

Building Capacity to Measure, Analyze and Evaluate Government Performance

Kathryn Newcomer, PhD

September 19, 2012



THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
THE TRACHTENBERG SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC POLICY^{AND} PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

My Key Points

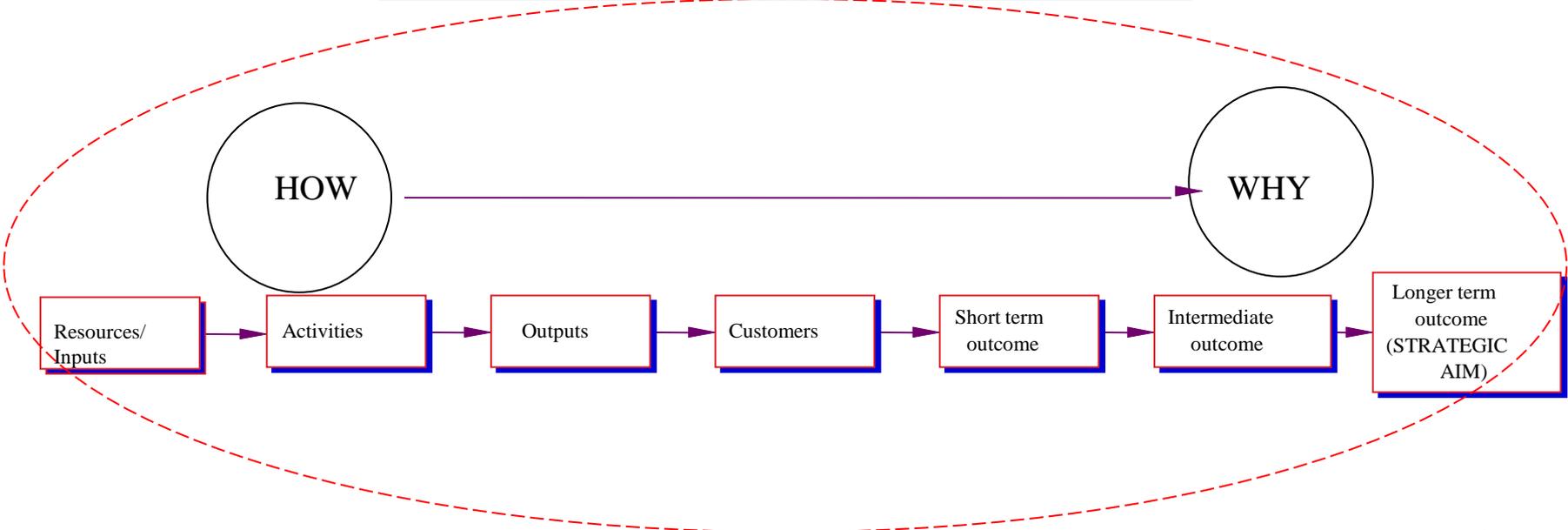
- ▶ Acceptance of a false dichotomy contrasting program evaluation with performance measurement has had deleterious effects
- ▶ Identification of needed evaluation competencies should begin with a consideration of the desired outcomes, i.e., enhanced organizational learning and government performance
- ▶ The AEA “Evaluation Roadmap for More Effective Government” (2010) provides useful guidance on evaluation capacity building

What is Program Evaluation?

- ▶ Program evaluation refers to both a mind set and a set of skills
- ▶ Evaluation involves:
 - using systematic social science tools to assess the strengths and weaknesses of programs, policies and organizations to improve their effectiveness,
 - employing systematic *data* collection, analysis and *judgment* to address questions about programs and policies, and
 - both ongoing measurement and one-shot studies across the life cycle of programs.
- ▶ Framing the most appropriate questions to address in any evaluation work is the key

Framing Evaluation Questions

Design Evaluation



Process/Implementation Evaluation

Outcome Evaluation

Impact Evaluation

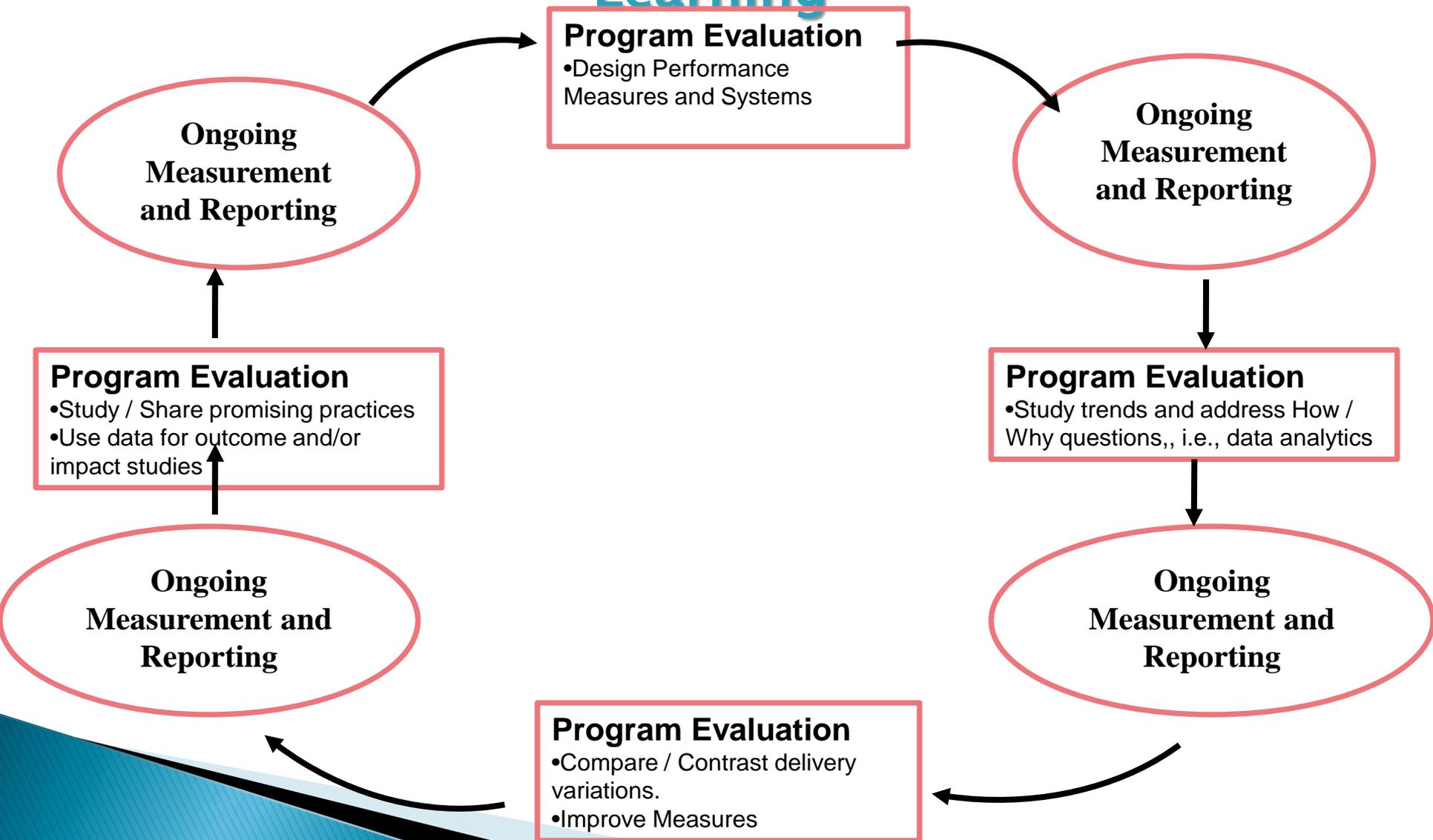
A False Dichotomy

- ▶ Program evaluation has been viewed as a separate function and activity from performance measurement
- ▶ The separation has been perpetuated by both academics and practitioners who may view the functions as serving different clients and/or potential users, or whose professional training or experiences highlight differences rather than similarities

A Pernicious Dichotomy

- ▶ Viewing performance measurement, or monitoring, as something separate from evaluation has resulted in:
 - reduced benefits from application of professional evaluation skills and standards in performance measurement practice,
 - a proliferation of different offices with different and even non-communicative staffs in public agencies,
 - reduced capacity for a strategic and holistic evaluation approach within organizations, and
 - obstacles to the generation of organizational learning and improved programmatic performance.

Program Evaluation Skills Infuse Performance Measurement and Enhance Organizational Learning



Evaluation Should Also Infuse Performance Management

- ▶ Performance management: The use of performance measurement information to:
 - help set agreed-upon performance goals,
 - allocate and prioritize resources,
 - inform managers to either confirm or change current policy or program directions to meet those goals, and
 - report on the success in meeting those goals.

SOURCE: *Serving the American Public: Best Practices in Performance Measurement*, NPR, June 1997.

Evaluation for What?

- ▶ Organizational learning and
- ▶ Accountability for
 - ongoing organizational learning,
 - program and organizational performance improvement, and
 - achievement of espoused policy and program goals.

Program
Evaluation
Across the
Programmatic
Life Cycle



Desired Outcome: Strategic Design to Promote Evaluation

- Evaluation should be treated as a mission support function, and designed in a strategic and holistic fashion
- Performance measurement processes should be designed and employed as one component of a strategic organization-wide evaluation approach, and better informed by program evaluation skills and standards, e.g., designs informed by theory of change, and measures informed by validity and reliability considerations
- The entire range of evaluation approaches, from qualitative and quantitative tools employed to assess to service quality, to cost effectiveness analyses to measure the results of regulations, should be embraced within the evaluation purview
- Evaluation should be situated within organizations to facilitate organizational learning, and staffed with experts in the specific field, as well as by representatives of multiple disciplines

Desired Outcome: Strategic Use of Evaluation to Promote Organizational Learning

- Policy analysts and evaluation staff have the competencies needed to support a comprehensive evaluation function, however---
- Competencies in evaluative thinking and analysis are needed by managers and executives, as well as budget and financial staff
- Strengthening needed evaluation competencies across the organization should be viewed as within the mandate for an evaluation office, e.g, the EPA model

Desired Outcome: Evaluation Competencies Held by Managers

- ▶ Analyze the theory of change underlying programs and policies
- ▶ Frame useful questions about program implementation and results
- ▶ Involve stakeholders effectively to enhance evaluation efforts
- ▶ Assess the competence, relevance and sufficiency of evidence (data) obtained through performance measurement processes and evaluation studies
- ▶ Analyze trends/and interpret performance data
- ▶ Interpret cost effectiveness and cost benefit models

Next Steps?

- Think strategically and holistically about evaluation to strategically:
 - connect and plan out the evaluation efforts undertaken in an agency to benefit from the synergies among them,
 - enhance organizational learning from all evaluation efforts, including performance measurement,
 - co-locate evaluation & measurement efforts and staff in one office to better inform performance measurement and management processes,
 - train managers and executives to enhance their evaluation competencies, and
 - envision evaluation and learning as the responsibility of all managers.

AEA: An Evaluation Roadmap for a More Effective Government

- ▶ Scope and Coverage
- ▶ Management
- ▶ Quality and Independence
- ▶ Transparency

Thank you!!

- ▶ I can be reached at newcomer@gwu.edu