

Participatory Internal Evaluation Forms a Strong Legacy

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Department of Environment,
Water and Natural Resources

Aim of presentation today

- Share some of my experiences with others who are new to the evaluation field
- Communicate the benefits internal evaluation has held for us
- Communicate a potential area of opportunity for Evaluation Professionals



Why internal evaluations?

- **Legacy of short-term external funding**

Monitoring and evaluation ineligible to receive funding

Lack of data on outcomes and focus on 'doing the work'

- **Movements towards MERI**

Knew we wanted to focus on this for a number of years – learn how to do it ourselves

Build evaluation culture from within

- **Need for strategic evaluation**

Falling investment driving hard-line investment decisions

Lack of information around which programs are providing best 'bang for buck'



How have we approached it?

First two external:

- Learning phase (training and capacity building in contract)
- Established Steering Committee (input to procurement, input to objectives and design, review of findings and draft recommendations) → **room for improvement**

Next one internal:

- Changed Governance to include closer links to decision makers
- Much longer timeframes (flexibility we couldn't provide first time)
- Contracted an Evaluation Professional to act in mentoring capacity

And now? **Great expectation and enthusiasm!** But – negotiated 12 months to apply learnings (improvements to internal MERI systems)



Differences Between Conventional and Participatory Evaluation

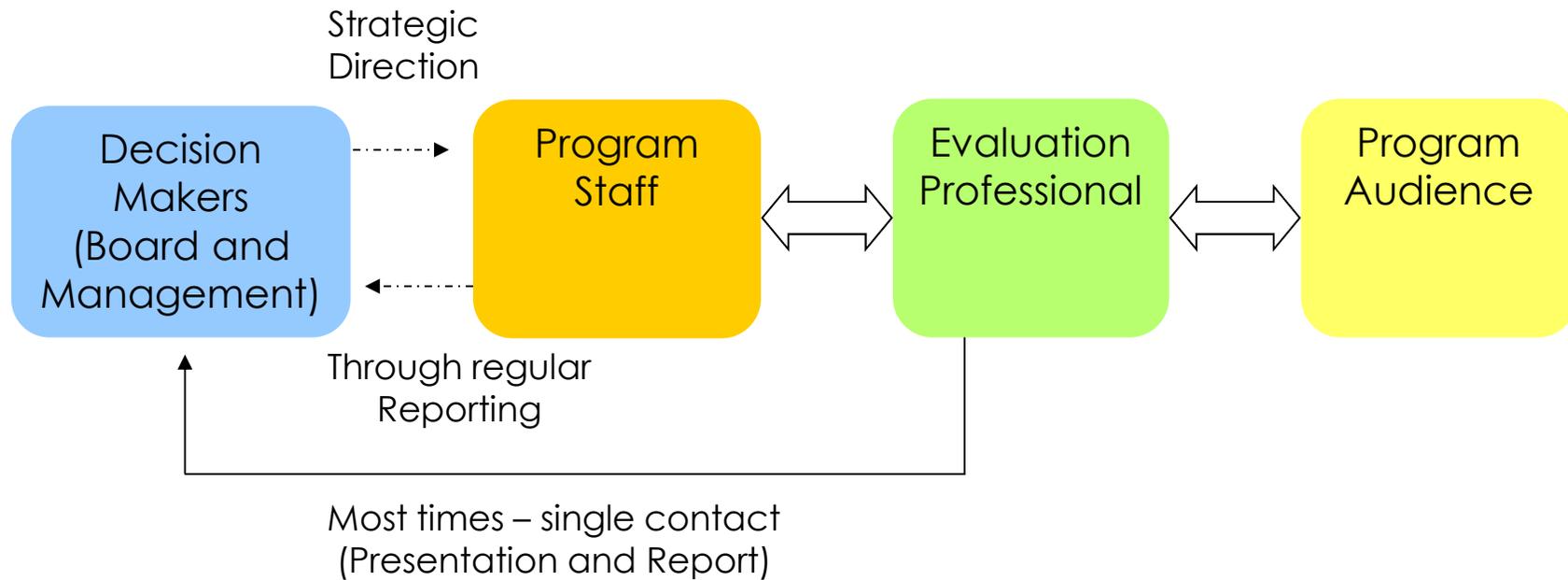
Dimension	Conventional Evaluation	External Participatory Evaluation	Internal Participatory Evaluation
Who plans and manages the process?	Senior managers, or outside experts	Local people, project staff, managers, and other stakeholders, helped by a facilitator	Local people, project staff, managers, and other stakeholders
Role of primary stakeholders	Provide information only	Help design the evaluation, develop questions and methodology, collect and analyse data, share findings and identify future proposed action	Design evaluation, develop questions and methodology, analyse data, review findings and identify future proposed action (recommendations). Communicate findings to groups they represent. Implement recommendations within their sphere of influence.
Who collects the data?	Evaluation professional (consultant)	Evaluation professional (consultant)	Monitoring and Evaluation staff within the organisation
Professional evaluator/consultant's role	To provide expertise in measurement of performance against programme/project objectives using standardised procedures and tools.	Main role is to facilitate stakeholders in carrying out the evaluation. Key qualifications include good communication, facilitation & analytical skills.	In this case, used as a mentor to assist our learning about evaluation theory and practice
Approach	Predetermined	Adaptive	Highly adaptive, some might suggest perhaps to the point of bending the 'rules'???

Adapted from: NZAID 2006, IDS 1998 referenced in AES Pre-Conference Workshop 2011- Participation: A Vital Ingredient for Meaningful Evaluation (I Patrick and T Delaney)

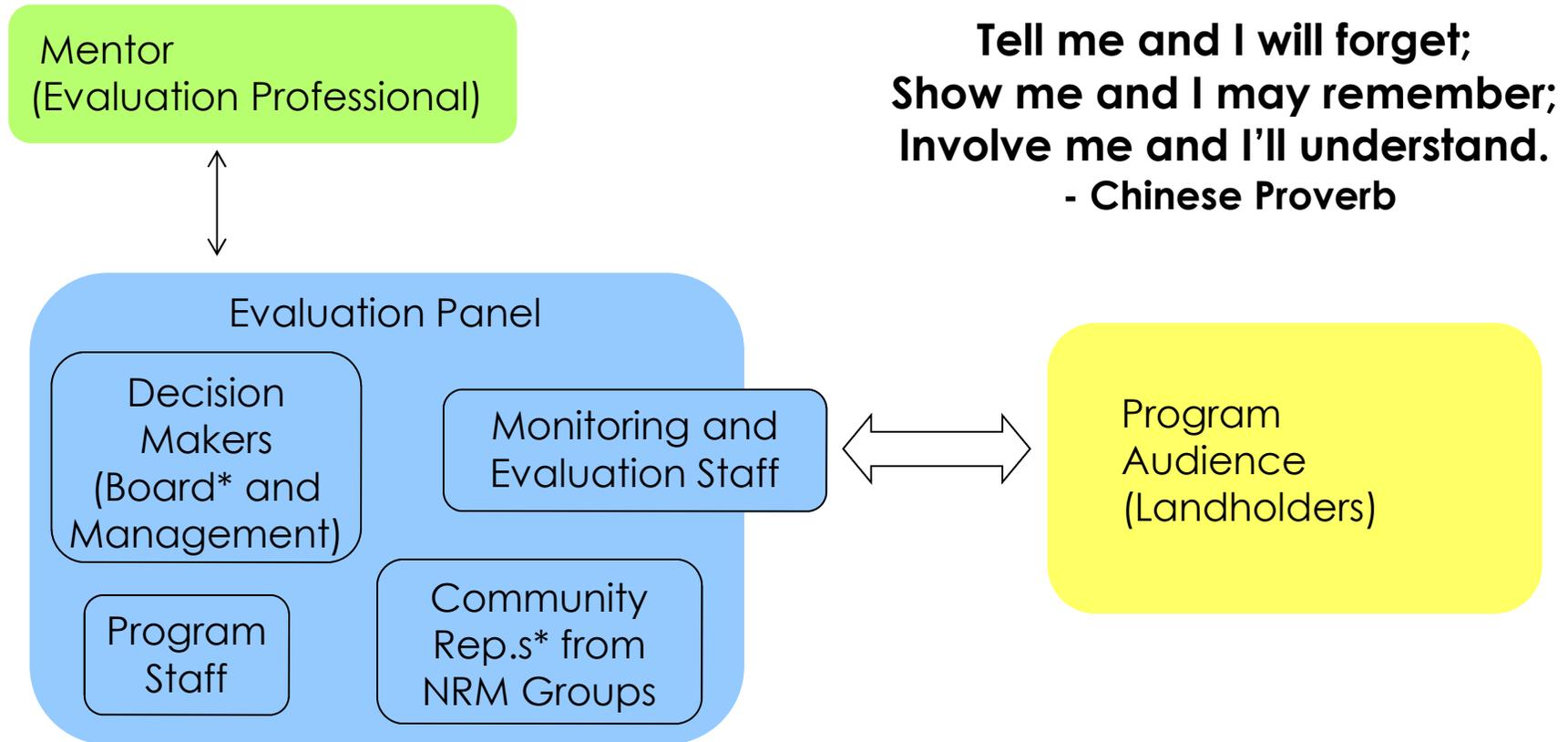


How it used to be for us

Chain of communication



Our new model



* Volunteers paid Honorarium and travel



How did the Mentor assist?

- Program logic review
- Facilitated Panel meeting to develop KEQ and identify data sources
- Helped staff design data collection process
- Assisted staff to organise evidence to present
- Facilitated Panel's review of findings and development of draft recommendations
- Helped staff synthesise feedback to craft final recommendations
- Review of draft Evaluation Report

Basically, provided our sounding board. Gave support and technical advice whenever required. BUT also gave us space to have a go on our own.....and then helped us work through challenges and rectify mistakes.

INVALUABLE !!



Evidence of the benefits

- Better ownership and control over the end product (than previous evaluations)
- Re-working of one recommendation based on new information (within changing environment, explained in Final Report)
- We have recommendations pitched at different levels (according to spheres of influence)
- Huge shift in evaluation capacity and culture – staff and decision makers. **‘Learning through doing’**



How else do we know it's working?

- Feedback from sub-regional Group members
- Regional Management Team discussing wider application of the process
- Program staff were comfortable with recommendations – more likely to implement
- Board has actioned several recommendations
- Panel members keen to continue involvement in next evaluation



Challenges/Trade-offs

- Changing relationship with colleagues
- Took a long time to reach outcomes (not helped by part-time staff and volunteers' other commitments)
- Required greater inputs of staff time than envisaged
- Lack of outcome data to inform evaluation of impact/effectiveness
- Sample sizes should have been bigger
- Costs associated with honorariums for Panel members



Take home points

- **Internal evaluation with professional support has allowed us to find the ‘best fit’ for our organisation**
- **Mentoring is a potential new area of opportunity for consultants**

Further Information

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