The Power of Evidence

Demonstrating the Value of Career Development Services

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PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. What do you think is meant by evidence-based practice?
2. What constitutes acceptable evidence of success in evaluating programs and providing services?
3. How can practitioners link the outcomes with the services that are provided?

Introduction and Learning Objectives

The main purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how an agency, a department, or an individual providing career development services can avoid being a casualty of budget cuts and changed priorities and instead be one of the success stories that receives further support and funding. At its simplest, it is a matter of collecting the necessary evidence to demonstrate the value of the career development services. The key is in being able to demonstrate the connection between the program and positive outcomes for the client.

There is substantial evidence indicating that career counsellors, generally speaking, do not evaluate the impact of their work with clients. For example, in a major national study of career and employment counselling, Conger, Hiebert, and Hong-Farrell (1994) found that 40% of practitioners reported never evaluating their

work with clients. Of those who claimed to evaluate their work, the most common method for doing so was simply to ask clients if they found the session useful. In a more recent study, more than 90% of managers and practitioners working in agencies providing career services to youth and adults agreed that it was important to evaluate the outcomes of the services they offered (Lalande & Magnusson, 2005, 2007). However, when asked about their evaluation practices, only about 35% of practitioners reported ever doing so. The data most frequently reported pertained to change in employment status. Funders found this useful, but practitioners lamented that the data were not very relevant to much of the work they did, and did not connect directly to the types of services they offered. In general, very few counsellors collect data on the impact of their services, and when they do, the types of data collected make it difficult to link the services that an agency offers to the outcomes that are achieved. The focus in this chapter is on providing an alternative.

Consider the following question: "Would you invest in something that has no documented track record of success, little certainty about what outcome you could expect, and few promises for how any outcome would be achieved?" Most people would say no! Yet in career services, this is what most service providers expect funders to do. Simply put, it does not make much sense to invest in an intervention if we don't know where we are going with it, we don't know how we're going to get there, and we don't know if we've arrived at the final destination. It is neither professional nor ethical to set about to do things with clients with no evidence base to support what we are doing.

We in the career development field need to reconceptualize how we think about evaluation. Often evaluation is seen as an activity that is conducted after the primary service has been designed, thereby relegating it to the status of an "afterthought." All too often, the main role of career practitioners is seen in terms of the provision of services, not the evaluation of the effectiveness of those services. When evaluation is done, an outsider is usually contracted to take a look at the program and provide feedback. Typically such external evaluators have had little involvement with the program and may not be familiar with the goals and intended outcomes. The assumption is that the outside expert can provide an objective look at the program.

As an alternative to external postservice evaluations, we propose an approach where evaluation is infused into the day-to-day practices of service providers and where service provision and service evaluation are completely intertwined. It is an approach where service providers will always ask themselves two questions:

1.   What intervention would be appropriate for this client?
2.   How will the client and I determine how well the intervention is working?

Thus, this chapter is about creating a marriage between service provision and outcome. First, we provide a conceptual background for approaching the merger of

service and outcome. Then we provide some practical tools to help implement the idea. Finally, we provide suggestions for implementing evaluation into practice, and discuss the policy implications and infrastructure needs that will help support the perspective we advance.

The learning objectives for this chapter are to enable you to do the following:

1. Grasp the importance of evaluating the impact of client services.
2. Understand the importance of infusing evaluation into the day-to-day practices of service providers.
3. Acquire some practical tools to help implement the merger of service and outcome.
4. Understand the steps involved in integrating evaluation into practice.
5. Become familiar with the policy implications and infrastructure needs to demonstrate the value of career development services.

We have used case examples to illustrate the points we make; they have been sufficiently disguised so that the identities of the agencies and the service providers are protected, but all of the stories are real-life examples. Examples of forms that can be used to conduct the evaluation and measure results and sample reports are provided in the appendices to this chapter.

Need for Evaluation

The following two stories from the field illustrate two situations where evaluation helped strengthen and save programs.

Stories From the Field (1): It Seems Our Program Is No Longer Effective

A few years ago one of the authors was contracted by an agency to conduct a program evaluation. The program was very well developed; had a strong rationale, detailed facilitator guide, and explicit expectations about client outcomes; and had been operating very successfully for several years. However, the results of the program had become uneven and the program seemed to be less effective than it was initially. Therefore, the agency wanted an objective third party to evaluate the program.

The program guide, the facilitator manual, and the participant materials were reviewed as the first step of the evaluation process. Next, a few group sessions were observed to see how the written materials were translated into practice. In some cases, it was clear from watching the session exactly where the group was in the intervention program. However in other cases, it was difficult to identify where

the group was in the overall program plan. It turned out that some facilitators were adhering strictly to the program guide, while others departed from it substantially. On closer analysis, it turned out that the people who were following the program guide were achieving consistent and effective results, but the people who had modified the program guide in an attempt to make it more "effective" were in fact achieving less consistent and less effective results.

The solution was to educate staff about the program, and for supervisors to monitor session objectives and the processes the counsellors used to conduct the sessions. Within a short time, the program seemed to be working equally well for all facilitators, and a higher degree of success was achieved more consistently across all staff members. As it turned out, the program was excellent and the results were consistently positive as long as the program was being implemented as intended.

Stories From the Field (2): Survivor Stories in Times of Budget Cutbacks

Budget reductions are a common experience for service providers across Canada. A few years ago, this was particularly true in one Canadian province where student service departments in many colleges and universities were severely reduced or eliminated entirely. There were two or three exceptions where the student service departments were left intact and, in one case, even expanded. This raised the question: "Why were these departments not affected negatively by budget cuts?" It turns out that in every case where the department was not reduced, a concerted effort had been made to gather evidence attesting to the positive impact that the student services department was having on students and on the institution as a whole. Evaluating the impact of services on clients, it seemed, provided good job security.

Conceptual Framework

In 2003, a *National Symposium on Career Development, Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development* was held. The symposium brought together service providers, educators, employers, and policy makers working in the career development field. In the plenary session, a senior federal policy maker shocked the Canadian career development community when he said: *"You haven't made the case for the impact and value of career development services, so why should government continue to fund them?"*

In response to that challenge, the **Canadian Research Working Group on Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development (CRWG)** was formed. The CRWG is a consortium of 10 researchers from six Canadian universities and one private foundation (CRWG, n.d.).

Evaluation Practices

One of the first questions facing the CRWG was, "What is the best way to evaluate the effectiveness of career development interventions?" A first step in addressing this question was to obtain a snapshot of current evaluation practices in the field (see Lalande & Magnusson, 2005). One of Lalande and Magnusson's findings was that differing needs and expectations existed between those who funded services and those who provided services. On the one hand, funders were generally more interested in broad social outcomes, such as how many of the people who accessed services found employment. On the other hand, service providers were typically more interested in indicators such as client satisfaction or counsellor reports of service delivery, neither of which addresses the concerns of policy makers. Service providers also expressed frustration that client outcomes they deemed important (such as personal growth, empowerment, optimism about their career futures, and confidence

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SPOTLIGHT: *THE CANADIAN RESEARCH WORKING GROUP (CRWG) ON EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT*
by Lara Shepard

The CRWG is made up of francophone and anglophone independent researchers from six Canadian universities (University of Victoria, University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, University of Calgary, Université Laval, and Université de Sherbrooke) who are collaborating to demonstrate the effectiveness of career development programs and services
    The mandate is described at the CRWG-GDRC website <http://ccdf.ca/crwg/> as follows:

- to develop an evaluation framework to gather evidence-based data on career development programs and services;
- to promote the implementation of an evaluation culture in the career development field;
- to conduct research to test the framework and build a bank of evidence-based data on the impact of career development programs and services.

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in their ability to manage their careers) were not considered to be important by funders. To be fair, policy makers had a point: Frequently, service and funding requests were based on a "moral obligation" argument, which assumed that people needed help in making career decisions and it was the responsibility of a "just society" (or organization or government) to provide that help. Justification for funding services was often based on how busy the service providers were. More often than not, no assessment of the effectiveness of those services was conducted.

Given the milieu described above, the CRWG decided to focus on client change as the primary indicator of the effectiveness of career development interventions, because it was seen as central to the challenge issued by policy makers. We drew on two trends that had become prominent in recent years: **evidence-based practice** and **outcome-focused intervention** (Charles, Ernst, & Ponzetti, 2003; Morago, 2006; Taylor & White, 2002; Webb, 2001).

Evidence-based practice focuses on providing services that have predictable positive effects. Evidence-based practice is important because, ethically speaking, clients deserve to receive interventions that have a positive track record for producing change. Furthermore, when that evidence is provided, job security for service providers is enhanced. The central question in evidence-based practice is: *What would be the best program or intervention to use with this client?*

Outcome-focused intervention involves demonstrating the added benefit of the services that are offered to the client or to society at large. Outcome-focused intervention is important because successful programs are frequently discontinued for lack of convincing evidence that clients have changed as a result of the services they received. Moreover, funders, clients, and agency managers, as well as service providers themselves, want evidence that the services in question have tangible, positive impacts on clients as well as on society at large. The central question in outcome-focused intervention is: *What evidence will tell me how well interventions are working?*

Frequently, the foundation for evidence-based practice comes from **randomized controlled trials** (RCTs). However, several authors have described the substantial problems associated with using RCTs as the sole basis for addressing efficacy concerns (e.g., Hiebert, 1997; Hiebert & Charles, 2008; Hiebert, Domene, & Buchanan, 2011; Horan, 1980). Thus, in this chapter, we offer an alternate approach that combines both evidence-based practice and outcomes-focused intervention. An alternative, and equally viable approach to RCTs, is to incorporate the notion of local clinical scientist (Trierweiler & Stricker, 1998) into service delivery practices. Local clinical scientists (or our preferred term *professional practitioners*) are practitioners who adopt a scientific attitude towards the work they do. They are clear about the nature of the change client's desire and clear about what they will do to meet client goals. They document what they do and how well it works. **Professional practitioners** are rigorous observers, operating in their everyday reality: They emphasize theory and

evidence-based practice, rather than merely technique (DeAngelis, 2005; Levant, 2005).

Professional practitioners treat their work with clients as investigations, tracking the various factors that might influence client change, documenting the client changes that are observed, and looking for patterns that connect contextual factors, processes used to initiate client change, and outcomes achieved. Each client becomes an "n = 1" experiment. Over time and multiple iterations of an intervention, patterns emerge and predictions can be made about treatment effectiveness. We are not suggesting that observations made by professional practitioners are better than, or should replace, observations deriving from RCTs. However, we do argue that such an approach is an equally viable alternative methodology for demonstrating the effectiveness of career development interventions. As Barlow (1981) points out, this will encourage practitioners to become more responsive to research evidence, and help them produce some of that evidence themselves.

To implement this philosophy, we needed an approach to evaluation that would be relevant enough that practitioners in the field would use it, yet comprehensive enough to cover the most important factors affecting client change. The resulting framework was a simple Inputs > Processes > Outcomes approach. The framework has been described extensively elsewhere (e.g., Baudouin, et al., 2007; Lalande, Hiebert, Magnusson, Bezanson, & Borgen, 2006) and therefore it will be only summarized briefly here (see Figure 1).

In the framework depicted in Figure 1, Framework for Evaluating Client Change, on the next page, you'll note that:

- Inputs are the resources that are available to help clients change (i.e., pursue the outcomes).
- Processes are the mechanisms that are involved in achieving the outcomes (i.e., what counsellors and clients do to facilitate client change).
- Outcomes are the client changes that result from the inputs enacting the processes (i.e., the knowledge and skills that a client acquires, the attitudes and other personal attributes that a client develops, and the impact of those on a client's life).

The three elements are interconnected, but the relationship is not linear. Inputs feed processes and processes result in outcomes. However, outcomes are also influenced by the inputs (resources) available, and the nature of the inputs (especially the competencies of the staff) influence the process (interventions) that can be enacted. Thus, even though the framework may look linear, in reality, the three elements are very interactive.
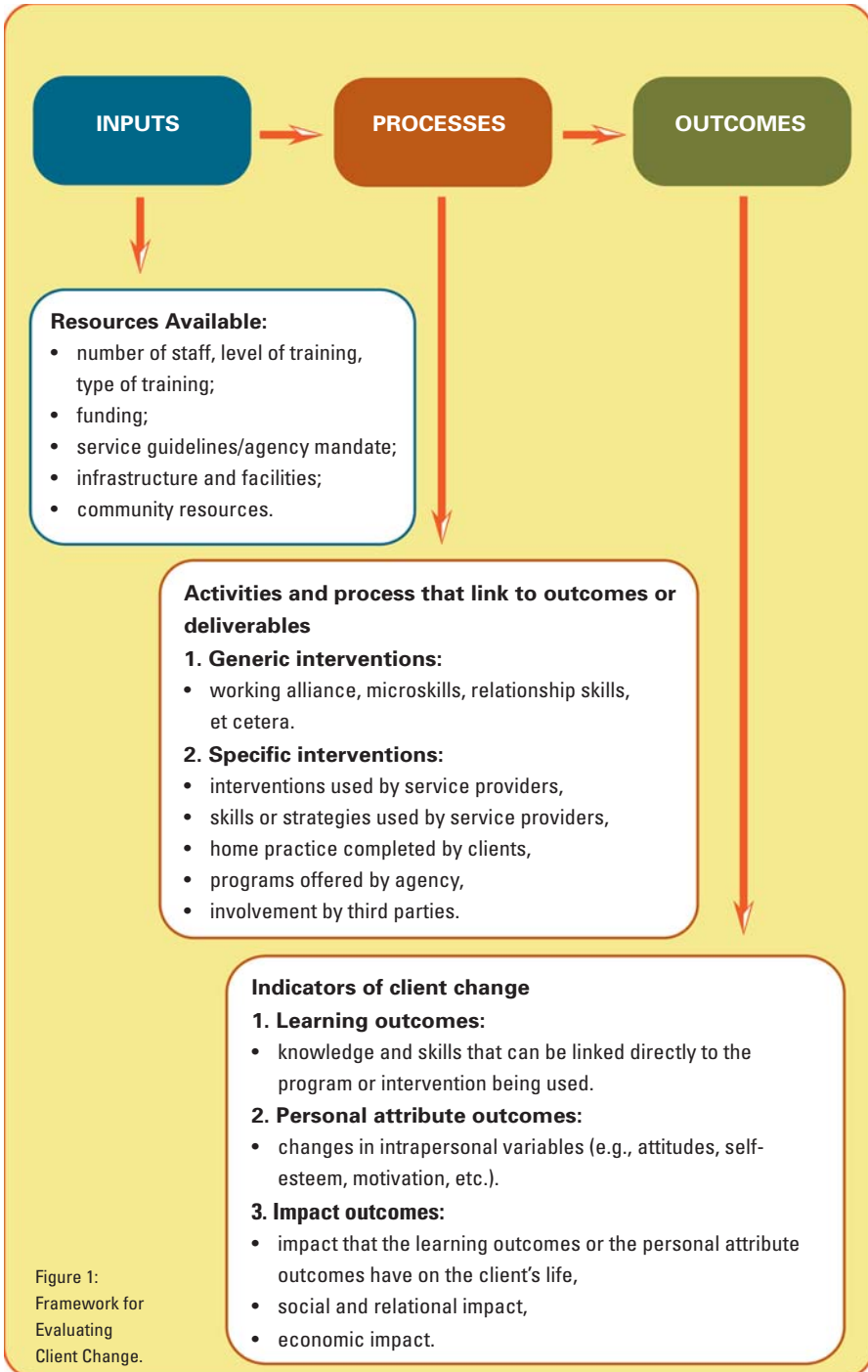
Figure 1: Framework for Evaluating Client Change.

Integrating Evaluation and Intervention

The evaluation framework described above integrates nicely with an intervention framework that is typically used in career counselling and career development services. The intervention usually begins by examining the client's context with a view to identifying the specific goals that a client wants to accomplish. The client's needs and the outcomes that are identified are integrated with available resources to develop a service plan. The service plan will include specific tasks that service providers and clients will need to engage in to meet the client's goals. These goals can be thought of as containing several specific outcomes and indicators of change that will determine the extent to which the outcomes have been achieved. The dynamic relationship between these factors (intervention, evaluation, and service delivery) is depicted in Figure 2.
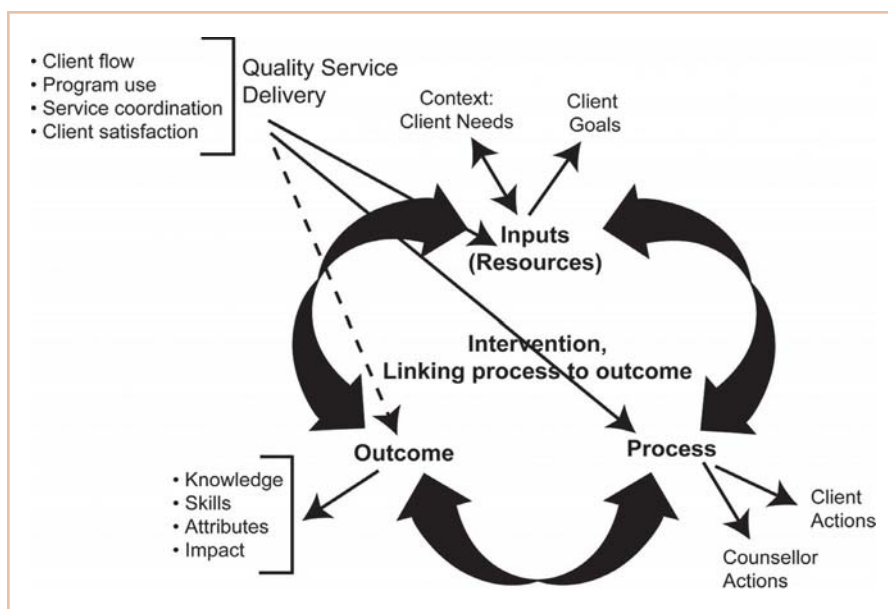

Figure 2: Interconnection Between Intervention, Evaluation, and Service Delivery.

It is important to note that Figure 2 contains an additional group of variables named *Quality Service Delivery*. This category includes factors that are important to agency managers, funders, and policy makers but do not relate directly to client change or intervention planning. Variables such as ease and timeliness of access, service utilization, and number of clients served, and so on, are important when evaluating the overall quality of services available, but by themselves, they do not speak to the impact of services on clients or on society. Simply put, quality service

delivery goals are insufficient for professional practice because they do not directly address client change or the effectiveness of the processes used to effect that change.

One final point deserves mention. When providing services, and especially when evaluating services, it is important to begin by identifying the types of client changes that are being sought. The client context and client goals need to be at the forefront of service provision to ensure that the expected outcomes are realistic. Practitioners and clients need to be in agreement regarding all aspects of the work they will do together.

Once the outcomes are clear, indicators of success and of progress towards success must be identified. Next, the processes needed to produce the outcomes can be developed and the resources needed to implement those processes can be recruited. There is a strong need for planning these two processes together. Each of the factors identified in Figure 2 need to be taken into account and the interactive nature of the factors needs to remain central in the planning and implementation of both the intervention and evaluation plan.

To summarize, in order for the evaluation to be effective, evidence must be documented regarding the resources used, the processes implemented, the client competencies (i.e., the knowledge, skills, and personal attributes) that were acquired, as well as the impact of those outcomes on the client's life or any larger societal or economic impacts.

Stories From the Field (3): **The Importance of Monitoring Process Variables**

A number of years ago a major agency, whose primary mandate was to help injured workers to return to work, contacted one of the authors to review their Job Finding Club programs. The primary responsibility for conducting Job Finding Club programs was subcontracted to several agencies and one troublesome observation was that some clients were returning two or three times to do the program. All of the agencies had the same facilitation guide, and the success rates for all agencies were in the range of 80% placement within 2–3 weeks.

In the initial telephone interviews with the agencies, it was discovered that some agencies were explicitly following the facilitation guide; however, about one third of the agencies had also hired a job marketer to help the clients find jobs. In those programs, clients were not learning job search skills; they were relying on the job marketer to find them jobs and thus did not develop job search strategies. If they found themselves unemployed again, they simply returned to the program for more help.

To address the problem, the funding agency introduced a program audit, where part of one staff member's time was devoted to conducting unannounced

site visits to see how closely the vendors were following the program. The service providers were all given a program-audit checklist in advance, and were told that there would be unannounced visits to see how closely the prescribed program was being followed. In actual fact, the site visits only happened once or twice, but the belief that they could happen was enough to get all providers following the program, and the rate of clients seeking to repeat the job club dropped to zero. The conclusion was that when the Job Finding Club program was followed the clients learned job search skills, and were able to use those skills independently to manage future career transitions. Setting up a system to monitor a program will make the program more focused and effective in terms of client change.

Tools and Resources

We believe that virtually all clients are capable of answering the question: *How useful are you finding the career development services you are accessing?* We further believe that in very few cases, perhaps no cases at all, would the client's answer be based on standardized test scores. Thus, it is important to develop (a) an alternative way to assess client change, and (b) other means for linking client outcomes to the services that are being accessed in ways that incorporate how clients actually think, act, and feel. Members of the CRWG have been experimenting with several new processes, most of which are informal assessment tools. A compendium of these tools is provided at CRWG (n.d.). Two of those tools are described in this section.

Evaluation as a Decision-Making Process

Frequently, evaluation is approached from a judgemental perspective: An evaluator passes judgement on the topic under examination. Let us say you are interested in the extent to which participants found a workshop useful. To find out, you might use a **Likert-type rating scale**, where participants are given a sentence stem such as, "I found the workshop really useful," and asked to select from five options: Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neither Agree nor Disagree; Agree; Strongly Agree. One problem with this approach is that there is often considerable discrepancy between individual raters in interpreting the rating options — this is called **inter-rater discrepancy**.

Instead of using a judgement model, we suggest approaching evaluation from a decision-making perspective, where an evaluator examines the evidence and decides on the level of acceptability on the topic under examination. Approaching evaluation as a decision-making endeavour involves a two-step process, as depicted in Table 1,

Evaluation as a Decision-Making Process. In guiding people through the decision-making process, we use common language to describe various steps. We do this in the belief that using common language increases the relevance of the process, is easily understood by participants, and therefore increases the consistency of interpretation and reliability of participant responses.

Step A, decide if the competency (degree of preparation, level of engagement, level of knowledge, etc.) **is acceptable** (employable or adequate at a beginning level) **or unacceptable** (unlikely to result in continued employment in a work setting).

Unacceptable	Acceptable

Then, in Step B, decide:

If the level of competence is unacceptable, is it:
    really quite poor (= 0), or
    almost okay (= 1).
If the level of competence is acceptable, is it:
    just barely okay (= 2) [but still acceptable, otherwise it would be 1],
    really very good (= 4), or
    somewhere in between (= 3) [better than minimally acceptable, but not yet excellent].

The resulting rating scale is presented below.

Unacceptable		Acceptable		
0	1	2	3	4

Table 1: Evaluation as a Decision-Making Process.

Consider, as an example, the self-evaluations (or supervisor evaluations) of practicum students on factors such as knowledge, skill, level of competence, degree of preparation, and so on. In such situations, we have found that using the decision-making approach depicted in Table 1 results in high inter-rater agreement. When several raters look at

the same performance, there is high agreement among the raters on what should be the appropriate rating.

We have also found that for the individual rater the decision-making approach results in higher consistency in ratings over time. When the same rater looks at the same performance on different occasions, there is high agreement on the rating from Time 1 and Time 2. Thus, many of the "judging issues" (e.g., what is the difference between "Agree" and "Strongly Agree") are reduced, and we have a higher degree of consistency and more trustworthy ratings (i.e., higher reliability).

Retrospective Assessment

One difficulty with using self-assessments to determine changes in skill or knowledge is that people don't know what they don't know. To illustrate, people enrolled in a program to improve interpersonal communication might be asked to rate their communication skills at the beginning of the program and again at the end of the program. At the beginning, many people think that their communication skills are reasonably good and they rate themselves quite high. During the program, as they get to know more about what constitutes good communication, they realize that their knowledge and skills are not as good as they initially thought. At the end of the program they are asked to rate themselves again, and the ratings are often lower than they were at the beginning, even though they have learned a lot and have an increased level of skill (see Hiebert et al., 2011; Posavac, 2011; Robinson & Doueck, 1994; Spiro, Shalev, Solomon, & Kotler, 1989). This is because their measuring stick changed as their learning progressed.

A form of retrospective assessment, which we have named Post-Pre Assessment, is often used to address this problem, as it creates a consistent measuring stick for both preassessments and postassessments (see Rockwell & Kohn, 1989). This process is used ONLY at the end of a program. It asks people to use their current level of knowledge to create a common measuring stick for preprogram and postprogram assessments. For example, when a workshop or program is finished, participants are asked: *Knowing what you know now about interpersonal communication, how would you rate yourself before the workshop, and how would you rate yourself now?* The self-assessment is done only at the end of the workshop or program, but it asks people to self-assess their preprogram competencies (hence the name "**post-pre assessment**"), along with their postprogram competencies, using the same measuring stick (i.e., "Knowing what you know now…").

The process for creating a post-pre assessment usually begins by listing the explicit outcomes that are being sought, and then using these outcomes as the item stems in a questionnaire. The mindset provided in the preceding paragraph is described (i.e., knowing what you know now about topic X), followed by the item stems (i.e., the explicit outcomes being sought).

An example of a post-pre assessment form is provided in Appendix A and also Appendix B of this chapter. Using the example of a workshop for facilitating student transition from university to the workplace, Appendix A shows how post-pre assessment can be used to evaluate knowledge and skill gains, and identify changes in personal attributes from participating in the workshop.

Appendix B, Sample Summative Evaluation Results, shows the evaluation data that can be obtained from one of these workshops and illustrates the types of conclusions that can be derived from this approach. These data provide strong support for the learning changes that have occurred as a result of the workshop (Pothier, Robertson, Hiebert, & Magnusson, 2008).

It is important to note that even though the example provided in Appendix A and Appendix B is for a workshop, the same process can be used to work with an individual client. In this case you will be viewing the client as a program of one participant, and working through a program tailor-made to address his or her needs. In our field research, we have worked with service providers to help them use these five steps with their clients:

1. Identify typical client goals.
2. Identify what they would use as indicators of success, indicating that the goal was being achieved.
3. Design the experiences (processes) needed for the client to learn the knowledge and skills, as well as acquire the personal attributes needed to achieve the goals.
4. Identify the skills that the service provider would use in guiding the client through the processes.
5. Identify the resources that would be used throughout the process to implement the intervention and evaluation plans.

Working through these steps typically takes about an hour the first time, but the planning process becomes substantially shorter the second and third time as the practitioners get the hang of doing it. With practice, the planning process takes no more time than a practitioner usually would take to prepare for an individual client interview.

The procedure described above provides useful data for linking the client change outcomes to the services that have been accessed and for developing summative evaluation.

A similar process can be used to obtain formative feedback for improving a program or an intervention. To do that, simply list all of the topics that have been part of the workshop or the intervention plan, and ask the client to use the decision-

making approach to indicate how useful they found each item. The same list can be used to indicate how engaged a client was in the intervention: simply list the topics and ask the client (or workshop participants) whether they "completed that item," "sort of completed that item," or "did not complete it at all." Appendix C, Sample Formative Feedback Results, contains a sample of a form used to obtain participant engagement data, and an example of the collected data and formative feedback on usefulness of workshop to the participants.

The approach described above will provide data on many aspects: (a) how engaged the participants were in the process, (b) how useful they found each of the topics, (c) the knowledge and skills participants learned, (d) the personal attributes they acquired, (e) the impact on the participants' lives, and (f) the participant attributes for the changes they experienced. Thus, we have a clear link between client change and the service provided, and we can say with confidence whether or not the program was responsible for the changes participants experienced.

❖ *Stop and Reflect*

An exhaustive collection of forms and checklists can be obtained from the website of the Canadian Research Working Group on Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development, at <http://www.crwg-gdrc.ca/>. Navigate to Resources > Evaluation Tools > Compendium of Evaluation Tools. These tools adopt the approaches outlined above and extend the areas of application to include numerous informal (non-standardized) procedures for gathering evidence of client change and intervention effectiveness.

Taking the Next Step: Integrating Evaluation Into Practice

So far, we have provided a framework for integrating evaluation into your practice, and provided some examples of tools and resources that can be used within this framework. We now turn our attention to integrating evaluation into practice. We suggest seven general stages to follow regardless of the scope of practice — whether you are considering evaluating large-scale interventions such as programs, or small-scale interventions such as individual counselling sessions. We see these stages not as hard and fast rules, but rather as a means of conceptualizing the process.

Stage 1: Understanding Service Foundations and Client Context

The guiding question in Stage 1 is, *What factors outside of the intervention might have an impact on the results?*

Services, whether consisting of individual counselling, workshops, or intervention programs, are embedded within unique contexts and circumstances. Before engaging

in effective evaluations, we must consider the environment in which we are working. Although that may sound trite, we have repeatedly found examples of "mismatches" between the intention of the service and the needs of the client. If we want to properly evaluate our services, we need to clearly identify the nature of those services, the contexts in which they are provided, and the needs of the clients accessing them. A more complete discussion of the alignment of service delivery with client needs can be found in Magnusson (1992) and Magnusson, Day, and Redekopp (1993).

Stories From the Field (4): **Making Sure the Intervention Is Appropriate**

One of the authors was invited to help a government agency understand why a funded program was doing so poorly. The goal of the program was to help women receiving Social Allowance to make the transition to employment. The program was a well-regarded employability skills program where participants were taught how to prepare résumés, develop contacts and job leads, and present themselves effectively in interviews. However, most of the participants were not ready to use such skills. They were on welfare because of a host of social and personal issues: Many had been (or were currently) victims of emotional and/or physical abuse; most had young children to care for; and most lacked formal education beyond high school. The problem was not so much that the program was ineffective, but that the program was inappropriate for the types of needs the participants experienced.

Nature of Services

The nature of a service can be thought of in terms of "what gets done, with whom, by whom." When people lose sight of any of these three components, it becomes difficult to determine what are the most effective services for clients. When examining the nature of service, it is important to consider service focus (i.e., the broad goals for service provision). Employment services typically focus on helping clients consider and/or find a particular kind of job. Vocational services help clients to link talents, interests, and passions in considering what kinds of work are best suited to them as individuals. Career services help clients with personal/lifestyle decisions and the balancing of multiple life roles (including occupational) across their lifespan. In the example we provided earlier, clients with career-service needs were put into an employability-focused program, with unfortunately predictable results.

Hiebert and Borgen (2002) describe types of services in terms of advising, guiding, and counselling. Advising services typically focus on providing general information

(such as Labour Market Information or LMI) that may assist clients. Guidance services attempt to match information about clients with information about the world of work so that clients can make sound work-related decisions. Counselling services engage in interpersonal processes for exploring life issues. Using these descriptions, we can see that the participants in *Stories From the Field (4)* primarily received advising services when most of them would have benefitted more from counselling services.

In determining the nature of services it is also important to consider the primary audience and the form to be used in delivering the services. The primary audience may be a specific age group (e.g., adolescents, older adults, etc.), gender, or segment of society (e.g., recent immigrants). The form of intervention is frequently embedded within an agency mandate, and includes services such as individual, group, psycho-educational, or self-directed. It is always important to ask if a particular client fits the primary audience and would benefit from that form of service. Three questions are useful when examining the nature of services:

1. Who is the primary recipient of our services?
2. What is the nature of our services? and
3. How are our services provided?

Context of Service

If the nature of the services you provide is the reason for your evaluation, then the factors external to your services form the context. We mentioned earlier that contextual factors do not indicate client change as a result of your services, but they certainly do provide a backdrop for understanding and explaining your results. For example, suppose you offered a job-finding service aimed at helping trained workers find employment within a specialized industry. Let's further suppose that 75% of the participants were able to find suitable employment. Is that a good result or not? If the unemployment rate in that sector was less than 5% in your region, then the people funding your service might conclude that you did not do very well. On the other hand, if the unemployment rate consistently hovered around 30%, your funder would probably think this was a terrific program. The answer to the question, "How good is this?" often depends on contextual factors.

A number of contextual factors may come into play in the evaluation of any service delivery. Table 2, Taking Stock of the Context for Service Evaluation, contains a sample checklist of items that could be used to identify unique or special circumstances that might have an impact on the results you are able to attain. It is also important to clearly describe the nature of your client group for, as we saw in *Stories From the Field (4)*, it is possible to deliver a good program, but to the wrong clients, and get disappointing results.

NAME OF PROGRAM OR SERVICE	
Context	**Factors that may affect results**
Social	
Cultural	
Political	
Economic	
Spiritual	
Gender	
Other	

Table 2 : Taking Stock of the Context for Service Evaluation.

Taken together, examining the nature of the service, the contextual factors in which the service operates, and the needs of the clients, will help you design a more effective evaluation and better understand your results. This will put you in a stronger position to argue for the efficacy of your program.

Stage 2: Describing Desired Outcomes

The core question to be asked in Stage 2 is, *What do we want to achieve?* Lalande and Magnusson (2005) found that many Canadian service providers were frustrated by the fact that the only measure of success funders considered important was employment status. The service providers believed they were accomplishing far more with their clients than what they were being asked to report on.

Agency and Funder Goals

When integrating evaluation and service delivery, it is imperative to understand the goals of the agency and funder, and then work to establish links between your services and their goals. For example, if you are working in an educational setting, the goals of your institution will likely include improving retention rates, improving academic performance, reducing program completion times, and ensuring successful transition to either employment or further studies. However, there are many steps along the way to achieving these goals. Thus, it is important to negotiate desired outcomes with the funders (i.e., what will count as success). In *Stories From the Field (2)*, the departments not only measured the outcomes of their services, but they also showed the impact of those services on broader institutional goals. It was that linkage that made the services valuable to the institution.

It is also important to keep an open mind regarding the nature of the ultimate impact of services. For example, Conger and Hiebert (2007) developed "employment equivalence" as a metric that could equate the completion of psychoeducational

workshops to employment status, and Peruniak (2010) builds a convincing argument for viewing "quality of life" as an ultimate impact of career services.

***Stories From the Field (5)*: Increasing College Students' Skills for Learning**

An instructor in a trades program at a large technical institution approached one of the counsellors over coffee and complained about how poorly prepared his students were for dealing with the academic components of their program. The counsellor offered to provide a brief study skills session for the students and the instructor agreed to give two, 2-hour blocks of class time for the sessions. The counsellor asked for a copy of the grade book, with names removed, so that a performance baseline could be established and then met with the class for 15 minutes to see what problems they had with their learning. Based on the class feedback, a short program was designed and delivered. After the second session, students reported that they had tried many of the suggestions and found them very useful. The counsellor then obtained the grades on the next class assessment, compared them with the baseline academic performance, and discovered a substantial improvement in academic performance. The results of the evaluation, including initial academic performance, student ratings of the workshop, and subsequent changes in academic performance, were described in a brief report, and distributed to the instructor, the department head, and the director of the division, who were impressed to see the substantial gains made by one of their most difficult student groups. The director went on to advocate for the retention of the student services department during budget cuts that came the following year. The results were also communicated to the students, with the message, "see what happens when you use the learning techniques to your advantage?" Reports from the instructor suggested that the students maintained and even improved on their performance for the rest of the term, and that there were far fewer behavioural and discipline issues, as well as a much lower rate of absenteeism

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Type of Client Change

A second important factor to consider when integrating evaluation and service delivery is the type of client change that is being sought (i.e., the outcomes). Although these changes are client-determined, they also may need to be supplemented by counsellor experience. For example, there may be developmental sequences that counsellors know the clients will need to go through before they can reach their ultimate goal. These developmental sequences need to be included in the list of client-change outcomes. A client may be aware of the need to craft a good résumé,

but the service provider will know the necessary sub-goals involved (e.g., a list of educational accomplishments, a chronology of prior employment, how to describe job duties in behaviour terms, etc.), and will build these into the evaluation plan.

In addition to the above, it is important to remember that clients are not always able (or willing) to articulate their goals. A presenting problem often masks a deeper issue. In such cases, it is necessary to revise the goals and deal with the deeper issue before resolution of the presenting problem is possible.

At this point, we want to address a common barrier that people face when trying to integrate evaluation into practice, namely, trying to do too much and making the outcome list too long. Recently, one of the authors was assisting a colleague to evaluate the impact of one of her courses. When asked to think about the kinds of student changes that she wanted to see as a result of the course, the outcome list contained more than 70 items. At some level, each of the 70 outcomes may have been useful, but the resulting form for data collection would have taken at least 30 minutes to complete and the data analysis would have been onerous. If the goal had been to conduct a one-time comprehensive evaluation, then perhaps such a strategy would have been fine. However, if the goal is to obtain evidence of the impact of a service by incorporating evaluation into everyday practice, it is more realistic to identify a few (5 to 10) major outcomes that are measured consistently, rather than a long list of items that rarely get evaluated. The decision-making and post-pre approaches described earlier are useful for obtaining such data. Appendix D has further examples of client-change outcomes.

Stories From the Field (6): **Translating Outcomes Into Measures**

Magnusson (1992) described career counselling in terms of working towards a general set of outcomes, which included:

- a dream or vision of a preferred future (the installation of hope),
- a specified goal (a target for action),
- a list of alternatives (options),
- a plan for goal attainment (the means),
- an acceptable career fit (satisfaction and resolution),
- self-sufficiency (adaptability and interdependence).

Each of these can be translated into a sentence stem that clients could rate:

- I am confident that I will have a meaningful place in the future.
- I have a clear sense of my future career direction.
- I have alternatives in mind if my first choice does not work out.

- I have a plan for reaching my preferred future.
- I have found work (or other life roles) that fit my needs and aspirations.
- I am confident that should other changes happen in my life, I will be able to make new plans.

Stage 3: Describing Core Activities

Once you have clearly articulated a set of desired outcomes, the next question to ask is, *What do we (service provider and client) need to do to achieve the outcomes?* Addressing this question helps link the core processes to the desired outcomes. In career counselling, core activities can be thought of in three broad categories: generic interventions, specific interventions, and programs (Figure 1, Framework for Evaluating Client Change). Generic interventions represent the sorts of counselling skills and processes that are used in virtually all situations. They include activities such as forming a working alliance with the client, exploring and defining client issues, goal setting, problem solving, action planning, and so on. Specific interventions are geared towards meeting specific individual client needs. They include those activities that have defined sequences of interactions with clients, such as the administration and interpretation of assessment instruments, the use of structured exercises (e.g., pride stories), or skill training (e.g., relaxation techniques or interpersonal communication skills). Programs are sets of activities that are structured in a particular sequence (e.g., job clubs or career-exploration workshops).

To provide a link between services and outcomes, it is important to be able to identify what is actually done with clients for the purpose of effecting client change. The service provider or counsellor may use the **professional practitioner** approach described earlier to obtain a strong level of intentionality. The professional practitioner engages in activities in the belief that the activity is most likely to produce desired change. It may be helpful to use an intervention grid that links outcomes with processes as illustrated in Table 3 (on the next page), Intervention Planning Grid. Each cell in the matrix invites a question about what will be done to achieve the desired outcome.

Stage 4: Selecting Measures and Scales

After planning the activities (processes) that link to the intended outcomes, the next important question is, *What will be the indicators of success?* Here it is necessary to find ways to measure both what you do, as well as what happens when you do it.

		OUTCOMES			
		Learning	Attributes	Impact	Other
Processes	Career decision making				
	Work-specific skills enhancement				
	Work search				
	Job maintenance				
	Career-related personal development				
	Other				

Table 3: Intervention Planning Grid.

Let us first consider how to measure the process factors (i.e., what you do). Keep in mind that we need to address two important and related questions: How well did the service provider deliver the service as intended?, and How well did the participants follow the program as intended?

It is relatively easy to construct a process checklist for specific interventions and programs by listing the required steps or components of the program and attach a rating scale to each item. You probably want a measure of the extent to which participants did an activity, and you also may be interested in finding out how interesting or useful they found each activity.

We use two rules to guide the selection of measures. The first rule is to keep the scales simple. The second rule is to use common language, instead of technical language, to reduce misinterpretation of what a rating might mean. For example, on a homework assignment that participants were supposed to do as a part of an intervention, we might ask each participant if they "Didn't Do It" (rating of 0), "Sort of Did It" (rating of 1) or "Did It Thoroughly" (rating of 2). To obtain usefulness ratings, we have found that the decision-making approach described earlier in Table 1 is useful. The client engagement and the usefulness information measures often can be combined in the same form, as is depicted in Table 4, Sample Activity and Usefulness Participation Rating Sheet.

There are a variety of ways to evaluate the outcomes of an intervention. Measures of impact are commonly used by funders or agencies to determine the effectiveness of an intervention. These measures frequently reflect economic goals (e.g., employment), or goals that have direct impact on an organization's economic status (e.g., retention rates at educational institutions) and/or reputation (e.g., academic performance). Standardized tests may be used in a pretest/posttest design to indicate change

MODULE 1, UNIT 1

IN WORKING THROUGH MODULE 1, to what extent have you completed the following activities?

HOW USEFUL DID YOU FIND THE EXERCISES?
In responding, please use a two-step process:
(A) decide on whether the degree of usefulness was *acceptable* or *unacceptable*, then
(B) assign the appropriate rating:
(0) unacceptable,
(1) not really acceptable, but almost there,
(2) minimally acceptable (but still okay, otherwise it would be 0 or 1),
(4) exceptional,
(3) somewhere between minimally acceptable and exceptional.

Activity	Didn't do it	Sort of did it	Did it thoroughly	Unacceptable 0	1	2	Acceptable	3	4
Unit 1 Exercises									
• *The Big Picture* worksheet	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
• *List of De-motivators*	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
• *List of Possible Career Options*	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
• *Core Motivators* worksheet	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
• *Reality Check Brainstorm*	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
• *Career-building Framework* (career vision and current situation)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐

Table 4: Sample Activity and Usefulness Participation Rating Sheet.t

attributed to an intervention. For example, a counsellor evaluating an intervention to reduce anxiety may administer the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory before and after the intervention: If the intervention was effective, there should be a decrease in the "state anxiety" scores in the latter test.

However, other measures that follow the professional-practitioner model also provide useful information linking intervention to client change. Observational measures, self-report measures, and other "informal" measures often provide the most interesting and useful indicators of client change. Data collection tools such as behavioural checklists and observation grids are particularly useful for this purpose. Self-report measures are used to gain client perspectives on their experiences. Although the reliability of any single self-report may be low, the reliability of combined self-reports across individuals and/or across instances of an event is very high (Gilbert, 2006).

In addition to the above, we have found it useful to ask participants to what extent did the change they experienced arise from the intervention or from other factors. After participants have assessed themselves along each of the desired intervention outcomes, we ask: "To what extent do you attribute changes you reported to the intervention (or program)?" and "To what extent do you attribute these changes to other factors in your life?" The participant attribution for change provides a convincing link between intervention and outcome.

Stage 5: Collecting Evidence

The core question that guides stage 5 is not simply, *How do we collect data (evidence)?* but rather, *How do we collect evidence most efficiently?* When evaluation is included as part of the initial design of an intervention, a good part of the work of collecting evidence will be done before a client walks through the door. When you specify the sorts of client changes you are trying to influence and identify the indicators of success for each, you have created your primary-outcome-assessment plan. When you plan intentional interventions to produce those client changes and develop the accompanying process measures, you have created a process-assessment plan.

All that is left is to decide when and how often to administer the evaluation tools you have developed. The process measures are typically collected after each "natural" phase of the intervention. If you are running a psycho-educational group that meets weekly for 5 weeks, you will probably administer a process assessment after each session (often, this is done at the start of the next session, which has the side benefit of serving as an excellent transition to the new material). These process assessments should not take more than 5 minutes to complete (and often can be completed in a minute or so). You will most likely administer the outcome assessment at the end of the intervention; a good rule of thumb is that it should not take more than 10 to 15 minutes for a participant to complete the outcome assessment.

Stage 6: Working With the Data

The guiding question for Stage 6 is *How do I make sense of the data I have collected?* For the most part, addressing this question need not involve complex statistical analyses. We suggest that there are alternative ways to organize the evidence such that the information helps improve practice and creates compelling arguments about the impact of services.

The informal assessments we have described lend themselves well to presenting accessible data that speak directly to the issues that are important to funders and practitioners alike. A useful beginning point is to compile frequency counts and percentages (e.g., 23 out of 25 (92%) of the participants in your program were able to find employment). Each of the process and outcome variables that we have described can be reported in this way and Appendix B, Sample Summative Evaluation Results, provides a sample of how these sorts of data can be analyzed and reported. In some cases, such as process checklists, it is also possible to report measures of central tendency, such as mean scores (e.g., participants went from a mean score of 1.4 to a mean score of 3.2 on their self-ratings of personal confidence before and after the program). However, we have found that it is often more useful to simply report frequencies, especially for process data.

Sometimes people are interested in knowing if the relationships in the data are statistically significant. In such cases, Chi-square tests can be used to determine if differences in the frequencies of categorical data are significant and t-tests or other inferential statistical analyses can be used for data that are more continuous in nature. However, in most cases, frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores will be sufficient to provide convincing evidence linking intervention and outcome. While a full description of the appropriate statistic to use for your data analysis is beyond the scope of this chapter, we do want to emphasize that the use of formal and/or traditional program evaluation techniques are compatible with the approach we describe.

Stage 7: Reporting Results and Marketing Your Services

One of the most important questions you will ask throughout the evaluation process is, *How do we use the data to convince others?* If we want to influence how others value our services, then we must be accountable for our work. A few reporting or marketing principles may help guide you.

The first principle of marketing services is to work from the macro to the micro. How do your interventions impact core agency or institutional needs and values (i.e., the big picture outcomes)? You may be more interested in the micro level of client change (e.g., increased sense of self, increased hope, etc.), but your first task is to express those changes in terms that are meaningful to other decision makers.

The second principle is to demonstrate movement in your results. Most client change is not done in a single step, nor is it an "all or nothing" phenomenon. It is possible to show movement towards a larger impact (such as higher job placement) by reporting increases in a client's level of hope or confidence, a better self-understanding, an increased ability to describe the local job market, an ability to demonstrate self-marketing skills, or any number of other intermediary steps.

We have found one of the best ways to demonstrate such movement is through the post-pre assessments described earlier. For example, in one program, we asked participants to use the post-pre strategy to assess their understanding of how to move forward in their careers. The data showed that, before the intervention, 15 of the 29 participants rated their understanding as being "Unacceptable," and no participants rated it as being "Exceptional." After the intervention, no participants rated their understanding as "Unacceptable" or even "Minimally Acceptable," and 14 had moved to self-ratings of "Exceptional." As a group, self-ratings went from an average of 1.45 before the intervention to 3.48 (maximum score = 4) after. The accountability picture becomes even more convincing when the data are aggregated across several desired outcomes, as is illustrated more extensively in Appendix B, Sample Summative Evaluation Results. These data provide powerful indicators of movement in the desired direction. How you use the data to inform your own practice will be as important as how you use them to convince others. In most cases, the act of designing an evaluation process at the same time that you design the intervention will help you to be more intentional in your practice. You can also look at the process data you collect to see how the participants in your intervention view the activities. Practitioners and clients often have differing perspectives on what is important in the services they access (Manthei, 2006).

Recently, we were part of the team exploring the impact of Labour Market Information (LMI). In that project, we developed a protocol for assessing client needs to make sure that clients received an intervention that matched need. We also developed protocols for delivering the intervention. At first, the counsellors felt constrained by adhering to strict protocols. However, later they reported that their practice improved greatly by adhering to the intervention protocols and that they would continue to use the protocols after the study was completed. Counsellors also discovered that many clients did not need all of the help they usually provided. Once client needs were correctly identified, clients demonstrated a high level of self-sufficiency in meeting their needs, thereby freeing counsellors to spend more time with those clients who really needed a deeper level of service. In reporting the results, we were able to say that (a) clients received the intervention that matched their needs, (b) counsellors delivered the programs as intended, (c) clients were engaged in the program, and (d) substantial gains were made in knowledge, skills, personal attributes and employment status. The data permitted us to make the link between the services provided and the outcomes obtained.

The final principle in communicating results is to ensure that decision makers actually get to see the results of your work. A few years ago, we conducted an evaluation of an innovative new program offered by a university career service. The results of the evaluation were exceptionally positive. The program was shown to have far more impact than even those delivering the program had hoped for. Unfortunately, the results of the evaluation were not conveyed to senior administration. Soon after, the institution needed to make budget cuts and the program was cancelled. Even if it is necessary to use "guerrilla techniques" (i.e., finding ways to get around the system), you need to get your results in front of the people who make the decisions for allocating resources. Many excellent programs are terminated because the people making the decisions are not aware of the evidence attesting to the effectiveness of the program. Stated bluntly, the results don't matter much if no one knows about them. The bottom line in evaluation is to tell the people who need to know in language they can understand, what the data say about the outcomes of the services you provide.

Conclusion

Often evaluation is seen as an activity done by an external expert who passes judgement on the effectiveness of a program. As an alternative, we propose an approach where evaluation is infused into the day-to-day practices of service providers and where service providers always ask themselves two questions: (1) What intervention would be appropriate for this client? and (2) How will the client and I tell how well the intervention is working?

If I were a funder, my reasoning might be something like this: *You think you have a program that will help clients attain "X." I am willing to fund such a program. What evidence will you show me that my investment in your agency has been worthwhile?* In most cases, client flow data will not be enough, nor will documentation of all the skills and competencies of the service providers. A clearly articulated set of goals and objectives will help convince me to fund the program, because I can see the potential positive impact of what you are promising the clients. However, I am unlikely to fund it a second time if you can't show me that the client goals you promised have been met. The bottom line is that I need evidence to support my decisions.

Our focus throughout this chapter has been on encouraging practitioners to reformulate their professional identity, so that their view of self-as-professional includes a union between process and outcome. Most practitioners do not see relationship building as separate from intervention. Relationship building is part of the intervention. In a similar way, evaluation must be seen as being integral to the intervention. Reformulating one's view of self-as-professional will take time; however, we believe that doing so will raise the profile of career development and provide evidence for the effectiveness of career services. As people begin to work with

these ideas, they will develop creative ways to demonstrate the value of the services they provide.

Evaluating services is a never-ending process. We encourage practitioners to start that process as soon as possible. Do not worry about getting it 100% right; just do it. Then share your results with others, so that collectively we can begin to more adequately demonstrate the value of career services.

Stories From the Field (7): **The Economic Value of Career Services**

A community agency received a contract to provide career development services to welfare recipients with the goal of helping them integrate into the labour market. The contract included a targeted outcome of 200 jobs at a total project cost of $260,000.00. Based on these figures, the average cost per client job was $1,300. This represented the government investment in career services for the project. Return on investment came from three sources: (a) welfare savings for the clients who found employment, (b) project staff employed to deliver the program and paid income tax on those earnings, and (c) taxes paid by clients who gained employment during the period of the project. Clients in the program were requested to provide a copy of their welfare pay stubs at the beginning of the program. This request was not a required condition for them receiving services; however, most clients complied with the request.

As clients obtained employment, the organization documented the client's starting wage and hours of work. Clients were then provided follow up services to help them stay employed. The organization tracked the duration of employment, and used this information to estimate the taxes paid by the clients and the project staff. When the program finished, clients were again asked to provide a copy of their pay slip, regardless of whether or not they had found a job. Then the organization calculated the increase in earnings for each client, as well as the increase in income tax paid by clients. The earnings of the service providers was used to determine the per-client income tax paid by those employed to deliver the program.

The return on investment was somewhat variable, depending on factors such as employment barriers, job availability, and so forth. However, over the two 1-year projects that were completed, the return on investment was in the range of $1.14. In other words, for each dollar the government spent on delivering career services programs to these clients, they received $1.14 within the same year. This 14% return would continue to grow as long as the client remained on the job, and provides clear economic support for viewing career services as an investment and not an expense.

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Glossary

Canadian Research Working Group on Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development (CRWG) was formed to address two important issues in the field of career development:

- Increase pan-Canadian sharing of research and promising practices, with an emphasis on sharing French and English research.
- Strengthen the overall evidence base for career development practice with an emphasis on informing policy.

The CRWG website can be found at <http://www.crwg-gdrc.ca/>.

Evidence-based practice (EBP) is the use of mental and behavioural health interventions for which systematic empirical research has provided evidence of effectiveness as treatments for specific problems. EBP promotes the collection, interpretation, and integration of valid and applicable patient-reported, clinician-observed, and research-derived evidence.

Inter-rater discrepancy is the degree of agreement among raters concerning the content validity of test or inventory items.

Likert-type rating scale is a survey response scale that asks respondents to indicate their attitude by rating their level of satisfaction or degree of agreement with a statement. The scale usually ranges from 1–5; 1–7; or 1–9 points. Degrees of agreement may be substituted for numeric points on a scale.

Outcome-focused intervention is based on results that have had demonstrable indicators of success or outcomes.

Post-pre assessment is a retrospective approach to measuring client change. Participants are asked to use their current frame of reference to create a common measuring stick for assessing their competence before and after a workshop. For example, participants in a workshop on how to understand and use labour market information might be asked: *"Knowing what you know now about using labour market information for career decision making or job search, rate yourself before the workshop and rate yourself now."*

Professional practitioners, as a term used in this chapter, have the following attributes: their practice is based on a significant body of theory; they have appropriate qualifications from a recognized body of peers; they are committed

to undergoing continuous professional development; they consult best practices before undertaking work; and they are held to a code of conduct. Professional practitioners are clear about the nature of the change client's desire, clear about what they will do to meet client goals, and they document what they do and how well it works. Professional practitioners focus equally on providing appropriate services for clients and providing evidence that the service is resulting in a positive impact on the lives of clients.

Randomized controlled trial (RCT) is an experiment in which investigators randomly assign eligible subjects into groups to receive or not receive one or more interventions that are being compared. RCTs help to eliminate effects of extraneous variables that may confound experimental results, which helps to establish external validity and generalizability.

Discussion and Activity

Discussion

Class Discussion Questions

1. Based on your understanding of the importance of assessing career development services, what are the key ingredients for career practitioners to be aware of and to monitor over time?
2. Suppose you followed an evaluation game plan similar to the one suggested in this chapter, using a combination of some of your current evaluation practices and ideas you got from this chapter. Suppose further that the evidence ended up being exceedingly positive. How would you go about making sure that the people who need to hear about this success actually do hear about it; i.e., telling the people who need to know, in language they can understand, that your program was an amazing success?

Personal Reflection Questions

1. Why is it important to evaluate the impact of client services? What concerns do you have about integrating evaluation into your everyday practice? What benefits do you see associated with integrating evaluation into your everyday practice?
2. In considering the "power of evidence," what further skills, supports, and resources do you need to be effective in evaluating the effectiveness of interventions used with clients?

Career Practitioner Role Questions

1. Free self-directed career interventions and assessments are available on the

Internet. Find four online resources and determine what criteria you would use to assess whether the resources would be suitable for use with clients. How would you evaluate their effectiveness with clients?

2. Identify a community-career partnership that exists in your province and discuss the work-related and job-specific skills needed to monitor the benefits of the program to individuals, to the employer, and to the community?

3. Some target outcomes of a career program may not occur until well after the completion of the program. What informal assessment would you create for longer term follow-up intervals?

Activity

There is a growing consensus that ethical and social values should be addressed when evaluating career services. How would you elicit ethical and social values from clientele that use these services to include in evaluations of services provided? Create a citizens panel with a small group in your class and discuss what central values you deem important (for example: access to the organization, choice of services, and quality of interventions).

Appendices: Sample Forms, Analysis, and Reports

Appendix A. Sample Post-Pre Evaluation Form

The Applied Career Transitions Program *Evaluation Form*

Program Goals

The goals of Module 1 are that participants will:

1. Formulate a clear understanding of what they want to build in their career (career vision).
2. Gather and analyze information about themselves and their past experience in relation to their career (career portfolio).
3. Identify and research career options that align with their career vision (research portfolio).
4. Identify emerging career goals and make decisions about the next steps they will take to move forward in their career.
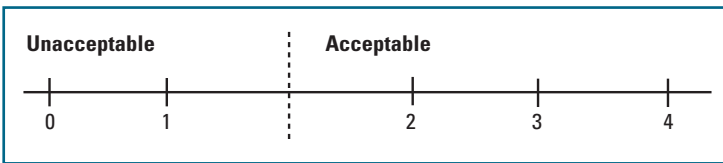
First, Some General Questions

In answering these general questions, we would like you to compare yourself now and before you completed the ACT program. **Knowing what you know now**, how would you rate yourself before the ACT program, and how would you rate yourself now?

In responding to the questions, please use a two-step process: (A) decide on whether the characteristic in question is **acceptable** or **unacceptable**, then (B) assign the appropriate rating:

(0) unacceptable,

(1) not really acceptable, but almost there,

(2) minimally acceptable (but still okay, otherwise it would be 0 or 1),

(3) somewhere between minimally acceptable and exceptional,

(4) exceptional.

Graphically, the scale looks like this:

Unacceptable		Acceptable		
0	1	2	3	4

REGARDING THE PROGRAM GOALS FOR MODULE 1, and knowing what you know now, how would you rate yourself before the program, and how would you rate yourself now?	BEFORE WORKSHOP Unacceptable / Acceptable 0 1 2 3 4					NOW Unacceptable / Acceptable 0 1 2 3 4				
1. A conceptual understanding of the processes involved in moving forward in your career.										
2. An articulation of the core motivators (e.g., your career vision) that describe what you want to build in your career.										
3. An articulation of how your career is impacted by your current situation (supports and challenges) in the different contexts of your life.										
4. An assessment of your past work, education, and life experiences.										

REGARDING THE PROGRAM GOALS FOR MODULE 1, and knowing what you know now, how would you rate yourself before the program, and how would you rate yourself now?	BEFORE WORKSHOP		NOW	
	Unacceptable 0 1 — Acceptable 2 3 4		Unacceptable 0 1 — Acceptable 2 3 4	
5. A list of possible career options that may align with your career vision.				
6. Knowledge of print and online resources that allow you to research career options.				
7. Confidence that career-related work opportunities actually exist that align with your career vision.				
8. Communication skills to connect proactively and appropriately with people in order to get direct, firsthand information about career options.				
9. Identification of emerging career-related goals and next steps.				
10. Optimism about the future of your career.				

11. To what extent would you say that any changes depicted above were the result of completing the ACT program, and to what extent were they a function of other factors in your life?

Mostly Other Factor	Somewhat Other Factors	Uncertain	Somewhat This Program	Mostly This Program
0	0	0	10	19

12. Are you currently working?		Yes ___	No ___

13. If you answered yes to the above question, to what extent is this work related to your career vision?

Unacceptable   **Acceptable**

```
+-----+-----:-----+-----+-----+
0     1     :     2     3     4
```

Table 5.

Appendix B. Sample Summative Evaluation Results

The results pertaining to completing the ACT program are summarized in the table below.
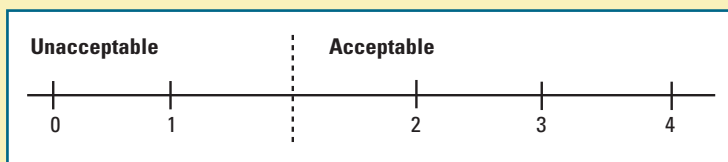
In answering these general questions, we would like you to compare yourself now and before you completed the ACT program.

Knowing what you know now, how would you rate yourself before completing the ACT program, and how would you rate yourself now? In responding to the questions, please use a two-step process.

(A) decide on whether the characteristic in question is acceptable or unacceptable, then (B) assign the appropriate rating:

(0) unacceptable,

(1) not really acceptable, but almost there,

(2) minimally acceptable (but still okay, otherwise it would be 0 or 1),

(3) somewhere between minimally acceptable and exceptional,

(4) exceptional.

Graphically, the scale looks like this:

Unacceptable			Acceptable		
0	1		2	3	4

REGARDING THE GOALS FOR THE ACT program, and knowing what you know now, how would you rate yourself before the program, and how would you rate yourself now?	BEFORE WORKSHOP						NOW					
	0	1	2	3	4		0	1	2	3	4	
1. A clear understanding of the processes involved in moving forward in your career.	7	8	8	6	0	1.45	0	0	0	15	14	3.48
2. A clear understanding of the core motivators (i.e., your career vision) that describe what you want to build in your career.	3	10	11	5	0	1.62	0	0	2	10	17	3.52

REGARDING THE GOALS FOR THE ACT program, and knowing what you know now, how would you rate yourself before the program, and how would you rate yourself now?	BEFORE WORKSHOP						NOW					
	Unacceptable 0	1	Acceptable 2	3	4		Unacceptable 0	1	Acceptable 2	3	4	
3. A clear understanding of how your career is impacted by your current situation (supports and challenges) in the different contexts of your life.	1	9	9	9	1	2.0	0	0	4	12	13	33.1
4. An assessment of your past work, education, and life experiences.	1	9	10	8	1	1.97	0	0	2	11	16	3.48
5. A list of possible career options that may align with your career vision.	4	9	14	2	0	1.48	0	0	2	12	15	3.45
6. Knowledge of print and online resources that allow you to research career options.	4	13	9	2	1	1.41	0	0	2	13	14	3.41
7. Confidence that career-related work opportunities actually exist that align with your career vision.	6	11	6	6	0	1.41	0	0	6	16	7	3.03
8. Communication skills to connect proactively and appropriately with people in order to get direct, firsthand information about career options.	7	7	7	6	2	1.64	0	1	2	15	10	3.21
9. Identification of emerging career-related goals and next steps.	5	12	8	4	0	1.39	0	0	4	11	13	3.32
10. Optimism about the future of your career.	8	10	5	5	1	1.34	0	2	2	14	11	3.17
						Avg						Avg
Cumulative Mean All differences in mean scores are statistically significant ($p < .01$)						1.57						3.34

Table 6.

Description of the Evaluation Results

The data in the summary table provide a clear picture of the dramatic effects accompanying completion of the ACT program and indicate that it was highly successful in achieving the intended outcomes. More specifically, we draw attention to the following:

- All together there were 29 (participants) x 10 (items) = 290 ratings.
- Regarding the participants' assessment of their competencies before the workshop, there were 144 ratings (almost 50%) in the Unacceptable category and 6 ratings of Exceptional.
- At the end of the workshop, there were 3 ratings in the Unacceptable category and 130 (45%) ratings of Exceptional. All 3 ratings of Unacceptable were in the "almost there" category.
- Stated another way, at the end of the workshop, Module ratings of "acceptable" changed from 50% to 99%, with 86% (249 of 290) of those responses being greater than minimally acceptable, and 45% of the responses being Exceptional (up from 2% before the workshop).
- In 8 of the 10 outcome measures, all participants who rated themselves as "Unacceptable" at the beginning rated themselves as having "Acceptable" levels of competence at the end. Moreover, there was a very strong movement into the upper categories of Acceptability with the predominance of responses being at level 3 or 4.
- The mean scores also indicate a substantial shift, from Unacceptable (mean score less than 2) to Acceptable (mean score greater than 2). The increases in mean scores on all 10 items were statistically significant. In other words, the activities included in Module 1 produced significant change in the desired direction on all of the outcome measures.

The impact of the changes described above was that 23 out of 29 participants were employed at the end of the program and for 10 of those 23 participants their jobs were directly in line with their career vision.

In any real-life situation, there are many factors that can influence an outcome. To determine the extent to which the ACT program was influential in creating the outcomes, we asked participants for their attributions of what caused any changes they noticed. Specifically, we posed the following question and received the responses indicated (see next page).

Overall the evaluation results for the ACT program indicate that it is highly successful in helping participants meet the outcome objectives of the program and in producing a noteworthy impact on employment status. Furthermore, in the minds of participants, the impacts achieved were largely the result of their participation in the program and were not due to other factors operating in their lives.

To what extent would you say that any changes depicted above were the result of completing the ACT program, and to what extent were they a function of other factors in your life?

Mostly Other Factors	Somewhat Other Factors	Uncertain	Somewhat This Program	Mostly This Program
0	0	0	10	19

Table 7.

Appendix C. Sample Formative Feedback Results

For each of instructional activities that were part of ACT program, we would like you to address two questions:

1. To what extent have you completed each of the activities in the program?
0 = Didn't do it.
1 = Sort of did it.
2 = Did it thoroughly.

2. How useful did you find the exercises?
    In responding to the questions regarding usefulness, please use a two-step process: (A) decide on whether the degree of usefulness is acceptable or unacceptable, then (B)
        assign the appropriate rating:
(0) unacceptable,
(1) not really acceptable, but almost there
(2) minimally acceptable (but still okay, otherwise it would be 0 or 1),
(3) somewhere between minimally acceptable and exceptional,
(4) exceptional.

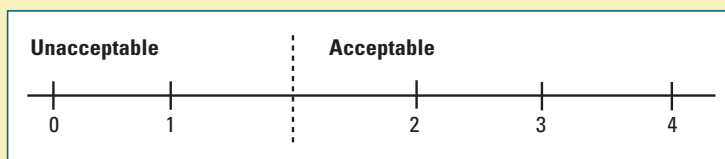Graphically, the scale looks like this:

Table 8.

The data presented above indicate that overall, participants found the activities to be very useful. The mean scores for each unit met or exceeded values of 3.0, meaning

that participants found the activities more than minimally useful. The completion ratings across the four units of ACT program indicate that participants were highly engaged at the beginning of the module and became progressively less engaged as they progressed. Generally, participants dropped from thoroughly completing activities in Unit 1, to sort of completing activities in Unit 4. The most likely reason for this is that as participants found employment, they were less motivated to continue completing the workshop activities. The usefulness data also flag a few items that likely should be revised to make them more engaging (e.g., items 1.2.b, 1.2.g, and 1.4.a).

REGARDING THE ACTIVITIES IN THE ACT Program, please indicate the extent to which you completed each activity, and also how useful you found the exercise.	COMPLETION			USEFULNESS					
	0	1	2	Unacceptable 0 — 1 — Acceptable 2 — 3 — 4					
Unit 1 Components									
1.1.a The Big Picture	0	2	27	0	0	2	15	11	3.32
1.1.b List of Demotivators	0	3	26	0	0	1	16	11	3.36
1.1.c Possible Career Options	1	10	18	0	1	4	17	6	3.00
1.1.d Core Motivators	0	2	27	0	0	1	11	16	3.54
1.1.e Reality Check	1	8	20	0	1	1	16	9	3.22
1.1.f Career-Building Framework	1	4	22	0	0	5	7	15	3.37
Overall Means for Unit 1 —			**1.80**						**3.30**
Unit 2 Components									
1.2.a Master Experience List	1	8	20	0	2	2	9	14	3.30
1.2.b Table of Contents	13	6	9	2	2	6	10	2	2.62
1.2.c Career Vision (all exercises from Unit 1)	0	4	24	0	1	3	8	15	3.37
1.2.d Experience and Skills (Master Experience List and current résumés)	0	9	19	0	1	1	14	12	3.32
1.2.e References and recognition (list of references, reference letters, etc.)	4	8	16	0	2	6	8	12	3.07

REGARDING THE ACTIVITIES IN THE ACT Program, please indicate the extent to which you completed each activity, and also how useful you found the exercise.	COMPLETION			USEFULNESS					
	0	1	2	Unacceptable 0 1 Acceptable 2 3 4					
1.2.f Educational credentials (copies of degrees, certificates, and transcripts)	4	8	16	2	0	1	14	11	3.14
1.2.g Work samples (papers, projects, reports, etc.)	6	11	10	0	2	6	12	8	2.93
Overall Means for Unit 2 —			1.44						3.11
Unit 3 Components									
1.3.a Career options research list	0	8	21	1	0	2	13	13	3.28
1.3.b Career options summary sheet	7	14	8	0	0	8	10	8	3.00
1.3.c Information and notes for each career option being researched	2	16	10	0	0	3	14	10	3.26
Overall Means for Unit 3 —			1.35						3.18
Unit 4 Components									
1.4.a Career option decision grid	10	10	9	2	0	3	9	8	2.95
1.4.b Emerging career goals worksheet	12	12	7	2	0	2	9	9	3.05
Overall Means for Unit 4 —			0.94						3.05

Table 8.

Appendix D. Examples of Client-Change Outcomes

Examples of Learning Outcomes (from Blueprint for Life/Work Designs)

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,
- link decision making to life/work,
- maintain balanced life/work rules,
- understand the changing nature of life/work roles,
- understand, engage in, and manage one's own life/work process.

Examples of Personal Attribute Outcomes

1. Attitudes:

- belief that change is possible,
- internal locus of control.

2. Intrapersonal factors:

- confidence,
- motivation,
- self-esteem,
- stress,
- depression.

3. Client independence:

- client self-reliance and initiative,
- independent client use of tools provided in career services.

Examples of Client-Impact Outcomes

1. Employment status (placement rates).
2. Participation in training.
3. Engaging in job search.
4. Client ability to fit in at the workplace.
5. Reduction of negative or self-defeating personal behaviours.
6. Increase in positive or self-asserting behaviours.
7. Increased job stability.
8. Natural job progression occurs for clients.
9. Societal impacts.
10. Relational impacts.
11. Economic impacts.