Our organization has **existing evaluation data collection tools and practices** that we can apply/adapt to subsequent evaluations.	4	3	2	1	
13. Our organization has **integrated evaluation processes** purposefully into ongoing organizational practices.	4	3	2	1	
Sectional Score					
Using Data to Inform Ongoing Work					
14. Our organization **modifies its course of action based on evaluation findings** (e.g., changes to specific programs or organizational-wide changes).	4	3	2	1	
15. **Evaluation findings are integrated into decision making** when deciding how to focus our work and what strategies to pursue.	4	3	2	1	
16. Managers look to **evaluation** as one important input to help them **improve staff performance and manage for results**.	4	3	2	1	
Sectional Score					
EVALUATION EXPERIENCE OF STAFF					
Existing Evaluation Knowledge & Experience					
17. Our organization has staff that have a **basic understanding of evaluation** (e.g., key evaluation terms, concepts, theories, assumptions).	4	3	2	1	
18. Our organization has staff that are **experienced in designing evaluations** that take into account available resources, feasibility issues (e.g., access to and quality of data, timing of data collection) and information needs of different evaluation stakeholders.	4	3	2	1	

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
19. Our organization can **identify which data collection methods are most appropriate for different outcome areas** (e.g., changes in norms require determining what people think about particular issues, so surveys, focus groups and interviews are appropriate).	4	3	2	1	
20. Our organization has staff with experience **developing data collection tools and collecting data** utilizing a variety of strategies, such as focus group sessions, interviews, surveys, observations and document reviews.	4	3	2	1	
21. Our organization has staff that know how to **analyze data and interpret what the data mean**.	4	3	2	1	
22. Our organization has staff that are knowledgeable about and/or experienced at **developing recommendations** based on evaluation findings.	4	3	2	1	
Sectional Score					
Developing a Conceptual Model for Our Work/Designing Evaluation					
23. Our organization has **articulated how we expect change to occur** and how we expect specific activities to contribute to this change.	4	3	2	1	
24. Our organization has **clarity about what we want to accomplish in the short term** (e.g., one to three years) and we agree on concrete examples of what success will look like.	4	3	2	1	
25. Our organization has **articulated how our goals and strategies connect to broader change efforts**.	4	3	2	1	
26. Our organization's **evaluation design has the flexibility** to adapt as needed to changes in external conditions affecting our work (e.g., political climate, economic conditions, policy environment). For example, evaluation benchmarks and indicators can be modified as the project evolves.	4	3	2	1	
27. Our organization has **tools and methods for evaluating the dynamic or changing elements** of our work.	4	3	2	1	
Sectional Score					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Defining Benchmarks & Indicators				
28. Our organization **measures outcomes, not just outputs**. Outputs are quantifiable activities, services or events while outcomes are measurable results or changes a program/organization would like to see take place over time and that stem directly from the intended result of specific strategies (e.g., an output might be the number of legislators attending a briefing event while an outcome would be the change in the legislators' behavior as a result of attending the event).	4	3	2	1
29. Our organization can identify **outcome indicators** that are important/relevant for our work.	4	3	2	1
30. Our organization has identified **what indicators are appropriate for measuring the impact of our work** (e.g., did our programs change attitudes?, did our interventions change policy?, did our efforts raise money or increase volunteer hours?, did our work result in more children in schools?).	4	3	2	1
31. Our organization can identify **what indicators are appropriate for measuring how we do our work** (e.g., has our organization strengthened its relationships with elected officials? Have we tested our assumption that "raising awareness" will result in changed behavior?).	4	3	2	1
32. Since many of the problems nonprofits tackle are multi-faceted and complex, and social change goals can take years to achieve, our organization **identifies and tracks interim outcomes that can be precursors of longer-term or more lasting change**, such as new and strengthened partnerships, higher program enrollment numbers, new donors, greater public support, and more media coverage, that tell us if we are making progress and are on the right track.	4	3	2	1
Sectional Score				

SCORING INSTRUCTIONS & INTERPRETATION

Calculating Your Score

Write your total score for each section in the appropriate row and divide by the number of questions in each section to come up with your sectional score. Then, add up your sectional scores and divide by 32 to get your overall score. Round your scores to the nearest hundredth (i.e., two decimal points).

Overall Score Sheet

Section	Score	÷	Number of Questions	=	Sectional Score
ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT					
Organizational Culture & Practice Around Evaluation		÷	5	=	
Organizational Commitment & Support for Evaluation		÷	8	=	
Using Data to Inform Ongoing Work		÷	3	=	
EVALUATION EXPERIENCE OF STAFF					
Existing Evaluation Knowledge & Experience		÷	6	=	
Developing a Conceptual Model for Our Work / Designing Evaluation		÷	5	=	
Defining Benchmarks & Indicators		÷	5	=	
OVERALL SCORE		÷	32	=	

Interpreting your score

Using your Sectional and Overall scores, refer to the chart below for your level of capacity.

Score	1.00–1.51	1.52–2.49	2.50–3.48	3.49–4.00
Capacity Level	**Need for increased capacity**	**Emerging level of capacity in place**	**Moderate level of capacity in place**	**Significant level of capacity in place**

Capacity Level Feedback

Need for increased capacity: There is low or uneven strength in your organization's evaluation expertise. There may be very limited measurement and tracking of performance, and most of your evaluation is based on anecdotal evidence. While your organization collects some data on program activities and outputs (e.g., number of children served), there are few measurements of social impact (e.g., drop-out rate lowered).

Emerging level of capacity in place: You have the essential elements of evaluation in place, but there is room for improvement. Your performance is partially measured and your progress is partially tracked. While your organization collects solid data on program activities and outputs (e.g., number of children served) it lacks data-driven, externally validated social impact measurement.

Moderate level of capacity in place: Your organization has a very respectable evaluation capacity. You regularly measure your performance and track your progress in multiple ways to consider the social, financial and organizational impacts of program and activities. You also use a multiplicity of performance indicators, and while you measure your social impact, an external, third-party evaluation perspective is often missing.

Significant level of capacity in place: Your organization has an exemplary level of organizational evaluation capacity. You have a well-developed comprehensive, integrated system for measuring your organization's performance and progress on continual basis, including the social, financial and organizational impacts of program and activities. You also focus on a small number of clear, measurable and meaningful key performance indicators. You strategically use external, third-party experts to measure your social impact.

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