

Promoting Evaluation Utilization in Developmental Evaluation: A Case Study Exploring
Organizational Conditions

by

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Abstract

The current study extends the enduring interest in evaluation utilization by researchers with a focus on developmental evaluation (DE) practices. A qualitative case study design examines what organizational conditions promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders during a DE process. The DE process occurred within a mentoring partnership organization from May 2013 to June 2014. Three themes (i.e., relationship influences; organizational readiness; and, collective climate) were generated by the integration of four data sources: semi-structured individual interviews (n=6), embedded reflections (n=6), review of organizational documents (n=31) and researcher field notes (n=45). Three case assertions, generated from the interpretations of the study findings, suggest that the progressive development of relationships, coordination of organizational responses and facilitation by a competent evaluator represent three organizational conditions that promoted evaluation utilization by stakeholders. These assertions advance important study implications for operationalizing DE conditions, guiding DE practices, and informing concurrent study of DE processes.

“But I don’t want to go among mad people,” Alice remarked.
“Oh, you can’t help that,” said the Cat: “we’re all mad here. I’m mad. You’re mad.”
“How do you know I’m mad?” said Alice.
“You must be,” said the Cat, “or you wouldn’t have come here.”
- Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

Grandad: Cave hominus unius libri; this one is for you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

How an evaluation process and findings are used by participating stakeholders for creating knowledge, informing improvement or future considerations are, in my opinion, as important as *what* emerges during the process of conducting an evaluation. My interest in the use of evaluations stemmed from personal experience as an evaluator where I witnessed some evaluations being used to their full potential and others that were not used as effectively as they could be. Particular to the lack of effective use, sometimes I noticed that the final report was put on a shelf and the recommendations and results were not used to catalyze change in the program or organization, even in situations where there were clear recommendations that small-scale changes would make a large improvement in the program. On several occasions, organizations did not appear to take time to digest the information from the evaluation or make plans to move forward for improvement. As a member of the evaluation team, it was frustrating to see the resources invested in our evaluation work that did not appear to be immediately utilized to enact change, improve practice or inform ongoing work. In contrast, seeing instances where evaluations were used extensively to inform stakeholders, guide improvement of programs or practices and shift priorities was incredibly rewarding, which only highlighted the frustration I felt in the instances of inefficient or lack of evaluation utilization. On one such occasion, an evaluation of a women's shelter in the Edmonton area was used immediately to improve both the quality of program provided to the women who stayed there and the evaluation results were shared at multiple levels (including national and international forums) to contribute to best practice. The observation of this contrast in evaluation use, and the implications it may have on evidence-based decision making, led me to graduate school to seek more understanding of evaluation theories and practices, and to determine how evaluations could be better utilized. This

introductory chapter shines a spotlight on the literature around evaluation utilization and on developmental evaluation (DE) as an innovative approach for enhancing evaluation utilization. The chapter also introduces the context in which this study of a DE was undertaken; and describes the multiple roles I held during the research study.

Spotlight on Evaluation Utilization

In terms of theory, I began to investigate the literature to find information on evaluation utilization and strategies for enhancing use. The exploration spurred an interest in the factors, structure, and processes of evaluations that promote evaluation utilization. In particular, the interest included the human, social and contextual factors that play a role in increasing evaluation use; the types of evaluation frameworks that help evaluators enhance use; and, specific practices or evaluation procedures that allow for utilization of evaluation findings. Evaluation utilization was initially conceptualized by scholars as the use of findings from evaluation to inform changes to a program or organization, alter stakeholders' perceptions of the evaluative process or provide direction to ongoing work (Alkin & Taut, 2003). Patton expanded the definition to include the participation in the process by stakeholders, in which the most important component was the evaluation's usefulness to its intended users (Patton, 2008, 2011). Stakeholders are defined as those who are invested in the program to be evaluated and may be individuals who are intended to use evaluation results (Alkin, 2011). Findings and learnings from evaluation assist stakeholders in supporting and informing future improvement, program development and evaluation (Patton, 2008). It is the use of the evaluation process and findings for the purpose of informing the current and future work which became of interest to me as an evaluator. It is important to note that some literature makes a distinction between use and

utilization (e.g., Johnson et al., 2009); however, for the purposes of this study I use the terms synonymously, with a preference for utilization.

The theoretical exploration of evaluation utilization led me on a personal journey to reflect upon and think deeply about evaluation practice to understand, as a practitioner, how I could guide organizations and stakeholders to better utilize the information they had learned from the evaluation. Part of my reflection centered on the literature I encountered and how the theoretical learning could inform my evaluation practice. The other component of my reflection centered on the skillsets and practices I needed to work with my stakeholders to enhance evaluation use. In particular, to think about what skills I needed as an evaluator to attend to the needs of stakeholders and support increased evaluation utilization.

In an effort to enhance my practice, I sought to become a credentialed evaluator through the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES). The credentialing program was created in 2010 by the CES to support the practice of high quality evaluations that are conducted by competent and ethical evaluators (CES, 2016). Evaluators are required to present evidence of appropriate education (graduate level degree or certificate), experience (at least two years of fulltime evaluation related work in the last ten years), and competence (education and/or experience related to at least 70% of competencies defined by CES) (CES, 2016). Discovering the CES competencies I required as an evaluator to become credentialed and comparing them to my interest in evaluation utilization led me to the topic for the current study. My interest in evaluation utilization has a large impact on discovering the competencies as an evaluator I need in order to help facilitate evaluation utilization by organizations and their stakeholders.

Developmental Evaluation as an Innovative Approach for Enhancing Utilization

My experiences with the underutilization of evaluations led me to wonder what features of evaluations promoted use, and further, whether certain types or approaches to evaluation fostered the use of results in an ongoing fashion. As I gained experience in evaluation and in learning about evaluation utilization, I discovered developmental evaluation (DE) – which is both a type of evaluation and an approach to evaluation (Patton, 2011). Common across both is the focus on the inclusion of stakeholders in the evaluation process which can enhance use. In particular, developmental approaches emerging as a tool to focus on supporting evaluation utilization within complex and innovative programs or environments (Patton, 2011). Developmental evaluation requires the inclusion of stakeholders, defined as those who are invested in the program (Alkin, 2011), organization (Alkin, 2011) or evaluation process (Patton, 2011). Developmental evaluation supports organizational development and innovation, with a focus on utilization, by encouraging relationality, collaboration, and flexibility among the organization and its stakeholders (Patton, 2011). In addition, DE is most appropriate for complex, innovative environments that require real-time information that can be used to respond to organizational challenges (Patton, 2011). The main goal of DE, then, is adaptive development to make programs different (Patton, 2011). To support the goal of adaptive development, key characteristics of DE include concepts of rigorous evaluation, evolving purpose, co-creation with stakeholders and a utilization focus (Patton, 2011). Upon my realization that the DE approach could be an important tool for my work as an evaluator to involve stakeholders and encourage evaluation utilization, I began to think about how I could best learn about how to practice DE.

In terms of practice, the approach of DE was then immediately intriguing and appropriate for me to examine as a way to enhance the utilization of evaluations. If I could practice DE in the

field, perhaps I could improve the usefulness of evaluation findings and process of the evaluations I worked on. Learning about DE and subsequently being exposed to the process through work as an evaluator and as a student led me to continue to investigate the topic and to study how I could best apply the concept to the evaluations I was working on. I wanted to know if there were any competencies (through CES or otherwise) that were essential to my knowledge and practice of DE. The fluidity of the DE framework in evaluation and the high level of inclusion and consultation with stakeholders led me to consider how I could investigate this further as part of my thesis. Thus, the purpose of the current study was to examine stakeholders' evaluation utilization within a DE framework. Specifically, the study sought to examine the conditions created by participation in a DE process for promoting evaluation utilization by stakeholders. The guiding research question for the study was: *What organizational conditions promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders during a developmental evaluation process?* Sub-questions to address the purpose and overarching research question included examining the influences relevant to the DE process related to developing effective relationships, assessing organizational readiness and facilitating a collective climate.

Context in Which to Study Developmental Evaluation

In order to study influences on evaluation utilization with DE I needed to find a context in which to undertake this study. To examine the influence of a DE on evaluation utilization by stakeholders, it was necessary to embed this study inside an ongoing DE. Previous work as a research associate with a Western Canadian University's Evaluation and Research Team provided the opportunity to create an evaluation framework for supporting the work of a provincial mentoring organization. The existing relationship between the mentoring organization (as the program and stakeholders) and the Evaluation and Research Team (as the evaluators)

allowed for an opportunity to undertake the research. The following details the evaluation context, which includes a brief overview of the organization and the timeline of the evaluation. The context provides information on the features of the organization and evaluation process that made it a prime candidate for studying DE. It also provides the contextual rationale for the study approach. The study context section in chapter three outlines the organization of focus, its mission, governance structures and evaluation history in more detail.

The organizational context for the study is important to understand, as are the processes in which the evaluation followed. The provincial mentoring organization began work in 2001 guided by an overarching vision that every child who requires a mentor is able to access one. Since then, the organization has focused on growing itself into a partnership of over 90 other agencies and providing essential leadership on topics related to mentoring. The organization approached their evaluation process by aligning evaluation efforts according to phases of organizational and programmatic implementation. The first phase centered on needs assessment and early implementation efforts by focusing on identifying trends, successes and best practices related to mentoring; increasing accessibility to mentoring organizations; expanding knowledge about mentoring; and developing and supporting a plan to enhance mentoring in the province of Alberta. Following Phase I of the organizational implementation, a summative evaluation was completed that involved interviews with stakeholders, site visits and a review of relevant documents. The information garnered from this evaluation demonstrated the strategies the organization had been implementing were effective in achieving the goals they had set for themselves.

Following the success of this work, in 2011 the organization received additional funding and transitioned into Phase II of their development. Phase II focused on continuing to increase

the capacity of mentoring programs in the province; increasing public awareness of the importance of mentoring; increasing collaboration of community partners; and, supporting sustainability of mentoring in the province. As a component of the work, the organization contracted the University's Evaluation and Research Team to develop an evaluation framework to guide their efforts through the Phase II implementation. Following the development of the evaluation framework, an independent contractor (lead evaluator) was secured to assist in the implementation of the evaluation plan, which comprises the DE currently under review in this study.

The organization itself is structured in an innovative way that allows for consulting, informing and supporting partner organizations that provide the front-line mentor service delivery. The organization focuses on providing both comprehensive online resources and learning opportunities in addition to field support. The structure of the organization, its governance and modes of delivering service and supporting its many partner organizations made it a prime candidate for a DE that would examine the complex, dynamic context.

The Phase II evaluation of the organization involved analysis of formative, summative and DE components. As a member of the Evaluation and Research Team, I had participated in designing the DE framework for the organization that was completed in May of 2013 and encompassed three key questions centered on: assessing the relevance of current working group activities to informational needs; improving intentionality of implemented activities; and, measuring the impact of initiative outcomes. At the end of this process, I sought the opportunity to be part of the implementation of the evaluation and at the same time complete the requirements for my thesis.

The provincial mentoring organization uses governance that includes a leadership team, Provincial Coordinator, fiscal agent and operations team. Community partnerships for the organization include their partner members, community agencies, schools, and children and youth. Through these governance leaders and partners, the organization develops and provides evidence-based tools and resources to partners, supports partners in their mentoring efforts, supports existing networks, and develops innovative fundraising initiatives and partners. The outputs for the organization include: credible communication materials that are distributed to partners across Alberta, the utilization of evidence-based tools and resources, existing networks that support mentoring, support to key stakeholders by the organization, and, identification of new funding opportunities. In their Phase II logic model, the organization has three clear outcomes: the effective and efficient promotion of awareness related to the benefits of mentoring, the effective and efficient provision of access to a range of quality mentoring opportunities, and, effective and efficient support of mentoring programs over the long term. The following depicts the organization's Phase II logic model.

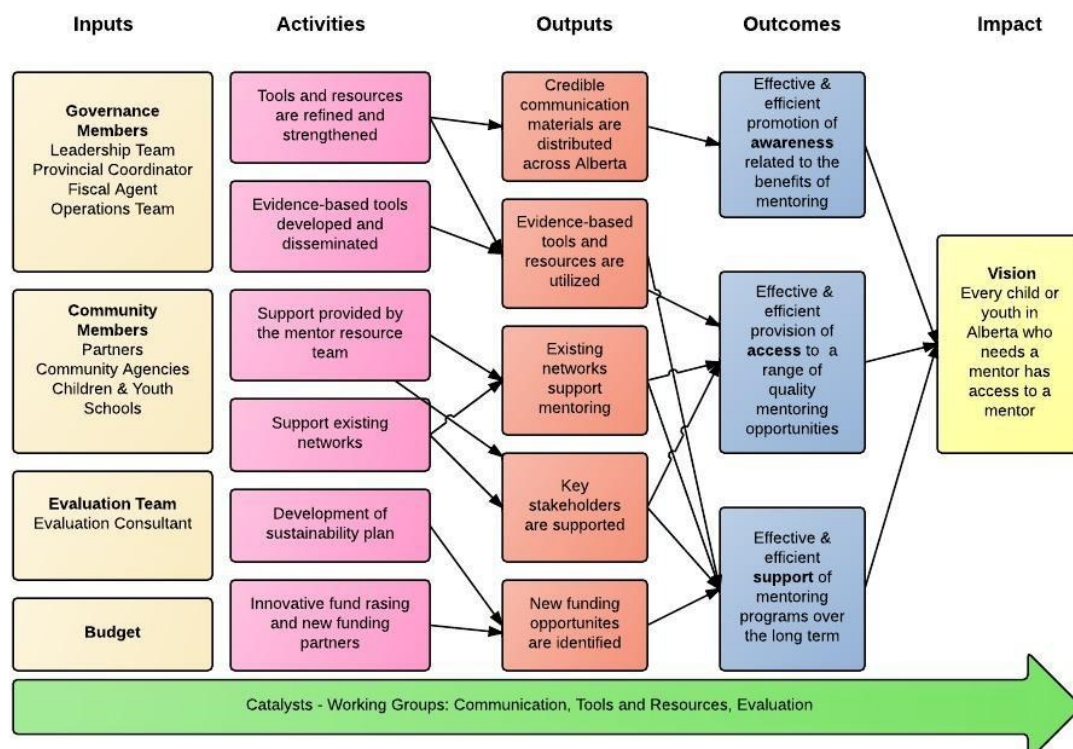


Figure 1. A Provincial Mentoring Partnership Organization's Phase II Logic Model

The evaluation was completed over the fall and winter of 2013/2014. The evaluation team utilized seven lines of evidence to provide information on understanding the organization's successes, challenges and outcomes. The seven lines of evidence included: analysis of administrative data; an electronic survey with mentors; an electronic survey with organizational partners; an electronic survey completed at an international mentoring symposium; a focus group with national/international mentoring experts; key informant interviews with stakeholders; and a DE to inform the evaluation process. All components of the data collection led to an integrative set of recommendations and conclusions that summarized the alignment of organizational efforts with their Phase II objectives.

Not surprisingly, the evaluation changed significantly in scope throughout the process from what was specified in the original evaluation framework, as one would expect with a DE (Patton, 2011). Key decisions were made during the course of the evaluation to alter the

objectives of the evaluation, focus of the evaluation, stakeholders contributing to the evaluation, evaluation data collection methods, participants, data analysis plans and knowledge dissemination plans for the evaluation. Overall, the DE that was conducted looks very different than outlined in the original framework. Through the DE process, the organization and its stakeholders utilized the DE approach to alter their path as they went forward based on the evidence and information they were receiving from the evaluation. Figures 2 and 3 depict the first and second years of the evaluation and research and highlights major milestones. In particular, four key research activities occurred concurrently with the evaluation process: the engagement of the Evaluation and Research Team; the dual-role involvement as researcher and evaluator; data collection beginning with respect to organizational document review and researcher field notes; and, data collection ending with embedded reflection and semi-structured individual interviews.

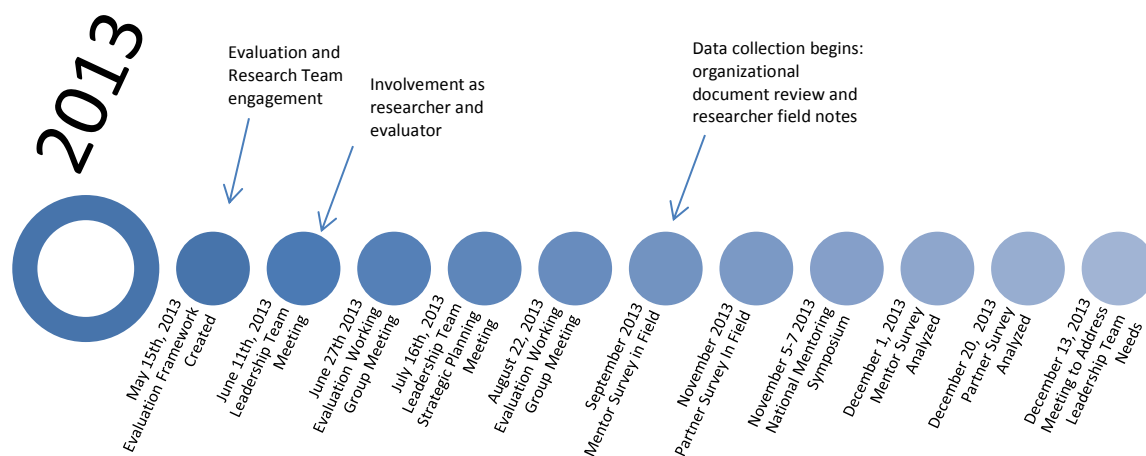


Figure 2. Research Activities Superimposed on Evaluation Milestones during 2013

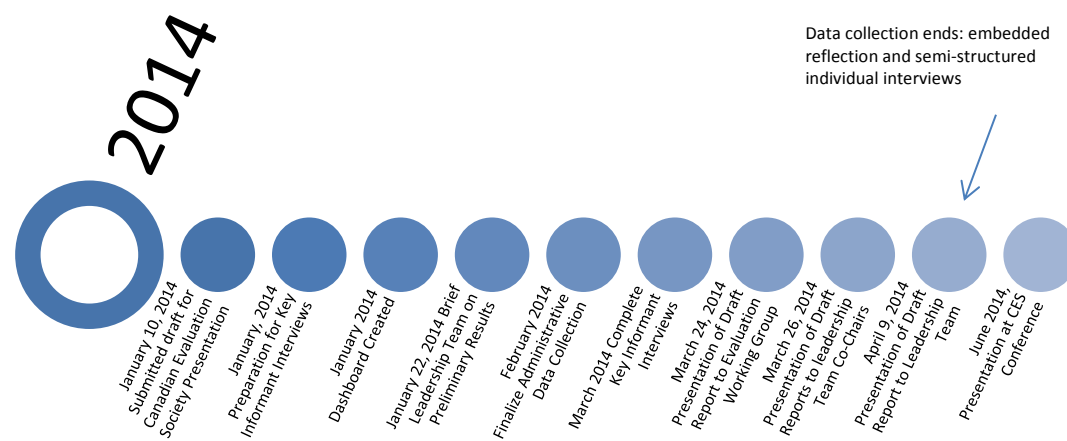


Figure 3. Research Activities Superimposed on Evaluation Milestones during 2014

Ultimately, the evaluation used data to support understanding of the organization in addition to successes, challenges and outcomes of their implementation. Information was gathered that allowed the organization to position itself for further strategic development. The evaluation summary provided situates the current study within the evaluation context, and allows for a greater understanding of the organization, structure, governance, stakeholders and course of the evaluation. In addition, the unique context provides a rationale for the use of a qualitative case study design as appropriate in the current study. The following section describes in greater detail the dual role of the researcher in the evaluation and the current study.

Defining the Researcher's Multiple Roles

To accurately describe the evaluation context and the present study, it is important to recognize the dual, and in some cases, multiple roles the researcher played. First, I was one of three evaluators who completed the original evaluation framework for the provincial mentoring organization. Following the creation of the framework, I joined the lead evaluator on the project

to assist in implementing the evaluation framework. Thus, I was both researcher for the current study and evaluator for the organization's DE project. The multiple roles I held allowed for an in-depth understanding of the contextual elements surrounding the organization including political climate, governance, organizational understanding, and process understanding.

Knowledge was obtained through almost two years of work with the organization. The understanding and relationship building offered a unique and 'insider' perspective to the process of evaluation for the organization and allowed for consistent and clarifying involvement into examining the influence of a DE context on evaluation utilization by stakeholders. I was aware of the potential bias in operating in multiple roles and I continued to be aware of any instances where bias may have influenced my thought process in this study. Generally speaking, the immersion within the organization and ongoing participation greatly increased my ability to comprehend and understand the perspectives of the organization and stakeholders when undertaking the research role. Thus, the multiple roles I held seemed to enhance the quality of my experience and the quality of this research.

Positioning Myself as a Qualitative Case Study Researcher

Through situating myself in the context of qualitative research by providing information on my experiences and educational background, I can make explicit the beliefs and philosophical assumptions I bring to the present study. An account of my experiences has already been interwoven into the previous sections that introduce the study purpose, context, and approach. In brief, examining these experiences has led me to understand my philosophical assumptions as closely identifying with the pragmatic worldview. This is because similar to Creswell (2013)'s description of the use of pragmatism as an interpretive framework, I seek to understand the world

in my study through participant views to solve a real world problem, that is the underutilization of evaluation process and findings by stakeholders.

The importance of practical evidence in the current study indicates that my ontological views are aligned with how I view the nature of my reality. In so doing, the focus of my thesis on use of evaluation emerged as a product of my experiences as an evaluator and as a graduate student in the content areas of measurement and evaluation theory. My approach to evaluation naturally integrates opportunities for applying understandings to programmatic decision-making. As a result of this view of the nature of reality, I wanted to empirically and systematically examine the influences to evaluation utilization by stakeholders during a developmental evaluation. This thesis topic, as well as the choice of a case study methodology were influenced by my ontological views that highlight the pragmatic approach I take in my study.

Multiple lines of evidence captured within an ongoing evaluation in the current study (i.e., individual interviews, embedded reflection, researcher field notes and organizational document review) suggest that my epistemological assumptions align with efforts to collect data so that I gain comprehensive understanding within the naturalistic context in which I am studying. During my training as an evaluator, one of the most important lessons I was provided was in terms of drawing upon multiple forms of evidence to form interpretations and the importance of gaining contextual understandings. I believe there are always multiple realities and multiple views from participants or stakeholders that may not be relayed accurately through only one data source. In this way, my data collection procedures collect information from a variety of perspectives to capture a comprehensive understanding of evaluation utilization within a developmental approach.

The use of field notes within my case study approach indicates alignment with my methodological view as I needed to interact with my stakeholders over the duration of the evaluation in order to gain a trustworthy understanding of the evaluation process. Using field notes I was able to make explicit my biases and emerging understandings and increase my awareness of the influence of my axiological values on this study. Including field notes in my methodology allowed me to track my understanding and interactions over time. Field notes were important to be able to unpack my thesis topic examining the influences to evaluation utilization by stakeholders, as I had to witness the learnings and utilization to be able to study them. The ability to examine my own biases, document progress and witness the development of the evaluation were critical in order to effectively examine my thesis topic.

Positioning Myself as a Developmental Evaluator

In the context of the current study it is important for me to situate myself as a developmental evaluator. My experiences as an evaluator, specifically as a developmental evaluator have influence on the nature of my interaction with participants in the current study. Through experience working as an evaluator in practice, I gained skills required to complete evaluations in a variety of different contexts with varying stakeholder groups. In particular, I started my career working as an evaluation consultant for a private evaluation firm. Work in this environment exposed me to projects ranging across a variety of sectors and with different stakeholder groups. In this position I witnessed a spectrum of evaluation utilization by stakeholders and it spurred me to understand more about my role as an evaluator in their use of information. These experiences of witnessing underutilization of evaluation led me to graduate school at the University of Alberta to further enhance my understanding of evaluation theory and practice.

During my study at the University, I continued to work as an evaluator in a large government data lab, as the program evaluation director for a not-for-profit organization, and as an evaluation consultant. The experiences I had in practice, coupled with my academic learning provided me with information to learn about DE as an approach to evaluation and to infuse my practice with the concepts. In particular, my knowledge of participatory approaches and adherence to principles and conditions for successful DE as outlined by Patton and colleagues' (2016) likely influenced some of the results of this study. As such, it is important to be aware of my influence as a DE evaluator on the current study.

I was an evaluator that was external to the organization, working with a lead evaluator to complete the project. The external nature of my positioning allowed me to experience engagement with the stakeholders but still remain as an observing party to the work. My relational approach with my stakeholders, consistent interaction and engagement as well as my provision of opportunities for reflection during the present study offered me a fruitful opportunity to gain more contextual information and understanding as an external evaluator. I was able to develop strong relationships with the stakeholders in the evaluation and with the organization, in general. Further, the organization was able to benefit from the interactions involved in the DE and through the research to obtain a fulsome and value-added evaluation product as a result of their participation with external evaluators. My role as a developmental evaluator had mutual benefit for myself as well as for the organization in the DE and research process in terms of learning, understanding and engagement.

Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter described my personal and scholarly interests in examining developmental evaluation processes in which utilization may be enhanced by stakeholder

involvement. My personal interest stemmed from my observations as an evaluator of ineffective evaluation utilization and my personal quest to find evaluation practices, types and approaches that could increase utilization. The search led me to DE as an innovative way of engaging stakeholders and increasing evaluation utilization. My scholarly interest was further piqued by reading the literature on evaluation utilization and DE practice to understand the complex features that promoted use within DE. The marrying of my personal and scholarly interest provided me with an opportunity to create a DE framework for a provincial mentoring organization and subsequently engage in the current thesis research with the organization. I described in this chapter the context of the provincial mentoring organization's research and evaluation. In addition, I defined the multiple roles I undertook in the current study as developmental evaluator and researcher and described the benefits as being essential to the comprehensive examination of the present study. I positioned myself as a qualitative case study researcher in terms of my ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions. Finally, I positioned myself as a developmental evaluator to provide additional contextual information. In the next chapter, I provide a rationale based in the literature for undertaking my study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study, focused on examining the influences on evaluation utilization during a developmental evaluation (DE), is grounded in the literature related to the complex construct of evaluation utilization and the theory and practices guiding DE. The construct of evaluation utilization will be examined in terms of its ever-evolving definition and our current understanding of factors and influences with a particular emphasis on stakeholder involvement and recent approaches to its study. The exploration of DE guiding theory and practices will emphasize our current understandings of key characteristics and articulated principles and recent approaches to its study. These aspects are pertinent to the study focus and context within an ongoing DE. I conclude the chapter by presenting the need for the current the study and chapter summary.

Positioning the Need for Evaluation Utilization

Evaluation utilization has been a personal interest, yet it is also a scholarly field of study. For this reason, in the context of the current study, evaluation utilization is a significant area to discuss. It is important to first define and then synthesize what research has uncovered, focusing specifically on the influences on evaluation utilization and the ways in which the work has been undertaken. Next, I examine how evaluation types and approaches contribute to evaluation utilization by discussing definitions of utilization, factors that influence utilization, practices for evaluation utilization, and the involvement of stakeholders as related to utilization. I conclude by discussing Canadian-specific practices to enhance evaluation utilization.

Defining evaluation utilization. In order to examine how a DE process influences evaluation, we must first define *utilization* in this context. Evaluation *use* or *utilization* are often used interchangeably in the literature and describe the application of evaluation findings to

practice, knowledge or experience (Johnson et al., 2009). Evaluators who spend time examining programs, providing recommendations or observations want the findings of their work to be utilized to support decisions, enhance services and foster change (Patton, 2011). Alkin and Taut (2003) have described two types of evaluation use: ‘process use’ and ‘use of evaluation findings’. Process use is defined as a change in behavior, procedure or thinking that occurs as a result of learning from the evaluation process (Alkin & Taut, 2003). They conceptualize the use of evaluation findings as comprising three distinct categories of use: instrumental, conceptual or symbolic use.

Instrumental use is described as the direct application of evaluation knowledge by stakeholders, and in a more traditional sense, a format that allows the results and findings to influence change in a program (Alkin & Taut, 2003). Conceptual use fosters change in understanding from evaluation findings; that is, changing stakeholders’ perceptions about a program (Alkin & Taut, 2003). Alkin (1985) notes that in some cases, conceptual use is the only type of use that results from evaluation work, as it is not subject to the same barriers as instrumental and symbolic use (e.g., lack of resources to make change). Symbolic use is defined as the existence of an evaluation being used to convince or make a case (Alkin & Taut, 2003). In the symbolic type of use, the evaluation itself, not the findings, are used to influence decision makers to follow a course of action supported by stakeholders (e.g., increasing funding) (Skolits, Morrow & Burr, 2009). Though defined in various forms, ‘utilization’ can be summarized as applying learnings from the process of evaluation and/or the findings of evaluation to ongoing or future work. In particular, DE frameworks support both process utilization and utilization of evaluation findings. The next section will discuss the factors that influence evaluation utilization.

Promoting evaluation utilization. Although there are many ways of conceptualizing and defining the term ‘utilization’, evaluators are overall most interested in whether or not the results of their evaluations are considered by organizations in decision making or redevelopment of their programming (Neuman, Shahor, Shina, Sarid, & Saar, 2013). The utilization of evaluation has generally been a concern to the evaluation community since Weiss (1972) found that evaluation findings did not influence programming or decision making. Much research since then has concentrated on the factors that create successful evaluations and focus has been placed on the use of evaluation findings as a key indicator of success (Preskill et al., 2003). Thus the utilization of evaluation is essential in helping to determine the success of an evaluation. Research has tended to identify human, contextual and social factors that are important in influencing evaluation utilization.

To define factors related to evaluation utilization, Cousins and Leithwood in 1986 conducted a comprehensive review of 65 studies that looked at evaluation utilization. They determined that several factors of evaluations were related to use and organized them into two broad categories: implementation-related factors and context-related factors (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986). Implementation-related factors included quality, evaluator credibility, quality of communication between the evaluation team and program team, quality of the findings, timeliness of the evaluation and degree of relevance (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986). Context-related factors included decision making processes in the organization, the political climate, evaluation needs, personality traits of the decision makers, and more importantly, the commitment of the organization and stakeholders to the evaluation process (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986). Although all factors were influential in the subsequent use of evaluation findings, Cousins and Leithwood noted more work should be done to include evaluation users in

the evaluation process (1986). By including evaluation users, the evaluation would appear more credible, and the results more relevant (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986). Further, such inclusion would increase commitment to the evaluation and help to provide more targeted evaluation findings (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986). The focus on inclusion of users in the evaluation process determined by Cousins and Leithwood (1986) hinges on the involvement of stakeholders. It should be noted that *evaluation users* are defined as those who in some way, shape or form will take the information garnered from the evaluation and use it to make decisions, inform practice or contribute to learning (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986). These users may also be defined as stakeholders, but in fact “stakeholders” is a broad term that can include distributors, users, recipients or financial supporters (Morris, 2002) and thus the terms are not mutually exclusive but important to note.

Building upon Cousins and Leithwood’s work (1986), Johnson and colleagues (2009) used the same framework to examine 41 additional studies on evaluation utilization to further explore the factors that relate to successful evaluations. They organized the research into the two core factors identified by Cousins and Leithwood but also discovered a third factor that was significant in promoting the use of evaluation findings (Johnson et al., 2009). They introduced the factor of stakeholder involvement, which built upon the observations of Cousins and Leithwood (1986) who noted that including evaluation users would enhance the quality of evaluations and evaluation use. Johnson and colleagues went a step further to note that interaction, communication and engagement between stakeholders and evaluators is of utmost importance to the “meaningful use of evaluations” (2009, p. 389). Johnson and colleagues found that the influence of the social factors of relationships between stakeholders improves the use of evaluations (2009). The human, social and contextual influences to evaluation utilization

described by Cousins and Leithwood (1986) and Johnson and colleagues (2009) provide evidence that there are factors evaluators can attend to in order to increase utilization of findings and process. In particular, the reviews in the literature identified the importance of stakeholder participation and engagement in the evaluation in order to increase use. The inclusion of individual stakeholders in the evaluation process, particularly in DE is discussed according to utilization, below.

Highlighting stakeholder influence on evaluation utilization. The important role stakeholders play in enhancing evaluation utilization is well established in the literature (e.g., Cabaj, 2011; Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Johnson et. al, 2009; Preskill et al., 2003) yet most research on stakeholder involvement highlights individual, rather than organizational involvement. In particular, the research does not account for the levels of organizational involvement and organizational evaluation utilization in addition to individual use. As previously noted, stakeholders is a broad term that can include distributors, users, recipients or financial supporters (Morris, 2002). Involving stakeholders is a practice in evaluation and can be seen in more participatory approaches, like Community-Based Research (CBR), that involve stakeholders more heavily than traditional evaluation practice (e.g., beyond the sharing of information) (Alkin, 2011). The involvement of stakeholders throughout the evaluation process is believed to increase validity of evaluations, empower stakeholders and increase the utilization of results (Morris, 2002). Not only is the involvement of stakeholders in evaluation research important, the level of individual stakeholder participation can also impact utilization (Greene, 1988).

Greene (1988) described three types of stakeholders and their participation: the marginally involved person, the sometimes involved person and the very involved person, as an

additional factor in successful evaluation utilization. She found that the type of stakeholder that is most common among those at the table influences the utilization of the evaluation. The marginally involved person is described as a person not comfortable participating in the evaluation and unsure of the purpose of the evaluation findings. The sometimes involved person is described as viewing evaluation as a valid and important mechanism but the length and demands of the evaluation work make participation difficult. The very involved person views evaluation as a critical component to program success, sees the process as worthwhile and enjoyable, and experiences limited barriers to participation. When Greene examined the influence of stakeholder participation type on evaluation utilization, she found that when stakeholders were the sometimes or very involved participant types, the utilization of evaluation findings increased. She noted that the increase is likely due to stakeholder empowerment, increased responsibility to implement results, and increased credibility and validity of the evaluation process (Greene, 1988).

Involving stakeholders mirrors participatory or community-based approaches that foster change and collaboration and engage the community (Chopyak, 1999). In general, there appears to be consensus that stakeholder involvement can improve evaluation implementation, alter decision making, and create an environment for increased meaningful use of evaluation findings (Johnson et al., 2009). Most research on stakeholder engagement has examined the influence of individual stakeholder involvement on evaluation utilization (e.g., Greene, 1988) rather than group or organizational stakeholder engagement. Limited research exists on how stakeholder involvement is related to organizational evaluation utilization. In addition, this research has largely been conducted retrospectively, rather than during an ongoing evaluation; which limits some of its ability to describe process use as this method is reliant on participant recall and bias

(Peck & Gorzalski, 2009). In the following section, I describe the inclusion of stakeholders in DE to enhance evaluation utilization and also discuss evaluation practices to promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders.

Enhancing evaluation utilization with Canadian –specific practices. Stakeholder inclusion is an important factor in the utilization of evaluations (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986), as is the level of stakeholder participation (Greene, 1988). Although complex relationships exist between the involvement of stakeholders, level of stakeholder participation and evaluation utilization, it appears that stakeholders are a central facet in meaningful use of evaluation findings (e.g., Cabaj, 2011; Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Johnson et. al, 2009; Preskill et al., 2003). Supporting this notion, DE frameworks focus on the involvement of stakeholders in complex, innovative environments by promoting relationship building, communication and fostering change. Thus, DE as a framework on its own supports stakeholder involvement to examine programs in continual development and thus is a key evaluation framework to support subsequent evaluation utilization by stakeholders. Research suggests that factors related to evaluation implementation, evaluation context and stakeholder inclusion promote evaluation utilization. These areas have important practice implications for evaluators who are navigating the DE context and are looking to promote evaluation utilization. In particular, research suggests the knowledge and credibility of the evaluator, communication structures they put in place, their ability to share findings, the appropriateness of the evaluation timing and relevancy all promote the utilization of evaluations (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986).

The context of the environment surrounding the evaluation is of equal importance for promoting utilization for evaluators in practice. In particular, evaluators may want to attend to the decision making processes of the organization, the political climate, the personalities of the

stakeholders involved and the commitment to evaluation held by the organization (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986). The involvement of stakeholders as described above is also a critical element to enhancing evaluation utilization success, and is a requirement of the DE framework.

Supporting the inclusion of stakeholders as well as contextual and process elements of evaluation, the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) necessitates a variety of key competencies for evaluators to uphold in practice (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2016).

The competencies were based upon work by Stevahn, King, Ghore, and Minnema (2005) and developed by the CES through research, consultation and validation to fit the Canadian context (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2016). According to the CES, the competencies help to provide information on areas of knowledge and skills Canadian evaluators require to contribute and develop sound evaluations. The competencies are segmented by the CES into five broad categories of domains of practice and are presented in Figure 4.

Canadian Evaluation Society Practice Competency Domains	
1	Reflective practice competencies
2	Technical practice competencies
3	Situational practice competencies
4	Management practice competencies
5	Interpersonal practice competencies

Figure 4. Canadian Evaluation Society Practice Competency Domains

The reflective practice competencies require evaluators to be aware of their own expertise and areas for growth in addition to focusing on the values underlying evaluation practice. Technical competencies refer to specialized areas of evaluation knowledge including topics of data collection and evaluation design. Situational practice competencies are focused on the context surrounding the evaluation; management competencies refer to handling and guidance of evaluation projects; and interpersonal competencies are focused on the people skills needed to collaborate and complete evaluations effectively.

The domains of practice most relevant to promote evaluation use refer to the reflective, situational and management practice competencies (CES, 2016), presented with example competencies in the following Figure 5.

Canadian Evaluation Society Practice Competency Domains with Example Competencies	
Reflective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Respects all stakeholders - Aware of self as an evaluator (knowledge, skills, dispositions) and reflects on personal evaluation competencies
Situational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examines organizational, political, community and social contexts - Attends to issues of evaluation use
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifies required resources - Monitors resources

Figure 5. Practice Competency Domains with Example Competencies

According to the CES, to engage in sound evaluation practice and to promote evaluation utilization, evaluators should attend to the context of the evaluation site including the larger organizational, political and social contexts. Evaluators should also identify the impacted stakeholders, serve the information needs of intended users of the evaluation and be cognizant of issues of evaluation use. The evaluator in practice should be willing to share their expertise and adapt to the change within the organization to encourage evaluation utilization. Evaluators should be able to identify and manage resources, including the involvement and coordination of stakeholders. The Canadian evaluator competencies support research described in this section that highlight the importance of attending to implementation factors, contextual elements and the involvement of stakeholders to promote evaluation utilization. The human, contextual and social factors greatly impact evaluation utilization. Further, the example competencies demonstrate the importance of facilitating evaluation utilization and the evaluator practices required to do so. The following section describes the DE framework in more detail and highlights its importance for evaluation utilization in the context of the current study.

Considering the Role of Developmental Evaluation

The DE approach is well suited to support evaluation utilization, and is discussed in the context of the present study. The following sections introduce DE with respect to evaluation purposes and contrast DE with more traditional evaluation purposes. DE can be considered both a purpose for evaluation as well as an evaluation approach. In this study, DE is characterized as an approach. The sections also discuss practices for guiding DE and our current understanding of DE; which highlights the lack of scholarly research on DE. The section provides information on why DE is an appropriate approach to facilitate utilization and to study in the context of the present research.

Defining developmental evaluation. Patton created the term DE and defines it as: “long-term, partnering relationships with clients who are, themselves, in on-going program or organizational development where the role of the evaluator is to ask evaluative questions and hold their feet to the fire of reality testing.” (Patton 1999, p.109). Patton has continued to advance the concept of DE to include utilization where alternative approaches to evaluation are required (Cabaj, 2011). Elements of DE are described in the literature in regards to eight essential principles which include: developmental purpose, evaluation rigor, utilization focus, innovation niche, complexity perspective, systems thinking, co-creation and timely feedback (Patton et al., 2016). The approach is appropriate in situations where programming is not intended to be static and is socially innovative or complex (Cabaj, 2011). DE is a particularly useful model for programs that are creative and are in stages of ongoing development (Gamble, 2008). These stages of growth and innovation are notoriously messy and emergent and require many levels of decision making to come to a final product (Cabaj, 2011).

Among the many purposes of evaluation, supporting ongoing development is key for the current study. This purpose for evaluation has emerged during the past decade to complement traditional formative and summative purposes. The purpose of the DE type of evaluation is to emphasize data-based decision making, concentrating on relevancy (Patton, 2008). In particular, DE supports innovation, rapid change and utilization of evaluations (Patton, 2008). The DE purpose is in contrast to the purpose of more traditional evaluation purposes that include summative and formative evaluation. Summative evaluation examines the extent to which intended goals are accomplished; thus, the focus is on impact. Summative, in essence, involves the collection and analysis of data to create a judgment on “the merit or worth of an entity” (Alkin, 2011, p. 8). Formative evaluations inform enhancement of service delivery by providing a picture of how well the program is doing what is intended; focusing on intentionality (Patton, 2008).

Approaches to evaluation have needed to keep pace with broadened purposes. Research on a DE framework is a critical component of the present study. As such, it is important to understand DE and its role in evaluation. As funding models and organizations are becoming more complex, so are their evaluations and evaluation structures (Patton, 2011). Evaluations of large, complex systems have broader and farther reaching stakeholders, and evaluations of their outcomes may not be used as often (Leviton & Hughes, 1981). To address this issue, DE has emerged as a framework to be used in conjunction with other models and is useful in contexts where programming and outcomes are constantly changing and emerging (Patton, 2011).

The ability to have access to real-time information in current evaluations is important given dynamic political, social and economic circumstances that have created programs that are in continuous development and improvement (Patton, 2008). The structures of these programs

require different evaluation approaches to judge their effectiveness (Patton, 2008). Although summative evaluation frameworks are successful in increasing accountability and judging program effectiveness, these frameworks have limited usefulness for supporting changes related to ongoing shifts in priorities, because clients receive the information at the end of the program/project cycle. The emergence of DE frameworks is not surprising given that organizations and their programs are not stable and so summative evaluation frameworks can be especially challenging when working in dynamic contexts. Such contexts include programs that are in development or quality improvement cycles, boundary-defined evaluations in innovative industry fields, programs or organizations that are in stages of transformation and in economic or social contexts that require innovative thinking (e.g., resource reduction).

Unlike other purposes of evaluation, DE's focus is to provide direction to those who are involved in rapidly changing complex program development (Patton, 1999). In particular, DE provides systematic collection of data and information to enhance program developers' critical thinking skills and assists in decision making (Cabaj, 2011). The benefit is that developers can improve the program and make decisions while they still have the opportunity to try new models or approaches (Cabaj, 2011). DE frameworks are garnering traction in order to meet the demands and circumstances of complex and innovative programs. In order to maintain these functions in DE, the evaluation findings and recommendations must be utilized by the intended users (Weiss, 1998).

DE is different from other evaluation approaches in that it requires the engagement and participation of stakeholders and evaluator to both assist in providing ongoing feedback about the evaluation, and guide the evaluation through various stages based upon learnings and ongoing evaluation results (Patton, 2011). In order to remain relevant and substantiate evaluation

utilization, evaluators involve stakeholders in participatory approaches that seem to increase the use of evaluation findings (Preskill et al., 2003). Research suggests both the involvement of stakeholders (Preskill et al., 2003) and their level of participation (Greene, 1988) are key components in the overall utilization of evaluation findings. The role of the evaluator in DE is much more involved and the evaluator becomes part of the stakeholder team (Patton et al., 2016). The involvement and consultation, however, has not been extensively examined in evaluations using DE frameworks. Such frameworks allow for complex systems, innovation, stakeholder involvement and adaptation but it has yet to be seen how this paradigm influences evaluation utilization by stakeholders. Thus, the current study seeks to examine how a DE process promotes evaluation utilization by stakeholders. The focus on the developmental purpose of the evaluation is key in DE and provides the appropriate context to examine utilization. The following section presents practices for the implementation of a DE approach.

Guiding developmental evaluation conditions. After defining DE, information on the implementation of the approach and practices are described in this section. In particular, there is a focus on the principles and factors for DE success. Patton has stated that the DE design should be tailored to best suit the context, aims of the program and intended users rather than using prescriptive methods for a DE approach (2011). Lam and Shulha (2015) have described the importance of evaluators making a distinction in their DE designs between improvement and development. Improvement refers to making changes to processes and program components to enhance the quality, whereas development refers to an adaptable model that is responsive to context (Lam & Shulha, 2015). In DE, both elements are important to incorporate into the evaluation design to address instrumental and process use. Evaluators should attend to both improvement and development processes in DE to guide evaluation practice (Lam & Shulha,

2015). In particular, identifying areas of improvement and development focus will help to determine other relevant aspects of the evaluation design, including stakeholder involvement and methodology.

Patton has continued to develop the DE concept by providing eight essential principles of DE in his latest book, along with case examples to illustrate the principles. These principles address a gap in the DE literature where prescribed methods for conducting DE in practice do not currently exist. The essential principles help to guide DE evaluators to attend to areas of importance within a DE. The eight essential principles for DE include: developmental purpose, evaluation rigor, utilization focus, innovation niche, complexity perspective, systems thinking, co-creation and timely feedback, and are presented in Figure 6 (Patton, McKegg, & Wehipeihana, 2016). The principles provide a grounding for DE researchers in practice, to ensure that the evaluation has a DE purpose and focus, is rigorous, highlights evaluation utilization, confirms the innovative and complex nature of the program or organization, provides broad system perspective and thinking, is co-created with stakeholders and involves ongoing and consistent feedback to stakeholders (Patton et al., 2016). The principles as outlined by Patton help evaluators to lead evaluations with a developmental focus more effectively.

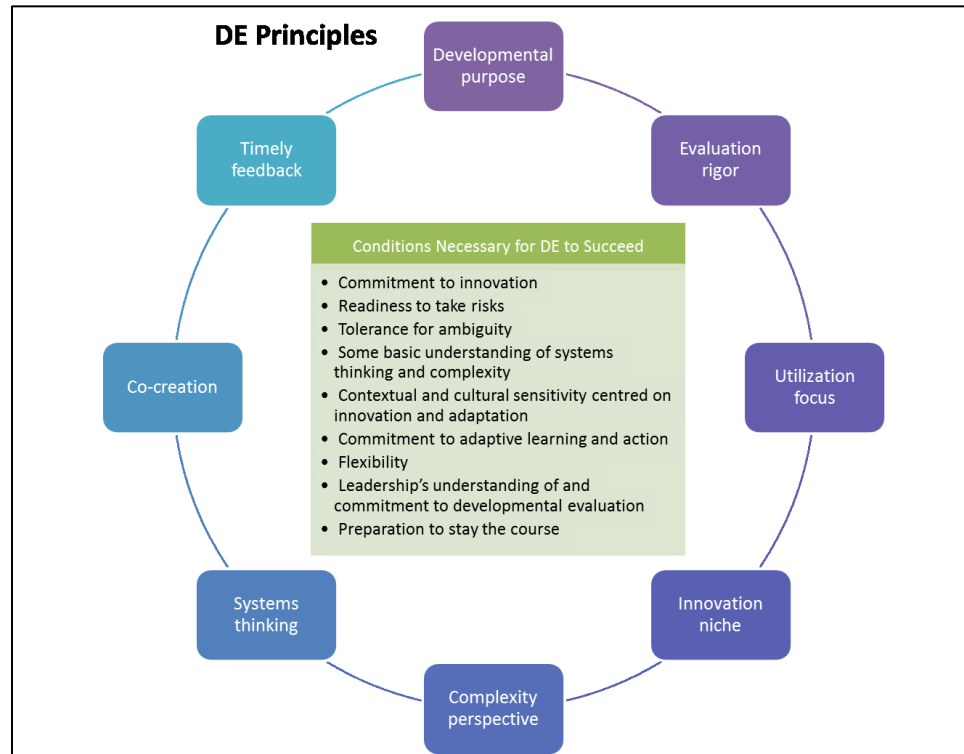


Figure 6. DE Principles in Practice and Conditions adapted from Patton, McKegg and Wehipeihana (2016)

The principles have repercussions for evaluators in practice, which include such concepts as demonstrating evaluation use, relationship building, adapting to emerging circumstances, collaboration, teaching and learning. The principles that Patton (2016) presents are very high-level, conceptual ideas that are not prescriptive in nature. Patton expands on the eight principles in his book by describing conditions for DE to succeed. In particular, he describes success of DE as related to readiness characteristics, which he refers to as the conditions. The ten critical conditions for the success of DE offer DE evaluators more insight into the *how* of DE practice (Patton et al., 2016). The conditions for success as described in the book include: commitment to innovation, readiness to take risks, tolerance for ambiguity, basic understanding of systems thinking, contextual sensitivity, commitment to adaptive learning and action, flexibility, leadership's understanding of DE and commitment to it, a funding stream that

understands DE and preparation to stay the course (Patton et al., 2016). These conditions are presented along with the DE principles in Figure 6, above.

The conditions for DE to succeed help to provide practice recommendations to DE evaluators. In particular, they highlight areas of competencies evaluators should have before engaging in DE, including areas like: being able to innovate, take risks, be okay with “living in the grey”, use high level thinking, attend to context, continually learn, adapt to circumstances and champion DE amongst the organization and stakeholders. The principles and practice considerations outlined by Patton and colleagues help evaluators to better navigate the DE landscape in practice. Although Patton and colleagues present the principles, conditions and include case studies on DE, their descriptions are brief and the concepts have not been studied conceptually or in practice. Thus it is important that they are examined in a more systematic way to allow researchers and practitioners the information they need in order to implement the concepts.

The examples Patton and colleagues (2016) provide highlight DE implemented in extremely large, complex organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO). The examples do not represent evaluation structures or designs that occur in smaller scale organizations, in a bounded evaluation context. The lack of relevant information for smaller organizations and program evaluations leaves the average evaluator wondering how to implement the principles and conditions for DE within a boundary-specific evaluation environment. Not only are examples of DE in bounded contexts lacking, Patton and colleagues do not operationalize the principles and conditions they present for evaluators. There is a clear gap in the work that does not address the “how-to” for evaluators working within small-scale, boundary-defined contexts. Evaluators who employ DE in practice would look to Patton and

colleagues work and find implementation recommendations or suggestions for the principles and conditions to be absent. The disconnect between the high-level principles and conditions and the operationalization of them is important to highlight for the present study. It then becomes important to look to the literature on DE to supplement our understanding. The following section extends DE from practice to describe how it has been researched, in particular, the shortcomings of DE research.

Synthesizing current research on developmental evaluation. DE is an emerging approach, and thus, few researchers have critiqued its use for effectiveness. For example, Cabaj (2011), in his dissertation on the perspectives of developmental evaluators, noted that he was unable to obtain any critiques about DE in a major known publication. In more recent publications, the problem has been stated explicitly: “At present, the extant knowledge base consists mostly of gray literature, unpublished theses, conference presentations, and anecdotal case illustrations” (Lam & Shulha, 2015, p. 359). Evaluators and stakeholders still do not know much about the topic of DE and its practice and there is very limited research on the use of DE beyond the work Patton has done (Cabaj, 2011). For the research that does exist, it has been largely reviewed retrospectively after the DE has been completed (Cabaj, 2011). The retrospective examination, as opposed to the concurrent study alongside an ongoing DE relies on participant and researcher memory and may not be the most reliable approach for examining DE. Although DE is a framework that provides flexibility and direction for programmers who are looking to revise, create or implement innovative and complex programs, more work needs to be done to examine its influence in the evaluation community and to provide critical learnings for the whole of DE practice. With utilization being such an important component of evaluations (Alkin, 2011), and a key outcome for the emergent and adaptive nature of DE, what remains to

be further examined is DE in the context of evaluation utilization by stakeholders. More specifically, to understand the influences that create successful evaluation conditions that promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders within a DE framework.

Need for the Study

As I investigated the literature related to evaluation utilization, I became aware of three important considerations for my study. First, the construct of evaluation utilization is complex in terms of its ever-evolving definition and influential factors (e.g., Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Johnson et al., 2009; Preskill, Zuckerman, & Matthews, 2003) and thus our current understanding of optimal conditions and practices are incomplete. Second, studies of participatory, collaborative and stakeholder-driven approaches point to practices that involve stakeholders as a key condition (Patton, 2011). Yet methodological approaches that allow the concurrent study of DE practices are lacking and instead the few studies are limited to use of retrospective methods. Third, further studies exploring the conditions for DE (Patton et al., 2016) are needed specific to boundary-defined DE processes within complex organizational contexts. Together, these considerations provide the theoretical and methodological foundation on which to base my study guided by the overall research question: *What organizational conditions promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders during a developmental evaluation process?* Addressing the primary research question is assisted by three sub questions asking *what the influences relevant to the DE process are related to: developing effective relationships, assessing organizational readiness and facilitating a collective climate*. This study examines evaluation utilization within an ongoing, boundary-defined DE process within a complex organizational context. The findings are anticipated to guide evaluators in their use of a DE approach for the

purpose of promoting evaluation utilization. Such information is needed to address a gap in the current evaluation literature on the conditions to promote evaluation utilization in DE.

Chapter Summary

Evaluation utilization has been an ongoing and important area for scholarly study of guiding practices (e.g., Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Forss, Rebein, & Carlsson, 2002). During the past three decades, we have developed a theoretical understanding of the human, contextual, and social factors influencing use. These factors, have in turn, focused the guiding practices for enhancing use on increasing stakeholder involvement. These types of practices have led to the articulation of collaborative, participatory and stakeholder-driven evaluation approaches to guide evaluators in their work. Common across these approaches is the expected role of the stakeholder as not only involved but also engaged and contributing to key decisions and the process in general. Emergent from the need to continually adapt to changing environments, developmental evaluation (DE) is suited for supporting stakeholders in situations of ongoing program development within complex organizational contexts. Defining characteristics of DE include real-time use of information for informing emergent programmatic considerations and decisions. Less well articulated in the literature are guiding practices for optimizing DE, however, Patton and colleagues (2016) recently described eight overarching principles and ten conditions for guiding developmental evaluators. What remains to be further studied is how the principles and conditions are operationalized within smaller, more bounded complex environments than the large-scale, multisite, global contexts in which Patton describes his examples. This chapter provides the theoretical and methodological foundations for the current study purpose to examine the small-scale organizational conditions that promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders

during a DE process. Chapter Three describes the methods used in the study to answer the research question.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the research study methodology. First I explain my reasoning for use of a qualitative case study design to explore what organizational conditions promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders during a developmental evaluation (DE) process. I then present the research questions, sampling and recruitment of participants, and ethical considerations guiding this study. Finally, I describe the procedures involved in selecting data sources, collecting data, and analyzing data as well as the strategies for enhancing trustworthiness and confidence in the data. The chapter will provide key methodological contextual information.

Describing the Qualitative Case Study Design

The present study utilized a qualitative case study design, employing multiple sources of data to examine how a DE process promotes evaluation utilization by stakeholders. A qualitative approach was important to gather exploratory data on the topic area because of limited literature available about how the DE process promotes evaluation utilization among stakeholders. As such, this approach was better suited to provide the in-depth information needed to explore the research question.

A qualitative case study design was an appropriate framework for undertaking the current research for three reasons: (a) the ability to document the phenomena being studied within its natural context; that is, the relationship between evaluation use and stakeholder participation, (b) the usefulness for examining complex phenomena as it unfolds in real-time; that is, the ongoing DE and (c) the focus of a case study to explore the phenomenon within a bounded system, that is, the boundary-defined context of the evaluation. Specifically, the instrumental case study as described by Stake (1995) focuses on the phenomenon of interest, evaluation utilization by

stakeholders, to understand how the phenomenon is enhanced by a DE. Given the complexity and contextual nature of the phenomenon of interest, the focus and purpose of a case study design was best suited to provide an in-depth examination of the ongoing DE within the particular organizational context.

The purpose of a case study design is to examine complex topics within their natural contexts in order to understand multiple perspectives of the phenomena (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Case study designs should be used when contextual elements are central to the phenomenon being studied; you want to answer “how” or “why” questions and you cannot manipulate behavior (Yin, 2014). Schramm (1971) proposed the following definition of a case study, as described and cited in Yin (2014): “The essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or a set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result” (p.15). Case studies can then focus on particular decisions, individuals, organizations, processes or programs (Yin, 2014). Generally, a case study examines a particular phenomenon in its own context, in a very in-depth way, within a bounded system (Stake, 1995). In addition, a case study allows for the description and examination of a situation and requires the use of multiple sources of data that triangulate or merge to produce overall results (Creswell, 2013). Thus, the case study approach was essential to the present study as the framework allows for a larger contextual description of a bounded system (Stake, 1995), focuses on particular programs and/or organizations and uses multiple data sources that produce overall case themes and descriptions (Creswell, 2013).

The present research used the rationale and theory of Stake’s definition (1995) of case studies to inform the current work as he provides strong theoretical descriptions relevant to the current study. However, Yin’s descriptions and protocols (2014) for the analysis of the data were

utilized as Yin provides more prescriptive and formal data analysis methods than Stake. The study uses an instrumental case study approach because of its appropriateness for looking beyond the scope of the particular case to facilitate understanding of something else (Stake 1995). In this particular approach, the case is examined in-depth to provide information that can help develop theory or enhance understanding of an issue and is bound by the contextual elements of time and place (Stake 1995). The intent of the instrumental case study is to understand a particular issue or problem in a very in-depth way (Stake, 1995). As such, the approach was used to guide the research efforts to understand how DE influences evaluation utilization by stakeholders. Given the complexity of DE, the instrumental approach was one that would provide a clearer understanding of the topic of interest while assisting in furthering knowledge related to DE in other contexts.

Guiding Research Questions

The current study sought to examine the conditions created by participation in a DE process for promoting evaluation utilization by stakeholders. The main research question guiding this study was: *What organizational conditions promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders during a developmental evaluation process?* The main research question was broad and was supported by the following sub questions: What are the influences relevant to the DE process related to:

1. Developing effective relationships?
2. Assessing organizational readiness?
3. Facilitating a collective climate?

The research questions were examined utilizing multiple data collection sources, which are described below.

Sampling and Recruitment of Participants

Purposeful sampling was the strategy used to invite participants in the current research because of its usefulness for deciding who will be involved in the research to best meet the research objectives (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). In the current study, the researcher invited stakeholders already involved with the provincial mentoring organization's evaluation efforts as part of an existing commitment to the organization's Evaluation Working Group (EWG). Six participants were purposively selected by the researcher and represented a non-random convenience sample because they were instrumental in gathering information about the influence of DE on evaluation utilization by stakeholders and were easily accessible participants to the researcher (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The criteria for participant inclusion comprised the following: knowledge of the organization; knowledge of evaluation; participation in the organization's evaluation process; and, willingness to participate in the research.

Participant recruitment occurred by the researcher inviting the EWG to participate through a group meeting. In that group meeting, the purpose, scope and information about the study were presented to participants. This information was followed by an individual email description and consent forms. All six members of the EWG agreed to participate in the research. The roles the participants represented included: the government, the community, the organization and the organization's Provincial Coordinator. The individuals had varying relationships with one another. Some had known each other and worked together alongside the organization in a variety of roles for many years, whereas others were new to the project and did not know one another. These individuals were already involved in evaluation efforts, and as such, no incentives or more robust recruiting techniques were needed to obtain their participation.

Anticipating Ethical Considerations

Prior to beginning research efforts, the researcher gained approval to conduct the study from the University's Research Ethics Board (REB). Consent was sought at two levels: organizational and individual participant consent. Both levels of consent were needed to mitigate organizational and participant risk. Organizational consent was sought from the organization's Provincial Coordinator because she represented the organization's involvement in the evaluation and their perspectives on inclusion. The Provincial Coordinator represented the organization and agreed to the participants who would be approached for inclusion in the research by signing a letter of information (see Appendix A). Participant consent was sought from all individuals involved in the EWG (participants) who were provided with a letter of consent to read and sign (see Appendix B). Prior to accessing any data sources, both organizational and participant consent were secured.

To continue to anticipate ethical considerations, the researcher remained aware of and mitigated potential risks for participations. In the interviews, the researcher reiterated the information in the consent letter, verbally, in addition to participants' signed consent. Participants were able to decline to participate in any data collection at any time, or request that their information was not included in the analysis. The greatest risk for both participants and the organization in the project was their identification through contextual and personal information shared during data collection. The risk was mitigated using four strategies: (a) anonymizing organizational information provided in the interviews from individual descriptions, (b) applying pseudonyms to individual participant data in the interview transcriptions, (c) destroying paper versions of interviews and field notes and digital recordings following transcription, and (d)

storing the digital files securely using a password protected laptop with an encrypted hard drive, to which only the researcher had access.

Selecting Data Sources

Four data sources were sought to develop the present qualitative case study: semi-structured individual interviews (n=6), embedded reflection (n=6), organizational document review (n=31), and researcher field notes (n=45). Together, these sources of data provided a comprehensive picture of the influence of DE on evaluation utilization by stakeholders within the particular organizational context. Each data source provided varying lines of evidence that were examined concurrently to triangulate the data (Creswell, 2013). Yin (2014) has noted that the use of multiple sources of evidence is one of the primary strengths of case study research and is a principle of data collection that is strongly recommended. Multiple lines of evidence allow for the development of converging lines of inquiry, which can also be described as data triangulation (Yin, 2014).

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with participants as a primary source of data for the purpose of accessing the perspective of the participants to assess the influence of the DE process on evaluation utilization. The rationale of using interviews as a data source is to capture unique information and perspectives from the person being interviewed, and discover information that the researcher would otherwise be unable to observe (Stake, 2010).

In addition to the interviews, another source of data that was selected was that of embedded reflection. Part of a developmental evaluator's role is to help participants think and reflect about the process; and the structured reflections served that purpose for the evaluation and as a secondary source of data for the current research. Creswell (2013) recommends that recording reflections about processes, activities and summary conclusions can be helpful for

future theme development. The addition of embedded reflection as a data source was for the purpose of capturing ongoing participant thoughts about process and activities to help guide future data analysis. The embedded reflections served as background and contextual information to inform the overall research and helped to provide supporting evidence to the information garnered from participants in the semi-structured individual interviews.

The third data source was an organizational document review. To assist in understanding the program involved in an evaluation a document review is often included as a component (Alkin, 2011). In case studies, documents help to provide contextual information and supplement the findings from other sources of data (Stake, 1995). In this research, the purpose of the organizational document review was to provide critical contextual information to understand the program and inform the findings of the research. The review helped to describe the DE process that is discussed in rich detail along with the findings from the other data sources.

The final source of data for the current research was researcher field notes which were for the purpose of gaining the researcher's perspective and documenting key milestones through the course of the research and evaluation. Case studies lend themselves well to the inclusion of observational and reflective data to provide relevant contextual information (Stake, 2010). In order to reflect on process, the researcher observed and created field notes from meetings and interactions with participants. Stake (2010) has stated that using observational protocols helps to focus directly on the main issues or research question. Thus, the researcher field notes provided important background and documentation for contextualizing findings.

Outlining Data Collection Procedures

Following ethical approval and informed consent procedures, as well as selecting sources of data, the researcher developed a data collection plan. The research was conducted in

three phases. The first focused on the organizational document review and the actual evaluation taking place, starting in September, 2013. The first phase ran from approximately September, 2013 to December, 2013. During this time, the researcher obtained and reviewed documents related to the evaluation. Concurrently, the researcher attended EWG meetings to observe the DE process. This was an ongoing activity as the evaluation was completed over several months. The second phase of the research occurred from January, 2014 to March, 2014 and focused on the organization's EWG or evaluation meetings and included researcher field notes and embedded reflection as data sources. Phase one and two were fairly similar in structure. The third and final phase of the research occurred from April, 2014 to October, 2014 and was focused on the completion of the primary data source of interviews with participants. Figure 7 outlines the general timeline of data collection from the four sources and offers a description of which data collection sources occurred simultaneously.

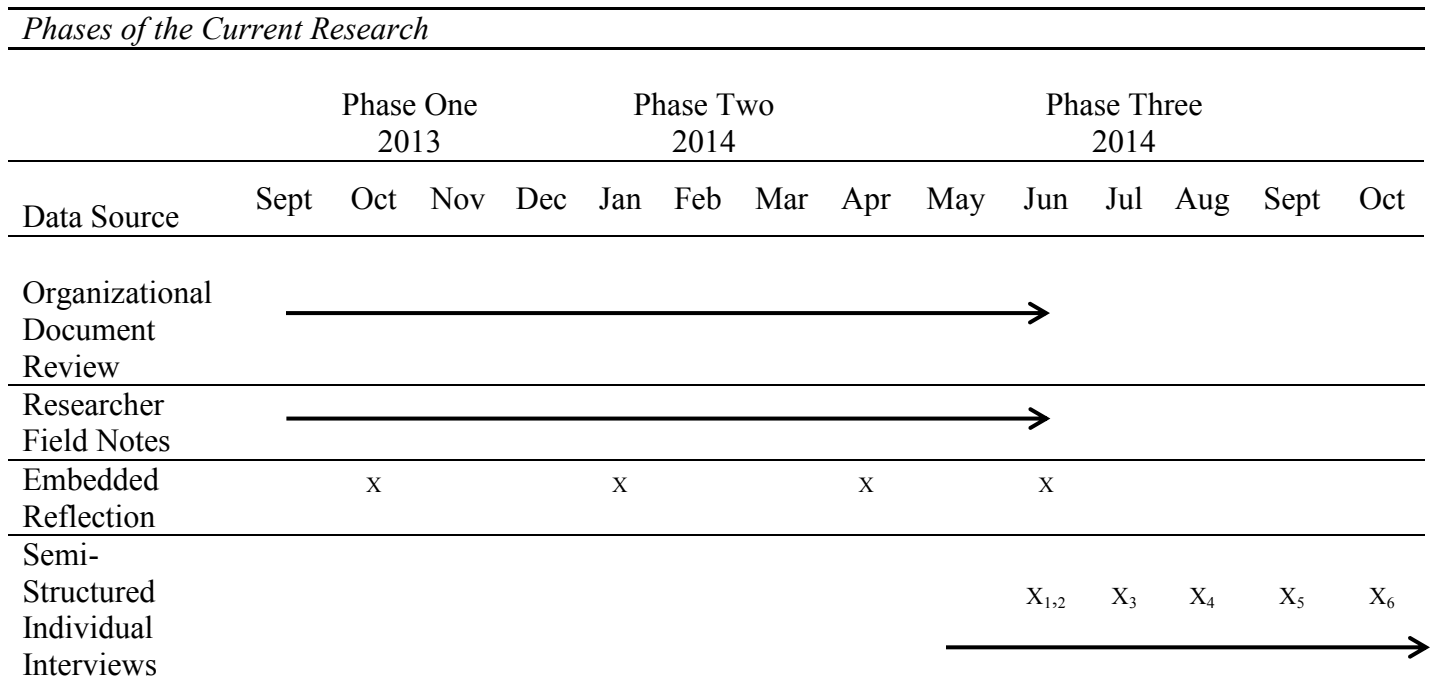


Figure 7. Data Collection Sources and Timing.

Semi-structured individual interviews. As stated previously, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with participants as a primary source of data for the purpose of accessing the perspective of the participants to assess the influence of the DE process on evaluation utilization. To prepare for the interviews, the researcher reviewed the literature and research purpose to create a semi-structured interview protocol. In case studies, the interviews are generally less structured and are similar to guided conversations (Yin, 2014). The protocol development included a review of the draft by the supervisor of the researcher to inform further refinement. Following in-depth reviews of the protocol, the interview protocol was finalized (see Appendix C).

Following the finalization of the interview protocol, semi-structured individual interviews with six participants were conducted. The interviews were completed at the end of the organization's DE. The timing of the interviews was most beneficial at the end of the evaluation to address the utilization of evaluation results and maximized the information provided by participants as they were engaged in the use of the DE. The interviews were approximately one hour in length, semi-structured with the use of an interview protocol, and were audiotaped. The interviews took place with participants individually, at a mutually convenient location where a private conversation was had to help maintain confidentiality for participants. The interviews addressed the research questions by exploring with participants their experience with the DE; what they had learned through the evaluation; how they used the findings from the evaluation; and, how they planned to continue to utilize the results of the evaluation. Following the completion of the interviews, they were transcribed verbatim from the researcher's audio recording. Once transcribed, the audio recordings were deleted and pseudonyms replaced participant names in the transcriptions. In addition, identifying information was masked with

general descriptions as to not identify the organization or individual participants and their contributions. Once this process was completed, interviewees were provided a copy of their interview and encouraged to add or correct any information covered in the transcript. The reviews were then utilized for adding additional comments and memos to serve as an audit trail for analysis. The interviews allowed for a focused examination of the research question and were critical in understanding how the DE process influences evaluation utilization by stakeholders.

Embedded reflection. The embedded reflection was completed for the purpose of capturing participant thoughts about the DE process to help guide future data analysis. The researcher developed the reflection protocol to represent ongoing reflections on how participants are using the evaluation findings, learning about evaluation and participating in the DE. As with the interview protocol, the embedded reflection protocol was reviewed by the supervisor of the researcher. In addition, the lead evaluator of the DE provided feedback for consideration. After review, the embedded reflection protocol was finalized and implemented.

As part of the DE process, participants were asked to reflect on a series of questions and provide written thoughts to the researcher at the end of the evaluation. Originally, some of the questions were going to be administered at the end of EWG meetings and captured in researcher field notes. As the process emerged, more dynamic and remote work was completed, and thus the strategy was changed to ask participants to provide their reflections at the final meeting of the project. Participants were emailed a copy of the questions and were asked to fill the document with their reflections and send it back to the researcher. Once all reflections were received, a semi-structured discussion at the final EWG meeting was completed to explore participant reflections. The reflective questions focused on evaluation utilization and were a secondary set of

data to support the primary data of interviews. See Appendix D for the embedded reflection protocol.

Organizational document review. The purpose of the organizational document review was to provide critical contextual information to understand the program and inform the findings of the research. As such, the researcher connected with the organization's Provincial Coordinator to talk about which pertinent documents should be reviewed. In addition to speaking with the Provincial Coordinator, a larger discussion with the EWG was held to talk about other items that should be reviewed to best contextualize mentoring in the province and the organization in general. A review of 31 documents was conducted on information related to the evaluation process such as organizational descriptions, memorandums of understanding, meeting minutes, and evaluation reports and findings. The information was collected and examined during the course of the research. The documents reviewed met the following inclusion criteria: were deemed as pertinent to the understanding of the organization, by the organization (e.g., background history documents), provided critical contextual information about the climate of mentoring in Alberta (e.g., research literature), helped document the DE process (e.g., meeting summaries), and were agreed on by both the Provincial Coordinator and the researcher. It should be noted that due to the researcher's dual roles, many of these documents were reviewed during the course of the evaluation, and this integration helped the researcher to better understand the context and to be more informed for the other primary and secondary sources of data collection.

Researcher field notes. The final data source was researcher field notes, which were used for gaining the researcher's perspective and documenting key milestones through the course of the research and evaluation. The researcher developed a field note protocol that served to help document the processes, decisions and reflections noticed by the researcher. Both the supervisor

of the researcher and the lead evaluator provided feedback to improve upon the format of the protocol. Once the review was complete, the field notes protocol was finalized and ready to implement. The field note protocol involved answering three short, reflective questions following stakeholder meetings. The questions addressed what was noticed about the DE process, what the interactions helped the researcher understand, and what had changed in relation to DE process (see Appendix D for field note protocol). The field notes captured information about the group's interactions, changes through the DE process and information on how participants were interacting with and utilizing information from the DE. The field notes provided an outside perspective to the efforts of the stakeholders. Following each group interaction, field notes were created detailing the main observations from the meetings regarding process use and evaluation utilization. In addition, decisions by the group on the direction and next steps of the evaluation were also documented as meeting summaries to serve as an audit trail and context for the evaluation.

Describing Data Analysis Strategies

The four sources of data (i.e., semi-structured individual interviews, embedded reflection, organizational document review and researcher field notes) provided multiple sources of evidence for comparison during the analysis phase of the project. There were two steps to the data analysis; first the individual analysis of each data source and then the integration across data sources. To validate the interpretations of the data in the current study, all sources of data were analyzed first, individually by using thematic coding procedures (Patton, 2002). Following the individual analysis, the four lines of evidence were amalgamated into a comprehensive summary of themes that emerged through the research to directly address the research question. The higher level case study summary assisted in better understanding the organizational conditions that

promote evaluation utilization. In particular, the analysis focused on identifying case assertions that were used to provide summarizing thoughts on the experience of participants. The following sections describe, in greater detail, the procedures of individual and integrated data analysis for the current research.

Individual data analysis strategies. First, each data source was coded individually to provide summary findings that answered the research question. Thematic coding helped the researcher highlight the findings from each source of evidence without being biased by the findings of other sources (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). In particular, individual codes were assigned line by line to each interview. The codes were then amalgamated into themes within each interview and between interviews to provide a fulsome description of the phenomenon of interest. This “ground up” method of analysis allowed for cross comparisons across all sources of data because they were examined using the same methodology (Patton, 2002). The data provided both supporting and contrasting evidence to provide richness to the overall data set (Stake, 1995). The order of analysis focused on the coding and analyzing of the interviews, which were the primary data source.

A master code list was created from the data analysis that detailed the overarching theme, subthemes, definitions and example quotations (see Appendix F for master code list). The master code list was provided to two reviewers who examined the structure of the code sheet and the subsequent themes for alignment and appropriateness and to a second coder who reviewed the codes used in the primary data sources for suitability. In addition, during analysis of the primary data source, the researcher utilized memoing techniques to record thoughts on the emerging themes for consideration. These steps helped to promote trustworthiness and confidence in the data coding. Following the analysis of the interviews, the embedded reflections were examined

and thematic coding procedures were used to find patterns of information in the data (Yin, 2014). Following the examination of the embedded reflections for convergent and divergent evidence, the same procedure occurred for field notes. In particular, each secondary source of data was examined for the themes identified through the analysis of the primary data source (individual interviews) and similar and contrasting information was noted through memoing. These patterns of convergent and divergent evidence were noted and summarized for that individual data set to help answer the research questions. The individual analysis helped to provide information about the experience and answer the research questions related to participants' utilization of the evaluation. The information was then combined in an integrated data analysis strategy, described further, below.

Integrated data analysis strategies. As previously noted, the present study utilized Yin's protocols for data analysis in case studies as he provides a more formal data analysis description (2014). After each individual data source was examined, themed, analyzed and summarized, the findings from each data source were compared across lines of evidence for each research question. The four lines of evidence were examined for convergent and divergent data (Yin, 2014), using the master code list, that addressed the research question. The data triangulation across lines of evidence helped to determine if the "phenomenon or case remains the same at other times, in other spaces, or as persons interact differently" (Stake, 1995, p.112). Figure 8 demonstrates the flow of individual and integrated analysis that occurred for the current case study.

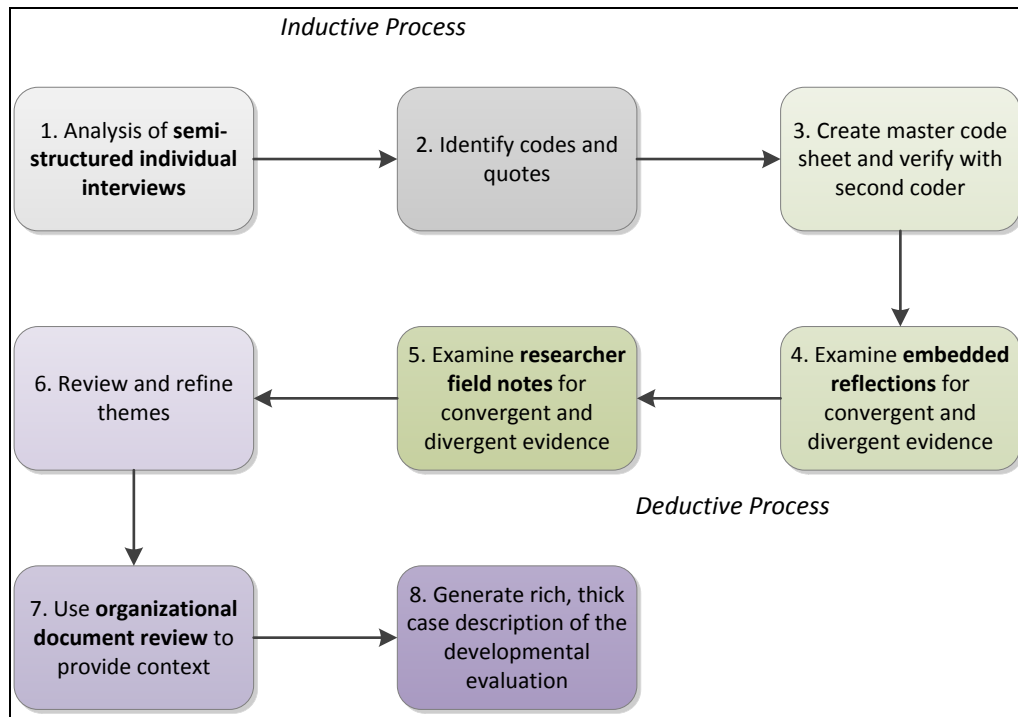


Figure 8. Data Analysis Flow.

Once the data sources had been triangulated, the information was coded and summarized into cohesive themes that allowed for interpretation into the findings and discussion sections. The final summary provided an understanding of the phenomenon of what organizational conditions promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders during a DE process. The summary allowed the researcher to understand the experience of participants completing a DE and how this process influences their evaluation utilization. In particular, case assertions were created from the themes provided through the analysis procedure. The themes were used as the organizing structure for the findings to develop case assertions and then the case assertions were used as the organizing structure for the discussion.

In qualitative research, the research itself is not focused on capturing conclusions; rather, it is focused on capturing experience or “life as it is lived” (Nolen & Talbert, 2011, p. 7). The interpretations that were generated from the multiple sources of data informed the high level case

assertions that summarized contextual information provided by participants. The assertions describe the overarching findings from the particular case study and point to important areas for implications. Specific to case study, Stake (1995) refers to case assertions as conclusions that are based on the data collected and the information observed. In particular, he notes “researchers are privileged to assert what they find meaningful as a result of their inquiries. Their reports and consultations will include strictly determined findings and loosely determined assertions” (Stake, 1995, p. 12). Stake highlights that the evidence produced from the data to create interpretations is done so in a comprehensive manner and these interpretations are used to draw conclusions and make assertions about the phenomenon of interest (Stake, 1995). The creation of the case assertions helped to guide the discussion and informed areas of study implications within the current study.

To maintain the spirit of a DE, the findings of the research were disseminated back to the organization’s EWG in a final report and a presentation. The presentation of the findings helped the group to understand their process and how it contributed to evaluation utilization. The organization was also provided with summary documents to share and disseminate with other interested parties as necessary.

Promoting Trustworthiness and Confidence in Data Collection and Analysis

Strategies on promoting confidence and trustworthiness in qualitative research are a key part of the criteria qualitative researchers consider when assessing quality (Creswell, 2013). Given the cross-section of paradigms and epistemologies qualitative research spans, *quality* is expected to look different in each study, as would the standards used to judge the research. While there are diverse ways of assessing quality (e.g., Guba, 1981; Morrow, 2005), for the purposes of the current study I have followed Creswell and Miller’s (2000) validation strategies to promote

trustworthiness and confidence in my data collection, analysis and interpretations. In their discussion of strategies frequently used by qualitative researchers, Creswell and Miller (2000) present eight validation strategies. The strategies are presented here in no particular order and discussed alongside evidence from my study design to support their inclusion in the research design.

The first validation strategy is that of *prolonged engagement and personal observation* (Creswell & Miller, 2000), this strategy is evidenced in the context of my research design through my engagement with the EWG for over a year. During this time I attended numerous meetings and interacted with the EWG consistently. In addition, the participants were included in three sources of data: their semi-structured individual interviews, embedded reflection and their activities captured in my researcher field notes. Second, the strategy of *triangulation* (Creswell & Miller, 2000), was supported by the use of four data sources (semi-structured individual interviews, embedded reflection, researcher field notes and organizational document review). The integration of four data sources strengthened the trustworthiness of the research findings because multiple sources of evidence provided a more holistic and comprehensive case study description than any one of the data sources alone. Triangulation of data is also one of the quality criteria as outlined by Guba (1981). The data sources all contributed different lenses in addition to convergent information. In this way, they were triangulated to support the development of case assertions. Third, *peer review or debriefing* (Creswell & Miller, 2000), was completed through the discussion of findings and themes with my thesis supervisor. The discussion led to the improvement and refinement of coding and themes to develop the case assertions. Fourth, *clarifying researcher bias* (Creswell & Miller, 2000) was addressed through the collection of researcher field notes. The field notes captured reflections not only on the development of the

evaluation, but about the values, assumptions and biases of the researcher. Memoing while reviewing the interview transcripts was also completed and it enabled me to record and document emergent ideas. In this way, a reflective commentary on the data was provided that helps to establish credibility (Shenton, 2004) and is also a quality criterion as outlined by Guba (1981).

Fifth, *member checking* (Creswell & Miller, 2000) was developed as a strategy for the data analysis where participants were provided with a verbatim copy of their transcript to assess the accuracy and credibility. The use of member-checking of the verbatim transcripts allowed participants to add any missing information, supporting an additional quality criterion as outlined by Guba (1981). Participants were provided with a copy of their verbatim transcript and asked to indicate if the transcript accurately captured their thoughts. All participants noted it captured the discussion and had limited information to add beyond comments about the success of the process. The participant member-checking supported trustworthiness and credibility of the data (Creswell, 2013) as participants indicated the transcripts were an accurate representation of what they intended to say. Sixth, *rich, thick description* is evidenced through the comprehensive contextual information provided about the organization and evaluation in this thesis. In addition, the case study design allowed for rich descriptions to be infused throughout the current research. Seventh, *external audits* (Creswell & Miller, 2000), was supported in the research design by having external individuals assess the codes for fit and their application to the primary data source. Two independent coders confirmed the codes, themes and definitions were clearly articulated and the master code list was applied in a reliable manner. This process enhanced the reliability of the data by demonstrating coding reliability across two independent coders (Creswell, 2013). Finally, *intercoder agreement* (Creswell & Miller, 2000), was established

through a peer review of codes and application to the interview data source. All eight strategies recommended by Creswell and Miller (2000) were employed in the current research and help to establish trustworthiness and confidence in the data.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the study research methodology as a qualitative case study design exploring how a DE process promotes evaluation utilization by stakeholders drawing upon four data sources. It described the analysis of the primary source of data, six semi-structured individual interviews with the key stakeholders from the organizational evaluation working group. The analysis of the interviews was complemented by secondary data sources of embedded reflection (n=6), organizational document review (n=31) and researcher field notes (n=45). Eight strategies for enhancing trustworthiness and confidence in the data and interpretations included prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation of data, peer review or debriefing, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, rich, thick description, external audits and intercoder agreement (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The next chapter describes the results of the data analysis integrating the four data sources.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the study findings organized by three key themes to address the research question, *what organizational conditions promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders during a developmental evaluation process?* Figure 9 provides an overview of the organizing structure for the subsequent sections by representing the relationship between the three key themes and subthemes. For each section, I first describe the key theme and present the findings organized by subthemes.

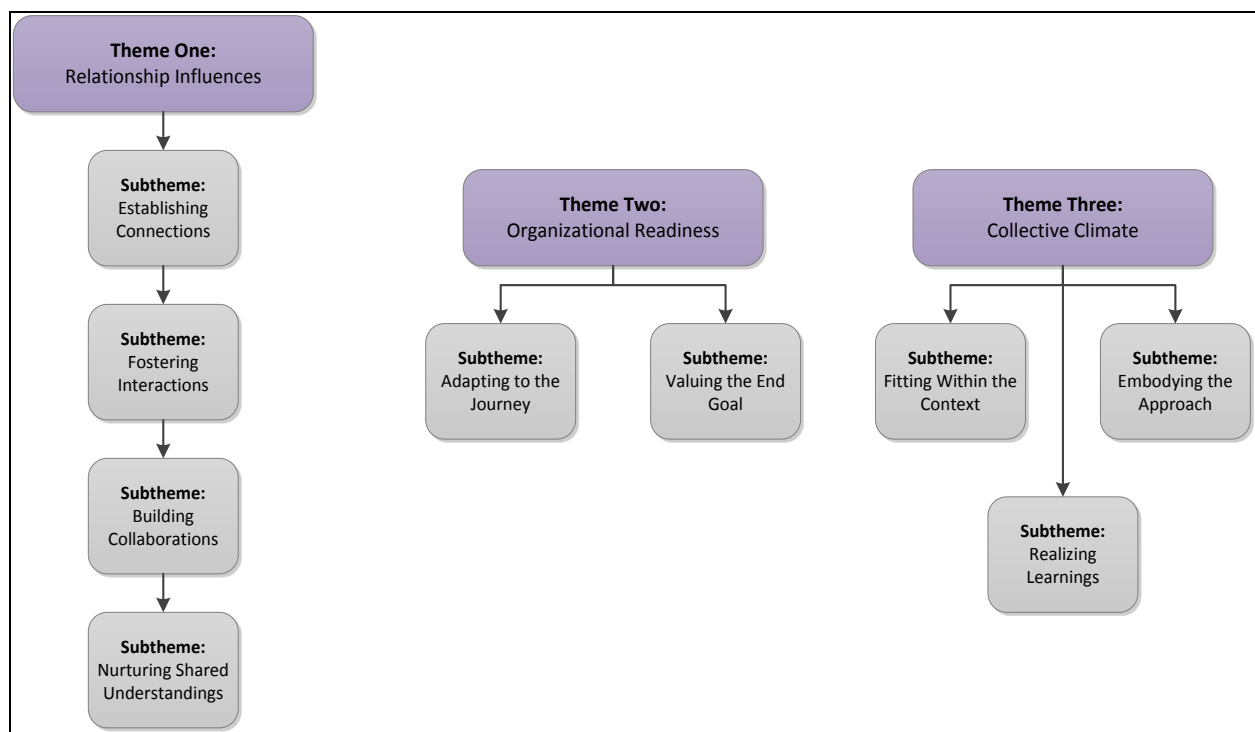


Figure 9. Relationship between Themes and Subthemes

Theme One: Relationship Influences

Relationship influences emerged as a prominent study theme and contributors to the development of relationships are described using four subthemes: establishing connections, fostering interactions, building collaborations and nurturing shared understandings. The descriptions of the subthemes are presented first to help understand their influence to the

relationships and the order in which they are presented are reflective of how the relationships seemed to develop through a progression.

Establishing connections. Relationships among stakeholders and between stakeholders and the evaluator seemed to begin with opportunities to interact as part of the evaluation. Evidence of this was provided by researcher field notes as well as through interviews with stakeholders; which identified a primary component of the initial DE work with the organization were efforts to develop relationships. The goal for the organization as noted in organizational documents was to create a foundation for the DE. The importance of these initial interactions as contributing to relationship building was highlighted by one of the interviewees, “That sort of, building relationship piece is important whenever any evaluation gets done”. It seemed that the perception of several participants was that in order to complete evaluation work, it was important to build and support the relationships between the evaluator, program staff, and stakeholders, and within the evaluation team. Participants noted in their interviews and embedded reflections that the engagement and connection amongst the team was an important step in their understanding and connection to the evaluation. Evidenced through researcher field notes, the organization invested resources to enable the stakeholders and evaluation team to meet and work together to develop their relationship. The organization capitalized on opportunities for face-to-face meetings of the evaluation team to establish the connections. As captured in researcher field notes, the organization had biweekly meetings with the EWG and weekly meetings with the evaluators and the chairs of the EWG. In addition to supporting the connection among stakeholders, the organization was flexible in how this connection was created. As the evaluation went on, the EWG continued to be in contact but did not connect as often in person, or as frequently as in the beginning phases of the evaluation. The EWG and the organization

agreed that the best use of resources was not always in set meeting times, but for meetings and connections as appropriate. The flexibility for stakeholders to interact when needed and in whichever mode was needed (e.g., email, skype, face to face) was created through the support of the organization.

It appeared that developing relationships was a key component of the evaluation success, as this was talked about in all six interviews with participants and was a recurrent theme in the embedded reflections. Participants often talked about the importance of developing relationships to be able to effectively work with, collaborate, trust and confide in their colleagues. Participants consistently commented on the value of the opportunity to develop relationships amongst one another and with the evaluator. As one participant commented: “the time we took to get to know each other, meet and learn was extremely valuable and it wasn’t something I had been involved with before”. In addition, the stakeholders indicated they had prioritized the connection amongst themselves to facilitate the success of the evaluation. One such participant noted “I took it upon myself to be engaged with this group. I’m pretty new to this thing and I thought it would be important. I am now working with [another participant] in another project”. The participants began by connecting and learning about each other and then were able to start to work together and function as one group.

A similarly important relationship seemed to be between the stakeholders and the evaluator. Evidenced through researcher field notes, the group spent considerable time meeting with the evaluation team interacting via email and telephone to get to know one another, understand each other and the process, and create an environment of trust. Through the course of the evaluation, which lasted over a year, there were a variety of in-person working group meetings, leadership meetings, teleconferences, informal meetings, data collection meetings and

meetings of the core evaluation team. The meetings facilitated the stakeholders' ability to develop a cohesive relationship with the evaluator. One participant commented in their interview that "... [the evaluator] took the time to get to know me and I to know her, it was pretty awesome!". In their embedded reflections and individual interviews, all stakeholders in some way commented on the connection with the evaluator and the beginning of their relationship. For example, one participant stated "I was nervous to work with the evaluator because I was familiar with DE but hadn't used it much but she put me at ease in that very first meeting and we emailed a lot".

The participants indicated the importance of developing the individual relationships as well as the relationships among the team. Participants noted in their embedded reflections that the individual relationships they had with the evaluator were key, but that the cohesive relationships of the group became very important. One participant noted in their interview: "It's also a good thing to the success of the project to have a really cohesive and strong team, and that's really what [the evaluators] brought to the table." The participants all tended to agree that relationship development was essential to evaluation success and it was important to involve all parties in the team including the stakeholders, evaluators, and funders. These sentiments were captured in researcher field notes, embedded reflections and participants' individual interviews. Establishing connections and relationships with one another as well as with the evaluator was seemed to be important in the current study.

Fostering interactions. The nature of the interactions as organic and interactive was described as a significant part of fostering interactions amongst participants. Participants described the EWG (including the evaluators) as supportive of one another and pointed to the many energizing conversations they engaged in as evidence. One such participant noted that

sometimes, conversations that were not prescriptive and were more organic, initiated through the continued connections amongst participants contributed the most to the project. She said: “I think there were a lot of different conversations that somehow made a huge contribution to the final product.” She described the environment as interactive among the stakeholders where they were able to talk and share information openly. Many participants had similar comments and noted that the interactions, whether through email, telephone, or in-person meetings and events, provided the context and the vehicle to make changes and capture the work they were doing. Evidenced through researcher field notes, the interaction amongst participants spurred them to connect on issues of evaluation use and of their learning of evaluation. As one such participant commented in their embedded reflection, “...hearing what others were doing in their work and how they were changing the focus based on the information from this group was encouraging. I was able to ask [participant] to send me an example of how she used the data for our planning session”. The continued interactions amongst the group facilitated an environment for open sharing of information. This seemed to impact stakeholders’ contribution to the evaluation, improve the evaluation product and increase their use of the evaluation findings.

Participants reported frequent communication as beneficial for opportunities to ask questions to clarify direction, process, and responsibilities. They consistently spoke of interacting with one another and how the ongoing communication between the evaluation team and the stakeholder group maximized their involvement, lent them a voice, and provided an avenue for ongoing work. Evidenced through embedded reflections, all participants noted that engaging with one another on a consistent basis helped with their understanding. As one participant stated: “I wasn’t really sure I understood the evaluation at first but meeting with my peers consistently helped me to see the value and how I could help”. Participants also commented on the

importance of the evaluator supporting the development of relationships amongst the group as well. The evaluator's expertise in creating communication structures that encouraged sharing among the participants and impacted their use of evaluation findings seemed to be important. In particular, as captured in researcher field notes, all documents that were created for the evaluation were fed through to the EWG for discussion and reflection. The stakeholders were provided with the opportunity in the meeting to contribute to the document, but also in the days following, through email. In reflecting on the success of this strategy, the evaluator agreed that it ended up working very well, and often facilitated conversations that held further meaning, and led her, as well as the participants, to additional insights. Findings suggest that the development and support of a positive communication structure where stakeholders can freely interact supported their ongoing engagement, improved the quality of the evaluation product, and impacted their enthusiasm to use the evaluation in the future.

Developing a cohesive group within a communication structure that permitted discussion seemed to increase trust. One participant bluntly said: "the thing that made that work was that we really developed some relationships with trust." The comment underscores the way that most of the participants reported feeling about the relationships they developed and the attitudes that they had for themselves. Trust was built along with the relationships and was a different, yet equally important entity. In one particular meeting captured by the researcher's field notes, one of the participants, a representative of the government, was able to share an internal document with the group that had not been released publicly, because it had importance to the evaluation. The members of the group all agreed to keep the information in confidence, and worked together to align the document to the evaluation and talked about the benefits and risks of the approach. The situation occurred because the group had developed feelings of trust in themselves, one another,

and the evaluation team. As the evaluator noted, “what it’s really underscored for me is that for DE really to work, there needs to be a relationship of trust between [the evaluator] and the team and that has to be consciously and intentionally nurtured.” It seemed that for many participants, they had to work on developing trust amongst themselves as well as developing trust with the evaluator. Once the relationships of trust existed, the group could go on to successfully participate in the DE to their fullest potential.

Fostering relationships amongst stakeholders and between stakeholders and the evaluator was important and evidenced by participants’ comments in their embedded reflections and individual interviews. Importantly, they were able to deepen the connections they had made and began to trust one another so they could work effectively together. It was important for the stakeholders and evaluator to support the continued development of the relationships after the initial connections. In particular, the advancement and deepening of those relationships seemed to allow stakeholders to continue to contribute to, learn from and use findings from the evaluation in this context.

Building collaborations. Establishing and fostering relationships between the stakeholders and evaluator created the opportunities for ongoing connection as well as formed trust amongst the participants. Having a group of stakeholders who felt comfortable to share and communicate enabled collaborations amongst the group and between the stakeholders and the evaluator. Collaborating together as a group allowed for the contribution of diversity from the individual participants in addition to supporting the creation of a collective environment for the stakeholders.

Having deep relationships between the evaluator and stakeholders fostered a shared environment for the group to interact, and seemed to create ownership of the evaluation for

stakeholders. Participants frequently commented on how they were able to work together to meet deadlines, interact with the evaluation team, and collaborate in meetings together to strengthen the products that were being developed. Participants also remarked that they were able to ask questions, gain greater understanding, ask for the assistance of their colleagues or the evaluation team, and obtain timely feedback from the group. One such participant noted: “it seemed like we were always working together on something and it wasn’t just me working on it, it was everyone working on it”. This participant seemed to refer to the group of stakeholders as collaborating together and operating as one unified team to work on tasks. The increasing collaboration was evidenced through researcher field notes, which captured and commented on the progression of interactions and collaboration on tasks amongst the group. The field notes specifically captured the following comment:

Today the group discussed the updated evaluation plan. It looks like they are more on the same page and everyone at the table offered some suggestions. They put the document up on the screen and tracked some changes together. Looks like they are really connecting!

To that end, participants spoke of the collective environment that emerged through the DE process that fostered collective efforts, diversity and ownership of the process as a result of the relationships that were created. One interviewee specifically commented on the relationship between all of the broader participants, citing: “I learned that funders and organizations and government can all work together and that as the boundaries get pushed, people can be really be comfortable with that.” She further went on to talk about how it was interesting to see the value that the different voices at the table brought, and the perspectives she otherwise would not have come to on her own. Specifically, this example demonstrates that individuals from a wide array of backgrounds and sometimes competing work agendas can come together to collaborate for a

common evaluation cause. When this happened, people reported being more comfortable than they might have imagined themselves at the beginning, and that working together brought about a sense of ownership. As another participant commented, collaboration and the creation of a collective environment allowed members “to own it in such a way that they also feel compelled to be active members and to contribute their time.”

The process of DE seemed to make stakeholders more comfortable to open up, collaborate and believe in one another, which allowed for additional contribution and collaboration. Across all sources of data, information and comments about the collaboration amongst the group were captured. Findings seemed to indicate that once the group was able to connect and get to know each other, they worked well together and consistently relied on their colleagues to help guide them through the DE process and to assist them in evaluation tasks.

Nurturing shared understanding of roles, tasks and the evaluation. The existence of strong relationships and a collaborative environment helped to nurture a shared understanding of roles and tasks between stakeholders and the evaluator. Participants in their interviews and embedded reflections talked a lot about developing clarity of their roles, tasks and the evaluation. The clarity and shared understanding related to the three areas of roles, tasks and the evaluation was facilitated by the development of relationships amongst participants.

Participants noted that it was important for them, in the context of the evaluation and the relationships they were developing, to be able to understand their role within the evaluation process. This extended to their roles within the group in terms of responsibilities, but also in the larger context of contributing expertise to the evaluation, and their role with the evaluator. One participant noted that it was important not just to understand their own role, but the roles of others on the team, stating: “we should all know who is involved and who is doing what”.

Identifying the roles and responsibilities of the whole team allowed participants to better communicate, collaborate, and relate to the evaluation and their colleagues. During a meeting, occurring approximately halfway through the evaluation process, participants had a discussion about identifying and defining roles among the evaluation working group, including the evaluators. This conversation was significant because of its length, and outcomes of the discussion were unique. One of the participants asked the group to deliberate roles amongst themselves so they could gain a better understanding of the experience of members and tasks others were involved in. The discussion lasted for almost the whole meeting, and at the end, the participants and the evaluation team all commented on the value of the discussion, which seemed to demonstrate the importance to both groups of defining roles in the relationships of the participants. Close to the conclusion of the evaluation, another discussion was had to talk about who on the stakeholder group would be taking on various tasks and roles with disseminating and using information from the evaluation. It was a critical moment for the group when they discussed and finalized the roles each stakeholder had in using the evaluation going forward.

The intentionality behind allocating time and energy into the development and maintenance of strong relationships nurtured shared understanding among the stakeholders and the evaluator. The shared understanding not only included the definition of roles but the clarification of tasks and subsequent expectations (e.g., timelines). Participants were better able to understand how the tasks they engaged in would support their work going forward. As one participant noted:

...and I often wondered, how, what I could contribute and how would this matter in my work. After going through those meetings and listening I actually understood how I could apply the results of the evaluation. Because, you know, I'm not really part of the

organization, exactly. It was a good learning. And who would of known I am actually reading [Patton's] book!

The interactions and collaborations among stakeholders and the evaluation team offered stakeholders greater clarity surrounding the tasks they needed to complete and created some focus and direction for the future.

Other participants commented in their interviews on the importance of “getting on the same page” and being able to understand their role in the larger evaluation and how that role would influence their utilization. They often commented on how the evaluation team was able to demonstrate how they might use information. As one participant noted: “[The evaluator] was able to take time over the phone to explain to me what this data meant and how the process was going to get us there. I found that super helpful”. By building relationships that nurtured shared understanding, stakeholders seemed motivated and supported to learn more about evaluation, understand the evaluation process, and subsequently utilize evaluation findings in a more robust way.

Theme Two: Organizational Readiness

The second theme that emerged through the analysis was that about influences to organizational readiness. In particular, what the influences were and how they impacted the readiness of the organization to conduct evaluation, the organization's willingness to adapt to changes and see the evaluation vision. Two subthemes emerged as influences: adapting to the journey and valuing the end goal. These two influences are described in detail, below.

Adapting to the journey. First, participants consistently commented on the ability of the organization to respond to the findings that were emerging from the evaluative efforts of the working group. This included organizational capacity to understand and undertake evaluation,

ability to interpret and respond to findings, and to be flexible and thoughtful in doing so. These aspects tended to highlight the adaptation to the DE evaluation journey and seemed to influence evaluation utilization by stakeholders in this context.

Participants often remarked in their embedded reflections and interviews how evaluation knowledge of the organization or of themselves was a critical component in their ability and desire to utilize information from the evaluation. Participants' prior exposure to evaluation or willingness to learn, resulted in increased engagement and participation in the process. In almost all of the participants', those who had previous personal experience found it was helpful in understanding the process and being able to engage. One of the participants on the EWG had limited experience with evaluation, and stated in her interview and reflections that she often found it difficult to provide quality feedback or know how to engage in the process because she was missing a mass of knowledge. Throughout the process, she did note that she greatly increased her understanding related to evaluation, and in DE, but still at times found it difficult to know where to go next. For those participants who had prior knowledge, they often stated they were able to rely on the knowledge to provide context and direction in the process. They found that previous experience allowed them to be more comfortable to discuss all aspects of the evaluation, participate in the evaluation process, and engage in using the evaluation in the future. One particular participant observed that:

Sometimes we only think that the lead person or the person coordinating the evaluation has the inside knowledge but even though that may be the case, all those other stakeholders have a lot of feedback that is maybe a little more objective than the lead person.

The participant recognized that previous knowledge and previous experience of the evaluation team can contribute objectivity and provide a unique lens for which to view the evaluation. For this particular group of stakeholders, prior evaluation knowledge seemed to influence their comfort and ability to engage in the evaluation.

Participants demonstrated their application of evaluation findings through factors related to the knowledge built through the evaluation; but they also established this application of findings by having an organization that supported evaluation and evaluation success. Evidenced through interviews and embedded reflections, it appeared that in order for stakeholders to apply findings from the DE, it was important for the organization to have some level of quality improvement, evaluation or research knowledge. One participant, in her interview described that:

Especially for social programs that don't have a lot of money, it's really important for them to almost have a layman's understanding and a basic understanding [of evaluation] and the ability to gather data and look at it for their programs.

Participants described being able to implement and use findings from the evaluation in instances where their organization had an understanding of evaluation and quality improvement processes and was supportive. Participants were able to learn individually as well as a collective group, organizationally, to be able to contribute effectively to the evaluation. Evidenced through researcher field notes that captured the progression of their learning, the knowledge allowed for a shared understanding of developmental evaluation and influenced their capacity to adapt.

The ability of the organization and its staff to learn, reflect, make changes and implement suggestions from the findings of an evaluation seemed to be a large factor in determining whether participants were using results from the evaluation and evaluation process. In particular, one participant commented in her interview:

I was really struggling with how we were even going to do this focus group and I finally said something at a meeting and it turned out that a few others had the same concerns.

[The organization] actually listened to what we had recommended and we ended up doing things a little differently. That data was so much better.

Others commented on the changes in evaluation focus that allowed them to see the value of data.

One such participant noted: “It was cool to see how the framework changed how we did the evaluation. Those two are very different and I think being able to change direction really improved what we got”. The responsiveness of the organization allowed participants to mimic similar actions when it came to their own personal contributions to the evaluation and in their utilization of the information. In their interviews, participants commented on how they were able to look at and reflect on information they had learned from the evaluation and be able to use that information to make changes, move in a different direction, or apply learnings. As one participant who was describing how ongoing evaluation data was used by the group to guide their efforts and alter their course noted:

Using the data to set where are we and where do we want to go and really plot[ting] that path and letting the data help us to be more intentional and guide as we go forward. But to be more long term and intentional.

Being able to look at the information that was resulting from the evaluation and reflect on it as an organization allowed for the creation of intentional and long-term goals and solutions. The thought was echoed by many participants through both their interviews and reflections, and was captured in researcher field notes. In fact, part of the evaluation process was to have participants reflect constantly through the working group meetings. As demonstrated in the evolution of the field notes, participants became more comfortable in the constant reflection needed through the

process, and by the end of the evaluation, were asking themselves and each other reflective questions in order to gain clarity to go forward and apply findings. One participant specifically noted that they “think that we should always be asking ourselves ‘is it time to reflect again?’ and be open to the idea of experiencing new things and questioning the knowledge we already have.” Others discussed the same point by stating that one of the most important learnings that allowed them to implement and use the knowledge they were gaining, was to ask themselves what they already know, what they need to know, and where they were heading to in the future. Addressing the current state, new learnings and the focus on the future seemed to permit the participants to take hold of what was being learned through the evaluation and what the results were, to implement changes, suggestions, considerations or to develop mechanisms to support future development.

The organization’s responsiveness seemed to also include the ability to shift practice and be receptive to evaluation needs. In many ways, participants commented on how the process had catalyzed change within the organization and led them to be able to better innovate, create and continue to learn. As one participant outlined, “the framing of the issues now are clearer for us, so our ability to make change or to strengthen or to innovate is more available now to us.” The participant succinctly stated what many talked about in their interviews and embedded reflections; as a function of the DE process, the organization and stakeholders were able to better understand and identify the issues, and they were subsequently better able to innovate and make critical changes in course. As a result of their own individual and organizational learning, participants were able to have a shared understanding of DE and were more willing to adapt and apply their learnings. A tangible example of organizational responsiveness comes from the researcher’s field notes. During one of the meetings in the first part of the evaluation that looked

at developing the evaluation framework, the evaluation team provided a very in-depth summary of the organization, its values, its history and current state of evaluation. During this meeting, the EWG sat in silence reviewing the information, until one participant noted that they had never seen their organization described this way, and that this was the first real, comprehensive history and summary of evaluation that had taken place. Another participant talked about how it became evident how much work they had already done, but that they needed to have a different focus going forward. The organization had never seen information presented this way, and it permitted the stakeholders to alter their course and refocus the evaluation. Subsequently they became better able to be creative, innovate and catalyze some changes to the evaluation structure that may have otherwise stayed the same. In fact, the group chose to deviate quite substantially from the original evaluation framework to better represent the new direction. The simple information on history and current state of evaluation gave stakeholders the permission to frame the new DE with a better lens.

Some of the utilization of evaluative information seemed to be as a result of the EWG to be flexible in their evaluation efforts and adapt to emergent situations. This is because participants consistently commented on how priorities shifted and the course of the evaluation needed to be altered with them, or, how opportunities for additional data collection or evaluative efforts emerged and were acted upon by the group. One participant noted: “and we just went a little over budget because we had activities to collect more data and so we took those opportunities”. Participants commented in their interviews on taking risks, and being able to be flexible and responsive to the emerging information from the evaluation that would then point the group in different directions. It seemed to be very important for the group to remain in close contact and adapt as the situations required. Another participant said:

I learned that sometimes you can have a plan in terms of identifying what it is you need and what it is you are going to do but you also have to be adaptive to what could happen and that there are always going to be changes along the way that you might not necessarily have control over.

This quote refers to an adaptation to an emerging data collection opportunity that was experienced by the organization. Initially, the evaluation team was going to interview youth at a mentoring symposium to represent the mentee perspective in the data collection. Days before the symposium it became apparent that there would not be time in the youth's schedule to accommodate a focus group. Instead, the EWG quickly identified that key international participants would be in attendance for the symposium and arranged for the evaluation team to conduct a comprehensive focus group with them. It represented international voices that described how much the organization had impacted their work and was a leader in the field of mentoring. The information would not have been collected from the group had there not been an emerging crisis and gap in data collection. Participants noted the flexibility of the evaluation that allowed them to make changes and take advantage of opportunities and learnings as they were occurring, so opportunities were not missed. Similarly, participants directly changed the focus, course and duration of the evaluation as a result of the learnings that were occurring. Thus, a critical component of change was acknowledging and supporting the need to be flexible in evaluation efforts, and adapting to emergent situations.

Participants discussed various aspects of the evaluation process that supported and expedited change in an appropriate and timely way. For many of the participants, much discussion in meetings and in their interviews was focused on how, after identifying areas of consideration, they now were able to think about the solutions and begin to implement them in a

timely way. They recognized that the information from the evaluation was best used as quickly as possible and consistently talked about how to implement the changes that were required from the learnings that were occurring. In one such example, the Provincial Coordinator for the organization began to recognize through the fieldwork she did that there seemed to be a large gap in their front-line mentoring providers' (the member organizations they support) knowledge of evaluation. Ongoing discussion with the EWG noted that it was in fact important for their providers to have this knowledge, and that the organization could be a leader not only in mentoring, but in providing information on evaluation as well. Subsequently, the group agreed to expedite this process and support these efforts by presenting at the mentoring symposium about evaluation. Similarly, they worked with their web designer to restructure their website to include toolkits on evaluation. Thus, even through the course of the evaluation, the organization greatly changed its approach to the information that was given to their providers, and altered its focus on evaluation in a very timely manner. One participant noted: "we are now trying to formulate the solution and implement those solutions and so I think we probably have to speed up formulating solutions so that we can more quickly get to the implementing of the solutions". The participant identified that there was a strong need in the organization to recognize the issue, speed up the development of solutions, and move into implementing solutions so they can be assessed for viability and fit. The timely use of learnings through the evaluation seemed to lead to increased stakeholder engagement and support for future direction of the organization.

It seemed that not only was it important for the organization to be flexible in allocating resources to evaluation but also to adapt in terms of evaluation approach and strategy. The organization was prepared to provide additional financial resources in order to support evaluation efforts. For example, through the evaluation it became evident that there was an opportunity to

collect data at a mentoring symposium that was being hosted by the organization. Not only was it important for the organization to be flexible in terms of altering their strategy for collecting data, but equally as important to support the efforts by allocating resources needed to complete the task. In this case, the organization was able to support the evaluators to attend and collect data at the conference to enhance the results of the evaluation. Participants commented throughout their interviews on points related to the resources from the organization that were provided to assist in their efforts. In particular, one participant noted that she appreciated the organization being able to re-allocate resources from one area to another when it was needed. She noted that it was very helpful to be able to call together the EWG to convene when it was needed, and the organization was able to provide the time, meeting space, and financial resources to support the efforts. She commented that it also worked in the other direction, where the EWG was able to recognize when meetings were not needed, and they were able to free up those additional resources to be re-allocated. For example, the EWG was meeting monthly in person, but once the evaluation was underway, they decided that working remotely and only connected in person to address some of the big issues was a better strategy. Subsequently, flexibility allowed the organization to redistribute those resources into another strategy, such as collecting more data, which would better serve the organization.

Having an organization, including stakeholders, that was able to understand evaluation processes, respond to emerging needs and be flexible on the allocation of resources to those needs seemed important in this context to supporting stakeholders' utilization of findings. Learning about evaluation individually and collectively allowed stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of developmental evaluation and to better be able to adapt to circumstances. As a result, the organization was able to lead by example, and demonstrate how and in what ways the

responsiveness was important. Stakeholders were permitted to reflect and demonstrate the same values when they went to use information they had learned. It seemed how responsive the organization was, and how it adapted to the evaluation journey impacted how and to what extent stakeholders utilized the information from the evaluation.

Valuing the end goal. Another theme that emerged was the value the organization placed on the end goal for the evaluation process and findings. This included the support of the organization and their willingness to engage in evaluative efforts as a result of valuing evaluation. Organizational support to engage in the DE allowed the stakeholders to work together to collaborate and provided direction for evaluation use. As one participant cogently stated, what they liked about the evaluation was that:

[It] allows government and community to work together, recognizes that nobody has all of the answers, recognizes that none of us, including government with all the money, has got it all figured out, that we've all got challenges and that if we take the time to understand and we take the time to shift, and we take the time to continue to build, we will get to appropriate places.

Participants across their interviews described the support of the organization that allowed for an in-depth, innovative and developmental approach to evaluation.

The support of the organization and the willingness to participate meant that stakeholders were engaged by attending meetings (rarely did any stakeholders miss a meeting), providing feedback in a timely matter, talking to one another about the evaluation, and asking questions to the group or to the evaluators. Even in the face of funding uncertainties, the organization did not waver in its support for the process, and the stakeholders continued to be engaged. This was evidenced through researcher field notes where participants in the meetings talked about the

funding challenges and simultaneously continued to be flexible in their budget to allow the time to complete the evaluation. In this way, the evaluation was valued highly as were the stakeholders who engaged in the process. Not only did the group value the evaluation in a broad way, in the researcher's field notes, it was also noted that the stakeholders valued the process at an individual level as well. All stakeholders took turns speaking at meetings and weighing options for moving forward. The group consistently engaged in lengthy discussions related to the evaluation that often had to be tabled and addressed at another time. In addition, the larger governance of the organization was very interested in the results of the evaluation, and they were dedicated throughout the process to provide feedback. It was very rare for a stakeholder not to have any feedback, opinion, or to be engaged in the process. As a result, most of the stakeholders credited their engagement partially to the support and recommendation of the organization to participate in the DE process. One such participant noted:

I really couldn't see this process going another way. [The organization] proposed this developmental method and at first I really didn't understand the difference. Looking back, I don't think anything else would have been appropriate and I sure wouldn't have attended as many meetings as I did.

The organization, including stakeholders, staff, and partnership organizations seemed to value evaluation and its contributions in the current context. The leadership team consistently noted in meetings with the evaluation team that they were energized by the findings emerging from the evaluation, and were looking forward to implement suggestions for quality improvement, funding considerations, or increased knowledge of their operations. One participant commented:

I think evaluation is just what we do every day and seeing this process involve so many of us and having [the leaders in the organization] recognize the time it takes helped me to allow myself to be involved and to actually recommend this process to others.

It seemed that the value the organization placed on evaluation, including their support and willingness to engage ensured that stakeholders were involved, and able to utilize the information.

The value the organization placed on the goal for the evaluation process and findings was evidenced by the ability of the organization to allocate resources to obtaining those goals. In the current study, the organization demonstrated readiness for evaluation by being prepared to dedicate specific time, energy and financial resources for the completeness of the evaluation. The organization allocated a working group to evaluation and provided the appropriate resources to run and support the efforts of the working group. For example, meeting spaces and technology were provided for the EWG. The organization supported their staff to attend the meetings and provided their time to participate fully in the DE; which often requires much more time and energy than a traditional evaluation structure. Participants consistently commented in their reflections and interviews on the resources provided by the organization and how they supported the evaluation efforts, and demonstrated the value the evaluation had to the organization. Specifically, one participant noted that it seemed important in the DE context for the organization to dedicate resources to evaluation. He noted that in his previous role, he participated in a different evaluation that did not have the same type of organizational allocation of resources. He noted that the group was much more disjointed, less engaged, and subsequently did not use any information from the evaluation because it seemed like the evaluation was not supported by the organization. He noted that as a result of the organization providing time for

meetings, emphasizing engagement of the participants, providing meeting spaces and lunch when appropriate, and allowing ample time for participants to develop relationship and engage with the evaluation team, he was able to truly learn about evaluation, thoughtfully contribute, and use the information in a profound way. He went on to describe how, in the future, he hopes to continue to be involved in evaluations that are valued by the organization and utilize such a comprehensive approach.

Theme Three: Collective Climate

The final theme that was found through analysis in the present study was that of influences to the collective climate. In particular, three influences to the collective climate were discovered (subthemes). The subthemes: fitting within the context, embodying the DE approach and realizing evaluation learnings are presented below.

Fitting within the context. First, the ability of the evaluator to align to the context of the organization was found to be a key influence of evaluation utilization for stakeholders. In particular, it emerged as important for the evaluator to align with the organization and fit the overall organizational context. It also seemed important for the evaluator to align to the particular evaluation approach (DE). To encourage alignment, the evaluator demonstrated engagement and openness to fitting with the organization. Being open and engaged and able to fit to the organizational and evaluation approach created an aligned and integrated evaluation structure for stakeholders.

The fit of the evaluator within the organization and with the evaluation was cited as one of the most important components of evaluation success. In particular, participants felt that it was imperative for the evaluator to have knowledge of the organization, and also have a personality that was aligned with the organization and the stakeholders. The importance of evaluator and

organizational alignment was described as a key component for success by all participants in their interviews. In some way or another, each participant described an example of how they knew the evaluator for this particular evaluation was the right fit, understood the context, and represented their values. One participant noted that she “remember[ed] sometimes on some conference calls and sitting there and describing exactly what we [saw] and need and... [the evaluators] understood the need or understood what was needed.” In this way, the evaluators were able to understand the perspectives of the stakeholders and of the evaluation focus and were able to recommend courses of action that aligned with values of the organization.

It also seemed important for the evaluator to be the right fit for this particular type of evaluation, as it required more time, innovation, commitment, guidance and flexibility than other types of evaluations, as cited in participant reflections and interviews. As one participant cogently stated:

If we had structured from the beginning a very discrete evaluation we would be in a very different place. We wouldn't be in a place where this work is co-owned, where multiple ministries see their role and it is a responsive model to the needs of kids and organizations and so on. So I think having people well-grounded in the discipline to walk alongside people well-grounded in the practice has shaped the practice.

This particular participant was identifying that the evaluator needs to be well versed in the evaluation methodology in order to authentically guide the course of the evaluation with those that are practice-focused. The fit of the evaluator was consistently stated as the most important evaluator characteristic in participant embedded reflections and interviews, and all participants agreed that for this particular evaluation, the evaluation team was a great fit. As a result of a good suitability, the participants found that they could see places where they would be able to

use the evaluation, present results from the evaluation, and apply the findings and learnings from the evaluation under the leadership and direction of the evaluator.

Another evaluator characteristic related to appropriateness of fit that was described through the analysis as being a factor for use was the engagement of the evaluator. Many of the participants in their reflections and interviews referred to the commitment and engagement of the evaluator as being a key component in their own engagement and commitment to the evaluation and in using the findings. One participant noted that they had always had a stake in the evaluation, but the evaluator's demonstration of how important the work of the organization was, inspired her to want to continue to demonstrate outcomes, impacts and findings from the evaluation in a larger forum. Subsequently, after the end of the evaluation, she engaged in a variety of extensive knowledge dissemination activities and applied a lot of the learnings from the evaluation into new business and operational plans for the organization. Another participant said that the "the group was good, we got a good group, really key interested people, really good contractors that moved this forward, we were always moving forward", which demonstrated the commitment of all participants and evaluators in continuing to apply learnings from the evaluation back into new directions and kept the momentum for the project going. The alignment of the evaluator to the organization in order to support evaluation use emerged as key.

Participants also identified openness of the evaluator in aligning to the evaluation context as being important to influencing the utilization of the evaluation findings. They talked about the importance of the evaluator getting to know the organization and being open to suggestions, changes, criticisms and feedback. One participant noted in his reflection that he always felt heard and understood when interacting with the evaluation team, and that it increased his confidence in the results of the evaluation because the team was willing to listen to alternative viewpoints.

Another participant noted that in her experience with other evaluators, she tended to find that the developmental evaluators seemed to be more willing to be open to suggestion, and had listening skills that rivaled some psychologists she had worked with. She said that “the developmental evaluators are more open and willing to change and look at opportunities.” In particular, she noted the evaluation team listened to the EWG stakeholders when reviewing the evaluation framework and listened to their concerns about the shift in priorities. Subsequently, the entire focus of the evaluation shifted and the evaluators were willing continue to guide the evaluation even when it took a strong detour. She said that the openness underscored the value of listening to stakeholder perspectives. The participants noted that because of the evaluator openness, they were able to co-create a product that they had confidence in, and were willing to adapt and share those findings in current and future practice. Participants indicated they felt understood, heard and supported in their decisions because of the right fit of the evaluator and their understanding of the organization and of the issues the organization faces. Similarly, they seemed to feel confident in the expertise and guidance of the evaluator, and in their openness to change. The evaluator characteristics appeared to greatly influence stakeholders’ use of evaluation learnings and findings.

Finally, another influence related to appropriateness of fit was the ability of the evaluator to foster an integrated and aligned evaluation. In this particular case, it seemed that if the evaluator was able to create an integrated evaluation climate, then stakeholders were able to feel safe, be open, trust the evaluation process, be engaged and see value in the evaluation. The integration of the evaluation was described as being significantly important to both evaluation success and subsequent evaluation use. Integration is defined in the present study as the inclusion

of evaluation efforts within the organization in the best way possible that aligns with the organization.

The alignment and integration of the evaluation within the organizational context was created as part of the evaluation climate by the evaluator. One participant noted that it seemed like a lot of care was taken to align the evaluation to the needs of the organization, and to continue to guide and shift that process as other concerns emerged. For example, during the evaluation, the organization was required to present some information to a funder to try to renew their contract. Because of the structure of DE one participant noted, the evaluators were able to pull real-time data to inform the funding renewal process, and the organization was subsequently successful in obtaining additional funding. Participants commented on how DE seemed to be the most appropriate framework, and seemed to fit within the context of the organization, which was rapidly growing partners and service providers in an innovative way. Further, they went on to describe how they would like to see ongoing evaluation efforts integrated within the organization in the future, and they continued to work towards the goal to include these types of system structures. One participant summarized this thought by saying: “what we would do is integrate evaluation as a core function of the work rather than an entity that runs alongside. I think we have, to a certain extent but being more mindful of what that would look like”. As a result of this goal, the participants worked to develop mechanisms within the organization that would provide ongoing data during the course of the evaluation and into the future, demonstrating the utility of having an integrated evaluation. Participants were able to readily access and utilize information from the evaluation to inform current and future practice. Using a DE framework that integrated and supported the goals of the organization resulted in encouragement for future use by stakeholders; which was a key indicator of evaluation success created by the evaluator.

In order to create a collective evaluation climate to influence evaluation utilization, it seemed that it was important for the evaluator to be a fit to the organizational and evaluation context. In addition, the engagement and openness of the evaluator to align to the context created an integrated and inclusive environment in this context for stakeholders to participate and utilize evaluation information. If the evaluator was able to align to the context, stakeholders seemed to feel more understood, engaged, and also tended to participate and utilize findings.

Embodying the developmental evaluation approach. Another way in which an evaluation climate was created by the evaluator to support use was through the evaluator embodying the approach. The evaluator was able to exemplify the approach through her expertise to demonstrate concepts of DE and provided examples of how to utilize evaluation findings. As a result, the evaluator seemed to create an inclusive learning environment for stakeholders in this context.

Almost all of the participants commented on how essential it was to have an evaluator with the right expertise to guide the group through the evaluation. Not only to have the expertise, but the evaluator actually using the expertise to demonstrate the DE concepts. They noted for DE especially, it was important to have an evaluator with experience in the concepts and practices of DE. One participant in her interview, highlighted the distinction between a traditional evaluation expert and an expert in DE by pointing out that experts in DE should be embedded within the evaluation, willing to share their knowledge, and draw on best practices. She eloquently stated that:

We're talking about evaluators as critical friends and talking about evaluators as outside experts, and those are two different perspectives in life. And I think the really great thing that has happened is that [when] I think of developmental evaluators, I think of them as

critical friends, because you can challenge our assumptions and you can draw on best practice. But it is not you're right and you're wrong. It is about having skills and abilities and recognizing those and trying to find the right place along the path together, and that has not been typical of the evaluation community in a typical academic sense.

The participant highlighted the importance of evaluators having DE expertise. She went on to discuss that as a result of the expertise, she felt comfortable and inclined to share the findings and results of the evaluation with a broad audience. Another participant, who was previously described as being less knowledgeable about evaluation, noted that had it not been for the expertise and mentorship of the evaluator, she would have been very confused and behind on the evaluation work and would not have provided any feedback. This particular participant looked to the evaluator for ways in which to approach the process and findings and was able to more thoughtfully contribute. She stated through the reflections that she developed more knowledge as a result of simply working with the evaluator who had a wide range of expertise and was able to demonstrate the concepts. In particular she commented:

I looked to [the evaluator] on how to be more collaborative with my colleagues. I work in [government] and it was hard to step outside the box and ask for help outside [the government]. [The evaluator] showed me how to add other feedback into my work and how actually talking to more people made the product better. Especially if they had a completely different way of doing things than me.

As a result of gaining knowledge, she noted that she was using what she was learning in her work life to influence and guide other project work; a direct application of learnings.

Participants noted the helpfulness of an evaluator who was able to demonstrate the concepts of DE by applying the principles and to model how they themselves could interpret and

utilize the findings. For example, one participant noted that as a result of the evaluator's expertise and behavior, she was able to clearly see the connections between the evaluation and subsequent organizational decision-making. She commented that because she had limited experience with evaluation, having the evaluator thoroughly describe what she was doing, hoping to learn, and providing recommendations for action along the way, she was able to engage in the discussion and understand the need for various type of action. Similarly, another participant commented that the evaluator was always readily available via telephone, email, or at the in person meeting to answer questions and provide next steps. The participant noted that having someone exemplify the components of DE, including openness, honesty, access and trust allowed the participant to actively contribute in a meaningful way to the evaluation. The evaluator herself noted that it was intentional to keep communication lines open, develop relationships, share learnings, provide access to evaluation findings and provide time for discussion. Doing so allowed the group to contribute to the evaluation, learn how to use the emerging findings and create a plan to enact future change. Thus, it seemed the modeling of behaviours related to the components of DE was a key facet in creating a positive and engaging evaluation climate.

The evaluator, through her expertise seemed to be able to foster an inclusive learning environment for stakeholders. The inclusive environment refers to the inclusion of diverse viewpoints, stakeholders and levels of involvement based on specific area content knowledge. The majority of participants in their reflections and interviews expressed some form of appreciation for the diversity of inclusion the DE provided. One participant described how they appreciated the division of work in the evaluation that aligned with participant interests, skill sets or areas of expertise. They noted that it seemed very intentional that certain individuals either

self-selected or were chosen for various tasks based on their knowledge and expertise. Similarly, another participant commented that it was nice to see such a diverse group of people at the EWG table in order to represent as many viewpoints as possible. Specifically, they stated: “we had some really good key people with good insights as they reviewed and as they looked at things, individuals brought some really different skills to the table.” It seemed to be very important to the participants that there was a lot of diversity within the team and within the evaluation itself. Many participants commented on the number of data sources that were used in the evaluation, and noted that it made them very confident in the evaluation findings. They were energized to share these findings because they were supported by a lot of diverse investigation. One participant described how she looked at the results from the evaluation and was very confident in the results because she knew how many people were consulted in order to come to those conclusions. It was important to her, she stated, to continue to share that information with others, because it represented a learning experience and success for the organization. Diversity and varying perspectives seemed to be an important characteristic of the evaluation that directly influenced the confidence of participants in using and sharing the information from the evaluation.

When participants were able to understand and were supported in their learning by the evaluator, they seemed to be more likely to integrate those learnings into their future work. Therefore, it seemed to be important in this particular context that the evaluator be an expert and participant in the DE field, and be able to embody the principles guiding a DE approach.

Realizing learnings. Another way in which the evaluator seemed to create a collective evaluation climate in the present study that influenced stakeholder utilization of evaluation findings was through the realization of evaluation learnings. The evaluator provided ongoing

access to evaluation learnings which seemed to allow stakeholders to be able to appreciate and utilize the findings. Realizing evaluation learnings in this context included: providing foundational learning about evaluation to stakeholders, promoting evaluation use, allowing access to information, showing participants how to apply process learnings, and showing them how to utilize the information to enact change.

Stakeholders who developed an understanding of the evaluation and of ongoing considerations in the current study seemed to be able to provide direction for changes to ongoing initiatives utilizing what they had learned. Specifically, participants commented in their interviews, reflections and meetings that being able to develop a foundational understanding of the evaluation, the evaluation process and the state of the organization allowed them to examine the findings with a clearer lens. In addition, the understanding supported the ability to identify areas of ongoing work. As an example, one participant noted that “[the evaluation plan] really captured exactly our history and current state and looking at what we need to evaluate and drive us to go forward”. Participants discussed that without access to a concrete understanding of the evaluation process and results, they were not able to create the focus and direction that was needed to guide future areas of work and subsequently would have been unable to apply the findings they had learned through the process.

In the present study, a basic understanding seemed to go a long way in allowing the participants to apply their learnings into different aspects of their work. One participant said she “felt like [she] was learning about the organization simultaneously as the evaluation was going on and then when [they] had that meeting where it was presented, [she] really liked the wording and the descriptions and [thought] it accurately reflected [her] experience with the organization.” More specifically, the Provincial Coordinator of the organization was able to create a plan for

sharing the results of the evaluation with partners by understanding the ways in which the partners wanted to be communicated with, and on what topic areas. It emerged that evaluation was very important to the partners, and the coordinator was able to use this information to create a focused plan and a route for sharing the evaluation findings and results. Having a defined course seemed to be very important for participants in this context to demonstrate they are able to implement findings from evaluation work. Participants who were able to adapt to and learn from the evaluation seemed more likely to be actively using information from the evaluation in other circumstances; such as the emergent DE or as a learning experience for the future. Similarly, reflecting on the experience of the evaluation organizationally, and on their learning led participants to make changes and implement suggestions from the findings of the DE.

During the evaluation process, the evaluator noted that learning was accelerated by the promotion of evaluation use. Participants commented on the ability of the evaluator to support the development of information that could be utilized during and after the evaluation. DE is designed to be an iterative process that continually provides information and the mechanisms to incorporate the information to guide the evaluation (Patton et al., 2016). As a result, participants all commented on how they appreciated the structure of the evaluation for this particular reason. They cited being able to apply what they were learning to adjust their expectations or provide feedback about the evaluation. They were able to take the information they were learning and apply it in other areas, such as business planning, grant agreements, or operational planning prior to the evaluation process being concluded.

Participants commented on the accessibility of information that emerged through the evaluation to inform immediate mentoring and evaluation practice. One participant summed up this thought by saying: “one of the things I take for myself is how specific learnings can be

applied for the future and how we can use the learnings to perhaps get prepared and get better organized for what is to come.” The participant placed value on the iterative process, and energized by the availability of information. Similarly, another participant described how the process allowed them to communicate about the organization through the evaluation documents with a variety of models and policies that will help to drive the focus for Alberta. Other participants commented on how the evaluation forced them to examine their own quality improvement, and implement systems that would support continuous feedback, like what was obtained and used in the evaluation. Participants seemed to see the immediate value of the continuous feedback and could see the utility in guiding their future efforts. One in particular noted that they “think that some of the work related to evaluation [helped] us look at the design of the entire initiative as a continuous improvement model.” The alteration in developing a continuous feedback system demonstrated how participants were planning to apply information from the evaluation to their practice. When participants had ongoing access to emerging findings as part of the evaluation process in this context, they developed a shared understanding of the evaluation purpose/current status, what thinking individual organizational members contributed, and how they could go about responding to change opportunities.

When participants were able to develop a foundational understanding about evaluation, experience the promotion of evaluation use and have access to findings from the evaluation, they were able to use the information in a meaningful way in this particular context. It seemed to be important that the evaluator be able to help the participants realize their learnings through expertise, provision of information and support.

Chapter Summary

The data analysis identified three themes: relationship influences, organizational readiness and collective climate that were presented to address the overall research question, *what organizational conditions promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders during a developmental evaluation process?* The themes were discussed relative to their subthemes and their contribution to the research question. In so doing, findings point to the importance of: establishing and developing relationships amongst stakeholders and between stakeholders and the evaluator, the organization being adaptive and valuing evaluation, and the role of the evaluator and their fit to demonstrate evaluation concepts and facilitate learning. The next chapter summarizes the findings of the research and discusses them in relation to three case assertions. The next chapter also discusses implications of the current study and provides concluding thoughts.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications and Conclusions

The current study was motivated by my personal experience as an evaluator, specifically from observations of under-utilization of evaluation learnings. This observation spurred an interest in the factors, structure, and processes of evaluations that promote evaluation utilization. The foundation of the present study was literature demonstrating the importance of stakeholder involvement and participation in evaluation utilization (e.g., Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Johnson et. al, 2009; Leviton & Hughes, 1981; Neuman et al., 2013; Preskill et al., 2003; Shulha & Cousins, 1997). There is a dearth of research specific to developmental evaluation (DE) and its influence on stakeholder utilization of evaluation process and findings. The current study was designed to begin addressing the literature gap with the purpose to examine what organizational conditions promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders during a DE process. More specifically, to determine what the influences are to developing relationships; encouraging readiness; and, facilitating a collective climate. By studying the influences, I am better able to understand the conditions that create opportunities for evaluation utilization in a developmental process. The current chapter provides the discussion of my findings and the subsequent implications and conclusions of the study. First, I present the discussion of findings in light of the literature and provide case assertions as interpretations of my findings. Next I provide implications of the present research. In particular, I highlight two practical implications and one methodological implication. Finally, I provide my concluding thoughts on the present research.

Discussion

There are three points of discussion for this study in the form of case assertions (Stake, 1995). The case assertions represent the interpretations of the themes I presented in the previous chapter and provide the organizing structure for the discussion. These assertions represent the

organizational conditions in the study that supported evaluation utilization by stakeholders. First, the progressive development of relationships was key for effective relationships. Second, the coordination of organizational responses was key for organizational readiness. Third, the competency of the evaluator was key for facilitating a collective climate. In this chapter I first describe each case assertion and then I discuss the assertion in light of the literature. Figure 10 provides an overview of the findings (i.e., themes and subthemes) and their related points of discussion (i.e., case assertions) described in the following sections. Figure 10 visually depicts the relationship between the themes, subthemes and related case assertion as they will be described in this chapter.

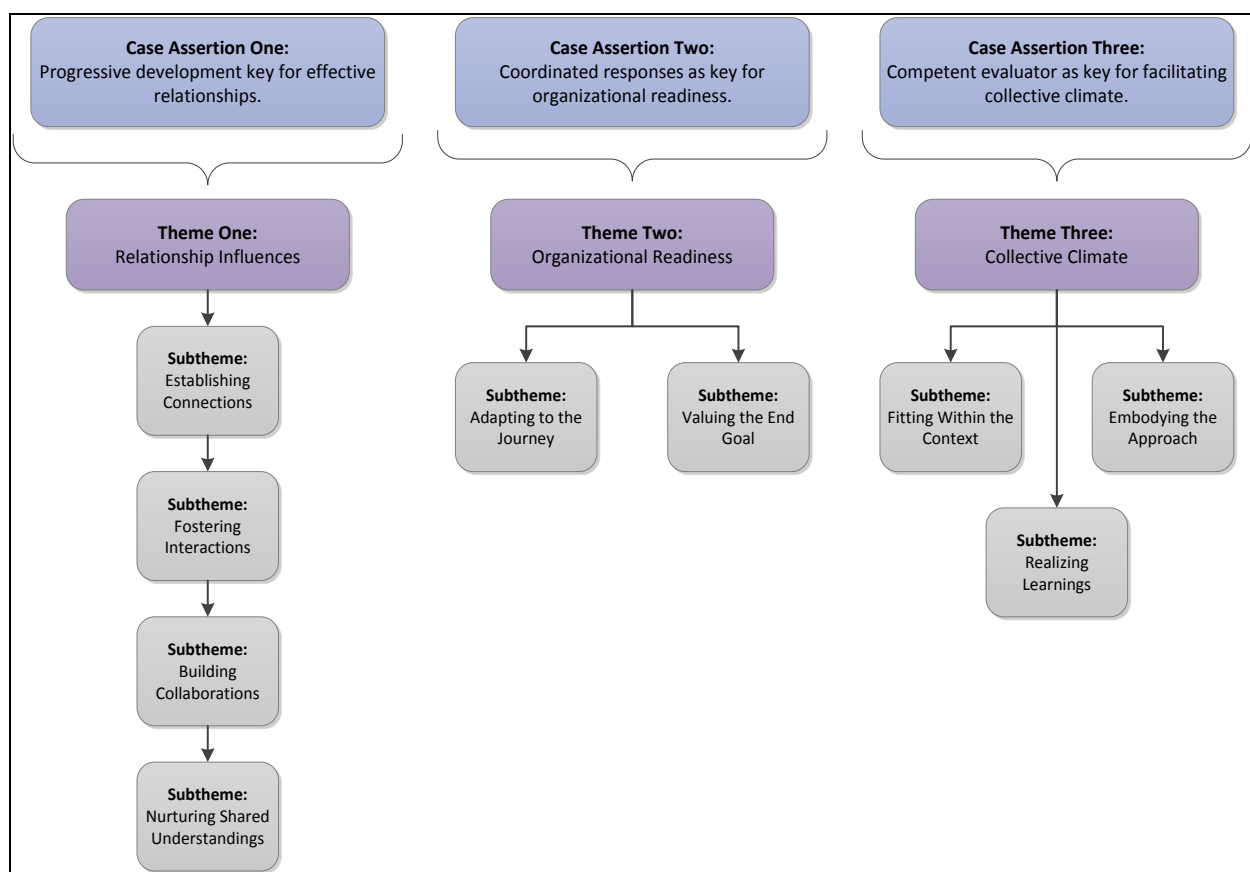


Figure 10. Relationship between Case Assertions, Themes and Subthemes

It is important to note that although Figure 10 presents the relationship amongst each of the discrete case assertions, the findings of the present study seemed to indicate that the case assertions are not mutually exclusive, and are in fact, interdependent. The three case assertions interact with one another and together contribute to our understanding of evaluation utilization within a DE. Figure 11 presents the case assertions as overlapping and interacting to represent this interdependent relationship. The overlapping relationship between the case assertions will become evident through the discussion of each case assertion. Generally speaking, the overlap of the case assertions demonstrated the importance of organizational conditions that must be in place to promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders from this particular context. The middle of the overlapping case assertions represents successful evaluation utilization. The linkages between the assertions will be described, below.

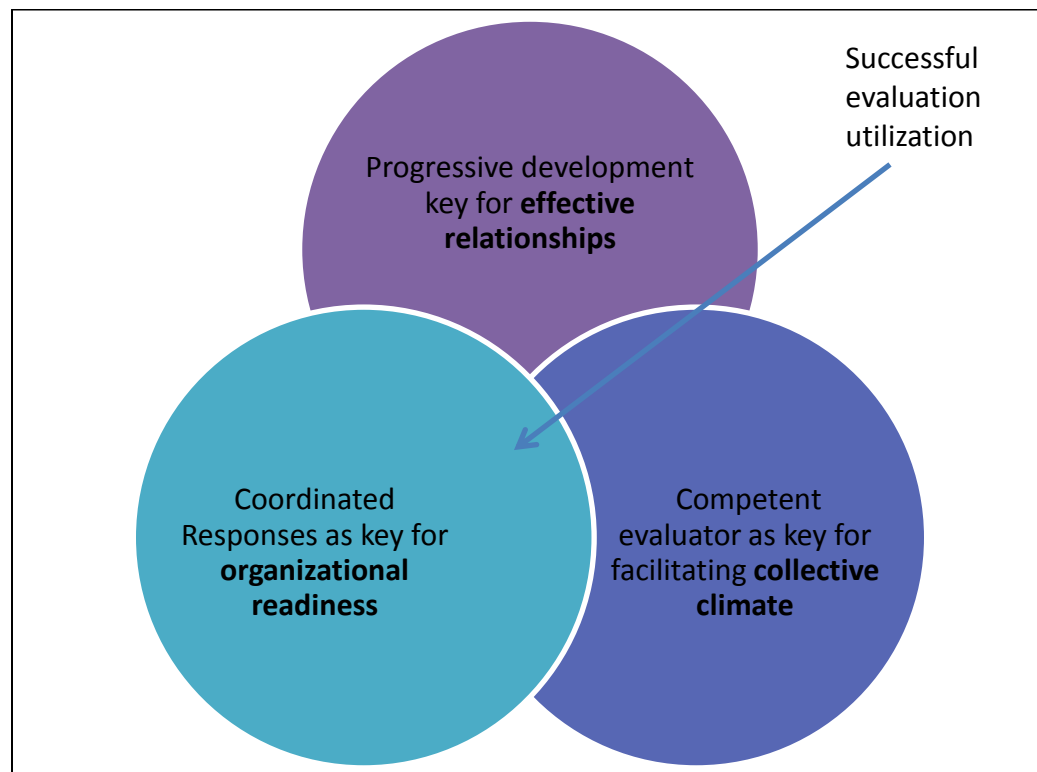


Figure 11. Interactive Relationship amongst Case Assertions.

Progressive development key for effective relationships. First, to address the overall research question, the influences relevant to the DE process related to developing effective relationships were examined. To that end, the first theme from the integrated findings suggest the progressive development of effective relationships among stakeholders and between stakeholder and the evaluator as involving establishing connections, fostering interactions, building collaborations, and nurturing shared understandings.

When relationships were established and developed among stakeholders and between stakeholders and the evaluator, collaborations amongst the groups were evidenced. The strong relationships and subsequent collaboration led to ownership and a shared understanding of roles and tasks related to the evaluation. Stakeholders were able to leverage their diversity and come together to participate in the evaluation in a collective manner. The allocation of time and energy by stakeholders and the evaluator into establishing these connections and supporting the continual relationship development fostered a collaborative environment grounded in trust. Specifically, stakeholders developed a shared understanding of the evaluation purpose, what individual functions they could play, how they could go about contributing, and confidence in the value of the process and each other. The development of relationships was an essential contribution to the DE experience for stakeholders.

The development of effective relationships was critical to the utilization of evaluation findings and to the success of the evaluation as a whole in the present study because of how learning was promoted by these sustained interactions and the nature of the relationship that was established. Points of contact for connection including face to face meetings, the frequency of the interactions, and the atmosphere that was created to foster the interactions were important to develop effective relationships. In particular, the organizational members first engaged in

learning when stakeholders established connections during early evaluation meetings and then continued to interact with one another through emails and in person discussions. These early connections introduced the stakeholders to one another and to the evaluator and laid the groundwork for personal motivation and organizational opportunities for further interactions as the evaluation progressed. As opportunities for attending subsequent meetings arose, sustained interactions were fostered through support by the organization in terms of time allocated to evaluation tasks. Through working together to develop understandings the evaluation process and findings and their roles and contributions these relationships became strengthened and a cohesive group emerged. The result was a shared understanding of roles and tasks which allowed the group to work effectively towards successful completion of the evaluation tasks.

Through a progression of developmental (and overlapping) phases, the relationships among stakeholders and the evaluation team offered a greater clarity surrounding the evaluation and created focus and direction for the future. Not surprising, the shared understandings seemed to impact how, when and in what ways stakeholders utilized the evaluation. This finding mirrors Preskill and colleagues' (2003) observation that the involvement of stakeholders is critical to promoting evaluation process use and provides further insight into the progression in which stakeholder relationships developed. Furthermore although Preskill and colleagues' (2003) note that stakeholder involvement in a collaborative evaluation context increases process use learning, the findings from this study also suggest that the organization, the stakeholders themselves and the evaluator play keys role in supporting the progression of relationship development.

The progression of relationship development resulted in the group becoming cohesive which in turn impacted stakeholder process learning and use. Interacting as a cohesive group created a "group think" mindset where the group worked to achieve the evaluation goals not as

individuals but as the EWG. The progression of the relationships into a cohesive group was described as influential to the experience of the DE by stakeholders. In the same way the findings point to the effects of cohesiveness to promote use, Johnson and colleagues' (2009) observed that interaction, communication and engagement between stakeholders and evaluators is of utmost importance to the "meaningful use of evaluations" (p. 389).

Specific to the DE process, stakeholders, the evaluator and the organization co-created the evaluation and evaluation products. The participants consistently commented on the importance of diverse voices and their inclusion in helping to define and direct the course of the evaluation. By working together to form the evaluation process and guide the use of findings, participants seemed to be better able to describe the evaluation process, understand its importance and be able to utilize the findings to their fullest extent. Co-creation is one of eight principles of DE recently identified by Patton and colleagues (2016). In this definition, if the evaluation is conceptualized, designed and adapted with the stakeholders to form the evaluation together as a group then co-creation has occurred and stakeholders are then able to engage in learning personally and organizationally. Co-creating during the current evaluation seemed to be nurtured through the development of relationships from stakeholders working together in building the framework, plan and evaluation process. In addition, the relationship development was interrelated with the other case assertions outlined in Figure 11 previously. There seemed to have to be interaction and engagement amongst the stakeholder group for them to behave cohesively to develop a collective climate. Similarly, relationships had to be established in order to develop coordinated responses amongst the stakeholders.

Coordinated responses key for organizational readiness. The second theme from the integrated findings suggest evidence of organizational readiness as involving the ability to

coordinate responses and specifically as adapting to the journey and valuing the end goal of the evaluation.

It appeared that for the organization to be ready for evaluation it had to be willing to adapt to the journey and value the evaluation above all else. The ability of the organization to support stakeholders learning of evaluation, time taken to engage in evaluative efforts, feedback and reflection seemed to greatly impact the extent to which stakeholders were engaged and committed to the DE. In this particular case, stakeholders were heavily involved through the process, and demonstrated the utility and importance of organizational readiness in the utilization of evaluation findings. The individual and collective learning to develop a shared understanding of developmental evaluation allowed stakeholders the opportunities to be adaptive to findings and learnings emerging from the evaluation.

The establishment of organizational readiness through coordinated organizational responses was important to the success of the evaluation as well as the utilization of findings because of how the organization was able to adapt to emerging circumstances to benefit the evaluation. In particular, the organization's ability to be receptive to potential changes and respond to the changes in a timely manner allowed them to follow the progress of the evaluation and adjust course as necessary. Stakeholders and the organization that were informed and empowered to make changes in course to improve the evaluation were able to see the value in the adjustments, demonstrated by their incorporation of that information into their subsequent use of findings. The coordinated responses by the organization and stakeholders to the emerging information from the evaluation demonstrated their readiness for both the evaluation and subsequent evaluation utilization. In particular, their readiness was evidenced by their adaptation to the evaluation course and their value of the process.

During the evaluation, it was important for the evaluation team to examine how ready the organization and its stakeholders were for the evaluation and how willing they were to adjust to circumstances. The ability of stakeholders to utilize evaluation findings seemed to hinge on the organization's capability to adapt to emergent situations and be flexible and coordinated in their approach. When the stakeholders and the organization were able to come to a common understanding of the evaluation and the current situation and see the significance of the evaluation, they were able to adjust their expectations and refocus evaluation efforts based on emerging information. Through the analysis, a variety of instances were discussed where the organization and the stakeholders made key decisions to adapt to emerging information in terms of data collection, evaluation strategies or meetings. By organizing and coordinating their efforts, they were able to make these critical decisions. In particular, including the stakeholders and having them help guide and coordinate the efforts of the evaluation supported the meaningful use of the evaluation as highlighted by Johnson and colleagues (2009). In this context, it was apparent that building relationships amongst stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of the developmental purpose built a flexible mindset that allowed the stakeholders and organization to learn to be adaptable.

Building a shared understanding of the developmental purpose was one aspect of the evaluation that was found to be focused on heavily by the evaluator. The evaluator spent time to ensure the stakeholders understood developmental evaluation and this allowed stakeholders to be much more flexible to change as a result. One of the eight principles for DE recently released by Patton and colleagues (2016) includes the principle of developmental purpose. That is, remaining cognizant of the purpose of DE, to "support innovative development" (p. 291), encourages the organization and the involved stakeholders to continue working together to develop, and support

ongoing work to adapt to emerging information (Patton et al., 2016). Patton and colleagues' principle directly aligns with the finding from the present study which found that stakeholders and the evaluator were consistently supporting innovative development by adapting to the evaluation journey as necessary and valuing the end goals of developmental evaluation. This was evidenced by their coordinated responses to situations that emerged from the evaluation.

Stakeholders who were able to adapt and learn from the evaluation were more likely to be actively using information from the evaluation. Reflecting on the experience of the evaluation led stakeholders to make changes and implement suggestions from the findings of the DE. The organization was able to demonstrate the extent to which they understood the worth of the evaluative efforts, and this translated into an ability to be open to and understand the need to change. Change could include the reallocation of resources, alteration of approach, or inclusion of different perspectives. Being able to adapt to changes resulted in stronger evaluation products, and ultimately created results that the organization and stakeholders were more likely to use. Stakeholders and the organization were willing to continue to interact and support ambiguity in the evaluation, and were prepared to make changes and differ their approach based on what emerged from the ambiguity. The evaluation spanned well over a year, and included a lot of stakeholder interaction and organizational support for DE, which demonstrated the organization's commitment to staying the course. Stakeholders and the organization were all willing to be flexible in their approach to the evaluation, evaluation tactics and evaluation timing to support the overall evaluation success. These findings are supported again by one of the concepts discussed by Patton and colleagues (2016) that hinge on the conditions for successful DE: the commitment to adaptive learning and action. If the organization is engaged and is able to commit to the evaluation process and the importance of ongoing learning and adaptation, then

they are demonstrating to stakeholders the importance of being flexible to develop a coordinated response to emerging findings (Patton, 2016). It was clear through the present study that the organization and stakeholders were highly engaged and committed to the evaluation and to continually learning and adapting based on the client needs.

It seemed that the organizational readiness was directly relevant to the shared understanding that was developed; and this finding aligns well with Patton and colleagues' (2016) observations of principles and conditions for DE to succeed. Similarly, study findings align with what Vanlandingham (2011) found, that organizations that are more receptive to evaluation are more likely to use the results. This was very true for the current study; coordination of organizational responses was a key condition to evaluation utilization by stakeholders. This assertion was supported by the organization being able to adapt to the evaluation journey and value the end goal for evaluation. The assertion was interwoven with the other two assertions as presented in Figure 11. Coordinated responses to position the organization for evaluative efforts were strengthened through relationships among the EWG. The group, having developed and established trust was able to coordinate their efforts. Similarly, the organization had to be prepared and ready to interact and engage with the evaluator, who was using her skillsets to develop a collective climate for the evaluation amongst the stakeholders and organization.

Competent evaluator key for facilitating collective climate. In many descriptions of DE, both the organizational context and the context of the evaluator and the particular evaluation are presented as being important factors to consider (Patton et al., 2016). Analysis seemed to support the significance of both contexts to influence the degree to which the evaluation was utilized by stakeholders. What emerged through the findings supported an overarching theme

about the collective climate, which included evaluator and evaluation characteristics that provided an environment that influenced stakeholders' use of findings. In particular, themes about the evaluator fitting within the context, embodying the approach and realizing learnings impacted subsequent evaluation utilization by stakeholders. As such, the interpretation of these findings led to the third and final case assertion for the present study, that facilitation by a competent evaluator was a key condition to evaluation utilization. The findings revealed the importance of a competent evaluator assessing their fit within the context and facilitating learnings to encourage stakeholders to embody the DE.

The approach of the evaluator and the ability to foster a collective climate for evaluation was influential to the utilization of the evaluation by stakeholders. In the current research, the evaluator was external to the organization and was able to fit to the context, embody the approach and realize evaluation learnings, which impacted stakeholders' ability to feel safe, be open, trust the process and learn from the evaluation. The evaluator's expertise, alignment with the organization and evaluation methodology, engagement and openness to alignment created a well-positioned and integrated evaluation for the stakeholders to participate. Similarly, the evaluator demonstrating evaluation concepts and creating an inclusive environment for participation encouraged stakeholders' process learning. Being able to create foundational learning about evaluation, promote evaluation use and provide accessible information allowed stakeholders the opportunity to use what they had learned in their own practice. The approach of the evaluator was essential to evaluation utilization because of her ability to assess fit of context to necessary skills. In particular, the external nature of the lead evaluator and the evaluation team ensured that the competencies for a successful evaluation were in place. The externality of the evaluator provided a foundation for competency and allowed facilitation of a collective climate.

These factors seemed to heavily influence and increase stakeholders' use of evaluation findings and learnings.

It seemed that the evaluator was able to align to the context, embody the approach, and realize evaluation learnings in the current study, which resulted in an integrated and inclusive evaluation climate that was created. The climate ultimately encouraged stakeholders to participate and utilize the emerging findings. The third case assertion was about facilitation by a competent evaluator. Specifically, this refers to the evaluator aligning with the context and being able to demonstrate, lead, and implement the evaluation learnings for the group. Through the analysis, it was reiterated that the fit of the evaluator was revealed as one of the most critical features of the evaluation process. In fact, when the evaluator aligned with the context, she was better able to understand, to embody the DE approach and realize the evaluation learnings. This was especially important because the evaluator was external to the organization and had to be more competent in her ability to align with organizational values and operation. The participants often commented on the ability of the evaluator to help them understand the evaluation, lead the evaluative efforts, recommend changes in course and provide information on how to best utilize the results. They credited this ability to the evaluator's knowledge base as well as their understanding of the organization and the fit of their personality.

Evaluator competency is vital to organizational and stakeholder learning and growth. Specifically, the findings based on the responsiveness of the evaluator align directly with the situational practice competencies for evaluators as defined by the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) (adapted from Stevahn et al., 2005). The situational practice competencies as defined by CES refer to competencies such as: respecting the uniqueness of the site; examining the organizational, political, community and social contexts; serving the information needs of

intended users, attending to issues of organizational use; and sharing evaluation expertise (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2016). The lead evaluator was able to demonstrate the competencies in practice, which was discussed in the findings and context of the current evaluation by stakeholders. Specifically, she took time to understand the current context, take into account the needs and visions of the stakeholders and the organization, pay attention to overall evaluation use and utilize her evaluation expertise to support the growth of the organization. By demonstrating the competencies and modeling the approach, she herself was able to be responsive to the needs of the organization and stakeholder group to support learning, development and the creation of a robust evaluation product.

The demonstration of competencies and support of learning by the evaluator provides linkages to the developmental evaluation principles as outlined by Patton and colleagues (2016), specifically in relation to evaluation rigor. The evaluator, leading by example and modeling the DE approach created a rigorous evaluation process that promoted stakeholder learning while aligning with best practices related to DE. In particular, the evaluator was able to create an evaluation environment that was thorough, accurately demonstrated DE concepts and supported stakeholders in their work. In addition, the learning climate facilitated by the evaluator in this case aligns with Torres and Preskill's (2001) findings that organizational learning is a continuous process that involves the integration into organizational infrastructure and alignment of values amongst participants. The embedding of the evaluation and value the organization placed on evaluation were translated into organizational learnings that were facilitated by a competent evaluator.

As a result of the evaluator being able to demonstrate DE concepts to the stakeholders, they were able to take the cues and adopt the principles of DE including: openness, flexibility,

willingness to adapt, relationship building, taking time and implementation and utilization of findings. The evaluator became a critical cog in the evaluation wheel by being able to guide the group and demonstrate the developmental approach through their expertise. It was clear through the present study that the lead evaluator was highly engaged and committed to the evaluation and to continually learning and adapting based on the client needs. One of the particular skill sets of the evaluator was to understand and align to the context which increased her ability to be responsive. Having the required competencies to guide the evaluative efforts and engage with stakeholders was important to help facilitate the learning and growth for the organization and stakeholders. The findings seemed to indicate that facilitation by competent evaluator promoted evaluation utilization by stakeholders through fitting the context, realizing learnings and embodying the approach. In particular, the fit of the evaluator, promotion of use by the evaluator and subsequent creation of evaluation rigor enhanced evaluation utilization by stakeholders in this context. This particular case assertion supports the integration of the three case assertions as defined in Figure 11 by linking the progressive development key for effective relationships and coordinated responses as key for organizational readiness. In particular, the evaluator, using her expertise was able to facilitate a collective climate for evaluation that was leveraged by developing the relationships among stakeholders and between stakeholders and her. Similarly, the organization seemed to have to be ready to participate in evaluative efforts in order for the evaluator to be able to facilitate the collective evaluation climate.

Discussion summary. Three interdependent case assertions were presented and discussed the sub-research questions: relationship influences, organizational readiness and collective climate in order to address the overall research question, *what organizational conditions promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders during a developmental evaluation*

process? The first organizational condition, progressive development of effective relationships was found to promote evaluation utilization by creating the conditions for stakeholder involvement and collaboration highlighted in the literature (Johnson et al., 2009; Preskill et al., 2003). Specific to DE, to promote evaluation utilization in the co-creation of understandings and findings as described by Patton and colleagues (2016). Second, a coordinated organizational response to emerging understandings from the DE positioned both the organization and stakeholders for use because the developmental purpose encourages stakeholders to work together and adapt to emerging findings (Patton et al., 2016) and highlights the importance of commitment to adaptive learning (Patton et al., 2016). As such, organizations that are receptive and committed to evaluation are more likely to use the results (Vanlandingham, 2011). Finally, facilitation by a competent evaluator enhanced evaluation utilization by stakeholders because of the evaluator's ability to understand the unique context surrounding the evaluation, attending to evaluation use by ensuring the needs of stakeholders are met and providing evaluation expertise in a flexible manner (CES, 2016). The three case assertions overlapped in their influence on evaluation utilization. Together, the case assertions expand upon evaluation literature focused on principles for successful developmental evaluations (Patton et al., 2016); supporting evaluation use and learning (Preskill et al., 2003); evaluator competencies (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2016); and, principles of DE evaluations (Patton et al., 2016). In the next chapter the implications of the case assertions are presented with respect to theory and practice.

Implications

This study offers an illustrative example of a complex organization undertaking developmental evaluation within a boundary-defined process to promote evaluation utilization and in so doing provides important implications for DE related to three areas: operationalizing a

core DE condition, guiding developmental evaluator practices in small-scale organizations and informing concurrent study of developmental evaluation with a case study design. The implications are presented below and discussed in terms of their relevance to theory, practice and method. Figure 12 details the relationship between the area of relevance in the field of evaluation for the implications (theory, practice and method), the consequences of the implications (operationalizing a DE condition, guiding DE practices in small-scale organizations, informing study of DE), and the implications themselves (increased understanding of adaptive learning and action, adaptive resource allocation, enriching individual and organizational learning, and informing concurrent study of DE with a case study). The implications of the current study are described, below.

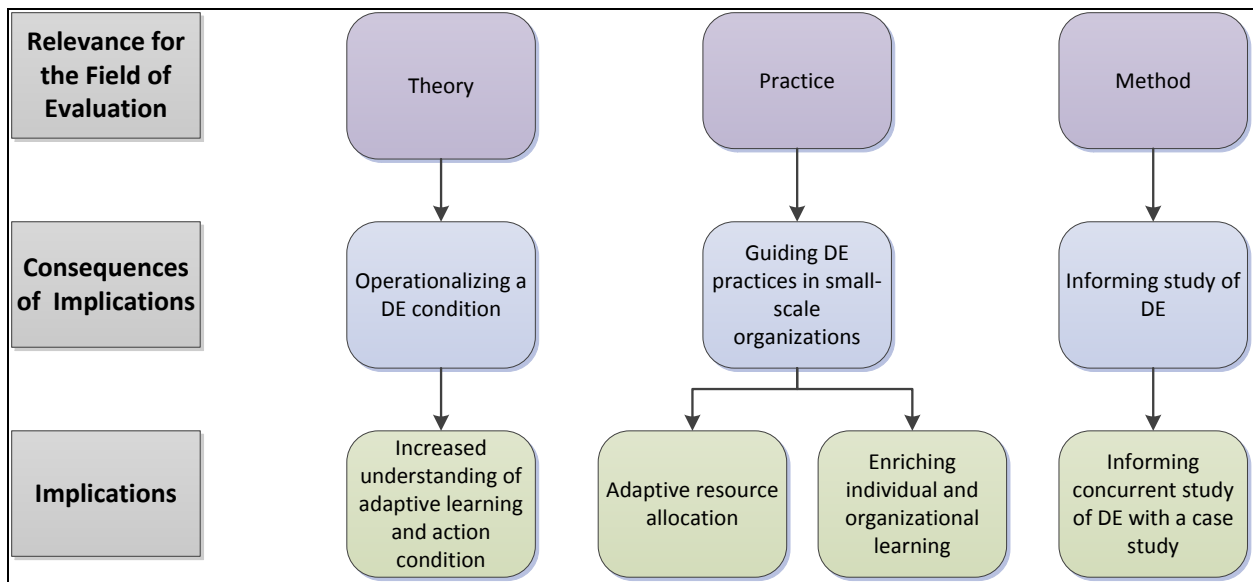


Figure 12. Relationship amongst Implications for the Current Study.

Operationalizing a developmental evaluation condition in the context. Findings from the study could effectively be linked to the operationalization of one condition for DE, commitment to adaptive learning and action, as outlined in the literature by Patton and colleagues (2016). The changing contexts in which DE operates coupled with the current lack of prescriptive methods poses a challenge for evaluators to implement the DE approach. Most

evaluators have learned the skills to implement DE by doing evaluations and gaining experience. Patton and colleagues, however, now guide DE approaches through their principles and conditions. The guidance provided by Patton specifies the conditions for DE to succeed but does not provide descriptive information on implementation. Findings in the current study helped to operationalize the condition of commitment to adaptive learning and action to help evaluators apply the information to their practices.

This study took place within the Canadian evaluation context, and as such, the five domains of evaluation practice as outlined by the CES competencies provide an additional appropriate means of describing DE practice. The operationalized condition links implications for practice to the CES practice competencies. The link provides external evaluators with direct practice implications based on Patton and colleagues' (2016) conditions, which are enriched by the study findings. The organizational conditions identified in the current study about the progressive development of effective relationships, coordination of organizational responses and facilitation by a competent evaluator to help to promote evaluation utilization among stakeholders inform the operationalization of the DE condition. In particular, two areas of practice implications emerged from the present study that are important for guiding evaluation practice: adaptive resource allocation and enriching individual and organizational learning. Figure 13 provides a visual description of the link between the DE condition, CES practice competencies and practical study implications that are discussed below.

Implications to Operationalize Conditions	DE Condition	Link to CES Practice Competencies
Adaptive resource allocation	<i>Condition 6: Commitment to adaptive learning and action</i>	<i>Management Practice Competency 3 and 4: Identifies (3) and monitors (4) required resources (human, financial and physical)</i>
Enriching individual and organizational learning		<i>Reflective Practice Competency 6: Aware of self as an evaluator (knowledge, skills, dispositions) and reflects on personal evaluation practice (competencies and areas for growth)</i>

Figure 13. Relationship amid Implications, DE Condition and CES Competencies

Guiding developmental evaluator practices in small-scale organizations. This study provides an empirical example of a DE process within a small-scale organizational context. In so doing, it points to two areas for practice consideration for external evaluators: adaptive resource allocation and enriching individual and organizational learning. One of the key linkages of this study is in relation to Patton's conditions for DE (Patton et al., 2016) and the CES evaluator competencies (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2016). In particular, the findings suggested the need to operationalize the commitment to adaptive learning and action condition provided by Patton and colleagues and to link it to the CES evaluator practice competencies. The conditions outlined by Patton and colleagues have not yet been considered from a research perspective in small-scale organizations. Thus, limited information exists on how the conditions can be operationalized and how they can be incorporated into evaluation practice. The study findings provided information on how this particular condition could be operationalized within a DE framework.

The current study provided information on two areas of practice implications to help guide evaluators in their implementation of the DE condition outlined by Patton and colleagues (2016). The practice implications focus on allocating resources appropriately and embedding

learning. They are described below and are connected to the study findings (operationalized condition), conditions for DE and evaluator practice competencies. Linking the implications to evaluator competencies will provide information on the implementation of conditions for practice rooted in evidence. The evaluator competencies are posited as important knowledge and skill areas for evaluators practicing in the Canadian context. These competencies, however, do not take into account evaluation frameworks that may require additional knowledge and skills, specifically in relation to DE. It then became important for the researcher to start to define what the conditions look like in a DE framework, and how a DE evaluator can demonstrate and operationalize competency in that particular area. The following two practice implications present the operationalized condition linked with the DE literature and the current CES competencies. Each practice implication discusses tactics that will demonstrate the competency in a DE approach. The two implications represent key points to developmental evaluation practices.

Adaptive resource allocation. The study points to the importance of stakeholders and the organization to be adaptive in their administration of resources in the DE process to facilitate use. It is important to invest time for the process, and allocate or re-allocate other resources as needs emerge through DE in order to facilitate use. Two of the CES management competencies focus on the identification and monitoring of resources (CES, 2016), which can be directly linked to the study findings that have identified the importance of commitment to adaptive learning and action. It is simply not enough for the organization and evaluator to have competency in identifying and managing resources in a DE evaluation; they have to be able to identify and monitor resources, but also to reallocate resources as necessary. Resources that are critically important to attend to in DE are those of time (selecting the right evaluator, interacting

with stakeholders, for the DE process), providing space for interacting, having funding for the evaluation process and expertise, and accessing the right people. Being sensitive to the progression of the evaluation and of the relationships that are developing allows the organization and the stakeholders to schedule meetings and interactions as appropriate, increase or decrease the frequency of the touch points and to guide the interactions as necessary. Flexibility of approach and resources allows the organization and stakeholders to invest energy and means into supporting the needs of the DE. This could include time for stakeholders to interact, alternate data collection approaches, revised evaluation timelines or changes to team composition. It also would be important for the organization to know the level of fit they require with their evaluator, and to spend the time and energy vetting evaluators that align with their organizational context and values. During contract negotiations, it may be necessary for the organization and the evaluator to both be transparent about the values, principles, ideals and fit that is required and what each side is prepared to offer. It could also be important to take the time to properly select the evaluator that fits within the context of the organization in terms of concept, approach, and expertise. The organization may wish to allocate appropriate resources, including time, money, expertise and people power to leverage success of the evaluation. The organization should be prepared to be flexible in their budgetary expectations for a DE to increase evaluation success and the ability to adapt to circumstances. Understanding that DE requires ambiguity and adaptation would allow the organization to better be able to allocate resources to where they are needed through a flexible system, rather than predefined expectations.

Enriching individual and organizational learning. The study points to the importance of promoting individual and collective learning and facilitating organizational knowledge during a DE. In particular, the previous implication centered on being adaptive allowed for the enriching

of individual and organizational learning in the present study. It seems that enrichment of learning can be informed by the organization's ability to be adaptive with their resources. The DE structure allows the evaluator to contribute more fully as part of the evaluation team to encourage individual and collective learning about DE, the process, and best practices. In addition, the evaluator is in a unique position to facilitate larger organizational knowledge about the same topics. The evaluator is able to create group cohesion through the facilitation of individual and organizational learning, so the group functions as one. To enrich individual and organizational understanding, it may be important to consider the evaluator as a leader in sharing information and results openly to stakeholders. This includes the open sharing of expertise, answering questions, commitment to provide ongoing feedback and helping stakeholders to develop their own knowledge. Through this process, the evaluator should remain cognizant of stakeholder participation and encourage stakeholders to contribute during sharing and learning opportunities. Creating cohesion amongst the group may help to promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders. The findings link one of Patton and colleagues' (2016) conditions with the reflective practice competencies of the CES. In particular, the findings connect the condition of commitment to adaptive learning and action with the practice competencies of awareness of self as an evaluator and the reflection on personal evaluation practice. In order to implement the condition into evaluation practice, the evaluator should be aware of the CES competencies and use the operationalized condition to inform their practice. For example, the reflective competency of being aware of oneself as an evaluator does not capture the need for the evaluator to commit to constant reflection of their own skill and practice, and to adjust their practice based on the current climate. This impacts the ways in which they will commit to adaptive learning and action, and provide the learning opportunities for the individual stakeholders and larger

organization. The responsibility to educate the stakeholders and larger organization may primarily fall on the evaluator. By recognizing their own practice and reflecting on their own experience, they are better able to adapt and provide the learning opportunities required to promote individual learning and facilitate organizational knowledge. Attention to the facilitation of learning will help to build group cohesion so the group can individually understand and then embody the approach together. The following section will summarize the implications for studying evaluation.

Informing concurrent study of developmental evaluation with a case study. A case study design provided a suitable methodology for conducting research concurrently with this developmental evaluation. In particular, the case study occurred alongside the specific boundary-defined DE that was occurring and was able to capture progression in a comprehensive way. The case study methodology is in contrast to much of the literature surrounding DE and evaluation in general that has looked retrospectively to draw conclusions (e.g., Preskill et al., 2003). These boundaries then fit within what case studies are meant to study- a bounded system, yet allowed the data sources for the research to be responsive to what happened in the DE to provide a rich description of the process. The case study design was able to capture stakeholders and evaluator perspectives as well as the dynamic context in which the interactions were taking place. In addition, the multiple lines and levels of evidence collected point to the importance of attending to stakeholders and their contributions. The case study allowed the rich, contextual information the researcher was gathering as part of the concurrent process to be incorporated into the research findings. In contrast, few studies centered on evaluation utilization have employed the use of case study to gather information (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986). The information garnered from the current study aligns with and demonstrates the importance of the situational

CES competencies (2016) that focus on attending to the contexts surrounding evaluation. The learnings from the current study have methodological implications for studying evaluation utilization alongside an evaluation process, and in rich, contextual detail via a case study. Namely, using a research method to study evaluation that is aligned with DE objectives in order to grasp a current context, improve the robustness of the research approach, and to develop a better connection with participants.

Conclusions

The current study points to three organizational conditions for promoting organizational thinking and use of evaluation findings during a DE; specifically related to relationships, readiness and the collective climate. In the present study, the conditions suggest progressive development as key for effective relationships, coordinated responses as key for organizational readiness and a competent evaluator as key for facilitating a collective climate. Findings from the study led to three implications related to theory, practice and method. In particular, the findings suggested the operationalization of one of Patton and colleagues' (2016) DE conditions. The condition of commitment to adaptive learning and action was operationalized by linking the condition to two CES competencies for evaluators and two practical considerations for evaluators that emerged out of the study findings. As a result, the implications helped to redefine core conditions that are important to consider when applying a DE framework, to promote evaluation utilization. The following section outlines limitations and future research directions, and provides concluding thoughts.

Limitations and future research directions. Three limitations are necessary to consider from the current study that are theoretical, methodological, and practical in nature. These limitations point to future directions for research. First, from a theoretical perspective, a more

precise definition of what is meant by utilization in the study would be beneficial. The researcher did not make a distinction between the types of use or evaluation utilization in the current study. Other research has defined particular types of use and makes a distinction between evaluation “use” and “utilization” (e.g., Forss, Rebein, & Carlsson, 2002). To begin to address this theoretical limitation, the types of stakeholders’ use could be categorized in other research to further explore the influence of a DE framework on the types of evaluation use. In particular, it would be interesting to examine the similarities and differences amongst the types of use by stakeholders. Second, the methodological limitations were in regards to participant selection and recruitment. The current study was limited to all six members of the EWG that were purposively selected to provide feedback to the researcher on their involvement in the DE. The sample was small and was confined to the examination of a single case of a DE. To address this methodological limitation, similar studies conducted in a range of evaluation contexts with diverse samples could be important to increase the transferability of findings across different contexts. Similarly, quantitative studies with a larger number of participants could help to test the case assertions presented in this study. Finally, the practical limitation of the current study was in reference to the format of the case study duration and data sources. The current case study was focused on gaining an in-depth understanding of this particular case. Thus, the results of the research may not be relatable to other cases. To address this limitation, follow-up studies longer in duration, or presented in a time series to see if planned changes following the evaluation have been implemented or realized, or if stakeholders are still utilizing learnings (and in what ways) would be beneficial. In addition, the case study generated a variety of additional avenues for data collection that could be capitalized on in future research. In particular, stakeholders used email communications to one another in addition to face to face interaction. The face to face

interactions were captured through researcher field notes and the progression of development was traced through the face to face meetings. To address this limitation, emails in future studies could be captured and their content analyzed to understand their importance to relationship development and evaluation utilization.

Concluding thoughts. The current study revealed three conditions enhancing evaluation utilization by stakeholders during an ongoing DE process. In the present context, the conditions suggest that progressive development is key for effective relationships, coordinated responses are key for organizational readiness, and a competent evaluator is key for facilitating a collective climate. The three conditions in the present context seemed to promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders. These findings were used to operationalize a condition for DE from the literature and provide linkages to evaluator competencies. In so doing we have a better understanding of developmental evaluation theory and practice, specifically in relation to various principles and conditions for the success of developmental evaluation. In addition, the study provides a first look at examining conditions in a smaller-scale, still complex and innovative environment. The boundary-defined DE of focus provides a unique lens to apply the conditions and lends itself to application by other evaluators. The study findings will contribute to evaluation practice related to the promotion of evaluation utilization in DE frameworks. In particular, the study will impact the evaluation practice of the researcher and provide information on how to mobilize stakeholders to better utilize evaluations.

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Appendix A: Organization Letter of Information and Consent Documents

U N I V E R S I T Y O F A L B E R T A

ORGANIZATIONAL LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of Study: How does a developmental evaluation process promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders?

We invite you to participate in a research project. The principal investigator for this study is:

- Krista Brower, Graduate Student, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta
- Dr. Cheryl Poth, Supervisor and Associate Professor, Assessment, Measurement, and Evaluation, Centre for Research in Applied Measurement and Evaluation, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta

Purpose/Background

The goal of this project is to examine how a developmental evaluation encourages evaluation utilization for stakeholders. The organization is currently undergoing a developmental evaluation and will serve as the organization to comprise the case study. This information is being collected as part of a Master's thesis.

Procedures

We invite you, as the organization to provide consent to serve as the organization of study in a qualitative case study examining developmental evaluation. Participation in the research will include one primary source of data (interviews with stakeholders) and provision of access to three secondary sources of data (review or organizational documents, observation and creation of field notes during meetings, and embedded reflection by stakeholders).

Benefits and Risks

There are minimal perceived risks or benefits to your participation as an organization. Risks could include the identification of your organization as a result of participation. To minimize potential identification, social and legal risk, the research team will ensure your data undergoes a de-identifying procedure and will not be published with your organizational name or identifying information unless there is explicit, written consent provided. The results of this study will help us determine whether a developmental evaluation process promotes evaluation utilization by stakeholders. This project is important for enhancing knowledge about developmental evaluation and the use of evaluation results. If any concerns are identified during the course of the research, then the appropriate referral for services will be made.

Freedom to Withdraw

You do not have to participate. You can withdraw from the study at any time as an organization.

Confidentiality

The information you provide as an organization will be kept in a secure area and names or any other identifying information will not be attached to the information we receive. The use of your organizational name will only be used with your consent and otherwise will be anonymized and will never be used in any presentations or publications about the study results. The information collected will be kept for a minimum of five years in a secure location by the principal investigator and password protected.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant, or how this study is being conducted, you may contact the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615. This office has no affiliation with the study investigators.

- If you would like to participate please sign the attached consent forms and return them to Krista Brower.
- If you have any questions about this project please contact **Krista Brower at kbrower@ualberta.ca** or **Dr. Cheryl Poth at [780 492 1144](tel:7804921144)** or cpoth@ualberta.ca.

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

ORGANIZATIONAL CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: How does a developmental evaluation process promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders?

Researcher: Krista Brower, Graduate Student, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta

Please Answer the Following Questions, responding as a designate on behalf of the organization.

	Yes	No
Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study?	_____	_____
Have you read and received a copy of an attached information sheet?	_____	_____
Do you understand the benefits and risks in taking part in this research study?	_____	_____
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	_____	_____
Do you understand that you are free to leave the study at any time?	_____	_____
Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you?	_____	_____
Do you understand who will have access to the information you provide?	_____	_____
Who explained this study to you? _____		

I agree to take part in this study: Yes ☐ No ☐

Signature of Organization Designate _____ Date _____

Printed name of Organization Designate _____

Signature of Investigator or Designee _____ Date _____

Appendix B: Individual Participant Letter of Information and Consent Documents

U N I V E R S I T Y O F A L B E R T A

PARTICIPANT LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of Study: How does a developmental evaluation process promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders?

We invite you to participate in a research project. The principal investigator for this study is:

- Krista Brower, Graduate Student, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta
- Dr. Cheryl Poth, Supervisor and Associate Professor, Assessment, Measurement, and Evaluation, Centre for Research in Applied Measurement and Evaluation, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta

Purpose/Background

The goal of this project is to examine how a developmental evaluation process promotes evaluation utilization for stakeholders. The organization is currently undergoing a developmental evaluation and will serve as the organization to comprise the case study. This information is being collected as part of a Master's thesis.

Procedures

We invite you to participate in a study examining a developmental evaluation process and evaluation utilization by stakeholders. Participation in the research will include one primary source of data beyond your regular duties in relation to the evaluation. Interviews will be conducted with you, as a stakeholder, during the course of the developmental evaluation. The interviews will be done in a place where a confidential conversation can take place and will last no longer than 60 minutes. If you give permission we will audio record these interviews and will remove any identifiers during the transcription stage. During these interviews you will have the chance to talk about your experiences with developmental evaluation and evaluation utilization. In addition, we ask your permission to access the following secondary sources of information that will be gathered during the course of the ongoing developmental evaluation: embedded reflections, field notes and document review. The embedded reflections will involve collecting your feedback on how the developmental evaluation is progressing, following your regularly scheduled Evaluation Working Group Meetings. Field notes will be taken during the regularly scheduled Evaluation Working Group Meetings and documents pertinent to the evaluation will be provided by to the researchers.

Benefits and Risks

There are minimal perceived risks or benefits to your participation. Risks could include the identification of you or your data as you are a member of the Evaluation Working Group for the

evaluation. To minimize potential identification, social and legal risk, the research team will ensure your data undergoes a de-identifying procedure and is only reported on aggregately. In addition, you are free to withdrawal, end or modify your participation at any time. The results of this study will help us determine whether a developmental evaluation framework encourages evaluation utilization by stakeholders. This project is important for enhancing knowledge about developmental evaluation and the use of evaluation results. If any concerns are identified during the course of the research, then the appropriate referral for services will be made.

Freedom to Withdraw

You do not have to participate. You can withdraw, end or modify your participation at any time and you can request that the tape recorder be shut off at any time during the interviews. You may withdraw your information from the study up to three weeks following your interview. There will not be any negative effects for you and if you decide to withdraw you may continue your regular participation in the evaluation. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question.

Confidentiality

The information you provide will be kept in a secure area at the University of Alberta and names or any other identifying information will not be attached to the information we receive. Your name will never be used in any presentations or publications about the study results. The information collected will be kept for a minimum of five years in a secure location by the principal investigator and password protected. The principal investigator and their supervisor will be the only individuals who have access to the data you provide.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant, or how this study is being conducted, you may contact the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615. This office has no affiliation with the study investigators.

- If you would like to participate please sign the attached consent forms and return them to Krista Brower.
- If you have any questions about this project please contact **Krista Brower** at kbrower@ualberta.ca or **Dr. Cheryl Poth** at [780 492 1144](tel:7804921144) or cpoth@ualberta.ca.

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: How does a developmental evaluation process promote evaluation utilization by stakeholders?

Researcher: Krista Brower, Graduate Student, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta

Please Answer the Following Questions

	Yes	No
Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study?	_____	_____
Have you read and received a copy of an attached information sheet?	_____	_____
Do you understand the benefits and risks in taking part in this research study?	_____	_____
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	_____	_____
Do you understand that you are free to leave the study at any time?	_____	_____
Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you?	_____	_____
Do you understand who will have access to the information you provide? Who explained this study to you? _____	_____	_____

I agree to take part in this study: Yes ☐ No ☐

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____

Printed name of Participant _____

Signature of Investigator or Designee _____ Date _____

If you would like to receive a summary of the research findings, please provide your email address.

Appendix C: Semi-Structured Individual Interview Protocol

Logistics

- Locate the interview in a place where the conversation can be private and of our commitment to take all measures possible to ensure confidentiality;
- Adhere to the maximum of hour in length;
- Remind participants of their right to refuse to answer any questions;
- Remind participants that the interview will be digitally recorded with their permission; and,
- Thank respondents for their participation and commit to send them a summary of findings.

Opening

Our research is aimed to inform our understanding of a developmental evaluation framework and its influence on evaluation utilization by stakeholders.

Before we get underway, I just want to review with you the ground rules for our conversation:

- Please speak clearly and to the best of your ability to answer each question.
- If you would prefer not to answer a question, please say so.
- Just a quick reminder about confidentiality. As you know from the information letters that your name will not be recorded in the write up. As well, in order to maintain the privacy of participants, please speak in general terms about colleagues including avoiding to refer to any fellow colleagues by name, instead just refer to them as “my colleague”.

Example Questions:

1. Tell me about your experiences in being involved in a developmental evaluation.
2. From your perspective, what have been your greatest challenges and successes with the developmental evaluation?
 - a. Probe: from a program perspective and from a working with an evaluation working group perspective
3. If you knew then what you know now, what would you do differently during the course of the evaluation?
4. What have you learned through the developmental evaluation?
5. How have you used information you have learned from the developmental evaluation?
6. From your perspective, how has the developmental evaluation influenced your use of evaluation findings?
7. How do you plan to use the results of the evaluation in the future?

Appendix D: Embedded Reflection Protocol

1. How has participation in the developmental evaluation process informed your other work?
2. What have you learned so far about developmental evaluation?
3. What types of activities have you been a part of that you have used this evaluation as an example?
4. Have you talked about the Evaluation with colleagues? If yes, in what ways?
5. In what ways do you intend to use the findings from this evaluation?
6. In what ways has this developmental evaluation influenced your other work?

Researcher Name:
Meeting of Event Attended:
Date:
Time:

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Reflective Questions:

1. What did I notice about the organizational context during the developmental evaluation process?

2. What does this interaction help me to understand about the developmental evaluation and evaluation utilization? (my role, their role)

3. What might be changing about the developmental evaluation process and evaluation utilization?

4. What evidence of use has come up?

Appendix F: Master Code List for Data AnalysisTable 1. *Themes and subthemes- Relationships*

Themes	Theme Definitions	Subthemes	Subtheme Definitions	Example
Relationships	Enhancing the communication and collaboration between evaluator and program staff, stakeholders, and within the evaluation team	Collaboration	How and in what ways stakeholders work together	<i>“I learned that funders and organizations and government can all work together and that as the boundaries get pushed, people can be really be comfortable with that.”</i>
		Developing relationships	Relationship building and development between evaluator, program staff, stakeholders and within the evaluation team	<i>“That short of building relationship piece is important whenever any evaluation gets done”</i>
		Communication	How and in what ways stakeholders talk to one another	<i>“I think there were a lot of different conversations that somehow made a huge contribution to the final product.”</i>
		Co-ownership	The importance of co-creating and feeling ownership over evaluation efforts	<i>“To own it in such a way that they also feel compelled to be active members and to contribute their time.”</i>
		Trust	Developing trust and rapport between the evaluator and program staff, stakeholders and within the evaluation team to influence confidence in evaluation results	<i>“The thing that made that work was that we really developed some relationships with trust.”</i> <i>“What it’s really underscored for me is that for DE really to work, there needs to be a relationship of trust between [the evaluator] and the team and ... that has to be consciously and intentionally nurtured.”</i>
		Closeness	The importance of facilitating and supporting close relationships	<i>“It’s also a good thing to the success of the project to have a really cohesive and strong team, and that’s really what [the evaluators] brought to the table”</i>

Table 2. *Themes and subthemes- Change*

Themes	Theme Definitions	Subthemes	Subtheme Definitions	Example
Change	Creating and supporting the infrastructure and procedures to shift practice and be responsive to evaluation needs	Catalysts for change	The ways in which elements of programming, evaluation or structure catalyze change within the organization or evaluation	<i>“The framing of the issues now are clearer for us, so our ability to make change or to strengthen or to innovate is more available now to us.”</i>
		Shifts in practice	Establishing a structured response to shift practice based on evaluation findings	<i>“So I think having people well-grounded in the discipline to walk alongside people well-grounded in the practice has shaped the practice.”</i>
		Flexibility/Responsiveness	Acknowledging and supporting the need to be flexible in evaluation efforts and adapting to emergent situations	<i>“And we just went a little over budget because we added activities to collect more data and so we took those opportunities”</i> <i>“I learned that sometimes you can have a plan in terms of identifying what it is you need and what it is you are going to do but you also have to be adaptive to what could happen and that there are always going to be changes along the way that you might not necessarily have control over.”</i>
		Timeliness	Supporting and expediting change in an appropriate and timely way	<i>“We are now trying to formulate the solution and implement those solutions and so I think we probably have to speed up formulating solutions so that we can more quickly get to the implementing of the solutions.”</i>

Table 3. *Themes and subthemes- Understanding*

Themes	Theme Definitions	Subthemes	Subtheme Definitions	Example
Understanding	Supporting the development and creation of understanding amongst stakeholders related to evaluation	Creating Focus/Direction	The importance of identifying areas of interest, providing focus and direction for ongoing work	<i>“[The evaluation plan] really captured exactly our history and current state and looking at what we need to evaluate and drive us to go forward.”</i>
		Clarity	Ensuring information is clear to the evaluation team	<i>“[The evaluators] were really good at keeping it focused and making it clear to everybody the contributions they could make to it”.</i>
		Developing Priorities	Identifying the importance and rank of various aspects of the evaluation and organizational work	<i>“All the work that was identified and all of the recommendations that were identified have now made it into the next three year work plan and have now all received their priority level and are being supported with human, financial or expertise resources.”</i>
		Defining roles	How stakeholders understand their role in the evaluation process	<i>“We should all know who is involved and who is doing what”</i>

Table 4. *Themes and subthemes- Evaluator Characteristics*

Themes	Theme Definitions	Subthemes	Subtheme Definitions	Example
Evaluator Characteristics	What characteristics the evaluator possesses, supports and develops to help guide the organization through evaluative efforts.	Expertise	The influence and support of evaluator expertise to support, facilitate and guide the organization in best practice	<i>“And I think the really great thing that has happened is that I think of developmental evaluators, I think of them as critical friends, because you can challenge our assumptions and you can draw on best practice”</i>
		Attitude	The influence of evaluator attitude and perspective on the organization and evaluation	<i>“And to be positive in terms of having that flexibility to develop the product at the time for what we had and then keeping it along the way or shaping it along the way.”</i>
		Engagement	The influence of engagement, commitment and critical thinking of the evaluator to support evaluation efforts	<i>“The group was good, we got a good group, really key interested people, really good contractors that moved this forward, we were always moving forward”</i>
		Fit	The importance of evaluator and organizational alignment	<i>“I remember sometimes on some conference calls and sitting there and describing exactly what we see and need and... [the evaluators] understood the need or understood what was needed.”</i>
		Openness	The importance of the evaluator getting to know the organization, openness of suggestion and change	<i>“I find the developmental evaluators are more open and willing to change and look at opportunities.”</i>

Table 5. *Themes and subthemes- Evaluation Characteristics*

Themes	Theme Definitions	Subthemes	Subtheme Definitions	Example
Evaluation Characteristics	Evaluation strategies, characteristics and adaptations designed to provide clients with what they need for a successful evaluation.	Integration	The importance of inclusion of evaluation efforts within the organization in the best way possible that aligns with the organization	<i>“What we would do is integrate evaluation as a core function of the work rather than an entity that runs alongside. I think we have to a certain extent but being more mindful of what that would look like”.</i>
		Continuous Use	Supporting the development of information that can be utilized in an ongoing way during and after the evaluation	<i>“It helped us really be able to communicate [organization name] through the evaluation documents with the various models and they have been used to link to ... other policy that will help drive the needs culturally, socially for Alberta.”</i> <i>“I think that some of the work related to evaluation in helping us look at the design of the entire initiative as a continuous improvement mode.”</i>
		Iterative	Establishing the importance of continual and structured examination and improvement during the course of the evaluation	<i>“One of the things I take for myself is how specific learnings can be applied for the future and how we can use the learnings to perhaps get prepared and get better organized for what is to come.”</i>
		Diverse Area Perspectives	The importance and inclusion of diverse viewpoints, stakeholders and levels of involvement based on specific area content knowledge	<i>“Sometimes we only think that the lead person or the person coordinating the evaluation has the inside knowledge but even thought that may be the case, all those other stakeholders have a lot of feedback that is maybe a little more objective than the lead person.”</i>

Table 6. *Themes and subthemes- Organizational Capacity*

Themes	Theme Definitions	Subthemes	Subtheme Definitions	Example
Organizational Capacity	The overall capacity within the organization that supports evaluation and evaluation success.	Evaluation Knowledge	The level of QI, evaluation or research knowledge the organization possesses	<i>“Especially for social programs that don’t have a lot of money, it’s really important for them to almost have a layman’s understanding and a basic understanding [of evaluation] and the ability to gather data and look at it for their programs”</i>
		Context	The importance of understanding organizational context	<i>“[The evaluation plan] really captured exactly our history and current state and looking at what we need to evaluate and drive us to go forward.”</i>
		Diverse Individual Perspectives	The importance and inclusion of individuals in the organization with diverse viewpoints and levels of involvement	<i>“we had some really good key people with good insights as they reviewed and as they looked at things, individuals brought some really different skills to the table”</i>
		Connection	The level of identity, linking and interaction between staff at the organization	<i>“It’s also a good thing to the success of the project to have a really cohesive and strong team, and that’s really what [the evaluators] brought to the table”</i>
		Reflection	The ability of the organization and its staff to learn, reflect, make change and implement suggestions from the findings of an evaluation	<i>“Using the data to “where are we and where do we want to go” and really plot that path and letting the data help us to be more intentional and guide as we go forward. But to be more long term and intentional”</i> <i>“I do think that we should always be asking ourselves “is it time to reflect again?” and be open to the idea of experiencing new things and questioning the knowledge we already have.”</i>