

# *Starting the Journey: A Collaborative Approach*

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# Outline

- Planning and Conducting a Collaborative Journey
- A Map of the Trip
- The Challenges of Evaluation
- The Benefits of Evaluation
- Getting to Successful Collaboration:  
A Journey Together

# An Overview of the Journey



# The Collaborative Journey

- Getting aboard at the same station
  - Where do program operators and evaluators “originate”?
  - What are their key “drivers”?
  - Maneuvering along the way
  - Arriving at the desired destination
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# Getting Aboard at the Same Station



# Examples of Values and Starting Points

## ➤ The Central Values of Program Designers:

- Doing good
- Commitment to youth and families
- Willingness to adapt
- Creativity

## ➤ The Core Values of Evaluators:

- Rigor
- Best measures
- Solid design
- Independence
- Multiple audiences
- Lack of bias

# Maneuvering Along the Way



# Maneuvering Along the Way

- Picking up the appropriate “passengers”
- Track turns, obstacles, unexpected stops, and steep grades:  
“external influences”
- Keeping the train moving:  
“internal processes”

# Maneuvering Along the Way

- Programs (especially new ones) change tracks often
- The types of activities, targeting of youth, etc., may change
- Evaluation methods may need to adapt during these changes
- It is difficult to know when a program is “settled enough” for an *impact* evaluation
- But other types of evaluation may still be desirable

# Challenges of Program Evaluation

- Sometimes it feels evaluators go too far

# Evaluation Tools Generally Are NOT:

- Designed to derail a program
- Used to judge the *values* in a program's message
- Used to determine the *relative* validity of a variety of possible approaches to an identified problem
- Designed to change a program's ultimate destination

# Practical Uses of Evaluation Types

1. Identifying the problem and how the program intends to address it (used at conceptual and design stages)
2. Examining if the program is operating according to its design and is reaching its specified target (monitoring function)
3. Assessing whether the program has the intended effect (measuring outcomes or impact)

# The Types of Questions Evaluation Can Address

- What is the definition and scope of the problem or issue, or what's the question?
- Where is the problem and how big or serious is it?
- How should the program or technology be delivered to address the problem?
- How well is the program or technology delivered?
- The questions and methods addressed under summative evaluation include:
  - What type of evaluation is feasible?
  - What was the effectiveness of the program or technology?
  - What is the net impact of the program?

# Challenges and Benefits of Program Evaluation

- Bridging differences between program operators and evaluators

# Challenges of Program Evaluation

- What if evaluation indicates that a program is struggling to reach its destination?
- What if the measures in the evaluation don't seem to match what you are trying to do?
- What if the program doesn't seem to have the intended impact?

The destination stays the same,  
but the exact itinerary may vary

# Challenges and Benefits of Program Evaluation



# Benefits of Evaluation

Evaluation provides the opportunity to:

- Clarify problems and develop adequate interventions
- Identify program deficiencies
- Improve program effectiveness
- Possibly provide scientific evidence of program effectiveness to a larger audience

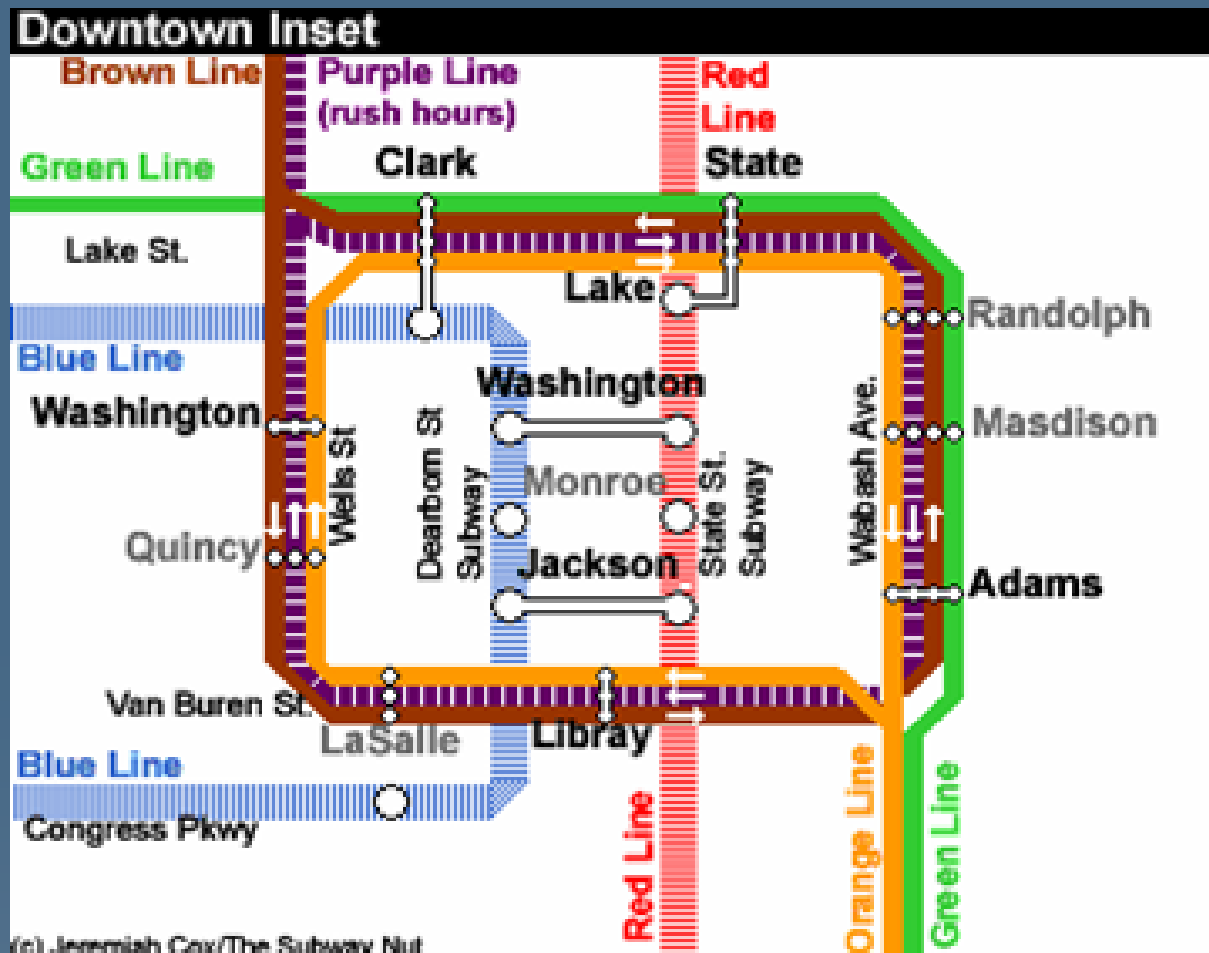
# Collaboration: Enjoying the Trip Together

- Collaborations should be on-going and mutually-influencing
- The most effective collaborations involve two-way communication between program proponents and evaluators
- Defining program goals and evaluation goals and being clear what they are all along the way

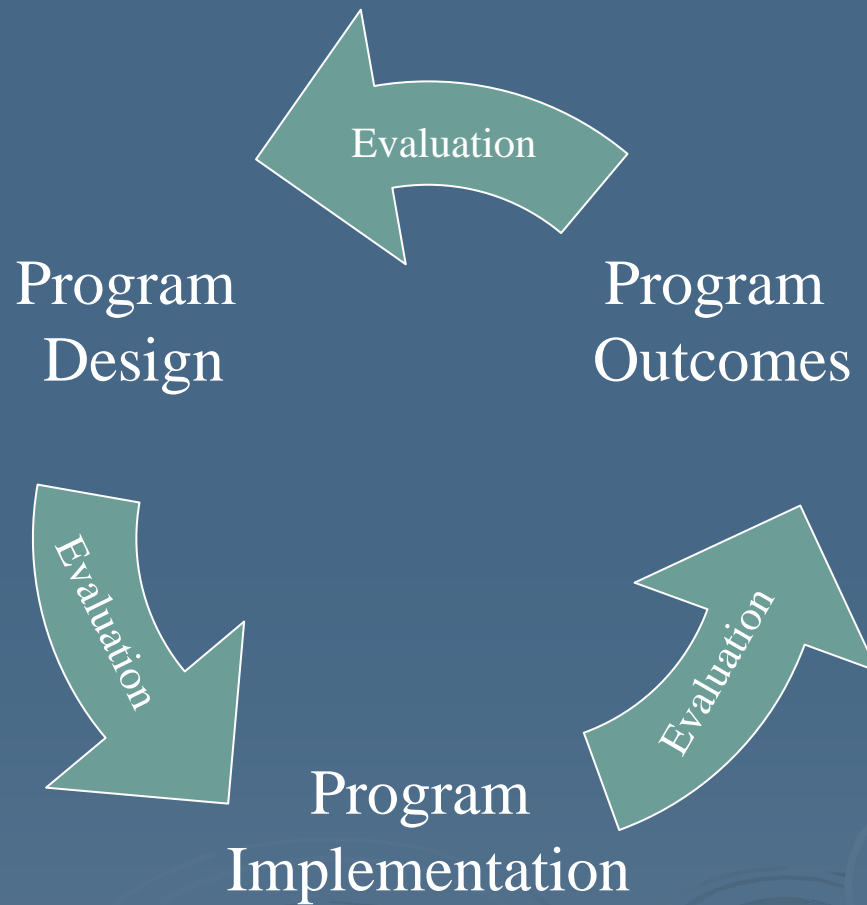
# Going Around in Circles?



# The Loop



# The Collaborative Evaluation Loop



# Arriving at the Desired Destination: Better Programs for Youth



# Successful Collaboration

- Not so much where do you end up but rather what have you learned along the way?
- How has the program improved?
- What have evaluators learned and shared?
- What have program operators learned and shared?

The key is to find travel partner and learn together as you go . . . Enjoy the journey!

All Aboard!

