

3:00 pm - *Break*
3:15 pm – Large group discussion about Topic #2
4:30 pm - *Wrap up*
5:00 pm - *Cocktails*
Dinner on your own

Saturday

7:30 am - *Breakfast*
8:30 am - Introduction to discussion Topic #3 – Nancy Cohen
8:45 am - Small group discussion: Topic #3:

Building evaluation capacity in community organizations

"Teaching evaluative thinking can leave a more enduring impact from an evaluation than use of specific findings. Specific findings typically have a small window of relevance. In contrast, learning to think evaluatively can have an ongoing impact. Those stakeholders actively involved in an evaluation develop an increased capacity to interpret evidence, draw conclusions, and make judgements." - Michael Quinn Patton

"It is not enough to have trustworthy and accurate information (the informed part of the informed citizenry). People must also know how to use information, that is, to weigh evidence, consider contradictions and inconsistencies, articulate values, and examine assumptions, to note but a few of the things meant by thinking evaluatively." - Michael Quinn Patton

10:15 am - *Break*
10:30 am – Large group discussion about Topic #3
11:30 am - *Wrap up*
12:00 pm - *Lunch*

Meaningful Evaluations of Community-Based Programs for Children: A Conversation

"One of the amazing things that has happened to evaluation is that it has pervaded the program world. Just about every organization that funds, runs, or develops programs now call for evaluation.

This is true locally, nationally, and internationally; it is almost as true of foundations and voluntary organizations as it is of government agencies. The press for evaluation apparently arises from the current demand for accountability.

Programs are increasingly called on to justify their existence, their expenditure of funds, and their achievement of objectives. Behind the calls for accountability is an awareness of the gap between almost unlimited social need and limited resources." - Carol Hirschon Weiss

April 29 – May 1, 2004
The Old Mill, TORONTO

*All quotes are taken from The Harvard Family Research Project –
The Evaluation Exchange, Fall 2003 & Winter 2003/2004
<http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hfrp/eval.html>*

Hosted by TLC³, Hincks-Dellcrest Institute
Sponsored by The Lawson Foundation

Meaningful Evaluations of Community-Based Programs for Children: A Conversation

The Purpose:

There has been considerable growth in community based initiatives in Canada and, in parallel, a demand for their systematic evaluation. In our own work on the TLC³ Project, as well as in conversations over the last 5 years with others who are evaluating a range of these community based initiatives, it is clear that there are challenges common to these undertakings. Some challenges have to do with the nature of program evaluation in the “real world” and others with being creative with limited funds. As part of the communication plan for the TLC³ Project, this meeting brings together a small group of people who have a range of experience in research and evaluation of community based programs for children and families. Our purpose is to discuss the challenges in evaluating these programs and to consider different ways of ensuring that the outcomes of these evaluations are relevant and genuinely useful.

Format:

Three broad topics have been chosen for small groups to discuss in depth. The hope is for the groups to make the broad topics meaningful and specific by sharing their own experiences and providing specific examples drawn from their past and present work in evaluating community-based programs. Following the small group discussions, highlights, challenges, and notable examples will be shared with the larger group for further discussion.

The Agenda:

Thursday April 29th

6:30 pm - *Cocktails*

7:00 pm - *Welcome and Dinner*

Friday April 30th

7:30 am - *Breakfast*

8:30 am - Introductions and setting the stage - Nancy Cohen

8:50 am - Introduction to discussion Topic #1 – Ray Peters

9:00 am - Small group discussion: Topic #1:

Being realistic about outcomes and measuring them effectively.

.....despite the new outcomes fascination, progress has been slow in harnessing this thinking to improve practice. Particularly troubling is our own and our clients' inability to be realistic about what kinds of outcomes we can expect from the work of the best minds and hearts of community activists within the timeframe of most grants and programs.”
- Gerri Spilka

“We must be rigorous, not just about measuring results, but also about setting expectations for what is possible.” - Gerri Spilka

10:45 am - *Break*

11:00 am – Large group discussion about Topic #1

12:00 pm - *Lunch*

1:15 pm - Introduction to discussion Topic #2– Gerard Malcuit

1:30 pm - Small group discussion: Topic #2:

Practical but meaningful designs for community-based evaluations.

“Little agreement exists about how evaluations of social intervention programs should be conducted. Traditional social scientists argue for the use of laboratory-based, control group, randomized designs as the gold standard, but this approach lacks generalizability to real-life settings. Alternative evaluation designs are necessary to document the elements of intervention programs that predict outcomes in natural community settings. Yet critics charge alternative methods with a lack of experimental rigor.” – Stephen Bagnato