Career Centre Evaluation: A Practitioner Guide

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Introduction

Why Evaluation?
The evaluation of career programs has become an increasingly common topic of discussion and is currently a priority for many career offices for “measuring the effectiveness of your office’s programs and services” and “demonstrating and validating the value of the career services” (NACE Journal, 2005, p. 28). A National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) 2008 Career Services Benchmarking Survey of four year colleges and universities found that nearly seven out of 10 respondents (67.8 percent) were planning to conduct an internal and/or external review/assessment of their career center within the next five years.

Purpose and Benefits of Evaluation?
The core purpose of evaluation is to **improve programming and services to our student clients.** In addition to this purpose, other benefits of evaluation include:

- To better understand the value provided by university career services and to demonstrate how these services contribute to student and graduate success;
- To understand and demonstrate how the career centre contributes to the overall strategic goals of the university;
- To inform quality improvement initiatives;
- To inform decision making with data;
- To provide accountability to clients, funders, and any other stakeholders;
- To recognize successes;
- To be proactive in establishing a rigorous assessment of services, recognizing that government or other stakeholders could impose measurements that may not be in line with career centre goals.

The University Career Centre Context
There may be agreement that evaluation has multiple benefits, but then the following question emerges:

What should a university career centre be evaluating?

There is no one answer to this question. Often, career centres are expected to measure their success based on graduate employment rates. There may be several reasons to track graduate employment, but as a indicator of career centre success this measure is insufficient, and possibly misguided. Why? Equating graduate employment rates with career centre effectiveness does not take into account that

- students’ experiences with the entire university (not just with the career centre) impact their future career successes
- graduate employment rates reflect not only the students’ entire educational and extra-curricular experience, but also other variables such as labour market conditions and other student variables (such as whether students choose to participate in activities and use services).

- employment rates do not provide data that can help inform quality improvement initiatives in the career centre. Post-graduation employment is so far removed from a student's participation in any particular career centre service (for example a half hour resume feedback session) that it is difficult, if not impossible, to make any programming decisions based on this kind of measurement.

To get a more sophisticated picture of career centre effectiveness, and to get information that can inform decision making and quality improvement, a more targeted set of measurements and evaluation practices are needed.

Current State of Practice
Evaluation is not completely new to career centres. Many have been doing some type of evaluation for a long time. Some of the common evaluation activities that have been occurring include:

Usage Statistics

For example, many career centres
- track phone calls, emails, and walk-in traffic of students/alumni, employer/recruiters, faculty/staff
- track appointment usage, including demographics (i.e. gender, year of study)
- track workshop and special event attendance
- track website visits to web sections and use of web tools

Feedback on Satisfaction

For example, many career centres collect satisfaction data from
- Workshops: feedback forms given to all participants
- Events: through online or print questionnaire
- Resume Critiques/Interview Practice Sessions: through feedback forms/surveys
- Online feedback forms for web events
- Counselling: periodic surveys of clients

Other

There are other tools some offices use to gather data, such as

- the Learning to Work annual survey from Brainstorm Consulting
- annual graduate employment surveys
- periodic target driven surveys

All of these activities have merit. However, there are far more options when it comes to creating more sophisticated evaluation strategies.

Why This Guide?
This guide is an attempt to help career centres think about, and choose, evaluation strategies.

To date, there has not been a lot of formal research conducted assessing the efficacy of career programs, and very little that speaks directly to university career offices. What career office leaders and practitioners require are tools and strategies to guide their own evaluation efforts, however they are constrained by the following:

(1)Very few relevant studies are available.
There are a handful of studies that can provide guidance for very specific evaluation projects within a career centre (for example: evaluating a career course: Brooks, 1995; Hung, 2002; Folsom & Reardon, 2001; Raphael, 2005; Reed, Reardon, Lenz, & Leierer, 2000; Stonewater, & Daniels, 1983; Ware, 1981; evaluating a job search club for

international students: Heim Bikos & Smith Furry, 1999), but these studies are limited to career courses and job search clubs.

(2) The published literature does not provide a great deal of guidance to career centres on how to evaluate their overall effectiveness.

In a review of the literature on the efficacy of career interventions, Magnussen and Roest (2004; Roest & Magnussen, 2004) report on the state of knowledge about the effectiveness of career services, and on the types of research published so far. The conclusion was that most articles were not relevant to career development practitioners. The majority of the reports contain little analysis of the impact or efficacy of specific treatment or program components; and even when positive treatment effects are found, very little description of the nature of the program, service or intervention is provided (information that career offices need in order to guide program development.) In addition, very little attention has been paid to aspects of career planning or career development processes other than exploration and decision-making behaviours when job search, work experience and other career supports are key elements of most university career offices. There are many textbooks on evaluation, but none targeted specifically to career centres.

(3)Lack of practical, easy-to-apply tools to guide evaluation.

The Canadian Research Working Group for Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development (CRWG), assessed the state of practice of the evaluation of career services in Canada (Magnussen & Lalonde, 2005). The research covered both a broad spectrum of career services and a range of settings including not-for-profit, provincial government, elementary and secondary schools, post-secondary institutions, private (for profit) agencies or private practices, and federal government agencies. Results of the surveys with career practitioners and agencies, and interviews with policy makers and employers, indicated that while all stakeholders see evaluation as important, career practitioners believe that current evaluation protocols are inadequate. The authors argue that “the data clearly suggest the need to develop better evaluation tools and processes” (p.47).

(4)Feelings of being inadequately skilled in conducting effective evaluation.

In addition, the survey of career practitioners in Canada mentioned above found that while some evaluation was occurring, participants indicated feeling an inadequacy in their evaluation competency, based not on a “lack of willingness” but on a “lack of knowledge” (Magnussen & Lalonde, 2005, p. 39). Magnussen and Lalonde (2005) contend that “making outcome assessment a reality will involve substantial improvements in our understanding of the nature of career services outcomes, the development of more accessible tools and processes for measuring those outcomes, and increased sophistication in how we use the data” (p. 48).

While there is limited published research literature that can guide career centre evaluation activities, tools and experiences are being shared amongst career offices and practitioners. Information is being shared amongst practitioners through articles in the NACE Journal (e.g. Greenberg & Harris, 2006; Ratcliffe, 2008a) and through presentations at professional conferences (e.g. Robertson, Pothier, Hiebert & Magnussen, 2008a) In addition, the University Career Centre Metrics Working Group (the authors of this guide) have created and shared a Learning Outcomes Tool as a template for setting and evaluating learning outcomes for career interventions (University Career Centre Metrics Working Group, 2006), have shared various surveys and forms developed by their member career centres, and have presented on measuring learning outcomes at a national conference (Keates & Kerford, 2007).

This guide will extend this practitioner to practitioner sharing of evaluation practices and learning.

Overall, the purpose of this guide is to help career centres

- demonstrate the impact of services to stakeholders – including clients/students, institutions, government, and the public
- make more informed decisions about program planning based on data
- learn more about the services and programs offered that are most valuable, appreciated, and efficient
- review examples of concrete tools that can be used and adapted to each career services context
- explore case studies to find out how several offices have designed and implemented evaluation practices

Terminology
A note about the terminology used in this guide:

If you review the literature, attend training sessions, or have conversations with other offices, you have likely noticed that terminology about evaluation is not used consistently. Some use the term “assessment,” others use “evaluation,” and others “metrics.” Not only are different terms used, but the same term often has different meanings depending on who is using it.

We have chosen to use the word “evaluation” in this guide in order to be consistent with the terminology used by the Canadian Research Working Group for Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development, whose theoretical framework (which will be explained in Sections 2 and 3) we are using.

Scope of the Guide
The particular emphasis of this guide is to explain a framework for evaluation that can help you create a plan for systematically collecting and using information in order to inform decision making and quality improvement initiatives. The guide will review each of the three components in the framework, inputs, processes, and outcomes, and provide example tools (such as surveys, rubrics, and spreadsheets) that have been used in the authors’ career centres. In addition, case studies will detail how five career centres have implemented evaluation and their reflections on what the authors have learned from their experiences.

The approach to evaluation covered in this guide is not the only option. Other ways of approaching evaluation include looking at **benchmarking** (comparing your career centre activities to the activities of other offices), **professional standards** (comparing your career centre procedures and activities to a set of professional standards), formal **research projects** (doing evaluation that is part of a research project, usually intended for publication in an academic journal), and considering the results of **external surveys** (such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) or the Globe and Mail Report Card). An in-depth review of these other four approaches is beyond the scope of this guide, but if you are interested in any or all of these approaches, below are some resources for helping you get started.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking is the act of comparing the activities at one location, to those of a set of comparable other locations, for example, comparing your staff to student ratio, with the staff to student ratio at career centres at other universities in Canada.

Sometimes benchmarking is done at a local level, for example when one career office contacts others to collect information. Benchmarking information at a broader level, is often provided by surveys conducted by professional associations, such as NACE and the Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (CACEE).

For example:
NACE Benchmarking Benchmarking reports available from NACE include the Recruiting Benchmarks Survey, the Career Services Benchmark Survey for Four-Year Colleges and Universities, and the Experiential Education Survey.

CACEE Benchmarking Benchmarking reports from CACEE include the Campus Recruitment and Benchmark Survey Report.

Professional Standards

There are tw sets of professional standards available for career centres. These professional standards lay out the types of services, programs, and functions of a career office. These types of standards can guide an assessment of the overall elements and outcomes of a career office and help with questions such as "*are we meeting professional standards?* and "*Are there activities that are recommended that we are not currently providing*?".

1. National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)
    a. NACE provides a set of Professional Standards for College and University Career Services (2006). Available to NACE members.

2. Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS)
    a. *CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education* (7th ed.) 2009.
    b. *CAS Self-Assessment Guide for Career Services*, 2006.

Research Projects

Some evaluation activities are carried out as part of a research project intended for publication. While many of the data gathering activities may be the same for a research study as they would be for an evaluation used for quality improvement, the level of scientific rigour (for example, ensuring reliability, validity, and sufficient sample sizes for showing statistical significance) is much higher for activities that are to be used for publication.

Before embarking on a research project, a valuable question to ask is whether the project will provide information and insight useful for decision-making. The answer will be unique to each situation. While there can be overlap between the activities for the two purposes (for example, for either purpose you may give surveys to students, or use rubrics to evaluate resumes), Magnussen and Roest (2004) concluded that studies appearing as published research may not provide information that is useful to help practitioners guide their work. This may only reflect limitations of past research, but can also alert us to how the outcomes of evaluation that will answer research questions may not always provide the outcomes needed for evaluation used to guide quality improvement.

For readers interested in conducting research studies:

- For support in designing your evaluation projects for future publication, career centre leaders often work with faculty members and graduate student research assistants to jointly design and implement the project.

- For examples of published Canadian research from university career services offices see:

Journal Articles

Hung, J. (2002). A career development course for academic credit: An outcome analysis. *The Canadian Journal of Career Development*, *1*, 1, 22-27.
McRae, N. (1999). Preparing for the work term: Online. *Journal of Cooperative Education*, 34(2), 49-53.
Teles, L., & Johnston, N. (2005). Investigating online teaching of employability skills: The Bridging Online program at Simon Fraser University. *Journal of Cooperative Education*, 39(1), 1-10.
Watters, M., Johrendt, J.L., Benzinger, K., Salinitri, G., Jaekel, A., & Northwood, D.O. (2008). Activities, Learning Outcomes and Assessment Methods in Cooperative Engineering Education, *International Journal of Technology and Engineering Education*, *5*(2), 13-21

Papers Presented at Academic Conferences

Johrendt, J. L., Northwood, D. O., Benzinger, K., Salinitri, G., & Jaekel, A. (2007, June). *Learning outcomes for engineering co-operative education*. Paper presented at the 11th Baltic Region Seminar on Engineering Education, Tallinn, Estonia.

Johrendt, J.L., Singh, P.K., Hector, S., Watters, M., Salinitri, G., Benzinger, K., Jaekel, A., & Northwood, D.O. (2009). *The Co-Op Portfolio: An Essential Tool for Assessment and Student Development in Cooperative Engineering Programs*, Paper presented at the Australasian Association for Engineering Education, Australasian Association for Engineering Education Conference: Engineering the Curriculum,.

Johrendt, J.L., Hector, S., Watters, M., Northwood, D.O., Salinitri, G., Jaekel, A., & Benzinger, K. (2009). *A Learning Outcomes Survey of Engineering Cooperative Education Students: Preliminary Findings*, Proceedings of the 2009 ASEE Annual Conference and Exposition, Austin, TX, USA.

Watters, M., Benzinger, K., Salinitri, G., Jaekel, A., Johrendt, J. L., & Northwood, D. O. (2008, May). *Activities, learning outcomes and assessment methods in cooperative engineering education.* Paper presented at 3rd North-East Asia International Conference on Engineering and Technology Education, Taichung, Taiwan, pp 53-59.

Career Centre Evaluation Projects Presented at Professional Conferences

Benzinger, K. & Watters M. (2009, June). *Reflection and Assessment: The Dual Role of Learning Portfolios in Experiential Education*. Presentation at NACE National Conference.

Mahoney, K., & Munteanu, A. (2009, June). *We Teach, They Learn ... or do They?* Presentation at CACEE 2009 National Conference, Vancouver, British Columbia.

Robertson, I., Pothier, P., Hiebert, B., & Magnussen, K. (2008a, April) *Measuring career program effectiveness: making it work*. Presentation at CANNEXUS, Montreal, Quebec.

Robertson, I., Pothier, P., Hiebert, B., & Magnussen, K. (2008b, June) *Measuring career program effectiveness: making it work*. Presentation at CACEE National Conference, Montreal, Quebec.

Submission Guidelines for the Canadian Journal of Career Development

External Surveys

In addition to the evaluation activities that career centres lead themselves, there are also surveys driven by organizations outside universities. These surveys gather data of possible interest for career centres.

Here is a list of some commonly referenced external surveys, with links to their own websites with further information.

- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
- From Learning to Work
- Maclean's University Rankings
- Globe and Mail University Report

Ethics Approval

Early in the process of creating your evaluation plan, it can be wise to investigate whether or not you will require ethics approval from your institution. The ethics approval process exists to ensure that data is collected and used within accepted ethical standards.

In general, ethics approval is usually

- **required** if the data will be shared for research purposes (eg in conference presentations or journal articles)
- **not required** if data is being collected solely to guide quality improvement

It is then important to determine: how and where you will be using, and sharing, the results of your evaluation(s), and how your own institution determines what requires ethics approval. As an example, the University of Waterloo defines **quality assurance/improvement projects** that are not subject to ethics approval as those that "assess how the organization/faculty/department/program is doing or involve activities undertaken by the University for administrative or operational reasons”.

While these are general practices, the specific practices at your university may or may not conform to the above criteria. To check what expectations are at your institution, you can consult with your ethics committee (variously titled ethics board, ethics review committee, etc).

For more on ethics:
TriCouncil Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans

Introduction References

Brooks, J. E. (1995). Guide to developing a successful career course. Journal of Career Planning and Employment, 55, pp. 29-31, 33, 58.

Folsom, B. & Reardon, R. (2001). The effects of college career courses on learner outputs and outcomes (Technical report No. 26 Revised), Tallahassee, FL: Florida State University.

Greenberg, R., & Harris, M. B. (2006). Measuring Up: assessment in career services. *NACE Journal*, 67(2), 18-24.

Heim Bikos, L., & Smith Furry, T. (1999). The Job Search Club for international students: An evaluation. Career Development Quarterly, 48, 31-44.

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Keates, C., & Kerford, K. (2007, June). *Measuring the effectiveness of the university career centre*. Presentation to CACEE National Conference, Kingston, Ontario.

Magnussen, K, & Lalonde, V (2005). *The state of practice in Canada in measuring career service impact: A CRWG Report.* The Canadian Career Development Foundation. Accessed at http://www.crccanada.org/crc/files/CRWG-English%20Report-%20Final%20Dec-05834_2.pdf on July 22, 2008.

Magnusson, K., & Roest, A., (2004). The efficacy of career development interventions: A synthesis of research. Accessed at http://www.crccanada.org/crc/symposium2/nav.cfm?s=documents&p=doclists2&l=e&main_catid=193 on July 22, 2008.

Mahoney, K., & Munteanu, A. (2009, June). *We Teach, They Learn ... or do They*? Presentation at CACEE 2009 National Conference, Vancouver, British Columbia.

Raphael, A. (2005). Career courses: how we know what students are learning. *NACE Journal*, 66(1), 34-39.

Ratcliffe, S. (2008a). Demonstrating Career services success: Rethinking how we tell the story (Part 1 of 2). *NACE Journal* 69(1), 40-44.

Ratcliffe, S. (2008b). Developing the career services story - overview of assessment strategy (Part 2 of 2). *NACE Journal* 69(2), 41-48.

Reed, C., Reardon, R., Lenz, J., & Leierer, S. (2000). Reducing negative career thoughts with a career course (Technical Report No. 25). Tallahassee, FL: Florida State University.

Robertson, I., Pothier, P., Hiebert, B., & Magnussen, K. (2008a, April) *Measuring career program effectiveness: making it work*. Presentation at CANNEXUS, Montreal, Quebec.

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Roest, A., & Magnusson, K., (2004). Annotated bibliography of current research on the efficacy of career development services, interventions and policies. (unpublished document).

Stonewater, J. K. and Daniels, M. H. (1983). Psychosocial and cognitive development in a career decision-making course. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 24 (5), 403-410.

University Career Centre Metrics Working Group (2006). University Career Centre Metrics Tool.

Ware, M. E. (1981). Evaluating a career development course: A two-year study. *Teaching of Psychology*, 8, 67-71.

Watters, M., Benzinger, K., Salinitri, G., Jaekel, A., Johrendt, J. L., & Northwood, D. O. (2008, May). *Activities, learning outcomes and assessment methods in cooperative engineering education*. Paper presented at 3rd North-East Asia International Conference on Engineering and Technology Education, Taichung, Taiwan, pp 53-59.

----- (2005). Into the Future: Top Issues and Trends for Career Services and College Recruiting. *NACE Journal*, 66(1), 27-33.
----- (2009, January). *2008 Career Services Benchmark Survey of Four Year Colleges & Universities*. Research Brief from the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

Setting Your Steps and Framework for Evaluation

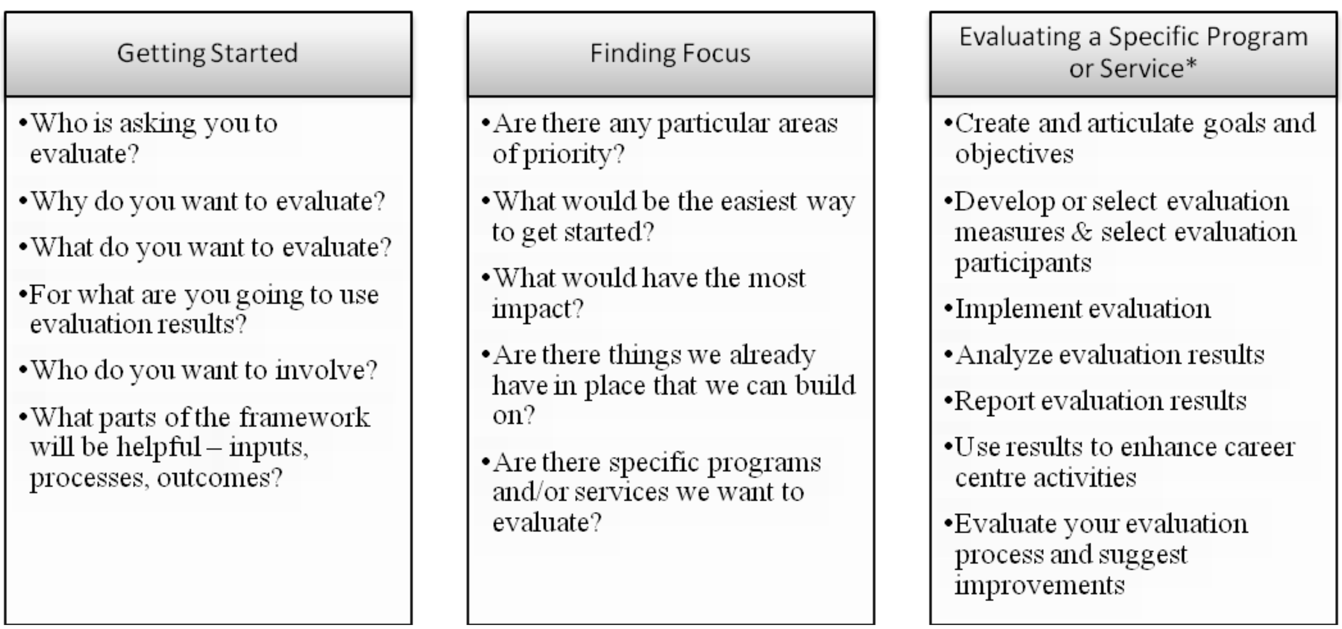
Steps for Evaluation
Theoretical Framework for Evaluation
  The CRWG Framework

Steps for Evaluation
As you consider (or re-consider) how to approach evaluation at your office, it can be helpful to have a sense of the possible steps for creating and implementing an evaluation plan.

Evaluation is not however a linear process that can be easily mapped out as a set of discrete steps. An evaluation plan evolves over time, different phases will overlap, and practices will evolve with experience.

However, especially if you are just getting started with evaluation, it can be helpful to have some guidance as to possible first steps. Below is a graphic which you can use as a worksheet to help you start creating your evaluation plan.

The first column, Getting Started, includes questions to help you assess and articulate your rationale for evaluation. The second column, Finding Focus, offers questions that will help you prioritize and determine where to start. The final column includes a list of steps created by Green, Jones, and Aloi (2008) that you can follow to evaluate a specific program or service.



* from Green, A. S., Jones, E., & Aloi, S. (2008)

While these three elements, Getting Started, Finding Focus, and Evaluating a Specific Program, do not capture the full complexity of creating and implementing an evaluation plan, working through these questions and steps will help you develop an informed strategy for getting started, which you can adapt and add to as you move forward.

Theoretical Framework for Evaluation
In creating your evaluation plan, it is helpful to employ a framework– a structure to help you understand **what you can evaluate**, and **how those elements fit together**.

The Canadian Research Working Group on Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development (CRWG) has created a comprehensive framework for evaluation which is specific to organizations providing career-related services. We have chosen to use their framework to structure this evaluation guide.

The full CRWG framework is available online. To give you an introduction to this framework, here is a brief summary of its components.

The CRWG Framework at a Glance

This framework breaks evaluation information into three elements: Inputs, Processes and Outcomes. We believe that this is a useful framework to help structure our evaluations, and we are creating our own metrics within this framework.

Table 1: The CRWG Framework at a Glance

	Definition	**For example**
Inputs	resources available	staff, funding, facilities, equipment
Processes	activities and mechanisms used to achieve outcomes	interventions such as skills exercises or quality of service indicators such as client satisfaction
Outcomes	indicators of client change	learning, personal attribute or impact

The next three sections of the guide will further examine Inputs, Processes, and Outcomes.

Section 3 Evaluating Inputs
Section 4 Evaluating Processes
Section 5 Evaluating Outcomes

Setting Your Steps and Framework References

Baudouin, R., Bezanson, L., Borgen, B., Goyer, L., Hiebert, B., Lalande, V., Magnusson, K., Michaud, G., Renald, C., & Turcotte, M. (2007). Demonstrating value: A draft framework for evaluating the effectiveness of career development interventions. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 41(3), 146-157.

Green, A. S., Jones, E., & Aloi, S. (2008). An exploration of high-quality student affairs learning outcomes assessment practices. *NASPA Journal*, 45(1).

Introduction to Evaluating Inputs

What are Inputs?
Inputs are "*the resources that are available to help clients change" (*Baudouin et al, 2007, p. 148). These resources include time, cost, materials, and so forth that are required for you to deliver your programming (not the actual workshops, appointments, etc., which are looked at more closely under the sections of Processes and Outcomes)

Why Assess Inputs?
The process of assessing inputs may be undertaken for a variety of reasons, including:

> **Evaluation**
> When designing or reviewing a program, tracking inputs can assist you in finding or supporting answers to questions that are raised (e.g. Are outcomes/processes worth the costs? Is this program feasible? Are we running more/less efficiently than last year?)
>
> **Decision making**
> Assessment of inputs can be used for decision making and planning purposes. Having a clear representation of what is needed to deliver a program is necessary for effective distribution of staff, budget and other resources. Comparing the planned inputs to the actual inputs can also help identify areas where shortages exist or resources are being wasted.
>
> **Documentation**
> Simply documenting what is involved in a program may be worthwhile. Having such a list may be very useful for staff training. While every input doesn't necessarily need to be evaluated, all inputs can be recorded, even if they are constant.

Possible Inputs of Interest
There are a variety of potential inputs you can measure – any of which may be relevant for a comprehensive look at evaluation.

Possible inputs to measure include:

Staff	**Funding**	**Infrastructure**
Number of staff	Continuing funding available	Marketing support
Cost of staff	Time-specific or project specific funding available (e.g. from event sponsors)	Registration and client intake (in person or online)
Training/credentials of staff	User fees (e.g. from employers, from students)	Technical and website support
Skills & competencies of staff		Insurance costs
Hours staff are available		
Staff availability during off hours (e.g. for evening outreach workshops)		

Facilities	Service Guidelines	Community Resources
Space (office, workshop, event)	Mandate	Professionals in other offices
Technology for staff use (data projector, laptop)	Policies and procedures	Other resources on campus (e.g. alumni support network, mentorship programs)
Technology for student use (e.g. computer workstations)		
Handouts and other materials		
Books		
Electronic resources (e.g. online fee-for-service career tools)		
Accessibility – are materials and technology accessible to all students? Costs for interpreters, note-takers, etc.		

Note: these categories (Staff, Funding, Infrastructure, Facilities, Service Guidelines, and Community Resources) are examples only and may be changed depending on your particular centre or program characteristics.

Choosing Inputs

As you document the inputs for a particular program you will not necessarily include each of the types of inputs listed above. The inputs you choose to document and gather data on will depend on what types of resources are applicable and relevant to your centre, and which variables will provide data to help with the decisions you are trying to make or the questions you are trying to answer at any given time.

Specific Uses of Documenting and Measuring Inputs

You may want to document and/or measure inputs for a number of different purposes, including:

- For program scoping.
    - If you are trying to determine whether to offer a new program or service, documenting the inputs required can help you investigate what would it take to create and deliver that new initiative.
- For calculating costs of particular activities.
    - You may want to know how many resources particular activities required. For example, you may wonder "How much does a resume appointment cost to deliver?" Documenting inputs will help you answer this type of question.
- For distributing resources.
    - As you try to decide how to distribute the resources you have available, documenting inputs can help by answering "What amount of resources does this particular service/program take, compared to another service/program?" and by allowing you to make more informed decisions about where to allocate resources.
- For getting greater clarity on how time and resources are spent.
    - Documenting inputs will allow you to see in greater detail how time and resources are currently being used.
- For identifying gaps in resources.
    - After documenting the inputs that are required for your programming plans, you may be able to identify what, if any, resources are missing.
- For decision making about what to continue, and what to discontinue.

Inputs can also be considered in terms of how they relate to processes (see Section 3B) and outcomes (see Section 3C). For example, you might have questions such as:

- With this amount of resources, what can we deliver?
- If we received more resources, what could we then deliver?
- If we received fewer resources, what could we deliver?
- What are our costs per student?
- How does the cost per student of program/service x compare with the cost per student of program service y? In other words, “Where will we get the best ‘bang for our bucks” or “What are the most relied upon resources our clients want?”

Steps for Documenting Inputs

Because no two programs or organizations have identical priorities or access to resources, the assessment process and related tools must be flexible and easily customized.

Step 1: What inputs are of interest?

In general, the first step in assessing inputs is to think about all of the resources that go into a particular program/activity and list them. This may require some brainstorming and gathering of information from multiple sources. Even if an item seems intangible or doesn’t have a direct link to the intended outcomes of the program, this list should be as comprehensive as possible. All resources drawn upon can be listed, even if just for documentation purposes at this point.

Step 2: What questions do we want to answer?

Once a comprehensive list of inputs is created, the next step is to determine what the priorities and key questions that need answering are. These will differ from program to program and maybe even from cycle to cycle for the same program. It is also possible for this step is taken before or in tandem with the aforementioned step. Some example input related key questions may include:

- What is the cost per student to run this program?
- How could we run this program more cost effectively?
- How much staff time would be required to run a new program?
- Now that we are reconfiguring our office space, what would be the ideal set-up (office space, computer terminals, etc)?
- What campus and community resources would I need to draw upon to run this new program?

There will likely be certain inputs that are kept track of consistently (ex. budget, headcount), and others that only come into play when necessary for a key question being answered. For example, one year the focus may be on thoroughly assessing staff time and capacity planning, whereas another year the focus might be on technological resources used in a program. In any case, the list of inputs should be revisited to determine which inputs are critical to assess in order to answer key questions.

Step 3: What units of measurement will we use?

The unit of measurement for some inputs may be easy to choose, for example the cost of materials, room bookings or other such resources would be noted in dollars.

The unit of measurement for other inputs may not be so obvious. An example might be staff time – should this be measured in hours, in percentage of a job? Should it be noted if the time use is different during different parts of the year? Another example would be “support from a supervisor.” This may not have a number attached to it, but notes about what specific support is required (eg a letter of congratulations, a quote to include in the brochure, or a 10 minute welcome at reception). Some discussion and thought need to go into how best to capture variables like these.

Some inputs will need to be assigned values so that they can be measured and evaluated, whereas others may only be reflected for documentation purposes. If forced, a value could be assigned to every documented input. However, it will be more effective to assign values only to items that factor in to the questions being answered with the assessment rather than to bog down the decision making and evaluation process with irrelevant data. At this stage, some of the listed inputs may need to be broken down further for the key question to be answered. For example, if staff time were being assessed, it may be useful to boil down the number of hours that staff work to the number of hours spent on certain activities.

General Considerations Regarding Inputs

Here are a few things to consider to help you strategize about how to incorporate documenting and assessing inputs into your evaluation practices:

- Inputs are really about measuring quantity of resources that are required and/or utilized.
- Because priorities and key questions being answered vary from program to program and may even change over time, certain elements are going to be more critical than others. This may mean that you may be documenting the same inputs across programs, or different inputs for different programs.
- While you may create a general tool that you use to document inputs for all your programs, this tool will need to be a living document because from year to year, decisions as to which inputs are to be measured may change.
- Sometimes the same "item" may be both documented as an input variable, and evaluated as a process variable.
    - For example, think of a program that requires you to recruit employers to participate (for example an internship program). You may want to record the resources required for recruitment as an input. This may include items such as staff time, travel time, phone costs, and marketing materials. This would allow you to assess what resources are going into the recruitment process for this program and answer the question "How much are we spending on recruitment?"

      You may also want to look at recruitment as a process variable. In this case, you would be attempting to answer the question "How well are we doing in our recruitment?" and "How can we measure the effectiveness of our recruitment activities?" In this case, you are not looking at the inputs of recruitment (ie the resources required) but are evaluating the process (i.e. the practice and activities) of doing recruitment.

Example Tools for Measuring Inputs

Here are several tools that have been used to look at inputs:

Each section of this guide contains tools that allow you to document and evaluate a specific component – either inputs, processes, or outcomes. However, often a single tool can in fact be used for multiple assessment purposes. For example, a post-service questionnaire can capture information about both processes and outcomes.

Inputs Worksheet for Proposed Employment Prep for International Students, Centre for Career Education, University of Windsor	Overview

	Worksheet	
Inputs Worksheet for Volunteer Internship Program, Centre for Career Education, University of Windsor	Overview Worksheet	
Capacity Planning, Career Centre, Trent University	Overview Worksheet	

Inputs References

Baudouin, R., Bezanson, L., Borgen, B., Goyer, L., Hiebert, B., Lalande, V., Magnusson, K., Michaud, G., Renald, C., & Turcotte, M. (2007). Demonstrating value: A draft framework for evaluating the effectiveness of career development interventions. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 41(3), 146-157.

Evaluating Processes

What are Processes?
Processes at a Glance
Possible Processes to Measure
Uses of Process Metrics
Example Tools for Measuring Processes

What are Processes?
Processes are *"the mechanisms that are involved in achieving the outcomes."* (Baudouin et al, 2007, pg 148)

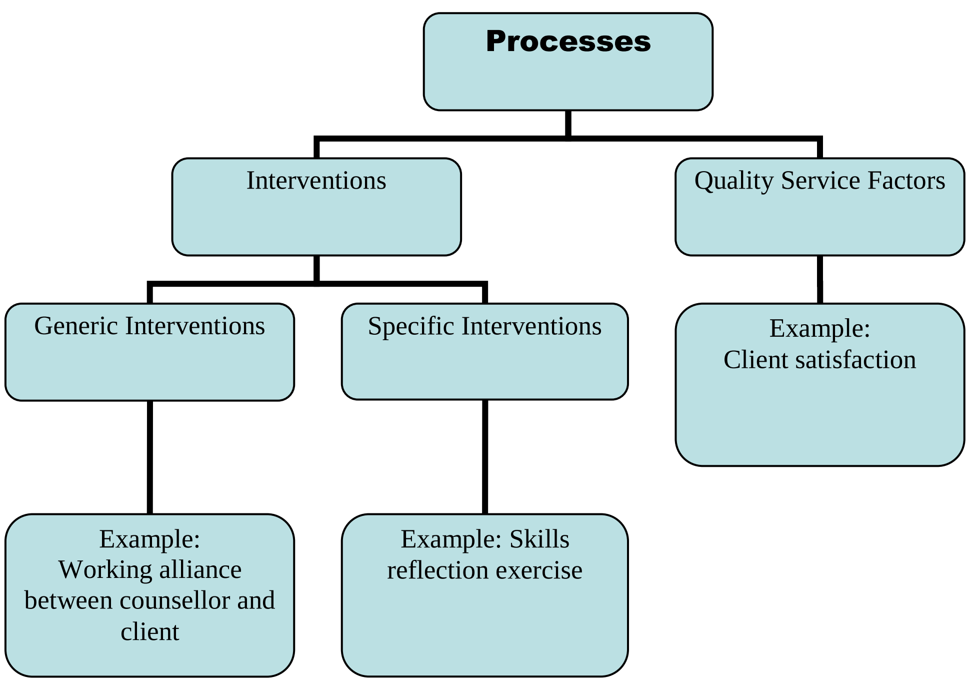
The CRWG Framework breaks Processes down into two main categories: **interventions** and **quality service factors**.

Interventions are activities that are intentionally undertaken as a way to foster client change (ie activities that influence client outcomes). There are two types of interventions: **generic interventions**, such as creating a strong working alliance between counsellor and client, that are a part of most interactions between the career centre and its clients, and **specific interventions**, which are activities for particular services, programs, or client goals, such as giving students a skills reflection exercise.

Interventions are activities that impact (or are meant to impact) client outcomes. Measuring interventions allows you to look at relationships between process and outcome variables.

Quality service factors may be of interest to measure, and may affect the operation of the career centre, but within this framework they are not seen as variables that influence specific client outcomes. One popular quality service factor is client satisfaction. Quality service factors can also include outputs such as number of clients served, percentage of student body registered with the career centre, and other measures of usage (but not outcomes).

Processes at a Glance



Possible Processes to Measure
There are a variety of potential processes to measure – any of which may be relevant for a comprehensive look at evaluation.

Examples of Generic Interventions	Examples of Specific Interventions	Examples of Quality Service Factors
Working alliance	Skills reflection exercise	Client satisfaction (students, employers, other clients)
Reframing	Career assessment tool interpretation	Usage numbers (such as number of clients served, number of library books signed out, number of hits to the website)
Goal setting	Interview feedback	Number of services used per client
Microskills (eg reflection, summarizing)	Mini-lecture on resume strategies	Centre or program reputation

Uses of Process Metrics
Processes data can be used to:

- **report popular, and possibly expected, variables to stakeholders.**
  - Variables such as usage numbers and client satisfaction are common process variables (specifically, quality service factors). Sometimes these variables are thought of as outputs (eg number of students served, number of books taken out of the library, number of hits to the website) but they are considered process measurements within this framework.
- **compare process variables over time.**
  - It may be of value to track and compare how process variables change (or don't change) over time. For example, you may want to be able to answer questions like the following
    - Are student traffic numbers to the career centre increasing or decreasing?
    - What are the trends in student traffic numbers to the career centre website?
- **assess student satisfaction with other career centre processes**
  - You may be interested in measuring other aspects to students' experience with the career centre, beyond specific interventions and outcomes. For example, you might be interested in students' experiences with other career centre processes such as:
    - students' experiences with reception
    - students' satisfaction with an online registration system
    - the length of time students waited before receiving an appointment
- **relate process variables to outcome variables**
  - You may want to be able to look at how student outcomes are linked to particular process variables. For example, you may want to try to answer a question like "What are the outcomes from x intervention?"
- **compare interventions and their outcomes**
  - There may be times when you want to compare the outcomes from different interventions. For example, you may want to answer a question like "which intervention (a process variable) has a stronger outcome (an outcome variable)?"
- **look at program adherence**
  - You can track process variables to determine whether a program was delivered as laid out in the program plans. This can be important in order to be confident that the results of other measures reflect

the effectiveness of the program as designed. An example of this was presented at the CACEE 2008 National Conference by staff from Career Services at the University of Victoria.

- **relate input and process variables**
    - You may be interested in looking at the relationship between input and process variables. For example you may want to answer a question like "what amount of resources (input variables) do these particular interventions (process variables) use?"

General Considerations Regarding Processes

Here are a few things to consider to help you strategize about how to incorporate documenting and assessing processes into your evaluation practices:

- Process and outcome variables can sometimes be misidentified. Variables such as client satisfaction and usage numbers are often used as if they are program outcomes. But they are really indicators of the process of the program. Outcomes (which are discussed in Section 3C) are the changes that the program has facilitated in clients.
- While there are a lot of different process variables that could be monitored, not all will be relevant for any given time or program. To determine which you would like to document and assess, you can start by determining what questions you want to be able to answer, and then evaluate those variables that will help you answer those questions.
- Some process variables require getting feedback from students (such as student satisfaction), while others can be collected by staff (such as tracking website usage numbers). Others may involve other stakeholders, for example if you want to assess your centre's reputation amongst staff, faculty or employers.
- As noted in the section on Inputs, sometimes a variable may appear both as an Input variable, and a Process. For example, the recruitment activities used for getting internship job postings can be tracked as an input (how many resources are used for recruitment) and as a process (how successful are our recruitment activities?)

Example Tools for Measuring Processes

Here are several tools that have been used to look at inputs:

> Each section of this guide contains tools that allow you to document and evaluate a specific component – either inputs, processes, or outcomes. However, often a single tool can in fact be used for multiple assessment purposes. For example, a post-service questionnaire can capture information about both processes and outcomes. The tools below are designed for measuring processes, but may overlap with inputs and outcomes.

Processes Planning Worksheet for Proposed Employment Prep Program for International Students, Centre for Career Education, University of Windsor	Overview Worksheet
VIP Process Flow for Volunteer Internship Program Admitted Students, Centre for Career Education, University of Windsor	Overview Worksheet
VIP Participation Data Tracking, Centre for Career Education, University of	Overview

Windsor	Worksheet
Past Participant Follow Up Survey for Volunteer Internship Program, Centre for Career Education, University of Windsor	Overview Worksheet
Career Counselling Evaluation Form, Career Centre, Trent University	Overview Worksheet
Interview Workshop Evaluation Form, Career Centre, Trent University	Overview Worksheet
Mock Interview Evaluation, The Student Success Centre, The University of Western Ontario	Overview Worksheet
Career Fair Employer Evaluation, The Student Success Centre, The University of Western Ontario	Overview Evaluation Form
Workshop Evaluation Form and Process, Centre for Career Action, University of Waterloo	Overview Process Evaluation Form

Processes References

Baudouin, R., Bezanson, L., Borgen, B., Goyer, L., Hiebert, B., Lalande, V., Magnusson, K., Michaud, G., Renald, C., & Turcotte, M. (2007). Demonstrating value: A draft framework for evaluating the effectiveness of career development interventions, Canadian Journal of Counselling, 41(3), 146-157.

Robertson, I., Pothier, P., Hiebert, B., & Magnussen, K. (2008) Measuring career program effectiveness: making it work. Presentation at CACEE National Conference, June 2008.

Evaluating Outcomes

What are Outcomes?
“Outcomes are the changes in service recipients (clients), i.e., the results of the inputs enacting the processes.” (Baudouin, et al 2007, pg 148)

Purposes of Measuring Outcomes
Overall, measuring outcomes allows you to evaluate what you are achieving and what impact you are having. This can be useful for:

- providing greater clarity about the purpose and intentions of a program/service
- seeing if you are accomplishing what you hope to be accomplishing
- identifying which programs or program components are not meeting desired goals and therefore need changes
- demonstrating the value of a program/service/office to stakeholders
- reinforcing anecdotal evidence that “we know this service is good and helps students” with concrete data that demonstrates that students do reach desired outcomes
- collaborating and aligning yourself with the academic areas in your institution that may also be working on setting and evaluating outcomes, in particular learning outcomes
- providing answers to questions such as
  - What does the career centre do?
  - What is the value of the career centre to the university?
  - What impact are we having?
  - What difference does the career centre make?

Types of Outcomes
The CRWG Framework classifies outcomes into three categories: learning outcomes, personal attribute outcomes, and impact outcomes.

Definitions of the Three Categories of Outcomes

Learning Outcomes	Personal Attribute Outcomes	Impact Outcomes
Knowledge and skills that can be linked directly to the program or intervention being used	Changes in attitudes or intrapersonal variables such as self-esteem, motivation, that change as a result of participation	Impact that the learning outcomes or the personal attribute outcomes have on the client's life, such as employment status, enrolled in training, etc. Social and relational impact Economic impact

(definitions from Baudouin, R., Bezanson, L., Borgen, B., Goyer, L., Hiebert, B., Lalande, V., Magnusson, K., Michaud, G., Renald, C., & Turcotte, M. (2007), p 148)

Learning & Personal Attribute Outcomes
Learning and personal attribute outcomes are sometimes seen as two different types of outcomes, and sometimes seen as being within the same category.

Why Is It Important to Measure Learning?

Learning as a variable of interest for career centres has become very popular. Consider

- "the ACPA (1996) affirmed in its hallmark document, The Student Learning Imperative: Implications for Student Affairs, that learning and development are "inextricably intertwined and inseparable" (Green, Jones, & Aloi, 2008, p. 2).
- "ACPA and NASPA (2004) reaffirmed these calls for reform by stressing the importance of learning "as a comprehensive, holistic, transformative activity that integrates academic learning and student development" (Green, Jones, & Aloi, 2008, p. 22).

Why might learning be important for career centres specifically?

- Assessing learning can help demonstrate how the career centre supports any university-wide learning outcome goals and contributes meaningfully to the student experience.
- Framing career centre activities as supporting student learning helps to align the career centre with the rest of a learning-based institution.
- A lot of career centre activities can be seen as educational or psychoeducational.

Organizing Learning & Personal Attribute Outcomes
When considering learning outcomes, there are several options for how to identify or develop appropriate learning outcomes. For example,

- a career centre can develop its own set of desired student learning outcomes, based on a discussion of the particular things that you believe are important for students to learn (these may be aligned with institutional priorities or desired graduate attributes).
- your institution, or division of student affairs may have a set of learning outcomes that you could use and/or adapt

- there are several sets of learning outcomes available from organizations outside of your particular institution which may be applicable.

Of those sets of learning outcomes that are available, the CRWG Framework recommends using the Blueprint for Life/Work Designs for organizing learning outcomes

The Blueprint for Life/Work Designs: (a summary)
1. Personal management outcomes
    - Build and maintain a positive personal image
    - Interact positively and effectively with others
    - Change and grow throughout one's life
2. Learning and work exploration outcomes
    - Participate in lifelong learning supportive of life/work goals
    - Locate and effectively use life/work information
    - Understand the relationship between work and society/economy
3. Life/work building outcomes
    - Secure, create, and maintain work
    - Make life/work-enhancing decisions
    - Maintain balanced life and work roles
    - Understand the changing nature of life/work roles
    - Understand, engage in, and manage one's own life/work process

Each of these points listed above is further refined by stages of development - a version of the full Blueprint is available on the website for the Blueprint.

Two other sources for suggested learning outcomes are Learning Reconsidered and The Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education.

Learning Reconsidered
Learning Reconsidered lays out a set of seven learning outcomes
1. Cognitive Complexity
2. Knowledge Acquisition, Integration, and Application
3. Humanitarianism
4. Civic Engagement
5. Interpersonal and Intrapersonal competence
6. Practical Competence
7. Persistence and Academic Achievement.

For more information, including dimensions of each outcome area, and sample developmental experiences for learning for each outcome area see Learning Reconsidered (2006) pgs 21-22.

Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education
The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) has outlined a set of learning and developmental outcomes. They have also integrated the outcomes from Learning Reconsidered.

CAS identifies six Student Outcome Domains:
1. Knowledge Acquisition, Construction, Integration, and Application
2. Cognitive Complexity
3. Intrapersonal Development
4. Interpersonal Competence
5. Humanitarianism and Civic Engagement
6. Practical Competence.

Each domain is then broken down into several dimensions. In addition, they provide specific examples of learning and development outcomes for each of the outcome domains. A full chart of the domains, dimensions, and examples is available on their website.

Writing Learning & Personal Attribute Outcomes

If you are planning to set learning and/or personal attribute outcomes for your programs and services, it can be helpful to have some tools to assist with writing good outcome statements.

This section will provide:

- two possible "formulas" for structuring learning outcome statements
- an introduction to Bloom's taxonomy which helps you think about the levels of learning that you want to facilitate

"Formulas" for Writing Learning Outcomes

One simple structure for formulating a learning outcome is complete the following phrase:

- At the end of instruction, students will be able to ...

For example, some possible learning outcomes using this structure could be

By the end of the workshop, students will be able to explain why networking is important for finding jobs in the hidden job market.

A second simple structure for formulating a learning outcome is the ABCD Method (Heinich, et al., 1996).

This structure consists of four parts:

A. Audience – Who? Who are your learners?
B. Behavior – What? What do you expect them to be able to do? This should be an overt, observable behavior, even if the actual behavior is covert or mental in nature.
C. Condition – How? Under what circumstances or context will the learning occur?
D. Degree – How much? How much will be accomplished, how well will the behavior need to be performed, and to what level

For example, a possible learning outcome using this structure could be:

Audience:	all students in the career planning workshop
Behaviour:	will identify possible career options that they want to research further
Condition:	by the end of the workshop
Degree:	at least 3 options for each student

By the end of the career planning workshop, all students in attendance will identify at least 3 possible career options that they want to research further.

Bloom's Taxonomy

A popular tool for helping instructors identify the type of learning that they want to facilitate is Bloom's Taxonomy. This taxonomy classifies learning into six categories, each one more complex than the previous.

1. Evaluation	Higher order
2. Synthesis	↑
3. Analysis	↑
4. Application	↑
5. Comprehension	↑
6. Knowledge	Lower order

There are several websites that provide information to help you apply this taxonomy as you develop learning outcomes.

For example:
http://www.coun.uvic.ca/learning/exams/blooms-taxonomy.html
http://www.teachers.ash.org.au/researchskills/Dalton.htm

Impact Outcomes
Impact outcomes are the "ultimate, hoped-for end result of an intervention" (Baudouin, et al 2007, pg 150). They occur after the end of the intervention, sometimes long after. Examples of possible impacts include:

- receiving a job offer
- accepting a job
- maintaining a job
- acquiring an income
- receiving acceptance into further education (graduate program, professional program, college program)
- satisfaction with career choice

Impact outcomes can be challenging to define and measure because:

- They can only be measured after a client has completed a program or finished using a service. It can be difficult to reach clients and get sufficient numbers of responses.
- Impact outcomes can be influenced by many external forces. For example, if employment is the desired impact outcome, in addition to any contribution a career centre program has made to a students' ability to find employment, their likelihood of securing employment can also be affected by
    - labour market trends and unemployment rates
    - other experiences (such as internships, summer jobs, volunteer work) they did, or did not, participate in while students
    - how well the curriculum in their program developed the skills and knowledge required for the work they are targeting
    - other variables outside of the control of the career centre
- It can be challenging to ascertain what impact outcomes are reasonable to expect from a particular service or intervention. For example, what is a reasonable impact outcome to expect from a student participating in a single one-hour practice interview session?

Note: Often measures such as client satisfaction are gathered at the end of service and considered an outcome. Remember that in this model, outputs (such as client satisfaction) are considered not outcomes (indicators of client change) but part of processes (as indicators that processes were followed well).

Probably the most common method that career centres have used to try to measure impact outcomes is graduate or alumni surveys. In some cases these surveys are conducted by the career centre, while others are done at the institutional level. Some are given as exit polls around the time of graduation, others follow up with graduates after some time has passed.

Example of a graduate survey conducted by a career centre:

CAPS Employment Survey of University of Alberta graduates (2000)

Example of a provincial post graduation survey:

Council of Ontario Universities

Example Tools for Measuring Outcomes
Here are several tools that have been used to look at outcomes:

Each section of this guide contains tools that allow you to document and evaluate a specific component – either inputs, processes, or outcomes. However, often a single tool can in fact be used for multiple assessment purposes. For example, a post-service questionnaire can capture information about both processes and outcomes. The tools below are designed for measuring outcomes, but may overlap with inputs and processes.

Program Outcomes Planning Worksheet for Proposed Employment Prep Program for International Students, Centre for Career Education, University of Windsor (covers learning, personal attribute, and impact outcomes)	Overview	
	Worksheet	
Volunteer Internship Program Learning Outcomes tools, Centre for Career Education, University of Windsor (covers learning outcomes)	Overview	
	Outcomes Tracking form	
	Orientation Survey	
	Ongoing Reflection Workbook	
Past Participant Follow Up Survey for Volunteer Internship Program, Centre for Career Education, University of Windsor (covers personal attribute outcomes)	Overview	
	Worksheet	
Resume Research Project tools, Career Services, University of Waterloo (covers learning and personal attribute outcomes)	Overview	

	Resume Rubric
	Student Survey
Career Advising Appointment Evaluation, Career Services, University of Waterloo (covers learning and personal attribute outcomes)	Overview
	Evaluation form
Communication Internship Program, University of Toronto (covers impact outcomes)	Overview
	Survey form
Career Counselling Evaluation Form, Career Centre, Trent University (covers learning, personal attribute, and impact outcomes)	Overview
	Evaluation Form
Interview Workshop Evaluation, Career Centre, Trent University (covers learning, personal attribute, and impact outcomes)	Overview
	Evaluation Form
Workshop Evaluation Form and Process, Centre for Career Action, University of Waterloo	Overview
	Process
	Evaluation Form

Outcomes References

Baudouin, R., Bezanson, L., Borgen, B., Goyer, L., Hiebert, B., Lalande, V., Magnusson, K., Michaud, G., Renald, C., & Turcotte, M. (2007). Demonstrating value: A draft framework for evaluating the effectiveness of career development interventions, Canadian Journal of Counselling, 41(3), 146-157.

Case Studies: Evaluating Inputs, Processes, and/or Outcomes

This section provides case studies demonstrating ways that career centres have approached evaluating inputs, processes and/or outcomes. Each case study overview presents the centre's purposes for conducting that particular evaluation project, what was learned from the evaluation, and some description of the tool(s) used. The actual tool(s) are also provided below.

Case Study 1

This case study describes the approach the Career Centre at Trent University has used to evaluate their career counselling service.

This case addresses the evaluation of:

Inputs	no
Processes	yes
Outcomes	yes
• Learning outcomes	yes
• Personal attribute outcomes	yes
• Impact outcomes	yes

Evaluating Career Counselling at the Career Centre, Trent University

Our main goal in developing a tool to evaluate our career counselling service was to measure change for a student, be it learning, confidence or impact on future actions. We were trying to understand if our services were having an impact on students in some way. We also felt that this knowledge would also help us, as facilitators, understand if we were covering the necessary material and providing the appropriate activities to facilitate change. In the career counselling process, we also used this process as a training/professional development opportunity with the counselling staff. The resulting discussions helped us to better understand the common approach the Centre used and develop a Counselling Approach training/PD tool. This information is also useful in final reports and marketing materials, but we were not being asked for it specifically.

We use the data to inform quality improvements and in individual case consultation discussions. Decisions about continuing a service have tended to be based more on attendance statistics.

The Evaluation Tool

We developed and used the Career Counselling Evaluation – Individual Appointment tool.

The process of developing this tool began by first developing outcomes for career counselling. These outcomes consisted of broad educational outcomes, competencies (based on the Blueprint for Life/Work Designs) and specific outcomes (learning, personal attribute, and outcome). This was a challenging exercise as each individual session will be unique. We ended up approaching it from the standpoint of what overall change/impact we would like to see in each session. Our outcomes (which are constantly being edited) are:

- Learning
  - Importance of self knowledge
  - How to find relevant information
  - Strategies to take the next step
  - Connection between your education and career
- Personal Attribute (confidence in)
  - Making career related choices
  - Ability to take the next step
  - Managing your career
- Impact
  - Has what you learned been useful/or will be useful in managing your career

From there we used these specific outcomes to develop the survey. In the career counselling survey there was more emphasis placed on process as well. This was a team effort.

Career Counselling Evaluation – Individual Appointment

Logistics

Who the tool(s) were used with	Students
When the tools were administered	At the end of each term.
How the tools were administered	Online Zoomerang survey.
Response rate	5%
Summarizing and analyzing data	The counsellor reviewed and summarized the data. We use a 5 point scale and collapse our results into two categories (scores of 1 or 2 are considered unacceptable; scores of 3, 4, or 5 are considered acceptable). This collapsed data and key highlights are summarized in a shared word document. In December and April, we meet as a team to review this document and discuss any potential changes in service.

Our Results and Learnings

To review our results, as mentioned above, the collapsed data and key highlights are summarized in a shared word document. In December and April, we meet as a team to review this document and discuss any potential changes in service. Highlights from these summaries are also incorporated into the final report.

The strength of this tool is that this evaluation encourages us to be thoughtful and reflective in our approach. The weaknesses are that students are survey fatigued already, and that it is challenging to measure a counselling session.

Looking at our overall approach, the strengths are that we can conduct the evaluation online, and that it is quick and requires no data input by staff. Two weaknesses are that students are inundated with emails and may ignore us, and that completing it at term-end may be too late to be relevant for students

Our main learning has been how challenging it is to measure counselling sessions. We revisit this survey annually and look at the language and results to see if we need to make further edits. The survey has also allowed us to see if/where we are having an impact/facilitating change for a student.

We have become very familiar with the three types of outcomes and have found that that is where our emphasis is in our process. We do include questions that look at process, and it was very helpful to be able to differentiate them from outcomes to ensure we were using an outcomes-based approach. Lastly, we continue to grapple with inputs and how/when to incorporate them into the survey process.

As with any initiative, there have been growing pains in implementing this. With the counselling survey, it has taken significantly more discussion and reflection to come to a place where we are comfortable. If there were more time, we would have spent time trying to understand inputs and their role in the survey process.

Over the last 3 years, we have made many changes to our survey, based on what we have learned each year. It has been helpful for us to remember that surveys do evolve and that what you put on paper/online one year can be adapted the next. This perspective may help in moving from a draft to a finalized survey for distribution. The other thing we have found is that consistency between surveys, where appropriate, makes it easier for staff and students to implement them.

Case Study 2

This case study explains how the Career Centre at the University of Toronto has been evaluating their career counselling service.

This case addresses the evaluation of:

Inputs	no
Processes	yes
Outcomes	yes
• Learning outcomes	no
• Personal attribute outcomes	no
• Impact outcomes	yes

Evaluating Career Counselling at the Career Centre, University of Toronto

We decided to create a career counselling feedback form in order to measure the effectiveness of our counselling sessions and to provide support and information in our annual report regarding the effectiveness of our counselling appointments. Our hope was that this would serve as an initial benchmark or metric of the effectiveness of our career counselling sessions (we had never done anything like this previously).

The Evaluation Tools

The career counsellors at the Career Centre, University of Toronto (St George Campus) created a Counselling Feedback Form.

Counselling Feedback Form

Logistics

Who the tool(s) were used with	The tool was used with students.
When the tools were administered	For a two-week period during October 2009 and February 2010.
How the tools were administered	During the specified time periods, students coming in for 1-1 counselling appointments were informed, at the end of that particular counselling appointment, about the survey and provided with a paper copy of the feedback form. Students could complete the form at their leisure and drop their completed form in a receptacle available at the front desk.
Response rate	The goal was for each counsellor to distribute between 10-20 forms within the two-week period. For the two assessment periods during 2009, 93 students returned completed surveys (52, 41 respectively). This represents approximately a 70% response rate.
Summarizing and analyzing data	The career counsellors summarized and interpreted the data using an Excel spreadsheet.

Our Results and Learnings

The feedback collected confirmed that students find counselling sessions to be effective in helping them address their concerns and identify and achieve their goals. Data was included in our annual report to support the measurement of outcomes for career counselling appointments

The strengths of the Counselling Feedback Form were that the tool was clear, straightforward, and easy to administer. One weakness is that it does not measure learning.

Reflecting on the overall approach we took, a strength is that this approach resulted in a higher than anticipated response rate. This was possible because the form was administered directly after the counselling session. A shortcoming is that while the tool we developed provides us with useful feedback, it does not fully “measure” career counselling effectiveness or outcomes.

There is still a need to find a better tool for assessing the effectiveness of counselling interventions. The counselling relationship is less learning driven and more process oriented, thereby making the assessment of learning outcomes a bit problematic. Client outcomes are not pre-determined by the counsellor, but the counsellor can have an impact on the outcome if s/he employs effective listening, intervention, or whatever is needed by the client to move them to the next step.

This tool and overview were submitted by the Career Centre at the University of Toronto.

Case Study 3

This case study describes how the Centre for Career Education created a strategy for evaluating the achievement of learning outcomes in their Volunteer Internship Program.

This case addresses the evaluation of:

Inputs	no
Processes	no
Outcomes	yes
• Learning outcomes	yes
• Personal attribute outcomes	no
• Impact outcomes	no

Evaluating Workshops in the Volunteers Internship Program, Centre for Career Education, University of Windsor

The learning outcomes project for the Volunteer Internship Program was meant to foster intentional program design. The program had already been running for more than a decade, but we decided that it was time for an overhaul to make the learning more meaningful for students and to improve program quality.

We collected this data in order to:

- inform quality improvement
- identify other potential areas for improvement to program design
- inform strategic decision making
- reporting (prove value)

The Evaluation Tools

We started out with an *Operationalization Plan* to outline the determined learning outcomes. For each learning outcome we identified the process flow and assessment plan as well as the list of new tools or changes to existing tools required to achieve and assess it. As a result, we ended up with more than 30 tools for the program divided into four categories:

- Assignments – Instructions for the independent assignments students work on
- Forms – Used to gather data from students and/or placement supervisors (for example, the Past Participant Follow Up Survey)
- Resources – Items handed out to the students in workshops or made available online in order to assist them with program requirements (for example, the Ongoing Reflection Workbook)
- Procedure – Instructions for the facilitator of the group-based workshops and sessions

Tools:

Past Participant Follow Up Survey

Ongoing Reflection Workbook

Materials were developed by the Applied Learning Coordinator with input from the Director on an ongoing basis. VIP is a unique program, so we didn't use anyone else's materials in particular for ideas. That said, research was done (mostly online), and articles and sample questions were sometimes looked at, especially when it came to using the "What? So What? Now What?" model of reflection to design the Ongoing Reflection Workbook. We also kept a select few of the materials that were already being used in the program, or that were used in other areas of our office that we felt were working well, and made minor changes to them to fit the new program design.

Logistics

Who the tool(s) were used with	**The tools were used variously with students, employers, and staff.**
When they were administered	The planning and design of the tools took place in the Winter and Summer of 2006, and the tools were introduced to the students in the program in Fall 2006. They have been used every semester since. Tools and data collection related to learning outcomes are used at several points in the program, starting in the application process right through to program completion. For example, students hand in a resume at their admission interview and an intake survey is administered during the orientation – both serve as a pre-test for learning outcomes. Student also work through an Ongoing Reflection Workbook (a collection of activities and journal industries) that addresses all of the desired learning outcomes of the program – this workbook is divided into "before you begin placement", "after your first day" and then 10 hour increments until they finish the required 40 hours. There are also several other tools administered throughout the program.
How they were administered	Mostly paper, but most forms and assignments are available online and can be submitted via e-mail as well.
Response rate	All tools that require submission are mandatory, so with respect to students that completed the program, you could say the response rate is 100%. However, our completion rate of students that confirm participation in the program averages about 75%.
Summarizing and analyzing data • The process	Data is collected during each cycle of the program and tracked on a detailed semester tracking sheet. For some of the learning outcomes, a more time consuming qualitative review is needed, so a document set for a random sample of 25 students is selected each term. A summary of each semester's data is entered onto another tracking sheet that allows us to make term over term or year or year comparisons.
• By whom	The Applied Learning Coordinator with help from a part-time student in the role of VIP Program Assistant.
• Using what software	MS Excel

Our Results and Learnings

Using our results we have been able to identify which learning outcomes are being achieved more successfully than others. We haven't yet made a lot of changes to the program as a result, but we anticipate doing a full program review in the next academic year and using that to identify areas for change and improvement.

At the moment, we track our results for internal use. We have shared pieces of it with other staff and included it in reports and articles. Now that the new design of the program has been in place for 3 full academic years, we plan on doing a more comprehensive review and using the results to guide changes and program improvements.

We have found the strengths of our approach have included:

- that it has been a great exercise to completely overhaul a program and make sure learning is intentional and meaningful – learning outcomes provided lenses to view each program component (existing or proposed) through.
- that we have been able to tie program components together and address multiple learning outcomes with a single tool.
- introducing one new program design, instead of multiple smaller changes made each cycle.

At the same time, the weaknesses of the approach we have taken are:

- this was a very large task. It is difficult to find time to plan and execute such an evaluation on top of regular duties.
- it seems daunting at first because it was such a large project.
- because components are so tied together and assessment tracking is all set up, it is sometimes difficult to make further changes to the program (because one small change to one component can initiate several other changes).

We have learned that when you are evaluating from the perspective of a program there are several elements and points of contact with the program's clients. Evaluation can then become a very complicated process, especially when the program is already in place and implementing evaluation requires an overhaul of the entire program. An existing program does present the challenge of working around constraints that are already in place. For example, in this case we tried to minimize how much the process and participation would change for the placement employers.

Given that we were looking at an existing program, we think it was a good decision to re-launch and introduce all of the changes at once rather than chipping away at it and constantly introducing small changes. This lent itself to integrating evaluation methods together, rather than having several stand alone teaching strategies and assessment tools to address one learning outcome at a time.

If we were to do this project over again, the only thing we might do differently is perhaps solicit more input from students about how the program might look (student input was minimal). While the program seems to be well-received as is, who knows what other interesting information or ideas would have come out of more formal or informal feedback from students?

A final reflection from our experience is that when a centre wants to evaluate learning, where possible, learning outcomes should be considered at the beginning when a program is being designed in the first place. Also, because a program is a sum of many parts, it may be necessary to revisit and rework the plan for learning outcome evaluation several times. Although we had come up with an overall plan, we found that we needed to tweak it as we started to design the actual tools and saw how they would work together with the timelines and processes involved in running the program. As things change, we continue to revisit and adapt our original plan that operationalizes our learning outcomes assessment.

This tool and overview were submitted by the Centre for Career Education at the University of Windsor.

Case Study 4

This case study describes the approach the Centre for Career Action (formerly Career Services) at the University of Waterloo has used to evaluate their resume services.

This case addresses the evaluation of:

Inputs	no
Processes	yes
Outcomes	yes
• Learning outcomes	yes
• Personal attribute outcomes	no
• Impact outcomes	no

Evaluating Resume Services at the Centre for Career Action, University of Waterloo

We decided to evaluate our resume services in order to a) measure the effectiveness of our online and face-to-face resume advising, and b) provide support and information in our annual report regarding the effectiveness of our resume advising services.

Because of our association with the Waterloo Centre for the Advancement of Co-operative Education (WatCACE) and the ability to bid for some research funding, we decided to turn this into a larger, and more formal, research project. The Centre collaborated with 3 faculty members.

The data was intended to serve as a benchmark for the effectiveness of our service, and to determine whether both services (online and face-to-face) should be offered, and their relative effectiveness.

The Evaluation Tools

We developed and used two tools. The first is a resume rubric (which lays out the criteria for evaluating each section of the resume – can be used for assigning a grade to the resume and each component part). The second is a student survey regarding student perception of the value of online and face-to-face advising. Both tools were developed by The Centre for Career Action staff after reviewing other available tools.

Resume Rubric

Student Perception Resume Survey

Logistics

Who the tool(s) were used with	The tools were used with students. The resume rubric was validated by employers.
When the tools were administered	The resume rubric is regularly used in our co-op prep courses, but this use, as part of a larger study, was new. The student surveys were developed for this work. ▪ The first survey determined eligibility for participation based on prior use of the Centre for Career Action. ▪ Students who qualified and completed all tasks followed this path: online survey and resume submission, complete online resume-related reading/activities, 2nd survey and submission of revised resume, face-to-face resume critique, 3rd survey and 3rd resume submission
How the tools were administered	Students completed most work online, including surveys, completing the resume module, and booking the resume critique. The resume critique itself was completed in person.
Response rate	A notice about the research was sent to all full-time students (20,000+). However, many respondents were soon eliminated as they had prior experience with the Centre for Career Action, and we wanted only "new" users, so our group of 549 was reduced to 350. This was a very involved, multi-step process. Students needed to fill out 3 surveys, submit resumes at 3 points in time, complete online work, and have an individual advisement meeting. Ultimately, only 29 students completed all of the steps. Larger sample sizes were used in analysis for the aspects that were completed by those students.
Summarizing and analyzing data	▪ A faculty member and the Director, the Centre for Career Action, directed a research assistant, who used SPSS to analyze the statistical data. ▪ To score resumes against the rubric, student assistants were trained to mark using the rubric. Resumes submitted each time were coded and graded. Each marker marked each resume (not knowing whether it was the first, second, or third resume version).

Our Results and Learnings

The feedback confirmed that students enhanced their perception of their resumes and the quality of their resumes (based on improved grades). Certain resume section grades increased more than others. There were some statistically significant results. We have included the results in our annual report to support the measurement of learning outcomes, and these results were shared at conferences (WACE, CACEE) in Spring 2009.

We think the following were strengths of our approach:

- The resume rubric we created is sound as it was validated by employers.
- In the 2nd and 3rd surveys we asked students to reconsider their previous resume versions and rate them in light of what they now knew.
- It was good to have both subjective (student perception) and objective (resume grade) measures.

We think the following were weaknesses of our approach:

- We may need to rethink the marking scheme to weight certain sections more heavily, although the downside is that this would make the process more complicated for students (and markers).
- From the data we were able to collect, it is not clear whether online learning was better or whether it only seemed to teach students more because it was the first intervention.

We have learned that doing such longitudinal, multi-step, multi-method research study is complicated and time consuming. We have also learned that partnering with research experts on campus is very helpful. In the future, if we were in a similar situation, we would do this mostly the same with some very small tweaks, and would need to choose an in-depth study topic wisely. Before embarking on a project like this again, a good question to ask ourselves would be, “How deep do we need to go to meet our objectives?”

This tool and overview were submitted by the Centre for Career Action at the University of Waterloo.

Case Study 5

This case study describes how the Career Centre at the University of Toronto is evaluating a new Communication Internship Program.

This case addresses the evaluation of:

Inputs	no
Processes	yes
Outcomes	yes
• Learning outcomes	yes
• Personal attribute outcomes	no
• Impact outcomes	yes

Evaluating the Communication Internship Program, Career Centre, University of Toronto

The University of Toronto Career Centre, recognizing the ongoing need of students especially within the Faculty of Arts & Science to obtain career related experience, piloted a small Communication Internship Program. The goal was to invite organizations having paid or unpaid internship opportunities to come on campus to meet with interested students. 17 organizations and 90 students participated in this program.

Since this was a new program, we knew the evaluation piece would be an essential component in assessing what worked and what didn't, so that decisions about similar future events could be objectively made. We needed to gain an understanding of the program operation from the student's perspective. We also knew that adding the evaluation component would be a great way to document the effectiveness as well as examine the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

The Evaluation Tools

A student satisfaction survey was developed by the staff member responsible for preparing the students for the Internship Program, based on existing feedback forms used at the Career Centre but modified to suit this activity.

Student Survey – Communication Internship Program

Logistics

Who the tool(s) were used with	Students
When the tools were administered	The student survey was done one month after the event
How the tools were administered	Student survey – online through Student Voice
Response rate	Response rate for the Student survey was 41%
Summarizing and analyzing the data	Student Survey – was summarized by the Work Experience Coordinator staff member. Results were calculated through Student Voice

Our Results and Learnings

We have learned overall that the program was beneficial to student and employer participants. This means that we will be repeating the program next year – broadening it to include a wider variety of employer participants.

Staff used the data to inform a program summary that was submitted to the Associate Director. This will inform program goals for the upcoming academic year.

A strength of the tools were that they provided us with an objective feedback system. A weakness is that we have no data at this point regarding impact or longer term effectiveness –i.e. whether participants secured employment or revised their career plans as a result. A learning outcome feedback form should have been added to the student prep sessions, but this was overlooked. Our approach is also missing specific correlations to learning outcomes along with a reflection component.

Through our evaluation process, we learned that we need to build into the program goals the contributions required from the staff members associated with the program. We also need to ensure better coordination between the staff members working to secure the employers and the coordinators on each campus who are responsible for preparing the students, so that we can have a better sense of how program goals and students' expectations meshed. We also learned that ensuring student feedback in larger numbers is something we need to work on.

If we were to do this again in the future, we would start the recruitment process for students earlier, but would continue to gauge employer interest prior to full roll-out of the program as we did this time.

From this experience, we have the following reflections to contribute:

- If you're planning to run a similar internship program, do a pilot. Keep the first one small.
- Pre-determine the touch points with both employer and student groups and how those will be assessed.
- Create your assessment tools prior to program launch.

This tool and overview were submitted by the Career Centre at the University of Toronto.

Case Study 6

This case study describes the approach the Student Success Centre at The University of Western Ontario has used to evaluate their Job Prep 101 program.

This case addresses the evaluation of:

Inputs	no
Processes	no
Outcomes	yes
• Learning outcomes	yes
• Personal attribute outcomes	yes
• Impact outcomes	no

Evaluating the Job Prep 101 Program at the Student Success Centre, The University of Western Ontario

Job Prep 101 is a one week program designed to support students who will be completing their degree within three months and who are actively seeking non-academic employment. The program runs 5 full days from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Participants work in large and small group formats with other students, staff, and employers to prepare them for the job search process.

This program was initiated in 2007 as a research project for the Career Counselling team to help determine how career support could be provided to a large group of students in an effective and efficient way, while meeting program and student objectives. Because of this, program evaluation was extremely important for determining whether we would integrate this program into general practice in the future.

There were two main reasons for evaluating this program:

1. To inform program development and services provided to students.
2. To demonstrate how career services contributes to student and graduate success.

The Evaluation Tools

The tools that we used and developed were:

- Pre and post tests
- Daily reflections
- Pre and post resume evaluation rubric *(from: http://academics.smcvt.edu/cbauer-ramazani/BU113/Rubrics/resume_rubric.htm)*
- Testimonials

The career counselling team developed the tools with the help of an Educational Researcher from Western, and utilized one external resume evaluation tool, to which we made a few changes.

Job Prep Pretest

Job Prep Daily Reflection

Job Prep Resume Rubric

Job Prep Registration form: The program registration form is also provided for your information.

Logistics

Who the tool(s) were used with	Students
When the tools were administered	1. Pre and post tests – administered at the beginning and the end of the program (100% response). 2. Daily reflection – administered at the end of every day (5 days) (100% response). 3. Pre and post resume evaluation rubric – administered at the initial and the final stage of resume development (80% response).
How the tools were administered	Paper and pen.
Response rate	1. Pre and post tests – 100% 2. Daily reflection – 100% 3. Pre and post resume evaluation rubric – 80%
Summarizing and analyzing data	Microsoft Excel was used for data collection and data comparison. An administrative assistant entered and summarized the data. In 2008, collection and interpretation of data was approved by the Research Ethics Board at Western and was interpreted by an Educational Researcher. After interpretation, the counselling team decided that based on the overwhelmingly positive results the program would be integrated into career services as standard practice for supporting graduating students. Data continues to be collected and interpreted to inform future program development.

Our Results and Learnings

The first statistical interpretation of the Job Prep 101 program in 2008 confirmed that it was effective in meeting program objectives and desired outcomes.

For each question in pre/post test, we report the results of a paired t-test (a statistic which compares two means which are paired in some way: pre/post data collected from the same participants). The t statistic in our case is negative because the mean from the post test is larger than the mean from the pre-test. The p value indicates if the t is significant or not. In each of our questions the difference is significant. The findings were very impressive and all of the items from the pre- and post test showed a statistically significant difference.

Reviews of pre and post test evaluations and daily reflections indicate students' high levels of satisfaction and a marked increase in confidence and content knowledge. Written student testimonials also support the findings of the pre and post test evaluations.

The strength of the tools used include the ability to capture change that the program caused, as well as the opportunity to reflect on the program immediately after the intervention was presented (daily reflection). For research based evaluation, we need to secure more resources and staff for the future.

Developments

There have been a total of seven Job Prep 101 programs offered since its inception in 2007. The Job Prep 101 program has since been tailored to specific groups such as Masters, PhD, and Postdoctoral students; students in the faculty of Arts and Humanities and Social Science; and in a modified format to a group of students who were laid off from an on-campus employer.

Every variation of the Job Prep 101 program has seen outstanding success. Evaluations, daily reflections, and testimonials continue to be extremely positive, and students report that the experience has increased their self-esteem, self awareness, and their readiness for job search.

Each year a report summary of the Job Prep 101 Program is developed and shared with the staff at the Centre as well as with the Western Career Partners. Each year, we use the data collected and participants' recommendations to make minor program adjustments to content and format to continually enhance the quality of the program.

This tool and overview were submitted by the Student Success Centre at the University of Western Ontario.

Reporting & Using Evaluation Results

Reporting
Quality Improvement
Influencing
Marketing

With busy schedules and so many things to think about when creating an evaluation plan, it can be tempting to postpone decisions regarding the results you want from your evaluation until you actually have the results in hand. However, some forethought about how you will use the results will make it more likely that you get the data you will need and ensure it is in a format that will be useful.

Four common uses for evaluation results are:

- reporting
- quality improvement
- influencing
- marketing

Each of these four uses will be discussed below. Also, keep in mind that evaluation results will often not be useful to just one of these four purposes; often the same evaluation data may be used for more than one of these purposes.

Reporting
Evaluation results are often used for reporting purposes, for example annual reports, reports to stakeholders, and project reports.

When you know your evaluation may be used to inform future reports, asking the following questions can help ensure you will get information that will be usable in your reports.

- Who will be the audience of the report?
- What kind of information does this audience want?
- How do they want the information presented?
- What kind of information do we want to provide to this audience?
- What level of detail will be appropriate for this report?
- What format should the report take? What will be the most effective way of presenting the data? Graphs? Narrative? Charts?

Quality Improvement
Perhaps the most common intended use for evaluation results is quality improvement. Much evaluation happens to help answer “How can we do things better?”

It can be helpful to break the process of evaluating for quality improvement into three stages:
The planning stage
The data review stage
The decision making stage

Here are some things to think about at each of these three stages.

The planning stage

In the planning stage you will be trying to design your evaluation activities in such a way as to ensure the results of the evaluation will give you information that will help you make good decisions. The following questions can help you with planning:

- Which programs and services do we want to focus on right now?
- What do we want to know about these particular programs?
- Are there particular changes we are contemplating? If so, what kind of information would we need to determine if these are worthwhile changes?
- Are there particular concerns that we have about this program/service? What kind of information would help us understand this issue more and what would help us understand what we could change?
- What decisions do we want to make? What information do we need to inform those decisions?
- How can we best get that information given the structure of our program?

The data review stage
At the data review stage you will look at the list of decisions you want to make, or questions that you wanted answers to, and see what answers you can find in the data.

As you review the data, you will find evidence that things are working well and/or evidence that there are things that are not working as you wish. When you review your data and discover a problem – for example, you may discover that there are one or more outcomes that you are not adequately achieving, you will next want to identify what caused (or was related to) that underperformance. Here is a series of questions that you can use to guide you as you search for the answer(s) –

Inputs

- Were there sufficient resources? If not, what was lacking?
- Were they the right resources?
- Did staff have adequate knowledge, training, and time, to work towards this outcome?

Processes

- On reviewing the program plan and interventions, are these interventions adequately focused on the intended outcomes? If not, was there anything missing?
- Was the program plan adhered to? If not, what changes were made? Might these changes have impacted the outcomes?
- Might low performance on any of the "quality service factors" have impacted the outcomes? (for example, if students were distracted by noise, were cold and were not concentrating on the content).

Outcomes

- Were the expected outcomes that were set realistic or too optimistic?
- Were the expected outcomes reasonably related to the program content?

As you summarize your findings, you are then able to indicate what areas need improvement based on the problem or underperformance and what you believe may have contributed to this problem.

The decision making stage
Once the data review is complete and you have identified what areas need improvement, you can move on to making decisions about how to improve quality based on the conclusions you can draw from the data. There are two main questions you will be asking at this stage:

- What changes do we want to make?
- What data are we using as evidence that these changes are required/will be useful?
- How will we implement these changes?

Influencing
Information collected through evaluation activities is often used to help with influencing, whether this is influencing decision makers, partners, steering committees, or others. If you want your evaluation results to be useful for influencing, the following questions can help you design your evaluation activities to give you the most useful data.

- Who are we trying to influence?
- What do we want them to do or decide?
- What arguments do we want to make?
- What kind of evidence will support those arguments?
- What kind of information might this audience find compelling?
- What kinds of concerns and counter-arguments might this audience make?
- What evidence could we collect to address their concerns?

Marketing
Sometimes evaluation results can be helpful for marketing purposes. If you want to use evaluation results to help with your marketing efforts, you can think about

- Who are we marketing to?
- What does that particular audience want from our centre?
- What kind of evidence would they find compelling?

Examples of Using Evaluation Results
The following examples show how career centres have used evaluation results for reporting, quality improvement, influencing and/or marketing.

Example	Demonstrates	
Annual Statistical Report Template, Centre for Career Education, University of Windsor	Reporting, Quality Improvement	Overview
		Worksheet
Detailed Program Review Template, Centre for Career Education, University of Windsor	Reporting, Quality Improvement	Overview
		Worksheet
Example Excerpts from Final Reports, Career Centre, Trent University	Reporting, Influencing	Overview
		Review Form
Using Results of the Employment Status Survey, Career Centre, University of Toronto	Reporting, Quality improvement	Overview
		Survey

Evaluation Overview End of Year Review, Career Centre, Trent University	Reporting, Quality Improvement	Overview
		Review Form
Needs Assessment, Student Success Centre, The University of Western Ontario	Reporting, Quality Improvement, Influencing, Marketing	Overview
		Survey
		Letter

Putting It All Together – The Directors' Perspectives

This section of the guide describes the evaluation experiences of five university career centres who have all used the framework described in this guide (inputs, processes, and outcomes) to inform their evaluation activities. While their approaches to evaluation have been adapted to their particular needs and settings, all have found the framework has had a positive impact and that evaluation is critical to how they work.

The main themes noted by the directors include:

- evaluation is scalable, and adaptable to circumstances and needs
- it takes time; start with small steps
- involve the team, and other stakeholders, throughout the process
- evaluation is a living process that emerges over time and is not a linear series of set steps
- evaluation is both useful and critical

Each section describes the directors' reflections on their unique steps, decisions, and learnings for their centre.

The Director's Perspective

Yvonne Rodney, Career Centre, University of Toronto, St. George campus

Getting Started With Evaluation
Why and when did you start tackling evaluation?

Roughly eight years ago when the government started to hint at wanting more accountability from public sector organizations including universities, I began thinking about the implications for us in the Career Centre. We would need to 'prove' how our work contributed to students' career success overall and not solely on students' post-graduation employment rates. We had always used 'evaluation' forms in our workshops and events, but how to justify that career education made a difference? Understanding the issue was one thing, but in my search I could find little assessment information targeted to our work in career development.

We teach our students about the importance of planning in their career development, and we also talk about the role 'happenstance' plays in even the best laid plans. So it was with us. A number of seemingly unrelated events came together and acted as a catalyst to our action plan. (1) Our Teaching Assistants' Training Program (TATP) was at the time developing tools to equip new TA's and faculty in assessing the learning outcomes for their classes, (2) Our then Vice Provost for Students returned from a NASPA conference eager to engage staff in "Learning Reconsidered", and (3) the National Association for Career Educators and Employers (NACE) released an article on the topic of evaluating career services. I then contacted the folk in our TATP office who agreed to offer an all-day professional development session for our staff on developing and writing learning outcomes. That was the pivotal moment for us.

Key Evaluation Activities & Major Steps
What are some of the key evaluation activities and major steps you've taken?

Our first plan of action was to attach learning outcomes to everything we did. To that end we began examining all our programs and services, asking "How do such and such an activity contribute to our work as career educators?" and "What are we aiming to teach students?" While these might seem like simple questions, what quickly became apparent was that some components of our work were not easily measurable –workshops or any other kind of facilitated learning activities. This was true enough, but what about the important but ad hoc conversations that happen daily at our front desk or in our resource library between staff and students? How did we write learning outcomes for these important pieces of our work? What about career fairs or employer hosted information sessions where we act more as facilitators of the events and not the ones who delivered the content?

We decided to focus first on creating learning outcomes for all our "career educational activities" for which there was an intentional focus on skill building or knowledge acquisition. As director, I worked on drafting up career centre level learning outcomes and then worked with team leaders to write learning outcomes for workshops and seminars.

One area we found particularly challenging to write learning outcomes for was 1-1 career counselling sessions. Given the qualitative and process-oriented nature of career counselling, how do we assess whether students have changed? We brought in an outside expert to share some tools. Since then, twice a year, for a one week period, career counselling clients are surveyed on the learning outcomes that every career counselling appointment should address: identification of career concerns, short/long-term career goals, and use of self-assessment information in planning one's career. While this is still self-reporting and not the most robust tool, we do feel it is helping us know the value students are deriving from the service. The next step in this process is to create a more robust intake instrument where the student can identify at the outset of the career counselling process the areas s/he would like to work on. Then we can follow up 4-6 months later, letting them know what they identified as their needs at the beginning, and asking them where they are at now.

In addition to looking at learning outcomes, the associate director began an examination of inputs; however, this has been put on hold to dedicate staff time to a visioning process currently underway at our Centre. Of note, there is now a university-wide emphasis on, and a divisional wide expectation of, departments to align their work with key performance indicators – which means that more resources are now available to aid departments in this process.

Impact of Evaluation
How has evaluating impacted your centre?

Our work on evaluation has had several impacts at our centre:

- The language of learning outcomes has become part of our work culture.
- Staff are articulating the learning outcomes for their programs much more effectively. That is, moving beyond using words like "participants will have a better understanding of…" to more action oriented outcome statements.
- We are asking ourselves some good questions about evaluation. For example, "Are all aspects of our work measurable?" "If we want to position our work as focused on career education, should all our programs and services have an educational component?" "If we are spending time in activities that are not 'educational' in nature, should we?"
- Evaluation has also highlighted for us the fact that students' career outcomes are not the sole responsibility of the Career Centre. That we need to find ways to intentionally align our work within divisional and university-wide mandates.

Key Learnings About Evaluation
What have you learned about evaluation?

We have learned the following things about evaluation:

- Evaluation takes a long time and a lot of resources
    - It takes dedication to make evaluation happen when there are so many other demands on your time.
    - As the director you know accountability is important, but it's important to remember that you're working with staff whose focus is service delivery. It can be a challenge to help them embrace it and make time in schedules for this. We need to build it into the culture and create pockets of time to do it.
- You can't measure everything every year
    - Create an annual cycle of what activities you're going to evaluate.
    - You have to make decisions about which assessment activities are the priorities at this time. For example, the division may be requiring different assessments than what you need within your centre.
- Recognize that things change
    - You develop a 3-year strategic plan and set up corresponding benchmarks and then things change. Or, you may have a new leader who wants you to move in a different direction. It can feel like you never get a chance to finish what was started. How do you factor unplanned directional changes into your strategic plan, let alone evaluate their effectiveness?
- It is easy for evaluation to get pushed to the back burner
- You need time along with skilled and motivated staff to not only analyze your evaluation data but to use the findings to inform future planning
- Training on evaluation must be a part of new staff orientation to ensure consistency and continuity

Future Plans
What are your next steps?

Our future plans are tied into changes at the divisional level. The Student Life portfolio is currently going through a new visioning process. Out of this will come strategic initiatives, goals and performance indicators. We will then choose what to measure at the Career Centre to contribute to these divisional goals. For example, we may contribute to a division learning outcome on effective communication by demonstrating that students develop communication skills through resume writing and interview skills. This will help ensure the Career Centre priorities are in sync with divisional priorities.

In addition, we are conscious of not over-surveying students, so will be looking for opportunities to work in collaboration with other units.

So far we are mostly using surveys and have not gotten into other kinds of assessments. We can see the improvements from where we were in the past. More work is needed to refine the tools we currently use and to explore other methods.

The Director's Perspective

Kristi Kerford, Career Centre, Trent University

Getting Started With Evaluation
Why and when did you start tackling evaluation?

When I first started at Trent in 2001, I was responsible for creating a stand-alone career centre and knew that I wanted to do so deliberately. Early in the process, I went to a strategic planning workshop and then with my team of two, wrote a strategic plan for the centre. This process allowed me to more clearly state what we were doing or wanted to be doing, but I wasn't able to actually see if we were achieving our goals.

A year or two later I joined the University Career Centre Metrics Working Group when it first met and at that meeting confirmed my belief that evaluation is important. By this time the Trent Career Centre was a staff of three, plus myself. As a team we started to apply and test the framework that the Metrics group was in the early stages of developing. About a year into this process I was able to do something significant about evaluation when I received funding to hire an intern for a year.

Key Evaluation Activities & Major Steps
What are some of the key evaluation activities and major steps you've taken?

In our new department we started on a small scale, doing satisfaction surveys, reading about evaluation, and speaking with other career centres who were already involved in this.

When we hired the intern we started on a year of concerted evaluation planning. Our first steps were, as a team, looking at the Blueprint for Life/Work Designs, and a half day training session about evaluation and learning outcomes.

We used a learning outcomes tool that the working group had created to start mapping out the learning outcomes for each of our workshops. We started by doing the resume workshop as a team, which got everyone on board. Our intern was then able to take our current evaluation forms, the Blueprint, and our facilitator guides, and then map out draft learning outcomes and educational strategies for each of our services. She would then meet with the staff who were the main facilitators for each service to review her drafts, and then meet with me so that I could review for continuity across all services.

After creating learning objectives for workshops, individual services, events, and our library, we then developed evaluation forms. We started by creating a paper evaluation based on our learning objectives. We quickly decided that we wanted the evaluations to be completed online, which required some formatting revisions.

There was a lot of time invested. Our intern was a recent Trent grad who was able to devote her time to this project. She also created a manual with some teaching tools for us, including sections on how to write learning objectives, steps for analyzing data, and a cycle of assessment.

Through this year with the intern, we mostly looked at process variables, and learning, personal attribute, and impact outcomes, but did not look much at inputs. Afterwards I did do some work on inputs, specifically staff time. I used a capacity planning spreadsheet, created by the career centre at York, to plot out staff time use. We have used this to clarify time use expectations, for example, setting that our career counsellor will do four hours a day of counselling, and then calculating how much time is available for workshops. This has helped with conversations with staff about how they are spending their time. However, we have not used this for evaluation and are not at the point where we could relate inputs to processes and outcomes, which feels unfinished for me.

Impact of Evaluation
How has evaluating impacted your centre?

The work we have done on evaluation has had several impacts on our centre. First, our work now feels more deliberate. While we are doing a lot of the same things that we were doing before, we are now more clear about what we are trying to accomplish, and are able to evaluate how well we are meeting those learning goals with students.

We also have a clear structure for quality improvement conversations. At the end of each term we are able to review our evaluation data from the services we've evaluated that term. We discuss the data, and then decide if we need to make any changes, for example, if we are going to drop a workshop topic, or if we need an additional workshop. Some of this feedback we may have gotten anecdotally and irrespective of this process, but having this process in place means we always catch these things. We now have a mechanism to catch information in a provable way; while we still incorporate facilitator observations, the rest of the process provides more backup and evidence for our decision making.

We found that establishing our evaluation practices took a significant amount of time, but that using these practices does not take a tremendous amount of time now. We are able to have one work study student work on the logistics, such as activating new online surveys and sending emails to participants. They also may do the first level of pulling and summarizing data. Staff spend two half days each year looking at their own results and preparing for meetings, and then two half days at meetings reviewing our results and recommendations. Occasionally more time is needed if we decide to make a major change in learning outcomes which needs to be thought through, but minor changes are relatively easy to make.

Key Learnings About Evaluation
What have you learned about evaluation?

- It's easier than it looks.
    - We have found that evaluation may look daunting, and that there is an investment of time at the beginning, but at the end of the day it feels easier than I thought it might have.
- There is a difference between research and practice.
    - It is important to decide what works for the centre and what will serve your needs. Not all evaluation needs to be like a research or PhD project. It is good to think about how to keep it understandable, manageable, and transferable, so that someone else can do it as well.
- The process was even more valuable than the final documents.
    - The learning that the team gained around evaluation and learning outcomes was invaluable. Now when we are considering changes or new ideas, the conversation is grounded in both how it fits with our strategic plan and how will we evaluate it.
- The importance of being able to prove your value.
    - While I have not specifically been asked for learning outcomes evaluation yet, it is a powerful tool to demonstrate that you are making a difference for students.

Future Plans
What are your next steps?

For the foreseeable future my plan is to maintain our current process and run the cycle through. I would love to be able to share what I have done with other units on campus. In addition, one trend at Trent is an increasing focus on more experiential education programs. I see the potential for using this framework to inform both the creation of new experiential education programs (for example, incorporating variables such as inputs into program proposals) and for evaluating the programs.

Kerry Mahoney, Centre for Career Action, University of Waterloo

Getting Started With Evaluation
Why and when did you start tackling evaluation?

It is hard to say when we first started to tackle evaluation in a significant way. We have been measuring a lot of things for a long time. When we became 100% student funded in the mid 90's, we felt it even more important to be able to demonstrate to students that they were getting good value for their money.

Around 2007 we became more interested in learning outcomes, and in demonstrating that through our services, students were enhancing their career-related learning. While we had long counted participation numbers, we began to discuss how we could better measure our educational impact.

Key Evaluation Activities & Major Steps
What are some of the key evaluation activities and major steps you've taken?

As noted, for a long time we have been tracking the number of clients engaged in services and their demographics (such as faculty, level) in order to see if there were any groups who were not using our service who we should reach out to. We also gave out post-workshop evaluations, though in the past these were mostly "happy" sheets asking questions about satisfaction. Periodically we conducted focus groups on some specific topics.

Occasionally we have reached out to employers to get specific input from them as well. For example, we have questioned employers about their hiring practices so that we could confirm that our advice was in line with their practices. In addition, we have participated in the Learning to Work survey and periodically have also conducted our own new grad survey.

We have invested a lot in creating online services and we developed ways to track students' use of these online education activities.

There are two particular significant evaluation activities that we have undertaken in recent years: first, a resume research project, and second, a marketing/rebranding project. The resume research is described in greater detail within this guide in Case Study #4.

To provide a basis for our marketing/rebranding efforts, we wanted a better understanding of the different types of student career needs. We worked with two marketing firms who surveyed and interviewed our students. From this data we were able to create a model of student preparedness and engagement, which allowed us to identify three broad areas of student career need. This new understanding of student needs is driving our plans for services and programs and is helping us to determine where to invest time and energy.

Impact of Evaluation
How has evaluating impacted your centre?

Evaluation has had an impact on how we structure our services. For example, we require students to do some online tasks before they can participate in face-to-face services, including workshops and individual advising appointments. Because we had evaluated the quality of the online activities, we felt confident in making this a first step for students. In this way, evaluation drives practice – making online activities a first step saves staff time. Evaluating the online services allowed us to have the confidence to make this business decision.

Another example is that we have a limit on the number of face-to-face appointments each student can have on a particular topic; for example, students can have 3 resume critiques over the course of their degree program. Because we have confidence that we are educating students through these appointments (based on our resume research project), we feel students should have the strategies they need, and so they shouldn't need an endless series of appointments.

It is also interesting to look at the impact of our two recent larger evaluation projects. First, the resume research project had great results because it confirmed that what we are doing is working. However, this didn't result in a lot of change. We did tweak a few things online, but while these evaluation results were very affirming, we didn't need to take much action at all.

In contrast, the marketing/rebranding project has resulted in significant changes. For example, in our evaluation forms (for appointments, events, and workshops) we have now inserted a brand tally form. Part of the initial market research was clarifying our brand attributes, and we found that students see us as "professional, trustworthy, and honest". We decided that we want to be known as "professional, relevant, and motivating." With these as our target attributes, we can track if the changes we are trying in our materials and behaviours are actually changing student perception.

In addition, we have made other changes in our post-appointment survey. While it was previously mostly a measure of satisfaction, we have now added questions about learning and motivation which tie in with our goals.

We will continue to track the efficacy of our new strategy, and not just through the brand tally questions. We will continue to look for increased numbers of certain types of students participating in key programs/services.

Key Learnings About Evaluation
What have you learned about evaluation?

The key things that we have learned about evaluation are:

- If we wait to have time to do it, it will never happen.
    - For me this means both that there is never a "right" time and that waiting to find enough time won't work as it seems like plates are always full. So, to make evaluation happen, you have to keep it front of mind and commit to it, even when you are way too busy.
- Get staff bought in early.
    - I was reluctant to get staff too involved early on, as I was so concerned that I had to have a well-constructed plan before I involved them. However, I've learned that the plan will never be perfect and that it is really important to get staff involved, even if it is in small ways like helping with survey question wording. If evaluation is to work, staff need to be on board so that they buy in and work to make evaluation a success (e.g., by getting students to complete surveys).
- There is a balance between depth/validity and practicality.
    - It is important that evaluation be well-done, but it must also be realistic. There is a balance to be found between statistical significance and research that is publishable, and making the evaluation real and practical so that it can inform decision making.
    - The bottom line is, "Is it going to allow me to take some kind of action?" For example, I've learned that if you have a survey, for each question ask yourself "Why do I need to know this?", "Is knowing this likely to lead me to change something that we are doing?", and "If not, why ask?".
- Pick an area and focus on it.
    - Focus on evaluating a particular area because time and energy are limited. For example, if you want to be the best at delivering services online, then focus there.

Future Plans
What are your next steps?

Because of the importance of, and the significant time invested in our marketing/rebranding project, my primary future focus for evaluation is to keep working on this to make sure that we are successful.

In addition, I see regular outreach to employers as a gap, and in the future want to be more proactive than reactive with seeking input from employers. I have not yet decided how to go about this, but it is on my radar.

Leslie Lumsden, Student Success Centre, University of Western Ontario

Getting Started With Evaluation
Why and when did you start tackling evaluation?

The career area at UWO historically had a very basic evaluation plan. The career area was part of The Student Development Centre, and this centre had a simple survey looking at student satisfaction with services received. The student was asked to identify what service they were evaluating and then submit the form in a sealed box in the centre. The staff were encouraged to hand out these forms (mostly in group/workshops) a few times during the year, but then encouraged to blitz evaluations around annual report time. The results were simple and often boiled down to a statement such as, “The Career area achieved an overall satisfaction rate of 4.2 out of 5 for services to students. This is up from 4.1 achieved last year”. This was the only internal measure or evaluation used until 2007.

At the same time, there were national surveys that were being used to evaluate student services at universities by various media (Globe and Mail, Macleans, etc.). Western had not been not evaluated highly in the career area. Although the university administration was aware that these surveys had some problematic methods (and thus results) but coupled with the career area’s lack of internal data, it was decided that career development needed to be a greater focus for the university. Thus, more data was needed to build this. With this commitment came a new influx of funding and the promise of more resources to come. The career team was lifted out of The Student Development Centre and a new centre was formed called The Career Centre @ Western.

With all eyes watching (at least it seemed that way), we needed a way to talk about our work and results. We also desperately needed data that showed the administration what they were getting for their return on investment. Also, as a new centre we really wanted to know what we were doing well and what we could do better.

Key Evaluation Activities & Major Steps
What are some of the key evaluation activities and major steps you’ve taken?

The first steps were basic. We started to talk about data and evaluation – a great deal. The entire team was engaged in this ongoing conversation. It was quickly identified that despite most staff having a master’s degree (and thus having experience with data collection and evaluation), we were stumbling when it came to how to evaluate what we were doing. We had many questions and used the questions as a basis to forming a plan. So, for example, we asked: What do WE want to know about our work vs what the administration wants to know vs what students want to know? What methods could be used and not take so much time in an already time crunched service? What theory or tools could we use? What has been published on this? Who had already done this work and what could we learn from them?

At the same time, we were building a new internal data management system for all of our services (student bookings, recruiter scheduling, etc.). This was a very exciting time as it encouraged us to think about all the data we could build into the system for later evaluation and insight.

A couple of significant epiphanies occurred at that time in our service model. First and foremost, we as practitioners needed to understand clearly what we were asking “from” all of the data we were now excited to collect. It turned out that our tech programmers (who were building the system) did not always agree with what needed to be collected or how. We learned a great deal during these months and were also challenged by many staff changes, which started the questions and debates all over again. We also learned that programming costs to collect this data were high and we needed to be very clear about what our end goal was. It is an ongoing process we continue to engage in to this day. But it did lead us to also ask, “What other low cost, high impact, evaluation could we do?”

We decided to revamp a satisfaction evaluation form for students. We talked about what we wanted to know and what we would do with the information. Several forms were used and modified over a period of 3 years. The entire team was involved and we had the resource of a few hours upon request of a researcher from The Teaching and Learning Centre. We also engaged other centres on campus and asked for input.

Many of the team felt very overwhelmed by the entire evaluation process, and at times the project has ground to a halt with us citing that "there just isn't time". Again, more discussions and modifications were made. Within the last two years, we decided we needed to adopt a framework and have tried to filter our thinking and methods of evaluation around the Inputs, Processes, and Outputs framework. We had several workshops to learn this framework and help to integrate this thinking into all we do. The team continues to find new methods to do this but is constantly looking for tools and strategies to assist with this quest.

Impact of Evaluation
How has evaluating impacted your centre?

There has been a tremendous impact on our centre in the last 5 years through us simply including a discussion of evaluation within everything we do. There is now a basic understanding by the entire team that every activity we do will be measured and evaluated. It is also part of the norm of our centre that once the evaluation is done, we need to use this data for improvements and changes (as well as to celebrate our successes). Sometimes we do a great job at this, and other times we are aware that we have much to learn.

Key Learnings About Evaluation
What have you learned about evaluation?

We have learned many things about evaluation, including:

- Evaluation is a challenging but very rewarding process.
- It is extremely empowering to have more data and information to share with each other but also with administration.
- Data and information allow us to be much more purposeful and proactive when we start to do our annual strategic planning.
- Data and information also allow us to report with more accuracy. We are now building a historical perspective to track trends and changes that we had previously only been able to do anecdotally.
- It is a challenge to not feel like evaluation is an "additional" chore, but rather an important tool for our work and our future.
- It is important to not become too concerned about doing it "right" and instead just jump in and learn en route.

Future Plans
What are your next steps?

Each area within the centre has been asked to put forward a strategic plan that includes a five-year plan around evaluation. Each program will have completed an evaluation using the Inputs, Process, and Outputs by the end of the five-year plan. There will then be a rotational method used to reassess each of these within the following five years. This goal has challenges, but we feel very comfortable that by aiming high and keeping it at the top of our priorities we will develop more skill, knowledge and information to achieve this goal.

Karen Benzinger, Centre for Career Education, University of Windsor

Getting Started With Evaluation

Why and when did you start tackling evaluation?

About 7 years ago, I decided to take on evaluation in a more in-depth way. We were already doing the "standard" evaluation: things like, tracking participation and general satisfaction measures (e.g., "Would you recommend this activity to a friend"). I knew we had this covered, but I wondered how we were helping students learn.

We had changed our name to the Centre for Career Education, and we wanted to focus and align with contributing to the holistic development of students. So, our first focus for evaluation was setting and measuring learning outcomes.

We were not receiving institutional pressure to report on learning, but coming from a background in student development and education, I was motivated to ensure we had quality programming.

Key Evaluation Activities & Major Steps

What are some of the key evaluation activities and major steps you've taken?

Our first step was to research what had been done about learning outcomes in co-op, career, and internships to look at what the best way to introduce this would be. Next, we had a staff retreat to talk about learning outcomes, review some articles, and do lots of brainstorming about what this process could look like for us. We also brought in some students to the retreat to get their feedback on particular services. We then assigned team leads: one for co-op, one for VIP (our Volunteer Internship Program), and one for career services.

These first steps were turned into small working groups with regular meetings, to start from scratch to identify learning outcomes for each of our offerings, and then identify the educational strategies that would contribute to those outcomes. After establishing learning outcomes and educational strategies, we looked at how we could assess learning. This was the hardest part, and we consulted our centre for teaching and some faculty partners for their input.

Our next steps were establishing how we should track all the data we'd be collecting, and we discussed the logistics of when to assess, how to store all this information, and so forth.

Finally, we looked at how the different pieces fit with each other. By no means is the structure we've created perfect, but it has moved us significantly forward.

At the same time, on the co-op side, we formed a research team with faculty members and did a research project evaluating learning outcomes, and presented and published the results.

At the present time, I am now looking at how well we are covering the framework of inputs, processes, and outcomes. I didn't have this framework when we first started our evaluation work, so I'm now identifying any gaps that we can address. Also, one of the biggest struggles that we still have is how to pull it all together. We have many separate measurements and are still working on how to take all of this data and create a succinct report with useful analysis. Given the small size of our staff, we have decided to keep the whole process manageable by creating a cycle of assessment in which we are not evaluating everything every year, but are still tracking what needs to be tracked so that when we are ready to do analysis, we have the data we need.

Impact of Evaluation

How has evaluating impacted your centre?

Our work on evaluation has had several impacts. First, the whole process has reinforced to staff what we are really about – which is education, facilitating learning, and making a difference. Second, I feel much more assured of the quality of our programming. At the very least, I know every program has been intentionally designed and that students are benefiting from these programs.

In addition, we are in a better position for the conversations about strategic directions that are happening across campus with the recent appointment of a new president. We already have our own plan and are able to talk knowledgeably about evidence-based decision making.

The most difficult part of this process for us was just identifying a clear strategy for attacking assessment. We struggled through our work with assessing learning outcomes (and are still working to enhance it). However, the framework has made it much easier for us to identify how to make our assessment work more robustly, by identifying and filling in gaps related to inputs, processes, and outcomes beyond learning outcomes.

Key Learnings About Evaluation

What have you learned about evaluation?

We have learned several things about evaluation:

- Evaluation can't be an after-thought.
  - Evaluation has to be done up front and totally integrated; it can't be done as well as an add-on. For example, how you structure the activities for the students is impacted by what you need in order to prove your outcomes. It is also not solely linear, not as simple as first setting learning outcomes, then educational strategies, then assessment – these three are always intertwined.
- There's constant evolution.
  - We found that once we saw the data, we needed to make changes in what we were asking (because our first attempt didn't really get at what we needed it to). Sometimes, that meant adjusting an educational strategy. You're always evaluating data (for quality improvement, etc.), but are also always evaluating your evaluation processes at the same time. For example, by asking, "Did we get what we needed?" and if not, "How should we do things differently next time?"
- The future and big picture are not always clear.
  - This process in some ways reminded me of doing my thesis. The picture starts out totally grey, and you may not know exactly where it is going, or what it will look like, but you gradually plod through, and with each step you take it becomes clearer. I also find that the more time you spend thinking and working on assessment, the easier it becomes to grasp. Sometimes, staff struggle with this because they are busy providing service. I have learned to think about what I can do to help make it clearer. For example, I have recently worked with several staff members on creating templates for reporting and program analysis. These templates summarize the assessment data in one place and include sections which require analysis and recommendations. I found that this helped staff connect the dots between the data they are gathering and program enhancement.
- It takes an extraordinary amount of patience.
  - You may believe this is so important that you want it done immediately, but it can't be done that fast. There are so many variables and you may need to make several attempts at a tool before you are satisfied. I remind myself I'm further ahead today, and I know I'm moving forward.

Future Plans
What are your next steps?

First, we are looking at how to best use the data that we are collecting. We are creating a structure for reporting that will give us insights into what is working, what is not working, and why. From there, we will be able to make changes as part of a continual improvement process.

Second, we are filling in the gaps in the three part framework of inputs, processes, and outcomes. We have always done processes, and have done some work on inputs and outcomes, but want to look at what needs to be added.

Third, we will re-look at assessment processes related to co-operative education, especially related to learning outcomes. We have struggled in this area due to its complexity. How do you measure learning associated with several different academic programs that span three years, dozens of activities, multiple work terms, etc.? Initially, we tried to measure learning associated with each activity in addition to learning across the entire program. This is proving to be quite difficult. We may need to abandon this ideal and focus solely on the latter.