



Philanthropy New Zealand
Tōpūtanga Tuku Aroha o Aotearoa

Learning-Based Evaluation

by Dr Jess Dart





Outline of talk

- Overview of learning-based evaluation
- Why it's relevant today
- Case study of a learning based evaluation for a program funded by two large Foundations



Start

Program
cycle

Communicate
results to
stakeholders
and funders

What is learning-based evaluation?

A favorite definition

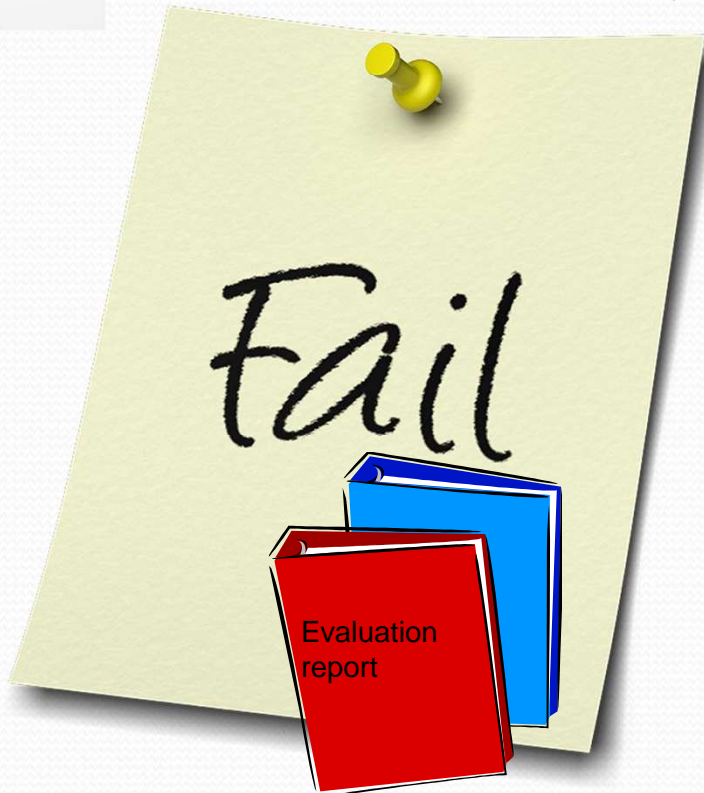
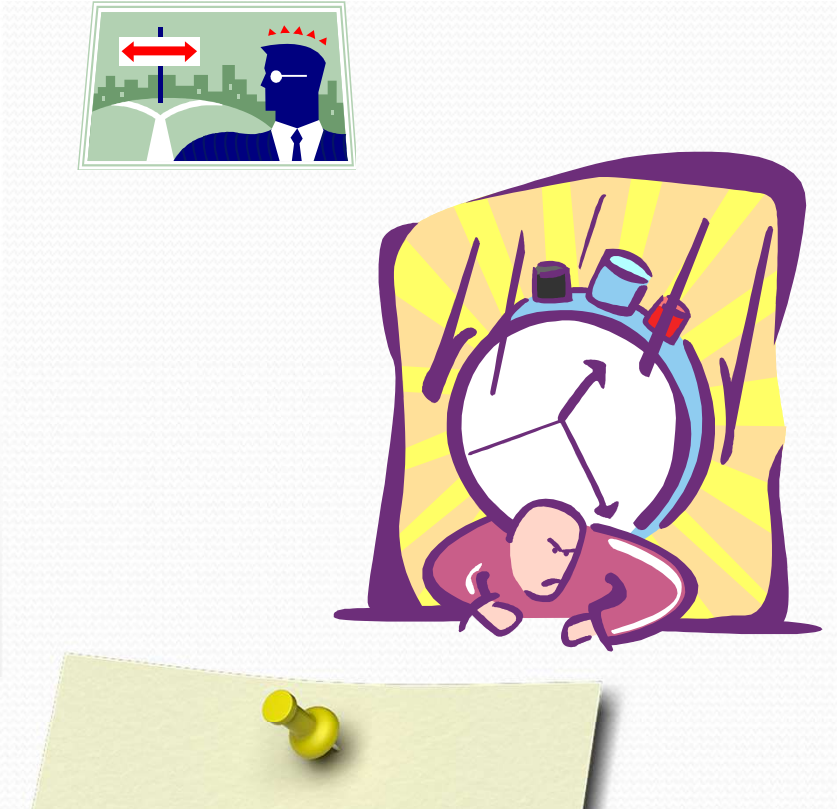
*Learning-based evaluation concerns the systematic collection of information, in order to improve decision making and enhance organisational **learning**, with the ultimate aim of bringing about programs that better meet needs and lead to improvements in targeted social, economic and environmental conditions.*



Why learning based evaluation?



Complexity



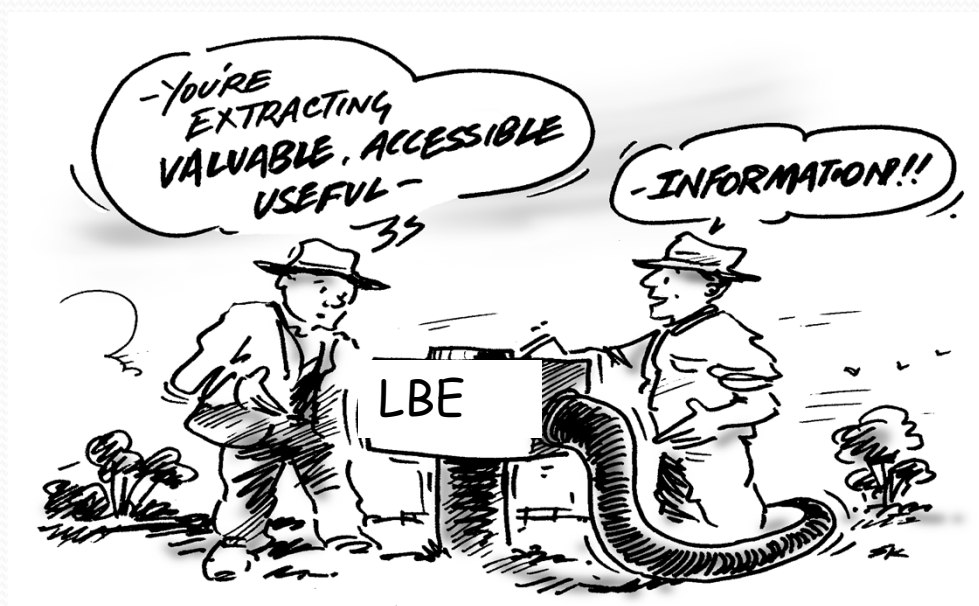
Evaluation report

**So how to embed this type of
evaluation into your
program?**

Steps for developing an LBE plan

- Step 1. Scope the LBE plan
- Step 2. Clarify the program theory
- Step 3. Develop a meaningful monitoring system
- Step 4. Consider additional evaluation studies
- Step 5. Judgement, reporting and improvement

Case study of Stronger Smarter Realities Program



Stronger Smarter Realities Program

- Program was funded by two large Australian Foundations
- Program ran from 2006 - end of 2008
- About creating systematic transferable change by arming Australian educators with belief, skills & capacity to make **profound changes** to learning outcomes of Indigenous children
- Aimed to engage principals, teachers & Indigenous community leaders from 240 schools with high Indigenous student populations
- How? – through a supportive educational environment, by providing excellent teachers and by **having high expectations**



Program context

- In Australia there is a big disparity between educational outcomes for Indigenous children compared to non-Indigenous children
- Nationally, proportion of Indigenous students who achieved a Year 12 Certificate has decreased from 51% in 2001 to 46% in 2006
- In that period proportion of non-Indigenous students increased from 80% to 86%
- Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes has widened

About the evaluation

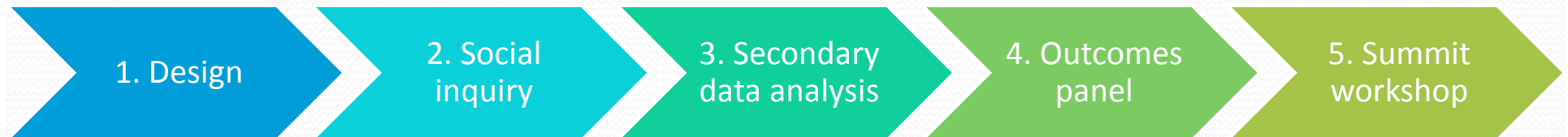
- The evaluation was initiated and funded by the Foundations
- Completed in 2009
- External consultants used
- Using a participatory approach
- Guided by two key questions:
 - i) To what extent has the SSR project contributed to excellence in Indigenous education in participating schools?
 - ii) To what extent did the SSR project influence the overall Indigenous education agenda?



Nature of the evaluation

- Focused both on accountability and learning
- Largely focused on outcomes
- A mixed method approach that involved key stakeholders in a number of process steps

Participatory process





Design

A design workshop was held where:

- the programme logic was clarified
- evaluation questions developed.

This was conducted with program team members and key stakeholders in a participatory manner.

Social inquiry

- Social inquiry included 50 semi-structured interviews incorporating Most significant change technique
- Informants were teachers, community members, headmasters and strategic informants
- Volunteers were trained to conduct some of the interviews
- 3 case studies from Indigenous communities. Here visits were paid to the schools and teachers, children, and community members were consulted

Secondary data analysis

- The data trawl involved collection and analysis of secondary documents and quantitative data on student outcomes from 10 schools
- We initially attempted to collect data from 50 schools
- This proved to be the most problematic step as the schools were not obliged to give us data
- Also it is very difficult to make sense of the data due to very uneven attendance of Indigenous pupils

Outcomes panel

- All data was fed into an 'outcomes panel' with Indigenous educators
- They examined the data and created statements about:
 - the extent to which the outcomes had been achieved
 - the plausible contribution of the program
 - what would have happened if program had not run
 - the quality of the data.
- The panel were selected as they were:
 - highly respected
 - had no vested interest in the program
 - had excellent knowledge of Indigenous education policy



Summit workshop

- The process culminated in an evaluation summit workshop
- Key stakeholders and staff deliberated over qualitative and quantitative data
- Recommendations were created through a facilitated process
- The consultants' role was:
 - collection and synthesized data a
 - facilitation of the sensemaking process with recommendations created by workshop participants.

What happened....

While quantitative data was limited in scope:

- The evaluation managed to capture some of the less tangible outcomes concerning 'breakthrough learning' and raised expectations for Indigenous children
- The program itself has been very successful and is being scaled-up and delivered on a national scale
- This evaluation has been *highly influential* as evidenced by:
 - all the recommendations been successfully implemented,
 - one foundation stating that evaluation was well-balanced, gave them confidence to provide further funding & Julia Gillard allocated \$12 million to it!

So...some ingredients of a learning-based pie

- Have a clearly articulated program logic
- Focus on your needs for learning first – this will help you navigate complexity & adapt
- Use mixed methods to tell your program's story
- Involve participants along the way, especially in developing recommendations
- Build capacity of all staff!

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