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Judy Savageau and Terri Anderson on Strategies for Strategic Planning to Improve Evaluation

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Et al.

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Our names are **Judy Savageau** and **Terri Anderson**. Judy is Associate Professor of Family Medicine and Community Health at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Terri is Director for Evaluation in the University of Massachusetts Medical School Commonwealth Medicine Center for Health Policy and Research.

Founded in 1999, Commonwealth Medicine's mission is to apply knowledge to improve health outcomes for those served by public health and human service programs. To support that mission, the Center for Health Policy and Research's Research and Evaluation Unit (Unit) conducts applied research and evaluation studies on health interventions and policies.

Recently the Unit established a strategic planning group to focus on standards for its evaluation report products, adopting numerous strategies outlined in several Robert Wood Johnson Foundation documents and peer-reviewed evaluation publications.

Hot Tip: The Unit also recently implemented an evaluation journal club as a means of collectively reviewing with research collaborators such topics as guiding principles for program evaluation, ethical considerations, methodologic and analytic design options, and stakeholder advocacy. We suggest this combination of resources for evaluators working with health service agencies.

Hot Tip: There are often many and varied audiences to which evaluation reports are disseminated. Similarly, there are numerous program evaluation designs employed as well as those with mixed methodologies. The program evaluation design and the intended audience(s) for dissemination of findings, coupled with a desire to bring a rigorous academic focus to the work and its outputs, requires a set of principles and standards for a formalized internal review process which will increase the likelihood of publication as well as improve the marketability of the evaluation team.

Rad Resources: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) has developed a series of reports as a guide to aid evaluators from beginning their assessment of programs (e.g., A Practice Guide for Engaging Stakeholders in Developing Evaluation Questions) to writing up results for dissemination (e.g., A Checklist for Evaluators). This RWJF series and links to its easy-to-read and easy-to-implement individual reports can be found at <http://www.rwjf.org/pr/product.jsp?id=52588>.

In addition, numerous peer-reviewed articles have outlined common pitfalls and recommendations in developing evaluation criteria for research in health care settings (e.g., Cohen and Crabtree. Evaluative Criteria for Qualitative Research in Health Care: Controversies and Recommendation. *Ann Fam Med* 2008;6:331-339).