

Program and evaluation  
design for the common good:  
**The role of evaluators in grant  
proposal writing**

Ellen Roscoe Iverson, PhD

Science Education Resource Center

Carleton College

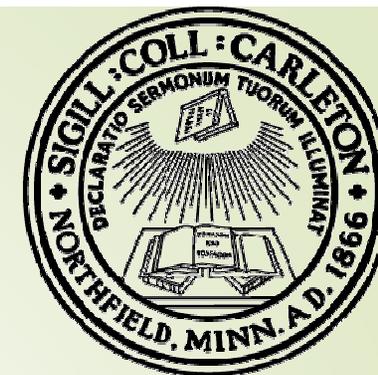
American Evaluation Association 2017 Roundtable



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<http://serc.carleton.edu>



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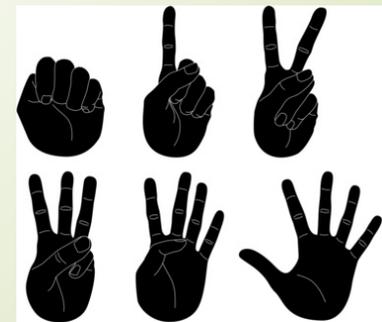
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# Overview

- **My Goal:** Get group thinking about role of evaluators in grant proposal writing
- Following roundtable, participants will be able to:
  - Describe why evaluators' role is critical in grant proposal writing
  - Use situational analysis to determine their interest and commitment to a proposal
  - Apply project management strategies to respond to a proposal inquiry
  - Formulate approaches that yield fundable, compelling, inspiring, and rigorous evaluations
- Process framework
  - Strategies
  - Examples from the field





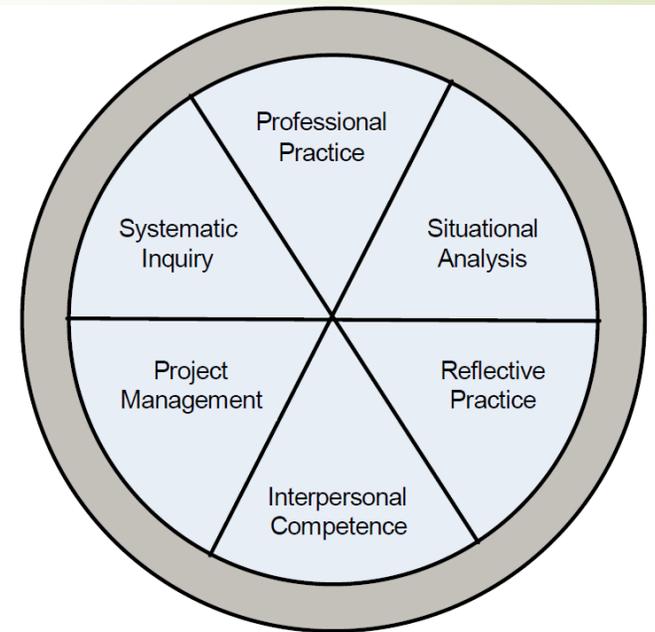
# Why evaluators are critical

- Proposals as a first step for social betterment
- Evaluation designs can make or break funding
- Proposals written under tight timelines require full set of evaluation competencies

# Essential Competencies for Program Evaluators

Five Domains (8/28/17)

- Professional practice
- Methodology
- Context
- Planning and management
- Interpersonal



Stevahn, King, Ghere, Minnema  
(2004)

# Proposal Process Framework

Initial  
contact

Early  
homework/  
conversations

Estimates  
and rough  
design

Plan  
development

Post  
proposal

Proposal due  
date





# How it sometimes starts. . .

Can you field this one?

Cathryn A. Manduca  
Director, Science Education Resource Center

Begin forwarded message:  
From:  
Subject: **hello and question/advice**  
Date: August 3, 2017 at 4:45:18 PM CDT  
To: cmanduca@carleton.edu

Hi Cathy,

I'm working on a project here at Super College to build a *STEM* program. As I envision it, our program will be designed to facilitate student access to information & resources both local to us, and beyond promote student cohort building, and bring faculty together to exchange ideas. It is modeled loosely on a number of centers. The thing I'm thinking about at the moment is assessment. Could we talk sometime about how you have built assessments into evaluating SERC programs?

Hope all is well,



I'm working on a project here at Super College to build a *STEM* program. As I envision it, our program will be designed to facilitate student access to information & resources both local to us, and beyond promote student cohort building, and bring faculty together to exchange ideas. It is modeled loosely on a number of centers. The thing I'm thinking about at the moment is assessment. Could we talk sometime about how you have built assessments into evaluating SERC programs?



# Initial Contact

Reflect as evaluator what is my:

- ▶ Commitment to proposed work and what are likely challenges
- ▶ Substantive expertise and what is needed
- ▶ Assessment of whether a single or team of evaluators will be needed
- ▶ Assessment of the synergies or areas for growth the proposed project could provide



# Initial Contact

- What is the nature of purpose/use of proposed project?
- Why are they seeking an evaluator?
- What is timeline for proposal and timeline for project?
- What is known about the scope and budget of proposed project and anticipated evaluation?
- **Decision point: Yes or No**



## Think and share

- ▶ What factors (timing, relationship, nature of intervention) inform your decision?
- ▶ How much intellectual effort are you willing to spend?

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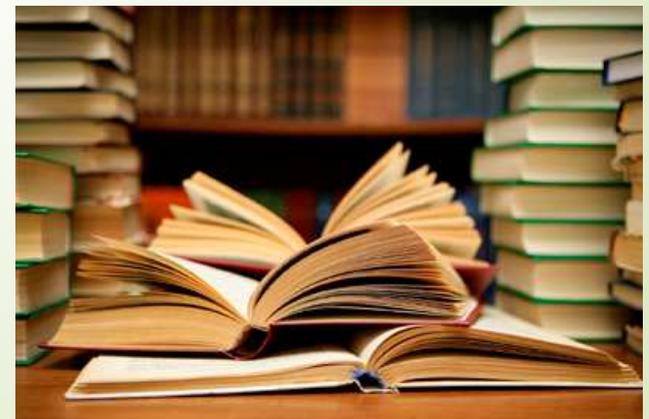
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# Early Homework

- What homework has been done and could be done on foundation solicitation?
- What restrictions on funding are known?
- Does the project have an existing history?
- Who are the key players?
- How is the given program understood to influence or contribute to specific outcomes (aka is program theory articulated)?



# Early Conversations

- Are other evaluators being considered?
- Could you develop evaluation questions?
- Are there theories that are more appropriate?
- What types of evaluation approaches seem feasible and compelling?
- How much influence can you exert on the program theory?
- Do you have enough information related to program theory, scope, timeline, budget?
- **Decision point: Yes or No**





## Think and share

- What models and strategies do you use for balancing compelling evidence with short timelines and lean budgets?
- How can you positively influence cultural competence or social equity in program theory?

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# Estimates and Rough Design

- What resources will proposed budget allow?
- What types of evaluation approaches/design can fit within the budget and timeline?
- How will evaluation be used?
- What comparison estimates are available from past evaluations?
- What extras are needed: communication, transcription, software, website, travel, copy/ mailing, page print charges?



## Think and share

- How can you tell if proposal writers are likely to submit?
- How do you evaluate whether a proposed project is fundable?
- How likely will the project stay on schedule?



# Plan Development

- What type of documentation on evaluation is needed for proposal?
  - Budget
  - Statement of work
  - Narrative with literature cited
  - Theory of change
  - Letter of commitment
  - CV or bio or resume
- How receptive are proposal writers to input on program itself? And proposal writing ?



# Post Proposal

- Documentation of what was actually proposed
- Update estimates of actual work, communication templates
- Institutional Review Board application
- Follow up communications with proposers

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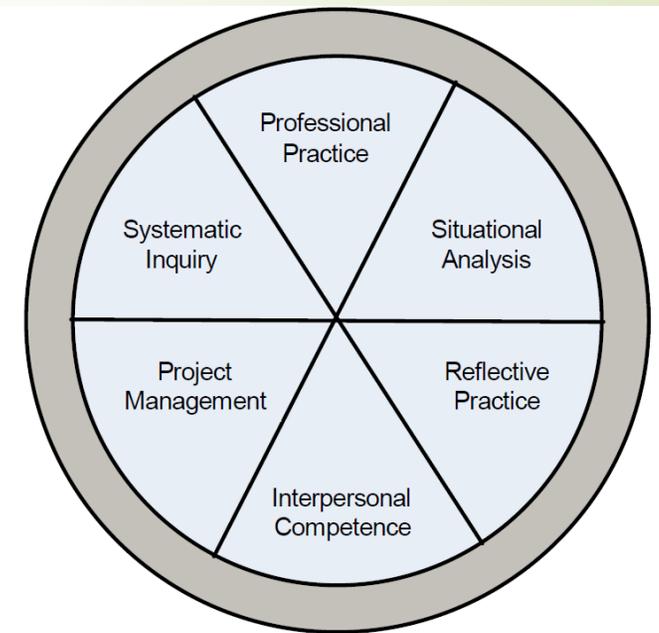
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# Essential Competencies for Program Evaluators

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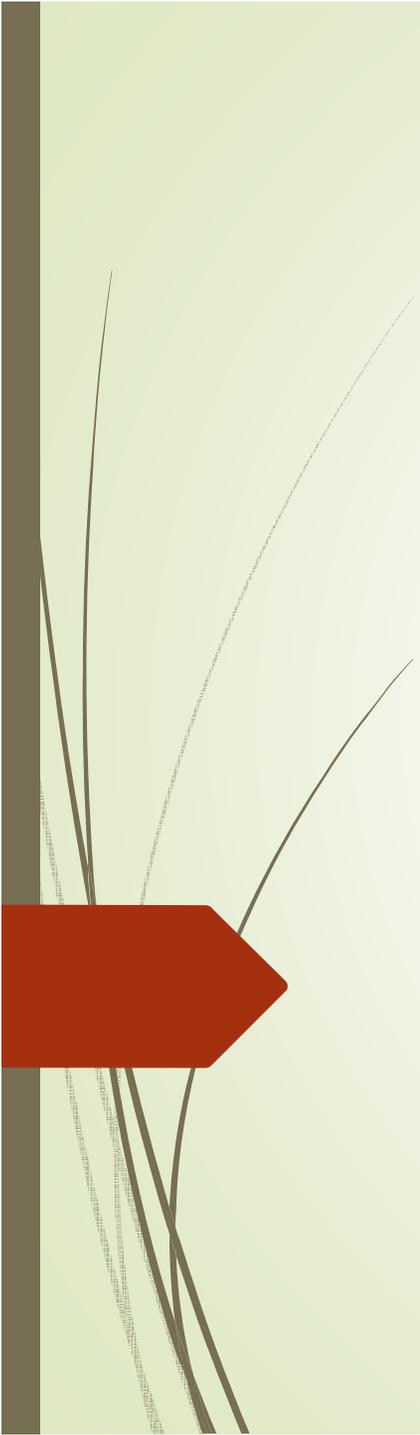
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Thank you  
<https://serc.carleton.edu/152569>

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