Some Evaluation Definitions

Audiences: Consumers of the evaluation; those who will or should read or hear of the evaluation, either during or at the end of the evaluation process. Includes those persons who will be guided by the evaluation in making decisions and all others who have a stake in the evaluation (see stakeholders).

Critical Appraisal: A professional critique of a project or program from the perspective of a visitor or user but without using their input directly. A critical appraisal is meant to identify problems and characteristics of an intervention that are in need of improvement. A subset of summative evaluation.

Formative Evaluation:

Evaluation designed and used to improve an intervention, especially when it is still being developed.

Impact Evaluation:

An evaluation focused on outcomes or payoffs.

Implementation Evaluation:

Assessing program delivery. A subset of formative evaluation

Longitudinal Study:

A investigation or study in which particular individual or group of individuals is followed over a substantial period of time to discover changes due to the influence of the treatment, or maturation, or environment.

Needs Assessment:

Using a diagnostic definition, need is anything essential for a satisfactory mode of existence or level of performance. The essential point of a needs assessment for evaluation is the identification of performance needs.

Planning Evaluation:

Evaluation planning is necessary before a program begins, both to gather baseline data, and to evaluate the program plan, at least for evaluability. Planning avoids designing a program that is unevaluable. Also referred to as front-end.

Process Evaluation:

Refers to the evaluation of the treatment or intervention. It focuses entirely on the variables between input and output.

Progress Evaluation:

A subset of formative evaluation. Progress evaluation is used to assess the progress of a project or program in meeting the stated goals. This type of evaluation examines opinions and attitudes of intended users of the program, exploring both positive and negative impacts. It is user/participant-centred and is useful throughout a project but is most vital at the beginning stages.

Remedial Evaluation:

A subset of summative evaluation that focuses on established project or program improvement. Often happens at the initial stage of opening or use or with established projects requiring update.

Stakeholder:

A program's stakeholder is one who has credibility, power, or other capital invested in the project, and thus can be held to be to some degree at risk with it.

Summative Evaluation:

Evaluation designed to present conclusions about the merit or worth of an intervention and recommendations about whether it should be retained, altered or eliminated. Summative evaluation can also identify unanticipated outcomes.