A Manager's Guide to Evaluating Citizen Participation

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IBM Center for
The Business of Government

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Foreword

On behalf of the IBM Center for The Business of Government, we are pleased to present this report, *A Manager's Guide to Evaluating Citizen Participation,* by Dr. Tina Nabatchi, an assistant professor at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University.

The Obama administration's Open Government Initiative is now three years old. But is it making a difference? A recent IBM Center report by Carolyn Lukensmeyer, Joe Goldman, and David Stern, *Assessing Public Participation in an Open Government Era: A Review of Federal Agency Plans,* highlights best practices and plans in the major agencies, but does not directly address the effectiveness of these initiatives.

Jonathan D. Breul

Dr. Nabatchi's report is a practical guide for program managers who want to assess whether their efforts are making a difference. She lays out evaluation steps for both the implementation and management of citizen participation initiatives, as well as how to assess the impact of a particular citizen participation initiative. The Appendix to the report provides helpful worksheets as well.

Agencies in coming years will be under greater fiscal pressures while facing increased citizen demands for greater participation in designing and overseeing policies and programs. Understanding how to most effectively engage citizens in their government will likely increase in importance.

Maria-Paz Barrientos

We hope this report by Dr. Nabatchi serves as a useful guide for government managers at all levels in determining the value of their citizen participation initiatives.

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Introduction

Whether by law, mandate, mission, or values, public managers at all levels of government are expected to engage citizens in a wide variety of issues. Such expectations will continue to grow given the calls for more participation in government. Perhaps the most notable call was President Obama's 2009 Open Government Memorandum and Open Government Initiative (http://www.whitehouse.gov/Open), which was aimed at increasing public participation in federal decision-making. In addition, numerous groups and organizations are now seeking to implement and institutionalize citizen participation in the regular work of government, and there has been a proliferation of research devoted to the subject.

Evaluation is an important step to institutionalizing quality citizen participation programs. Evaluation research is defined as "the systematic application of social research procedures for assessing the conceptualization, design, implementation, and utility of social intervention programs" (Rossi and Freeman 1993). Effective evaluation can enable managers and agencies to improve public participation programs and ensure that they are useful, cost-effective, ethical, and beneficial. Two types of evaluation are relevant for assessing citizen participation:

- **Process evaluations** can help managers better understand and improve the implementation and management of a citizen participation program.

- **Impact evaluations** can help managers determine whether the citizen participation program reached its intended audience and produced its intended effects.

This report is designed to assist public managers with the evaluation of their citizen participation projects and programs. The report first explores the concept of direct citizen participation in public administration, broadly defined as "the process[es] by which members of a society (those not holding office or administrative positions in government) share power with public officials [e.g., agency managers and officials] in making substantive decisions" related to a particular issue or set of issues (Roberts 2008a). The report then examines the importance of citizen participation, as well as the needs for and challenges of evaluating citizen participation. Next, the report provides a brief overview of the steps in program evaluation.

The report then turns to practical, non-prescriptive approaches for evaluating citizen participation. The report emphasizes the use of practical, ongoing strategies to plan, improve, and demonstrate the results of citizen participation, and specifically encourages the use of process and impact evaluations that are integrated with routine program operations.

Process evaluation focuses on assessing the implementation and management of a citizen participation program, whereas impact evaluation focuses on assessing the outcomes and results of a program. For each type of evaluation, the report identifies key questions and relevant indicators that can be used. Tips for conducting evaluations are offered throughout the report. Appendix I presents worksheets designed to assist managers with the initial steps of planning an evaluation of their citizen participation programs.

Managers can use this report to help systematically think through the elements essential to evaluating citizen participation processes. The two types of evaluation presented in this report provide effective strategies for assessing citizen participation programs and have the potential to improve public managers' ability to envision and execute such evaluations. The goal of this report is not only to increase public managers' understanding of and ability to evaluate citizen participation, but also to produce results that, in the long term, will help managers determine whether, where, when, why, and how to engage in direct citizen participation efforts.

Understanding Citizen Participation

What is Citizen Participation?

Citizen participation can be broadly defined as the processes by which public concerns, needs, and values are incorporated into decision-making. Citizen participation happens in many places (e.g., civil society, electoral, legislative, and administrative arenas) and can take many forms (e.g., methods may range from information exchanges to democratic decision-making). The box, *Understanding Key Factors in Citizen Participation,* describes several other features by which participation processes may vary.

Citizen participation may be indirect or direct:

- **Indirect participation**, such as voting or supporting advocacy groups, occurs when citizens select or work through representatives who make decisions for them.

- **Direct participation** occurs when citizens are personally and actively engaged in decision-making.

This report focuses on the evaluation of direct citizen participation in public administration, namely, processes that:

- Are organized or used by government agencies

- Are designed to achieve specific goals

- Involve some level of interaction between the agency and participants

Direct citizen participation in public administration can be broadly defined as "the process[es] by which members of a society (those not holding office or administrative positions in government) share power with public officials [i.e., public managers and other agency officials] in making substantive decisions" related to a particular issue or set of issues (Roberts 2008a).

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) has identified core values for the practice of public participation. The following list is adapted from one on IAP2's website (http://www.iap2.org/):

1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

2. The participation of those who are potentially affected by or interested in a decision should be sought out and facilitated.

3. Public participation should seek input from participants in designing how they participate.

4. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.

5. How public input affected the decision should be communicated to participants.

Understanding Key Factors in Citizen Participation

Citizen participation can take a wide variety of forms depending on the presence and extent of many key features.

- **Size.** Size of a process can range from a few participants to hundreds or thousands, and online processes potentially involve millions.

- **Purpose.** Processes are used for many reasons: to explore an issue and generate understanding, to resolve disagreements, to foster collaborative action, or to help make decisions, among others (NCDD 2008).

- **Goals.** Objectives can include informing participants, generating ideas, collecting data, gathering feedback, identifying problems, or making decisions, among others.

- **Participants.** Some processes involve only expert administrators or professional or lay stakeholders, while others involve selected or diffuse members of the public.

- **Participant recruitment.** Processes may use self-selection, random selection, targeted recruitment, and incentives to bring people to the table.

- **Communication mode.** Processes may use one-way, two-way, and/or deliberative communication.

- **Participation mechanisms.** Processes may occur face-to-face, online, and/or remotely.

- **Named methodology.** Some processes have official names and may even be trademarked; others do not employ named methodologies.

- **Locus of action.** Some processes are conducted with intended actions or outcomes at the organizational or network level, whereas others seek actions and outcomes at the neighborhood or community level, the municipal level, the state level, the national level, or even the international level.

- **Connection to policy process.** Some processes are designed with explicit connections to policy and decision-makers (at any of the loci listed above), while others have little or no connection to policy and decision-makers, instead seeking to invoke individual or group action or change.

6. Public participation should recognize and focus on the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers.

7. Public participation should provide participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.

While the above descriptions make citizen participation sound tidy and scientific (which might be reassuring to public managers), in reality it is often messy and malleable. For example, many of the assumptions behind the IAP2 and other organizing principles for citizen participation do not always hold (see Table 1). Moreover, administrators may develop a participatory process with a specific goal or set of goals, but then have to revise the process to bring individuals and organizations to the table (and to make them happy once there). While this need to be responsive might help ensure broader participation, it might also mean that administrators have to compromise their original goals for the project. Thus, while methodical, systematic participation might be the desire, disorder and change are often the reality. Despite this reality, direct citizen participation is an important aspect of public administration, and it is here to stay.

Why is Direct Citizen Participation in Public Administration Important?

Citizen participation is an accepted foundation of democracy. In modern democracies, citizen participation in government has traditionally meant indirect participation through voting. Indeed,

Table 1: Assumptions and Realities about Citizen Participation

Assumption	Reality
Participation is led by government.	Participation may be organized in multiple sectors (e.g., civic, electoral, legislative, administrative). It may be directed and led by government, government may be one of many players, or government may not be involved at all.
Participation is focused on decision-making and helps direct government allocation of resources.	Participation can be done for reasons other than decision-making. Even when focused on decision-making, participation might not (and often need not) address resource allocation issues.
Participation is periodic and temporary.	Some participation processes are one-shot endeavors. Others are used repetitively, either for a continuing issue or in different settings but the same context (e.g., public participation under NEPA). Still other processes are long-term and ongoing.
Citizens want to actively participate in the work of government.	Citizens may not want to be involved in decision-making, and even if they do, may face real barriers (e.g., time, money) to participation.
Citizens can and want to help design how they will be involved in the participatory process.	In addition to interest levels and other barriers, citizens may not understand the various features of participatory design. Moreover, their expectations for participation might not be compatible with the requirements of laws, administrative rules, and other mandates.
Citizens understand their individual needs and interests, and are aware of the needs and interests of other relevant parties.	Citizens may not have (or have access to) information needed to assess their own needs and interests, let alone those of others. Even if they do have this information, citizens might give undue weight to personal rather than broader needs and interests (e.g., the "not in my backyard" phenomenon).
Government has sufficient time, financial, and other resources for engaging the public to solve complex public problems.	Contemporary government is operating under conditions of resource scarcity, and notions of "doing more with less" may be incompatible with expectations for broader citizen participation.

until relatively recently, the focus of citizen participation was on gaining and guaranteeing the rights of all citizens to vote for representation in government (Keyssar 2000). Once these rights were established, the focus shifted from an emphasis on "the representative nature of government" to an examination of "direct participation by the citizenry in day-to-day activities of the state" (Stewart 1976).

Over the last few decades, demands for direct citizen participation in the United States have grown at the local, state, and national levels. Many calls for more direct participation are aimed at administrative agencies because they represent the most permeable area of government—where major decisions affecting the public are made and where citizens have the most potential influence. Moreover, the executive branch is where much of the actual work of government gets done and where officials are perhaps most easily held accountable.

At least two sets of arguments are behind calls for increased direct participation, including those based on normative ideals and those based on more pragmatic claims about the potential benefits of participation:

- **Arguments based on normative ideals.** Participation is intrinsically good, and it is the right thing to do regardless of other outcomes. Participation is an important part of democracy—it fosters legitimacy, transparency, accountability, and other democratic

values. Moreover, citizens should have a say (and want to have a say) in decisions that affect their lives, and, when done well, citizens actually like to participate. Administrative agencies make numerous decisions that affect the public, and citizens need to have a voice in those decisions. Therefore, participation should be a regular feature in the work of administrative agencies regardless of any benefits it may (or may not) produce.

- **Arguments based on the pragmatic benefits of participation.** The old (or traditional) ways of dealing with public problems no longer work because they do not account for the "new political conditions facing leaders and managers" and the new "expectations and capacities of ordinary people" (Leighninger 2012). Citizen participation offers a potential solution because it has many instrumental benefits for citizens, communities, and policy and governance. Participation creates and fosters better citizens because it promotes education about government and policy and improves basic civic skills and dispositions. It helps build healthy communities because it raises awareness about problems, develops the motivation, leadership, and capacity to address those problems, and builds social capital. It creates better policy decisions and improves governance because it generates more information, builds consensus, and increases buy-in and support of (potentially unpopular) decisions. Given these beneficial outcomes, participation should be a regular feature in the work of administrative agencies.

Not everyone agrees that participation is normatively desirable or that it always has instrumental benefits—many have suggested that too much participation can undermine the representative system of government and potentially harm citizens, administrators, and policy and governance. Unfortunately, empirical evidence does little to resolve this debate—suggesting at least one reason why more and better evaluation of citizen participation processes is needed: evaluating participation can help public managers maximize the benefits and minimize the challenges or drawbacks of participation.

Some public managers employ citizen participation because they realize it can have "positive benefits to the substance, transparency, legitimacy, and fairness of policy development as well as the general view of government held by citizens" (Lukensmeyer and Torres 2006). They also see the potential for a specific gain to be realized through participation in a particular issue or decision. However, it is fair to say that citizen participation, particularly at the federal and state levels, has traditionally been conducted in response to legal requirements or mandates (Bingham 2010; Bingham, Nabatchi, and O'Leary 2005).

A host of legislation at all levels of U.S. government directs managers to use citizen participation in a variety of administrative contexts (for discussion, see Bingham 2010). While it is beyond the scope of this report to detail all federal legislation requiring participation, there is now mandatory public participation in policy arenas such as the environment, planning, land use, housing, and emergency management, among others. Not surprisingly, the phrase "public participation" or a related term (such as public involvement) appear over 200 times in the United States Code and over 1000 times in the Code of Federal Regulations (Bingham 2010). Also note that President Obama's (2009) Open Government Memorandum and Open Government Initiative (http://www.whitehouse.gov/Open) call for more public participation in federal policy-making. Thus, regardless of normative desires or idealistic visions, public participation is important in public administration because it is often a legal requirement, and therefore a reality in the work of many public managers and public agencies. Beyond meeting legal requirements, however, public participation can also serve many purposes for public managers.

What are the Goals of Citizen Participation in Public Administration?

Citizen participation can have many goals. When determining goals, public managers must be mindful not only of their own needs, but also the needs (and interests) of potential allies, stakeholders, and citizens. For example, participation can be used to:

- **Inform the public:** let citizens know about issues, changes, resources, and policies

- **Explore an issue:** help citizens learn about a topic or problem

- **Transform a conflict:** help resolve disagreements and improve relations among groups

- **Obtain feedback:** understand citizen views of an issue, problem, or policy

- **Generate ideas:** help create new suggestions and alternatives

- **Collect data:** gather information about citizens' perceptions, concerns, needs, values, interests, etc.

- **Identify problems:** get information about current and potential issues

- **Build capacity:** improve the community's ability to address issues

- **Develop collaboration:** bring groups and people together to address an issue

- **Make decisions:** make judgments about problems, alternatives, and solutions

Scholars and practitioners have developed numerous models, frameworks, and typologies for understanding citizen participation (e.g., Arnstein 1969; Cooper, Bryer, and Meek 2006; Creighton 2005; Fung 2006; NCDD 2008), but perhaps the most prevalent is the International Association for Public Participation's Spectrum of Public Participation (IAP2 2007).

The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation presents a five-point continuum of participatory processes: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. Each point along the spectrum represents a different purpose for citizen participation and has a different level of citizen empowerment or shared decision-making authority. The five points, from lowest to highest shared decision authority, are discussed briefly below (all quotes are from IAP2 2007 unless otherwise noted). Figure 1 presents an adapted version of the spectrum, including the goals and promise at each point, along with some general (i.e., unnamed) and specific (i.e., named) processes (see IAP2 2006 for a more complete list of techniques, tools, and processes that can be used at points along the continuum). It is important to note that the many examples that fall in the same category have fundamental differences in both their design and their assumptions about how and why public engagement should be done.

Inform

At the first level of the spectrum are processes that inform, or "provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions." At this level, the public has virtually no shared decision-making authority; thus, the promise made by government to the public is simply, "We will keep you informed." Some examples of informational processes include static websites, mailings, bill stuffers, fact sheets, 311 call centers, and open meeting webcasts. Social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter are also sometimes used to inform the public.

Consult

At the second level are processes that consult with the public, or "obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions." Consultation processes provide minimal, if any,

Figure 1: Modified Spectrum of Participation*

			Increasing Level of Shared Decision Authority →		
	Inform	**Consult**	**Involve**	**Collaborate**	**Empower**
Goal of Public Participation	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain feedback on analyses, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public
Promise to the Public	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what you decide
Examples	Websites, Mailings, Bill Stuffers, Fact Sheets, 311 Call Centers, Open Meeting Webcasts, Social Media Tools (e.g., Facebook or Twitter)	Public Meetings, Focus Groups, Citizen Surveys, Public Comment Devices, Interactive Websites	Public Workshops, National Issues Forums, Deliberative Polling®, Wikiplanning	Citizen Advisory Committees, 21st Century Town Meeting®, Citizens Jury®	Delegated Decision-Making Processes, Participatory Budgeting

This chart is adapted from the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation (IAP2 2007).

shared decision authority, and promise only to "listen to and acknowledge [citizens'] concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision." Some face-to-face examples include traditional public meetings and focus groups. Other consultation processes are done remotely through citizen surveys or various public comment devices; still others are done through specific interactive websites such as SeeClickFix.com, FixMyStreet.com, or LoveLewisham.org, as well as through numerous other general websites that use social media and Web 2.0 technologies.

Involve

At the third level are processes that involve the public, or "work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered." Involvement processes promise that public "concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed;" thus, they have an inherent level of shared decision authority, though this can range from low to moderate. Public workshops are a general example of face-to-face involvement processes, and National Issues Forums (e.g., Melville, Willingham, and Dedrick 2005) are a specific example. Deliberative Polling® (e.g., Fishkin and Farrar 2005) is a specific example that may be done face-to-face or online, and wiki-planning (www.wikiplanning.org) is a specific online example.

Collaborate

At the fourth level are processes that collaborate with the public, or "partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution." Collaborative processes promise that public "advice and recommendations" will be incorporated "into the decisions to the maximum extent possible;" thus, they have a moderate to high level of shared decision authority. Some citizen advisory committees may be structured as collaborative processes. The America*Speaks* 21st Century Town Meeting® (Lukensmeyer, Goldman, and Brigham 2005) and the Citizens Jury® (Crosby and Nethercut 2005) are specific examples of face-to-face collaborative processes.

Empower

At the highest level are processes that empower the public, or "place final decision-making in the hands of the public." Empowerment processes have the highest level of shared decision authority because the promise made is that the government will implement what the public decides. Participatory budgeting, which may be done online or face-to-face, can be an empowerment process, particularly when done in the style of Porto Alegre, Brazil, where citizens make neighborhood-level decisions on budgeted items (see, Abers 1998; Baiocchi 2001; Wampler 2007). Other processes that guarantee delegated decision authority can also be considered empowerment processes.

The Challenge of Evaluating Citizen Participation

Program evaluation is defined as the systematic application of social science research procedures to assess the conceptualization, design, implementation, operation, and outcomes of projects or programs. Simply stated, program evaluation is the process of collecting, analyzing, and using information to understand how a program is operating and/or the outcomes and impacts it is having on the recipients, organizations, and society. There are several types of program evaluation. This report focuses on two types: process evaluation and impact evaluation.

Before exploring these two types of evaluation, it is useful to examine the importance and challenges of evaluating citizen participation in public administration. A growing number of agency programs now employ and deploy different approaches to citizen participation. At present, there exist no systematic comparisons of citizen participation processes and methods, despite the fact that agency officials are increasingly required to engage the public. Public managers need to move toward more comprehensive and methodical evaluations of citizen participation to improve understanding of where, when, why, and how citizen participation works and does not. Evaluation will help future managers understand what type of participation, under what circumstances, creates what results. The box, *Benefits of Evaluating Citizen Participation,* further explores the importance of evaluation.

Satisfying the growing need (and desire) for more and better evaluation of citizen participation is hampered by several challenges. We lack comprehensive frameworks for analysis. There are no agreed-upon evaluation methods, and few reliable measurement tools. This is due in large part to several other difficulties in evaluating citizen participation.

There is tremendous variety in the design and goals of participatory processes. Thus, evaluation frameworks must be general enough to apply across settings and types of processes, yet specific enough to have value for research and practice.

Public participation is an inherently complex and value-laden concept. There are no widely held criteria for judging the success and failure of citizen participation efforts. Some advocates focus on the intrinsic benefits of participation and believe that its instrumental outcomes are irrelevant. Others focus on its instrumental outcomes for citizens, communities, policy, and governance. Critics often doubt both sets of claims. Evaluating across all of these and other outcomes is impractical, yet what is (and is not) evaluated sends clear signals about the goals of the program and the values of its managers.

Program managers should consider two types of evaluations—process evaluations (which examine program management and administration) and impact evaluations (which examine program outcomes and results)—as both will be important to understanding citizen participation. While conducting both a process and an impact evaluation of a participatory program may be desirable, it is not always possible or practical.

Benefits of Evaluating Citizen Participation

Evaluations are important because they are used to judge the merit or worth of programs, processes, policies, and performance, and can yield numerous benefits for agencies, managers, and other associated stakeholders. Evaluating citizen participation has interrelated benefits that include the following:

Accountability. Evaluation can help improve and verify accountability structures. Elected officials, agency personnel, stakeholders, civic leaders, and citizens want to know if the programs they are funding, implementing, voting for, objecting to, or receiving are actually having the intended effects. Answering this question can only be done through evaluation. Evaluation can help serve these ends by providing one mechanism of quality control.

Management. Evaluation provides useful and practical information about a program in its context that can help administrators monitor and improve implementation and management. For example, evaluation can offer a fresh look at a program, increase knowledge and awareness of program impacts, identify areas for program improvement, track changes and impacts over time, and help determine whether a program should be modified, expanded, continued, or cancelled.

Finance and resources. Evaluation can help ensure that public monies and resources are being used appropriately and efficiently. In an era of budget scarcity, evaluation can be used to assess the costs and benefits of public participation programs, to determine whether participation saves time and money in the long run, and to ascertain how best to allocate financial, human, technological, and other resources to achieve desired goals. Such information will be extremely useful for justifying programs, particularly when those programs are effective but at risk of being scaled back or cut altogether.

Legality. Evaluation can help managers determine whether their participation programs are adhering to—and meeting the intentions of—relevant laws, rules, and mandates. Because much citizen participation is mandated by law, it is important to understand how such programs are being used to accomplish broader societal or legal goals and how well they are serving the needs of government writ large, as well as the needs of individual agencies and the public.

Ethics. Evaluation can help make sure that participation programs have fair and appropriate representation and that participants understand the impact of their contributions. This makes participation programs more likely to foster democratic values such as transparency, accountability, and legitimacy, among others.

Ownership. When done right, evaluation can help build ownership of problems, processes, and outcomes (both within and outside the agency). Within the agency, evaluation signals that a program is supported and considered meaningful. Outside the agency, evaluation demonstrates to allies, stakeholders, and citizens that the agency is interested in improving its participatory processes. This might generate interest among outside groups in assisting with evaluation and taking a stronger role in addressing the problem or issue for which participation is being used.

Research and theory support. Evaluation can help improve the study and practice of citizen participation. Most research on citizen participation has dealt with questions about scope (Who participates? How many participate? How is participation structured?). There has been less focus on questions of quality (Is participation effective? What are its impacts and outcomes?). These and other questions about quality can only be answered through evaluation.

Evaluation can be useful to a number of audiences. Agency officials, program managers, participants, affected public(s), practitioners, scholars, citizens, and others are likely to be interested in the results of evaluations, but each is also likely to desire and value different evaluation criteria and information. Thus, whereas informal assessments may meet the evaluation needs of some audiences (e.g., participants or the public), other audiences may require more rigorous evaluations that use well-defined and systematic research based on accepted social science methodologies (e.g., academics). Likewise, some audiences (e.g., practitioners and elected officials) may be more interested in the impacts participation had on individuals or groups, whereas other audiences (e.g., program managers and public officials) may be more interested in program costs and efficiency.

Evaluation can be a daunting, resource-intensive task. Evaluation is often a scary word—one that can provoke anxiety for the responsible person—and particularly one new to such endeavors. The technical issues in evaluation and the idea of evaluating peers, colleagues, and one's own professional work can be intimidating. Moreover, time, money, personnel, and other valuable resources are often in short supply, making the task of the evaluator even more challenging.

Several additional points should be made. First, evaluation efforts will vary depending on whether one is evaluating a single public participation process, a participation program that involves a number of activities spread over the course of months or even years, or a long-term program that has numerous processes (Creighton 2005). For purposes of clarity, this report simply refers to public participation programs or processes without distinguishing among the number, frequency, or duration of activities, though these issues certainly need to be addressed in any evaluation.

Second, the steps in this report were developed, in part, by reviewing and adapting protocols, procedures, and recommendations for evaluating alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in the federal government (e.g., Dispute Systems Design Working Group 1993, 1995). Evaluation of both ADR and public participation present many of the same problems and difficulties. Both occur in many arenas, encompass a wide variety of tools, techniques, and processes, potentially have different meanings of success for different parties, and can be evaluated using an array of methods and measurement tools.

Finally, after the release of President Obama's Open Government Memorandum, numerous administrative policy changes were made to enable federal agencies to make greater use of social media and other Web 2.0 technologies to engage the public, e.g., the General Services Administration prepared new Terms of Service Agreements with social network services providers, and the Office of Management and Budget made changes to the cookie policy to allow government agencies to collect data (for more discussion, see Mergel, 2012).

Despite these changes, public managers face real challenges in evaluating the impacts of their online participatory activities. The most prominent challenge is that at this time, there are no officially allowed or approved tools available that go beyond mere quantitative counts of website traffic.

At present, most agencies have no formal metrics in place, and measurement tools provided by vendors are not used. Most agencies using social media count their friends and number of likes on Facebook, and their number of Twitter followers. Some are using rudimentary measurement techniques offered by third-party service provides (e.g., Google Analytics or Facebook Insights). While such data do offer indicators of interest in the online activities used by agencies to engage the public, they do not provide information about the impacts and outcomes of such activities. Moreover, although agencies may use pop-up web surveys, these are subject to restrictions and must receive clearance from the Office of Management and Budget before they can be used.

The remainder of this report addresses many of these challenges by providing overviews of process and impact evaluation for citizen participation in public administration. These are generic enough to be used across program contexts, settings, designs, and other unique features, but specific enough to enable managers to develop robust, useful evaluations of their programs. Before discussing process and impact evaluations, the report first explores program evaluation more closely.

For More Information

- **About the procedures and requirements for agency use of web measurement and customization technologies:** see the June 25, 2010, Office of Management and Budget Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies at http://www.whitehouse.gov/ sites/default/files/ omb/assets/memoranda_2010/m10-22.pdf.

- **About measuring the impact of social media devices:** see Mergel (2012).

An Overview of Program Evaluation

Program evaluation has five basic steps:

- Pre-design planning and preparation

- Evaluation design

- Implementation

- Data analysis and interpretation

- Writing and distributing the results

A number of books provide detailed overviews of program evaluation (Langbein and Felbinger 2006; Owen 2007; Rossi and Freeman 1993; Royse, Thyer, and Padgett 2006; Vedung 2009; Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer 2004), so only a brief discussion of the steps is presented here. For a summary of each step, refer to the box, *Basic Steps of Program Evaluation.* Appendix I provides worksheets that guide managers through some of these steps.

Basic Steps of Program Evaluation

1. Pre-Design Planning and Preparation
- Determine goals and objectives for the evaluation
- Decide about issues of timing and expense
- Select an evaluator(s)
- Identify the audience(s) for the evaluation

2. Evaluation Design
- Determine focus of the evaluation in light of overall program design and operation
- Develop appropriate research questions and measurable performance indicators based on program goals and objectives
- Determine the appropriate evaluation design strategy
- Determine how to collect data based on needs and availability

3. Evaluation Implementation
- Take steps necessary to collect high-quality data
- Conduct data entry or otherwise store data for analysis

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation
- Conduct analysis of data and interpret results in a way that is appropriate for the overall evaluation design

5. Writing and Distributing Results
- Decide what results need to be communicated
- Determine best methods for communicating results
- Prepare results in appropriate format
- Disseminate results

Step One: Pre-Design Planning and Preparation

This is the key to good evaluation. During this initial step, program managers make several important decisions that shape the overall quality and usefulness of the evaluation. Specifically, program managers need to:

- **Determine the goals and objectives of the evaluation,** which should be clearly connected to the goals and objectives of the participation program.

- **Consider issues of timing and expense,** which are influenced by several factors, such as the number and complexity of performance indicators, type of evaluation design, level of statistical significance required, availability of acceptable data for comparison, and parties selected to carry out the evaluation, among others.

- **Determine who will conduct the evaluation.** Desirable evaluators will have objectivity, experience, technical expertise, and an understanding of the organization or context in which the program operates. (See Appendix II for a discussion of benefits and drawbacks to potential evaluators.)

- **Identify the potential audiences for the evaluation** and be sensitive to their varied needs and interests, as illustrated in the accompanying text box, *Potential Interests of Different Audiences.*

Step Two: Evaluation Design

The purpose of this step is to design the evaluation in a way that generates the desired and necessary information, but is also consistent with financial and time constraints. Four issues are of particular importance:

- **Determine the focus of the evaluation** in light of the overall participation program's design and operation. As noted, two types of evaluations, process and impact, are likely to be useful in citizen participation. Table 2 outlines differences between process and impact evaluations.

Potential Interests of Different Audiences

Program managers are likely to be interested in how the participatory program is working and how it might be improved. The results of a process evaluation will thus be important to them, although results from an impact evaluation are also likely to be important.

Other agency officials and managers (e.g., persons in the offices of budget, general counsel, inspectors general, and other participatory programs) will also be interested in the results of evaluations. For example, budget office personnel will likely have an interest in the costs and cost-savings of participatory programs. General counsels and Inspectors General will likely be interested in issues of access and outcomes. Other program managers might be interested in whether the evaluation results are generalizable and whether there is potential for replicating the program.

Legislators and other elected officials may be interested in knowing how public participation is being implemented and used per legislation and to what ends.

Academics, researchers, and practitioners may be interested in knowing the connections between program design and outcomes.

Program participants might be interested in knowing how their participation in the program affected the final decision.

General citizens might be interested in knowing how a public participation program impacted policy decisions.

Table 2: Differences between Process and Impact Evaluations

	Process Evaluation	Impact Evaluation
Definition	A systematic assessment of whether a program is operating in conformity with its design and reaching its specified target population.	A systematic assessment of the outcomes or effects (both intended and unintended) of an intervention to determine whether a program is achieving its desired results.
Overarching Goal	To better understand the inputs and outputs of program implementation and management	To determine whether a program produced its intended effects
Overarching Questions	"What?" • What is the program intended to be? • What is delivered by the program in reality? • What are the gaps between program design and delivery?	"So What?" • What are the outcomes or results of the program? • To what extent are these effects or changes in outcome indicators a function of program activities?
Focus	Inputs, Outputs	Outcomes, Results
Some Potential Uses	• To assess whether a program is operating in conformity with its design • To determine whether a program is being managed well and efficiently • To understand what worked and what did not • To identify areas for program development and improvement	• To assess whether the program achieved its intended goals/outcomes • To determine whether outcomes vary across groups or over time • To ascertain whether the program is worth the resources it costs • To help prioritize actions and inform decisions about whether to expand, modify, or eliminate the program
Audiences Likely to Be Interested	• Program managers and staff • Other agency officials	• Program managers and staff • Other agency officials • Legislators and elected officials • Academics, researchers, and practitioners • Program participants • General citizens

- **Develop research questions and performance measures** that are aligned with the evaluation goals and objectives.

- **Select an appropriate design strategy.** Table 3 describes several of the most common evaluation strategies, including case study, time series, quasi-experimental and experimental designs, and the benefits and drawbacks of each.

- **Make decisions about data collection** based on available or potential data sources, such as observational data, archival data, and program data.

Step Three: Evaluation Implementation

Here the evaluation design is put into action and data collection begins. The goal is to obtain high-quality, reliable, valid data. A reliable evaluation tool, for example an interview or a survey, will repeatedly yield the same results. A valid evaluation tool (or individual measures within an evaluation tool) accurately measures what is intended to be measured.

Table 3: Common Evaluation Design Strategies

Evaluation Strategy	Description	Benefits	Drawbacks
Case Study Design	• Focus on one or more cases where participation was used • May describe the goals, objectives, start-up procedures, implementation processes, and outcomes of a program	• Detailed description that allows comparisons of similar situations where participation was and was not used • Comparatively inexpensive and less time-consuming	• Inferential • Less scientific weight • Does not allow examination of cause and effect
Time Series Design	• Collect information about a particular group over time	• Allows assessment of changes in indicators (e.g., participants' perceptions) over time	• Requires longitudinal data • Does not allow for comparisons to another group (unless data are collected for that group as well)
Quasi-Experimental Comparison Group Design	• Use naturally occurring groups (e.g., those who participated in program and those who did not participate in program) to assess outcomes	• Useful in determining whether outcomes are the result of the program or something else	• Not always easy/possible to get access to groups that did not participate in program
Experimental Control Group Design	• Individuals are randomly assigned to participate or not participate in program	• Best way to ensure that outcomes are the result of the program • Holds the most scientific weight	• Not always possible for ethical, financial, and other reasons • A complex research design that is comparatively more expensive and timely

Step Four: Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation can range from simple descriptive methods to highly complex statistical methods. The choice of analyses depends on the goals for the evaluation, the over-all evaluation design, the type(s) of data collected, the interest of the evaluation audiences, and the timeline for completion of the evaluation.

Step Five: Writing and Distributing the Results

Once the analyses are complete, the results must be communicated to the appropriate audiences. To do so, program managers need to decide what results needs to be communicated, determine the best methods for communicating the results, prepare the results in an appropriate format, and disseminate them.

Evaluating the Implementation and Management of Citizen Participation

A process evaluation is "a systematic assessment of whether or not a program is operating in conformity to its design and reaching its specified target population" (Rossi and Freeman 1993). The general goal of a process evaluation is to enhance a program by understanding the inputs and outputs of its implementation and management more fully. Accordingly, a process evaluation can help with several areas of program administration. For example, a process evaluation can help gauge what worked and what did not; it can help assess whether a program is being managed and administered efficiently; it can identify areas for program development and improvement; it can help appraise accountability mechanisms; and it can help determine a program's potential for replication by others (Rossi and Freeman 1993). Given these potential benefits, process evaluations are most likely to be of interest to the managers and staff running the participation program, as well as to other agency officials.

When conducting a process evaluation, three questions are important to keep in mind:

- What is the program intended to be?

- What is delivered by the program in reality?

- What are the gaps between program design and delivery? (Bliss and Emshoff 2002)

To answer these questions, the most important areas to consider are arguably program organization, service delivery, general and program-specific outputs, specific program features, and intervening events. In the following discussion, specific evaluation questions and indicators are identified for each of these broad areas. Table 4 lists each process evaluation area, along with the main question to be considered and the most useful data sources. It will be up to the program manager and the evaluator to determine which of these (and potentially other) areas and questions are most important and applicable to the program being evaluated. Examples and tips are provided here to assist in this effort; also refer to the worksheets in Appendix I.

Before proceeding, it is important to note two issues. First, the term "participants" is used broadly in the following discussion to refer to a variety of internal and external stakeholders; it may be necessary to distinguish among these groups in the actual evaluation. Second, there are likely to be few significant differences in conducting process evaluations for face-to-face and online programs, therefore, only a small number of distinctions between these types of participation programs are made below. However, there are federal restrictions on data collection methods and the types of data that can be collected from the public. Managers will need to ensure that all aspects of their evaluation design, including but not limited to data types and collection methods, are in line with federal regulations.

> *Tip: Consider using an inside evaluator. Because process evaluations focus on and are used primarily for internal purposes (e.g., improving the implementation and management of a participation process), inside evaluators (e.g., those from the program or agency) can be particularly useful and cost-effective. Make sure that the evaluator is perceived to be unbiased by the target audience of the program under study.*

Program Organization

The organization of a program is critical to its success and effectiveness. It is important to assess at least five components of program organization.

1. **Program implementation and operation.** How was the program implemented and how does it operate? What problems were encountered during implementation, and how were they resolved? Were all planned activities implemented? If not, what remains to be done? Were planned activities accomplished on schedule? Why or why not? Were objectives, plans, or timetables revised? If so, why was this necessary? How much time was spent during planning, implementation, evaluation, and other program-related activities? What costs were incurred? Did they exceed initial projections? What was the level of support within the agency, among internal and external stakeholders, and among the public? What lessons have been learned that might be useful to future efforts? Are the program's structure and processes consistent with underlying laws, regulations, and executive orders; and agency guidance, mandates, rules and regulations, and expectations?

2. **Directives, guides, and standards.** Do program directives, guidelines, manuals, and standards provide sufficient information for program administration and use? Are these materials in line with the program's goals and objectives?

3. **Delineation of staff and participant responsibilities.** Does the delineation of staff and participant responsibilities reflect program design and operation? Does this delineation of responsibilities foster smooth and effective program operation?

4. **Sufficiency of staff.** Are the number, type, and training of staff adequate to meet operational needs? Do staff responsibilities reflect program design and enable effective operation?

5. **Coordination and working relationships.** Have effective collaborative relationships been established to carry out program objectives? Is the needed coordination with other internal and external actors (both individuals and organizations) taking place?

> *Tip: Use personnel involved in the delivery of the participatory process to gather important information about program organization. They are likely to have insights and experiences that may not be immediately apparent to those who are not on the front lines. Much of this data can be collected through structured discussions with program personnel, for example, at staff meetings or through interviews or focus groups. However, it will be important for the manager and evaluator to create an atmosphere where personnel feel comfortable discussing the positives and negatives of the participatory program.*

Service Delivery

Four areas of service delivery are important to assess, including access, neutral parties or facilitators, procedural understanding, and issue selection.

1. **Access:** Has the program served its intended public? Are potential participants aware of the program? How are they made aware of the program? Do all potentially affected parties have access to the program? Are all potentially affected parties represented in the program? What proportion or percentage of potential participants actually participated? What were the demographic and other characteristics of participants? Do participant perceptions of the program impact their willingness to participate? What is the level of repeat participation?

2. **Neutral parties or facilitators.** If neutral parties or facilitators are used in the program, are they adequately trained? Do they have a sufficient understanding of the program and its goals to be effective?

Table 4: Process Evaluation Areas, Main Question, and Data Sources

Evaluation Area	Main Question	Data Sources
Program Organization		
1. Program Implementation and Operation	Was the participatory program implemented and does it operate as designed?	Archival, Program Staff
2. Directives, Guides, and Standards	Do program directives, guidelines, manuals, and standards provide sufficient information for program administration and use?	Archival, Program Staff
3. Delineation of Staff and Participant Responsibilities	Does the delineation of staff and participant responsibilities reflect the design of the participatory program and enable its smooth operation?	Archival, Program Staff
4. Sufficiency of Staff	Are the number, type, and training of staff adequate to meet the operational needs of the participatory program?	Archival, Program Staff
5. Coordination and Working Relationships	Have effective collaborative relationships been established to carry out the objectives of the participatory program?	Archival, Program Staff, Stakeholders, Observation
Service Delivery		
1. Access	Are potential participants aware of the program and do they have access to the program?	Participants, Program Staff
2. Neutrals/Facilitators	Are neutrals/facilitators effective in the participatory program?	Participants, Program Staff, Observational Data
3. Procedural Understanding	Do program staff and participants understand how the participatory program works?	Participants, Program Staff
4. Issue Selection	Are appropriate issues being discussed in the participatory program?	Participants, Program Staff, Stakeholders, Observation
General and Process-Specific Outputs	What are the general outputs from the participation program? What are the outputs specific to the goals and objectives of the participatory program?	Archival
Specific Program Features	What unique features of the participatory program should be assessed?	All data sources possible depending on features assessed
Intervening Events	What events may have influenced the implementation and operation of the participatory program?	Observation, Program Staff

3. **Procedural understanding.** Do personnel and participants understand the purpose of the program and how it works? Is there a relationship between their understanding of the program and their willingness to participate? Do participants have the materials and skills needed to participate effectively? Do the participants have the right level of influence or empowerment?

4. **Issue selection.** Are appropriate issues being discussed in the program? Are issues being discussed at the right stage of the policy process? Do participants perceive the selection and timing of issues to be fair? Are certain issues not being discussed that perhaps should be?

Tip: Consider integrating service delivery data collection devices into the regular practice of participation. For example, registration forms or surveys can be used to capture information from participants about access, awareness, demographics, perceptions about neutral parties, and procedural understanding. Similarly, short and simple surveys can be given to neutral parties or facilitators to capture their perceptions of these issues. Collecting data throughout the participatory program will make evaluation easier.

General and Process-Specific Outputs

Both general and process-specific outputs are important to examine in a process evaluation.

- **General outputs.** Examples include the number of participants; number and types of issues reported; number and types of issues addressed; number of reports created and disseminated; number and types of data collected; number and types of databases created; and changes to guidelines, directives, or plans.

   Tip: Consider using a management information system to collect output (and other) data. Most output data are numbers-oriented and easy to collect through documentation, especially if documentation systems are set up before and used throughout the implementation of the participation program. Such documentation work can be built into relevant staff job descriptions.

- **Process-specific outputs.** Outputs will vary depending on the particular processes used in the program, for example, the process's location on the IAP2 spectrum. Examples of outputs for each level along the spectrum are below. These examples are not comprehensive and will vary depending on the specific nature of the program.

   - **Inform**: Number of fact sheets or bill stuffers mailed or distributed; hits on website; open houses or meetings held; calls to a customer service center

   - **Consult:** Number of attendees at public meetings or focus groups; comments received; surveys completed; issues raised or addressed

   - **Involve:** Number of attendees at workshops or other meetings; individuals polled; individuals interviewed; different concerns raised or addressed; viable alternatives suggested

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Pinellas County, Florida

To evaluate its information activities, the Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in Florida examined several indicators, including the number of hits on its website and the number of times relevant documents and maps were visited and viewed. Counting mechanisms were built directly into their website. The MPO also used a pop-up web survey to learn how citizens stayed informed about MPO activities (MPO 2008).

The MPO also developed and implemented a tracking system to capture data about its public outreach events (which could be categorized as either consult or involve). This system has a simple user interface in which staff members record data about events, including their titles, topic, date, location, and attendee numbers. The MPO is currently working to create mechanisms to track how many comments are received and how they are handled (MPO 2008).

- **Collaborate:** Number of participants; issues and concerns raised or addressed; viable ideas, alternatives, or recommendations generated and implemented; new collaborative relationships developed

- **Empower:** Number of participants; issues and concerns raised or addressed; viable ideas, alternatives, or recommendations generated and implemented

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Open Government Memorandum

In response to the Open Government Memorandum, a number of federal agencies are using online technologies to engage the public in agency work (see Lukensmeyer, Goldman, and Stern 2011). Although most of these processes would not be categorized as collaborative or empowering, many agencies are collecting data that examine the number of ideas, alternatives, and recommendations generated. Other agencies are working to develop indicators that go beyond quantity of participation to assess quality. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) plans to collect data on the number of ideas from the public that are adopted and the impacts they have on EPA outcomes.

Specific Program Features

Every public participation process is unique; thus, agency officials and evaluators may consider examining specific features of the process as appropriate. These unique features may relate to the design of a program, the personnel involved in program design and administration, and agency support, among others.

> *Tip: Talk with program personnel and stakeholders to identify specific program features that will be of interest in a process evaluation.*

Intervening Events

Programs operate in continually changing environments, and it is possible that intervening events will affect the results of a process evaluations. Types of intervening events that may affect a program are numerous, complex, and varied; they may or may not be able to be controlled or eliminated. Examples include internal environmental changes or agency-level events, such as policy changes, budgetary changes, and changes in leadership or administration, among others, as well as external environmental changes, such as events in the community and policies and programs implemented by other organizations.

Summary

The purpose of a process evaluation is to determine whether a program is reaching its target population and operating in conformance with its design. The general goal of a process evaluation is to enhance the program by understanding the inputs and outputs of implementation and management. Process evaluations can be useful managerial tools and assist in several aspects of program improvement.

The process evaluation steps presented in this section outline several important areas to be assessed and analyzed, and offer specific questions and indicators to do so. Additional important questions and indicators can and should be developed for a thorough process evaluation of citizen participation in public administration. However, by assessing the areas of program organization, service delivery, general and process-specific outputs, specific program features, and intervening events, a manager should be able to understand the citizen participation

program more fully, assess its development, and identify opportunities for improvement. Appendix I provides several useful worksheets for managers wishing to conduct a process or impact evaluation of a participatory program. (For a detailed workbook on designing a process evaluation, see Bliss and Emshoff 2002).

The Seattle Neighborhood Planning Program

In 1994, Seattle established a Neighborhood Planning Program that encouraged citizens to "create their own plans to manage future growth with funding support from the City." By the end of 1999, over 16,000 citizens in 38 geographically defined neighborhoods had been involved in planning processes. As the city "grappled with the complexities of effective citizen participation," it needed to:

- Understand why some participation efforts were perceived as effective and accountable while others were not
- Identify the barriers to effectiveness that some efforts faced
- Determine how to ensure that future participatory processes were inclusive, accessible, and open to all citizens
- Understand whether and how citizen participation was used (and could be used in the future) to accomplish broad citywide goals and meet needs
- Determine how to maintain the viability and involvement of stewardship groups to help implement the 38 approved neighborhood plans

These issues motivated the Seattle Planning Commission to conduct an evaluation of citizen participation efforts to "identify basic characteristics of effective participation and to make recommendations to the City regarding future City support of citizen participation" (Seattle Planning Commission 2000).

Although the commission took the lead on the evaluation, it also worked with an interdepartmental staff team and an outside consultant, and got input on the evaluation design from citizens active in participation processes. The commission also held a public forum to present the results and draft recommendations before finalizing the report and giving it to the city council and mayor for action.

Data were collected from multiple sources using multiple methods, including:

- Archival data (obtained by working with relevant city staff)
- A mail survey to participants that focused on their experiences and opinions
- In-depth interviews with city staff and participating citizens to test the mail survey results and obtain specific comments about some issues
- Telephone interviews with a random sample of citizens
- Focus groups with city staff, participating citizens, and members of the City Neighborhood Council
- Archival data and interviews with key staff in five other cities that had active neighborhood-based participation efforts

The planning commission asserts that the evaluation project provided "rich information regarding how various City-sponsored citizen participation efforts operate, what citizens' perceptions of their role and effectiveness is and what needs to be done to improve these City-supported processes" (Seattle Planning Commission 2000). In addition, the evaluation report was "particularly useful in identifying what is working and ways to improve how City-initiated and supported citizen participation can be more effective" (Seattle Planning Commission 2000).

Evaluating the Impact of Citizen Participation

Process evaluation focuses on the "what" question, while impact evaluation focuses on the "so what" question. Specifically, an impact evaluation is a systematic assessment of whether an intervention (in this case a public participation program) achieved its goals and produced its intended effects. The general goal of an impact evaluation is to determine and reveal the extent to which observed changes in outcome indicators are due to program activities. Several challenges complicate impact evaluations and make them generally more difficult to conduct than process evaluations:

- Impact evaluations can only be done once a program has been implemented.

- Many effects of participation take time to come to fruition; outcomes may not manifest for months or even years after the conclusion of a process.

- Impact evaluations presume a set of defined objectives and criteria of success; that is, they assume there is a definition of effectiveness.

- Determining the counterfactual is a challenge when evaluating participatory processes; it is hard to know what the outcomes would have been in the absence of participation.

Despite these challenges, impact evaluations can generate valuable information. For example, they can help improve program effectiveness by answering questions about whether the program achieved its intended goals or changed intended outcomes; whether program impacts vary across different groups of participants or over time; whether there are any positive or negative unintended consequences or effects of the program; whether the program is effective in comparison to alternative interventions; and, whether the program is worth what it costs. Accordingly, impact evaluations can help prioritize actions and inform decisions about whether to modify, expand, replicate, or eliminate a particular program. Given these potential benefits, impact evaluations are likely to be of value to a wide variety of audiences, including program managers and staff, other agency officials, elected officials, academics, researchers, and practitioners, program participants, and the general public.

When conducting an impact evaluation, it is important to keep in mind some key questions, including:

- What does and does not work?

- Where, when, why, and how do certain elements work?

- What are the costs of the overall program and its specific elements?

To answer these questions, several areas can be explored, among the most important of which are arguably efficiency, participant satisfaction, general outcomes, process-specific outcomes, specific program features, and intervening events. In the discussion below, specific evaluation questions are identified for each of these broad areas. Table 5 lists each of the impact evaluation areas, along with the main question to be considered and the most useful data sources. It will

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be up to the program manager and the evaluator to determine which of these (and potentially other) areas and questions are most important and applicable to the program being evaluated. The worksheets provided in Appendix I can assist in this effort, and examples and tips are provided throughout the following discussion.

The term "participants" is used broadly here to refer to a variety of internal and external stakeholders, and it may be necessary to distinguish among these groups in the actual evaluation. Moreover, and in contrast to process evaluations, there are likely to be greater differences in conducting impact evaluations for face-to-face and online programs. Distinctions between these types of participation programs are made when appropriate. Once again, it is important to be aware of federal restrictions on data collection and ensure that all aspects of the impact evaluation are in line with federal regulations.

Table 5: Impact Evaluation Areas, Main Question, and Data Sources

Evaluation Area	Main Question	Data Sources
Efficiency		
1. Costs to Agency	What agency costs are associated with the participatory program (e.g., staff time, dollars, and other resources)?	Archival, Program Staff
2. Time for Agency	How much agency time was required for the participatory program (from planning and design to implementation and evaluation)?	Archival, Program Staff
3. Cost to Participants	What participant costs are associated with the program (e.g., child care, elder care, transportation, etc.)?	Participants
4. Time for Participants	How much time was required of participants in the program (including pre- and post-participation activities)?	Participants
Participant Satisfaction	How satisfied are participants with various aspects of the program? (Note the five elements of participant satisfaction)	Participants
General Outcomes		
1. Benefits for Individuals	What are the outcomes of participation for individuals?	Participants
2. Benefits for Community	What are the outcomes of participation for the relevant community(ies)?	Participants, Stakeholders, Program Staff
3. Benefits for the Agency	What are the outcomes of participation for the agency?	Program Staff, Participants, Stakeholders
4. Benefits for Policy or Public Action	What are the outcomes of participation for policy or public action?	Program Staff, Participants, Stakeholders
Process-Specific Outcomes	What are the outcomes specific to the goals and objectives of the participatory program?	All data sources possible depending on outcomes assessed
Specific Program Features	What unique features of the participatory program should be assessed?	All data sources possible depending on features assessed
Intervening Events	What intervening events may have influenced the implementation and operation of the participatory program?	All data sources possible depending on the events assessed

Tip: Consider using an outside evaluator or a team of inside and outside evaluators. Impact evaluations often require greater rigor in data collection and analysis, and outside evaluators may have stronger skills and abilities in program evaluation and statistical methods. Moreover, outside evaluators may be seen as being more objective and impartial, which could be important depending on the goals of the evaluation. To minimize the costs of contracting with an outside evaluator, consider using academics, including advanced doctoral students.

Efficiency

This is perhaps the easiest area in which to identify impact evaluation criteria, although not necessarily the easiest to measure. At least two areas, costs and time, should be assessed for both the agency and participants.

- **Costs to the agency.** What are the financial costs associated with the public participation program (measured in staff time, dollars, resources such as material preparation or technologies, and other quantifiable factors)? Does participation cost more or less than the alternative? Does participation save money by easing policy implementation, for example by reducing conflict and potential challenges to the final decision or action?

    Tip: Work with an experienced evaluator to determine the importance, relevance, and feasibility of evaluating participation costs in comparison to other alternatives and with regard to long-term policy implementation. The evaluation of these agency costs requires knowing the counterfactual and having an abundance of data from multiple sources. In an ideal world, such information would be readily available, but in the real world this information can be very challenging to collect.

- **Time for the agency.** How much time was taken during the entire participatory program from design and planning stages to completion of the evaluation? Measures of time should be examined for all types of staff involved (e.g., administrative, legal, marketing, etc.) and should look individually at various participatory activities.

    Tip: Consider using a management information system to track time required by program personnel, as well as the financial costs associated with the public participation program. Personnel involved in the program can regularly enter relevant data into such a system, allowing for efficient tracking and analysis.

- **Costs to the participants:** What are the financial costs associated with participation in the program (e.g., child care, elder care, transportation)?

- **Time for the participants:** How much time was required of participants in the program? (Note: measures might include preparation time, travel time, time in participatory activities, and time for follow-up activities).

    Tip: Consider using a survey to collect cost and time data from participants. The survey can simply ask respondents to indicate various costs of, and estimate time spent in, participation. For face-to-face programs, surveys can be administered on site, either before or after the process. For online programs, administrators can build into the user interface either a pop-up web survey or a device to record time spent on the website. If contact information is available, surveys for either type of program can be administered via telephone or mail.

Participant Satisfaction

Measuring participant satisfaction with a participatory program should be a key feature in any impact evaluation—and luckily, it is fairly simple to do. The importance of participant satisfaction should not be underestimated. Having such data can inform public managers about how to better serve customers by making improvements to the participatory program. Specifically, participant satisfaction information enables managers to address specific problems, gain insight into what is happening in the program, and determine what changes should be made. Moreover, all federal agencies are required by the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) to measure customer satisfaction and make changes to improve service and satisfaction.

Several areas of participant satisfaction can be addressed. The most common include satisfaction with the:

- Participation process(es) used

- Outcomes

- Neutral parties or facilitators (if any)

- Information provided

- Discussions during the enactment of the program

Managers should work with the evaluator to determine which of these (and perhaps other) areas of participant satisfaction are most relevant and will be most useful in the impact evaluation.

> *Tip: Use a survey with simple Likert scale questions to collect data on participant satisfaction. Refer to the example in the* Sample Participant Satisfaction Survey *box to see one possible survey format and questions that may be relevant.*

Environmental Protection Agency

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) serves a wide variety of citizens, stakeholders, and partners in its work. To effectively do its job of protecting public health and the natural environment and serving its various customers, the EPA must communicate with them and listen to their ideas. It does so through a wide variety of activities, including participatory events such as forums, workshops, public meetings, Federal Advisory Committee Act group sessions, and community-wide exchanges, among others. The EPA also uses a variety of tools for collecting information about customer satisfaction, including informal sessions, focus groups, surveys, comment cards, Internet feedback screens, and more.

In an effort to improve its ability to collect and use satisfaction information, the EPA (through a participatory process) developed a set of guidelines for agency-wide use. The resulting document, "Hearing the Voice of the Customer," is available online (ww.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/feedback/voice.htm). Using the suggestions and steps outlined in this EPA document will help managers and evaluators think through the aspects of collecting satisfaction data in a wide variety of participatory program and processes.

Sample Participant Satisfaction Survey

Below are numerous questions that may be relevant to evaluating participant satisfaction with a program. The program manager and evaluator should decide which of the following questions are most important for the evaluation, as well as what other evaluation questions might be asked.

Directions: Please indicate how satisfied you are with each of the following:

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Satisfaction with the Process					
How satisfied are you with…					
The fairness of the participatory process?					
Your opportunity to participate in the process?					
The issues addressed in the process?					
The appropriateness/usefulness of the process to address the issue?					
The diversity of people in the process?					
The diversity of views and opinions in the process?					
Satisfaction with the Outcomes					
How satisfied are you with…					
The fairness of the outcomes?					
Your level of input on the outcomes?					
Your level of influence over the outcomes?					
The degree to which the outcomes represent broader community interests?					
Satisfaction with the Neutral(s) or Facilitator(s)					
How satisfied are you with…					
The performance of the facilitator?					
The neutrality [objectivity] of the facilitator?					
The fairness of the facilitator?					
The way you were treated by the facilitator?					
The way others were treated by the facilitator?					
Satisfaction with the Information Provided					
How satisfied are you with…					
The information you were provided about the process?					
The degree to which the provided information helped you understand the process?					
The degree to which the provided information prepared you to participate effectively in the process?					
The degree to which the provided information prepared others to participate effectively in the process?					
Satisfaction with the Discussions					
How satisfied are you with…					
The quality of the discussions?					
The civility of the discussions?					
The way you were treated during the discussions?					
The degree to which people were respectful of differing viewpoints?					
The degree to which the discussions were open, honest, and understandable?					

General Outcomes

As noted earlier in this report, several scholars and advocates have identified numerous potential outcomes of direct citizen participation, and particularly deliberative participation, in public administration (e.g., Button and Ryfe 2005; Fung 2003, 2006; Irvin and Stansbury 2004; Roberts 2008b). In general, these potential outcomes includes impacts on:

- Individual citizens

- Communities

- Government

- Public policy or public action

Notably, the manifestation of these outcomes and impacts may occur at different times following participation. For example, it is likely that the impact on participants will be apparent immediately after participation, whereas the impact on public or policy actions may not be apparent for months or even years. Moreover, proof of various impacts is likely to be important for different audiences and for different reasons. Managers and evaluators will need to work together to determine the importance, relevance, and feasibility of evaluating these various participatory impacts and outcomes.

- **Impact on citizens:** Are participants better informed about the issue(s) that were addressed in the participatory program? Did participation increase participants' perceptions of political efficacy, sophistication, interest, trust, respect, empathy, and public-spiritedness? Did participation help participants cultivate skills such as eloquence, rhetorical ability, courtesy, imagination, and reasoning capacity? Did participation help people clarify, understand, and refine their own preferences and positions on the issue(s)? Did participation change participants' views on the issue(s)? Did participation help people take more account of community or collective concerns? Did participation increase the likelihood that individuals will participate in future activities?

    Tip: Measuring changes among individuals is best accomplished with before-and-after surveys, and/or use of experimental and control or comparison groups. In the event that this is not feasible or possible, participants can be provided with a survey that simply asks for self-report data, for example, whether they are more informed, efficacious, trusting, empathetic, and so forth, and/or whether they perceive that the participation program helped them take into account community or collective concerns or increased the likelihood that they will participate in future activities. If self-report data are used, managers and evaluators should note the possibility of social desirability bias—the tendency for people to over-report their own good behaviors or behaviors that they perceive as being desired by others.

- **Impact on the agency:** Did the participatory program identify public interests, concerns, and preferences? Did it recognize weaker political groups? Did it build trust and collaborative relationships with stakeholder groups? Did it increase accountability to citizens? Did it increase the legitimacy of the decision or action? Did it increase consensus? Did it reduce conflict? Did it affect polarization?

    Tip: To assess benefits for the agency, consider using qualitative data collected through focus groups or interviews with relevant personnel, stakeholders, and perhaps even participants. At present, there are no agreed-upon quantitative tools and methods for assessing agency impacts; however, qualitative data may provide insight about such impacts and suggestions for improvement. Although anecdotal evidence is not always preferred, its usefulness can be greatly enhanced when collected through a structured evaluation design and systematic research methods.

- **Impact on communities:** Did participation build trust and collaborative relationships among stakeholder groups? Did participation build community capacity to address current and future issues? Did participation identify and address community concerns, needs, and interests?

    Tip: Consider using the Community Capacity Building (CCB) Framework to assess the impacts of a participatory program on a community. The CCB Framework identifies four key characteristics of community capacity: (1) a sense of community, (2) commitment to community among its members, (3) the ability to solve problems, and (4) access to resources. The CCB Framework also identifies four specific strategies for building community capacity: (1) leadership development, (2) organizational development, (3) community organizing, and (4) organizational collaboration. This breakdown of the abstract concept of community capacity into more discrete components, and the identification of specific strategies, may make it easier to evaluate the impact of participatory programs on communities (for more information, see Kinney 2012).

- **Impact on public or policy action:** Did participation produce a "better" decision? Did participation improve the justice of the final decision? Was this decision durable over time? Did participation improve the effectiveness of public action? Did participation ease implementation? Did participation reduce the number of potential future issues with a particular decision or policy action?

21st Century Town Meeting

America*Speaks* 21st Century Town Meeting® is a large-scale participatory process that engages a demographically representative group of citizens (from 100 to 5,000+) in simultaneous deliberation around a specific policy issue in a particular political community (see www.americaspeaks.org).

One study examined how participation in a 21st Century Town Meeting affected perceptions of internal and external political efficacy (Nabatchi 2010). The study used quasi-experimental, longitudinal survey data collected at three points in time from two non-equivalent groups: 1) the treatment group, which consisted of participants in the 21st Century Town Meeting, and 2) the comparison group, which consisted of a random sample of area residents who did not participate in the 21st Century Town Meeting. Surveys were administered by telephone prior to the event, in person at the event immediately upon its conclusion, and by mail 24 months after the event.

Internal political efficacy was measured with three Likert scale items that asked participants how strongly they agreed that: 1) Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on; 2) I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics; and 3) I often don't feel sure of myself when talking about politics or government. External political efficacy was measured with the four Likert scale items that asked participants how strongly they agreed that: 1) Elected officials don't care what people like me think; 2) People like me don't have any say about what the government does; 3) Elected officials are only interested in people's votes; and 4) Local government is responsive to citizen concerns.

Despite some methodological limitations to the study, the results showed that 21st Century Town Meeting was successful in encouraging less efficacious citizens to participate. Moreover, it provided partial support for the argument that participation can increase political efficacy. After participation, external political efficacy, which regards perceptions about the responsiveness of government to citizen demands, increased in a statistically significant way, and internal political efficacy, which regards perceptions of one's competence to engage in politics, also increased, although not in a statistically significant way.

Although impact evaluation of policy effectiveness is fairly routine, significant challenges persist in tracking the impact of participatory programs on institutions and policy change (for a discussion, see Barrett, Wyman, and Coelho, 2012). For example, while many direct citizen participation programs in public administration occur in a context that has policy implications, there is a great deal of variation in terms of whether and how participatory programs are structured for or feed into the policy process. Likewise, there are difficulties in demonstrating causal links between participation and policy outcomes, in part due to the time lag between processes and policy or public action, as well as intervening events. There is also considerable ambiguity about what would constitute a substantial impact, which means that impact must be considered in relation to the initial goals of the participatory program. Finally, scholars and practitioners are still devising methods with which to better examine the links between public participation processes and public policy changes and action.

> *Tip: Consider conducting a case study analysis, which is possibly the most common approach to tracking the policy impacts of participatory exercises. Case studies typically focus on a single participatory process and rely on qualitative data, collected, for example, through focus groups or interviews. Some case studies compare two or more processes and/or use mixed qualitative-quantitative data collection and analysis approaches. Case studies can make logical links between the internal features of a participatory program and policy impacts, although these are often based on basic correlations and "most likely associations," rather than formal causal links (for more information, see Barrett, Wyman, and Coelho, 2012).*

Case Studies About the Impact of Participatory Programs on Public Policy

Participatory Budgeting—Case study research on participatory budgeting in Latin America generally, and specifically on Brazil, shows discernible effects on redistribution of public resources to poor neighborhoods (e.g., Marquetti 2002). There is also evidence that Brazilian municipalities using participatory budgeting between 1996–2000 spent higher proportions of their budget on health care relative to municipalities that did not use participatory budgeting (Boulding and Wampler 2010). A World Bank (2008) evaluation of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, found that participation in the budget reduced poverty and improved access to water and sanitation.

Consultations on Pandemic Influenza Planning—A recent case study examines the Canadian experience with using public participation for pandemic influenza planning, and the impact of participation on the final national policy. The case study used multiple sources of data, including:

- Survey data from participants measuring the degree to which citizens expected their advice to be taken into account and the extent to which they would trust the ultimate recommendations, knowing how much advice was being sought

- Data from the work of the planning team as communications were developed about the consultations for decision-makers

- Interviews with policy-makers to identify how and when the proposals entered the decision-making process, and how well citizen and stakeholder input was considered alongside legal, ethical, scientific, and financial streams of evidence, and input from international organizations and agencies

- An analysis of the recommendations produced through the participatory process

Based on this data, as well as an examination of the final national policy, the study concluded that public participation had a significant and meaningful impact on the policy-making process and on the final policy. For more information on these and other case studies about the policy impacts of public participation, see Barrett, Wyman, and Coelho 2012.

Process-Specific Outcomes

Numerous criteria of a good participatory process have been suggested, including fairness, legitimacy, transparency, visibility, accessibility, representativeness, objectivity, credibility, and adequacy, among others. The breadth of norms about what constitutes a good process makes developing evaluation questions difficult. Moreover, as noted previously, outcomes will vary depending not only on the particular process used, but also on the level of shared decision-making authority implicit in the process, or where the process would be located on the IAP2 spectrum. Examples of impacts and outcomes for each level along the continuum are identified below. These examples are not comprehensive and will vary depending on the particular process employed. Moreover, many of the tips provided in the discussion above also speak to evaluating these (and other) process-specific outcomes; they are therefore not repeated here. As a final note, program managers may wish to evaluate the quality of the communication modes employed in the various processes, though such questions are not included below (for a discussion of evaluating communication quality, see Black 2012).

- **Inform:** Did the participants receive balanced and objective information that helped them understand the problem, alternatives, and solutions? Was the public adequately informed about a policy decision or public action?

The Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review

Description of Initiative

The 2010 Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR) was enabled by Oregon House Bill 2895, which asserted that "informed public discussion and exercise of the initiative power will be enhanced by review of statewide measures by an independent panel of Oregon voters who will then report to the electorate in the Voters' Pamphlet." In 2010, the CIR convened "two small deliberative groups of randomly selected citizens to help the wider Oregon electorate make more informed and reflective judgments on two specific ballot measures in the general election" (Gastil and Knobloch 2011).

Program Evaluation Component

Both panels and the consequences of the panels' work for the 2010 CIR were evaluated. Specifically, the evaluation examined two questions, using different data for each.

First, the researchers asked the question: Did the two CIR panels convened in August 2010 engage in high-quality deliberation? To answer this, they used observational data and before-and-after interviews with CIR panels and project staff, and assessed the quality of the Citizens' Statement (i.e., the Voters' Pamphlet). The results on this question showed that the panels carefully analyzed the issues and maintained a fair and respectful discussion process throughout the procedures. The Citizens' Statements included most of the insights and arguments that emerged during deliberation and were free of factual and logical errors.

Second, the researchers asked the question: Did the CIR Citizens' Statements help Oregonians decide how to vote? To answer this question, they conducted a pair of statewide telephone surveys. The results on this question showed that those who read the CIR Statements found them to be helpful in deciding how to vote and become more knowledgeable about the issues; however, the majority of Oregonian voters were unaware of the CIR process and did not read the CIR Statements.

This evaluation effort produced some notable results and recommendations that were used by the Oregon state legislature; in 2011, the legislature created a new agency to continue the CIR process. In addition to its results, this evaluation offers evidence to public mangers that evaluation of participatory efforts matters. For more information on the Oregon CIR process, evaluation, and results, see Gastil and Knobloch 2011; see also http://healthydemocracyoregon.org/citizens-initiative-review).

- **Consult:** Did participation allow the public to give adequate feedback on the analyses, alternatives and decisions about a policy or public action? Did the agency listen to and acknowledge the public's needs, interests, concerns, and aspirations? Did the agency provide the public with feedback on how their participation influenced the decision?

- **Involve:** Did the agency adequately understand the public's needs, interests, concerns, and aspirations? Were needs, interests, concerns, and aspirations adequately considered in the agency's decision-making? Did the agency provide the public with feedback on how participation influenced the decision?

- **Collaborate:** Did the agency involve the public in each aspect of decision-making? Did the public have the opportunity to develop alternatives? Did the public have the opportunity to identify the preferred solution? To what extent were the identified alternatives and recommendations incorporated into the final decision or action?

- **Empower:** Was final decision-making placed in the hands of the public? To what extent were the participatory decisions implemented?

Multi-City "Our Budget, Our Economy" (OBOE) Events

Description of Initiative

On June 26, 2010, America*Speaks* convened more than 3,000 individuals in 19 communities across the United States (plus 38 volunteer-organized community conversations) to discuss how America should handle its growing national debt. "The event was meant to create a distinctive opportunity for ordinary Americans … to deliberate about these momentous choices according to their own values. The "Our Budget, Our Economy" (OBOE) events intended to provide one input—the considered views of ordinary Americans—into the deliberations of the professional policy-making bodies such as President Obama's National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform" (Esterling, Fung, and Lee 2010).

Program Evaluation Component

Concurrent with the design of the OBOE event was evaluation planning. Several sources of data were used to evaluate the OBOE event, including participant surveys, site-based field reports, table-level keypad responses, control group surveys, elite opinion surveys, and census data.

One of several evaluation reports focuses on numerous issues, including:
- Who participated?
- What did individuals think should be done to control the federal deficit?
- Did the views of participants change after participation? How?
- What was the underlying structure of OBOE participants' preferences for policy change (e.g., were preferences guided by political ideology)?
- To what extent did OBOE shape participants' attitudes as citizens?
- How did participants evaluate their experience of public deliberation in the OBOE process?

The OBOE evaluation provides not only some significant results about the impact of public participation, but may also serve as a model for public managers wishing to engage in evaluation of their participatory efforts.

For more information on the OBOE process, evaluation, and results, see Esterling, Fung, and Lee 2010.

Specific Program Features

As noted in the discussion of process evaluations, managers and evaluators may wish to examine the unique and specific features of the participatory program as appropriate. These unique features may relate to the design of a program, personnel involved in program design and administration, and agency support, among others.

> *Tip: Talk with program personnel and stakeholders to identify specific program features that will be of interest in an impact evaluation.*

Intervening Events

Intervening events are extremely important to consider when conducting an impact evaluation. Participatory programs operate in continually changing environments, and it is possible that intervening events will affect the impacts and outcomes of a participatory program. These potential intervening events are numerous, complex, and varied, and may or may not be able to be controlled or eliminated.

> *Tip: Work closely with the evaluator to identify events that may have impacted or influenced the program and ways to mitigate their effects on the evaluation results.*

Summary

The purpose and general goal of an impact evaluation is to determine whether a program achieved its goals and produced its intended effects. Impact evaluations can be useful managerial tools that assist in several aspects of the participatory program. The discussion about impact evaluation above presents several important areas to be assessed and analyzed, and offers specific questions and indicators to do so. Additional important questions can and should be developed for a thorough impact evaluation of citizen participation in public administration. However, by assessing efficiency, participant satisfaction, general outcomes, process-specific outcomes, specific program features, and intervening events, a manager should be able to determine and reveal the extent to which observed changes in outcome indicators are due to program activities, and make changes and other decisions accordingly. Appendix I provides worksheets for managers wishing to conduct an impact evaluation (and/or a process evaluation) of a participatory program.

Appendix I: Evaluation Design Worksheets

The following worksheets are designed to help managers take the initial steps in planning for a process or impact evaluation of their participatory program. Some of the following materials are adapted from Bliss and Emshoff (2002), who provide a detailed workbook on designing a process evaluation. Following the five steps below will help program managers narrow the program elements to be evaluated, develop initial evaluation questions, and determine whether to use an in-house or outside evaluator.

Step One: Identify Relevant Program Components

Public managers can begin developing an evaluation by identifying relevant program components to be examined. To do so, managers must answer the who, what, when, where, and how questions as they pertain to the participation process. Complete Worksheet A below to identify the components of your participatory program.

Worksheet A: What Are Your Program Components?	
Who: Program participants, stakeholders, and program personnel	
What: Purpose and goal of participation process	
When: Frequency and length of the participation process	
Where: The context and setting of the participation process	
How: The techniques, strategies, and/or methods used in the participation process	

Step Two: Draft Evaluation Questions of Interest

Managers will need to make decisions about the questions they would like to include in their evaluation. Specifying the questions is a critical first step in determining the methods that will be used to collect and analyze data. To assist with this effort, consider the six broad areas for a process evaluation (program organization, service delivery, general outputs, process-specific outputs, specific program features, and intervening events), and the six broad areas for impact evaluation (efficiency, participant satisfaction, general outcomes, process-specific outcomes, specific program features, and intervening events). In Worksheet B, make a list of questions that are applicable to, or of interest in, the evaluation, and add any additional questions not contained in the process and impact evaluation discussions in the report.

Worksheet B: What Evaluation Questions are of Interest?	
Process Evaluation Areas	**Questions of Interest**
Program Organization	
Service Delivery	
General Outputs	
Process-Specific Outputs	
Specific Program Features	
Intervening Events	
Impact Evaluation Areas	**Questions of Interest**
Efficiency	
Participant Satisfaction	
General Outcomes	
Process-Specific Outcomes	
Specific Program Features	
Intervening Events	

Step Three: Validate the Importance of Your Draft Evaluation Questions

Although many questions are likely to be identified, managers must be mindful of time, budget, resource, and other constraints; therefore, it will be critical to validate the importance and purpose of each draft evaluation question. The table below presents a tool for determining whether each draft evaluation question is important enough to be considered in the evaluation. Go through each draft evaluation question and consider it with respect to the validation questions listed in the table below. Ideally, for each draft evaluation question, the answer to the validation question in the table will be "yes." Consider eliminating any draft evaluation questions for which this is not true.

Validating the Importance of Draft Evaluation Questions		
Validation Question	**Yes**	**No**
Will I use the data that will stem from this question?		
Do I know why this question is important and/or valuable?		
Is someone interested in this question?		
Is this question sufficiently clear and unambiguous?		
Do I have a hypothesis about the "correct" answer for this question?		
Is the question specific without limiting the scope of the evaluation or probing for a specific response?		
Is it feasible to answer the question, given what I know about the resources available for evaluation?		
Is this question worth the expense of answering it?		

Step Four: Identify Potential Data Sources and Data Collection Mechanisms

Now that you have a list of evaluation questions, identify potential data sources and data collection mechanisms. Complete Worksheet C below by listing each evaluation question, and make a note about from where the data to answer the question might come, and how data might be collected (for example, through a survey, observation, interview, focus group, archival data, management information systems; see the tips throughout sections on process and impact evaluations). Add additional rows to the worksheet as necessary.

Worksheet C: Identifying Potential Data Sources and Data Collection Mechanisms		
Evaluation Question	**Potential Data Source(s)**	**Potential Data Collection Mechanism(s)**

Step Five: Assess the Internal Capacity to Gather, Analyze, and Report on the Desired Data

Review your list of questions, data sources, and data collection mechanisms in Worksheet C. Given this information, ask and answer the following questions:

- Do one or more program personnel have the knowledge, skills, and time to collect this data?

- Do one or more program personnel have the knowledge, skills, and time to analyze this data?

- Do one or more program personnel have the knowledge, skills, and time to write up and communicate the results to appropriate audiences?

- If conducted by one or more program personnel, will the results of this evaluation be perceived as objective and impartial by outside audiences?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, consider outsourcing one or more of these (or other) evaluation tasks.

Appendix II: Benefits and Drawbacks to Potential Evaluators

Outside evaluators: A person or team not affiliated with the agency sponsoring and conducting the public participation process, for example a research institution, a think tank, an academic, or a doctoral candidate working on a dissertation.

> *Benefits:* Greatest potential for impartiality and objectivity; likely to have strong skills in program evaluation and statistical analysis

> *Drawbacks:* Relatively expensive (with the possible exception of doctoral candidates); may have high demands in terms of overall evaluation design; may take more time than desired

Inside evaluator (outside the program): A person or team within the agency, but not involved in the public participation program.

> *Benefits:* Takes advantage of internal agency evaluation capacity; likely to be impartial and objective; potentially less expensive

> *Drawbacks:* May be perceived as biased; may lack some research and evaluation skills

Inside evaluator (inside the program): A person or team within the agency and directly involved in the public participation program

> *Benefits:* Takes advantage of internal agency evaluation capacity; greatest understanding and knowledge of the process; least expensive

> *Drawbacks:* Potential lack (or perceived lack) of impartiality and objectivity; may lack some research and evaluation skills

Team of inside and outside evaluators: A team comprised of outside evaluators and both types of inside evaluators (involved or not involved with the program).

> *Benefits:* Reduces or eliminates disadvantages of the other options

> *Drawbacks:* Potentially most expensive and time consuming

To help overcome some of these challenges and to make decisions about hiring an evaluator, program officials can assemble an advisory committee early in the evaluation planning phase. This advisory committee can serve as a sounding board for questions about evaluation design, implementation, analysis, and other issues.

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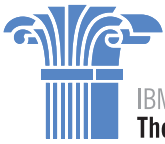
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