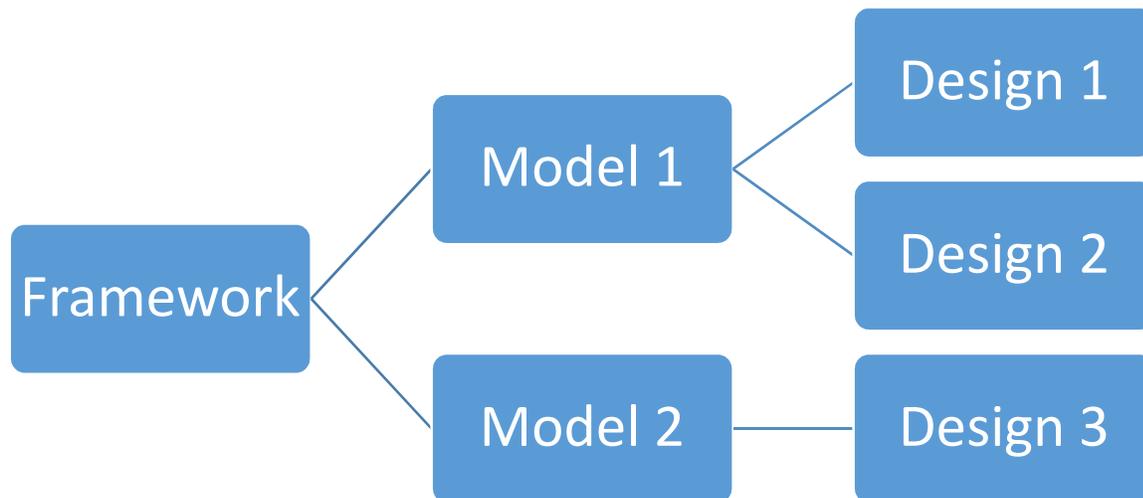


Overview

The three concepts of evaluation framework, approach or model, and design are hierarchical. Different evaluators may describe them differently; I find it helpful to see the hierarchy moving from abstract framework to generic model to a specific design (evaluation plan).



In this illustration the same framework is the basis for two approaches/models for evaluation; two specific evaluation designs/plans are based on one model while one plan is based on another model. The three programs may be very different, so the different evaluations for them will have different features but will have some common features since they are connected to one framework.

For example, a participatory framework can support an empowerment evaluation model and a responsive evaluation model. Data collection and analysis for the two models differ, but they will share some features of the participatory framework.

Elements of an evaluation framework

I suggest that an organization that desires to have an internal program evaluation model work through a framework that provides guidelines in six areas. The set of guidelines must be internally consistent. Each guideline should have a rationale that is acceptable to the users of the framework. (A guideline is acceptable if you can say, "I do not agree with it completely but I can live with it.") The elements of the framework are a template for choosing an evaluation model (e.g., transformative evaluation) and tailoring it for use on a particular program evaluation design.

Examples of guidelines are given for each area. They are not a consistent set of statements; they show possible statements for individual areas without regard for consistency within the area or across areas.

1. Guiding values for evaluation work

- The goodness of a program shall be defined by notions of goodness that are described by the different groups of stakeholders.
- Participatory methods shall be used throughout all aspects of the evaluation exercise.
- An evaluation exercise shall include reflection and discernment in addition to typical methods for collecting and analyzing appropriate information to achieve evaluation objectives.
- Etc.

2. Assumptions about reality

- Physical reality is comprised of relationships based on causes and effects. Programs are planned to initiate causes that will produce desired effects such as better child health, employment skills, etc.
- Spiritual reality is informed by a worldview based on the dynamics of sin and grace.
- Reality is a set of social constructs.
- Etc.

3. Use of evaluation findings

- Findings are used to improve programs.
- All findings will be available to anyone.
- Findings will be used to prepare marketing materials.
- Etc.

4. Theory of social change (ToC)

- Each evaluation will examine the appropriateness of the implicit and explicit theory of change undergirding the program design.
- The evaluation focus is on the degree to which agreed program objectives were achieved. If achievement is unsatisfactory the evaluation report will include recommendations regarding investigating theories of change that may guide future programing that will have better results.
- Each evaluation will document the process followed to develop the program design. The evaluator will comment on the process regarding the role of ToC in the process.
- Etc.

5. Knowledge of assets in the context that strengthened program results

- The evaluation will examine the assessments that guided the program design to determine if assets were considered; if so, how did the design include them to strengthen it?
- The evaluation will examine how the program monitored assets in the context and responded to opportunities to use them.
- Etc.

6. Knowledge of obstacles in the context that could reduce program effectiveness or efficiency

- The evaluation will examine the identification of “killer assumptions” that were considered and how that affected the design of the program.
- The context for each program result will be examined to identify obstacles to achieving maximum results.
- Etc.