2010

Designing an Evaluation of a New Initiative: A Practical Approach to Ensure Evaluation Use

Linda M. Bosma
Bosma Consulting, LLC

Chris Matter
ClearWay Minnesota

Jaime Martinez
ClearWay Minnesota

Nicole Toves
ClearWay Minnesota

Joanne D'Silva
ClearWay Minnesota

Recommended Citation

Designing an Evaluation of a New Initiative: A Practical Approach to Ensure Evaluation Use

Linda M. Bosma, Ph.D., Bosma Consulting, LLC; Chris Matter, B.A., ClearWay Minnesota; Jaime Martinez, M.Ed., ClearWay Minnesota; Nicole Toves, ClearWay Minnesota; and Joanne D'Silva, M.P.H., ClearWay Minnesota

Key Points

· This article describes the process of planning an evaluation of the Tribal Tobacco Education and Policy initiative.

· The initiative was launched in 2007 to reduce tobacco use among American Indians, who disproportionately suffer the negative health effects of tobacco use.

· The work of the initiative and the evaluation had to incorporate an understanding of tribal structure as well as of the traditional use of tobacco in American Indian sacred ceremonies. The theory of change was conceptualized as circular, rather than linear, in keeping with American Indian philosophical traditions.

· The planning process, utilizing evaluators familiar with community mobilization and policy evaluation and informed by program staff familiar with the culture, can be useful to the funder, the program staff, the program participants, as well as the ultimate evaluator.

Introduction

Evaluation is important to funding organizations, but foundations may be challenged at times to provide sufficient direction for evaluation or to understand their evaluation needs. Evaluation can be especially important when funders seek to understand how a new initiative works. Recently, ClearWay Minnesota[SM] began funding the Tribal Tobacco Education and Policy (TTEP) initiative, and wanted an evaluation tailored to this unique policy initiative.

ClearWay Minnesota is an independent nonprofit created with 3 percent ($202 million) of the 1998 tobacco settlement. Its mission is to enhance life for all Minnesotans by reducing commercial tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke through research, action, and collaboration. Rather than beginning with a general request for evaluation proposals, ClearWay hired an evaluation consultant and undertook a yearlong evaluation planning process. Using Patton's (2008) principles of utilization-focused evaluation, which emphasize "the personal" – who will use the evaluation – the evaluation consultant helped ClearWay staff identify their evaluation needs, purpose, and use.

While one purpose was ClearWay's need for grantee accountability, just as important was the need to learn to what extent tobacco control approaches more typically used in mainstream settings translate to tribal communities. An evaluation consultant helped staff articulate their theory of change, informed by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Best Practices (CDC, 2007) and history of tobacco work in tribal communities. Next, the partners developed an evaluation framework informed by evaluation and community mobilization research (Bosma, 2005). The evaluation consultant then worked with staff to craft a request for proposals and select an evaluation team.

This paper discusses a yearlong planning process undertaken to identify ClearWay's evaluation

needs to better understand tobacco control work in American Indian tribal settings in Minnesota. It presents an overview of the TTEP initiative, the underlying evaluation and tobacco control literature that supports this work, a description of the evaluation planning process, and key lessons learned for other funders who seek to evaluate new initiatives. While the lessons learned from this planning process are relevant to any organization seeking an evaluator for an initiative, they may be especially important for funders supporting work in American Indian communities and with other priority populations.

Background

The roles of decision makers and evaluators have expanded over the years, with both taking on more broad-ranging responsibilities. Decision makers have become more hands-on in evaluation efforts, and evaluators have become more engaged in articulating a program's goals. Grantmakers may especially benefit from these expanded roles as they seek not only to hold grantees accountable to deliverables, but to understand how programs work and contribute to the knowledge of their fields.

In its early years, leaders in the evaluation field such as Michael Scriven (1967) defined the purpose of evaluation as judging the worth and merit of a program. In recent years, many stakeholders find this purpose of limited value. Stakeholders often want more nuanced evaluations that ascribe to Michael Quinn Patton's concept of utilization-focused evaluation and are designed with stakeholders' input and needs in mind (2008). Grantmaking organizations may be especially dissatisfied with the "black box" approach to evaluation. Huey-Tsyh Chen finds this approach too limiting: "If stakeholders and evaluators desire to understand both the merits of a program *and* how its transformation processes can be exploited to improve the intervention, then theory driven outcome evaluation is often a better choice" (2005). Increasingly, grantmakers seek to fund programs that will contribute to the knowledge base in their field.

Likewise, today's evaluators may engage in plan-

ning and program design or offer special expertise based on their experience in a given field. An evaluator may have more experience crafting a document that articulates a program's purpose and goals than the funders and practitioners who implement the program. Thus, it may be helpful to have an evaluator assist with developing a program's logic model or theory of change.

> *Today's evaluators may engage in planning and program design or offer special expertise based on their experience in a given field. An evaluator may have more experience crafting a document that articulates a program's purpose and goals than the funders and practitioners who implement the program.*

Evaluation literature over the past decade encourages expanded roles for evaluators and an emphasis on building evaluations on the theories undergirding programs. Developing a theory of change may engage the evaluator beyond the traditional roles of data collection and interpretation and into program development and even strategic planning (Patton, 2008). Carol Weiss (2000), who has conducted extensive evaluation in public policy settings, encourages evaluators to use their expertise and experience for the benefit of stakeholders: "When social science provides theory and concepts that ground and support local formulations, it can be of great evaluative value. The evaluator should bring her knowledge of the social science literature to bear on the evaluation at hand."

Chen (2005) suggests that evaluations can be based on either scientific theory or stakeholder-implicit theory. Evaluations based on scientific theory rely on scientific evidence to support the

underlying theory of a program, whereas stakeholder-implicit theory evaluations are informed by the practice and beliefs of key stakeholders. Patton (2008) makes a similar distinction, identifying a deductive approach that draws on existing knowledge and literature and a user-focused approach that focuses on the intended users and extracting their implicit theory of change to make it explicit. Further, Patton suggests that the two approaches can be combined, with a program's theory of change incorporating both scientific evidence and practices while taking stakeholder preference and beliefs into consideration. Such combined evaluation approaches bring a utilization focus to an evaluation that is grounded in scientific evidence.

> *American Indians have a long tradition of sacred use of tobacco, a practice that has been exploited and replaced by marketers of commercial tobacco products.*

This combination may be especially valuable for grantmakers as they attempt to employ evidence-based principles while seeking to understand how a program works in a certain setting. A theory of change informed by current science and evidence brings credibility to program evaluation efforts (Chen, 2005). At the same time, the theory of change can incorporate the needs of stakeholders, combining the evaluation's purpose and questions to fit the needs of both the grantmaking organization and the grantees.

While the scientific theory may be more tangible, stakeholder theory is more implicit. Chen (2005) argues that it is the evaluator's job to help the stakeholders elaborate their ideas. Likewise, Patton (2008) advocates the value of involving evaluators early on in the planning process. In order to effectively evaluate a program, it should be clearly understood how the program is ex-

pected to achieve its desired results – its theory of change. Therefore, decision makers who fund programs and evaluators should work together to plan for evaluation needs, starting with the theory of change.

The Tribal Tobacco Education and Policy Initiative

In 2007, ClearWay Minnesota launched the Tribal Tobacco Education and Policy (TTEP) initiative to support public health efforts to reduce the harm caused by use of commercial tobacco and exposure to secondhand smoke. The purposes of the TTEP initiative are:

- To support American Indian efforts to educate tribal government leaders, community members, traditional and spiritual leaders, and elders on the dangers of commercial tobacco use and secondhand smoke and to support community-level policy-advocacy activities to advance smoke-free policies on tribal lands.
- To provide training and technical-assistance resources to grant recipients in order to support their work and develop their ability to support effective policies and strategies in Minnesota's American Indian nations.

In the United States, American Indians are disproportionately harmed by the use of commercial tobacco. In Minnesota, four of the five leading causes of death among American Indians – cancer, coronary heart disease, stroke, and lower respiratory disease – are related to commercial tobacco use (Great Lakes EpiCenter, 2004). In the Northern Plains area, which includes Minnesota, 48 percent of American Indian men and 40 percent of American Indian women report current cigarette smoking (Denny, Holtzman, & Cobb, 2003). According to the 2008 Minnesota Adult Tobacco Survey, the overall rate for all adult Minnesotans is 17 percent (ClearWay Minnesota, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, & Minnesota Department of Health, 2008).

Tobacco work in American Indian communities faces unique challenges. Tribes are sovereign and their government structures are separate from state tobacco regulations. American Indians

have a long tradition of sacred use of tobacco, a practice that has been exploited and replaced by marketers of commercial tobacco products. The need to respect traditional tobacco customs can make addressing commercial tobacco use more complicated than policy work in nontribal settings. Only a handful of examples of commercial tobacco policy work in tribal communities exist, and little evaluation on these efforts has been undertaken. The United States has a long history of tobacco control work throughout municipalities and states demonstrating the effectiveness of mobilizing communities and restricting the use of tobacco products. Research shows that reducing exposure to secondhand smoke reduces tobacco-related harm (CDC, 2007). However, much of this work has virtually ignored tribal communities. In 2007, for example, Minnesota adopted the Freedom to Breathe Act, a statewide smoke-free law for all indoor workplaces. Minnesota's American Indian nations are sovereign and thus not covered by the new state law.

ClearWay Minnesota undertook the TTEP initiative to reduce commercial tobacco-related harm to American Indian communities by applying best practices learned in states, counties, and cities throughout the nation and learnings from two tribal nations in Montana where comprehensive commercial tobacco tribal policies have been successful.

Evaluating TTEP

The TTEP initiative is administered through ClearWay's community development department, which administers several environmental initiatives to develop and support tobacco control efforts in priority populations in Minnesota that are underserved or underrepresented in such efforts. These populations include Africans and African Americans; American Indian nations; Asian American and Pacific Islanders; Chicanos and Latinos; and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender populations. The three-person staff has extensive experience working with diverse populations in Minnesota and focuses on projects that cannot obtain funding elsewhere. One member of the community development department was recruited specifically to help guide the

TTEP initiative based on her experience in her tribe in Montana with tobacco control policy. The community development department collaborates with ClearWay's research department to determine evaluation priorities for its projects.

While staff from both departments believed it was important to evaluate this unique initiative, they wanted to be sure the evaluation met their organizational learning needs, respected the grantees in the tribal communities, and that the evaluation would sufficiently examine the community mobilization and policy implementation aspects of the TTEP initiative. Staff members from both departments were uncertain about how to proceed with evaluating a community mobilization process.

> *Staff wanted to be sure the evaluation met their organizational learning needs, respected the grantees in the tribal communities, and that the evaluation would sufficiently examine the community mobilization and policy implementation aspects of the TTEP initiative.*

Rather than issue a request for proposals, ClearWay Minnesota decided to seek assistance to *plan for the evaluation* of the TTEP initiative to help determine what it needed in an evaluation. ClearWay decided to seek an evaluation consultant with extensive experience in community mobilization and policy efforts to guide it through the planning process. Additionally, ClearWay wanted to secure an evaluation firm with a proven history of successful evaluation work in tribal communities that included American Indian principals and who would be sensitive to the history of skepticism and distrust of research and evaluation in

TABLE 1 Questions Used by the Evaluation Consultant to Articulate the TTEP Theory of Change

Guiding Questions for Developing Tribal Tobacco Education and Policy Theory of Change
What is the big problem?
What do you want to see happen?
What does success look like?
What is your vision for what tribal communities will look like if TTEP succeeds?
How do you get there?
What activities will it take?
What needs to change?
What are the underlying assumptions?
Why do you believe these activities will work?
What evidence/support do you have from literature and other projects for this belief?

tribal communities. This diversity of needs and priorities led ClearWay to undertake a serious planning process *prior* to securing an evaluation firm for the TTEP initiative.

With this need in mind, ClearWay approached an evaluator who had extensive experience in community mobilization and policy research and evaluation, and who had worked as a community organizer for many years. After several meetings to discuss how the evaluator could contribute to ClearWay's planning process and help meet its evaluation needs, a yearlong planning process began in April 2008.

Incorporating utilization-focused evaluation approaches (Patton, 2008), the evaluation consultant began working with the community development department to understand its evaluation needs and to help staff explicitly articulate the TTEP theory of change. In their first meeting, the evaluator helped ClearWay staff articulate the underlying rationale of TTEP. Over several hours, the evaluator interviewed department staff using a series of open-ended questions and probes (Table 1) to help them define the problems they sought to address, what they hoped to accomplish, activities they believed would lead to accomplishing their goals, and their vision of success.

After this first meeting, the evaluator condensed this information into six main content areas and arranged the information into four categories: the problem, why the problem existed, how staff believed change would occur, and vision for outcomes.

At their second meeting, ClearWay staff responded to the groupings in the categories and clarified, corrected, and added to the content. As they reviewed the groupings, they answered the following questions: Are these the main problems? What is missing? Is this the vision and our expectation for grantees?

Involvement of community development staff in this process was critical to informing the theory-of-change document. Through this discussion, the evaluation consultant was able to draw out the experience and expertise of the community development department. Two members of the staff had vast experience with numerous community-based policy initiatives and the third had done tobacco control education and policy work in her own tribal community, thus offering broad experience in tobacco control work in diverse communities and knowledge specific to work in American Indian communities. This depth of staff experience and knowledge was essential to identifying the key elements of the TTEP theory of change and identifying those elements that were the most important to evaluate.

The six key elements (Table 2) that had emerged from the first meeting were clarified. Since TTEP's focus was on secondhand smoke, superfluous items related to pricing, sales, and access to commercial tobacco were removed. Tradi-

Six Key Elements of the Tribal Tobacco Education and Policy (TTEP) Initiative
1. Tribal communities acknowledge and restore traditional/sacred traditions while exposing the role governmental policies and commercial tobacco interests have played in suppressing sacred traditions.
2. Tribal government leaders, community members, traditional and spiritual leaders, and elders are knowledgeable of the role of commercial tobacco industry marketing and harm caused by commercial tobacco use.
3. TTEP initiatives will be sufficiently resourced to provide sustained efforts and to support trained professional practitioners within American Indian nations to develop culturally appropriate strategies and activities.
4. Tribal community environments will support non-use of tobacco, supported by smoke-free policies and practices, compliance with those policies, and public areas that are smoke-free.
5. Businesses and casinos in tribal communities are successful and smoke-free, and are supported by the community.
6. Tribal governments, community members, traditional and spiritual leaders, and elders embrace and support smoke-free policies and policies that restrict use of commercial tobacco.
The theory of change allows for each grantee to address different elements at different stages and levels of readiness.

tional/sacred tobacco use is an important part of American Indian history and staff feedback determined that a stronger emphasis was needed on this aspect of tobacco, as well as more clearly distinguishing between sacred and commercial tobacco. ClearWay staff pointed out the need to emphasize the economic importance of casinos to tribal economies and the perceived threat posed by any restrictions on indoor tobacco use. Another important distinction brought out in subsequent discussions was the unique history of tribal nations with the U.S. government. Whereas policy in the dominant culture society might be seen as a tool for public health reform, in tribal nations, policy initiatives have often been associated with repression, exploitation, and dismantling of American Indian culture. Thus, an understanding of the history of tribal nations was included in the theory of change as an important part of the context in which tobacco control work would take place. Last, in line with both community mobilization work and American Indian traditions, it was emphasized that the theory of change is not linear, but circular. Work can start at any place in the circle and continue in any order.

This process was greatly enhanced by input from people with direct experience working on tobacco control policy in American Indian set-

tings. Having a ClearWay staff person who was from the American Indian community and had experience working on tribal tobacco control efforts was especially helpful in clarifying the roles of tribal elders, government, and leaders in the community change process. Her understanding of traditional tobacco customs and their importance was critical to development of that element of the theory of change. Additional review of the core elements and theory of change was provided by an American Indian national consultant who has led successful policy change efforts around tobacco control. Her input helped validate and clarify the elements in the emerging document, and provided a useful outside review of the theory of change.

While little literature exists on tobacco control efforts in tribal settings, a rich body of research and evidence supports such work in mainstream communities. As Weiss (2000) suggests, it is valuable to bring research evidence to bear on local settings. The community development department's work is informed by this evidence-based practice. Thus, while looking at the specific local applications of such strategies in Minnesota tribal settings through TTEP, the evaluation consultant also conducted a literature review to ground the TTEP approaches in the current research.

This feedback helped the evaluation consultant revise and clarify the context of the proposed TTEP work and some of the nuances specific to tobacco control efforts in tribal settings.

> *The evaluation framework recognizes the circular nature of the theory of change elements and that the work will not unfold in a linear way.*

Evaluation Framework

As the theory of change was being finalized, the evaluation consultant began crafting an evaluation framework to capture its elements. The underlying assumptions and philosophy of the evaluation framework were discussed in meetings with community development staff members to ensure they met their goals. ClearWay staff knew that each grantee would progress at a different pace and focus on different elements of the theory of change. Thus, the evaluation framework needed to be able to capture both the community mobilization/policy process and grantees' progress. ClearWay staff knew that the TTEP initiative would encourage and support tribal communities to undertake an approach to commercial tobacco that is frequently new and unfamiliar to them. It was expected that grantees would require time to learn and embrace a policy approach.

The evaluation framework incorporated both a community mobilization framework, based on Bosma's previous evaluation research (2005), and looked at the implementation process, using Fixsen's framework for implementation progress (2005). This created an evaluation framework that allows the grantees the flexibility to adopt and embrace the TTEP process while moving at their own pace *and* allows the ClearWay Minnesota staff to carry out an evaluation that lends to greater understanding of how this work will unfold in tribal communities. The evaluation framework

also recognizes the circular nature of the theory of change elements and that the work will not unfold in a linear way.

Collaboration With the Research Department

The initial focus of the evaluation consultant's work focused on the community development department staff, as they had the most intimate understanding of the TTEP initiative. Other users of the evaluation included the research department, which works collaboratively with community development on evaluation of projects. It was decided that initial meetings to draft the key elements would focus on the community development department, and after that work, research department staff became part of the meetings. This included an additional review of the key elements and discussions that were further informed by the expertise and experience brought by the staff of the research department, which has funded several research projects in tribal communities.

At the same time, this discussion helped increase the understanding of the TTEP initiative beyond the community development staff. Because of ClearWay Minnesota's structure, evaluation work needs to meet not only the community development department's needs, but must adhere to sufficient rigor and quality to meet organizational standards. Research department staff thus reviewed both the theory of change and the evaluation framework, bringing an internal research perspective to the planning process. Research staff provided input into the scope of the evaluation questions, an area where the community development staff felt less confident. Frequently the evaluation consultant helped translate and articulate the perspectives of the community development and research departments.

Securing an Evaluation Team for TTEP

After four months, the theory of change and evaluation framework were accepted and approved by both the community development and research departments, so the request for proposals for the evaluation could be drafted. The evaluation consultant drafted the content sections of the pro-

posal and ClearWay staff wrote the organizational requirements sections. The evaluation consultant provided input on the required qualifications and experience for a successful evaluation team.

The request for proposals required respondents to demonstrate how they would develop and implement an evaluation plan that would address each of the six elements in the theory of change and be based on the evaluation framework. The review process included an expert panel that was expanded to include American Indian evaluators with history in tobacco control work, who provided input on necessary criteria and strength of proposals. In April, the ClearWay board approved the selected firm and it began work in May, one year after the evaluation planning process had begun.

Discussion

The evaluation planning process required a substantial investment of resources and time from ClearWay Minnesota staff. Thus, it is important to point out the benefits from this process to the TTEP initiative and the grantees involved, to ClearWay staff who manage the project, to ClearWay Minnesota as an organization, and to the newly selected evaluation firm.

Benefits to the TTEP Initiative and Grantees

The planning process clarified the expectations for TTEP outcomes and how those outcomes would come about. Understanding how policy-change work unfolds is critical to successfully evaluating such efforts, as well as managing those efforts. Planning a coherent, thoughtful, realistic evaluation provides both guidance and reassurance to grantees: guidance by helping them understand clearly what is expected, and reassurance that progress toward policy goals – not just actual passage of a policy, which in some settings may take years – will be a measure of progress.

Additionally, the TTEP evaluation plan calls for intensive stakeholder involvement in the evaluation to finalize the plan and report. The evaluation firm selected is informing their evaluation plan by conducting listening sessions and numerous meetings with TTEP grantee staff and stake-

holders. This allows grantees to ask questions and provide input and feedback into the evaluation process, to better inform the evaluation and demystify the evaluation process for grantees. Information is being fed back to grantees to further inform their work, while also helping community development staff identify additional challenges and needs of the grantees.

Grantees have time and resources provided in their budgets to support the evaluation work, while sensitivity to limits of grantees' time is also built into the evaluator's plan. Thus, whenever possible, evaluation reporting is designed to serve multiple functions, so that the same information is not collected multiple times for different purposes.

> *The planning process clarified the expectations for TTEP outcomes and how those outcomes would come about.*

Grantees' evaluation capacity will also be enhanced, as they receive evaluation feedback and participate in evaluation activities.

Benefits to ClearWay Minnesota Staff

Bringing in an outside consultant to guide ClearWay Minnesota staff through a substantial planning process clarified both the evaluation needs and priorities, information which proved useful in selecting a firm to conduct the actual TTEP evaluation. By the time a request for proposals was issued, staff had a clear idea of what they desired and needed in their evaluation, and could ask potential firms to respond specifically to the theory of change and evaluation framework. At the beginning of the evaluation planning process, the community development staff was uncertain what they needed and wanted in the evaluation. They had a general idea of what they sought to know, but needed assistance articulating that need. By creating a detailed theory of change, the

community development staff was able to identify the key elements of the TTEP initiative that they wished to understand through evaluation. A consultant with expertise in community mobilization helped them identify criteria specific to those processes.

> *Through the planning process, the staff developed a greater understanding of evaluation in general and of their evaluation goals related to TTEP specifically. The community development staff is better equipped to manage and direct the evaluation firm.*

Working with a consultant to plan the evaluation also helped staff identify the purpose of their evaluation. It was quickly apparent that even though ClearWay wanted to have some level of grantee accountability in the evaluation, they did not seek a "judgment" type of evaluation. Accountability was only a small part of the goal. What ClearWay Minnesota really wanted was an evaluation process that would help increase the understanding of how the TTEP work will unfold in the tribal communities. The evaluation consultant helped them clarify their evaluation needs and purpose and gave voice to their theory of change.

Engaging in this process has enhanced the evaluation capacity of the community development department staff. Through the planning process, the staff developed a greater understanding of evaluation in general and of their evaluation goals related to TTEP specifically. The community development staff is better equipped to manage and direct the evaluation firm. Additionally, it has helped them clarify their goals and expectations for the TTEP initiative and how they believe it will work.

Benefits to ClearWay Minnesota

As an organization, ClearWay Minnesota benefits from a well-designed evaluation that will meet its organizational needs. This process helps ensure that the TTEP initiative is well-run and that the lessons learned from this process can inform other work both within the organization and in the tobacco control field. The credibility and mission of ClearWay are served by a well-run project with learnings that can be shared with other tribal communities and funders attempting to do this work. Supporting successful tobacco control initiatives in tribal nations contributes to the organization's goal to reduce tobacco harm among Minnesota's priority populations.

Benefits to the New Evaluation Team

Providing a detailed theory of change and a clear evaluation framework resulted in the selection of an evaluation firm that was well-suited to the TTEP initiative. Likewise, as contractors, the new firm entered into the contract with clear, well-understood expectations. The community development and research departments' deep understanding of their evaluation goals and needs contributed to a shared understanding of the evaluation on both sides. This benefits the evaluators by giving them clear direction for their work and means that ClearWay staff are not only clients, but resources to them in their work.

Benefits Beyond TTEP

While this planning process was specific to the TTEP initiative, our experience may be of value to other funding agencies as they make evaluation decisions. Engaging in a rather lengthy planning process required an investment of time and resources, but ClearWay Minnesota felt that this investment was worthwhile. The planning process allowed ClearWay to clearly identify what it needed to obtain from evaluation of the TTEP initiative. Thus, it was able to provide specific parameters in the evaluation of requests for proposals and assess responses with a clear purpose in mind. Had a request for proposals been issued without this process, the decision-making would have been far less informed. This process helped ClearWay articulate its goals for evaluating TTEP.

One reason for evaluating TTEP is to develop a better understanding of what is entailed in undertaking commercial-tobacco policy work in American Indian communities, and how that work may differ from "mainstream" tobacco control work. Involving people in that discussion with expertise and experience working in American Indian communities was essential. While the planning process discussed here is specific to American Indian projects in Minnesota, we would argue that the lessons we learned are applicable in many settings. Certainly it is important to involve stakeholders who are knowledgeable and respected by the population served in any setting, but in priority population communities, funders and evaluators have even greater responsibility to respect and recognize community dynamics and realities and take the time to ensure that evaluations are planned well and consider community needs. Hopefully our experience provides insights for other funding agencies as they undertake evaluation of initiatives in under-served communities.

Limitations and Needs

Undertaking a planning process such as this one has limits. Sufficient time to plan the evaluation is required up front. Our experience was that the time invested up front was well worth the delay in starting the evaluation.

Time is also required of the organization's staff. The evaluator needed access and participation of the community development staff to craft the theory of change and evaluation framework and from the research department as these documents were finalized. Their knowledge of the current and expected grantees, past tobacco control work in tribal communities, and political dynamics of tribal communities was essential to crafting the theory of change. While the evaluation consultant supported the key elements with literature review, the nuances and specifics could not have been developed without participation and feedback from community development staff. It was essential that they work as a team, and this process required significant time from the community development staff.

> *This investment of time and resources contributed to a greater understanding of evaluation needs and in the long run was cost effective, as the selected firm comes on board with a clear understanding of the evaluation goals, theory of change, and desired evaluation framework. This may be a useful model for other funding agencies to consider when planning for the evaluation of new initiatives.*

Resources were necessary to support the evaluation consultant, since outside expertise was needed. ClearWay Minnesota was able to budget approximately 200 hours of consultant time for this project. Some organizations may have difficulty obtaining sufficient resources.

Finding the necessary expertise in a consultant is also essential. The reputation of the consultant selected was known to the ClearWay staff, but the consultant and the community development and research department staffs met many times before committing to this process to ensure a fit of expertise and expectations.

Finally, some evaluation firms might feel some constraints in coming into a situation with so much of the evaluation plan developed prior to their start. Maintaining flexibility to allow for input from the new evaluation team was important to give members the ability to put some of their special expertise into the plan.

Conclusion

Evaluators can play a useful role in helping program staff articulate their goals. A collaborative

process involving evaluators and program-funding staff in evaluation planning greatly enhanced ClearWay Minnesota's ability to identify its evaluation needs and helped articulate program goals at the same time. Engaging in a substantive planning process prior to selecting an evaluation firm both enhanced the evaluation capacity of the program staff and clarified the qualities needed in the firm who would evaluate TTEP. This investment of time and resources contributed to a greater understanding of evaluation needs and in the long run was cost effective, as the selected firm comes on board with a clear understanding of the evaluation goals, theory of change, and desired evaluation framework. This may be a useful model for other funding agencies to consider when planning for the evaluation of new initiatives.

References:

Bosma, L.M. (2005). *Evaluation of community organizing: Three groups implementing Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol (CMCA).* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2007). *Best practices for comprehensive tobacco control programs – 2007.* Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health.

Chen, H. (2005). *Practical program evaluation: Assessing and improving planning, implementation, and effectiveness.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Clearway Minnesota, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, & Minnesota Department of Health. (2008). *Creating a healthier Minnesota: Progress in reducing tobacco use.* Minneapolis, MN.

Denny, C.H., Holtzman, D., & Cobb, N. (2003). Surveillance for health behaviors of American Indians and Alaska Natives. Findings from the Behavior Risk Fact Surveillance System, 1997-2000. *Centers for Disease Control Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: Surveillance Summaries, 52(7),* 1-13.

Great Lakes Epicenter. (2004). *Community health profile: Minnesota, Wisconsin & Michigan tribal communities.* Lac du Flambeau, WI: Great Lakes Intertribal Council, Inc.

Patton, M.Q. (2008). Utilization-focused evaluation: Process and premises. In M.Q. Patton, (Ed.), *Utilization-focused evaluation: The new century text, (*4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Scriven, M. (1967). The methodology of evaluation. In R. E. Stake (Ed.), *Curriculum evaluation. American Educational Research Association Monograph Series on Evaluation, No. 1,* (pp. 39-83). Chicago: Rand McNally.

Weiss, C.H. (2000). Which links in which theories shall we evaluate? Program theory in evaluation: Challenges and opportunities. *New Directions for Evaluation, 87,* 35-45.

Linda M. Bosma, Ph.D., is president of Bosma Consulting, LLC, an evaluation practice specializing in public health initiatives that utilize community mobilization strategies. Her work focuses on helping groups articulate their impact on reducing substance use and abuse through community mobilization efforts. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Linda M. Bosma, Bosma Consulting. LLC, 3422 44th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55406 (email: linda@bosmaconsulting.com).

Chris Matter, B.A., is senior community development manager at ClearWay Minnesota; her work focuses on engaging and supporting tobacco control efforts among priority populations. In addition to managing and directing initiatives, she has also worked on community organizing research projects.

Jaime Martinez, M.Ed., is director of community development at ClearWay Minnesota. His background includes extensive tobacco control work among priority populations; he has also led several alcohol policy efforts in the state of Minnesota.

Nicole Toves is a community development manager at ClearWay Minnesota and advises grantees implementing American Indian tobacco control initiatives; in her previous position, she was directly involved in passing tobacco control policies in tribal communities in Montana.

Joanne D'Silva, M.P.H., is senior research program manager at ClearWay Minnesota, where she is involved in directing and implementing research and evaluation on numerous tobacco control and cessation initiatives.