Criteria for Assessing
WCB Evaluations of
Major Initiatives

by

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Introduction

The Worker’s Compensation Board has developed, pilot-tested and implemented a series of major initiatives in the past several years. Others are in the process of being developed or pilot-tested in preparation for full implementation in the future.

Each initiative is a substantial investment in time and resources, and the process of successfully planning, resourcing and implementing each is of major concern to senior managers, the Board, the Panel of Administrators, employees, clients and other stakeholders.

The extent to which major initiatives have been evaluated as they have been developed and tested for full implementation is an important question for the Royal Commission and is one reason for conducting a review of the extent and quality of evaluations completed to date.

The following criteria are intended to guide a review of the evaluations that have been conducted as a part of developing and implementing major initiatives at the WCB in the past five years. The criteria focus on four phases in evaluation processes: planning, resourcing and managing, conducting, and reporting and utilizing evaluation results. Where appropriate, criteria are linked to references in evaluation literature, professional standards or government guidelines.

Because the practice of program evaluation is both rich and varied, it is important to note that the criteria which follow represent a general framework for assessing evaluations and evaluation-related activities. Individual evaluations will differ from each other as they appropriately reflect the contexts and the purposes for which they were intended.

1.0 Planning Evaluations

1.1 Program evaluations should be conducted within the context of an organizational strategic plan which clearly articulates a policy and program structure and objectives and expected results for policies and programs. (Treasury Board of Canada, 1994, Chapter 3, pp. 2-3)

1.2 The requirements for a credible, timely and objective evaluation should be anticipated and planned for as a program is being designed for implementation. (Rossi and Freeman, 1989, p. 113)

1.2.1 One requirement is a clear statement of the objectives of the program. (Wholey in Chelimsky and Shadish, 1997, p. 130; Rossi and Freeman, 1989, p. 124).

1.2.2 A second requirement is the capacity to collect accurate and complete information needed to measure program outcomes. (Wholey in Chelimsky and Shadish, 1997, p. 130)
1.2.3 A third requirement is the capacity to assess incremental program outcomes by anticipating the requirements of valid before-after and/or program-no program comparisons. (Rossi and Freeman, 1989, pp. 229-231; European Commission, 1997, pp. 52-55)

1.2.4 A fourth requirement is that the program or pilot project be fully implemented to assess incremental outcomes. (Rossi and Freeman, 1989, p. 121)

1.3 New programs should be pilot-tested and evaluated before they are fully implemented. (Rossi and Freeman, 1989, p. 140; Campbell, 1986)

2.0 Resourcing and Managing Evaluations

2.1 A management structure should be established for each evaluation project. (European Commission, 1997, p. 33)

2.1.1 A steering group, consisting of key stakeholders (those affected by the evaluation and those using the findings and recommendations) should be established for each evaluation project. (European Commission, 1997, p. 34)

2.2 Clear terms of reference should be established for each evaluation project. (Bell in Wholey, Hatry and Newcomer, 1994, pp. 512-515; European Commission, 1997, pp. 47-50)

2.2.1 Among the issues included in the terms of reference are: the scope of the evaluation; the main evaluation questions; and the selection criteria for external [contractor] evaluators (if applicable). (European Commission, 1997, p. 47)

2.3 Where contractors are used for all or parts of an evaluation, contractor work should be regularly monitored for quality, completeness and timeliness. (Hatry, Newcomer and Wholey in Wholey, Hatry and Newcomer, 1994, p. 591)

2.3.1 Evaluators should disclose any roles or relationships they have concerning whatever is being evaluated to alert their client(s) to any potential conflicts of interest. (Shadish, et. al., 1995, pp. 23)
2.4 Where in-house staff are used for all or parts of an evaluation, staff persons must have the knowledge, skills and experience to ensure the quality, completeness and timeliness of the evaluation. (Bell in Wholey, Hatry and Newcomer, 1994, pp. 515-520)

3.0 Conducting Evaluations

3.1 Program evaluations should produce timely, relevant, credible and objective findings and conclusions based on valid and reliable data collection and analysis. (Office of the Comptroller General of Canada, 1990, Chapter 1, p. 1)

3.1.1 Relevant findings and conclusions are produced when evaluation issues and questions are clearly stated and agreed to by the steering group which is a part of the evaluation management. (European Commission, 1997, pp. 35-38; Treasury Board of Canada, 1994, Chapter 3-2, p. 5; Office of the Comptroller General of Canada, 1990, pp. 2-19 and 2-20)

3.1.2 Credible findings and conclusions depend in part on the use of practical, cost-effective and objective data collection and analysis methods in the evaluation. (Treasury Board of Canada, 1994, Chapter 3-2, p. 5; Office of the Comptroller General of Canada, 1990, pp. 2-19 and 2-20)


3.1.5 Objective findings and conclusions are produced when data collection and analysis methods are replicable, that is, another evaluator could repeat and corroborate the data collection and the analyses, leading to the same findings and conclusions of the evaluation. (Coleman, 1972, p. 10; Office of the Comptroller General of Canada, 1989, p. 14; Office of the Comptroller General of Canada, 1990, Chapter 2, p. 18; Caudle in Whole, Hatry and Newcomer, 1994, p. 85)
3.1.6 Valid data collection methods incorporate measures that are not biased and represent what they are intended and presumed to represent. (Office of the Comptroller General of Canada, 1990, Chapter 2, pp. 13 and 14)

3.1.7 Reliable data collection methods produce the same result when they are applied repeatedly in a given situation. (Office of the Comptroller General of Canada, 1990, Chapter 2, p. 13)

4.0 Reporting and Utilizing Evaluation Results

4.1 Evaluators have a responsibility to fully and fairly represent their procedures, their data and their findings. Within reasonable limits, they should attempt to prevent or correct any substantial misuses of their work by others. (Shadish, et al., 1995, p. 23)

4.2 Reported evaluation findings and conclusions must address all the issues and questions that were originally stated (in the terms of reference). (Office of the Comptroller General of Canada, 1990, Chapter 2, p. 19)

4.3 Evaluation results (findings, conclusions and recommendations) should be used by senior managers in strategic decision-making on policies and programs and for accountability reporting. (Treasury Board of Canada, 1994, Chapter 3-2, p. 1)
References


