EIFI EVALUATION
CAPACITY WORKSHOP
REPORT
JULY 26-28, 2013

Submitted by
Clare Strawn, Ph.D.
September 9, 2103
Introduction

ISTE was asked to support the Education Innovation Fund for India by helping them set up an evaluation system that built on the experience of the HP Catalyst Initiative and the leading evaluation practices of the field. HP’s objectives were to get consistent and accurate reporting of projects’ reach and stories of project impact in communities. In addition, OECD’s research project on inclusive innovation overlapped with many of the program objectives and had its own data collection needs.

Observations from the HP Catalyst work that informed our planning:

1) “Innovation” is very broadly interpreted in the Catalyst and EIFI RFPs and in the range of projects. Individual projects funded by the initiative are very diverse in design, scope and outcomes. It is not the case that programs can be measured by a single metric such as learning gains. EIFI projects range from infrastructure development, to informal community based learning, to new concepts in curriculum design and program delivery.

IMPLICATION: Simple overarching metrics will not fit the intentions of all projects. The objective of the workshop was not to develop a single project assessment instrument but to help project leads re-frame the evaluation endeavor to benefit their project.

2) Projects have varying levels of capacity regarding evaluation and the grant did not allocate funds for evaluation. Evaluation is generally experienced as an externally imposed burden for accountability and reporting.

IMPLICATION: Evaluation design, data collection and analysis need to have a low cost to benefit ratio. The strategy was to support the internal evaluation capacity development of grantees and work toward changing the use of evaluation from meeting external requirements to focusing on organizational learning from which external reporting is derived. This strategy is consistent with the cutting edge of evaluation practice. The premise is that data collection that has intrinsic value and participation for the project will be more accurate and support project sustainability.

3) Evaluation capacity building via a webinar on logical models was not sufficient to support project implementation of a viable evaluation process. Logic modeling is not intuitive or immediately useful to most grantees. Throughout the Catalyst Initiative the best learning occurred in face to face summits.

IMPLICATION: Evaluation tools and resources need to be shared in the context of deeper discussion of practice and useability, preferably face to face. Recommendations in the field
suggest even greater immersion and coaching with programs, but that is not feasible in the timeline and budget of the EIFI project.

4) Projects have difficulty telling their story and describing their context to external audiences in ways that inform policy, scaling and adaptation.

**IMPLICATION:** Workshop should include a storytelling component and other resources to support projects to tell their stories.

Unique characteristics of the EIFI project:

1) Projects are mostly NGO’s based in communities or part of international organizations. With one exception they are not part of university infrastructure. Some are very small (3 person) social entrepreneurs.

2) All projects are located in India, but from very diverse geographic and cultural spaces.

**IMPLICATIONS:** One observation of collaboration learned in the Catalyst initiative is that non-profit organizations tend to operate collaboratively as part of their core sustainability strategy as compared to institutions of higher education that support individual research agendas. David Morris reiterated in the planning process that the grantees were very collaboratively oriented and that he wanted to encourage collaboration amongst them as peer to peer learning. However, the EIFI program was not initially designed as a collaboration strategy (in contrast to the Catalyst Initiative, which was).

While the Catalyst Initiative brought together people from virtually every continent, the group of participants at the EIFI workshop was clearly Indian and the leadership is mostly non-Indian/Western. This cross-cultural stretch was evident to me, as the American facilitator, and to project leads. Conscious efforts were made on all sides to value local knowledge and context and to address Western assumptions. However, as the funder is corporate and the rearschers western in culture one of the tasks is to build bridges between their external needs and local priorities. This is part of the creative tension of the project and a characteristic of global social entrepreneurialism.

David Morris, EIFI Program manager, and Clare Strawn decided that the most effect strategy would be to bring grantees together for a face to face workshop with the following goals:

1) Increase accuracy of reports by building buy-in with the value of accurate reporting.

2) Create a community of practice for “horizontal” peer to peer learning within and between projects.
3) Contribute to sustained program improvement beyond the life of the grant.

Workshop preparation

The planning team was comprised of Sankalp Chhabra (HP India), David Morris (ICIE, EIFI), Sumedha Garg (ICIE, EIFI), Clare Strawn (ISTE), and Stéphan Vincent-Lacrin (OECD). We met frequently via skype to collaboratively design and refine the workshop activities.

In preparation for the workshop we asked ICIE EIFI to have preliminary conversations with grantees about their evaluation needs. Project leads also completed a survey to help the workshop designers determine priorities and attitudes about evaluation. (See appendix 1). Responses to the survey suggested that all the projects valued and used evaluation, and have a high level of evaluative capacity. David Morris, as a cultural boundary spanner, interpreted these findings from his experience as a project manager in the Indian context. He suggested that this was an example of the tendency to respond to data collection surveys with the desire to look good and give the asker what they want. This is also an easier clerical task than to represent actual conditions. We decided to use these data to model participatory data interpretation with the participants and discuss its relatively little value for planning purposes.

In addition to the onsite workshop activities, an extensive resource toolkit was compiled by Clare and is included here as a separate PDF portfolio, along with the workshop agenda and slides. Project leads were expected to carry the discussions back to their own staff to extend the training and design their own project specific evaluation and data collection processes. The resource toolkit was intended to supplement these activities in lieu of personal coaching. ICIE/EIFI required use of these tools in future renewal proposals.

A post workshop survey was sent to participants in addition to a request that they send in email letters about their experience and submit concept notes on several ideas generated by the workshop. Below is the summary of responses to the post evaluation survey.

Workshop outcomes

The post-workshop evaluation survey covered four main points: Quality of the experience, value of the content, logistical accommodations, and suggestions for improvement. Graphs of responses are found in Appendix 2, Post-workshop survey. It was refreshing, and perhaps a measure of workshop success that answers varied across the scales compared to the pre-workshop survey responses.

1) Quality of facilitation (chart 1). Overall the facilitation was rated highly on the full range of components. One very forthcoming participant (“You asked for my frank and honest opinion,
therefore the ratings. Please do not take it otherwise.”) indicated poor ratings on a number of indicators that I interpret as reflecting the problem of designing and facilitating training across cultural contexts and without close knowledge of the participants.

2) Participants reporting learning more than expected for most of the content modules (chart 2). Some had transformative learning experiences. The expertise of workshop participants on storytelling was activated to facilitate that session, and is the single report of not learning anything new. One participant commented, “the idea of looking at micro-innovation was revealing - especially with regard to scale; non-linear models was an important insight.”

3) The outcomes of the workshop are being implemented over time, with the ultimate measure being the value of the data generated by projects to all stakeholders concerned. The immediate outcomes and progress toward following up are rated by percent of agreement they feel with having accomplished the outcome (chart 3).

4) Overall participants were very happy with the accommodations provided by the Sri Aurobundo Society (chart 4). Concerns included the fact that the timing of the workshop was during Muslim observation of Ramadan, which posed difficulty for them, and a desire for simpler and less expensive meals (not buffet at hotel and café lunch) with consideration for the social responsive nature of their work.

5) The comments below are responses to the prompt: What are the two things that you would have done differently to improve the quality of the workshop?
   - I would have not organise in the month of Holy Ramazan. Secondly, will show the HP run implementation work for exposure, how agency does works with best practice. (CS: Desire to know how HP uses the data and value of corporate philanthropy)
   - 1. Making & telling a unique story. 2. Building good relation among other participants.
   - Planned the workshop with the participants, so that everyone was on board, and each one's capability and capacity was used to the best possible extent.
   - Perhaps we could have looked at where do we see the challenges in our current EIFI projects to evaluate? A three day mentoring workshop where we could actually build the most relevant evaluation model for the EIFI grant would have been the total stunner. If you guys could provide us time for this now - that would be great. Look for spaces within it where we could introduce the possibilities within the framework of actually physically doing collaborative assessments. I left longing for a social researcher to be attached to my project - if HP{EIFI can build some relationship that brings forth high quality agile and adaptive thinking social researchers who could be year-long interns. That would be a great boon.
   - 1. Make it more sensitive to local context. 2. If a framework with standard parameters could be discussed as a format for evaluating your project.
1. Some lively discussion on what is innovation and innovative approach we all mean by and through that process take out data points for evaluation. 2. some more communication and clarity in terms of objective and work to be done could have helped.

- Sharing my project with other participants and workshop leaders - Try to connect and correlate with our project evaluation strategies.
- I would have stretched the workshop for another day as the day and half we had seemed to be too packed to absorb everything.
- Have at least one Indian facilitator. Add one more day for discussions and interaction.

As the lead facilitator and evaluator, I tend to agree with these comments. Most of these suggestions were sacrificed by the limitations of a short pre-meeting preparation time frame and the cost of having a longer, fuller workshop. Ideally, we should have allotted substantial time for project leads to present their work and evaluation approaches with each other. However, we chose not to do this because previous experience indicated that it could take the whole two days and because we were not emphasizing a collaborative instrument measurement strategy. We did include one Indian facilitator from Design for Change for the story telling segment. However, I do take the point that the whole experience would have benefited the leadership of an Indian facilitator. The conversations on inclusion and innovation (led by Stéphan) were very generative. While this was not the intended focus of the workshop, it was a valuable contribution to the experience and would deserve its own focus, with perhaps a different audience of social entrepreneurs interested in making a difference in India. The engagement of participants suggests the potential for peer to peer learning among the group. Next time I would organize the sessions to spend more time work-shopping in detail evaluation systems in one or two of the projects with the entire group engaging in design and analysis.

Follow up

Ann Ewasechko (HPOGSI) asked, “Given the diversity of the projects, what metrics can we use to represent the work concisely to corporate stakeholders?”

One of the project leads suggested a visual representation of aggregate EIFI grantees that would represent both the scope and domains of the projects (see figure 1, below). This would necessarily have to be a way of aggregating individual reports and may or may not prove to be useful. In the interim, there is enough overlap between outcome measures of interest and programs interested in participating in Stéphan’s study that he is taking the lead on data collection which can then serve also to address HP’s reporting needs. Projects have followed up with baseline reports to Stéphan.
ICIE will have to coordinate among grantees and Stéphan’s data collection efforts to compile summative reports to HP, perhaps entering figures into the multi-dimensional footprint graphic. The measure of the workshop effectiveness will be the degree to which projects are able to comply with their data reporting and storytelling objectives.
Figure 1: Multi dimensional “footprint” representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>who</th>
<th>How counted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
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<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Classroom/teachers</td>
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<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>School/district2</td>
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<td>Children out of school</td>
<td>Community</td>
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Appendix 1: EIFI Grantees preliminary evaluation assessment

Do you currently monitor or evaluate your project work? Please describe:

Is there a demand for information or evaluation from:
a. Your funders?
b. Your organization leadership?
c. Your board or governing body?
d. Your staff?
e. Your constituents?
f. Researchers?
g. Other partners?

Please indicate the extent to which your program currently uses evaluation results for the following purposes (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = somewhat agree, and 4 = strongly agree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Rating 1</th>
<th>Rating 2</th>
<th>Rating 3</th>
<th>Rating 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To report to a funder.</td>
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<td>To improve services or programs.</td>
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<td>To get additional funding.</td>
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<td>To design ongoing monitoring processes.</td>
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<td>To assess implementation of a program.</td>
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<td>To assess quality of a program.</td>
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<td>To improve outreach.</td>
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<td>To make informed decisions.</td>
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<td>To train staff.</td>
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<td>To develop best practices.</td>
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<td>To eliminate unneeded services or programs</td>
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What are your thoughts about evaluation? I think that an evaluation:

(1 = strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = somewhat agree, and 4 = strongly agree)

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<tr>
<th>Thought</th>
<th>Rating 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is unnecessary because we already know what is best for our participants.</td>
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<td>Is too complex for staff to do.</td>
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<td>Is not worth the time and effort</td>
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<td>Is a distraction from our work</td>
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<td>Will help me understand my program.</td>
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<td>Will inform the decisions I make about my program.</td>
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<td>Will justify funding for my program.</td>
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<td>Will help to convince managers that changes are needed in my program.</td>
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<td>Will inform changes in our documentation systems.</td>
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<td>Is absolutely necessary to improve my program.</td>
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<td>Should involve program participants in the evaluation process.</td>
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<td>Will influence policy relevant to my program.</td>
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<td>Will help improve services to underserved people</td>
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To what degree do you think your organization or project (especially at the leadership level) understands, values and uses evaluation?

1 not at all, 2 to some extent, 3 to a considerable extent, or 4 to a very great extent

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(please check yes or na if not applicable and mention how often the data are collected)

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes / na</th>
<th>At what interval?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Number of students (enrolled or touched by your initiative)</td>
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<td>Type of students enrolled or touched (family income, minority, or other characteristics)</td>
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<td>Completion of enrolled students</td>
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<td>Dropout of enrolled students</td>
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<td>Learning outcomes of students</td>
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<td>Number of communities reached</td>
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<td>Types of communities reached (socio-demographic characteristics)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of teachers (enrolled or touched by your initiative)</td>
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Do you feel adequately prepared and resourced to do self-evaluation in your program or to partner with your evaluators, participate in the interpretation of their findings, and implement recommendations?

If no – what development would be most valuable to you?

Summary

1. Felt need for evaluation:
2. Attitude about evaluation
3. Existing evaluation capacity

Pre-workshop survey findings:

I think that an evaluation:
Is not worth the time and effort.

Is a distraction from our priorities.

Is too complex for staff to understand.

Will justify funding for the program.

Will help to convince stakeholders.

Is absolutely necessary to achieve our goals.

Should involve program stakeholders.

Will help me understand the program.

Will help improve program delivery.

Will inform the decisions about the program.

Will inform changes in the program.

Will influence policy decisions.

Agree

Disagree
Appendix 2: Post workshop survey results

Chart 1: Quality of facilitation
Chart 2: learning of content of workshop overall and of modules
Chart 4: Accommodations

- Quality & Location of Accommodation
- Meals & Refreshments
- Quality & Appropriateness