Measuring Results

Executive Summary

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Gaining insight on behavior change strategies and evaluation methods from environmental education, museum, health, and social marketing programs



A report of the Coevolution Institute Understanding Metrics Project

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Abstract

he Coevolution Institute (CoE) set out to explore the theories that guide effective behavior change interventions and program evaluation. Specifically, CoE asked, "What can we learn from behavior change interventions and outcome measurement through a cross-field survey of published literature?" Measuring Results examines the ways those who work within and outside of environmental education have approached the challenges of effecting and measuring individual behavior change. Measuring Results offers program providers, grantors, and other stakeholders a common terminology and background information on how different fields have approached behavior change interventions and assessment. Effective behavior change practices include targeting actions, tailoring interventions to the audience, building self-efficacy, and using prompts or tools to trigger action. Evaluation is fundamental to our success on multiple levels, including program and organizational development. A variety of methods, including specific evaluation frameworks and qualitative and quantitative research techniques, guide evaluation work. Dissemination (or communication) of results is crucial to achieving greater knowledge. It is the responsibility of program providers to share with others what is working, but just as important what is not working, within an organization. Collaboration and information exchange among organizations is an important step in learning what is effective and in promoting valid and useful evaluations. Research for Measuring Results took place through a review of the academic literature in the fields of environmental education and museum research and, to a lesser extent, in health and social marketing research.

Introduction

Understanding Metrics

The Coevolution Institute (CoE) is committed to creating meaningful learning experiences that result in positive conservation attitudes and actions. CoE has a vested interest—some argue, a responsibility—to know whether our work changes individual behavior. We began the Understanding Metrics Project to better elucidate how we can promote behavior change and how we can measure the influence of our work. We set out to explore the theories that guide effective programs and evaluation methods. Specifically, we asked, "What can a cross-field survey of published literature teach us about behavior change programs and outcome measurement?"

Given the need of like-minded organizations for this kind of information, we commissioned *Measuring Results*, the first publication of CoE's Understanding Metrics Project. This report examines the ways that those within and outside of environmental education have approached the challenges of effecting and measuring behavior change.

What We Have Learned

The process of researching and writing *Measuring Results* has made it ever clearer that evaluation is a rigorous and complex process that requires strong commitment of human and financial resources. We have learned that, within environmental education evaluation, the lack of a systematic process and the failure to disseminate findings hinders our adoption of effective practices and hampers a more complete understanding of effective strategies. Evaluation is fundamental to our success on many levels, including program and organizational development.

Purpose of the Report

We want *Measuring Results* to serve as a springboard to a better understanding of behavior change interventions. It considers evaluation practices that are in use now and that can be developed further and applied across a variety of fields. Increasingly, funding agencies, board members, and program staff are discussing ways to better understand and communicate program outcomes. *Measuring Results* provides program stakeholders with common terminology and information on how those in different fields have approached behavior change interventions and assessment. Our purpose is not to provide a "how-to" resource or step-by-step instructions for conducting evaluations. That need is met in a variety of places, some of which are listed at the end of the Executive Summary.

We invite your comments on this first installment of the Understanding Metrics Project on the Response Form at the end of this Executive Summary or by e-mail to info@coeovlution.org.

What Is Evaluation?

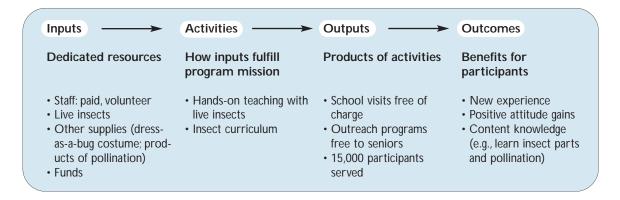
or the purposes of *Measuring Results*, "evaluation" is considered a general term pertaining to the assessment process used to elucidate program outcomes. The report's authors focused on published academic research and, to a lesser extent, on individual evaluation reports. Evaluation—measuring organizational or program needs, structure, and outcomes—is pivotal in program development and improvement. Evaluation is important in the communication of program objectives and outcomes, the identification of effective strategies, and—often most important—in compliance with funding requirements.

Impetus for Change

The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, which requires federally funded agencies to create performance goals and to report progress annually, has changed the way state and local agencies measure success and has influenced how foundations and non-profit organizations measure their performance. United Way of America, for example, revised its reporting guidelines in 1995. United Way's work in turn has influenced assessment thinking and requirements in many other sectors.

Output-Outcome Distinction

United Way transformed its evaluation approach by differentiating between *outputs* (specific services rendered, number of people served) and *outcomes* (results of program participation, including skill acquisition or changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, or behavior.) United Way's outcome model, an example of an evaluation logic model, is applied to CoE's Bug Mobile program in the diagram below.



The United Way evaluation model as it could be applied to the Coevolution Institute Bug Mobile project.

Methods

A variety of methods, including specific evaluation frameworks and qualitative and quantitative research techniques, guide evaluation work. The evaluation methods table describes evaluation approaches and tools.

Evaluation: Summary of Methods

Method	Explanation
Case study	 Captures information from program stakeholders, including the different perspectives and experiences of donors, participants, managers, educators Includes document analysis, interviews, observation Investigates phenomena within a specific context
Empowerment evaluation	 Encourages input from staff and affiliated interested parties (program donors, participants, clients) Includes three-step process: Define a mission statement Take stock, identify, rate, rank the most significant program activities Plan for the future through goal and strategy statements
Ethnography	 Like the case study, provides descriptive information primarily through analysis of multiple sources of data (documents, people, surroundings), interviews, and observation Emphasizes human behavior, social contexts Uses field-generated metrics based on data collection
Experiment	 Compares treatment and control groups to determine whether differences can be attributed to the program Assesses outcomes by comparing results or performance in treatment and control groups
Listening (focus group, interview, questionnaire, survey)	 Collects data on participant or visitor attitudes, knowledge, expectations, experience through spoken or written forms Analyzes transcripts to provide salient information, including potential trends in responses
Log frame	 A 4 x 4 project-planning matrix for defining program goals, purpose, outputs, and activities and the inputs needed to achieve them Includes active program staff participation ZOPP (Zielorientierte Projektplanung) or, in English, GOPP (goaloriented project planning) is an example of a log frame: Most commonly used for international projects Includes 2 phases: analysis (identification of problems) and project planning Requires a trained facilitator (1- to 14-day workshop) Widely used in international projects
Logic model	 Visual depiction showing relationships between program components including resources, activities, strategies, target audiences, outcomes, indicators Multiple uses: facilitate program organization, enhance team building, communicate links among program components, focus the evaluation process by identifying key issues and questions The United Way outcome model is an outcome-based logic model. Other forms include process theory models, which describe the internal organization of the program (interaction between staff and participants) and program development and monitoring models, such as the log frame

Evaluation: Summary of Methods

Meta-analysis	Reviews, analyzes, and compares results from multiple studies pertaining to the same subject in assessing the effect of a particular approach or intervention					
Observation	Collects data on participant or visitor behavior, interaction, social engagement (conversation, gestures)					
Pre / post tools	Collect participants' responses before and after a program					
Qualitative methodology	 Takes multiple forms: case studies, ethnography, focus groups, interviews, observations, open-ended questions in surveys and questionnaires Emphasizes context Addresses atypical results (outlying data) 					
Quantitative methodology	 Takes multiple forms: experiments, pre/post tests, questionnaires, statistical tools, surveys Seeks to control context through random assignment or multivariate analysis Generally disregards deviant cases (outlying data) 					
Results framework	 Planning, management, evaluation, and monitoring tool widely used by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Staff required to state program hypothesis and define ultimate objective as well as short-term and intermediate objectives Emphasis on causal linkages and concrete results 					
Social return on investment (SROI)	 Designed by Roberts Enterprise Development Fund Quantifies the social–economic value of programs or organizations based on a discounted-cash-flow analysis Includes qualitative descriptions of the intervention, organization, and people served 					

Field-Specific Findings

Theoretical frameworks, program characteristics, and evaluation findings in each of the four fields in *Measuring Results* provide insights about effective programs and program evaluation. The sections below describe the findings in each of the fields: environmental education, museums, health programs, and social marketing.

Theories and Methods: Summary by Field

Field	Theoretical Base and Program Characteristic	Evaluation Methods
Environmental education	 Theoretical shift away from the traditional knowledge-attitude-behavior (KAB) model toward emphasis on behavioral theories emphasizing intention and skills training Weak link between theory and practice Positive influence on knowledge gain through hands-on activities, pre- and post-program activities Mixed results on the impact of attitude modification and subsequent behavior Intrinsic motivation, intention, knowledge of action strategies, and prompts are likely to lead to adoption of targeted behaviors 	Dominated by one-time individual program studies Reliance on self-reported data Traditional emphasis on quantitative tools changing to incorporate multiple-method approach Few longitudinal studies No systematic guidelines Challenge of valid tools (measuring behavior modification)

Theories and Methods: Summary by Field

Museums	 Learning influenced by multiple variables: individual, interaction with exhibit, exhibit, and social interaction Time spent with an exhibit promotes knowledge gain Interactive exhibits increase exhibit attracting and holding power, encourage social interaction, increase knowledge gain Visitor variables—age, education, agenda—influence visit outcomes Mixed results on gender, prior knowledge, attitudes on learning Families tend to spend 1 to 1.5 hours per visit, follow predictable behavior patterns 	Qualitative and quantitative research base Dominated by timing and tracking studies and observation; includes measuring the amount of time visitors spend with an exhibit (holding power), monitoring movements and where and for how long they stop (attracting power), and visitor interaction (both with the exhibit and with one another) Few longitudinal studies Challenge of measuring long-term outcomes
Health programs	Strong link between theory and practice: Social learning theory states that people learn behavior by observing the results of others' actions. Behavior, therefore, is strongly influenced by the positive and negative consequences we observe and subsequently model. The health belief model asserts that, to change, people must believe in the value of changing their behavior. One must believe in the negative consequences of not changing to be motivated to act. Specific individual behaviors targeted and taught Tailoring to participants is vital	Dominated by experiments and field studies Case studies, interviews, document analysis also widely used Follow-up data collection and longitudinal studies common Adoption of systematic processes (e.g., CDC model)
Social marketing	 Attention to cost-benefit analysis; targeted, cost-effective strategies Consumer marketing terminology (product, targeted behavior change; pricing, individual cost or effort of change; promotion, communication of social benefits of change; placement, where the message about change is disseminated) Program strategies include advertising, informational entertainment, education, and media campaigns 	Case studies are common and serve to document efforts as well as disseminate findings Mixed-method approaches used, such as social return on investment (SROI) framework (quantifies value of programs with respect to social savings and gains and includes qualitative analyses) Built-in metrics such as the inclusion of toll-free telephone numbers

Environmental Education

Changes in behavior are the ultimate goal of most environmental education programs, yet tracking human behavior over time is a near-impossible task. Environmental education research cites the following in bringing about positive environmental behavior:

- Environmental sensitivity
- Knowledge of action strategies
- Skill in action strategies
- Strong self-efficacy

People need to know why and how to act in environmentally responsible ways. One metaanalysis identified effective programs (those that had a positive effect on behavior) that actually trained participants for specific behaviors. And there are antecedents (prompts or triggers) that can increase the frequency of desirable behaviors or decrease the frequency of undesirable ones. Examples include spoken or written messages, such as flyers, personal reminders, and informational feedback systems (utility bills that show individual household energy use, for example). Educators should target change by affecting participants' cognitive and personality factors. In a practical sense, interventions that focus on developing skills, that prompt issue recognition and understanding and that encourage specific actions can lead to responsible environmental behavior. Going forward, we expect to see more systematic approaches to evaluation, including collaborative efforts to define and measure targeted outcomes.

Museums

Museums include aquaria, science centers, and zoos. The extent to which visitors' knowledge, attitudes, and behavior are affected by museum visits depends on individual visitors' characteristics and the informal learning setting. As is the case for environmental education, outcomes could have as much to do with cultural norms, personal variables, and social interaction as they do with the learning environment itself.

Measuring Results examines three areas of research and evaluation that have dominated museum studies: visitor and exhibit characteristics, family behavior and learning, and field trips. The belief that each visitor has a unique experience within the same setting has prompted studies that evaluate outcomes based on visitor variables. Key findings from museum research and evaluation include the following:

- The amount of education an adult visitor has appears to have the most influence on attendance: People with more years of formal education visit museums more often than people with fewer years in formal education.
- Some exhibit characteristics are more effective than others. Textual references in exhibit labels increase knowledge gain and holding power. Interactive exhibits also keep people, especially children, engaged while they learn, and they enhance interactions within groups of visitors, lead to increases in knowledge, and promote more questioning.
- Family behavior is predictable, and it can be divided into four distinct phases: orientation, preparation, viewing, and cruising.
- Children interact more frequently with hands-on exhibits than do accompanying adults.
- Field trips are most effective when there is advance preparation and follow-up.
- Field trips can increase students' content knowledge and conceptual understanding.
- Field trips provide professional development opportunities for classroom teachers.

Health Programs

Successful health interventions are as varied as their targeted outcomes and participants. Individuals' characteristics have a strong influence on the effectiveness of attitude and behavior change programs. Research for *Measuring Results* showed that successful programs for young people consider multiple components—individual characteristics, school environment, and the community. The most successful programs tend to incorporate multiple educational and informational techniques. An extensive review of effective adolescent STD/HIV/AIDS prevention programs showed use of at least four of the following strategies:

- · Adult involvement
- · Case management
- · Group discussion
- Lectures
- · Peer counseling
- Public service announcements
- Role-playing
- Video presentations

The overwhelming message from the literature review is that tailoring interventions to the specific situation and to the circumstances of individual participants is vital to promoting successful behavior change.

Qualitative and quantitative data collection and analyses provide information about participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behavior before, during, and after health programs. Experimental and field studies dominate much of health program evaluation, along with studies that use various listening techniques, such as interviews and surveys.

Social Marketing

Social marketing aims to benefit society at large. Practices and assessments are based on traditional for-profit models and on psychology, sociology, behavior modification, and education theories. According to various experts, an effective social marketing program takes advantage of the influence of an opinion leader, supplying information from multiple credible sources, providing an opportunity for intensive personal support, and promoting different methods and media for message communication.

Case studies and research in the area of personal giving show that donor variables, the nature of a request, and who the message provider is all influence charitable giving and volunteering. Specifically, the size of a request can affect the number of donors and the amount given; labeling potential donors elicits greater intentions to help and more helping behavior. Familiar and credible sources also are influential in promoting financial giving and volunteerism.

Key Findings

Effective Strategies for Changing Behavior

Analyses across fields suggest that, to change behavior, it is necessary to target specific behaviors and tailor programs to the audience. Influencing affective characteristics (building self-efficacy, for example) and cognitive attributes (decision-making skills, for example) is important.

Promising Theories of Change

Theoretical frameworks are useful in considering program development and evaluation. Social learning theory states that knowledge of and attitudes about expected results (primarily gained through observation) heavily influence personal behavior. This is especially evident in the outcomes of health education programs, where it can be argued that participants' beliefs and knowledge are gained by observing the outcomes of others' actions. Witnessing the positive and negative consequences of other people's actions—for example as shown in anti-smoking campaigns or teenage-pregnancy-prevention programs—heavily influences behavior. Modeling and role-playing are effective strategies. Same-sex models and models who are seen as similar in some meaningful way to the participant are especially salient.

The health belief model asserts that people must understand the value of changing their behavior in order to change. One must believe negative consequences will follow from not changing behavior in order to be motivated to act.

Target Specific Behaviors

A clear emphasis on specific skills and behavior, before now largely ignored in environmental education, has proven effective in other domains, such as health and social marketing. Such interventions demonstrate the specific targeted behavior and the results of performing targeted behaviors or the consequences of ignoring them. Behavior analysts claim it is usually more cost-effective to target behaviors directly than it is to expect attitude change to occur as the result of an intervention and hope that attitude change leads to action.

Tailor Strategies

Tailoring interventions to the audience also is crucial for success. Environmental education programs, for example, can be more successful in changing individual behavior if they consider the factors at work in their participants' lives: their ages, day-to-day environments, experiences, home communities, and knowledge. Interventions that address and focus on participants as much as on specific behavior and skills seem more likely to increase the salience of responsible-behavior messages.

Foster Belief in Abilities

People need to believe in their own abilities to take action. From social learning theory, the health belief model, and the model of responsible environmental behavior, we learn that attitudes are significant in behavior adoption. One implication is that educators should work to instill positive attitudes toward taking action. People are likely to plan to take action if they believe in the value of taking action, know that they can act, and believe that it is important for them to do so. Those intentions can be reinforced by successful opportunities to practice action.

Evaluation Strategies

What emerges from *Measuring Results* is that program designers, managers, funding organizations, and evaluators should keep a multifaceted approach in mind and consider evaluation throughout the stages of program development and growth. Systemization, through common indicators or tools, or both, will demonstrate the overall results of our work.

Create Measurable Objectives

Effective evaluation strategies include the identification and development of targeted and measurable outcomes. It is important to create micro-level goals and to consider how they contribute to the overall context. The creation of specific targeted outcomes is critical in constructing valid measurement tools. It is expensive and time-consuming to measure outcomes effectively (to do so requires solid financial and human support), but thorough assessment informs a program from design through implementation.

Use Multiple Methods

Multiple-method evaluations provide more depth and greater understanding of complex issues. Using quantitative and qualitative methods together provides a deeper understanding of a program and its outcomes, and it offers a credible way to triangulate results. Multiple-method evaluation and authentic assessment or "built-in" metrics are promising assessment strategies that are gaining increasing application across fields.

Systemize and Disseminate

To better explain and learn from what works, there must be a more standard approach to evaluation. Systemization should demonstrate the overall successes and failures of a field at large. Communication of results is crucial to the achievement of greater knowledge. It is the responsibility of program providers to disseminate what is working and, just as important, what is not working. Collaboration and information exchange among organizations are important in elucidating what is effective and in identifying valid and useful evaluations across fields.

Conclusion

lt illustrates that effective assessment calls for systematic, multifaceted, longitudinal methodology built in to the initial program concept and budget. Common challenges across fields suggest that several areas require further development and exploration. Systemization and dissemination will help bridge the gap between evaluation and practice, and that constitutes one especially important area for granting agencies' consideration. We believe that grantors are in a position to support and influence evaluation practices and sharing of information across organizations.

Being Informed

The resources below contain succinct descriptions of evaluation methods, access to evaluation and research studies, and how-to guides for program assessment.

American Evaluation Association www.eval.org

AEA is an international professional organization devoted to improving and promoting evaluation. The "Links" section of the site provides access to online handbooks on designing and conducting evaluations: http://www.eval.org/EvaluationLinks/default.htm

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Evaluation Working Group www.cdc.gov/eval This site includes evaluation frameworks for public health program evaluation.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation http://ericae.net

Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation is an online journal that provides educators with articles about research and evaluation at the local education agency level.

Interpreting Biodiversity: A Manual for Environmental Educators in the Tropics

http://research.amnh.org/biodiversity/center/publ/pubdwnld.html
An easy-to-read and useful guide that is adaptable to a variety of environmental education programs, this manual focuses on program development. Chapter 5 is about evaluation. Visitors to this site need to register to download this publication.

Management Assistance Program for Nonprofits

Guidelines for designing a basic logic model: www.managementhelp.net/np_progs/np_mod/org_frm.htm

Charity Village

Program Logic Model: What, Why and How? http://www.charityvillage.com/charityvillage/research/rstrat3.html

W. K. Kellogg Foundation http://www.wkkf.org

Logic Model Development Guide

http://www.wkkf.org/Programming/ResourceOverview.aspx?CID=281&ID=3669

Evaluation Handbook

http://www.wkkf.org/Programming/ResourceOverview.aspx?CID=281&ID=770

Museum Learning Collaborative http://museumlearning.com

MLC's web site offers a comprehensive annotated bibliography and access to studies about informal learning.

Roberts Enterprise Development Fund, Social Return on Investment

http://redf.org/pub_sroi.htm#methodology

This site offers access to SROI reports and information on calculating SROI.

United Way Toronto Clearinghouse www.unitedwaytoronto.com/PEOD/index.html This site has annotated listings of evaluation resources, including how-to manuals, reports, bibliographies, and research.

Coevolution Institute: Funding and Partnership Opportunities Bug Mobile and Butterfly Pollinator Gardening Program

The Bug Mobile is a hands-on science program that encourages positive attitudes toward insects and educates participants about insects' roles in the environment. Both the Bug Mobile and the Butterfly Pollinator Gardening Program have been piloted in the San Francisco Bay Area and are ready to be launched at other locations across the country.

North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC)

NAPPC coordinates pollinator conservation efforts and is committed to encouraging the health of resident and migratory pollinating animals in North America.

Understanding Metrics Project

Measuring Results is the first work from the Understanding Metrics Project. To access the complete 130 page Measuring Results document, contact info@coevolution.org.

Interested in learning more about the Coevolution Institute? Contact us to discuss sponsorship and partnership opportunities or visit us online.

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The Coevolution Institute

The Coevolution Institute (CoE), founded in 1997, is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that seeks to improve the health and survival of species through conservation efforts and educational interventions. Our current initiatives include the Understanding Metrics Project, the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign, the Bug Mobile, and the Butterfly and Pollinator Gardening Program.

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About the Sources

Research for Measuring Results took place through an extensive academic literature review in the fields of environmental education and museum research and, to a lesser extent, in health programs and social marketing research. A sample of studies representative of common and accepted approaches was selected to describe health and social marketing practices.

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Measuring Results Executive Summary

Response Form

CoE is dedicated to self-assessment. We would like to hear from you after you have read the *Measuring Results* Executive Summary. To access the complete 130 page *Measuring Results* document, contact info@coevolution.org.

Your Information*							
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