What are Collaborative Approaches to Evaluation (CAE)?
CAE is a class of evaluation approaches where evaluators work together with members of the program community (stakeholders) to implement evaluations and produce evaluative knowledge about programs, projects, strategies, and/or other interventions. The CAE principles are premised on the understanding that context matters and that any CAE project should be collaboratively designed and developed on the basis of stakeholder information needs and interests.

How are CAE principles intended to be used and applied?
The principles are intended to guide and inform practice and understanding in, for example, (i) planning, developing and implementing CAE projects, (ii) reflecting on / analyzing completed CAE projects, (iii) informing CAE training and educational program development, and (iv) designing empirical research on CAE. The eight principles are interconnected, and intended to be used as an interrelated set, not as a linear sequence of steps. The attention given to any principle depends entirely on the context within which the program resides.

1 For detailed information about the study and its rationale see:
What are the specific principles meant to imply?

Here is a brief description of each principle and its underlining supportive factors or considerations to be taken into account in application. Illustrative quotations are from practicing evaluators who participated in the study by commenting on authentic CAE projects.

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**CLARIFY MOTIVATION FOR COLLABORATION**

"The sponsor of the evaluation wrote an RFP asking specifically for a collaborative approach and I described in detail what that meant to me."

**Description:** Why use CAE as opposed to a conventional or other alternative approach to evaluation? The principle encourages the development of a thorough understanding of the justification for the collaborative approach.

**Supportive Factors:** Evaluation purpose; evaluator and client expectations; information and process needs.

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**FOSTER MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS**

"We may be the evaluation experts, but they are subject matter [program content] experts and both are very important."

**Description:** The principle inspires the conscious development of quality working relationships between evaluators and program stakeholders and among stakeholders, including open and frequent communication.

**Supportive Factors:** Respect, trust and transparency; structured and sustained interactivity.

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**DEVELOP A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROGRAM**

"The evaluator helped project leaders articulate their program objectives and learning outcomes for participants."

**Description:** Is the program commonly understood? Is everyone in agreement about intended program processes and outcomes? The principle promotes the explication of the program logic situated within context.

**Supportive Factors:** Program logic; organizational context.

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**PROMOTE APPROPRIATE PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES**

"Staff was involved at all levels from design decisions, to data collection, to findings presentations."

**Description:** The principle encourages deliberate reflection on the form that the collaborative process will take in practice with regard to specific roles, and responsibilities for the range of stakeholders identified for participation.

**Supportive Factors:** Control of decision making; diversity of stakeholders; depth of participation.

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**MONITOR AND RESPOND TO RESOURCE AVAILABILITY**

"The program manager was able to devote 25% of paid work time towards the evaluation . . . . It was not something extra."

**Description:** Participating stakeholders are a significant resource for CAE implementation. In addition to fiscal resources, the principle warrants serious attention to the extent to which stakeholder evaluation team members are unencumbered by competing demands from their regular professional roles.

**Supportive Factors:** Budget; time; personnel.

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**MONITOR EVALUATION PROGRESS AND QUALITY**

"Due to lack of experience on my part as a young evaluator I did not engage the client in troubleshooting problems as they arose as much as I should have and they spiralled out of control, resulting in inconsistent data collection across sites, and problems with the quality of the data collected."

**Description:** The principle underscores the critical importance of data quality assurance and the maintenance of professional standards of evaluation practice.

**Supportive Factors:** Evaluation design; data collection.

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“The organization was committed to the evaluation and very open about its strengths and weaknesses in doing the work.”

**Description:** The principle inspires the active and conscious development of an organizational cultural appreciation for evaluation and its power to leverage social change.

**Supportive Factors:** Inquiry orientation; focus on learning

“There was a great deal of process learning: stakeholders were given a chance to reflect on their program by being involved in creating the logic model and identifying evaluation questions. They said often that this was just as, or even more, helpful than the final report summarizing findings.”

**Description:** To what extent is the evaluation a valuable learning experience for the stakeholder participants? The principle promotes the conscious consideration of the potential for learning, capacity building and other practical and transformative consequences of the evaluation. Implicated are evaluation processes and findings.

**Supportive Factors:** Practical outcomes; transformative outcomes

**Ongoing Development and Validation**

The CAE principles should be understood to be evidence-based, systematically-developed and supportable, yet dynamic and subject to change over time. In addition to the aforementioned intended uses and applications the research team encourages systematic field testing and practice-based study of the principles with a long term goal of revising them downstream. We invite members of the global evaluation community to consider participating in this endeavour.

For more information and input on possible field testing designs, opportunities, and considerations, contact the research team c/o Brad Cousins at bcousins@uottawa.ca

**About the COVE Research Team**

Members of the Collaborative Opportunities to Value Evaluation (COVE) research team are: Brad Cousins (University of Ottawa), Bessa Whitmore (Carleton University), Lyn Shulha (Queen’s University), Hind Al Hudib (University of Ottawa), and Nathalie Gilbert (University of Ottawa).

The team is indebted to a large group of willing evaluators who gave freely of their time to inform the development and validation of the principles, to the University of Ottawa for financial support, and to the Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services (CRECS) for technical assistance.

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Invitation to Lead a Field Test of Principles for CAE

As an active member of the evaluation community you are cordially invited to contribute to the ongoing development and validation of Principles for Collaborative Approaches to Evaluation (CAE). If interested, please complete the following information and scan/email or fax to Brad Cousins: bcousins@uottawa.ca; fax: +1-613-562-5188.

Our intention is to publish a compendium of empirical field study reports by evaluators such as you and your colleagues over the next number of years. Ultimately, we will revise the principles on the basis of such systematic field testing.

Name(s): _____________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

Organizational Affiliation: ____________________________________________

Country: ____________________________________________________________

Contact information: email/telephone (include country code):

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Intended Focus for Field Study (check which option(s) apply):

___ Retrospective review of CAE project       ___ Planning of upcoming CAE project

___ Development of CAE training/course       ___ Research on CAE

___ Other, specify _________________________________________________

Project description (Include details about study objectives, design, scope, timeframe). Use additional space as required: