

Summary of anzea’s Evaluator Competency 2010 Consultations: Issues and Tensions

On the one hand ...	And on the other ...
1. What is the problem we are trying to remedy?	What are the benefits of developing evaluator competencies?
<p>On the one hand some have said: “ So we are developing competencies, what’s the problem we are trying to remedy?” And yet on the other hand, there are others who say: “There are clear benefits to creating a set of competencies?”</p>	
<p>It was clear from the consultation that there is a strongly held perception about a wide variability in the quality of evaluation practice, which is lowering the credibility of all evaluation. People spoke of ‘cowboys / girls’ tarnishing the credibility of evaluation, and having no accountability.</p> <p>Among some evaluation commissioners, in government and in community contexts, there are very limited views about what evaluation is, for example, evaluation is seen as a compliance exercise by many. It is thought developing evaluator competencies may help expand people’s understanding of evaluation, provide a ‘tool’ for helping to identify who has the skills to do evaluation which in turn may help commissioners of evaluation (in government and community organisations) choose people who can do a good evaluation job for them.</p>	<p>The benefits that consistently emerged from consultation are that evaluator competencies will help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raise the profile and understanding of evaluation among commissioners of evaluation and other stakeholders • there will be clearer guidelines for practice, for evaluators and for commissioners • that evaluator competencies will improve the accountability of those practicing evaluation (both evaluators and commissioners of evaluation)

On the one hand ...	And on the other ...
2. The 'good evaluator'	The 'good evaluation' and role of the evaluation commissioner
<p>On the one hand we will have competencies that define a 'good evaluator', and plenty of comment has emerged about what to include. On the other hand, we had plenty of feedback indicating that a good evaluator doesn't necessarily produce a 'good evaluation' and therefore we also need to address what makes a 'good evaluation' as well.</p> <p>In particular concerns have been raised that developing evaluator competencies without a focus on addressing the competency of commissioners to commission a 'good evaluation', 'good evaluation' will not get done.</p> <p>The feedback strongly suggested that the competencies need to be clear they are focused on the evaluator only, and that a 'good evaluation' (one that is useful, credible, asks and answers good evaluation questions etc) also requires a good commissioner along with a whole lot of other conditions.</p>	
3. Freedom to practice	Professionalisation
<p>On the one hand we have had views about how the current situation allows evaluators to be creative, and practice with a degree of freedom (bar ethical guidelines) because of the lack of bureaucratic constraints that exist in other professions. On the other hand, having professional standards is seen to help to ensure that the 'cowboys/girls' out there don't give evaluators and evaluation a bad name. Professionalization is seen to help ensure a better quality of the work done by evaluators.</p>	
<p>There is no doubt that the current situation has allowed a considerable freedom of practice, of creativity and diversity of practice. There are concerns that a competency framework may stifle this diversity and creativity.</p>	<p>The development of competencies will put a boundary around what a competent evaluator looks like. This boundary will need to be reviewed periodically to ensure that it is continuing to serve the purpose for which it was developed – enhancing evaluation quality – particularly the quality</p>

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<p>There are concerns about issues of power, particularly about who gets to define who meets these attributes. As the competencies are implemented, anzea will need to carefully consider how these decisions are made, for example, should such decisions be made by employers of evaluators, by teachers of evaluators, or by the profession itself?</p>	<p>of evaluation practice.</p> <p>The move towards professionalization which the development of competencies suggests does imply a need for the profession to clearly define how it will maintain its emerging obligation to practice appropriately. This might imply that some sort of designation and review function will need to follow. These decisions are still not resolved and will be the subject of future critical discussion. There is an expectation that anzea watches and learns from the Canadian experience of accreditation and professional designation.</p> <p>There also seems a need to identify a continuum (or levels) of competence, so that new entrants can see a pathway of development. This has yet to be addressed.</p>
4. The role of the Treaty of Waitangi and indigenous rights	The meaning of culture
<p>On the one hand the feedback expressed an increasing understanding of, and support for, the importance of the Treaty as a key input to informing the development of competencies in Aotearoa New Zealand. This seemed to be an expression of support for the importance and acknowledgment of indigenous rights and the value of indigenous perspectives. And yet on the other hand, we have questions about the broader meaning of culture (i.e., as it's applied to gender, disability, ethnicity etc) and it's relationship to the Treaty. Some have expressed concern to take care to not conflate a focus on the Treaty and indigenous rights with culture, as this narrows our meaning of culture. And others have expressed a view that cultural competency is considered to be a subset of general evaluator competencies, and not central to</p>	

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evaluator competence (as has occurred in the development of these competencies).	
<p>The Treaty of Waitangi is the founding constitutional document of Aotearoa NZ; it expresses the nature of the relationship that was desired between the indigenous population and those wanting to settle in Aotearoa NZ. It has full constitutional legitimacy today, and continues to form the basis for the relationship between Māori and the Crown, and all other cultures in NZ today.</p> <p>The principles that have emerged over time in relation to the Treaty are a contemporary cultural expression of a desired relationship that is in the nature of partnership, mutually understanding and respectful of difference, while recognizing past injustice, marginalization and the need for equitable outcomes in the future.</p>	<p>There are many cultures, culture is more than ethnicity and people are members of more than one 'culture'. In the development of these competencies, we have emphasized and acknowledged that we all have culture and that culture shapes our values, beliefs, and worldviews – AND we take a position that an understanding of the Treaty and its principles, and how these might be applied in practice is an important and central part of evaluation competency and culture in Aotearoa NZ. Working within the context of the Treaty is inclusive of all peoples and cultures of Aotearoa New Zealand.</p>
5. Skills, attributes and abilities	Personal and professional commitment / dispositions
<p>On the one hand the competencies express a range of skills, knowledge, experience, abilities, attributes and dispositions that the 'good' evaluator should have. On the other hand, there are others that say that a competency framework oversimplifies and technocratizes what evaluators are and what they do. Evaluators are as much 'moral stewards' as they are able in the skills of measurement and analysis, and as such we have responsibilities to society.</p>	

On the one hand ...	And on the other ...
6. Who benefits?	Who is marginalised?
<p>On the one hand, the feedback as supported the expressed benefits (refer no.1) of developing evaluator competencies, especially among experienced evaluators. And on the other hand, others have been concerned that developing competencies will put a boundary around who can 'be' an evaluator, and who cannot 'be' an evaluator, and so will, by definition, exclude some who might have otherwise perceived themselves as doing evaluation or being an evaluator. Previously, this boundary didn't exist. Concern was also expressed that the professionalization implicit in the development of competencies, may drive the price of evaluation up so that evaluation is not longer affordable, particularly for community organisations. Similarly, the competencies may further privilege the values of the predominant culture and perpetuate existing inequalities. anzea will need to pay careful attention to the question of 'who benefits' and 'who is marginalised' by the evaluator competencies.</p>	

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