

EVALUATION CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE VOLUNTARY/NONPROFIT SECTOR

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of priorities for evaluation capacity building in the voluntary/nonprofit sector and to raise awareness among evaluation professionals of the key issues for nonprofits that may have an effect on evaluations. The various challenges for nonprofit organizations in the evaluation of their programs, projects and activities include the availability of resources, evaluation skill levels, the design of evaluations, and the nature of nonprofit work. Among the priorities for evaluation capacity building in the nonprofit sector that emerge from these challenges are: fostering collaboration; addressing resource and skill needs; exploring methodological challenges; and building a feedback loop into evaluation. There is currently a large opportunity to open the dialogue process in evaluation, for nonprofits to work together, and for nonprofits to work with funders and evaluators to address evaluation challenges. Evaluators have a role to play in meeting evaluation challenges in nonprofit organizations by helping to find strategies for affecting change, exchanging information with the nonprofit sector community on advances being made in this area, and ensuring that efforts are sustainable.

Résumé: L'objectif de cet article est de fournir une synthèse des priorités pour le renforcement de la capacité évaluative dans le secteur bénévole et sans but lucratif et de mettre les professionnels de l'évaluation au courant des enjeux clés qui peuvent avoir un impact sur les évaluations pour les organismes de bienfaisance et sans but lucratif. Divers défis existent pour les organismes sans but lucratif dans l'évaluation de leur programmes, projets et activités, incluant la disponibilité des ressources, les niveaux de compétences en évaluation, la conception des évaluations et

la nature du travail dans le secteur sans but lucratif. Parmi les priorités pour renforcer la capacité évaluative il y a la promotion de la collaboration; la satisfaction des besoins de ressources et de compétences; l'exploration des défis méthodologiques; et la mise en place de la rétroaction dans l'évaluation. Couramment il y a des possibilités importantes de dialoguer et de travailler ensemble dans le but de surmonter les défis. Les évaluateurs ont un rôle à jouer pour relever les défis dans les organismes sans but lucratif en assistant à trouver des stratégies pour effectuer des changements et à échanger de l'information avec le milieu du secteur sans but lucratif sur le progrès accompli. L'évaluateur puisse ainsi assurer la durabilité de ses efforts.

■ Evaluation capacity building within the voluntary/nonprofit sector currently needs to address various issues, including gaps in information, skills and resources within the sector, resultant challenges, and priority areas. Priorities around capacity building in the voluntary/nonprofit sector emerge from the literature and from real experiences in the sector. Numerous possible responses on the part of nonprofit umbrella organizations, public and private funders, and evaluators working with nonprofits would facilitate meeting evaluation challenges in nonprofits.

This article is based on research carried out by the author to enhance the voluntary/nonprofit sector's awareness of the present status of evaluation resources available to organizations and to identify any gaps and priorities in terms of evaluation resources for nonprofits (Bozzo, 2000; Bozzo & Hall, 1999). The findings from that research have contributed to the author's understanding of evaluation capacity building issues in the nonprofit sector. As well, the author's own experiences in helping nonprofit organizations evaluate their programs and a subsequent literature review have contributed to much of the discussion. The scope of the voluntary/nonprofit sector for the purposes of this article is narrow and does not include hospitals, teaching institutions, libraries and museums, professional associations, religious organizations and places of worship, or other member benefit organizations. Rather, the focus is on human and social service organizations providing benefits to the community. This includes both registered and unregistered charitable organizations that often rely on unpaid volunteers to deliver services (Dow, 1997).

The information presented is a cursory overview of priority areas for evaluation capacity building. The intent is to enhance evalua-

tion professionals' understanding of the key issues affecting evaluations in the nonprofit sector. In the context of this article, capacity in the nonprofit sector is defined broadly as "the human and financial resources, technology, skills, knowledge, and understanding required to permit organizations to do their work and fulfil what is expected of them by stakeholders" (Voluntary Sector Roundtable, 1999, p. 29). As such, evaluation capacity building refers to the development of resources, technical skills, and understanding to enable organizations to undertake evaluation activities. This discussion serves as a starting point for the formulation or reformulation of our opinions on appropriate evaluation approaches in working with nonprofit organizations and in meeting challenges that we as evaluators may face in that work.

ACCOUNTABILITY REQUIREMENTS

Demands are being placed on nonprofit organizations both externally (that is, coming from public or private funders and the public) and internally (from within organizations themselves). Nonprofit organizations are increasingly being asked to demonstrate their effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability to a variety of stakeholders including clients, funders, partners, volunteers, employees, donors, boards, and the public (Forbes, 1998; Legowski & Albert, 1999; Murray & Tassie, 1994; Newcomer, 1997; Torres, Zey, & McIntosh, 1991). A recent study of Canadians on their opinions about voluntary/nonprofit or charitable organizations and issues affecting these organizations found that 75% of respondents thought that nonprofit organizations should be providing more information about the impact of their work (Hall, Greenberg, & McKeown, 2000).

For nonprofit organizations, greater competition for funding means having to provide information on effectiveness (Fine, Thayer, & Coghlan, 1998). This includes everything from information for basic reporting purposes to information that assists in predicting direct or indirect outcomes of a program and information that enables the assessment of impacts of funding in communities. While many organizations may collect information less formally and more anecdotally in the course of delivering programs and services, current accountability requirements imply the need to systematize and standardize information collection over time to enable comparisons to be made. In particular, the shift to reporting on outcomes and conducting evaluations that are more rigorous or that involve stakeholders presents a daunting task to organizations already

facing shortages of human and financial resources. Moreover, the nature of nonprofit work raises questions about how best to report on impacts that relate to the social benefits of activities, programs, and services.

In the current fiscal environment, every size of organization is expected to undertake evaluations. However, there is much diversity within the sector; voluntary/nonprofit organizations in Canada are involved in a wide range of activities and vary in terms of size, revenues, structure, and organization. For example, almost half of Canada's charitable voluntary organizations operate on revenues under \$50,000, 16% with revenues less than \$100,000, and 3% with revenues just over a million dollars (Sharpe, 1994). This is an indication of the low level of financial resources that a near majority of nonprofits may be operating with, raising questions about the extent to which nonprofits may be able to respond to evaluation and accountability demands — or whether all nonprofits are able to respond to these demands in similar ways.

There are some internal pressures to improve programs and services delivered by nonprofits and different trends that encourage nonprofits to be more efficient and effective, including pressures to behave in a more “businesslike” fashion (Light, 2000). Theoretically, there is much to be gained by nonprofit organizations through using evaluation as an organizational management and learning tool that enables strategic, evidence-based decisions to be made about programs.

Given the evaluation and accountability pressures, many organizations are concerned about their ability to respond adequately to evaluation expectations being imposed (Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector, 1999). In a very real sense, nonprofits need to cope first with their evaluation capacity issues in terms of evaluation skills and resources before undertaking evaluation activities. The challenge is a large one and the steps towards evaluation capacity incremental.

THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

Perhaps the best place to start when attempting to understand the current state of affairs or any gaps with respect to evaluation capacity in the voluntary/nonprofit sector is with nonprofit organizations themselves. When voluntary/nonprofit sector organizations are

questioned on their priorities with respect to evaluation, they raise the following needs: improvement in their own accountability; more research to look at evaluation methods in the nonprofit sector; identification of evaluation methods that can be used in different kinds of nonprofits (for example, community and social service organizations, education organizations, and health organizations); and ways of measuring impacts on the community (McKechnie, Newton, & Hall, 2000). Clearly, the voluntary/nonprofit sector recognizes certain gaps, based on experiences in undertaking evaluations. It is not entirely clear from existing research to what extent there has been integration or coordination on evaluation issues and the nonprofit sector's efforts in this area, or whether there have been any efforts to address the gaps identified in and by the nonprofit sector.

Nonprofits, foundations, and umbrella organizations have developed evaluation resources to address evaluation capacity issues (Backer, 1999; Bozzo, 2000; Bozzo & Hall, 1999; Plantz, Taylor Greenway, & Hendricks, 1997). The 1998 review of evaluation resources (that is, manuals, guidebooks, and workbooks) and interviews with nonprofit leaders and evaluation practitioners in Canada and the U.S. revealed that there is room for substantial improvement and for training in evaluation in the nonprofit sector (Bozzo & Hall, 1999). Several questions arise regarding the applicability and usefulness of these resources, such as: What evaluation approaches work best and in which contexts? What methods are appropriate and when? Do existing resources sufficiently facilitate the evaluation process for nonprofit organizations? (Bozzo, 2000). A nonprofit organization planning to undertake an evaluation may consider drawing on information from various evaluation guides and manuals, as no one guide will address all its needs. Moreover, evaluation resources only go so far in terms of facilitating the evaluation process for organizations. In fact, a number of challenges within the voluntary/nonprofit sector need to be addressed in building evaluation capacity.

CHALLENGES FOR EVALUATION IN NONPROFITS

Among the challenges for nonprofit organizations in the evaluation of their programs, projects, and activities are the availability of human and financial resources, evaluation skill levels of staff or volunteers, buy-in on the part of organizational staff or volunteers as to evaluation approaches or design, and the nature of nonprofit work. The challenges for evaluation in nonprofits is well-documented in a

range of areas including community economic development, HIV prevention, substance abuse prevention, peer counselling, literacy training, and health promotion (Gabriel, 1997; Madill & Myers, 1996; O'Connell, Bol, & Langley, 1997; Papineau & Kiely, 1996; Sanders, Trinh, Sherman, & Banks, 1998; van Beveren & Hetherington, 1997). These challenges have been grouped into three categories of issues — evaluation skills, the design and approach of the evaluation, and the nature of nonprofits — and are briefly discussed here.

Evaluation Skills as a Limiting Factor

Evaluation and reporting requirements may not always take into account the organizational capacity, resources, and skill levels of different organizations. Evaluation skills in the nonprofit sector may be weak. Nonprofits may be lacking the skills to approach an evaluation and produce findings, let alone technical findings, and consequently to report back on those findings. The current situation is improving, through the work of some nonprofit umbrella organizations and funders. Many resources have been developed to address the range of evaluation skill levels within nonprofits. However, manuals, guidebooks, and workbooks are only as good as the training that accompanies them, and the use of skills taught in training is dependent on the extent and level of retention of the material on the part of organizational staff and volunteers. This means that there is a need for ongoing support beyond the one-time training of organizational staff and volunteers in nonprofits. Interviews with evaluation practitioners and nonprofit managers in Canada and the U.S. revealed that an area not entirely developed in relation to evaluation work with nonprofits is the addressing of large-scale evaluation skills issues in the voluntary/nonprofit sector.

Design and Approach of the Evaluation

Evaluation practitioners, and certainly nonprofit managers undertaking evaluation activities, face the dilemma of striking a balance between methodologically complex evaluations and overly simplified ones. In nonprofit organizations there is the real challenge of dealing with both quantitative and qualitative data — both what to do with large amounts of data and what to do with information collected qualitatively. There is also the challenge of finding appropriate approaches (that is, bottom-up versus top-down, from more to less participatory) and then identifying the circumstances that lend

themselves to one approach over another. In addition, linked to the evaluation approach and design, nonprofits may not be able to readily identify factors that need to be considered in an evaluation and the relationship of these to the different types of programs, activities, and services being evaluated.

The design of the evaluation and the choice of methodology are key to the ability of nonprofits to undertake evaluation activities. Perhaps simpler evaluation designs will ensure not only that evaluations are more manageable, but that the efforts undertaken will be sustainable over the long term (Fine et al., 1998). In their interviews with key informants among evaluation professionals and nonprofit practitioners in Canada and the U.S., Bozzo and Hall (1999) found that nonprofits may be intimidated by sophisticated data collection methods. As well, some nonprofit organizations may not be well-equipped to handle highly complex technical data or quantitative data. They may not have the in-house capacity to undertake data collection and analysis (Plantz et al., 1997). Information that is collected may be too technically complex for some organizations. While “technically complex” may be a relative term and dependent on skill levels within an organization, the expectation to produce highly technical analyses from the data may be too ambitious at this point in time within the voluntary/nonprofit sector. There is also the question of what to do with qualitative data. Organizations may be uncertain about what to do with information gathered through qualitative data collection methods — how can this information be utilized? In terms of existing evaluation resources, there may be very little clarity on the matter of design and evaluation approaches.

Nature of Nonprofit Organizations

There are challenges to conducting evaluations in nonprofit settings that relate to the nature of nonprofit work. Jointly funded projects, projects conducted in partnership, multiple funding sources, and evaluation fatigue all pose barriers. There is also a special challenge in finding evaluation approaches that will assist in demonstrating the value or contribution of a nonprofit organization’s activities or programs (Kanter & Summers, 1987).

Based on the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) discussions between voluntary organizations and federal agencies in 2001, two challenges in funding practices that relate to evaluation and reporting on ac-

countability were identified, namely: a barrier to collaboration among federal departments in terms of their ability to transfer funds across departments to facilitate working with a common nonprofit organization on a specific initiative; and different evaluation and reporting mechanisms not only across federal departments, but within the same department (VSI, 2001a). From a voluntary/nonprofit perspective, this implies having to invest more organizational resources to be in compliance with the different evaluation and reporting requirements of one federal department or several federal departments working jointly.

There are currently few known or well-documented examples of how nonprofit organizations can report information relating to the nature of their work and still fewer examples of where reporting and evaluation requirements have been simplified or coordinated among the various players.

PRIORITIES FOR EVALUATION CAPACITY BUILDING

Several priority areas form part of the discussion on meeting evaluation challenges in nonprofits and building evaluation capacity in the voluntary/nonprofit sector: fostering collaboration, encouraging dialogue among the players, meeting resource and skill needs, addressing methodological challenges, ensuring flexibility in evaluation, and building a feedback loop into evaluation. It is important to keep in mind that capacity building is key to fostering accountability in the voluntary/nonprofit sector (Light, 2000). If public and private funders, nonprofit umbrella organizations, and evaluators are to assist nonprofits in reporting on their effectiveness and efficiency and meeting their evaluation challenges, then greater attention will have to be paid to the challenges and needs within the voluntary/nonprofit sector.

There is now a very large opportunity to open the dialogue process and negotiate evaluation approaches, for nonprofits to work together and for nonprofits to work with funders and evaluators to address evaluation challenges. Greater flexibility should be built into evaluation, with funders accepting different forms of reporting and with three-way learning being promoted (that is, nonprofits learning from nonprofits, nonprofits learning from funders, and funders learning from nonprofits). Meeting the evaluation challenge in nonprofits means having to address needs in organizations, building evaluation capacity, and then working to establish the sustainability of

capacity building efforts. As nonprofits learn about what has worked, what has not, and why, and recognize that the results of evaluation can help them, they begin the process toward accepting evaluation as contributing to program or organizational planning and development. The priorities of fostering collaboration, meeting resources and skills needs, addressing methodological challenges, and building a feedback loop into evaluation are summarized here.

Fostering Collaboration

Collaboration involves private and public sector agencies, nonprofit umbrella organizations, and evaluators taking a more proactive, participatory role in capacity building. This may involve pooling resources across different funders and across various funding interests. Collaboration consists of providing forums for exchanges of information on evaluation and joint training sessions. This can be undertaken by umbrella organizations in conjunction with private foundations, government agencies providing funding, and evaluators. Collaboration may also entail greater dialogue among funders, nonprofits, and evaluators to establish mechanisms for simplifying evaluation and reporting practices where there are overlaps in funding, multiple funding interests, or projects conducted in partnership.

Sharing evaluation plans and findings may facilitate the evaluation process for organizations. This would be enabled through the establishment of a climate that encourages open, interactive environments and reduces competition in the nonprofit sector. Perhaps the relationship between funders and nonprofits and between nonprofits and other nonprofits is some time away from achieving a collaborative, open-dialogue state in a competitive funding environment. Where nonprofits are working in partnership, there needs to be some sensitivity on the part of funders and evaluators to the issues around collaboration between organizations “in practice” (for example, time frames and coordination of information gathering) and how this may affect the evaluation process.

In 2001, the Voluntary Sector Initiative discussions identified priorities related to good funding practices and evaluation of funding regimes, such as: effective and efficient reporting; accountability for public expenditures and responsible spending; value for money and focus on results; and joint approaches to monitoring, evaluation, and accountability (VSI, 2001b). This is only one indication of agreement

in principle of where improvements can begin. As described earlier, funding practices contribute to the challenges faced by nonprofits. There is a real need to coordinate the requirements of different funders where there is an overlap of funding areas in order to simplify reporting and evaluation for nonprofits. Providing simplified templates for evaluation and reporting may help to make evaluation less onerous for nonprofits.

There may be a large opportunity for the exchange of information among nonprofits, between nonprofits and funders and among nonprofits. If collaboration is to be promoted and strengthened to enable capacity building in the nonprofit sector, then there has to be greater leadership — funder or nonprofit sector driven — to advance thinking in this area. The proof of collaboration in action will be the transformation of policy into concrete practices for the interaction between nonprofits and funders, and the implementation of effective approaches for undertaking evaluations.

What could be emerging new relationships between funders and nonprofits are only a starting point in meeting evaluation challenges and building capacity in the voluntary/nonprofit sector. Perhaps the important element to recognize is the inherent inequality in these relationships. While grant-makers are seeking more of a partnership with communities, the dialogue process on the scope and design of evaluations presents an extra challenge. How to set in place parameters for fair negotiation to take place when there are inherent power imbalances, based on who has grant money and who is seeking it, has yet to be determined (Nee & Mojica, 1999).

A seemingly untapped opportunity in Canada is the potential to foster collaboration between the evaluation, funder/grant-maker, and nonprofit communities to address issues of capacity and to share ideas, innovations, or advancements made in nonprofit evaluation. More efforts need to be employed at the ground and local levels, bringing funders and nonprofits along with evaluation professionals together in non-confrontational settings to develop mutually acceptable strategies and to simplify evaluation and reporting mechanisms.

Meeting Resource and Skill Needs

Skills and resources need to be in place before meaningful, useful evaluations can be expected over the long term. Financial resources

may be needed in some areas. This situation is improving as funders enable nonprofits to allocate resources within their proposed budgets to evaluation activities.

Most efforts for meeting skill needs will involve delivering training on evaluation processes and evaluation approaches to the organizational staff and volunteers charged with the responsibility of undertaking evaluation activities. This training would include building an understanding of the development of program logic models and their importance in program planning and evaluation — illustrating, for example, how a program may be connected first to its organizational goals and then to impacts in the community (Murray & Balfour, 1999). Some degree of evaluation training is already being implemented by funders and nonprofit umbrella organizations in Canada and the United States.

One of the largest challenges in meeting resource and skill needs may be the turnover of staff and volunteers in nonprofits that does not enable consistency in the collection of information over time. In this sense, building capacity is a bit of a moving target — the organizational context (including the financial situation) does not seem to stay the same long enough to enable impacts information to be collected effectively.

A strategy to facilitate the development of skills in nonprofits could be the implementation of a system for organizations to contact each other for support beyond training workshops to share the lessons learned from evaluations — that is, the development of networks of nonprofit organizations funded in the same or related areas. This involves first delivering evaluation training to different levels of understanding, to different levels of staff within organizations, and to different locations within a city or province to maximize the reach within sub-sectors of nonprofits. Next it involves creating forums for exchanges either face-to-face or online.

The sustainability of efforts to build evaluation capacity in the voluntary sector will increase over time as key skills for evaluation planning and framework development are transferred to the sector. We are seeing more evidence of partnerships between nonprofit organizations and universities or teaching institutions and with local chapters of the Canadian Evaluation Society to connect evaluation students and professionals with organizations needing support or advice in conducting evaluations. Over the long term the utilization of evaluation findings may be enhanced as nonprofits are shown

how results can inform their organizational planning and decision-making.

Addressing Methodological Challenges

With the push to assess impacts comes the need to ensure appropriate systems are in place for gathering information on performance, progress, and outcomes. Sustainable evaluation capacity will be achieved through the learning that comes from evaluation experience and that gets transformed to the use of evaluation findings within nonprofit organizations. From a nonprofit perspective, limited human and financial resources and skills to conduct evaluations combined with multiple evaluation and reporting requirements leads to questioning which methodologies can be efficiently applied for maximum gain.

Grappling with the issue of methodological choice may be another priority area for meeting the evaluation challenge in the voluntary/nonprofit sector. Methodological rigour is often pitted against the participation of stakeholders or approaches that may sometimes be viewed as less “scientific.” In this climate, nonprofits may be led to believe that they need to involve external evaluators to a large extent, that the “real” work of collecting and analyzing evaluation data is better left to the technical experts. This is often linked to the notion that credible and objective findings can only be obtained in this way. While the author does not dispute the usefulness of methodologically complex evaluations in certain circumstances, their relevance and wide application needs to be reviewed in the context of evaluation in the nonprofit sector and specifically with respect to evaluation capacity in the sector.

The emphasis in the voluntary/nonprofit sector should be on the collection of information — through modest endeavours — that provides a good indication of how things are working or have worked. Ultimately, findings should be understandable and usable by nonprofit organizations. Perhaps there are mechanisms not yet explored for ensuring that evaluations are meaningful to a number of impacted or interested parties beyond the organization itself. In effect, data should be in a form that the end-user is comfortable with — in a form that can be manipulated by the end-user to uncover trends. As such, methodology should be simplified where possible. Simpler, more manageable data may enhance the utilization of findings (Fine et al., 1998). Finally, there needs to be greater discussion

within the voluntary/nonprofit sector itself of the benefits of bottom-up versus top-down approaches — of approaches that range from more to less participatory. One approach is not necessarily more appropriate than the other. This is organizationally dependent. It depends on how amenable the organization is to undertaking one approach versus the other. It also depends on the organizational and decision-making structures and processes within the nonprofit organization.

Through ongoing dialogue, funders and nonprofits together can begin to move beyond systems for basic reporting and toward viewing evaluation as a tool in organizational planning and development for nonprofit sector organizations. Before this can take place greater leadership is required on the part of funders and evaluators to work closely with nonprofit organizations in developing appropriate strategies. Evaluators have a role to play in facilitating the dialogue process and lending their years of expertise — advocating for a transformation in how information of an evaluative nature or evaluation findings can be used.

Building a Feedback Loop into Evaluation

Incorporating a feedback loop into evaluation involves funders communicating with nonprofits, nonprofits with funders, nonprofits with other nonprofits — a three-way learning process. As funders and nonprofits work more collaboratively, assurances need to be built into the evaluation and reporting process that will assist nonprofits in understanding what funders' expectations are, how information of an evaluative nature may be used by funders, or what has been done with the information that has been reported on. Nonprofits could be sharing information on evaluation frameworks, processes, approaches, and findings with other nonprofits to a greater extent than they are presently doing to facilitate a mutual learning process within the nonprofit sector.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Building evaluation capacity in the voluntary/nonprofit sector starts with addressing resource and skill issues mainly through training efforts in organizations as well as across groups of organizations. In tackling the challenges that nonprofits may face in undertaking evaluations, there should be some time spent assessing the avail-

able evaluation approaches and determining their applicability to the range of nonprofit sector programs and activities. This will be enabled through an open-dialogue, collaborative environment involving public and private funders, nonprofit umbrella organizations, and evaluators that includes negotiating on the scope and parameters of evaluations and on the selection of appropriate methodologies.

A step in the right direction may be the identification of leaders among funders, nonprofit sector organizations, and evaluation professionals who will champion the cause, bringing together sometimes different, but most often common perspectives on what can be done and turning that into action. These champions would be part of targeted dialogues on evaluation issues, exchanges of ideas, and communication of advances to the broader audience. The reach and impact in various sectors (that is, private, public, and nonprofit) would be enhanced through the participation of evaluation professionals tapped into networks of nonprofit organizations. In addition, evaluators equipped with the knowledge of evaluation challenges and priorities in the voluntary/nonprofit sector may be charged with facilitating the learning process for organizations and ensuring that efforts to build capacity in the sector are sustainable. Efforts would be undertaken at the ground level and across public and private funders in different jurisdictions in Canada.

Equipped with both the knowledge of evaluation challenges and priorities in a nonprofit organization and an understanding of the nature of work in a nonprofit, evaluators have a responsibility to facilitate the learning process for that organization. Essentially, it means being aware of, attuned to, and sensitive to multiple evaluation and reporting requirements and skill, resource, and methodological challenges. It also means simplifying the evaluation process, where possible.

There is a large yet seemingly untapped opportunity for cross-fertilization between the evaluation and nonprofit worlds. While many advances are being made along similar paths, there do not appear to be many exchanges of information between the two communities. This is perhaps an area to be explored by evaluators in collaboration with voluntary/nonprofit sector organizations. Professional associations such as the Canadian Evaluation Society in collaboration with associations geared specifically toward nonprofit researchers and practitioners may begin the dialogue through local networking events or at national-level conferences. Many evaluation profession-

als straddle different camps, and this presents a key opportunity for the larger evaluation community.

Any changes in the use of evaluation within the voluntary/nonprofit sector will be incremental. We cannot expect too much too soon. Establishing a culture of evaluation is a gradual process as nonprofit organizations recognize how to use information from evaluation. With nonprofit organizations beginning to understand the evaluation process, incorporating evaluation into organizational or program planning and development, and using evaluation findings, the nonprofit sector as a whole will make advances toward meeting evaluation and accountability demands.

NOTE

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