

MODUL 5

Evaluating Impact and Mainstreaming Innovation

Unit 5.2

Participatory, Collaborative and Empowerment Evaluation Approach

Learning aims

- Gain an understanding of different types of impact participatory evaluation and the differences between them.
- Learn about different participatory approaches in the evaluation process and when to use which.
- Gain knowledge on ways to understand and appreciate different cultures and customs during the evaluation process.

Content

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5.2.1 Types and characteristics of participatory, collaborative and empowerment evaluation

Employing participatory, collaborative, and empowering approaches to evaluation is particularly beneficial in Learning and Innovation Labs, which consider social innovation to be the integration of processes that result in changing social relationships.

5.2.1.1 Participatory evaluation

Participatory evaluation involves the stakeholders and service users of a program or project in the collective examination and assessment of that program or project. It is people-centered: project stakeholders and service users are the key actors of the evaluation process and not the mere objects of the evaluation. The participatory evaluation helps build capacities of stakeholders to reflect, analyse and take action and it can be done at any point of implementation of the project. As a result of the active involvement of stakeholders in reflection, assessment and action, a sense of ownership is created, capacities are built, service users are empowered and lessons learned are applied both in the field and at the program level, increasing effectiveness. In participatory evaluation, stakeholders and service users are involved in all steps of evaluation: evaluation planning, implementation, and reporting through the participation of stakeholders in defining the evaluation questions, collecting and analyzing the data, and drafting and reviewing the report (Morra Imas & Rist, 2009).

Three important elements of participatory evaluation include:

- **Evaluation as a learning tool** – evaluation is understood as a process in which opportunities are created for all stakeholders to learn from their roles.
- **Evaluation as a part of the development process** – the results of the evaluation are used as tools for change and not historical reports.
- **Evaluation as a partnership and shared responsibility** – everyone included in the evaluation process has equal power – evaluator, project stakeholders and donors are all participants in the process.

Box 5.2.1 Principles of participatory evaluation

- The evaluation process involves participants' skills in goal setting, establishing priorities, selecting questions, analyzing data, and making decisions on the data.
- Participants own (commit to) the evaluation, making decisions and drawing their own conclusions.
- Participants ensure that the evaluation focuses on methods and results they consider important.
- People work together, facilitating and promoting group unity.
- All aspects of the evaluation are understandable and meaningful to participants.
- Self-accountability is highly valued.
- Facilitators act as resources for learning; participants act as decision-makers and evaluators.

Source: BETTER EVALUATION (2023). *Participatory evaluation*.
<https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/participatory-evaluation>

The participatory evaluation approach is receiving increased attention in the development context. It is being used more often for development projects, especially community-based initiatives. Participatory evaluation is another step in the move away from the model of independent evaluation or evaluator as an expert. Planning decisions, such as identifying the questions, measures, and data collection strategies, are made together with participants. It is a joint process rather than a traditional top-down process (see Table 5.2.1). The participatory approach usually increases the credibility of the evaluation results in the eyes of program staff, as well as the likelihood that the results will be used. Advocates of participatory evaluation see it as a tool for empowering participants and increasing local capacity for engaging in the development process.

Table 5.2.1: Participatory evaluation vs. Traditional evaluation

Participatory	Traditional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant focus and ownership • Focus on learning • Flexible design • More informal methods • Outsiders as facilitators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donor focus and ownership • Focus on accountability and judgment • Predetermined design • Formal methods • Outsiders as evaluators

Source: COMMUNITY TOOL BOX. Section 6. *Participatory evaluation*.
<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/evaluate/evaluation/participatory-evaluation/main>

However, using participatory evaluation does come with risks. Here are some tips to ensure the process is adequate:

- Participatory evaluation poses considerable challenges – regular meetings and making sure everyone is on the same page takes time and effort, as well as considerable skill in maintaining a healthy group dynamic.
- There may be a challenge in creating an egalitarian team consisting of members who have different positions in the community, which can create challenges among team members and dominance of some, and under representativeness of those who usually are underrepresented. The evaluator wanting to conduct a participatory evaluation must have facilitation, collaboration, and conflict management skills.
- There is always a chance that the evaluation will not be objective, as it is performed with the active participation of involved stakeholders in every step of the evaluation. There is a risk that those closest to the intervention may not be able to see what is actually happening if it is not what they expect to see. The evaluation may indeed become “captured” and lose objectivity. Participants may be fearful of raising negative views because they fear that others in the group may exclude them or the intervention will be terminated, resulting in loss of money for the community, or that they will never get the development organization to work with them again.

Approaching participatory evaluations from a *learning perspective* may help in reducing these fears. Reflecting and challenging the “loss of objectivity” by the evaluator in the team meetings can reduce the negative effects of this process. It is important to nurture an

environment of support and freedom of expression from the very beginning of the evaluation process so that everyone feels comfortable sharing their views, if not with the group, then with the evaluator himself/herself. Participatory evaluation is at the base of both inclusive and empowerment evaluation (similarities and differences summarized in Table 5.2.2).

Useful resources

- BETTER EVALUATION (2023). *Participatory evaluation*. <https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/participatory-evaluation>
- EVAL PARTICIPATIVA. Participatory evaluation guides and manuals. <https://evalparticipativa.net/en/resources/participatory-evaluation-guides-and-manuals/>
- Gujit, I. (2014). *Methodological Briefs: Impact Evaluation No. 5 Participatory Approaches*. UNICEF. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/methodological-briefs-impact-evaluation-no-5-participatory-approaches>
- USAID. *Guidance note: participatory evaluation Locally Led Approaches to Evaluation*. https://usaidlearninglab.org/system/files/2022-05/participatory_evaluation_for_lld_1.pdf

5.2.1.2 Inclusive evaluation

Inclusive evaluation focuses on involving the least advantaged members of a population as part of a systematic investigation on the usefulness and success of a project, program, or policy. It is based on data which are generated from the least advantaged stakeholders who are usually underrepresented. An inclusive evaluation would ask questions such as the following:

- What are the important differences within the population to be served?
- How are services delivered within different subgroups?
- What are the values underlying the distribution of services?

By involving marginalized groups and vulnerable communities directly in our evaluation, we can better understand and meet their needs. Their inputs and perspectives can also then be fed into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs and policies. Inclusive evaluation, in short, amplifies the voices of the marginalized, provides for more comprehensive and representative findings, and better-aligned recommendations.

However, using this method, while it can provide many different perspectives, does have challenges (*see Box 5.2.2*). It is important to keep these challenges in mind from the moment you start to plan evaluation if this is the approach you want to take.

Box 5.2.2 Challenges to keep in mind when implementing inclusive evaluation

- **Treating vulnerable and marginalized groups as homogeneous:** Gender mainstreaming overlooks the differences between different groups of women, and the unique needs of for example, displaced women, widowed women, women with disabilities, minorities and Indigenous women.
- **Inadequate resources:** Marginalized groups can be harder and more costly to reach and evaluate. Often, target groups are located in remote areas that are unsafe and difficult to reach, compromising the inclusivity of data collection. When budgets are tight, data collection processes may favour reaching more easily accessible groups.
- **Perpetuation of Eurocentric research methods:** While some progress has been made in decolonizing research and challenging Eurocentric research methodologies, there has been less progress in the evaluation sector, since those who receive funding for development and human rights interventions tend to be accountable to Northern donors. Additionally, evaluations often use generic frameworks that are not context-specific.
- **Power dynamics between the Global North and South:** Research methodologies and evaluations are disproportionately shaped by the Global North since the region dominates the development space with its disproportionate financial resources and power. Evaluators, like consultants and other ‘experts’, are often sourced by donors, and there is an assumption that practitioners from the Global South are ‘recipients’ rather than ‘implementers of programs’. Many professionals in the evaluation sector are far removed from the contexts and cultures they are evaluating, and often do not – or cannot – recognise structural barriers and issues of power. These dynamics leave project ‘beneficiaries’ and rural networks on the periphery of the evaluation process.
- **Insufficient uptake of evaluation results:** Evaluation results are often shared only with funders and programmers, and are not cascaded into the communities being evaluated. This is a missed opportunity since it limits the ability of target communities to fully comprehend internal trends and take appropriate action. These power dynamics need to change to ensure that evaluation is fully comprehensive, inclusive and participatory.

Source: INCLUDOVATE. *Inclusive Evaluation*.
<https://www.includovate.com/inclusive-evaluation/>

Useful resources

- BETTER EVALUATION. Jane Davidson, J., Macfarlan, A., Rogers, P., Rowe, A. and Stevens, K. (2023). *Sustainability-inclusive evaluation: Why we need it and how to do it A Footprint Evaluation Guide*.
<https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/Sustainability->

[inclusive-evaluation-Why-we-need-it-and-how-to-do-it-Footprint-Evaluation-Initiative-v1-1.pdf](#)

- INCLUDOVATE. *Inclusive Evaluation*.
<https://www.includovate.com/inclusive-evaluation/>
- UNODC (2003). *Guidance note for Evaluators: Inclusive Evaluation*.
https://www.unodc.org/documents/evaluation/HumanRights-GenderEquality/Guidance_Note_for_Evaluators_Inclusive_Evaluations.pdf

5.2.1.3 Empowerment evaluation

In **empowerment evaluation**, the stakeholders are involved in a way that provides them with the tools and knowledge they need to monitor and evaluate their own performance and accomplish their goals. Empowerment evaluation was developed to overcome practitioner concerns about the independent evaluation structure, whereby an organization hires an external evaluator to evaluate the organization’s strategies, often impedes the use of evaluation findings for strategy improvement and the building of the organization’s evaluation capacity.

Specifically, practitioners have been concerned that under an independent evaluation structure, stakeholders are not adequately engaged in the overall evaluation process and evaluation reports are submitted too late (i.e., often after funding ends) to inform strategy and organizational improvement. Empowerment evaluation attempts to reduce or eliminate these concerns by introducing a different type of evaluation structure that has an empowerment evaluator providing training, technical assistance and tools to organizational stakeholders in how to conduct their own evaluations and improve their organization’s evaluation capacity (Paton, 2017).

Empowerment evaluation focuses on fostering self-determination and sustainability. It is particularly suited to the evaluation of comprehensive community–based initiatives or place-based initiatives. In addition, it is inevitably bound to the pursuit of social justice. It is usually applied along two streams: practical and transformative. Practical is designed to enhance program productivity and performance and is controlled by program staff, participants and community members. Transformative stream highlights the political, social and psychological power in which people learn how to take greater control of their own resources leaving the traditional roles and organizational structures.

Table 5.2.2: Similarities and differences between participatory, inclusive and empowering evaluation

	Participatory evaluation	Inclusive evaluation	Empowering evaluation
Including different stakeholders	√	√	√
Including least advantaged service users in evaluation		√	
Used when project involves different levels of vulnerabilities of service users		√	
Giving tools to stakeholders to evaluate their own projects effectively			√
Can be done at any point of implementation of the project	√		

Creating sense of ownership and active participation of all involved	√	√	√
Stakeholders and service users are involved in planning, implementing and analyzing	√		

The three evaluation approaches are complementary and usually used together, but adapted to the needs of individual projects.

Useful resources

- EVAL COMMUNITY. *Empowerment Evaluation Theory: Key Principles and Applications*. <https://www.evalcommunity.com/career-center/empowerment-evaluation-theory/>
- Patton, Michael Quinn. "Empowerment evaluation: Exemplary is its openness to dialogue, reflective practice, and process use." *Evaluation and program planning* 63 (2017): 139-140. <https://www.includovate.com/inclusive-evaluation/>

5.2.1.4 Self-evaluation

During the project evaluation, it is also important to remember to do a regular self-evaluation, which is usually described as a permanent, internal evaluation process involving staff at all levels or stakeholders and service users to generate information that can inform decision-making. Self-evaluation is the ideal type of evaluation to answer questions such as (*see also Box 5.2.3*):

- Did we achieve the expected results?
- What are the change processes in our project?
- How is the interaction? Is the distribution of tasks and responsibilities clear enough?

5.2.3 Self-Evaluation Example Questions

To guide Lab staff in their self-assessment journey, provide attentive, open-ended questions that prompt meaningful reflections.

Personal accomplishments and contributions

- Describe a significant achievement from the past year and how it positively impacted the Lab team.
- Discuss a challenge you encountered and how you overcame it.

Strengths and areas for growth

- What do you consider your most valuable skills and strengths in your role?
- Identify one or two areas where you believe you can improve and how you plan to work on them.

Alignment with Lab goals

- How do you believe your work aligns with the Lab's overall objectives?
- Provide examples of how your contributions supported the Lab's mission.

Adapted from: OMNI; Breton, K. (2023). Strategies for Effectively Structuring Self-Evaluation Conversations

It is useful for simple projects and also contributes to improving the general functioning of complex programs (on multiple levels, with multiple partners). It can contribute to a better clarification of mutual expectations, own needs, mutual understanding, respect for the sphere of responsibility of others, own needs and ways of dealing with problems. Self-evaluation and external/independent evaluation are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. Strict boundaries between these two types are not always possible: aspects of self-evaluation can be found in external evaluation and external parts can be necessary in self-evaluation. In each type of evaluation, the focus can be on accountability (summary) or on learning and improvement (formative). In practice, a balance between learning and responsibility is required.

Useful resources

Lusthaus, C., Adrien, M., Anderson, G. and Garden, F. (1999). *Enhancing Organizational Performance: a toolbox for self-assessment*. International Development Research Centre. <file:///D:/Downloads/IDL-22953.pdf>

5.2.2 Participatory approaches to evaluation

5.2.2.1 Outcome Harvesting

Outcome Harvesting collects (“harvests”) evidence of what has changed (“outcomes”) and, then, working backward, determines whether and how an intervention has contributed to these changes. Outcome harvesting is a good method for evaluating Innovation as it is meant for those situations when it is not possible to define concretely most of what an intervention aims to achieve, or even, what specific actions will be taken over a multi-year period. This approach consists of evaluators, program managers, staff and donors identifying, formulating, verifying, analysing and interpreting outcomes in contexts where relations of cause and effects are not clear. The outcome(s) can be positive or negative, intended or unintended, direct or indirect, but the connection between the intervention and the outcomes should be plausible. Outcome Harvesting is usually done through 6 steps (Tapella et al, 2022):

1. **Design the outcome harvest.** Identify the users of the harvest and questions to guide the harvest, such as: **what** has been the collective effect of grantees on making the national governance regime more democratic and **what does it mean** for the portfolio’s strategy?
2. **Review documentation and draft outcome descriptions.** Potential outcomes are defined from reports, previous evaluations and other documentation and what interventions contributed to changes.
3. **Engage with informants in formulating outcome descriptions.** Harvesters engage with informants to review outcome descriptions identified in the second phase.
4. **Substantiate.** Harvest users and harvesters review the final outcomes and select those to be verified in order to increase the accuracy and credibility of the findings.
5. **Analyse and interpret.** Harvesters classify all outcomes in consultation with informants, deriving them from questions, objectives and strategies of implementer or donor.
6. **Support use of findings.** Harvesters propose issues for discussion to harvest users grounded in the evidence-based answers to the harvesting questions and facilitate discussions with users, which may include how they can make use of the findings.

At the most basic level, Outcome Harvesting documents a change in a social actor. Sometimes it is enough to discover **who** changed **what**, **when** and **where** it was changed, and **how** the change agent contributed to the outcome. At other times, **it may be** essential to describe the outcome's significance. It may be useful to include other dimensions such as the history, context, contribution of other social actors, and emerging evidence of impact on people's lives or the state of the environment. Regardless of what is being collected, it is important that harvest users and harvesters agree on the detail required: Will a simple description suffice or should each dimension be explained? Will one or two sentences be enough or are several paragraphs required to describe each dimension? Data may be collected from the social actors influenced as well as from document reviews. Initially, however, the gleaning of data begins with program documents and program staff. Some useful tips in harvesting outcomes include:

- **Focus on pertinent data:** The Outcome Harvesting process reverses the logic of conventional monitoring and evaluation. Rather than tracking activities and outputs to see whether they are generating results as planned, harvesters first identify outcomes, whether planned or not, and then determine how the change agent contributed. To establish contribution – indirect or direct, partial or whole, intended or not – beyond a reasonable doubt, the harvester uses three mechanisms: reported observations (reports, case studies), direct critical observations (what is seen in writing, heard during telephone conversations, or observed during a field visit), and direct and simple inductive inference (i.e., insider information given to a journalist that creates international pressure)
- **Choose data sources to ensure credibility:** the best sources of data are those that are authentic, reliable, and believable. The best informants are those with the most intimate knowledge of what changed and how it changed – the change agents.
- **Collect data as frequently as needed.** Outcome Harvesting is done as often as necessary to understand what the change agent is achieving; the frequency depends on the predictability of the time required to bring about desired changes.

Box 5.2.4 Outcome harvesting in evaluating Innovation LABs

- **The focus is primarily on outcomes rather than activities.** Outcome Harvesting is designed for situations where decision-makers (“harvest users”) are most interested in learning about what was achieved and how. Emphasis is on effectiveness rather than efficiency or performance, and when the aim is to understand the process of change and how each outcome contributes.
- **The programming context is complex.** Outcome Harvesting is suitable for programming contexts where relations of cause and effect are not fully understood. In complex environments, objectives and the paths to achieve them are largely unpredictable and predefined objectives and theories of change must be modified over time to respond to changes in the context. Outcome Harvesting is particularly suitable to assess social change interventions or innovation and development work.
- **The purpose is evaluation.** Outcome Harvesting can serve to track the changes in behaviour of social actors influenced by an intervention. However, it is designed to go beyond this and support learning about those achievements. Thus, Outcome Harvesting is particularly useful for on-going developmental, mid-term formative, and end-of-term summative evaluations. It can be used by itself or in combination with other approaches.

Useful resource

- INTRAC (2017). *Outcome Harvesting*. <https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Outcome->

5.2.2.2 Most significant change (MSC)

Most significant change (MSC) is a form of participatory evaluation that involves the collection of significant change stories emanating from the field level, and the systematic selection of the most significant of these stories by panels of designated stakeholders or staff. MSC generally involves introducing a range of stakeholders to MSC and fostering interest and commitment to participate. Then it is crucial to identify the domains of change to be monitored and to decide how frequently to monitor changes taking place in these domains (Davies and Dart, 2004).

Using MSC involves several steps:

1. **Deciding the types of stories and domains of change** that should be collected (identify with stakeholders some domains of change – typically between three and five – that will be evaluated. Domains are broad areas where change might be expected to occur for example, changes in the quality of service users’ lives, changes in the sustainability of people’s organisations and activities and changes in changes in the nature of people’s participation in development activities.
2. **Identify how and when the stories will be collected and decide on the methods** that will be used to identify, record, discuss, select and analyse the stories.
3. **Collecting and analysing the stories.** In collecting process include information such as: who provided the story; when and where the change happened; and what the story teller believes is the significance of the events described in the story, including the stories with negative and positive changes. There are many different ways to analyse and describe the range of changes or themes contained in a set of significant change stories (by thematic coding, analysing positive and negative changes, by using a hierarchy of expected outcomes - i.e. a program logic model, analysing the activities or groups mentioned in stories, etc.
4. **Select the most significant stories** of change within each domain and target group, community or programme level. Process used to select the stories has to be open and transparent, and every time stories are selected the criteria used to select them, and an explanation of the decision, should also be recorded and fed back to all interested stakeholders.
5. **Verification and sharing of stories.** Verification of stories includes checking selected stories for accuracy before being used or passed on to the next level of the hierarchy. It might also be useful to gather further information to close gaps in the stories or provide better explanations of the changes recorded. Finally, sharing the stories and discussing values with stakeholders and contributors so that learning happens about what is valued.

Significant change stories are collected from those most directly involved, such as participants and field staff. The stories are collected by asking simple questions:

- During the last month, in your opinion, what was the most significant change in (particular domain of change)?

- From among all these significant changes, what do you think was the most significant change of all?

It is initially up to respondents to allocate their stories to a domain category. In addition to this, respondents are encouraged to report why they consider a particular change to be the most significant one. The stories are then analyzed and filtered up through the levels of authority typically found within an organization or program. Every time stories are selected, the criteria used to select them are recorded and given back to all interested stakeholders, so that each subsequent round of story collection and selection is informed by feedback from previous rounds. The organisation is effectively recording and adjusting the direction of its attention – and the criteria it uses for valuing the events it sees there.

Most significant change as evaluative approach generates knowledge and facilitates improvement through:

- notifying unexpected outcomes
- encouraging and making constructive use of a diversity of views
- enabling broad participation
- putting events in context

MSC is particularly useful when you need different stakeholders to understand the different values other stakeholders have regarding "what success looks like" - criteria and standards for outcomes, processes and the distribution of costs and benefits. MSC can be very helpful in explaining **how** change comes about (processes and causal mechanisms) and **when** (in what situations and contexts). Therefore, it can be useful to support the development of programme theory (theory of change, logic models).

MSC is not a quick method. It takes time and an appropriate project infrastructure to generate understanding and value clarification (identifying what people think is important). The full MSC process involves analysis of stories and sharing with both contributors and stakeholders, which requires a programme with several structures in it (for example, local, regional and national project structures) and it needs to be repeated through several cycles. If you imagine a normal distribution of outcomes for individuals then the stories often come from the extremity of positive change. It can be useful to explicitly add a process to generate and collect stories from the extremity of little or negative change.

Useful resources

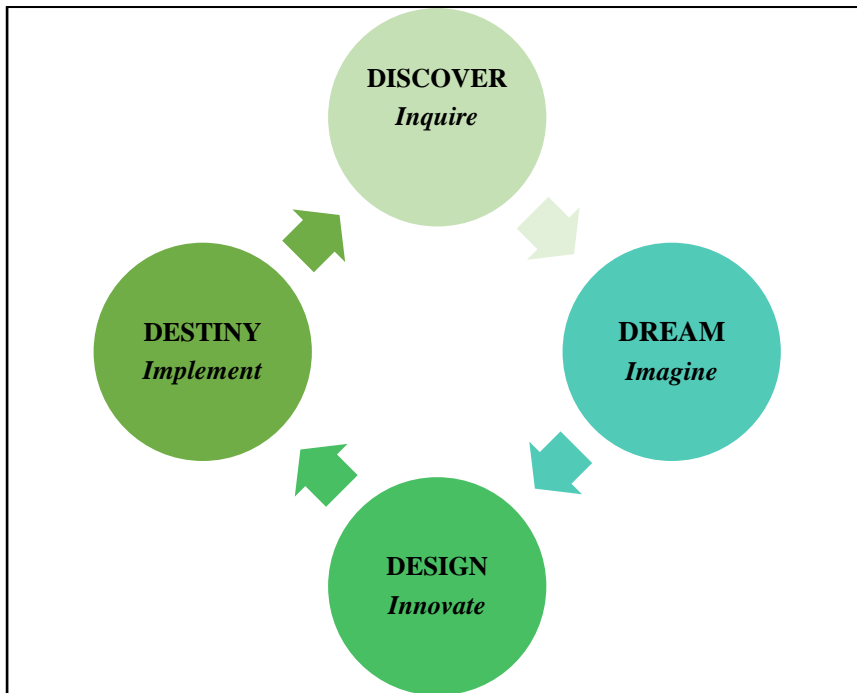
- BETTER EVALUATION. *Most significant change*. <https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/most-significant-change>
- INTRAC (2017). *Most significant change*. <https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Most-significant-change.pdf>
- Davies, R. and Dart, J. (2004). *The 'Most significant change' (MSC) Technique*. Clear Horizon. <https://www.mande.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2005/MSCGuide.pdf>
- Davies, R. & Dart, J. (2004). *The 'Most significant change' (MSC) Technique*. Clear Horizon. <https://www.mande.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2005/MSCGuide.pdf>

5.2.2.3 Appreciative inquiry (AI)

This is a participatory form of inquiry which puts a different focus on how information is collected, analysed and used. It deliberately focuses on what is working well and how can things be made even better, and not on problems and challenges. A key principle of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is that the act of asking a question influences the direction of change. This is because the question (and the way in which it is asked) prompts those contributing information to anticipate a future state (Acosta and Douthwaite, 2005; Preskill, 2007). Within social development, Appreciative Inquiry is most often associated with the 4-D model which includes Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny, or alternatively 4-I model: Inquire, Imagine, Innovate and Implement (*see Diagram 5.2.2*).

- **Discover – Inquire.** In this phase positive stories are identified and recorded, and then used to build a positive picture around a particular topic and involves identifying processes that worked well. The purpose of this phase is to shift attention from challenges and problems to what is working and could work in the future. Methods used in this phase are interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires. Appreciative Inquiry generally means asking questions in a positive way; for example, asking stakeholders what they most value about themselves, their work and their organisation, or what achievement they are most proud of.
- **Dream – Imagine.** The dream phase encourages groups of stakeholders collaboratively to consider what they think their organisation, project, program or partnership is being called upon to do. In this phase, methods of workshops or large group meetings are used in order to share stories collected in the previous phase. These stories are now shared and discussed encouraging stakeholders to imagine what could be done in the future and not to focus on narrow boundaries of what an organization, project or partnership is doing.
- **Design – Innovate.** The design phase encourages stakeholders to come together to create a path towards achieving the dream through putting together what are called ‘provocative propositions’ - ambitious objectives designed to challenge common assumptions or routines. These represent real possibilities for an organisation, project, programme or partnership. The provocative propositions are usually accompanied by the beginnings of strategies designed to help realize the objectives.
- **Destiny – Implement.** This phase is sometimes known as the delivery phase and focuses on action planning at organisational, project/programme and individual levels. Small groups are encouraged to work on areas that require collaboration, and teams may be established for new initiatives. Commitments are made to help ensure the agreed provocative propositions are realized and a set of action plans is designed in order to fulfil the objectives. The destiny phase is ultimately about putting learning into action in order to bring about desired change.

Diagram 5.2.2: Model of Appreciative Inquiry



In application of appreciative inquiry in evaluation, it is vital to develop interview guides and surveys by using the Discover (Inquire) and Dream (Imagine) phases in designing and redesigning existing instruments, by adding one or more AI questions to an existing instrument, or by developing a fully appreciative instrument.

Box 5.2.5 Examples of AI questions

Peak Experiences

In your work here, you have probably experienced ups and downs, some high points and low points. Think about a time that stands out to you as a high point- a time when you felt most involved, most effective, most engaged. It might have been recently or some time ago.

- What was going on?
- Who were the significant people involved?
- What were the most important factors in your Lab that helped to make it a high-point experience? (e.g., leadership qualities, rewards, structure, relationships, skills, etc.)

Values

- What aspect of your work do you value most?
- Describe one outstanding or successful achievement or contribution of which you are particularly proud.
- What unique skills or qualities did you draw on to achieve this result?
- What organizational factors helped you to create or support your achievement?

Wishes

- What are three things we do best that you would like to see your Lab keep or continue doing – even as things change in the future?
- What three wishes would you make to heighten the vitality and health of

your Lab?

Adapted from: BETTER EVALUATION. Preskill, H. (2007). *Using Appreciative Inquiry in Evaluation Practice*.
https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/Preskill_Using_Appreciative.pdf

Several characteristics of AI differentiate it from other evaluation processes:

- The change process begins with interviews in which participants reflect on their positive experiences and discover their own capacity to make a difference. For some, the AI interview may be the first time anyone has asked about their unique contributions, and being allowed to voice these can have a notable empowering effect. Sharing the stories that emerge from the interviews builds appreciation for the value and potential to contribute that is inherent in all human resources.
- Accumulating positive stories has the effect of changing the grand narrative or self-image of a system.
- The dream (imagine) phase raises the sights of the system by enabling it to see the significant contributions and achievements it is uniquely capable of making.
- The most powerful seeds of change are contained in stakeholders' ownership of the dream and provocative propositions. If stakeholders buy into the dream and design statements, they will organize themselves and build change into their agendas, above and beyond other formally planned actions or large-scale interventions.

Box 5.2.6 Implementing appreciative inquiry in your Lab

Discover (Inquire) - Identifying the “best of what is”

- Paired interviews
- Core questions: Best or peak experience; Values; Wishes
- Share stories in groups of 6-8
- Identify themes

Dream (Imagine) – Identifying images of a desirable future

- Small groups envision a possible future state
- What will the Lab/ program/organization look like 3, 5, 10 years from now?
- Visions shared in words and/or visual images
- Groups share their visions and images
- Discussion of themes

Design (Innovate) – Translating the vision into actionable statements

- Develop provocative propositions for themes from stories and visions
- Stretch the imagination, go beyond the obvious
- Represent the Labs' social architecture (culture, leadership, policies, business processes, communication systems, strategy, relationships, structure)
- State it in the affirmative and present tense

Destiny (Implement) – Making the provocative propositions become reality

- Participants select those propositions they wish to work on
- Monitor, evaluate, and celebrate progress
- Keep the conversation going

Adapted from: BETTER EVALUATION. Preskill, H. (2007). Using Appreciative Inquiry in Evaluation Practice.
https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/Preskill_Using_Appreciative.pdf

Appreciative Inquiry can be successfully applied to Lab evaluation when:

- The Lab is interested in using participatory and collaborative evaluation approaches.
- There is a desire to build evaluation capacity.
- The evaluation includes a wide range of stakeholders.
- There is limited time and resources for conducting the evaluation.
- The Lab values innovation and creativity.
- The Lab wants to use evaluation findings to guide its change efforts.

AI makes system change processes remarkably easier compared to traditional processes. Innovation emerges by fostering both continuity and transition from the best of the past and present into the future. The vision sells itself because it emerges from the collective aspirations of the system's members. The principle of self-organization allows individual members of the system to sign up for the things they care most about. The energy and excitement generated by the process make it difficult for anyone to remain on the sidelines.

Useful resources

- Acosta, A. and Douthwaite, B. (2005). *Appreciative inquiry: An approach for learning and change based on our own best practices.* [ILAC Briefs 52516](https://ideas.repec.org/p/ags/ilacbr/52516.html), Institutional Learning and Change (ILAC) Initiative. <https://ideas.repec.org/p/ags/ilacbr/52516.html>
- BETTER EVALUATION. *Appreciative inquiry.* <https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/appreciative-inquiry>
- ENCOMPASS (2019). *Frequently asked questions on appreciative evaluation.* https://www.encompassworld.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Frequently-Asked-Questions-on-Appreciative-Inquiry-in-Evaluation_2019Jul.pdf

5.2.3 Recognizing the cultural context in evaluation

Planning any evaluation requires mutual trust and respect, and this is not possible without understanding the **local culture and customs**. It is crucial to have in mind the importance of recognizing the cultural context in which program operates and to be sensitive to cultural norms, beliefs, practices and incorporate these in the evaluation process. Respecting the knowledge and experience that participants have will promote long-term trust and involvement without which it will be difficult to do a meaningful evaluation.

It has been shown that usual evaluation practices such as a mixed-method approach, collaboration with stakeholders and a culturally diverse team – albeit critical in such evaluations – do not automatically assume cross-cultural competency. It is possible, for example, for evaluators to engage the wrong leaders in designing the evaluation because they did not fully understand the leadership structure of a particular cultural group; informal influential leaders, are not easily identifiable to the evaluators, and may be left out of the process. While it is impossible to become perfectly competent in another culture, it is possible to gain sufficient competency to work across cultures. Evaluator must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to work with people from different cultures by having an open

mind, not making assumptions and asking the right questions respectfully. Only then can the competency to work across cultures, or cross-cultural competency, become possible.

Box 5.2.7 Questions about culture every evaluator should ask himself/herself:

- Who can help me understand this cultural group and some of its basic norms?
- Who can introduce me and help me gain entry into the group?
- What non-verbal communication and rules of conduct did I observe in this group?
- What have others learned about what it takes to work with this group? What are some of their mistakes I should be careful not to repeat?
- What does this term or concept mean for this cultural group? How can I find out more about its meaning?
- What is the term in this group's language?
- Which professionals can I consult for translation and interpretation?
- Where can I pilot my questions and instruments?

Useful resources

- THE COLORADO TRUST. *The Importance of Culture in Evaluation: A Practical Guide for Evaluators*. <https://communityscience.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/CrossCulturalGuide.r3-1.pdf>
- WORLD BANK GROUP Independent Evaluation Group (2023). *Culturally responsive evaluation: How do different regions approach it?* <https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/blog/culturally-responsive-evaluation-how-do-different-regions-approach-it>

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- Acosta, A. and Douthwaite, B. (2005). *Appreciative inquiry: An approach for learning and change based on our own best practices*. *ILAC Briefs* 52516, Institutional Learning and Change (ILAC) Initiative. <https://ideas.repec.org/p/ags/ilacbr/52516.html>
- Davies, R. and Dart, J. (2004). *The 'Most significant change' (MSC) Technique*. Clear Horizon. <https://www.mande.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2005/MSCGuide.pdf>
- Morra Imas, L. G. & Rist, R. C. (2009). *The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations*. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, The World Bank
- Patton, M. Q. (2017). Empowerment evaluation: Exemplary is its openness to dialogue, reflective practice, and process use. *Evaluation and program planning* 63: 139-140. <https://www.includovate.com/inclusive-evaluation/>
- Tapella, E., Rodríguez Bilella, P., Sanz, j. C., Chavez-Tafur, J. and Espinosa Fajardo, J. (2022). *Sowing & harvesting. Participatory evaluation handbook*. DEval, <https://evalparticipativa.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/SOWINGHARVESTING-FINAL-DOBLES-ALTA.pdf>

Quiz

1. In participatory evaluation, key actors of the process are:
 - a. Stakeholders and service users
 - b. Evaluators
 - c. Donors
 - d. All of the above

2. When involving service users in inclusive evaluation, it is important to make the group as homogenous as possible:
 - a. True
 - b. False

3. What are some limitations of traditional evaluation?
 - a. Impartial evaluators
 - b. Inflexible design
 - c. Unbiased external evaluators measuring impact of program on specific outcomes
 - d. Significance/casual relationships shown with statistical analysis

4. The most significant action to take to achieve cross-cultural competency as an evaluator includes?
 - a. Using mixed-methods
 - b. Having a culturally diverse team
 - c. Learn to gain competency to work across cultures
 - d. Assume that the knowledge you already have is enough to work with other cultures

5. Use of evaluation concepts, techniques, and findings to foster improvement and self determination is known as
 - a. Illuminative evaluation
 - b. Empowerment evaluation
 - c. Self evaluation
 - d. Utilization-focused evaluation

6. Example of self-evaluation question is
 - a. How are services delivered within different subgroups?
 - b. How do you believe your work aligns with the program's overall objectives?
 - c. How valuable were the results to service providers, clients, the community and/or organizations involved?
 - d. How satisfied are program users?

7. Participatory evaluation is (choose all that apply)
 - a. Participant focused
 - b. Donor focused
 - c. Flexible in design
 - d. Focused on users satisfaction
 - e. Predetermined in design

8. Participatory evaluation approaches
 - a. Are suitable only for formative evaluation

- b. Are always inclusive
- c. **Focus on partnership and shared responsibility**
- d. Apply only qualitative methods

9. Characteristic of traditional evaluation approach (choose all that apply)

- a. Outsiders as facilitators
- b. **Accountability and judgment**
- c. **Donor ownership**
- d. Focus on learning
- e. Comprehensiveness
- f. Focus on implementation

10. Main characteristic of empowerment evaluation

- a. Preserving traditional roles and structures
- b. **Fostering self-determination and sustainability**
- c. Inclusion of marginalized community groups
- d. Stakeholders and users are involved in planning, implementing and analyzing evaluation data

11. Self-evaluation focus on

- a. Stakeholders and service users participation
- b. **Strengths and areas for growth**
- c. Raising and highlighting negative views
- d. Internal processes

12. In Outcome Harvesting evaluation, harvest is

- a. What has changed
- b. Accountability
- c. Pertinent data
- d. **Evidence collection**
- e. Outputs

13. Appreciative Inquiry

- a. Includes experimental design
- b. Involves participants' skills in establishing priorities.
- c. **Focuses on what is working well and how can things can be better**
- d. Is used when project involves different levels of vulnerabilities of service users

14. Most significant change

- a. Is based on storytelling
- b. Focus on positive stories
- c. **Identify expected and unexpected outcomes and impacts**
- d. Collect data as frequently as needed

15. In outcome harvesting the focus is on:

- a. Activities
- b. Needs
- c. **Outcomes**
- d. Empowerment

16. Appreciative Inquiry

- a. Asks questions in neutral way
- b. Build a positive picture around a particular topic identifying processes
- c. **Enabling a change focusing on what is important**
- d. Focus on outcomes

17. Design phase of Appreciative Inquiry

- a. Encouraging stakeholders to imagine what could be done in the future
- b. Focuses on action planning
- c. Shift attention from challenges and problems to what is working and could work
- d. **Focuses on objectives designed to challenge common assumptions or routines**