Evaluability Assessment

INTRODUCTION

In our first chapter we explored the notion of results-oriented management: management directed at producing demonstrable progress toward a specific set of realistic, measurable, outcome-oriented program objectives. In this chapter we review the development of a powerful, relatively inexpensive tool for evaluation known as *evaluability assessment* (or *exploratory evaluation*). Evaluability assessment answers the question, not whether a program can be evaluated (every program can be evaluated), but whether the program is ready to be managed for results, what changes are needed to allow results-oriented management, and whether evaluation is likely to contribute to improved program performance. Originally developed as a preevaluation approach aimed at determining if programs were ready for useful evaluation, evaluability assessment has emerged as an evaluation tool in its own right.[1]

Evaluability assessment is appropriate when there is policy or management interest in improving program performance and a willingness to invest in monitoring or evaluation – but policy and management decisions have not been made defining program performance in terms of a specific set of realistic, measurable, outcome-oriented program objectives. Evaluability assessment may be conducted as a separate process or built in as the initial step in a larger evaluation.

Evaluability assessment documents and clarifies program intent from the points of view of key actors in and around the program; it explores program reality in order to clarify the plausibility of program objectives and the feasibility of performance measurement; and it helps develop policy and management consensus on desirable changes in program resources, activities, objectives, or the collection and use of program performance information.

Evaluability assessment is intended to help managers and policymakers to select sets of realistic, results-oriented program objectives and program performance indicators in terms of which they will assess and manage their programs, thus moving their programs to Level 1 on the results-oriented management scale introduced in Chapter 1 (Table 1-1). In many cases, evaluability assessment provides information that helps managers to introduce program changes likely to achieve improved program performance — or to communicate more clearly the value of existing program activities.

In this chapter we discuss the need for, and origin of, evaluability assessment; describe the evaluability assessment process and products; and present a simple example of this evaluation approach. In Chapters 3 and 4, we further explore evaluability assessment, presenting more complex examples of evaluability assessment process, products, and uses.

PROBLEMS INHIBITING RESULTS-ORIENTED MANAGEMENT AND USEFUL PROGRAM EVALUATION

Results-oriented management is difficult to achieve in organizations not motivated by profit or return on investment, particularly when resources and program activities are controlled at levels far removed from the delivery of services. As we noted in Chapter 1, large public and nonprofit organizations are plagued by problems of inefficiency, ineffectiveness, unresponsiveness, and lack of purposeful activity directed toward common ends. Such organizations also tend to find it difficult to communicate the value of their activities.

Evaluability assessment helps those in charge of public programs to overcome five problems that inhibit results-oriented management and useful program evaluation. These problems are: (1) lack of agreement on program objectives and information priorities;

(2) implausibility of program objectives; (3) unavailability of relevant information on program performance; (4) management inability or unwillingness to act on the basis of program performance information; (5) management inability to communicate the value of program activities. We will now consider each of these problems.

Lack of Agreement on Program Objectives and Information Priorities

In the absence of policy and management agreement on program objectives and information priorities, those designing evaluations tend to develop their own pictures of policy and management information needs, usually focusing on "rhetorical" program impact objectives suggested by authorizing legislation or the interests of the evaluators. Those designing management systems, on the other hand, tend to focus on input and process.

Born and sustained in compromise, most public programs have a large number of objectives—input objectives, process objectives, outcome objectives, and impact objectives — whose significance and relative importance can be assessed only with the help of managers and policymakers. Evaluability assessment helps those in charge of public programs to sort through the competing objectives of policymakers, managers, those delivering services in the program, those served by the program, and relevant interest groups. Using evaluability assessment, those in charge are often able to come to agreement on a set of program objectives and performance indicators in terms of which the program will be assessed and managed. (Program objectives and performance indicators can be changed as policy and management priorities change, as more is learned about the likelihood of effective program performance, and as relevant program performance measures are developed.)

Implausibility of Program Objectives

Policymakers, higher-level managers, and evaluators are often guilty of attempting to hold programs accountable for progress toward objectives that are unrealistic because of resource constraints, insufficient time to demonstrate impact, or lack of knowledge indicating how objectives could be achieved.

Evaluability assessment helps those in charge of public programs to examine the plausibility of alternative sets of objectives before deciding on the sets of objectives in terms of which the program will be held accountable. If program objectives appear to be unrealistic, those in charge can consider changing resources or activities to enhance the likelihood of progress toward the objectives — or they can consider changing the objectives. (Rather than holding a program manager accountable for achieving progress toward a crime-reduction objective that appeared to be unrealistic, for example, higher-level managers might agree to hold the manager accountable for establishing a system for documenting the extent to which a specific approach reduces crime.)

Unavailability of Relevant Information on Program Performance

When managers and policymakers have not agreed on a set of program objectives in terms of which the program will be managed and held accountable, evaluators' attempts to measure program performance are often frustratingly unsuccessful. Needed program performance data often prove to be unobtainable or too costly to collect; needed comparison data are even less likely to be available.

Evaluability assessment helps those in charge of a program to get the input needed to achieve agreement on appropriate program objectives and program performance indicators; to develop appropriate program performance measures; and to gain the cooperation and support needed to ensure the availability of valid, reliable data on program performance.

Management Inability or Unwillingness to Act

Program managers and policymakers act on the basis of their entire past lives, most of which have been lived successfully without systematic information on program results. Program managers and policymakers are, therefore, often unwilling to absorb and use evaluation results. Some program managers lack the authority to take actions needed to improve program performance. In such cases, it may be necessary to involve higher-level managers and policymakers.

Evaluability assessment involves many management and policy levels in decisions on program objectives and information priorities. It helps those in charge to decide on intended uses of program performance information when the decisions are being made to collect the information. Evaluability assessment thus reduces the likelihood of that all-too-familiar evaluation phenomenon "information in search of a user." Early and continuing involvement of the managers and policymakers tends to facilitate the use of evaluation findings.[2] Agreement on intended uses of information also tends to facilitate use of evaluation findings.[3]

Management Inability to Communicate the Value of Program Activities

Especially around budget time, many government and nonprofit organizations face difficulties in communicating what their activities are accomplishing. Available data demonstrate that staff are employed and that money is being spent, but convincing evidence of organizational effectiveness either is lacking or is embedded in case studies that are too voluminous for easy communication.[4] Evaluability assessment helps those in charge of public and nonprofit organizations to agree on outcome-oriented objectives and performance indicators that will facilitate efficient documentation and communication of organizational accomplishments.

ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION OF EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT

Evaluability assessment originated in the Urban Institute's program evaluation research group, as a result of the group's efforts to identify and solve problems inhibiting useful evaluation; in particular, problems inhibiting management use of evaluation to improve program performance. Reflecting on the results of past evaluations, the Urban Institute evaluation group concluded that evaluation is unlikely to result in program improvement unless three conditions are satisfied:

- *Program objectives, important side effects, and priority information needs are well defined* (that is, program managers have

agreed on a set of measurable objectives and program performance indicators in terms of which the program is to be assessed and managed).
- *Program objectives are plausible* (that is, there is some likelihood that the objectives will be achieved).
- *Intended uses of information are well defined* (that is, program managers have agreed on intended uses of program performance information).

The "evaluability" (or "manageability") conditions have been stated in slightly different ways in different publications.[5] In this book, I try to simplify the statements of the conditions and of the method itself, to enhance the usefulness of the evaluability assessment approach.

Evaluability assessment developed in three stages, which correspond to the steps taken in conducting evaluability assessment as we now understand it: (1) clarifying program intent (1973–1975); (2) exploring program reality (1974–1977); and (3) assisting policy, management, and evaluation decisions (1978–present).

Evaluability assessment originally focused on the need for agreement on the objectives and performance indicators in terms of which program performance would be assessed. The initial focus was on understanding the decision environment; identifying relevant managers and policymakers; documenting the expectations, assumptions, and priorities of program managers, policymakers, and relevant interest groups; bounding the program to be evaluated; and identifying the performance indicators (types of evidence) in terms of which the program would be assessed and held accountable.

Evaluability assessment soon added a strong emphasis on getting evaluators into close contact with program reality before final decisions were made on program objectives and performance measurements. This second focus was on understanding program operations; estimating the likelihood that program objectives would be achieved; and clarifying the feasibility and cost of measuring program inputs, program activities, and program outcomes.

When examined in terms of the three evaluability criteria (agreed-on program objectives and performance indicators, plausible objectives, agreed-on uses of information), many programs appear

poorly designed — not ready to be managed for results and not ready for evaluation work aimed at documenting and improving performance and results. Rather than labeling such programs as unmanageable or unevaluable, evaluators added a third evaluability assessment focus: helping those in charge to change the program to enhance the likelihood of results-oriented management and useful program evaluation. Here the evaluators identified — and helped managers to choose from among — program change options, each of which specified a set of plausible program objectives, a set of agreed-on program performance indicators, and one or more intended uses of each type of data to be collected.

Over the years since 1977, evaluability assessment has been implemented on a broad scale, included in standards and policies for conduct of program evaluation, modified, and improved. During this period evaluability assessment has come to be seen not as a rigid set of procedural steps but as a spirit and method directed at results-oriented management and management-oriented evaluation. In this phase, evaluability assessment has emerged as a member of a family of relatively inexpensive evaluation processes that managers and policymakers can use to set plausible, measurable program objectives; to identify changes in program activities that will contribute to improved program performance; and to identify evaluations, monitoring systems, and information systems that will contribute to demonstrably effective program performance.

Evaluability assessment has been incorporated into the policies and activities of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Education, the Auditor General and the Comptroller General of Canada, the Evaluation Research Society of America, and many other organizations. In many instances, evaluability assessment occurs not as a separate activity but as the initial step in a larger evaluation.

THE EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In this section we discuss the evaluability assessment process in more detail, presenting a simple example of the use of evaluability assessment in clarifying program objectives and in identifying options for program evaluation and for program improvement.

Clarifying Program Intent, Side Effects of Interest, and Priority Information Needs

The initial focus of evaluability assessment was — and is — on establishing agreement on management and policy information needs. Here the evaluator documents program objectives, expectations, causal assumptions, information needs, and priorities of relevant managers, policymakers, and interest groups, clarifying the performance indicators (types of evidence) in terms of which the program will be assessed and managed.

Believing that evaluators often attempt to serve too many audiences (and therefore serve none well), Pamela Horst and her colleagues suggested that evaluators first identify those managers and policymakers who have the most influence on relevant program and policy decisions and then document the program design from their points of view.[6]

Here the evaluators use three sources of information: (1) program documentation (the program's authorizing legislation; legislative history; program regulations, guidelines, and annual reports; budget justifications; research, evaluation, and audit reports; speeches; organization charts; grant applications; and the like); (2) interviews with small numbers of program managers and policymakers in the executive and legislative branches of government; and (3) interviews with representatives of small numbers of relevant interest groups. On the basis of information from these sources, the evaluators develop two sets of products that promote fruitful dialogue between managers and evaluators. These products (program design models and lists of currently agreed-on program performance indicators) document the extent of agreement on program objectives among policymakers, managers, and interest groups, and document the types of information that could be developed in terms of agreed-on objectives and performance indicators.

Program Design Models

Program design models (or *logic models*) present the program design (the resources allocated to the program, intended program activities, expected program outcomes, and assumed causal linkages) from the points of view of managers, policymakers, or key

interest groups. An important part of the development of program design models is identification of intermediate outcome objectives that lead from program activities to intended program impacts.

In a typical technical assistance program, for example, program documentation and interviews with program managers and policymakers reveal agreement on a program design like that presented in Figure 2-1. (Technical assistance programs are typical of a large class of information programs intended to influence the behavior of organizations. The "technical assistance" may, in any given instance, be program regulations, guidelines, manuals, or inservice training.)

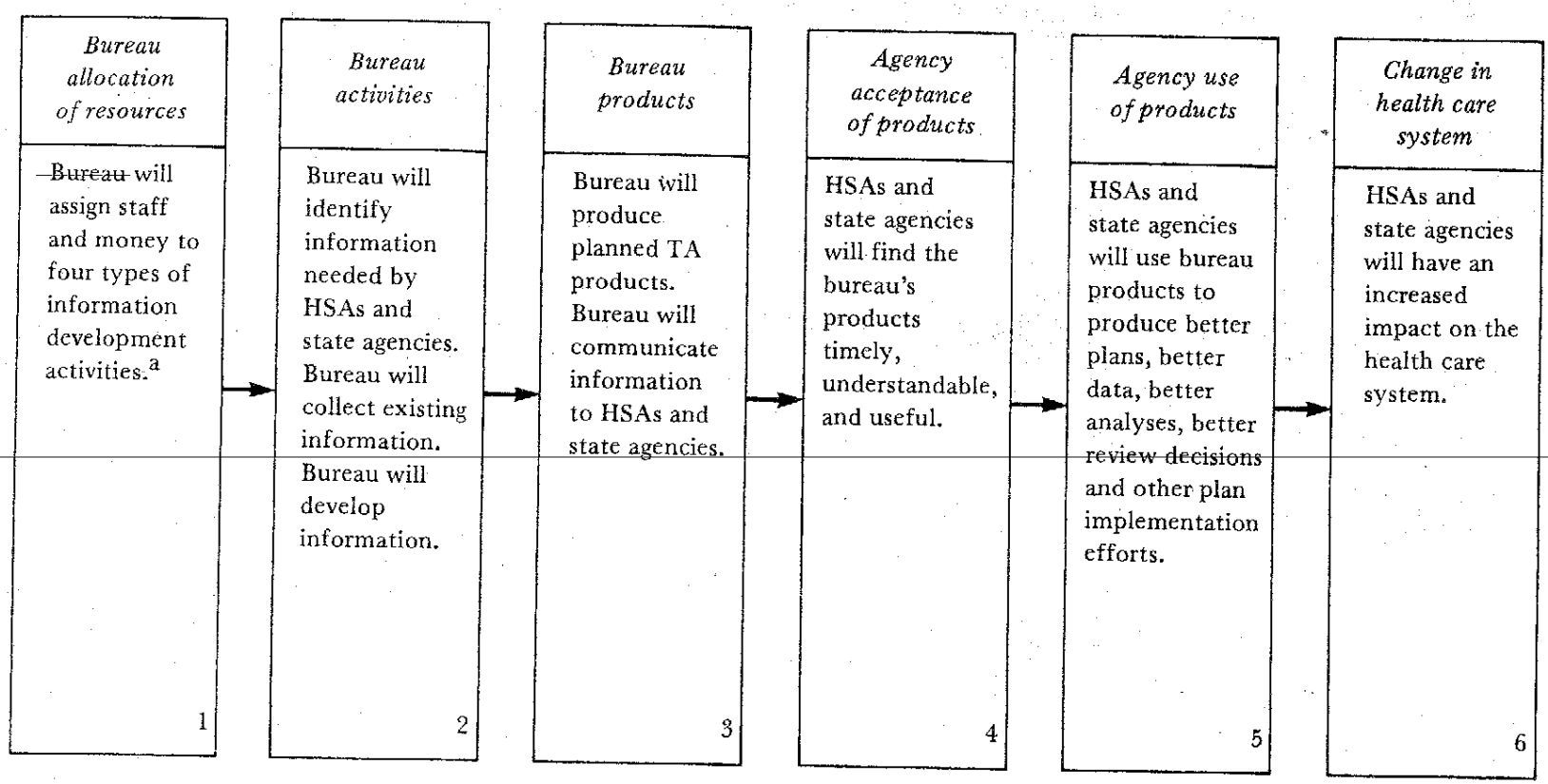
Program design models like Figure 2-1 present the key events in the intended program and the assumed causal connections among those events. With the agreed-on program performance indicators to be discussed next, program design models focus attention on management-oriented evaluations that might be relevant: Occurrence of the expected results could be tracked in a program monitoring system or management information system; the assumed causal connections could be tested in one or more evaluations.

In evaluability assessment, evaluators do not hypothesize the program design. Instead, evaluators extract the program design (in particular, the events expected to lead from program activities to intended impacts) from the key actors in and around the program — and ensure that the program design is acceptable to key program managers before a full-scale evaluation is undertaken. Management's program design, which may evolve during the course of an evaluability assessment, is the framework for decisions on the collection and analysis of program performance data.

In many programs, managers and policymakers agree on the intended program in all important respects. In other programs, however, there will be conflicts among managers and policymakers over the program objectives. As long as some of those in charge of the program are interested in a particular objective, the objective is likely to be included in program management's (revised) program design and in subsequent program monitoring or evaluation.

Agreed-on Program Performance Indicators

In most programs, management has a system for monitoring program activities but has not clearly defined the intended outcomes



[a]Assess HSA and State Agency needs, collect existing information, produce and develop new information, disseminate information to health planners in HSAs and State Agencies.

Figure 2-1 Program III: Developing and Disseminating Discretionary Technical Assistance Products (Program Logic from Bureau's Perspective) (*Source:* Joseph S. Wholey and others, *Evaluability Assessment for the Bureau of Health Planning and Resources Development, DHEW: Bureau Program III: Developing and Disseminating Discretionary Technical Assistance Products* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1977), p. 6.

and intended impacts of program activities. In a typical technical assistance program, for example, program documentation and interviews with program managers reveal agreement on performance indicators for the first four events in the program design (see Table 2–1). Technical assistance program managers typically monitor program activities by comparing actual program activities with those specified in some type of management-by-objectives (MBO) system, and monitor products produced and disseminated by comparing draft and final products with those scheduled to be

Table 2–1 Technical Assistance Program: Management's Agreed-on Program Performance Indicators

Events	*Agreed-on performance indicators*	*Data sources*
1. Resources are allocated and expended	1a. Staff years allocated	1a. Budget
	1b. Staff years expended	1b. Work measurement system
	1c. Contract funds allocated	1c. Budget
	1d. Contract funds expended	1d. Accounting system
2. Staff and contractor activities	2a. Planned vs. actual schedule of staff and contractor activities	2a. Program records
3. Products are produced and disseminated	3a. Product produced: draft, final	3a. Program records
	3b. Product disseminated	3b. Program records
4. Products are accepted by local agencies	4a. Product was considered useful by local agencies	4a. ——
5. Products are used by local agencies	5a. ——	5a. ——
6. Changes occur in health care system	6a. ——	6a. ——

Source: Adapted from Joseph S. Wholey and others, *Evaluability Assessment for the Bureau of Health Planning and Resources Development, DHEW: Bureau Program III: Developing and Disseminating Discretionary Technical Assistance Products* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1977), pp. 10 and 32.

produced and disseminated. Managers of technical assistance programs usually do not get systematic data on the extent of their success in meeting the program's outcome and impact objectives, however. Instead, they rely on informal, unsystematic feedback to get clues as to the program's effectiveness.

Exploring Program Reality

The second focus of evaluability assessment is on program reality. Here the evaluator documents the feasibility of measuring program performance and estimates the likelihood that program objectives will be achieved. Believing that evaluators too often attempt measurements and comparisons that later prove to be infeasible or too costly, Joe Nay and his colleagues recommended that, as a step toward the design of evaluations or information systems, evaluators spend some time documenting the program activities actually under way.[7] By documenting flows of resources, flows of clients (or other entities of interest), and flows of program performance information, evaluators learn what program performance information could be developed in a full-scale evaluation or management system; and they can estimate the likelihood that program objectives will be achieved. Examination of program operations may reveal that program reality is far from the program design envisioned by those at higher management and policy levels.

Using existing documentation (program data systems, project reports, monitoring reports, research reports, evaluation reports, audit reports) and site visits to a small number of projects, the evaluators determine the extent to which intended resources, activities, and outcomes are likely to materialize. At this point, three intermediate products may be developed: models of resource flows, process flow, and information flows. These products, which usually are not presented to management as such, provide information that the evaluators can use in developing and defending their findings.

Resource Flows

By making rough estimates of the flows of resources to program activities (on the basis of budget documents, contracts, MBO sys-

tems, or work measurement systems, for example), the evaluator begins to move from program rhetoric to identification of the priority objectives in which appreciable resources are being invested. In the Bureau of Health Planning and Resources Development technical assistance program, for example, it turned out that few resources were going into determining what problems existed at local level or determining what solutions work at local level (see Figure 2–2).

Process Flow

In a typical technical assistance program, program documentation, interviews with those who operate the program, and interviews with those served by the program reveal a flow of technical assistance products among "states," like those illustrated in Figure

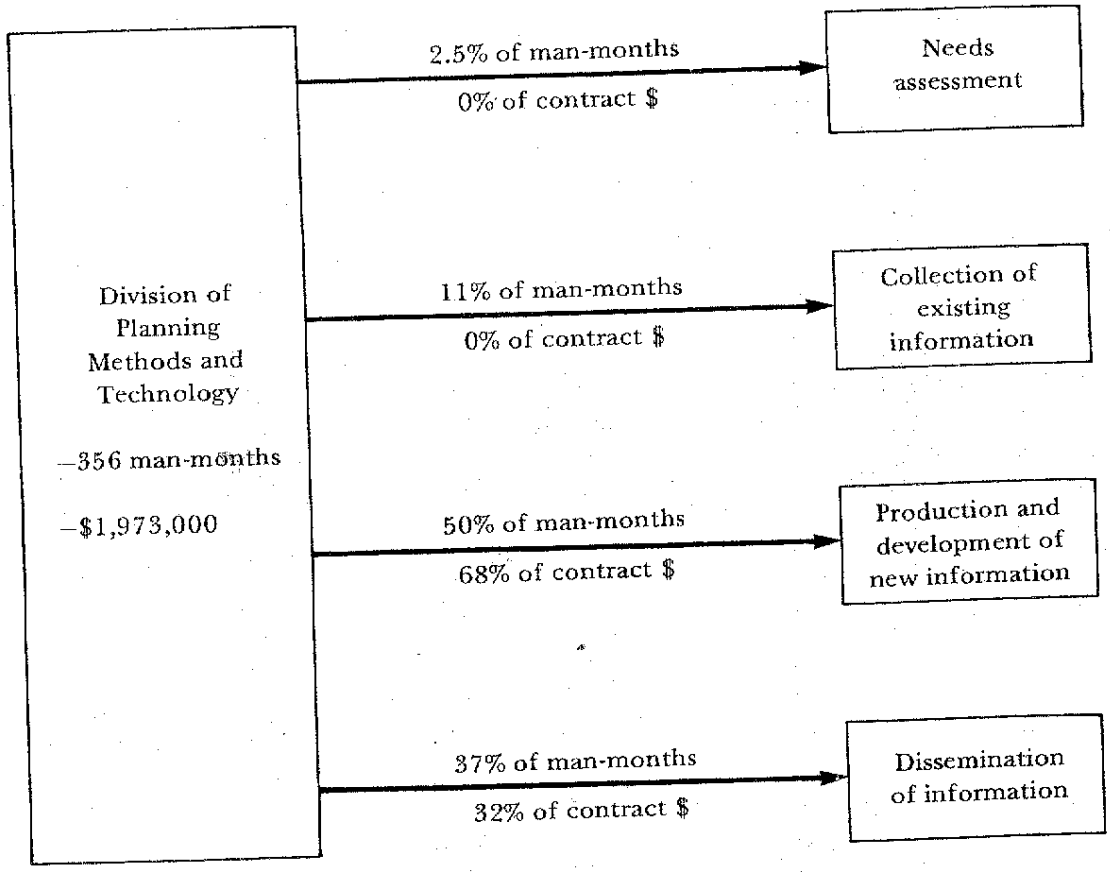


Figure 2-2 Technical Assistance Program: Resource Flows (*Source:* Joseph S. Wholey and others, *Evaluability Assessment for the Bureau of Health Planning and Resources Development, DHEW: Bureau Program III: Developing and Disseminating Discretionary Technical Assistance Products* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1977), p. 22.)

2-3. Process flow models like Figure 2-3 present the states in which an entity of interest can be, and the flows of that entity among states. The process flow model displays the points at which program performance measurements could be taken.

Information Flows

In a typical technical assistance program, the evaluators' exploration of program reality reveals systematic information flows like those displayed in Figure 2-4:

- Management systematically collects information on products produced and disseminated.
- That information is used by management to control staff and contractor activities.
- Information is not systematically collected on whether the technical assistance products are accepted and used by local agencies, or whether use of the products results in expected changes in the environment.

Plausibility Analyses

To assist decisions on the set of objectives in terms of which a program is to be managed and held accountable, my colleagues and I added an analysis of the plausibility of program objectives.[8] Based on what has been learned from program documentation, from interviews with program managers, policymakers, and representatives of relevant interest groups, and from site visits, the evaluators estimate the likelihood that each objective will be achieved at an acceptable level of accomplishment. These plausibility analyses have changed evaluability assessment from a pre-evaluation process to an evaluation process.

In many technical assistance programs, for example, exploration of program reality reveals that there are serious problems in getting products produced and disseminated – and even more serious problems in getting those products accepted and used. The summary presentation in Figure 2-5 conveys these judgments succinctly.

The plausibility analysis represents the evaluator's judgments on the likely success of the program – judgments based on available

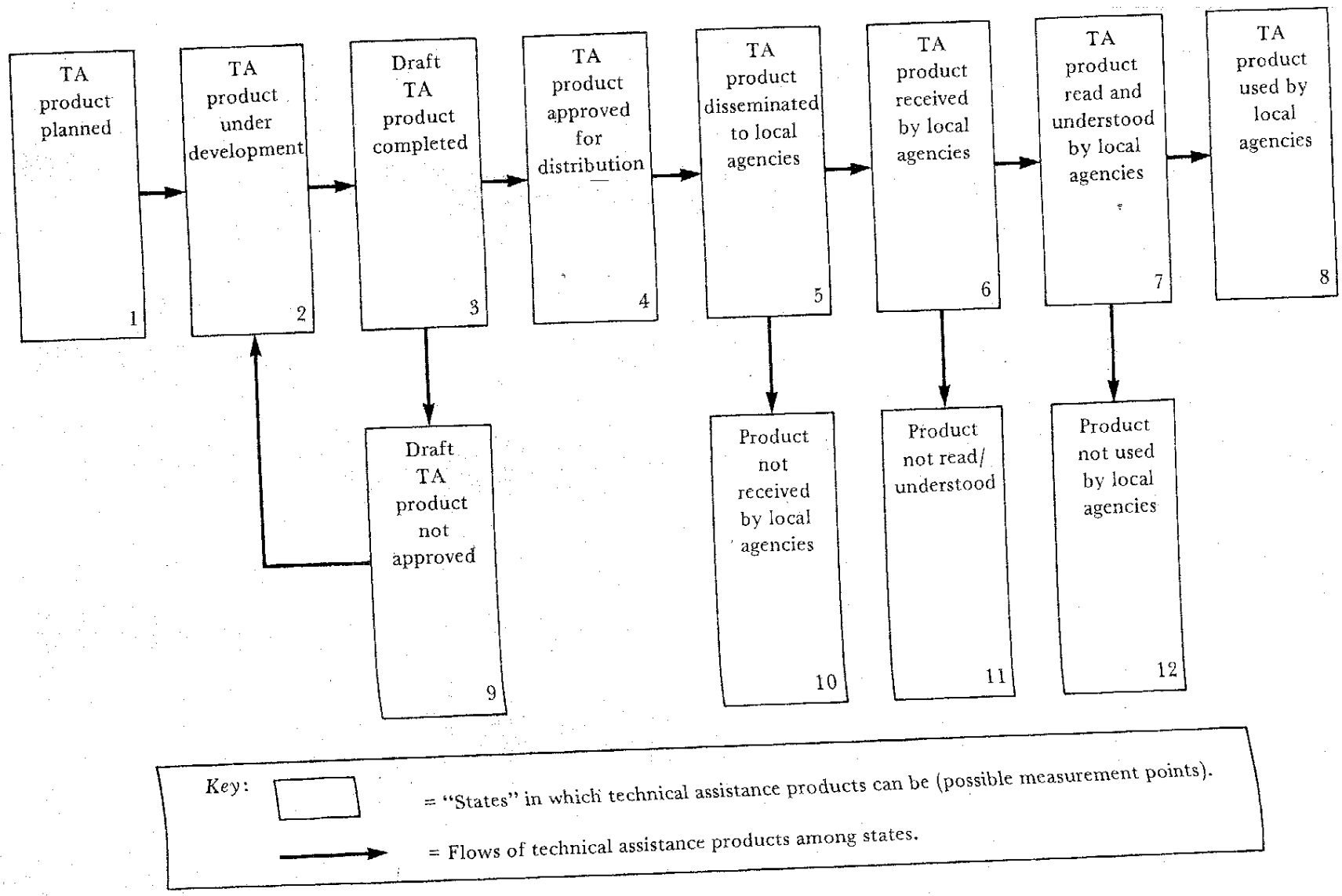


Figure 2-3 Technical Assistance Program: Process Flow

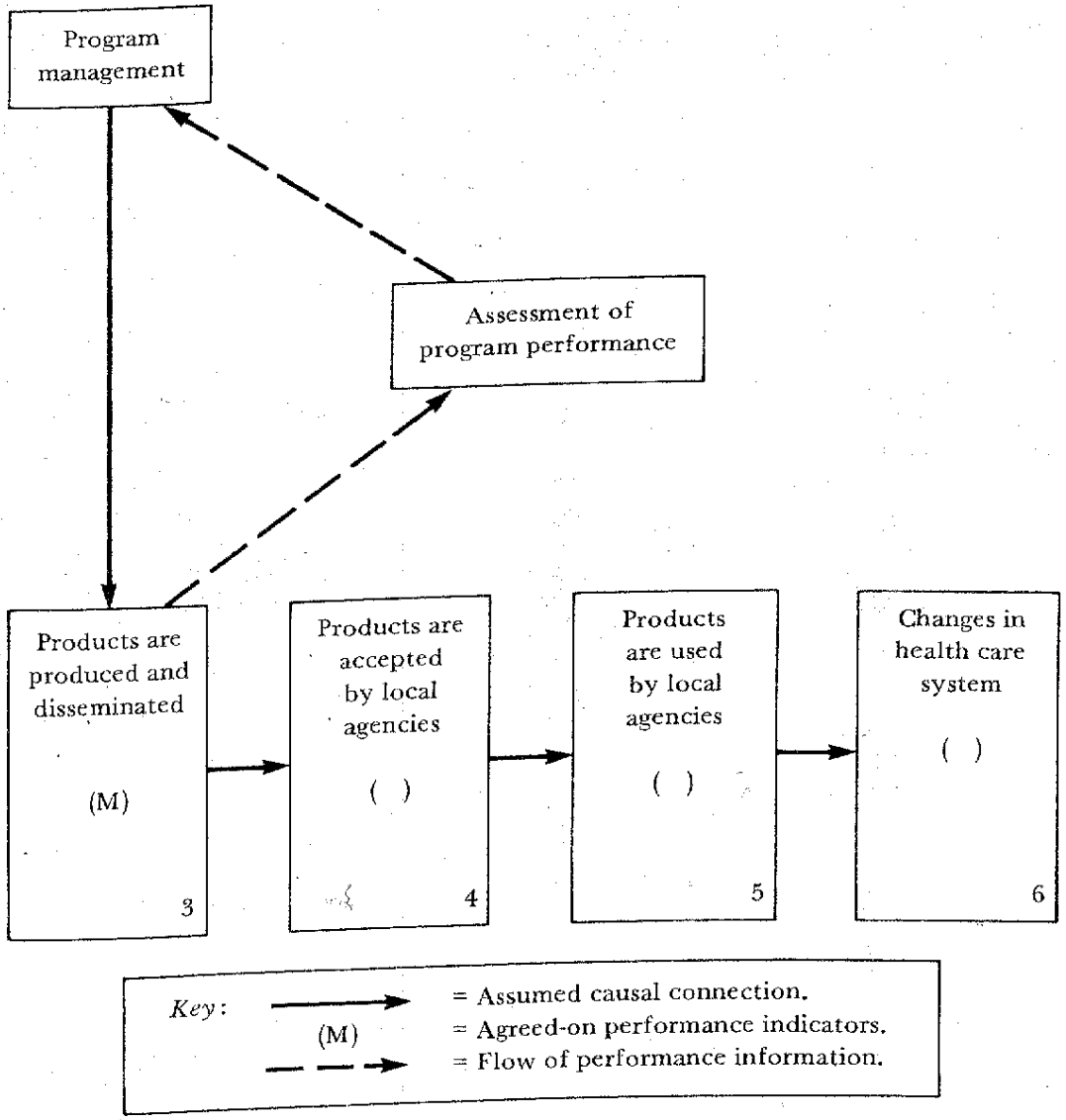


Figure 2–4 Technical Assistance Program: Current Information Flows

information and subject to later revision. Even on the basis of a small amount of information, it is often possible to conclude that success is unlikely or is highly uncertain. When such judgments are presented to managers or policymakers with supporting evidence, those in charge can use the information in decisions on possible changes in program design or information system design.

Assisting Policy and Management Decisions

The first focus of evaluability assessment was on program intent; the second, on program reality. The third focus is on management

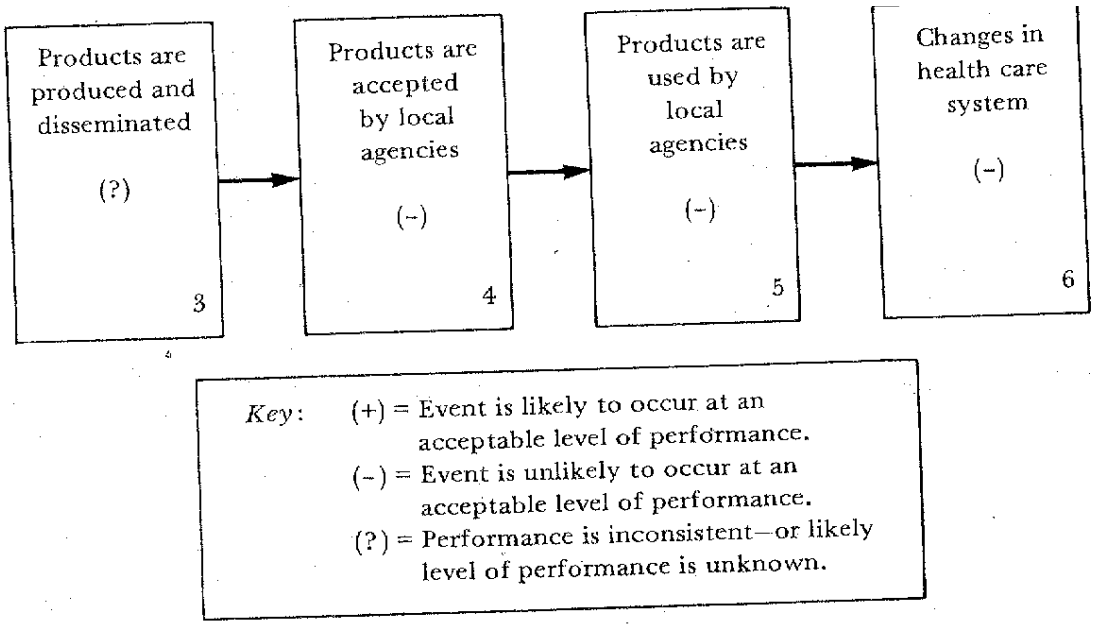


Figure 2–5 Technical Assistance Program: Plausibility of Program Objectives

use of evaluability assessment information to improve program design, program performance, and use of program performance information. Using the information gathered and analyzed in the first two evaluability assessment steps, the evaluators are now in position to work with management, clarifying the implications of what has been learned and exploring options for program change and program improvement.

The Evaluable Program (Status Quo Option)

One option is always the *status quo* option, which would leave the program as it currently exists. The *evaluable model* of the program presents, in summary form, an evaluation of the program design in terms of three evaluability criteria. The *evaluable program* is that portion of the program which is currently manageable in terms of a set of realistic program objectives and agreed-on program performance indicators. For our technical assistance program, for example, the evaluable program would include only the first three events in the program design: allocation of resources to technical assistance, staff and contractor activities, and production and dissemination of technical assistance products. Objectives 4, 5, and 6 would be missing from the evaluable model because objectives 4, 5, and 6 are unrealistic and because agreed-on performance indicators have not been identified for objectives 5 and 6.

Policy, Management, and Information Options

The evaluability assessment is typically a powerful critique of the program design. In terms of the three evaluability criteria, few government programs look good, at least initially. The evaluators now help management to explore possible changes in the program design that could improve the likelihood of demonstrably effective performance.

Believing that the collection of program performance information should always be related to an intended use of the information, and believing that priority should be given to collection of information likely to improve program management and program performance, Richard Schmidt and his colleagues worked with key managers and policymakers to explore program change options implied by the evaluability assessment findings.[9] Three types of program design options were developed and explored:

1. options for changes in program resources or objectives (now called "policy options")
2. options for changes in program activities ("management options")
3. options for changes in collection and use of program performance information ("information options").

Working with management, evaluators explore the implications of the status quo and other program design options, gathering and presenting new data if necessary to facilitate management decisions on program resources, program activities, program objectives, or collection and use of program performance information.

Results-oriented technical assistance program managers would probably find the status quo unacceptable. Results-oriented managers would probably want to achieve and demonstrate progress toward outcome or impact objectives; for example, objectives 4 and 5: local agency acceptance and use of technical assistance products. Deciding to hold the program accountable on such outcome objectives would be a "policy" choice that would in turn imply selection of both information and management options.

Table 2-2 presents information options for technical assistance programs: performance measures that results-oriented managers might use to assess and manage a technical assistance program.

Table 2-2 Technical Assistance Program: Possible New Performance Indicators

Events	*Possible new performance indicators*	*Data sources*
4. Products are accepted by local agencies	4a. Product was received by potential user	4a. Telephone surveys
	4b. Product was read and understood by potential user	4b. Telephone surveys
	4c. Product was considered useful by local agency	4c. Telephone surveys
	4d. Product presented significant knowledge or capability that potential user did not already have	4d. Telephone surveys
5. Products are used by local agencies	5a. Decision was made to use product in local agency operations	5a. User documentation
	5b. Effort was made to use product in local agency operations	5b. User documentation
	5c. Product was successfully used in local agency operations	5c. User documentation
6. Changes occur in health care system	6a. Use of product led to expected results	6a. User documentation

Source: Adapted from Joseph S. Wholey and others, *Evaluability Assessment for the Bureau of Health Planning and Resources Development, DHEW: Bureau Program III: Developing and Disseminating Technical Assistance Products* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1977), p. 32.

Here the evaluators suggest a set of possible performance indicators that appear relevant to policy and management information needs and could be translated into feasible program performance measures. Table 2-3 illustrates the types of program outcome data that results-oriented managers might use in managing a technical assistance program .

Management selection of any or all of the performance indicators in Table 2-2 would represent management's intent to assess and manage the technical assistance program in terms of the types of outcome and impact objectives often cited in legislative/budget justifications. Selection of one or more of these new performance

Table 2-3 Technical Assistance Program: Hypothetical New Performance Data

	Product No. 1	*Product No. 5*
Number of appropriate local agency staff surveyed	100[a]	200[b]
4a. Product was received by potential user	90%	40%
4b. Product was read and understood by potential user	70	30
4c. Product was considered useful by local agency	60	10
4d. Product presented significant knowledge or capability that potential user did not already have	50	10
5a. Decision was made to use product in local agency operations	40	5
5b. Effort was made to use product in local agency operations	40	5
5c. Product was successfully used in local agency operations	20	2

[a]Sample survey responses are subject to random error of approximately 10 percentage points.

[b]Sample survey responses are subject to random error of approximately 7 percentage points.

Source: Adapted from Joseph S. Wholey and others, *Evaluability Assessment for the Bureau of Health Planning and Resources Development, DHEW: Bureau Program III: Developing and Disseminating Discretionary Technical Assistance Products* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1977), pp. 34–35.

measures would not, however, do much to improve program results.

Results-oriented technical assistance program managers might wish to change the program by adding new activities designed to enhance the likelihood of progress toward the program's outcome and impact objectives. Possible new program activities of this kind (for example, documentation of best local practices as bases for development of useful technical assistance products) would now be presented as "management options."

program design options to managers and key staff in a series of memoranda, individual briefings, and decision-making meetings. An initial meeting might cover program design models and agreed-on program performance indicators (Figure 2-1 and Table 2-1); a second meeting, the plausibility of program objectives (Figure 2-5) and the feasibility of relevant measurements and comparisons; a third meeting, the implications of the status quo option and a number of options for changing the program design to enhance the likelihood of effective program performance or to better document program accomplishments.

The evaluability assessment proceeds by successive iterations, with the initial specification of program design models, agreed-on performance measures, and program options all subject to revision on the basis of additional information.

CONCLUSION

To meet public needs and rebuild public confidence in government, government managers must achieve demonstrable improvements in the performance and results of the programs for which they are responsible. Though improved government performance will not in itself restore public confidence in government, it is a necessary step in the process.

Evaluability assessments help managers to establish realistic, outcome-oriented program objectives by bringing together information on the expectations, priorities, and information needs of policymakers, managers, and relevant interest groups; and by providing informed estimates of the likelihood that various objectives will be achieved. Evaluability assessments help build a consensus on program objectives and priorities that is stable enough to outlast changes in individual managers or policymakers. Evaluability assessments focus managers' attention, in particular, on "intermediate outcome objectives" (outcome objectives that lead from program activities to intended program impacts), thereby facilitating a shift from process-oriented management to results-oriented management.

Evaluability assessments also facilitate needed changes in pro-

gram activities by identifying program objectives whose accomplishment is unrealistic or uncertain — and by pointing out opportunities to improve program performance while there is still time.

Over the years since 1977, evaluability assessment has been tested, refined, and extensively used. In the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services between 1978 and 1980, for example, evaluability assessments of more than twenty programs resulted in changes in program design or changes in collection/use of program performance information in most of the programs assessed. In Chapter 3, we present examples of management use of evaluability assessment in setting realistic, measurable objectives for their programs. In Chapter 4, we present managers' reactions on the usefulness of the evaluability assessment approach.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the Symposium on Program Evaluation: A Tool for Health Care Administrators, Hofstra University, Hempstead, N.Y., July 16, 1981, and will appear in Bernard Rosen and William Schmelter, eds., *Program Evaluation and the Delivery of Health Care* (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, forthcoming).

2. See John D. Waller and others, *Developing Useful Evaluation Capability: Lessons from the Model Evaluation Program,* Report prepared for the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1978).

3. See, for example, Murray Levine, *From State Hospital to Psychiatric Center* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Company, 1980), pp. 61-73; and Joseph S. Wholey, "Using Evaluation to Improve Program Performance," in Robert A. Levine and others, eds., *Evaluation Research and Practice: Comparative and International Perspectives* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1981), pp. 92-106, and in Howard E. Freeman and Marian A. Solomon, eds., *Evaluation Studies Review Annual,* vol. 6 (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1981), pp. 55-69.

4. John Scanlon has noted the problems managers face in communicating voluminous qualitative information to higher policy levels. John W. Scanlon, "Developing Performance Measures" (Lecture at the University of Southern California's Washington Public Affairs Center, Washington, D.C., November 23, 1980).

5. See Pamela Horst and others, "Program Management and the Federal Evaluator," *Public Administration Review,* July/August 1974, pp. 300-308; Joseph S. Wholey and others, "If You Don't Care Where You Get To, Then It

and Public Policies: The Dartmouth/OECD Conference (Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth College, 1975); Joseph S. Wholey and others, "Evaluation: When Is It Really Needed?" *Evaluation*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1975), pp. 89–93; John W. Scanlon and others, "Evaluability Assessment: Avoiding Types III and IV Errors," in G. Ronald Gilbert and Patrick J. Conklin, *Evaluation Management: A Selection of Readings* (Charlottesville, Va.: U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Federal Executive Institute, FEI B-12, 1979), pp. 43–59; and Richard E. Schmidt, John W. Scanlon, and James B. Bell, *Evaluability Assessment: Making Public Programs Work Better* (Rockville, Md.: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Project Share, Human Services Monograph No. 14, 1979).

6. Horst and others, "Program Management and the Federal Evaluator."

7. Joe N. Nay and others, *The National Institute's Information Machine: A Case Study of the National Evaluation Program*, Report prepared for the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1977); and Comptroller General of the United States, *Finding Out How Programs Are Working: Some Suggestions for Congressional Oversight* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. General Accounting Office, 1977).

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9. Richard E. Schmidt and others, *Appalachian Regional Commission Health and Child Development Program*, Reports prepared for the Appalachian Regional Commission, Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1976). Also see Comptroller General, *Finding Out How Programs Are Working;* John W. Scanlon and John D. Waller, "Program Evaluation and Better Federal Programs" (Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Society for Public Administration, Phoenix, Ariz., 1978); John W. Scanlon and others, "Evaluability Assessment: Avoiding Types III and IV Errors," in G. Ronald Gilbert and Patrick J. Conklin, eds., *Evaluation Management: A Selection of Readings* (Charlottesville, Va.: U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Federal Executive Institute, FEI B-12, 1979), pp. 43–45; and Joseph S. Wholey and others, *Evaluability Assessment for the Bureau of Health Planning and Resources Development.*