**Utilization-Focused Evaluation (U-FE) Checklist**

*From Michael Quinn Patton’s U-FE Checklist*

This checklist will guide evaluators from the identification of primary intended users through evaluation design. The 5 parts of the checklist are divided into 2 columns. Primary U-FE tasks are identified in the column on the left. Because of the emphasis on facilitation in U-FE, particular facilitation challenges are identified in the column on the right. Underlying premises are made explicit for each step in the U-FE process.

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| **1. Identification of Primary Intended Users** | |
| **Premise:** Primary intended users are people who have a direct, identifiable stake in the evaluation and meet the criteria below to some extent.  **Primary Task:**  ***Find and recruit people who are…*** | **Premise:** The U-FE facilitator needs to both assess the characteristics of primary intended users and reinforce characteristics that will contribute to evaluation use.  **Evaluation Facilitation Challenges:** |
| 🞏 Interested | Determining real interest; building interest as needed; sustaining interest throughout the U-FE process. |
| 🞏 Knowledgeable | Determining knowledge; increasing knowledge as needed. |
| 🞏 Open | Facilitating an evaluation climate of openness. |
| 🞏 Connected to an important  stakeholder constituency | Working with primary intended users to examine stakeholder connections and their implications for use. |
| 🞏 Credible | Building and sustaining credibility. |
| 🞏 Teachable | Teaching evaluation and U-FE. |
| 🞏 Available for interaction throughout  the evaluation process | Outlining and facilitating a process that intended users want to be part of. |
| **2. Situational Analysis** | |
| **Premises:** Evaluation use is people- and context-dependent. Use is likely to be enhanced when the evaluation takes into account and is adapted to crucial situational factors such as those below.  **Primary Tasks:** | **Premise:** The evaluator has responsibility to identify, assess, understand, and act on situational factors that may affect use.  **Evaluation Facilitation Challenges:** |
| 🞏 Examine program's prior experiences with evaluation. | Learning the extent to which past evaluations were useful. |
| 🞏 Look for possible barriers or resistance to use. | Looking at typical barriers—people, resources, culture, turbulence—while also looking out for unusual or unexpected barriers. |
| 🞏 Identify factors that may support and facilitate use. | Looking at typical supports—e.g., accountability demands—while also looking out for unusual or unexpected ones. |
| 🞏 Get clear about resources available for evaluation. | Including in the budget resources beyond analysis and reporting to facilitate use. |
| 🞏 Identify any upcoming decisions, deadlines, or time lines that the evaluation should meet to be useful. | Being realistic about time lines. |
| 🞏 Assess the evaluation knowledge level and experiences of primary intended users. | Building into the evaluation process opportunities to increase the knowledge of primary intended users. |
| 🞏 Understand the political context for the evaluation, and calculate how political factors may affect use. | Including attention to both potential uses and potential misuses. |
| 🞏 Make sure that important constituencies and diverse stakeholder groups for the evaluation are represented among the primary intended users and assess the consequences of any omissions for use. | Staying focused on intended use by intended users while assuring that intended users represent important and legitimate interests of diverse stakeholders—done on an ongoing basis as new information surfaces throughout the evaluation. |
| **3. Identification of Primary Uses** | |
| **Premise:** Intended use by primary intended users is the U-FE goal of the evaluation.    **Primary Tasks:** | **Premise:** The rich menu of evaluation options are reviewed, screened, and prioritized to focus the evaluation.    **Evaluation Facilitation Challenges:** |
| 🞏 Consider how evaluation could contribute to program improvement. | Guiding primary intended users in reviewing formative evaluation options. |
| 🞏 Consider how evaluation could contribute to making major decisions about the program. | Guiding primary intended users in reviewing summative and major decision-oriented evaluation options. |
| 🞏 Consider how evaluation could contribute by generating knowledge. | Guiding primary intended users in considering the possibility of using evaluation to generate lessons learned and evidence-based practices that might apply beyond the program being evaluated. |
| 🞏 Consider process uses of evaluation. | Enhancing communications; building capacity; learning evaluative thinking; nurturing an evaluation culture within the organization; and/or reinforcing the program intervention. |
| **4. Focusing the Evaluation** | |
| **Premise:** The focus derives from primary intended uses of the evaluation by primary intended users.      **Primary Tasks:** | **Premise:** Primary intended users will often need considerable assistance identifying and agreeing on priority evaluation uses and the major focus for the evaluation.    **Evaluation Facilitation Challenges:** |
| 🞏 Make sure that all high priority questions are addressed in the evaluation design—or be clear about why they aren't included. | Actively involving primary intended users in determining priorities; narrowing the options and determining what specific evaluation questions and issues will be addressed by the evaluation based on priority intended uses. |
| 🞏 Make sure that the intended uses of answers to the specific evaluation questions are reasonably clear. | Actively involving primary intended users in determining the specific relevance of intended uses of findings. |
| **5. Evaluation Design** | |
| **Premises:** The evaluation should be designed to lead to useful findings. Methods should be selected and the evaluation designed to support and achieve intended use by primary intended users.    **Primary Tasks:** | **Premise:** Evaluators and users have varying responsibilities in the design decision-making process.        **Evaluation Facilitation Challenges:** |
| 🞏 Select methods appropriate to the questions being asked. | Making sure that methods are selected jointly by primary intended users and the evaluator(s). |
| 🞏 Assure that results obtained by the methods selected will be believable, credible, and valid to primary intended users. | Making sure that primary intended users play an active role in reviewing methods to examine their believability, credibility, and validity. |
| 🞏 Assure that the proposed methods and  measurements are   * Practical * Cost-effective * Ethical | Making sure that methods and measures are reviewed jointly by primary intended users and the evaluator(s). |
| * Assure that the results obtained from these methods will be able to be used as intended. | Facilitating serious review of intended use by primary intended users. |
| * Review the evaluation as designed in relation to professional standards and principles. | Taking professional standards and principles seriously—not just treating them as boilerplate or window dressing. |
| * Consider seriously whether involving primary intended users or other stakeholders in actual data collection enhance process use. | Seeking creative possibilities for enhancing process uses; examining potential trade-offs between utility (process uses specifically) and credibility. |