Strategies for Supporting Comprehensive Evaluations

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The active-reactive-adaptive evaluator works with decision makers to design an evaluation that includes any and all data that will help shed light on evaluation questions, given constraints of resources and time. Such an evaluator is committed to research designs that are relevant, rigorous, understandable, and able to produce useful results that are valid, reliable, and believable.

Michael Q. Patton
Qualitative Evaluation Methods

In the last chapter, the author discussed important aspects of initiating, planning, and implementing state and local evaluations from an organizational and political viewpoint. In the chronology of user-oriented planning activities associated with program evaluation, information dissemination and utilization represent the final set of related planning and research responsibilities. Communicating evaluation information that is usable by decisionmakers, and at those points in the decisionmaking process where receptivity to such information is likely to be the greatest, requires a conscious effort on the part of evaluators and agency planners working in partnership with them. The author made it clear that dissemination and utilization must be anticipated and dealt with throughout an evaluation effort. Doing so increases the relevance of the conclusions based on research findings and the recommendations for action that flow from these conclusions.

Information Dissemination and Use

The political process tends to resist research as a source of information, unless it can be used to support a position already formulated.
Bureaucracies are the foundation of modern societies, but one of their enduring traits is resistance to change, which is a potential outcome of program evaluation (Perrow 1979). The academic training and professional norms of evaluators predispose them to use technical language in explaining evaluation plans and results. These realities have affected the ability of evaluation sponsors, planners, and researchers to influence the policy process.

Even though well-understood by program practitioners, the "organizational politics" of evaluation has only recently been given serious attention by those involved in evaluation research (Cronbach 1980; Chelimsky 1987a; Palumbo 1987). And most of what has been written about this phenomenon has been applied to national-level evaluation. State and local environments differ regarding the specific political and organization influences operating, but common issues surface at all levels of government regarding the most effective context for disseminating and using evaluation information.

For example, a 1987 exploratory survey of state and local program directors and oversight staff in JTPA yielded insights similar to those reflected in the new national literature on evaluation politics (Blalock 1989). There was a consensus among respondents that the following conditions were essential to the successful communication and use of evaluation information:

1. Evaluation questions must be framed in such a way that their answers will be policy relevant.
2. Policymakers, planners, and managers must be invested in these evaluation questions and the use of evaluation results from the beginning of the evaluation planning process, i.e., evaluation must be perceived as meeting their decisionmaking needs and interests if they are to commit needed evaluation resources.
3. Determining how the new information from an evaluation is to be used is a prerequisite to deciding how feasible it is to conduct the evaluation, i.e., determining whether this information will be used for ongoing operational management, short-term policy decisions, or major long-term policy shifts.
4. Decisionmakers must be involved at some level with the develop-
ment of evaluation plans and strategies for using the results for future planning and program operation, i.e., they must be kept in the review and approval loop.

5. Top management must be involved to some degree in the evolution of evaluation plans and activities.

6. To be considered credible, research designs must be as unbiased as possible, and the sources of data as accurate and reliably collected as can be accomplished within existing resources.

7. Evaluation activities must be presented to program staff in a positive, nonpunitive, nonthreatening way to assure their acceptance and cooperation, i.e., presented honestly as a way to make practical improvements in policies and programs.

8. Program oversight staffs must have more support for and access to intensive training in the specialized skills required for both evaluation planning and program evaluation.

9. Evaluation findings must be timely, directly applicable to programs, and presented to users in nontechnical language.

Although this survey reported a surprisingly high level of evaluation activity on the part of most states and a large number of local service organizations, it also revealed a candid litany of barriers to bringing program evaluation into the JTPA system. The following were the issues of greatest concern:

1. Lack of commitment to evaluation as an organizational goal, paucity of management directives supporting evaluation, hesitation of managers to raise evaluative questions, and difficulty in gaining acceptance of evaluation as an integral oversight function and practical management tool.

2. Difficulty in interesting state and local policy councils in evaluation and in generating questions of potential use in carrying out their policy development, coordination, and oversight responsibilities.

3. Insufficient funding, staff time, and research expertise.

4. Unclear differentiation between monitoring and evaluation in designing and implementing evaluations, and difficulty in discarding a "monitoring mind-set" that associates evaluation results with program sanctions.
5. Intra-organizational bureaucratic territoriality, competition over turf, fear of losing control over programs, and displacement of evaluation goals by organizational agendas.

6. Problems with data reliability, access, and confidentiality, and a lack of imaginativeness in merging data from multiple data bases across programs.

7. Concern about building the necessary collaborative relationships with other agencies, and assuring that important constituencies have a sufficient sense of ownership in evaluation efforts to support an appropriate use of evaluation findings.

In general, the most disturbing issues were evaluation funding, the research sophistication of evaluation efforts, and their neutrality. Implied was an understandable resistance to moving beyond traditional program perimeters and their organizational contexts to seek funds, acquire expertise, and develop new ways to make evaluation relevant to the policymaking process.

This viewpoint on the evaluation challenge reveals themes common to other social programs concerning the organizational status of evaluation, evaluation commitment and capability, evaluation resources, and the utilization of new objective information. Such themes are not new. Those involved in knowledge production have always faced fundamental problems of this kind. While recognizing that such problems exist, we are entering a particularly exciting period in terms of the application of scientific tools to the study of state and local programs.

The scientific and technological base for program evaluation was never stronger. There is a new legislative oversight mandate in many programs, which supports evaluation. States and local areas have greater control over the resources that reinforce such a commitment, and there is growing acceptance, interest, and activity at the state and local level in establishing an evaluation capability. State and local program evaluation is a rapidly evolving phenomenon of considerable significance and potential utility. Therefore, it is important to give attention to some changes that might enhance the ability of states and local program organizations to meet the evaluation challenge.
Strategies for Meeting the Challenge

Unflattering myths persist in the practitioner community about research, but the assumptions that keep these myths alive are weakening. The increased emphasis on cost-efficiency now supports the analysis of routinely collected program information to answer more complex and useful questions than are posed or can be answered by program monitoring activities. The more visible influence of the private sector in program decisionmaking has brought with it the rhetoric of industrial quality control and product research, which has indirectly supported the objective study of social program processes and their outcomes.

Congressional pressure on states to assume new oversight responsibilities as a tradeoff for increased power has led states and local areas to consider how to accommodate the evaluation function. The risks in having only subjective information to offer to decisionmakers now frequently outweighs resistance to mounting scientific studies. The tedious withering away of myths, however, is not enough. Changes must be made in how we view the role of evaluation, the way we acquire resources to support and use it, where we locate it organizationally, what range of methods we need to consider in studying evaluation issues, and the kinds of expertise we must acquire to conduct comprehensive evaluations.

Redefining Expectations about the Role of Program Evaluation

In this book we have repeatedly emphasized that the major role of evaluation is to improve programs as strategies for resolving social problems. But we must guard against overstating the ends that evaluations can accomplish in terms of affecting the conclusions of key decisionmakers in the policy process. Exaggerating the role research can play merely sets up evaluation sponsors and participants for a chronic sense of failure regarding the impact of research efforts. Furthermore, it can distract research advocates from identifying and utilizing more realistic opportunities for affecting program decisions.

An overly dogmatic and inflexible view of what can be accomplished with evaluative information can also deflect policymaker’s attention
from the complexity of social problems—the multiple causes that must be addressed, and the myriad interrelated program alternatives that must be marshaled to resolve them. We need to develop a less territorial, more pragmatic, and shrewder view of evaluation's role.

An adjusted definition of the role of evaluation might more wisely view decisions as the result of debate among many actors, the outcome of negotiation and sometimes conflict. As Lee Cronbach comments, "Action is determined by a pluralistic community" (1980). No one evaluation or series of evaluations readily supports one right decision. Too many important questions for making an ideal decision have to be left unanswered, or are unanswerable even by scientific means. As Carol Weiss suggests, there are only "best compromises" (1988). Also, decisions frequently bypass formal decisionmaking processes. They are often the by-product of a progressive, largely nonrational narrowing of existing alternatives—a "nonlinear process," according to Gary Henry (1987). In this context, we must appreciate the significant and more subtle indirect effects as well as the more immediate and tangible direct effects of evaluation activities on the nature and content of social programs. These quite different kinds of influence may be equally pervasive.

There is little question that certain evaluation contexts and situations produce immediate policy or program effects. In cases where decision-makers have requested a specific evaluation for the purpose of making immediate changes within a particular time frame, for instance, or where the underlying agenda for conducting an evaluation is a clear demand for and commitment to change, there is often a visible, easily describable influence for evaluation. There are situations in which the policy question is of fundamental interest to the intended user, and the evaluation findings clearly answer that question.

Findings can lead directly to legislative action, i.e., program reauthorization and new program rules and regulations. Synthesizing findings from past evaluations and applying this analysis to a high-priority subject area can sway decisions. Over a particular year, the U.S. General Accounting Office produced 290 evaluation reports with 1,135 recommendations. A study of what happened to these recommendations
revealed that 80% percent were accepted by the federal agencies to which they were directed (Chelimsky 1987b).

Other contexts and situations—conceivably the majority—involves indirect influences. Evaluation information may shape assumptions subsequently taken for granted by political and organizational decision-makers in the process of negotiating decisions, such as assumptions about the nature of the problems to be resolved, the characteristics of those to be changed, the change strategies considered most effective. This information may influence the design of new programs through the accumulation of evidence from past research. It may influence the language of the policy debate—reporting empirical evidence to support positions lends credibility and power to those positions. It may have an effect as a rationale for change, circumventing more obvious barriers to the utilization of evaluation information. It may expand the policy debate by including a broader range of alternatives to consider. It may set parameters around the debate, such as which issues are to be given attention, and how they are to be defined and prioritized. It may reorient policy agendas by suggesting which program implementation theories may be flawed and which reasonably effective in producing the desired results (Cronbach 1980; Chelimsky 1987a).

Evaluations can also alert decision-makers to an immediate social crisis or to troublesome long-term trends requiring a policy response. They can help provide a new framework within which issues are considered, supporting innovation in policy development and program design. They can contribute information that supports the formation of coalitions that do wield direct persuasive power over the policy process. In rethinking the role of evaluation in the policy process, we may have to relinquish the naive expectation that evaluation must always have a prominent, direct, measurable, and immediate impact on policy and program decisions.

Developing New Approaches for Securing Evaluation Support, Resources, and Utilization

The impressive evaluation efforts now occurring at state and local
levels have, nevertheless, been constrained by dependence on scarce resources within the programs being evaluated. The JTPA survey, for instance, indicated that nearly all state and local organizations paid for evaluation activities exclusively with JTPA administrative funds, a small pot of money. Only two states had ever leveraged funds across the programs to be coordinated with JTPA. Only one had acquired funding outside the JTPA system. Most agencies used in-house JTPA staff in program monitoring or management information system (MIS) units to design and implement evaluations. Remarkably few engaged in joint cross-program evaluations, relied on research consultants, or used a combination of in-house and outside research expertise.

One would suppose that concern about a lack of general support for evaluation within JTPA and the recognized need for new in-depth information would have led to more imaginative efforts to combine resources from multiple sources. Yet, it was clear that in most cases states and local areas had not fully exploited chances to expand their resource bases. Although survey respondents were concerned about evaluation utilization, it was obvious that minimal energy had been invested in systematically anticipating utilization issues throughout an evaluation, or in advocacy and marketing activities once an evaluation was completed. In a period of reduced resources in the 1980s, this revealed a confining bureaucratic mind-set about resource opportunities.

This suggests the need for a new sense of empowerment at the state and local level that resists the tendency to rely on limited, traditional sources of support. There is risk in leaving the apparent safety of familiar organizational territory—a sense of loss of control in reaching out to other people and other programs. Collaboration involves an inevitable renegotiation of authority and ownership. Nevertheless, new attitudes are liberating in terms of expanding the scope of evaluation efforts and increasing evaluation resources.

Empowerment, however, will require the purposeful creation of new collaborative relationships—from the beginning to the end of the evaluation process, and beyond. States and local organizations will need to construct support networks that bring together representatives of constituencies that are significant sources of support in considering evalu-
Strategies for Supporting Comprehensive Evaluations 361
ation issues, provide a base for evaluation activities, and ensure the appropriate use of new information.

Rather than focusing on a lack of access to resources needed for evaluation, it will be important to concentrate on identifying potential resources, bringing them into the social service system, investing contributors as partners in efforts to make that system more accountable, and offering something of value to these new partners in return. New partners can be offered public recognition, increased organizational credibility, and information required to pursue their own goals. New linkages can be established, giving them greater access to the resources they need. In building support networks, ways to offer opportunities for a mutually profitable exchange with these constituencies will have to be developed.

Experimentation with leveraging funds and other kinds of assistance should also be encouraged across different pools of funds within programs, across different service providers who are expected to function cooperatively, and within a larger system of integrated services. Developing funding consortia to jointly fund evaluations, and collaborative bodies to receive and allocate jointly contributed resources is important.

Crafting general strategies for approaching funding sources at the national level and developing specific strategies tailored to carefully selected private corporate and foundation sources should be part of this innovative resource acquisition effort. To be successful, these strategies must be responsive to the kinds of social exchanges required to interest and invest potential contributors. (See Feldman, chapter 5 in this volume.)

These suggestions should not imply the creation of a large, amorphous network of people; acquiring resource partners should be a highly selective process. The core of a support network needs to be organized as a formal advisory body, which consolidates the network’s influences and helps maintain it over time. The size and purpose of such a group can be limited, so that its mission is not easily displaced. Composition can be confined to representatives of constituencies that wield the most power in obtaining evaluation resources and securing the use of the information produced. Assigning a specialized planner to act as a liaison
between this advisory body and ongoing evaluation activities can develop important bonds among program practitioners, evaluators, contributors, and users, and can help them to coordinate their agendas.

Building effective organizational linkages secures mutual investment over time, so that future evaluations will have an immediate base of support. Formalizing a support network increases opportunities to generate otherwise inaccessible funds and nonmonetary contributions outside the program. It protects evaluation activities from being co-opted by special interests, including those invested in the program, and provides a buffer when evaluation results are controversial. More important, it can influence a program's status in its environment by increasing public perception that a program is genuinely accountable, and by giving evaluation special legitimacy as an accepted part of decisionmaking.

**Increasing the Autonomy of Evaluation Activities and Their Influence on Policies and Programs**

The JTPA survey referred to earlier identified a problem faced in most social programs—the organizational location and autonomy of program evaluation activities. Most JTPA evaluation activities had reportedly been carried out by staff within programs being evaluated, in particular by monitoring and reporting staff. Only a few of the larger state agencies and urban program organizations had used evaluation units separate from program divisions to carry out JTPA evaluations.

This is understandable; funding for oversight activities has traditionally emphasized monitoring programs for compliance with rules and regulations. The new interest in meeting formal performance standards has increased the priority given to monitoring the allocation of scarce program dollars. Expectations for monitoring staff have encouraged a strong investment in the program being reviewed, and the location of monitoring activities within program divisions has legitimized this interest. This lack of neutrality, however, can seriously reduce the objectivity of evaluation activities.

One practical resolution of this problem is to relocate evaluation activities where they can be given greater organizational priority, funding, and autonomy. One of the most useful ways to accomplish this is to
develop *evaluation units* that are semi-autonomous from program divisions and serve an evaluation function for multiple programs within a state agency, or are given responsibility for a singular and separate oversight function within a local program organization. The directors of such units would be required to report to the decisionmaking level of the organization. This concept of state or local level "general accounting offices" has been applied successfully by several states and large program organizations.

This kind of unit could be the focus of network building for evaluation activities, and assume responsibility for working with an evaluation advisory body. It could become the focal point for assessing resource needs for evaluation and contracting with state universities, local community colleges, and private research firms for additional expertise. Its basic funding within state agencies could be collaborative, drawing from multiple sources of administrative and technical assistance monies as well as outside sources. At the state and local level, separate evaluation units could more easily attract contributions specifically targeted to program evaluation activities, and legitimize the acquisition of staff sufficiently trained to participate in designing and implementing comprehensive evaluations.

There is always the danger that autonomous evaluation units will become isolated from programs, exercise too much professional discretion, develop their own language and agenda, and become threatening to program management. However, such units could be mandated to maintain close connections with program divisions through liaison personnel with evaluation planning expertise, who are outstationed with evaluation units, or through staff working within a program division and in close partnership with the evaluation unit's research staff.

A significant advantage of such units is their potential for concentrating evaluation fund search, networking, research contracting, research, and evaluation marketing activities in one place. Their position on the organizational chart permits them to be direct recipients of high-level decisions and to exert an influence on the organization's overall oversight commitment and direction. Perhaps most important, this kind of organizational niche for program evaluation assures maximum objectiv-
ity, encourages research competence, adds stature to the role of evaluation in the organization, and offers the best opportunity to actively advocate the use of evaluation information.

**Expanding the Evaluation Repertoire**

As discussed in chapter 1, there has been a tendency to oversimplify programs in order to study them more quantitatively, and to focus on highly selected aspects of programs without considering how they fit together. There has been little systematic interest in testing the accuracy of the assumptions underlying program design, or in viewing the components of programs as part of a larger organizational system.

As perverse as it may sound, increasing interest in the social sciences over the last three decades is in part responsible for these limited perspectives. This interest led to specialization within social science research and the professionalization of evaluation research. It has had an unintended divisive effect on the research community, regarding which approaches and methods are “best”—experimental vs. nonexperimental, quantitative vs. qualitative, outcome-oriented vs. implementation-oriented. The strong traditional emphasis on net impact studies and, more recently, on experimental field studies has assigned a higher status to research in the policymaking community, but a price has been paid for greater rigor in the narrow sets of issues that can be addressed.

Even as the significance of implementation studies has gained deserved recognition, most process evaluations are being carried out independently of outcomes studies. This limits their usefulness in offering explanations for the results of outcome evaluations. This “either-or” attribute of evaluation research has restricted the evaluation repertoire unnecessarily. It is a particularly restrictive perspective in evaluating state and local programs.

As Chelimsky suggests, when the context of an evaluation involves a heated policy debate, a rigorous generalizable net impact study may offer protection to the evaluator, but be neither feasible nor appropriate in answering the question of greatest interest (1987a). Even when such a research design is the appropriate choice, timeliness may take precedence over the power of scientific rigor. Under different circumstances,
a net impact study would be imperative in answering the policy question. The increased flexibility sought in wider choices should not be viewed as compromising scientific principles and methods. It simply allows us to fully utilize them.

At state and local levels, the repertoire should offer the full range of theoretical and methodological choices and encourage the use of combinations of choices in undertaking comprehensive program evaluations. We may want to combine a rigorous net impact study using econometric methods with an exploratory study of particular aspects of implementation, or combine a survey to determine the attitudes of program personnel with a study of the gross outcomes of program participants. We may want to combine a survey of employers with a survey of clients who have been trained or employed by them. Opening up the evaluation process to more diverse opportunities that cut across different approaches and methods can free us to study issues of more direct interest to those making decisions about program change.

In expanding the evaluation repertoire we can benefit from a consideration of a broader set of research choices. We should also be concerned about the manner in which information yielded by these choices is communicated to users. We must be more responsive to decisionmakers' requests to translate evaluation findings into meaningful form from their points of view. The scientific interpretation of results must be converted into a political and organizational interpretation.

Clearly, the evaluator is obligated to make the appropriate distinction for the user among findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The evaluator's primary responsibility is to report findings as honestly as possible, with all of the necessary qualifications. There is, however, an important secondary obligation for those working in applied research. They must draw pragmatic conclusions from those findings, if possible, and suggest effective action that can be taken to improve policies and programs.

In some cases the findings will not warrant this leap. Even in this instance, the evaluator can recommend issues to study in future evaluations. In most cases, however, something will have been learned from an evaluation that supports making these progressive leaps from the
research itself. These conclusions and recommendations will not be heard by the decisionmaker unless the evaluator—with advice from practitioners—presents these ideas attractively and in nontechnical user-oriented language, trims what is irrelevant, condenses, and decides which findings are the more important ones and which can actually be addressed by those making decisions (Chelimsky 1987a; Cronbach 1980). If evaluation information from a more varied set of research opportunities is to be effective, the presentation and marketing of this information must also become an accepted part of the evaluation repertoire.

**Using a New Approach in Staffing Evaluations**

If a broader research repertoire is used, staffing evaluations differently at state and local levels is essential. Although some state agencies and local program organizations have evaluation units whose staff is well-trained in research, many more depend on staff with considerable managerial, planning, or computer science expertise, but minimal research training. It is frequently assumed that these staff members can be formally or experientially retrained to conduct evaluations, and that assigning staff members dual oversight roles is an efficient way to meet accountability responsibilities.

It is extremely difficult for those monitoring program compliance to maintain objectivity about the program being evaluated, and it is unrealistic to expect that even an intensive series of courses can substitute for graduate research training. A less-than-thorough grounding in research principles and methods constrains staff in judging the feasibility of evaluation questions, identifying the resources needed for sound evaluations, and developing viable research designs.

A separation of talent is, therefore, not only necessary but efficient. Researchers are best equipped to carry out program evaluations. Monitoring and MIS staffs have key roles to play in reviewing evaluation issues and plans, and in opening access to program information in the process of implementing evaluations. Basic evaluation training can be extremely useful in increasing their sophistication as they contribute to the evaluation process in that role.
There are several changes that can be explored, including hiring an interdisciplinary research team as the core of a central evaluation unit, having this unit selectively use outside research consultants, and redefining the evaluator's role. The benefits gained in undertaking these activities, include the following:

1. A core in-house research staff with exposure to the knowledge base of more than one social science discipline can draw from alternative theories about social problems and how they can be resolved, and from a range of methodologies for studying social programs.

2. Job descriptions for such a staff benefit from consultation with experienced researchers willing to contribute their reviews and comments. The choice of consultants should reflect the nature and extent of education, specialized training, and experience needed to construct an interdisciplinary team. Personnel selection should focus on a knowledge of social theory, research design, advanced research methods, social statistics, and computer analysis. The applicant's level of experience and success in working collaboratively with program practitioners throughout the evaluation process, including securing the use of the information produced, is also important. The political, organizational, and interpersonal skills needed to work cooperatively in pragmatic program settings requires the research team to be familiar with concepts in political and organizational theory and behavior, and interpersonal negotiation.

3. As effective as an evaluation unit may become, its integrity and objectivity will need to be maintained by supplementing this in-kind research expertise with assistance from outside researchers. An effective strategy is to contract selectively for time-limited, specialized expertise required by a particular evaluation, i.e., expertise needed but not available in-house, or expertise that needs to be obtained from a source clearly seen as politically neutral.

4. The cost of hiring researchers and contracting for specialized research expertise are important considerations. This expertise, however, is not as expensive as most states and local organizations may suppose. Many applied researchers are accessible to states and local areas through state community college and university systems, other
state higher education institutions and related research institutes, and private research organizations. These evaluators are often eager to utilize opportunities to work in applied settings and to make such experiences available to graduate students. A social exchange, as well as an exchange of fiscal benefits, is involved. Also, in servicing more than one program, an evaluation unit can be partially supported by pooling administrative and technical assistance funds. An evaluation support network can be a critical asset, and an advisory group an important source of contributed expertise.

5. Thinking more creatively about constructing a competent interdisciplinary evaluation team and maintaining useful linkages with program divisions should not distract us from expanding the role of the program evaluator. A perennial complaint is that this role is too intellectual and removed from organizational realities. Evaluators must be willing to learn to play roles beyond their primary technical responsibilities in the evaluation process, including the following:
   (a) Students of organizations, the policymaking process and how the political system works.
   (b) Research advocates with information users.
   (c) Catalysts for listening to users' concerns and helping them raise useful, researchable questions about programs.
   (d) Organizational team players within an evaluation unit, and members of a working partnership with evaluation planners operating within program divisions.
   (e) Political and organizational interpreters of evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations to users and the media.
   (f) Evaluators of the impact of evaluations, i.e., the effectiveness of evaluation efforts in influencing the direction programs take.
   (g) Consummate agents of change.

Unquestionably, the suggested changes will require more effective educational efforts to explain the benefits of applied science, increased funding for evaluation, bureaucratic commitment to evaluative activities, inventive collaboration among those responsible for programs, more sophisticated research and planning expertise, and greater appreciation of the value of accumulating a usable body of knowledge about social programs.
Concluding Thoughts

The authors of the preceding chapters have offered distinctly different, but complementary, perspectives on program evaluation at state and local levels. In the three research-oriented chapters, each author has drawn from his or her own area of social science research to design a practical, scientific approach to studying a number of important aspects of programs: the array of program outcomes experienced by clients and others to be affected by a program, a program’s net effects, and the organizational policies and practices that shape a program’s influence in creating the intended changes. Nevertheless, a commitment to comprehensive program evaluation remains the central theme. There is continuing emphasis on the informational benefits of evaluation efforts that inform decisionmakers about the multiple facets of programs and how they function in pragmatic environments.

In this respect, the authors of chapters 2, 3, and 4 encourage the reader to move toward evaluations that take into account the complexity of relationships between program outcomes and program organization. Studying high-priority implementation and outcome issues within the same historical period—a given planning cycle—permits an evaluator to explore important interrelationships among organizational factors, social interventions, and outcomes for a particular historical cohort of individuals exposed to a program, and with the group of program actors who have developed and applied program policies within that same period. This approach provides the opportunity to acquire considerably more useful information than can be obtained from isolated process and outcome studies conducted in different periods under varying program conditions.

A better understanding of the intricate relationships between program implementation and impact is directly responsive to the needs of policymakers, administrators, planners, and managers who must routinely identify problems, develop new policies, and modify programs. Part of their mission is to determine which program changes are most appropriate in resolving problems and develop strategies for making those changes. In order to carry out this mission successfully they must rely
on a broad, accurate information base.

The author of chapter 5 shifts our attention from the technical aspects of this expanded view of evaluation to the organizational and political context and environment of state and local evaluation activities. This chapter defines significant partnership roles for the evaluator and program planner in the evaluation process. It also explores some of the organizational and political barriers to evaluating, and suggests ways to reduce or work around them. Most important, it dramatizes the importance of assigning sufficient resources to the evaluation process, since the nature of those resources subtly direct and shape information production.

Viewed as a whole, the interrelated chapters of the book express the concept of evaluation introduced in chapter 1, which defines evaluation as an undertaking demanding a conscious, purposeful use of scientific and organizational knowledge, skills, and sensitivities.
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