

**An honest and  
pragmatic reflection  
on program  
evaluation.**

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## About the Report:

In the face of real or perceived resource constraints, disillusionment with feedback initiatives, and inertia with process change in large organizations, how do student service professionals committed to best practice and continuous improvement address the part of service delivery often unacknowledged?

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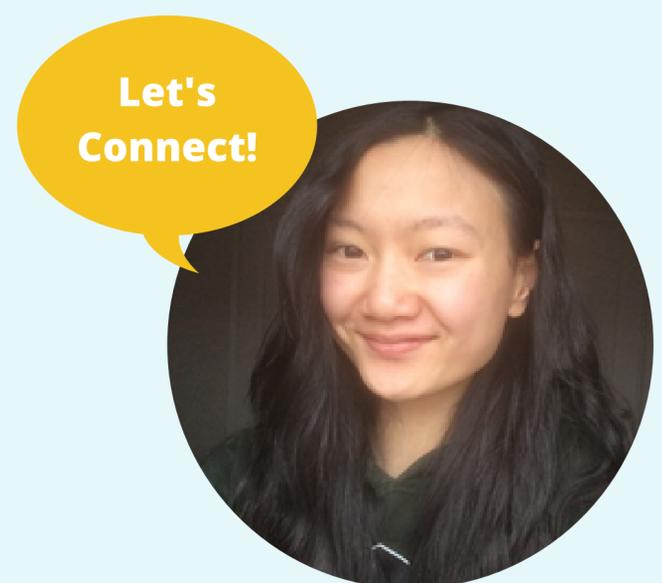
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## About the Author:

Hi there! My name is Stephanie Cheung and I am a student service professional committed to knowledge exchange and human-centered design. I joined the Evaluation Capacity Program to learn more about how I can advocate for system change in my institution.

I hope you find this resource insightful and supportive to your work with students. If you would like to connect, feel free to reach out to me. I'm always happy to talk ideas!



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# An Overview of Program Evaluation & My Practice

“Evaluation is the systematic assessment of the design, implementation or results of an initiative for the purposes of learning or decision-making.”

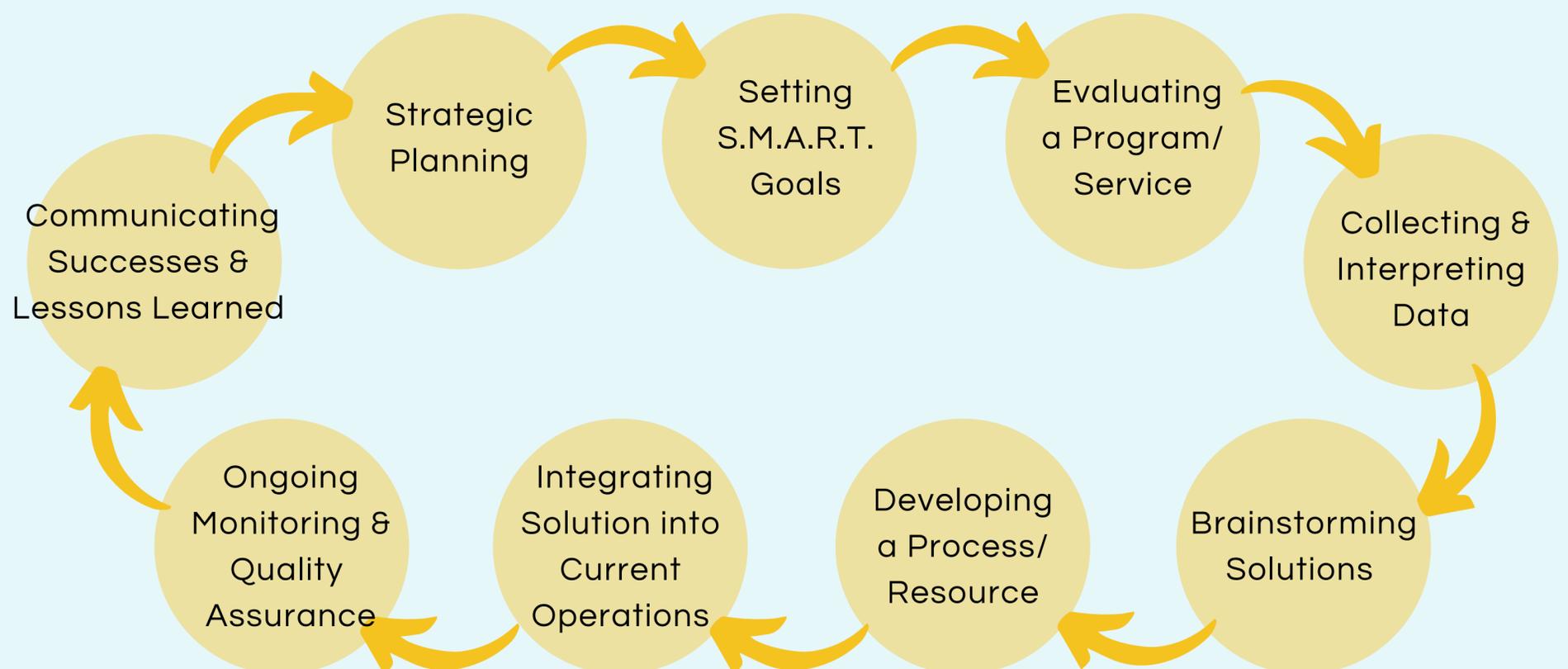
– Canadian Evaluation Society

As a Policy/Program Evaluation/Data Analyst, program evaluation underscores my commitment to responsive and responsible student service. It allows me and my team to:

1. Gain insight into how we can make ongoing improvements to our service delivery model so that we can better serve students; and
2. [Effectively communicate the work we are doing](#) to internal and external stakeholders by way of referencing timely, and accurate information

My day-to-day practice is broad in scope and program evaluation underpins the cycle of continuous improvement.

## My Practice: Continuous Improvement in Service Delivery



Skills Needed: Stakeholder Management, Research & Analysis, Collaboration, Problem-solving, Organization, Communication, Leadership, Change Management

## Questions for Reflection

- What does service delivery look like in your team/department/institution?
- Does program evaluation or continuous improvement have a role in your work?
- What skills do you already have and which would you like to further develop?

## The Continuum of Meaningful Program Evaluation

Throughout the cycle of continuous improvement in service delivery, I continually strive for meaningful program evaluation which I visualize on a continuum:

The team/department/institution:

-  Does not see value in program evaluation and therefore does not engage in the practice
-  Recognizes the value of program evaluation but does not engage in it due to other constraints (e.g. "priorities" directing resources elsewhere)
-  Recognizes the value of program evaluation and engages in the practice, but only superficially (e.g. stakeholders are passively engaged, evaluation results do not affect one's practice)
-  Recognizes the value of program evaluation and engages in the practice meaningfully (e.g. stakeholders are actively engaged, evaluation results lead to action/meaningful change)
-  Recognizes the value of program evaluation, engages in the practice meaningfully, continually develops the evaluative capacity of the team, and shares knowledge and lessons learned with others in the industry

This is where I try to be!



### Questions for Reflection

- Where do you/your department/institution fall along this continuum at present?
- Where would you like to be?
- What do you need to move towards your desired goal?

See "Additional Resources" at the end of this document for links to websites and articles that support building an evaluative culture and assessing your team/department's level of readiness to engage in evaluation meaningfully.

# Program Evaluation: Common Barriers & Potential Solutions

While often making for stimulating and rewarding work, program evaluation is not without its unique set of challenges. Here is a shortlist of barriers I've faced in my work with evaluation to date and some potential solutions/next steps for you to ponder.

<b>Barrier</b>	<b>Solution</b>
Evaluation seems to encompass many different aspects. How do I know where to start?	Here are several prompts to consider when thinking about/prioritizing what to evaluate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What challenges to service delivery exist in my department?</li><li>• What data are we already collecting/have easy access to?</li><li>• What information/answers have we wished we had?</li><li>• What internal priorities/pressures are present?</li><li>• What external priorities/pressures are present?</li><li>• Which program/service reaches the most people?</li><li>• Which program/service utilizes the most resources?</li><li>• What are common misunderstandings about the work we do?</li></ul>
What if I don't have the skills needed to conduct evaluation?	There are lots of ways to brush up on the skills needed to support evaluative work. You may include specific skill development in your performance management plan, speak to your manager about opportunities for growth, and attend professional development workshops hosted by your institution. Most importantly, put your learning to practice and monitor your growth over time.
Can I conduct an evaluation if I don't know how to work with large datasets and numbers?	The goal of evaluation is to capture the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of stakeholders (e.g. students, counsellors, support staff, etc.) in their own words so that their experiences can help make future programming better. Evaluation does not always involve the use of large numerical datasets.  Many evaluation tools are student/staff-friendly, simple, and easy to use (see additional resources). A good evaluation report is written in a way that people with different levels of knowledge can understand.

What if my evaluation doesn't involve randomized control trials (RCTs) or experimental groups?

While evaluation methodologies should be robust, they aren't meant to be as rigorous as research studies which seek to contribute to an established body of evidence. Program evaluation is about continuous improvement- big or small. Any improvement is better than none.

Doesn't spending time on program evaluation take time and resources away from working directly with students? How do I know evaluation will be worthwhile?

Program evaluation helps us to ensure that our interventions are financially responsible, sustainable, and meaningful to students. Without it, we may be making the same mistakes repeatedly and not even know it! Involving students in evaluation and service design also acknowledges their agency and builds self-efficacy.

While additional time and resources may be needed upfront, evaluation provides a holistic approach to finding solutions rather than band-aid approaches to work within a broken system that can lead to burnout for everyone involved.

Furthermore, many post-secondary institutions experience a sharp decrease in service demand over the summer months. This time can be used for project work centering on evaluation and continuous improvement so the necessary infrastructure is in place when the fall semester begins.

How do I obtain the buy-in of my colleagues when conducting evaluative work?

Meaningfully consult stakeholders in all parts of the evaluative process. Some examples are as follows:

- Identifying what the challenges/current gaps are in program offerings/service delivery
- Determining what success look like
- Deciding what data should inform problem-validation
- Interpreting data and developing next steps

Does program evaluation involve individual scrutiny?

Program evaluation is not the same thing as performance management. The former is about doing better as a collective team to improve our services and the latter about individual assessment. When obtaining feedback, surveys and focus groups frequently prioritize anonymity and confidentiality. Evaluation requires an environment where all stakeholders feel safe to share their thoughts on what is going well and what may need to change.

What happens if an evaluation identifies a weakness in a program?

Evaluations help us to reflect on and critically review the value that a program provides. Good evaluation identifies program strengths and weaknesses. It helps us to see ways in which the program can be adapted to better suit the everchanging needs of our students. If weaknesses are identified, consider developing or revisiting the program logic model (see page 09), and consult your team on how the program or service can be improved.

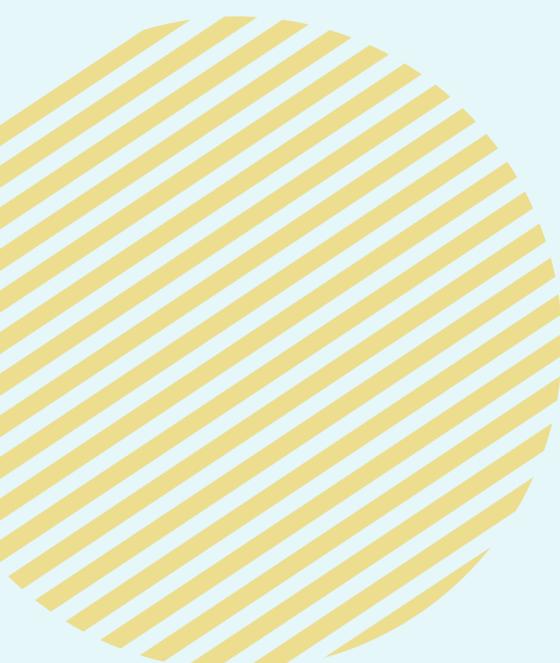
Why does evaluative work seem lonely?

I'm glad you asked! Most organizations focus on investing in operations/direct service to clients and spend relatively less time and effort on system/process change. Consequently, you may be hard-pressed to find another individual in your department or organization that has an interest or is involved in program evaluation.

The nature of evaluative work (balancing conflicting opinions and priorities, scoping and making sense of complex feedback) can also feel both demanding and isolating. Some ways you can stay connected with other evaluative practitioners include:

- Searching the organization's directory for individuals with roles related to evaluation/project management
- Asking your manager if there are other individuals in the organization that do evaluative work
- Connecting with others at in-person/virtual conferences through the conference attendee list

Through it all, don't forget to take care of the most important person in your life – you!



# Counselling Practicum Program Evaluation Outline

The following pages provide a snapshot of the 2020-2021 Practicum Program Evaluation at Student Counselling, Health & Well-being (SCHW).

## About SCHW's Counselling Practicum Program

The [Counselling Practicum at SCHW](#) is an eight-and-a-half-month program that offers graduate students placement with the department to further their clinical expertise, obtain direct client contact hours, and work towards registration with the College of Psychologists of Ontario, the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, and the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario.

The purpose of the program is two-fold: to provide training, teaching, and education to graduate students completing a placement at the department, and to provide mental health services to York University students. The 2020-2021 academic year was the first time in which the practicum program was facilitated remotely.

## Reference Documents

Reference documents are those which support the evaluation team with information gathering:

- Counselling Practicum Handbook, 2020 – 2021 [Internal Document]
- Individual Student Learning Contract/Evaluation Templates [External Documents]
- Internship Program Evaluation 2019 [Internal Document]
- Resources on Clinical Supervision from the University of Calgary [External Documents]
- Journal article on live supervision: Champe, J., & Kleist, D. M. (2003). Live Supervision: A Review of the Research. *The Family Journal*, 11(3), 268–275.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480703252755>

## Methodology

### Stage 1: Updating the Program Logic Model

Revisiting the aspects of the Practicum Program we've evaluated in the past and determining what we'd like to focus on this year.

### Stage 2: Framing the Evaluation

Stakeholders are asked to provide general feedback on what has and has not worked this year. General feedback is used to develop high-level themes for evaluation.

### Stage 3: Surveying Stakeholders

Surveys are issued to stakeholders who are invited to share additional thoughts on each of the areas of interest identified in Stage 2.

#### Stage 4: Writing the Report

Data collected from surveys and through file reviews are compiled and analyzed. Additional research is obtained as needed and recommendations for next steps provided.

#### Stage 5: Communicating Findings

An executive summary of the report is shared with clients and practicum students. The full report is presented in a staff meeting and uploaded to the department's shared drive.

### **Surveying Stakeholders Summary**

	Clients	Practicum Students	Counsellors
Timeframe	April 12-19	April 15-21	April 15-21
Submissions Received	75	7	16
Total Eligible/ Survey issued to	290	10	17
Response Rate	26%	70%	94%
Anonymous	Yes	Yes	Yes
Voluntary	Yes	Yes	No
Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Informed Consent</li><li>• Live Supervision</li><li>• Meeting with a Practicum Student Counsellor</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Completing a Clinical Placement Remotely</li><li>• Learning Objectives &amp; Evaluation</li><li>• Live Supervision</li><li>• Supervisory Relationship</li><li>• Overall Experience</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Facilitating a Clinical Placement Remotely</li><li>• The Role of Supervisors</li><li>• Live Supervision</li><li>• Overall Experience</li></ul>

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If your department has/will be embarking on an evaluation of your internship or practicum program, feel free to connect and I will be happy to share more about SCHW's counselling practicum evaluation (e.g. evaluation design, program logic model, development of evaluation questions, measures, and data sources).

# Exercise to Engage Teams in Program Evaluation

## Purpose:

Leveraging the program logic model<sup>1</sup> to motivate and excite team members for program evaluation. To promote a culture of critical inquiry, learning, and continuous improvement. At the end of the activity, team members should have a better understanding of the gaps that exist in the program/service, stakeholders impacted, resources available for implementing change, and next steps for action.

The individual facilitating this activity should have an intermediate level of knowledge of logic models.

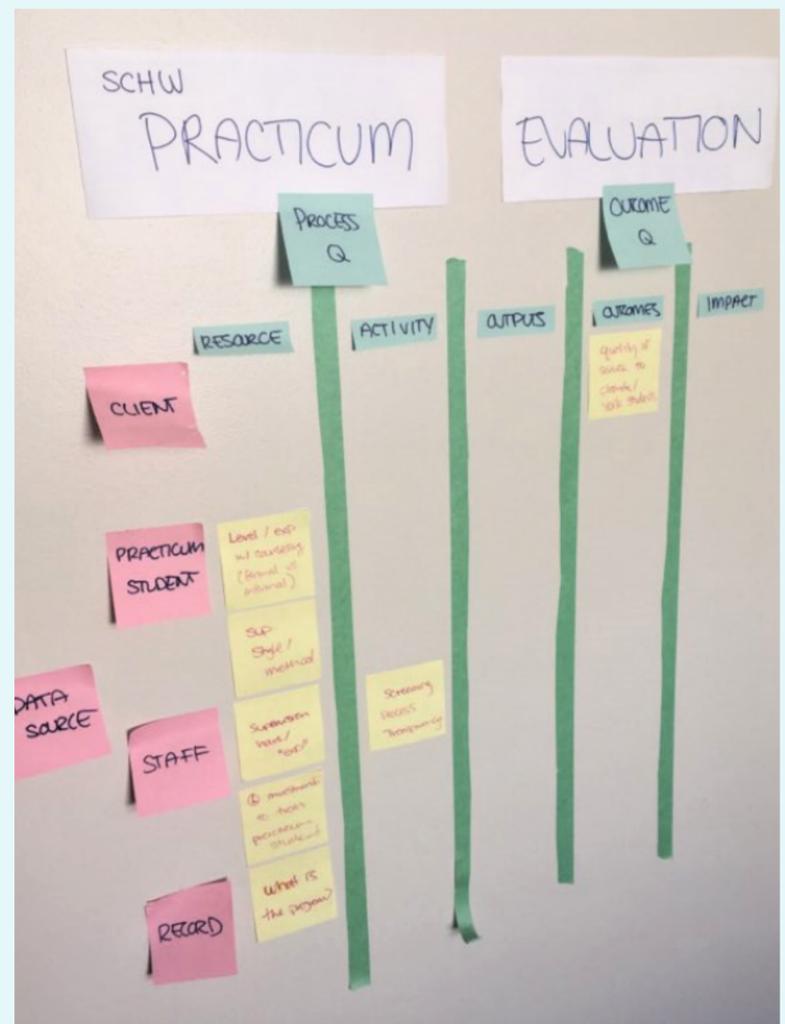
## Materials:

In-person/virtual: Paper, markers, sticky notes, tape  
Virtual: [Zoom whiteboard](#), or another online, collaborative platform (e.g. [Miro](#))

**Time:** 30 to 45 minutes.

## Facilitator Steps:

1. Introduce what a Program Logic Model is: its parts, purpose, and role in supporting continuous improvement.
2. Select a program/service you would like to review as a part of this exercise.
3. Create a blank template of a Program Logic Model with the team. Add stakeholders/data sources to the left of the program logic model (e.g. "client", "practicum student", "staff", "administrative record", etc.)
4. Work as a team to list aspects of the program/service that are discussed amongst the team (e.g. at staff meetings), where feedback provided by clients (positive or negative), and areas for which resources do and do not exist. Record your thoughts on individual sticky notes.
5. Discuss opportunities to address gaps identified in the Program Logic Model:
  - How can we capture informal feedback in a more formal/concrete way?
  - Do we have data that we can point to which supports our claims about the program?
  - Does feedback typically center on certain areas of interest in the program/logic model?
  - Do we hear equally from our stakeholders regarding how the program is going?
  - What should be our next steps for action and who should take on this role?



<sup>1</sup> W.K. Kellogg Foundation. (2004). Logic Model Development Guide. <https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/LogicModel.pdf>



## Additional Resources

### General Information

CICMH Evaluation Toolkit: <https://campusmentalhealth.ca/toolkits/evaluation/>

Focus On: Logic model–A planning and evaluation tool:

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/F/2016/focus-on-logic-model.pdf?la=en>

Program Design & Development Resources:

<https://www.unitedwaygt.org/document.doc?id=538#:~:text=Logic%20model%20%E2%80%93%20a%20systematic%20and,program%20is%20hoping%20to%20achieve.&text=It%20is%20often%20used%20interchangeably%20with%20goal%20or%20intended%20result.>

QI Tools and Templates: [https://e-qip.ca/resources\\_type/qi-tools-and-templates/](https://e-qip.ca/resources_type/qi-tools-and-templates/)

### Creating a Culture of Evaluation

Building an Evaluative Culture for Effective Evaluation and Results Management

[https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/resources/example/building\\_evaluative\\_culture/building\\_evaluative\\_culture\\_example](https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/resources/example/building_evaluative_culture/building_evaluative_culture_example)

Change and Implementation in Practice: Readiness Assessment Tool

<https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/cbc/readiness-assessment-tool-cp-00025.pdf>

Creating an Effective Terms of Reference- Health Quality Ontario

<http://www.hqontario.ca/portals/0/documents/pe/terms-reference-en.pdf>

### Free Online Trainings & Certificates for Program Evaluation & Data Analysis

Data Wrangling for Youth Program Evaluation: Using Spreadsheets to Manage Your Data

<https://youthrex.com/webinar/webinar-data-wrangling-for-youth-program-evaluation-part-1-using-spreadsheets-to-manage-your-data/>

Program Evaluation for Youth Wellbeing: <https://youthrex.com/opec/>

Using Excel to Manage and Analyze Data: <https://vimeo.com/189827483>

Using Spreadsheets In Program Evaluation: <https://youthrex.com/apec/>

### Sample Evaluative Tools

Session Rating Scale (SRS)

<https://www.corc.uk.net/outcome-experience-measures/session-rating-scale/>

Youth-Friendly Measures

<https://youthrex.com/measures/>