

I think we are using an evaluative mindset to determine the direction of the Agency. We continuously ask questions now: What is the information we need? How do we get the information? What is the best method to use? What is the time frame to implement? When can data be available? . . . As Executive Director, I now have a team of "evaluative minds" to strategically look at areas to improve and develop.

Executive Director, Evaluation Capacity Building Trainee

Organizational Benefits and Challenges of Investing in Evaluative Capacity

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This paper is designed to answer stakeholder questions about what evaluative capacity is, how it can be developed and sustained, and why sustained evaluative capacity may be worth the investment.

Understanding Evaluation and Evaluative Capacity

Evaluation is a process that applies systematic inquiry to program management, improvement, and decision making. Evaluation is also used to assess the status or progress of a strategy (i.e., a group of meaningfully connected programs, not just the simple aggregation of multiple programs) or an initiative (a grouping of strategies).

Evaluation Capacity is the ability of staff and their organizations to do evaluation. Because evaluation is systematic, it involves proficiency in a particular set of skills.

- Asking questions of substance
- Determining what data are required to answer specific questions
- Collecting data using appropriate strategies
- Analyzing collected data and summarizing findings
- Using and sharing the findings

Evaluation is an active, dynamic process. It is the ability to do evaluation—to assess what is taking place with a program, a strategy, or an initiative—that allows an organization to use data to inform its decision making. For evaluation to be relevant, it must respond to important questions, be accurate and timely, and provide a springboard for action. Evaluation capacity used well leads to programs, strategies, and initiatives that allow organizations to better deliver on their missions and to better meet the needs of those they