User-Centered Evaluation Planning

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Evaluating
SOCIAL PROGRAMS
at the
STATE and LOCAL
Level

The
JTPA
Evaluation Design
Project

Ann Bonar Blalock
Editor

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An evaluation can no longer be seen merely as a creature of the evaluator's own choosing. Insofar as we are dealing with the intent of being used in a political environment, the choice of the program to evaluate and the types of policy questions to be asked must reside with the decisionmakers.

Eleanor Chelimsky
Evaluation Forum

Basic Concepts

Three major complementary approaches to evaluating social programs have been outlined in the previous chapters. Taken as a whole, these approaches are meant to provide a comprehensive view of evaluation possibilities at the state and local level. In order to supplement these more technical descriptions of evaluation models, this chapter examines the practical *evaluation planning* issues that cross-cut all three approaches: how to effectively initiate, staff, and fund an evaluation, how to support its proper implementation, and how to insure that it is well-utilized once it is completed.

The chapter is presented in several sections. This introductory section presents some key concepts about the nature of the *evaluation planning process* and the important role played by the *evaluation planner* in that process. The central ideas expressed suggest a general framework for planning the evaluation of social programs at both the state and local level. Later sections expand upon this framework, using the JTPA program as a continuing example.

Effective planning for evaluation requires an expansive view of the planner's role and the planning process. In this view, the focus of the

planning effort is not narrowly centered on the research aspects of the evaluation. Rather, attention is more broadly focused on developing and sustaining organizational support for the evaluation and utilizing its results, as well as on implementing the evaluation. The planning process for the evaluation grows out of important preliminary *organizational work* that sets the stage for later successful implementation of the evaluation, dissemination of useful information, and utilization of the results.

The overarching principle emphasized in this chapter is that of a *user-focused approach* to evaluation planning. This concept begins with the premise that if evaluation is to be truly useful in improving social programs, evaluation planning must start with the anticipated users of the results and their particular information needs, and then build from this essential base. Ideally, the user-focused planning approach consists of a series of sequenced steps as outlined in chart 5.1.

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CHART 5.1
Steps in the User-Focused Evaluation
Planning Process

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Preliminary Planning for a User Focused Evaluation

- Identifying users and their information needs.
- Assessing the organizational supports to and constraints on the evaluation process.
- Making a preliminary assessment of resources required.
- Developing a beginning support network for the evaluation.

Developing a Specific Evaluation Strategy

- Identifying users' key evaluation issues and questions.
- Determining the feasibility of the questions
- Choosing a manageable set of researchable questions.
- Selecting an appropriate evaluation approach and feasible methodology.

Planning for the Implementation of the Evaluation

- Developing an implementation plan.
- Assessing the resources needed and their costs.
- Developing a staffing strategy.
- Acquiring the necessary resources

Implementing the Evaluation

- Collecting and analyzing data.
- Developing conclusions and recommendations.
- Disseminating the evaluation information to users.
- Utilizing the evaluation information for decision making.

The chronology in chart 5.1 suggests a neat, logical progression of steps. In practice, the chronology will not be so clear-cut. The process may require that multiple tasks be coordinated and carried out within the same time frame, rather than in a clearly defined sequence. Nonetheless, outlining the ideal helps us think about and sort out the broad array of planning tasks that will be needed to support and sustain program evaluation. The second section will expand upon key components within this framework, using JTPA as the case example.

The integrating principle tying these tasks together is the assumption that the primary purpose of state and local program evaluation should be to provide information that *informs decisionmaking.* It should be relevant to the users, written and packaged in a way that invites use, and available at the most opportune time from the decisionmaker's perspective. Otherwise, the investment in evaluation may be wasted. The planning process must, therefore, begin with the user and his or her perceived information needs, remain cognizant of these needs throughout, and end with information that is actually put to use in improving a program.

In the user-focused planning process, the role of the evaluation *planner* is distinct from the *evaluator* and central to the effort. In some instances, in smaller organizations, the person planning the overall evaluation effort may also act as the evaluator, i.e., the one who designs the evaluation, oversees its implementation, and analyzes and reports on the findings. Nonetheless, the planner's role in this process is separate and distinguishable.

The planner plays a key organizational role that complements and supports the more technical research activities of the evaluator. The planner acts as a crucial communicator and coordinator among three major groups involved in the evaluation process: the evaluation research staff who must design, implement, and analyze; the administrators and other decisionmakers who need the evaluation information; and the program staff and clients who may be affected by and, in turn, affect the evaluation process and its outcomes.

Evaluation does not occur in a social vacuum. Just as political and organizational factors influence a program's design and operation, so

will such factors influence the nature, scope, and ultimate utility of an evaluation. A chief challenge for the planner will be to accurately assess and creatively build upon the *organizational context* in which the evaluation is to take place.

At each stage of the process, the planner will want to anticipate organizational *constraints* to and *supports* for evaluation and adjust planning activities accordingly. For example, in the initial stages the planner should focus on defining specific evaluation users and uses. How might the organizational context influence the interest and participation of potential users? Will inter- and intra-agency conflicts hinder efforts to bring certain users together? Given differing organizational agendas, what kinds of accommodations to others and support for the evaluation will different decisionmakers be willing to make? And, most important, what kind of benefits will users expect in return for their participation?

The planner must also carefully assess organizational factors that may affect the actual evaluation process. How well the evaluator and evaluation activities are received by program staff, clients, and others involved in the process will depend largely on the quality of advance organizational work undertaken to prepare, educate, and appropriately involve these concerned parties. In the role of organizational communicator and coordinator, the planner can help anticipate staff concerns about the evaluation and work collaboratively with the evaluator and his or her team to address these concerns.

Frequently, a major organizational constraint to evaluation is lack of staff expertise and other resources. In an era of scarce resources for social programs, the evaluation planner must unavoidably be preoccupied with resource acquisition and planning. What kinds of expertise will be required, and how can that expertise best be obtained? What kinds of financial support and other resources, such as computer services, will be necessary?

In the evaluation planning process, the final principles to stress are *collaboration* and *partnership*. The importance of the planner's role in working closely with researchers, other staff, and evaluation users has already been emphasized. The planner is further challenged to go beyond

the immediate user circle to seek creative funding partnerships in both the public and private sectors. The collaborative funding approach is an organizational investment that extends beyond the life of the individual evaluation effort. In seeking funds outside the immediate program to be evaluated, the evaluation planner creates new networks of contacts and new possibilities for outside community support and involvement in the program. Such support and involvement are likely to enhance not only the evaluation effort, but also the ongoing program effort.

An amplification of the central themes presented above follows. The evaluation planning chronology, as outlined earlier, serves as the general framework for elaborating on the planning process and the evaluation planner's role in that process. Within this framework, the chapter focuses on the first three major planning stages leading to the actual implementation of the evaluation:

1. Preliminary planning for user-centered evaluation.
2. Developing a specific evaluation strategy.
3. Planning for implementation of the evaluation.

Within each of the major stages, the more important planning tasks will be highlighted. As in previous chapters, the JTPA program is used as a case example for illustrating key features of the process.

Preliminary Planning for a
User-Centered Evaluation

Even before specific evaluation questions are delineated or an evaluation approach settled upon, important preliminary planning issues must be considered. This preliminary work revolves around the following interrelated questions concerning the organizational setting in which the evaluation will occur:

1. Who will be the chief users of the evaluation results?
2. What kinds of evaluation activities are most feasible?
3. How will the fiscal and organizational context influence the evaluation effort?
4. How can organizational support for the evaluation best be developed?

The manner in which these questions are dealt with will have long-range consequences for the implementation of evaluation and its ultimate integrity as a useful planning, policy, and management tool within JTPA. This first section focuses on these preliminary planning concerns and the role of the evaluation planner in developing organizational support for evaluation.

Defining the Users

If evaluation is to be pragmatic, i.e., provide useful information to decisionmakers for improving social programs, then the evaluation planning process must begin by anticipating and identifying the evaluation *users* and their *information needs*. These factors should drive the initial formulation of the evaluation project and the planning steps that follow (Patton 1978; Davis and Salasin 1975). This kind of user-centered planning approach increases the likelihood that evaluation results will be useful and, in fact, used.

A user-centered approach implies that the evaluation planner should play an activist role in identifying, educating, and involving potential users in the evaluation process. In this preliminary planning stage, for example, the planner has to target potential customers and supporters of evaluation and initiate contact, rather than wait for these parties to involve themselves. In collaboration with technical staff, the planner assists users in articulating their specific requirements, and suggests ways in which evaluation might fulfill these needs.

The proactive planner needs to *market* evaluation on several levels. In addition to information, evaluation offers side benefits of which potential users should be made aware. These benefits, such as improved agency coordination and cooperation and increased political credibility, are often intangible and not easily measured. Evaluation can also be marketed as a capacity-building investment in the organization, yielding improved staff capabilities for future evaluation or related research activities. It can lead to an enhanced Management Information Systems (MIS) or other data collection system, and increased access to contact in research, professional, and private sector networks outside the organization's normal sphere of communication.

Potential users of evaluation need not be narrowly defined. While the interest and commitment of program policymakers and administrators are key, other users, both in and out of the program, should not be overlooked. Additional candidates include planning and operations staff, whose input in shaping and refining the focus of the evaluation inquiry is valuable. Decisionmakers and staff from related programs or agencies who might benefit from the evaluation results should also be considered.

In the case of JTPA, where legislation mandates coordination between employment and training and welfare and educational agencies, joint support of evaluation activities is an important possibility to explore. Users from these coordinating agencies may have substantive contributions to make in the form of data, staff expertise, and political or fiscal support. There can be a beneficial return on such contributions to these people in the form of useful evaluation findings, or increased recognition and credibility as an evaluation participant.

Finally, potential users may include a variety of groups outside JTPA, such as elected officials and legislators, clients and client-advocates, researchers, local business and labor groups, and the general public. While not all such users may be involved directly in the evaluation process, it is important to consider how their interests and their information needs might affect the ultimate focus of the evaluation.

In identifying a range of potential users and their needs early on, the planner establishes a better position for garnering a broad base of organizational support essential to the evaluation effort. How information needs ultimately translate into a specific research design will be picked up in a later section.

Determining Feasibility

Before considering a specific research plan, evaluation planners must study the *feasibility* of evaluating a particular JTPA program. Are some kinds of evaluation efforts more likely to succeed than others? Is the timing appropriate, or would an evaluation yield better results at a later date? To answer these kinds of questions, a number of experts have

suggested that evaluation planners begin with an "evaluability assessment" of the program in question (Rutman 1980; Schmidt 1978). Such a preliminary assessment, which may require assistance from an outside specialist, will help an organization accomplish the following goals:

1. Define the appropriate scope and timing for an evaluation.
2. Avoid wasting time and planning effort that will not produce useful results.
3. Identify evaluation barriers that need to be removed before evaluation can take place.
4. Lay the groundwork for doing further evaluation planning when circumstances are more conducive to such efforts.

Some of the most obvious barriers to useful evaluations of JTPA programs are related to resource or technical constraints. In the following sections, some of the major implementation issues concerning funding, staffing, and managing JTPA evaluation efforts will be presented in greater detail. These concerns are briefly mentioned here as they touch on program evaluability.

Financial constraints. Are sufficient funds available to ensure successful completion of the evaluation effort? If not, can additional funds be obtained within an acceptable time frame? A scaled-down, but well-supported evaluation effort, providing quality information in a few key areas, may prove to be the most useful interim option.

Staffing constraints. In-house staffing of an evaluation effort is one way to overcome financial constraints, but if staff resources are thinly stretched, or if staff lacks the necessary technical expertise, this strategy may end up compromising the quality and usefulness of the evaluation. An in-house evaluation may also lack sufficient credibility if the effort is perceived as self-serving.

Evaluation time frame. To be most useful, evaluation results must be available to users within a time frame that supports their decisionmaking needs. In JTPA, for example, evaluation activities should ideally mesh with the two-year program planning cycle to produce information for decisionmakers at key junctures within that cycle.

Data collection problems. Insufficient, inaccessible, or unreliable data may also limit the nature and scope of an evaluation effort.

Program Features Affecting Evaluability

Another set of factors affecting evaluability has to do with the *contours of the program itself*. A social program may exhibit certain characteristics that make evaluation outcomes more difficult to interpret and utilize effectively. Typically, a *process* study may be necessary to elucidate such features before an organization considers evaluating. The process model presented in chapter 4 suggests key organizational components that might be useful in determining program evaluability. For example, *program goals* are a central feature affecting evaluability. Explicit program goals provide a predetermined standard against which program processes and accomplishments can be measured. When a program's goals are unfocused or constantly changing, the task of evaluation is more difficult. How do you measure your achievements if you are not sure about what you are trying to achieve?

Alternatively, program goals may be well-defined, but inconsistent with each other, complicating the task of evaluation. For example, the goal of achieving a high placement rate at a low cost per placement often conflicts with other goals, such as significant participant skill development or long-term retention of trainees in their placements. Such goal conflicts are inherent to many JTPA programs. The issue is not to completely eliminate such conflicts, but to make the evaluation approach as sensitive as possible to the constraints placed on achieving program outcomes.

The manner in which program services are delivered is another important consideration. When programs encompass numerous service provision strategies (as is the case in many JTPA program settings), or change strategies midstream, the evaluation task becomes more challenging. The less uniform the overall treatments provided, the more complicated the task of adequately accounting for program impacts.

Finally, the size of the program may shape the nature and scope of evaluation. In the case of smaller programs or pilot projects, impact findings may be of limited usefulness because sample size may be small or cost inefficiencies may exist.

Organizational Factors Affecting Evaluability

Organizational factors often present the least tangible but most powerful barriers to useful evaluation. Some common organizational factors affecting evaluability are suggested below.

Staffing problems. When a program is plagued with low staff morale or high turnover, something is clearly wrong, but an evaluation may not help. Evaluation activities may create added burdens, which the staff cannot handle. Effective employees are crucial in any social service program. An organization with serious staff problems must focus on rectifying those problems before being able to utilize broad evaluation findings.

Previous evaluation history. Have previous evaluations been conducted? If so, how have they been used? Have evaluation findings been ignored or used to undermine certain factions or personnel within the organization? If so, the credibility and usefulness of the new evaluation may be questioned and staff cooperation lost. Evaluation planners will have to develop initial strategies to build trust and credibility.

Hidden agendas. In some cases, the sponsor of the evaluation is not truly committed to an open inquiry into program operations from which the program can learn or improve. Instead, he or she may want to use evaluation to support a preconceived notion about the program.

Financial difficulties. When a program is struggling to stay afloat financially, the utility of an evaluation is often severely curtailed. Administrative energy is necessarily focused on program survival rather than program improvement. The program may be able to take better advantage of evaluation findings when it is on a more stable financial footing.

Inter- and intra-organizational relations. Turf battles over clients, staff, and other resources can compromise the evaluation effort. If, for example, cooperative support among agencies is lacking, the evaluator may find access to important sources of information blocked or delayed in ways that hurt the evaluation. A comprehensive evaluation planning effort will include strategies to ameliorate or compensate for difficult organizational relations.

An evaluability assessment is not intended to discourage evaluation. Part of the assessment task is to help program operators determine which factors can be manipulated to enhance overall evaluability. Once these are identified, the evaluation planning staff can actively work with program administration and other staff to create a program environment that is more receptive to evaluation.

Examining the Organizational Context of Evaluation

The JTPA organizational context is complex, cross-cutting all levels of government, and embracing numerous agencies and organizational agendas. Because of this complexity, understanding how organizational factors might intervene to help or hinder evaluation is especially critical to the JTPA evaluation planning process. In addition, the evaluation itself may subtly influence program processes and outcomes. Therefore, the *context* in which evaluation occurs and the *manner* in which evaluation is carried out interact to affect evaluation activities. For these reasons, preliminary planning for evaluation must include a focus on how the organizational context will affect evaluation.

The planner's challenge is to identify and work knowledgeably with organizational constraints and supports to evaluation. Since these factors will vary from program to program, the intention here is to provide a general framework for incorporating organizational issues into the evaluation planning process.

Organizational Inertia

To accomplish their specified missions, organizations create mechanisms for promoting stability and efficiency. They develop structures that establish chains of authority and accountability, standardize operations, and routinize and parcel out work in a specific manner. In creating stable structures, organizations also create vested interests; a major goal of the organization becomes self-preservation. Over time, the very structures developed to enhance the organization's efficient functioning have a tendency to become rigid and resistant to change. *Change* means more uncertainty, and as such, constitutes a threat to the organization and its vested interests (Weiss 1983).

The logic of evaluation, on the other hand, is based on *the potential for change*. Ideally, evaluation feedback offers a rational mechanism for planned change in the interest of program improvement. Therefore, as a harbinger of such change, the evaluation planner can expect to encounter some natural organizational resistance to evaluation activities. Sometimes the resistance is not active, but takes the form of passive inability to mobilize for an evaluation effort. Sheer organizational inertia—the urge to follow time-honored structures and patterns that have shaped the organization's identity—inhibits the evaluation undertaking. On the other hand, in an age of shrinking public resources, JTPA and other programs are under constant external pressure to improve their efficiency and effectiveness. Evaluation provides a tool for such improvement, which need not threaten the security and continuity of the organization.

Overcoming organizational inertia or outright resistance to evaluation may present a bigger challenge than the evaluation itself. JTPA's complex administrative structure may demand that not one, but several separate organizational entities be mobilized to cooperate and participate in evaluation activities, if those activities are to be meaningful. A common organizational fear is that the evaluation results will point out only a program's weaknesses and damage program credibility. Program administrators and service providers need to be assured that evaluation results can enhance program credibility in several ways. The fact that a program embraces evaluation as a tool for innovation and improvement, itself, sends a positive message to program sponsors. Moreover, a *balanced* program evaluation will help identify program strengths as well as weaknesses, underscoring program accomplishments that compliance measures alone may not reflect. Finally, evaluation may produce information that compensates for or explains lower compliance with the various performance standards required in JTPA.

Organizational Roles and Relations

In JTPA, numerous distinct state and local level organizations are involved in program activities. Often, at both levels, separate groups set policy, administer programs, and deliver services. In addition, elected

officials, business groups, other education or social welfare-related agencies, and economic development agencies may play an active or influential role in JTPA. All these actors have developed an organizational stake within the JTPA system. But will they want to participate in and support an evaluation?

A strategy for developing user participation and support in evaluation must be inextricably tied to an examination and understanding of the broader organizational context in which users are operating. Therefore, before approaching and involving various users, the planner needs to assess the *roles* these various organizational actors play within JTPA. How active or central a role does each organization play?

Program administrative entities, for example, play such a key role in service delivery that in most instances their direct involvement in the evaluation planning will be critical. How receptive to or constrained by evaluation are key actors? What explicit or implicit agency agendas might affect the evaluation effort? For example, if an SDA has not met the federally mandated performance measures, it may be interested in initiating its own evaluation but not interested in participating in an effort initiated by others. Ignoring the interests of a particular JTPA stakeholder in the planning phase may impede the evaluation in later implementation and utilization phases.

It is not sufficient to know who the organizational actors are and what their stakes in JTPA entail; one must also know how these various groups interact with one another. Do the PIC, local program staff, local officials, and involved agencies regularly communicate with each other? Are there unresolved turf battles over JTPA or other program areas? Have personality conflicts marred interagency cooperation in the past? These are the kinds of questions an evaluation planning group will have to pose and answer in order to lay the organizational groundwork to support an evaluation effort.

Sometimes organizational interests are pitted against each other in ways that make coordinated evaluation very difficult. Conflicting interests are most likely to arise where two agencies share the same client base, as is the case with many JTPA and welfare programs. Competition between these two programs can be particularly intense when the fuller

funding of JTPA has translated into less funding for welfare. A welfare agency will then perceive that it may not be in its interest to participate in an evaluation that might validate JTPA at welfare's expense.

If agencies have a history of poor communication or struggle over who should administer what programs, or who should set policy, this history can spill over into and stymie evaluation efforts in significant ways. Access to necessary data or information on clients or programs may be denied or delayed, and otherwise useful in-house resources may not be discovered and shared. Moreover, the organizational input necessary for formulating useful evaluation questions may not occur, so that the general utility of evaluation findings may be impaired or simply not recognized by important decisionmakers.

Cooperative Planning for Evaluation

Conversely, identifying potentially positive interagency connections provides a base on which to build the evaluation effort. Evaluation activities that cross agency or divisional boundaries, while providing extra challenges to planning and coordination, may also provide unique opportunities for the exchange of information and ideas within the overall JTPA organization. Since evaluation often requires special coordination among different units, the process can create a supportive context for interaction across territorial lines. Such interaction can itself be valuable in informing people about decisionmaking and work agendas in different agencies, reducing organizational isolation, and improving coordination of resources (Blalock 1988). Whatever the organizational configuration, the planning role cannot remain purely technical. The evaluation planner may need to play information broker and mediator, acting as a conduit to open up or enlarge channels of communication and cooperation.

Each stake-holder needs to gain something from participating in the evaluation effort, whether it is information, public recognition, enhanced support, or credibility. A crucial task for the planner is to elicit from primary actors what it is they are willing to give and need to receive, in return, as participants in the evaluation process. The planner's task is also to help sensitize actors to each other's concerns, bringing covert

issues into the bargaining arena (e.g., the perennial problem of data acquisition across agencies) so that necessary agreements can be negotiated upfront before evaluation commences.

Successful cooperative evaluation planning can be supported and sustained through a number of strategies, as summarized below.

1. *Involve key actors.* Preliminary meetings with key actors in the evaluation process will help shape an evaluation approach that accommodates a variety of concerns and does not exacerbate inter- or intra-agency conflict. Staff, as well as administrators, should be included in early planning and/or briefing meetings.

2. *Develop advisory groups.* An advisory group is another way to bring diverse organizational interests together in the evaluation planning process. Group members can include not only agency representatives, but outside professionals or other citizens who can contribute expertise and lend additional support and credibility to the endeavor.

3. *Develop innovative funding and staffing alternatives.* Sources of support for evaluation exist beyond the usual organizational channels. Moving outside an agency for evaluation resources can extend the base of interest and support for such activity.

4. *Put interagency agreements and assurances in writing.* Successful evaluation often depends upon interagency cooperation and resource sharing. Since control of resources is always a sensitive organizational issue, negotiated agreements about access to data, clients, staff, and other resources must be in writing to avoid future misunderstanding.

5. *Use a team planning approach.* A team approach to planning makes sense when a great deal of interagency or intra-agency coordination and communication is necessary to accomplish evaluation tasks. Even if an outside evaluator is brought in to do the work, a team might play a useful advisory role, providing a mechanism for more direct organizational involvement and commitment to the evaluation. In a JTPA evaluation, representatives from a variety of divisions or units within the overall coordinated system might contribute effectively to a team planning effort. Besides a member of the evaluation or research staff involved in conducting the

evaluation, the team might also incorporate representatives from the program staff(s) involved, from relevant policymaking bodies (such as a state or local council), and from the MIS or computer services division.

Choosing Evaluation Staff

The organizational context should also influence who plans, implements, and administers a JTPA evaluation. Should the employment and training staff have primary responsibility for evaluation, or should a policymaking body like the PIC? Or, should an organization more removed from the JTPA system have primary evaluation responsibilities? Should evaluation responsibilities be divided among different entities? Clearly, given the enormous organizational variation across JTPA, no one unit is the "right" place to house an evaluation effort. What works well in one setting may not transfer to another. Some major considerations in choosing an evaluation staff include their position in the organization's authority structure, their objectivity, the degree of trust they engender and their specific research competence.

Authority Structure

The positioning of an evaluation staff within an organizational hierarchy is important. Ideally, evaluation staff will be sufficiently detached from the existing hierarchy to hold no direct power over those being evaluated or, conversely, those in a program being evaluated do not have direct authority or influence over the evaluators. If the evaluator is thought to be too closely aligned with the administrative power structure, his or her credibility may be impaired and with it the ability to carry out evaluation functions. On the other hand, if the evaluator is perceived as lacking sufficient administrative support, he or she may be seen as "marginal" in relation to ongoing program operations. In this instance, the message being sent is that the evaluation is not very important; cooperation in the effort may again be undermined. Greater staff detachment is often achieved by contracting out to a private consultant or establishing an independent evaluation unit.

When the head of an evaluation unit reports directly to major decision-makers in an organization, evaluation activities usually receive better support fiscally and politically, and evaluation information is better utilized by managers and policymakers. Such a direct link to power-holders, however, may have to be offset with extra effort to bring a range of appropriate division administrators and relevant staff into the planning process. Otherwise, there is the danger that those in lower echelons will feel compromised by or excluded from important decisionmaking and become less supportive of the evaluation effort.

The JTPA authority structure at both the state and local level is partially defined by who conducts compliance-related activities. Most JTPA organizations have developed special monitoring and compliance units, which routinely collect and analyze JTPA program data and audit certain aspects of JTPA program operations. Since these units are already collecting information about JTPA, and since evaluation is often viewed as an elegant offshoot of monitoring, the temptation is to add evaluation activities to ongoing monitoring and compliance operations. This tendency is probably reinforced by the CETA legacy of mingling compliance and technical functions under one roof.

From a purely technical standpoint, piggybacking evaluation onto ongoing monitoring operations may make sense: staff is familiar with the data, program operations, and personnel. From an organizational standpoint, however, such an arrangement may be problematic. As mentioned earlier, downplaying the threatening aspects of evaluation and enlisting the cooperation of those being evaluated are important ingredients in planning a successful evaluation. The neutral, nonthreatening posture an evaluation staff seeks is readily compromised in the eyes of those being evaluated, if that same staff is also connected with compliance activities. The inherently threatening aspects of evaluation are heightened by the fact that the evaluating office is also the office that critiques and sanctions. A compromise approach might be to involve monitoring and compliance staffers as special *evaluation consultants,* who can provide unique information and insights into JTPA program operations, while others actually implement the evaluation.

Independence and Objectivity

Since the evaluation mission is to yield the most accurate and objective information possible to decisionmakers, the objectivity of those conducting the evaluation is a key concern. An evaluation staff's actual and perceived neutrality is closely connected to its position in the organization structure and hierarchy. The more involved or invested particular staff is in the ongoing planning, administering, and implementing of a program, the more difficult it is for it to carry out an objective assessment. Its experiences with and preconceived notions about the program may lead to the unconscious filtering of what is observed and how it is then analyzed, interpreted, and reported. If evaluator objectivity is questioned either by decisionmakers or those being evaluated, the whole purpose of the evaluation effort may be called into question, and the potential utility of that effort lost.

The quest for neutrality does not inevitably lead to expensive outside consultants. First, hiring outside consultants does not automatically remove the suspicion of bias—outside evaluators may merely be viewed as an extension of those who hire them. Second, there are alternative approaches to evaluation that sufficiently meet the requirements of independence and neutrality. For example, as mentioned earlier, evaluation can be accomplished through an *independent research unit*, which is under an administrative authority separate from that of the program being evaluated.

If an independent research staff is not feasible and a strictly in-house evaluation effort is contemplated, the evaluation planner must search for other structures or mechanisms to protect the objectivity and credibility of the evaluation. An organization might consider temporarily borrowing outside staff or exchanging staff with other divisions or closely related organizations, in order to achieve some greater detachment from the program on the part of the evaluator.

Trust and Competence

Trust is another important consideration in deciding who is best able to carry out an evaluation effort. Trust enhances the evaluator's ability to gain entry to a program and elicit information and assistance from

program administration and staff. An evaluator's neutrality does not necessarily guarantee *trust*; neither does it necessarily engender distrust. In fact, trust may be based on the evaluator's perceived *positive bias* towards a program. In selecting the evaluation staff, tradeoffs may have to be made between the researcher who has greatest rapport and access to program information and the one who exhibits the greatest neutrality and independence.

The technical competence of an evaluation staff is a primary factor in deciding how best to build an evaluation capability. If the technical expertise is inadequate or inappropriate, an evaluation is more likely to waste resources and produce results of questionable validity and useful-ness. However, technical competency and efficiency, while of primary importance, should not be the sole criterion for location of an evaluation effort. Familiarity with JTPA programs and the ability to maneuver within that system to accomplish goals are also important attributes for an evaluation staff.

The more comprehensive the evaluation effort, the greater the need to involve different constituencies and coordinate their activities. Who is best able to perform vital coordination efforts, to bring interested parties together in critical planning stages, to establish interagency agreements about data and resource sharing, to bridge communication gaps when necessary? Here again, some argue that these critical nontechnical competencies must be obtained by hiring an outside consultant, whose vision can transcend the narrower perspectives of individual JTPA personnel. On the other hand, in-house staff, by virtue of its superior knowledge of interagency history and personnel, may also be in a good

Preparing and Involving Staff

Even if only temporarily, the evaluator becomes a part of the organiza-tional landscape in which he or she is operating. How those being evaluated *perceive* the evaluator and how the evaluator, in turn, *interacts* with those he or she studies inescapably influences the evaluation process. Therefore, the evaluator must be sensitive to the role as innovator within the organization and anticipate potential difficulties arising from that position (Rodman and Kolodny 1977). The first challenge for the

position to perform such support-building and coordination functions.

Most evaluators regard themselves as facilitators of positive change. However, it is difficult for those being evaluated to embrace this positive point of view; they assume that the evaluator has come to point a disapproving finger at what *they* are doing wrong. If nothing is done to soften this negative view of the evaluator, that is, if no assurance and protection are given to the evaluated, then an evaluator's presence is likely to induce a defensive posture that is not conducive to the ultimate goals of the evaluation.

If program staffers feel unsure of the *purposes* behind the evaluation, their defensive actions can seriously undermine the process. For example, in one case, JTPA evaluators were investigating the impacts of a special JTPA program through use of a control group of nonpartici- pants. When the evaluation was in progress, the evaluators discovered that program staff members, in their eagerness to prove the program's worth, had become unofficial program gatekeepers, assigning JTPA services only to the most obviously job-ready. As a result, evaluators had difficulty assessing whether positive outcomes were due to the program services or to the select nature of clients receiving those services.

These organizational difficulties can be minimized if the evaluation planner devotes a sufficient amount of preliminary planning time to appropriately involving program staff in the process. As potential *users* of the evaluation, several staffers might participate in the initial evalu- ation planning or advisory group. Later, all affected program staff should have an opportunity to meet with the evaluation staff for a briefing on the planned evaluation activities and purposes.

Unavoidably, the evaluator has an effect not only on the social climate of a program (an intruder on sacred soil), but also on the working conditions within the program. In requiring interviews and meetings, the evaluator distracts staff and administrators from their regular work load. Whether staff members perceive evaluation duties as a burden or an intrusion depends, in part, on the sensitivity of the evaluator and how well staffers are briefed as to the nature of the evaluation and the importance of their role in the process. In a positive context, evaluation interviews and planning meetings can offer program staff a chance to be heard and

make a meaningful contribution.

Evaluation planning staff can smooth the way for the evaluator by educating others involved and working out a clear delineation of everyone's role in the evaluation, including the degree of staff participation and staff responsibilities related to the evaluation. Establishing informal channels of communication between the evaluator and others involved in the evaluation process will help reduce inevitable tensions and miscommunication, and protect the ongoing procedure.

Finally, the evaluator must confront the possibility that his or her presence constitutes an additional influence affecting the program in an unknown fashion. If, for example, the evaluator is seen as threatening, staff morale and program effectiveness may decline. On the other hand, because of the evaluator's presence, staff may take extraordinary measures that artificially and temporarily boost program performance.

Even if the evaluator is viewed in a strictly neutral light by staff, the subjects of the evaluation—who may range from JTPA clients to PIC members—may react to the process of being studied (the well-known "Hawthorne effect"). As a result of being observed or interviewed, subjects may consciously or unconsciously alter their behavior, biasing the evaluation results obtained. While such influences cannot be totally eliminated, the planner can help sensitize the evaluator to the organizational setting in an effort to minimize bias in the evaluation process and its results.

Reducing the Threat of Evaluation

The evaluator is not automatically doomed to alien status within a hostile and mistrustful program environment. Although some organizational factors may be beyond his or her control, the evaluation planner can develop strategies to demystify the process and reduce a program staff's initial fears. Such strategies can include the following:

1. Involve program administrators and *program staff* in initial and subsequent evaluation planning activities, in order to enhance user understanding and commitment to the evaluation.
2. Make clear to program personnel the *purposes and anticipated consequences* of the evaluation. Ideally, consequences center around

constructive program change, giving program operators room to experiment, learn from mistakes, and improve programs.

3. Emphasize the *evaluation of programs*, not personnel. The more emphasis placed on evaluating program attributes, as opposed to staff attributes, the less threatening the evaluation process. If staff inadequacies are a predetermined central concern, then other vehicles, such as in-service training, should be considered to address this problem.

4. Establish *clear lines of authority* separating evaluation staff from program administration staff.

5. Introduce an initial evaluation effort into the *least threatening program situation*. For example, focus initial inquiry on overall program structures, processes, or outcomes, rather than on individual service providers.

6. Assure *confidentiality* to clients, staff, and all other participants in evaluation.

7. Select evaluators whose organizational status is perceived as most *neutral* and nonthreatening.

Developing a Specific Evaluation Strategy

The previous section began with a set of key planning questions about evaluation users, program evaluability, and the organizational context in which evaluation occurs. We turn to an additional set of questions associated with developing an *evaluation research plan*, which will lead to a specific *evaluation strategy*.

1. What are the important questions that users wish an evaluation to answer?

2. What general evaluation approach is most feasible for answering such questions?

3. What data will be required, and what demands on the organization will be made in terms of data collection and analysis?

In discussing issues raised by each of these questions, it is important to distinguish between *research tasks* and *evaluation-planning tasks*. Although these may be performed by the same individual(s) in small

JTPA organizations, commonly some or all are performed by various individuals with different expertise and different positions *vis-a-vis* the JTPA organization.

The research steps involved in developing a specific evaluation research strategy, as discussed in chapter 1, require individuals with appropriate research expertise in order to ensure the technical competence of the research design and its implementation. The research tasks performed by these experts, however, are complemented and supported by a series of *organizational* planning tasks, as illustrated in chart 5.2. The evaluation planner works in partnership with the researcher/evaluator to ensure user involvement in and general organizational support for the development of a workable research strategy.

CHART 5.2
Organizational Tasks Associated with the Research Process

Steps in the Research Process	Associated Organizational Planning Tasks
Formulating feasible research questions	Identifying various users' questions about the program.
	Prioritizing users' questions
Defining the important factors to study in order to answer the questions.	Making a preliminary assessment of information and resources required.
Developing a Research Design • Sampling • Data Collection • Data Analysis	Determining the organizational supports needed for the research design.
Implementing the Evaluation	Involving users and program staff in the final design and implementation.

Identifying Questions

As stressed in the previous section, an evaluation's usefulness hinges in large measure on providing information that users need in order to make more informed decisions about their programs. The actual design of an evaluation, therefore, develops around a *key set of research questions about JTPA's effectiveness and efficiency*, which flow directly from users' interests. These key questions will, of course, vary at different points in time across different state and local program settings,

but in general, useful evaluation will concern one or more of the following generic questions:

1. Was the program implemented as planned?
2. Did the program achieve its stated goals?
3. Did program participants as a whole benefit significantly?
4. Who benefited most/least from the program?
5. Did the program have unintended results (good or bad)?
6. Which program activities were most/least cost-effective?
7. How might implementation be improved?

Defining the most significant questions about JTPA will help set the parameters of an evaluation effort early on in the planning process.

In this question-formulation stage, the evaluation planner plays a key collaborative role with users in shaping the direction of the evaluation effort. As mentioned at the outset, their participation is crucial in the evaluation planning process. User input increases user commitment to the evaluation effort and focuses that effort on relevant issues. During the question-formulation stage, however, evaluation staff do not have to defer exclusively to users.

Identifying specific questions can be a difficult process, and users may have problems developing researchable inquiries about the program. Because JTPA is so tremendously "performance driven," users may have difficulty moving from a compliance and monitoring mode to broader inquiries. In such cases, the evaluation planner plays an important educative role in eliciting or reformulating questions.

Different Users, Different Questions

Bringing different users into the question-formulation stage creates additional challenges for the evaluation planner because different users may be interested in entirely different questions. For example, conflicts may surface between different decisionmaking levels or branches of the program as to what is truly important to know about JTPA. At the service delivery level, program staff may be more interested in the JTPA intervention's impact on clients. Are clients being placed effectively? PIC members may be more concerned with the business community's perceptions and involvement; administrative users may be more in-

trigued with studying the cost-effectiveness of JTPA. Political leaders may look for information that justifies public expenditures or responds to constituents' needs.

When state and SDA users are jointly involved in evaluation, thorny issues regarding the focus of the evaluation may arise. Since the state can ultimately sanction a poorly performing SDA, that SDA must be more directly and unyieldingly concerned with performance issues.   State JTPA policymakers, on the other hand, may feel less compelled to examine immediate performance outcomes, and focus instead on more long-term effectiveness measures of the program.

The question-formulation stage can provide an additional opportunity for information exchange and accommodation between these different factions. Part of the planner's job, then, is to stimulate this exchange and assist in identifying those questions for which there is shared interest or general support.

Determining Priority Questions and Their Feasibility

Once users and planning staff have generated a number of evaluation questions, they must be prioritized and the scope of the evaluation determined, based on allotted time and resources. Though they seem important, some questions may have to be eliminated because pursuing the answers will prove too time-consuming or costly.

Attempting to answer too many questions in one evaluation effort is a common pitfall. When the scope is too grandiose, staff and other resources may be too overextended to produce a quality product. An overly ambitious scope increases the complexity of the evaluation process and the coordination of staff activity, and increases the likelihood that deadlines will be missed and budgets overrun. In addition, some questions simply may not be feasible to study at a particular time, given the existing resources available. Therefore, defining priority questions as early as possible creates an important foundation for later evaluation activity.

Prioritizing a set of evaluation issues can be one of the more frustrating and time-consuming steps in planning a JTPA program evaluation. The planner may have to sustain the process with a generous dose of negotiation among different users. In order to arrive at an ultimate list

of shared priorities, the planner may have to sketch several different evaluation scenarios and accompanying contingencies concerning funding, staffing, data collection, and analysis. Users may then be better able to revise their questions and agree upon priorities.

Those engaged in setting priorities must have access to expert research advice as to the feasibility of answering each preliminary question from a research standpoint. If staff research expertise is limited, this is the time to bring in an outside research consultant to help select and refine the questions. This consulting time is well-spent if it yields a manageable set of questions that reflect users' evaluation priorities. These questions will form the heart of the evaluation and inform and direct the research efforts that follow.

Selecting an Evaluation Approach and Methodology

Once key evaluation questions have been selected, they must be translated into the research inquiries to be addressed by the evaluation, i.e., the specific program variables of interest and the critical relationships among these variables to be studied. A subsequent task is to choose a research strategy to use in studying these relationships. The issue at this stage is to select the most appropriate research approach, given the nature of the questions and the status of resources such as time, staff expertise, and data accessibility.

This book illustrates three major kinds of program evaluation: net impact, gross impact, and process evaluation. Each approach has its strengths and weaknesses and is most appropriate to answering particular questions, as described in chapter 1. A *comprehensive* evaluation approach combining both process and impact questions is ideal; it yields useful information on program outcomes and on the *processes* that have contributed to those outcomes.

A number of factors in the real world will influence the kind of evaluation approach selected: evaluation costs, time frame for accomplishing the evaluation, data requirements, staff and other resource capabilities, and organizational demands. The evaluation planner must work in concert with program and research staff to adequately assess these limitations.

Settling on a basic evaluation approach is the beginning step in a series of research and planning decisions regarding implementation of the evaluation. In developing a feasible *research design*, staff must first decide who will be studied and how the necessary data will be collected and analyzed. (The specific tasks involved in developing a design are described in chapter 1 and illustrated in chapters 2 through 4 in this volume.) At this point in the process, the evaluation planner plays an important organizational support role for the technical evaluation designers, ensuring that the technical requirements of the evaluation design mesh with organizational capabilities.

Here again, real world considerations impinge upon the choices evaluation designers would ideally make. The full range of data desired may be too costly or time-consuming to collect. Some information may be difficult to retrieve or merge with other data sets. Staff may lack expertise in specific kinds of statistical analysis required by a research approach. Working closely with research staff, the planner's task is to identify resources and information requirements suggested by a preliminary research plan, and anticipate the various organizational factors that may enhance or constrain particular design options.

Anticipating Data Collection Issues

At this stage, *data collection* may pose special issues for the planner and the researcher to address. Whether data are derived from an MIS or other automated data base systems, access to accurate and valid information is key to designing and implementing any evaluation. Without adequate data, the most careful design may be worthless. Planners should not wait until the evaluation is in progress to study data gathering systems, and *then* discover their inadequacies. Rather, these systems should be explored and their drawbacks uncovered in the early evaluation planning stages. The planner can directly support the researcher in this exploration in a number of ways.

Data Reliability

One of the researcher's primary concerns is the *quality* of the data. In part, data quality is a function of the *reliability* of the data gathering

process, that is, how accurately and consistently the data are collected. For example, in an evaluation using MIS information there are several potential sources of unreliable data: (1) the client himself or herself, (2) the staff recording information about the client, (3) the data entry staff transferring that information, and (4) the system classification schemes, which do not clearly or consistently distinguish one data element category from another.

SDAs with highly decentralized intake and service delivery systems, where many different personnel in different agencies input data, have a greater potential for data inconsistencies and inaccuracies. The planner can assist the researcher either by directly reviewing the organization's data collection procedures and safeguards, or by making the organizational contacts necessary for the researcher to undertake this review.

Data Comparability

Comparison of evaluation data across different subunits, such as states, SDAs, or even service providers, may be another concern for the researcher. In order to evaluate program implementation or outcomes, definitions of data elements across systems must be reasonably standardized. Achieving such standardization across different JTPA jurisdictions is often complicated, especially in states that operate a more decentralized MIS system.

Where JTPA services are decentralized among numerous separate contractors, the issue of data comparability extends all the way to the service-provider level. When the SDA or a proxy agency, like the Employment Service, performs centralized intake and service assignment, it can exert more control over the way in which participant information is categorized and codified in the MIS. Where these initial service functions are relinquished to independent contractors, however, standardization of information is more difficult to maintain. Rigorous categorizing and coding guidelines for contractors may not exist; or, if they do exist, they may be hard to enforce at the subcontractor level.

Again, the planner can play a support role by gathering information from the various organizations concerned so that the research staff can better determine whether a data comparability problem exists. If

different units within the system are measuring the same variables in an inconsistent manner, the planner will have to assess the organizational feasibility of bringing greater uniformity of measurement systemwide.

Data Availability

In any state or local setting, the Management Information System (MIS), which provides ongoing information on a number of important client and program variables, will be a key factor in the evaluation. Besides data quality and comparability, a primary concern must be the ability of the MIS to meet important data requirements of evaluation. What demands, in fact, will evaluation place on the MIS? If the MIS lacks certain data elements useful to evaluation, how readily can the system be revised? It may be more cost-effective in the long run to hammer out a thorough revision based on multiple evaluation uses, rather than slowly to attack a system piecemeal.

The cost of adding elements to the MIS is an obvious constraint to modifying the system. In the more decentralized state settings, where SDAs operate independent mainframe or software systems, individual modifications may be especially costly because the states are likely to bear less responsibility for locally run information systems.

Computer programming time is not the only cost issue involved in acquiring new data for evaluation. SDAs need to be sensitive to the potential burdens (designing new forms, training intake personnel, etc.) that added reporting requirements will place on themselves and their service providers. Also, there is a limit to the amount of research information an SDA or service provider can collect without compromising its social service mission. Therefore, part of initial evaluation planning must involve the integration of an evaluation's MIS requirements into the SDA's overall information needs.

In the more centralized, state MIS systems, an SDA will have less latitude in independently modifying its MIS. Longer-range planning for evaluation activities likely must entail bringing together state and SDA users to develop an MIS capability oriented toward both parties' evaluation needs. SDAs may have different information priorities from each other and from the state, however, complicating the task of enhancing the

MIS to meet diverse evaluation needs. In some instances, SDAs have collectively negotiated changes in proposed statewide evaluation to include gathering more information of direct concern to the SDAs.

Data Merging

Although MIS information will often be at the core of many JTPA evaluations, additional information may also be critical. For example, merging MIS client data with other kinds of client data on post-JTPA earnings, employment, and welfare dependency permits a more sophisticated analysis of program outcomes and impacts. Frequently these additional data are contained in data base systems completely separate and incompatible with JTPA MIS. The evaluation plan should anticipate the technical difficulties in bringing various data systems together for a unitary analysis.

The task of merging MIS with other data involves organizational considerations as well. The data may be under another agency's authority, and obtaining that data may pose additional problems. Commonly, data requests across agency boundaries are viewed as an imposition, requiring extra staff time or other resources. Moreover, the outside agency may be under a different jurisdiction than the JTPA agency (state rather than local, or vice versa). There may, in this case, be less organizational precedence or support for interaction and cooperation with the JTPA agency.

Such realities underscore the need for strategic organizational planning as part of the overall evaluation planning effort. Representatives of affected agencies should be brought into the planning process early to ensure greater cooperation. Interagency understanding about data sharing and computer use should be put in writing as further insurance against future frustrations or misunderstandings.

Client Confidentiality

Although state agencies and SDAs may routinely share JTPA client information, client confidentiality does not become an issue as long as such information is presented in the aggregate without individual identifiers, such as client name or social security number. However, both the

net and gross impact evaluation approaches described in this volume involve merging MIS data with other data sources for which client identifiers are required to accomplish an information match. State statutes on client confidentiality may be restrictive regarding the release of this information to others. Some SDAs have encountered difficulties, for example, in obtaining state-administered UI Wage Records.

When two or more separate agencies agree to share JTPA client data, issues of confidentiality must be understood. Each agency may have its own internal standards regarding access to and use of client data. For example, one agency may strictly limit information containing client identifiers to a small number of special users, while others may allow wide access to such information. Some agencies may permit client data to be used for compliance investigation, and others may not.

Assurances about confidentiality are especially important to service providers because inability to guarantee client confidentiality will impair the client-service-provider relationship and subsequently affect treatment success. For these reasons, interagency discussion and agreement about client confidentiality must be part of the evaluation planning effort.

Planning for the Implementation of an Evaluation

Once staff has developed a feasible evaluation approach, planners can think more specifically about how the evaluation will be implemented, and chart a course for the planning activities that implementation requires. These activities will center on assessing the resources needed, estimating their costs, and developing strategies for acquiring and efficiently allocating them.

Developing an Implementation Plan

A written *implementation plan* is an invaluable tool for conceptualizing and carrying out well-coordinated, timely, and useful evaluation activities. Ideally, such a plan comprehensively documents all planning and management decisions that must precede actual implementation of the evaluation. This plan is, therefore, an indispensable companion piece to the research plan. The *research plan* documents the specific *research tasks* to be undertaken; the *implementation plan* details the *organiza-*

tional resources and activities that support the research.

Committing this plan to writing helps in several ways. First, a written plan creates a *conceptual record* to which one can continually refer for clarification and direction. As a written record, the plan is more subject to outside review, critique, and revision. A written record also allows for a more broadly shared understanding of the evaluation process and the planner's conceptual work that shapes that process. Such an understanding is crucial to the evaluation team for efficient coordination of tasks, particularly between the technical staff and others involved in the evaluation process. Evaluation *users* will also appreciate the opportunity to review the complex organizational considerations that contribute to a sound evaluation plan.

More than a single document, a comprehensive implementation plan consists of a number of interrelated statements, descriptions, charts, and checklists. Informal notes, memos, and interviews serve as supporting or supplemental documents to the main plan. A plan should contain a purpose and goal statement as well as users' questions to be addressed. A purpose and goal statement is the organizing principle behind both the research and the implementation plan. At the end of the evaluation, this statement offers a yardstick for measuring the evaluation's accomplishments. Was the evaluation implemented in a manner consistent with the original goals? How well did it answer the questions originally posed?

Whatever written format is used, the *core* of the plan should provide a detailed blueprint of the sequential activities occurring in each phase of the evaluation. The evaluation process encompasses three major phases: a *planning phase*, an *implementation phase*, and a *reporting and dissemination phase*. The implementation plan sequentially orders all the anticipated evaluation-related activities within each phase, highlighting how organizational planning tasks dovetail with and support research tasks, as illustrated in chart 5.3.

In serving as the evaluation's blueprint, the core of the implementation plan covers *activities* as well as the *timing, management, resources*, and *costs* that these activities entail (Adams and Walker 1979; Fink and Kosecoff 1982). Each of these elements is considered below.

Chart 5.3
An Evaluation Implementation Plan:
Some Sample Activities

Planning Phase:
Research Activities

- Reformulating users' concerns into researchable questions
- Determining evaluability of the program and recommending how to proceed with evaluation
- Developing a basic research strategy
- Refining the research strategy
- Reviewing of strategy by independent consultant, if necessary

Planning Phase:
Organizational Support Activities

- Identifying and involving evaluation users
- Establishing work group and advisory group
- Identifying and prioritizing users' questions
- Identifying organizational supports and constraints
- Assessing preliminary resources required and available
- Reviewing & modifying researchers' required recommendations
- Reviewing (w/research staff) data accessibility, reliability
- Agreeing on a basic research strategy
- Reviewing and approving final research strategy

Implementation Phase:
Research Activities

- Training staff involved in data collection
- Field testing new interview instruments
- Collecting the data
- Preparing data for analysis
- Analyzing data
- Interpreting the results
- Developing recommendations
- Producing draft report

Implementation Phase:
Organizational Support Activities

- Obtaining necessary interagency agreements on data sharing
- Hiring and assigning evaluation staff
- Briefing all program staff and others involved
- Maintaining organizational contacts and support for data collection process
- Providing users and advisory group with interim report(s) on preliminary findings
- Obtaining review and feedback from key users/advisory group
- Developing a final dissemination strategy

Dissemination Phase:
Research Activities

- Meeting with users for discussion session
- Incorporating feedback into final report

Dissemination Phase:
Organizational Support Activities

- Special packaging and distributing of final report for different users
- Preparing and distributing evaluation summaries to program staff and others

The Time Schedule for Evaluation

As with any project work plan, the evaluation implementation plan should also include a specific schedule for accomplishing tasks. This scheduling dimension is important to the evaluation effort for reasons that extend beyond efficient day-to-day management and resource utilization. If not accomplished within a specified time frame, evaluation results become stale. The organizational momentum behind the effort may die and the results, when finally produced, may no longer be valued

or utilized. Over time, the potential users of the evaluation may change substantially, and new users have less commitment to or interest in the evaluation or feel more threatened by the information the evaluation elicits. For these reasons, user input should inform the *scheduling*, as well as the *content* of the evaluation.

Scheduling evaluation activities ideally should mesh with relevant funding, legislative, and planning timetables. For example, evaluation findings with implications for broad policymaking might ideally be coordinated with the policy time frames of the PIC, economic development agencies, or local government. JTPA evaluation planning might also be coordinated with allocation decisions for state set-aside monies or other state and local administrative actions. The important point in overall scheduling is to seize coordination opportunities with other actors within the total JTPA system whenever possible. Such coordination can only enhance the ultimate utility of the evaluation effort.

Monitoring the Plan

In scheduling evaluation activities, planners can build into the evaluation planning process opportunities for review, comment, and revision. Opportunities to monitor each significant evaluation phase can enhance the overall evaluation effort in several ways. Monitoring builds *flexibility* into the implementation plan, allowing for changes and improvements where necessary. Monitoring also encourages the timely discovery and correction of research problems or planning gaps, ultimately *saving time and resources*. Finally, external review by an independent third party can increase users' *confidence* in a predominantly in-house evaluation and its overall credibility. When an evaluation effort crosscuts organizational divisions or agencies, review takes on an added dimension. Whether formal or informal, the ongoing review process, by inviting feedback, can be an effective mechanism for sustaining interest and involvement by initial supporters and participants.

Resources Required

As evaluation needs, interests, and capabilities vary across local setting, so will the required implementation resources. As part of the

overall plan, a written strategy, or *resource plan*, for acquiring appropriate capital is essential to planning and managing the evaluation effort. It may begin as a tentative document for debate and revision in the initial stages. Before the actual evaluation focus (which questions are to be answered?) and approach (what evaluation design is appropriate?) are delineated, the plan will be sketchy, but as early decision points are reached, the plan will take on greater detail and form.

A resource plan can be devised according to a number of formats. Whatever format is chosen, the basic elements of the plan include the following:

1. A sequential listing of evaluation tasks to be performed and products to be produced.
2. A time allotment for each task.
3. The staff and other resources needed for each task.
4. An estimate of the quantity or amount of resources required (number of staff hours, computation or word processing time, etc.).

These elements must be *identified in writing* and combined in an easily readable form. Chart 5.4 contains a sample format of an evaluation resource plan. As this design suggests, program evaluation will often require special staff or consultant input at key junctures.

Determining Costs

Estimating evaluation costs is a critical step in the planning process. Funders must have preliminary cost parameters before authorizing an evaluation effort, and evaluation planners will want to anchor evaluation options to financial realities as early as possible. The thorough costing-out of the major evaluation components, as listed in a preliminary resource plan, provides a practical basis for comparing evaluation alternatives and assessing the relative merits of different data collection and staffing strategies. An estimate encourages planners to rethink alternative resource and staffing strategies more creatively, or consider one or more scaled-down versions of the preliminary evaluation design.

Costs will vary tremendously depending on the purpose and scale of the evaluation effort, the kinds of resources an organization can marshal to undertake the task, and the existing market cost for external resources,

Chart 5.4
A Sample Format for a Resource Plan

Phase of Evaluation	Personnel Resources Needed						Other Resources Needed			
	In-House Resources			Outside Resources (Contracted for or Contributed)			In-House		Outside	
	Staff Responsible	Tasks	Estimated Time Commitment and Cost	Consultant	Tasks	Estimated Time Commitment and Cost	Type of Resource	Estimated Cost Value	Type of Resource	Estimated Cost Value
Preliminary Planning	Staff A			Consultant A			Supplies		Supplies	
	Staff B			Consultant B			Equipment		Equipment	
	Etc			Etc			Computer Time		Computer Time	
Planning for Implementation										
Implementation										
Dissemination										

such as consultants. For example, consultant fees for an evaluation specialist may range from \$100 to \$600 a day, or more. Personal interviews with participants or others can cost between \$100 and \$500 per interview, depending on consultant fees and the ease with which the interviewee is located and the information collected.

Sometimes reduced fees or in-kind contributions are available, substantially altering the cost framework for evaluation. A comprehensive assessment should include *all costs borne by all organizations* supporting the evaluation, not just the direct monetary expenses to the main sponsor. (For a different perspective on evaluation costs, see Alkin and Solmon 1983.) Such an approach ensures that various projected contributions of different funders and sponsors are recognized. When in-kind resources, such as internal staff time, computer time, administrative overhead, and materials, are shifted to an evaluation project, they should also be fully costed out. In some cases, it may be more convenient and meaningful to cost out some costs in other than dollar terms, e.g., staff hours to be donated to the evaluation. Examples of various evaluation expenses are shown in chart 5.5.

Quantifiable costs, such as labor and materials, are only part of the total equation; these must be considered in concert with other, less definable expenses. Examples of this more elusive spending category might include the level of anticipated program disruption caused by the evaluation or resource losses associated with an inexperienced staff.

Some of these nonquantifiable outlays can best be assessed in terms of comparisons across different evaluation strategies being weighed. Consider the strategy of using in-house staff vs. outside consultants. In some cases, the former may be much cheaper, but the results less credible to important funders or decisionmakers. Although not measurable, the potential price of reduced credibility and utilization is nonetheless important to the overall calculation.

The costs of various evaluation strategies are most meaningfully interpreted in terms of comparative benefits to be derived from each strategy. However, evaluation benefits are far more resistant to comparative calculation than are expenditures. First, most potential evaluation benefits are intangible or difficult to measure. The primary benefit

Chart 5.5
The Costs of Evaluation

Quantifiable Costs	
Direct Costs	• Travel
	• Evaluation staff salaries/benefits
	• Consultant fee
	• Per diem expenses
	• Telephone and mail
	• Computer time for data processing
	• Printing/duplication
	• Published materials
	• Supplies
Indirect Costs	Overhead
	• Facilities and space
	• Equipment rental, use and repair
	• Utilities
	• Administrative time
	Support Services
	• Secretarial/office
	• Accounting
	• Legal (e.g., contracting, client confidentiality issues, data use issues, etc.)
	• Public relations
	• Publishing
Non-quantifiable Costs	
Potential Costs to Staff and Client	• Interagency coordination costs
	• Program disruptions
	• Service inefficiencies
	• Interview time
General Program-related Costs	• Credibility problems and costs
	• Mistakes, inefficiencies of inexperienced staff
	• Time delays
	• Staff resistance to evaluation
	• Inadequate or inappropriate utilization of evaluation results
	• Political costs

of evaluation is to gain better information about JTPA; whether that information is well-utilized and leads to program improvements will not be known for certain.

In addition, the evaluation process may lead to certain organizational enhancements, or *indirect benefits,* which are often not considered because they are not explicitly connected to JTPA goal achievement. For example, effective evaluation planning with many users may result in improved inter- and intra-agency communication and/or coordination in

the future. Evaluation implementation may result in enhanced MIS or other data collection improvements. Although these kinds of benefits are generally not quantifiable, a thorough checklist of potential direct and indirect advantages provides a richer context for decisionmakers to use in weighing the cost of evaluation alternatives.

Acquiring Resources

While JTPA legislation supports various evaluation activities, no specific funds are allocated to this purpose. As long as administrative funds remain so limited, finding financial support for JTPA evaluation will be a fundamental concern for most states and SDAs. Decision-makers and planners must think broadly and creatively about funding possibilities.

Several general planning assumptions underlie the various funding possibilities discussed below. First, it is assumed that JTPA's orientation toward interagency coordination and public-private collaboration sets the stage for exploring new funding partnerships for evaluation as well as for other program activities. A corollary to this assumption suggests that others outside the JTPA system are interested in evaluation specifically linked to program improvement and may be open to requests for assistance.

Second, whatever funding strategy is ultimately considered, those who will use the evaluation, if they are truly committed to the process, represent the logical source to approach for funds. While key users themselves may not have direct access to funding, they may help in other ways to contact sources, provide staff for the fund search, or deliver other valuable in-kind services.

No funding strategy should overlook potential sources of *in-kind* contributions for the evaluation effort; a far broader range of supporters will be able to give noncash contributions to the effort. The strategy may include approaching multiple contributors for different kinds of support. Furthermore, funders will often be more interested in supporting a project if they see that others are contributing as well.

Finally, the fund-search process is a capacity-building undertaking for the organization. It requires creative program marketing to potential

supporters and provides opportunities for strengthening networks of important contacts in and out of the program.

Internal Funding and Assistance

State JTPA agencies will probably have a more centralized and developed research capability than their local counterparts. As states and SDAs better define their respective roles and interrelationships, increasing opportunity for cooperative state-local evaluation activities will arise. Many states are in a good position to offer valuable technical assistance and special services to SDAs contemplating JTPA program evaluation.

In addition to state-local cooperative efforts, both administrative levels might want to explore funding leveraged from other agencies or governmental units participating in JTPA (e.g., local welfare offices, economic development agencies, city community development offices, etc.). Evaluation supported *across* agencies can focus more on issues of administration and service coordination of shared importance to constituent funders. With joint funding for a particular or ongoing evaluation, an independent evaluation unit may be acceptable to all parties. Whatever the arrangement, evaluation activities will have to answer varying needs and provide recognized benefits to all participants.

External Funding and Assistance

Evaluation funding possibilities exist beyond government funding sources connected directly or indirectly to JTPA. State and local agencies, however, have historically been reluctant to tap outside resources. Finding and approaching these other funders requires staffing and time investment for busy administrators, which initially discourages organizational risk-taking.

Ultimately, however, casting a broader net into funding realms beyond the familiar pays off in many ways. Even if adventureous searchers are not rewarded directly with the cash support they seek, their efforts will prove valuable in a number of ways: nonmonetary contributions, increased contact and interaction within the business, academic, and professional communities, increased program visibility and credibility,

and expanded possibilities for future funding. The remainder of this section outlines some of these alternative funding possibilities.

Academic institutions often offer unique evaluation resources at reduced costs. Faculty are a major resource; they frequently have the specialized research expertise needed, and are often available at a lower salary than private consultants with similar expertise. Through their institutional ties, faculty are better able to leverage related resources, such as research materials, computer expertise, or other faculty and students. If the consultant time required of a faculty member is below a certain amount, academic institutions will often reduce or waive the indirect costs they normally charge.

State-supported educational institutions, including community colleges, are part of the state agency network. Their public-sector status provides an opportunity and rationale for developing closer ties that can be mutually beneficial to both parties. In terms of hiring a JTPA evaluation consultant, contracting with state-supported colleges or universities may be simpler, less formal, and involve lower indirect costs than would other contracting arrangements.

Students are another potential source of support for evaluation. Frequently, graduate students are willing to devote research time to an outside evaluation project in order to gain practical work experience or develop material for a thesis or doctoral project. Many professional graduate schools encourage or require their students to engage in such research. Sometimes students, as well as faculty, can partially or fully support their evaluation research activities through research assistantships, postdoctoral fellowships, or individual research grants. Although limited, federal work-study funds do exist at the graduate level. These funds pay a portion of the wages going to a work-study student. An added benefit is that students bring the advice, interest, and support of supervising faculty, who can act as an additional quality control on student's work, and who themselves may be willing to play an active role in the evaluation effort, contributing specialized expertise.

In some cases, graduate departments or professional schools may partially or fully fund studies of evaluation issues of special relevance to their faculty and students. One local JTPA evaluation, for instance, was

largely sponsored by a nearby university's graduate business school. Faculty and SDA staff planned the evaluation; students collected and analyzed data under faculty supervision.

A number of nonprofit business, labor, professional, social service, and public interest organizations are interested in improving employment and training programs. A JTPA evaluation can capitalize on this interest in a number of ways. Members of such groups can serve as formal or informal advisors to the evaluation planning process and offer reduced fee services or provide certain resources in exchange for public recognition of their contributions.

Private foundation support used to be almost entirely the preserve of educational institutions and nonprofit organizations. Increasingly, however, public agencies have broadened their funding strategies to include soliciting foundations for support. Foundation backing, as with other support, is not limited to direct services. Many foundations are concerned with developing innovative approaches to service delivery and are willing to fund applied research activities in a number of service areas, including employment and training.

Most major metropolitan libraries carry standard directories profiling the larger national and regional foundations and their contribution patterns. Regional directories of state and local funders are also usually available. These references provide initial information needed to identify funders who are most likely to be interested in enhancing social programs.

The major directories include fairly detailed profiles on foundation activities (previous funding patterns, kinds of costs covered, special requirements, current recipients of support), which help the researcher quickly narrow the search effort. Financial reports of foundations, charities, and trusts within a state also provide useful information on the kinds of individuals and organizations they fund and their funding philosophies and agendas. These reports are generally available through a state attorney general's office or the state agency that oversees the financial reporting of charitable organizations.

Such funders may be more attracted to programs that are innovative or can serve as *demonstration models* for other programs. Evaluation of

programs geared to *special populations* (e.g., youths, ex-offenders, welfare recipients, older workers) may also interest certain funders who otherwise would not want to become involved with JTPA evaluation activities.

Foundation size and location are often important considerations. Smaller and more local foundations may be unpredictable in their outlook, but they will be more geared to local actors and interests. They may support an especially appealing local project outside of their usual framework.

In contrast, larger, national foundations are more bureaucratic, engage in a very formalized selection of issues to be funded, have more specifically defined application procedures and fixed funding parameters, and apply more rigid criteria in making funding decisions. Larger foundations tend to have lengthy time frames for review and final decisionmaking. The tradeoff is that major foundation support, while more competitively sought and more difficult and time-consuming to achieve, offers larger pots of money, greater prestige, and increased likelihood of supplemental funding in the future. Therefore, while an SDA's best chances for funding may be at the local level, the fund seeker should not automatically preclude national and state sources.

JTPA envisions a close working relation between government and the private sector to better connect those who are being trained with those who can offer jobs. In the interest of learning more about and improving current JTPA operations, the public-private partnership might arguably be extended to include joint support for evaluation activities.

Large companies utilizing JTPA services such as OJT may be particularly receptive to requests for assistance in evaluating and improving those services. More support may be available if the company also views its participation in terms of public relations returns. Although local service agencies may be unaccustomed to approaching the private sector directly for help, a mechanism for making such contacts is built into JTPA through the PICs and state councils. Council members often have extensive business and community ties, and are in a good position to help planning staff identify not only who should be approached, but how they should be approached as well.

In addition to approaching business contacts through JTPA channels, other sources of information on private sector companies are available to help in the fund search. State employment agencies, economic development organizations, and private research companies often publish information on the largest employers in the state. Also, major university and public libraries in each state usually carry reference guides on corporations and their endowment programs.

Local companies can be contacted directly for information about their funding interests and requirements. Funding proposals usually are not required to be as long or complex as those of other funders, and decision time is much shorter. With major national corporations, the scenario can be quite different. They may have special (usually nonlocal) corporate contribution units that handle all funding requests, often requiring more sophisticated and detailed proposals. Although these special units may make the final selections, local corporate branches may also wish to be involved in the review process, and may have influence over the ultimate corporate funding decision.

Examining Staffing Options

Concommitant with efforts to obtain adequate evaluation resources, the planner must develop strategies for the optimum use of these means. A key source will be the evaluation staff. Because each organization will have its own evaluation interests and needs, every evaluation effort will be unique; no single staffing pattern suffices for all. In some settings, an in-house team of specialists is most feasible; in other contexts, an outside consultant may make more sense. An important consideration is whether available in-house staff has the technical skills to accomplish the required evaluation tasks. In addressing this consideration, the planner must first consider specialized staffing requirements the evaluation might entail.

Comprehensive evaluations will probably require evaluation specialists in areas such as research design and statistical analysis; more scaled-down efforts might manage with fewer expert sources, acting in a more limited consultant fashion. Whatever the scale, most evaluations will require some special staffing, as suggested by charts 5.6 and 5.7.

Chart 5.6
Core Evaluation Staff

Type of Specialist	Examples of Specialist Activities
Program Evaluator (specializing in employment and training programs)	Develops and implements a feasible conceptual evaluation *approach* (the questions to be investigated) and research *methodology* to meet the information needs of users
Evaluation Planner/Coordinator	Coordinates organizational activities *in support of* evaluation. Assesses the supports and constraints for conducting evaluation; develops strategies for increasing the utility and utilization of evaluation. Coordinates activities across agency and division boundaries. Plans and/or coordinates resource utilization, staffing, and other implementation components of the evaluation.
MIS Programme/Analyst	Develops software programs needed for merging categorical data from different sources Creates customized data sets for analysis purposes and does data analysis under the supervision of the program evaluator.
Data Collections Staff	Carries out the actual collection of information required by the research approach and methodology.

Chart 5.7
Additional Evaluation Specialists

Type of Specialist	Examples of Specialist Activities
Evaluation Researcher specializing in evaluability assessment	Determines the feasibility of carrying out different kinds of program evaluations, given users' evaluation needs.
Research design specialist	Advises a program evaluator on the most appropriate and efficient strategies for data collection and analysis.
Sampling specialist	Advises program evaluator on sampling strategies to ensure maximum validity and reliability of information collected
Survey research specialist	Advises on the construction of interviews and questionnaires. Assists in implementation of phone, mail, or in-person surveys of participants, employers and others Trains and supervises interviewers
Applied social statistician	Advises on appropriate and efficient methods for statistical analysis of data in order to obtain valid information.
Public information staffer	Assists in promotion of evaluation effort, developing informational materials and/or funding solicitations. Assists in packaging and dissemination of final reports.

At first glance, the specialized staffing needs listed in charts 5.6 and 5.7 may seem formidable. The list is offered, however, to suggest the kinds of special advice that may be needed to sustain the technical competency and ultimate utility of an evaluation. The experts listed in the second chart are necessary only if the evaluation questions present

special research challenges to which the core staff cannot adequately respond. Alternatively, a small core research staff can be constructed to include people with such specialized skills, reducing the cost of contracting out for such expertise.

There are two major staffing configurations for carrying out evaluation: in-house staffing and outside consultant staffing. Each has its benefits and drawbacks, which will be more or less pronounced depending on the particular evaluation context.

In-House Staffing and the Use of Consultants

Some states and SDAs can meet the JTPA evaluation challenge through creative in-house approaches. Although many SDAs or their CETA predecessors have not conducted comprehensive evaluations of their employment and training programs, they often have access to untapped resources sufficient for such an undertaking. In larger organizations, although requisite staff are scattered throughout JTPA or local government systems, these resources can be drawn together as a special interagency evaluation team, or loosely coordinated as an in-house consultant panel.

Certainly, cost is one of the most compelling arguments for seeking in-house expertise. However, in certain settings such an approach may involve many *hidden* outlays that must be entered in the overall calculation in deciding which staffing strategy to pursue. To locate and involve special evaluation staff may require significant organizational effort. Division or agency heads are likely to be skeptical and resistant to loaning personnel, underscoring what has been said earlier about the importance of building broad organizational support for evaluation. Moreover, pooling in-house staff resources requires extra management staff to bridge the communication and coordination gaps that arise.Finally, inefficiencies associated with less experienced and less specialized evaluation staff attempting to negotiate a learning curve are time-consuming and expensive.

Cutting corners on evaluation specialists may cost the organization more than the fee that would have originally been spent on consultants. Where in-house evaluation staff lacks requisite technical expertise, the

great risk is that the information obtained will lack sufficient reliability or validity, and the findings will be of diminished value. Another danger in using in-house evaluators may be lower credibility for evaluation results.

On the other hand, the in-house approach to evaluation carries with it some potentially important benefits:

1. Staff familiarity with the organizational setting, data collection systems, staff capabilities, time schedules, program procedures, etc.
2. Fewer entry problems for evaluation staff, more rapport with program staff, greater receptivity to programmatic needs of staff.
3. Potential cost savings through closer monitoring and control of the work in progress.
4. Opportunities to foster inter- and intra-agency communication.
5. Capacity-building for further evaluation efforts.
6. Flexibility in reassigning noncontract evaluation staff to evolving tasks.

In-house staffers also help maintain the momentum of a user-centered evaluation. If they become involved and invested in evaluation in the early planning stage, they may be more committed to facilitating or encouraging the active use of the results. Critics of the in-house approach argue that even if these resources are available, some important *potential* benefits offered by outside consultants should not be overlooked. These potential benefits include:

1. Greater credibility with evaluation users, particularly funders.
2. Separation from the organization, which allows for greater objectivity and fairness (actual or perceived).
3. More acceptance from program staff who feel less threatened.
4. Greater assurances of a quality product produced by an experienced specialist.
5. Ability to allow staffing levels to fluctuate in response to varying resource needs.

Outside evaluations may be most appropriate where organizational tensions or mistrust call for an evaluation with maximum separation from the JTPA system. For example, outside consultants may provide greater credibility when the evaluation calls for a more subjective

assessment of process or implementation factors. In such a case, service providers, SDA staff, and other stake-holders may more easily trust and accept the interpretive evaluation results of an outsider.

Compromise Staffing Strategies

A compromise staffing strategy involves the judicious use of consultants at critical planning and implementation junctures of the evaluation, where expertise is most needed. For example, a consultant might be brought in solely to assess the *evaluability* of a program or to develop the *evaluation design*, which others may carry out. A consultant can contribute by performing those tasks most associated with objective judgment: the research design, the data analysis, and the evaluation report. Alternatively, a consultant's role might be strictly advisory, limited to reviewing and commenting on the in-house evaluation work in progress. In this manner, quality control can be assured, while consultants' fees are contained. When a formal review is conducted by a completely independent party, the process is considered an *evaluation audit*.

An evaluation audit by an independent third party serves several functions. An auditor can formally review and critique the evaluation plan as well as the implementation procedures and the final evaluation report. By reviewing the plan before evaluation commences, the auditor can spot problems, gaps, and weaknesses in the plan and suggest changes to improve the scientific soundness, the organizational effectiveness, or the efficiency of the evaluation.

Using an outside evaluation auditor improves the utility and appropriateness of the evaluation, and enhances the credibility of an effort planned and executed by in-house staff. Because the use of an auditor offers many of the protections of contracting-out, at reduced cost, it is an attractive staffing alternative.

Conclusion

Technical concerns about planning and implementing an evaluation often overshadow organizational issues, but organizational factors can

tremendously influence the evaluation process and the ultimate useful-
ness of the evaluation results. In a user-centered approach to this
planning, the organizational context is the primary focus for all evalu-
ation planning activities. This context defines who the key users of the
evaluation will be and how the evaluation must be generally molded to
meet their information and other program-related needs. Users and their
needs drive the evaluation from preliminary planning to ultimate dis-
semination of results.

Organizational planning to support evaluation also places importance
on defining and engaging additional key actors, such as program staff,
research staff, computer and data technicians, and evaluation funders, to
work with one another in a coordinated fashion. The collaborative
involvement of all participants in the planning process is important on
many levels. Collaboration on evaluation creates new communication
pathways across traditional organizational divisions and helps overcome
organizational isolation. It fosters cross-fertilization of ideas regarding
what is important to study in a program and how best to undertake this
effort. Collaboration encourages greater organizational support for
researchers so they can better protect and enhance the technical compe-
tence and reliability of the evaluation results. By the same token, this
approach sensitizes researchers to user perspectives at all levels, ensur-
ing that the research approach selected truly reflects users' needs.

The evaluation planning process requires the planner to play a particu-
larly strong, proactive role in creating organizational support. In addi-
tion to identifying potential users and other key actors, the planner
develops strategies for maintaining their involvement and interest. He or
she may have to market the evaluation actively both inside and outside
of the immediate organization and help potential users create new and
mutually beneficial partnerships in support of evaluation. The planner
may be an organizational ground-breaker in developing new communi-
cation and coordination links to facilitate evaluation implementation and
dissemination. And finally, the planner may have to assist in or direct a
creative search for new evaluation resources.

Proactive planning translates into a special challenge for those in-
volved in the process. Bringing together people from different perspec-

tives and experiences to play new roles and perform new tasks entails a degree of uncertainty and risk-taking for everyone. In openly recognizing this challenge, the evaluation planner takes the first step in incorporating the organizational context into the evaluation planning process.

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