The Complexity of Institutionalizing Evaluation as a Best-Practice in North-American Quitlines

A Paper Submitted to the American Journal of Evaluation
Study Overview

**Goal:** To elucidate and describe the complex factors influencing the implementation and institutionalization of the evaluation ‘best-practice’ in the Quitlines

- Uses Qualitative, Interpretivist approach
- Builds on the KIQNIC study
  - Quantitative, Positivist approach
  - Developed a list of 23 best practices

**Practice:** “to conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of the quitline”
Methods
## Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAQC</th>
<th>Service Providers</th>
<th>State Funders</th>
<th>CDC</th>
<th>Evaluation Contractors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Recruitment: Convenience and snowball sampling
- Added recruitment question to the KIQNIC survey
- Sample: 20 decision-makers (e.g., Director, coordinator)
- 2-Canadian; 18-USA
- 19 semi-structured interviews (45-75min in length)
Thematic Analysis

- Systems change framework: Developed based on the Organizational change + Systems thinking (System dynamics & CAS) literature

- Four overarching system elements to consider in systems change:
  a. System norms (values, assumptions, beliefs)
  b. System resources (human, economic, social)
  c. System regulations (policies, practices, procedures)
  d. System operations (power & decision-making)

- More detailed sub-themes were identified from the data
Results
System Norms

1. Perspective of the Practice:
   - Definitions of the practice
   - Goal of practice

2. Justification for funding as a driver

3. Relationship between evaluation and QL operations

4. Conducting meaningful utilization-focused evaluation
System Resources

1. Human resources
   1. Skills and knowledge
   2. Designated staff

2. Social resources/relationships
   1. NAQC and CDC
   2. Service provider and funders
   3. QL and 3rd party evaluation contractors
   4. QL with the state
   5. QL to QL

3. Economic resources
   1. Cost of evaluation
   2. Funding arrangements
System Regulations

Refers to the policies, practices, procedures and routines that guide actors in the system to behave in a unified manner and these must be aligned with the desired change goal (i.e., institutionalizing evaluation) (Foster-Fishman, 2007).

Two Subthemes:

1. Funding mandate to conduct evaluation
2. Collection of Minimal Data Set (MDS) data elements
System Operations: Power & Decision-making

1. NAQC power
   Subtheme: Inclusion and conformity

2. CDC/Federal government power

3. State funder power

4. Service provider power

5. Power over information & resources
   Subtheme: Ownership of data
Conclusion

- Institutionalizing the evaluation practice is highly complex with factors interacting across different system levels (eg. Quitline network, federal) and parts (eg. Norms, context)

- Data suggests that a systems change approach is needed to improve implementation of the evaluation practice
  - Change requires coherent interventions across different levels and parts of the system
  - Leverage points can serve as intervention opportunities to shift the entire system to the desired goal

- Implementation of other practices may also benefit from using the systems change framework as a planning guide
Implications & Next Steps

- Further explore and confirm study results on a larger scale
- Develop interventions targeting the key systems elements needed for change

**Example 1:** Perspective that evaluation is not necessary because quitlines are already an evidence-based practice

- How many people believe this? Who are they?
- Why does this perspective exist?
- How can this perspective be changed?
Next steps cont’d

Example 2: Utilization of evaluation findings
- Which quitlines are not utilizing evaluation data?
- Why aren’t evaluation findings being utilized more?
- How can NAQC assist quitlines to utilize evaluation data?

Example 3: Ownership and access to evaluation data
- Do the relevant stakeholders have the necessary access to raw data that they need to explore evaluation questions?
- If not, how can this problem be remedied?