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Rita O'Sullivan

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Collaborative Evaluations: A Step-by-Step Model for the Evaluator, by Liliana Rodriguez-Campos. Tamarac, FL: Llumina Press, 2005.

Reviewed by Rita O'Sullivan

As someone deeply ensconced in collaborative, participatory, and empowerment program evaluation approaches, I was pleased to welcome another voice among us. I also was curious to investigate what new dimensions to the approach the book might present. I am pleased to report Liliana Rodriguez-Campos has made a substantive contribution to the field with *Collaborative Evaluations: A Step-by-Step Model for the Evaluator*.

The title of the book should be taken literally. Dr. Rodriguez-Campos writes primarily for an audience of practicing evaluators who may or may not be familiar with collaborative evaluation strategies. She has constructed a six-component model for collaborative evaluations (MCE) that is clearly presented in a step-by-step fashion. The six components—(a) identify the situation, (b) clarify the expectations, (c) establish a shared commitment, (d) ensure open communication, (e) encourage best practices, and (f) follow specific guidelines—are presented as wedges of a hexagon; however, the author stresses that they are interactive. Each of the book's six sections starts with foundational definitions and then focuses on one component of the model and elaborates on the relevant factors identified as part of the MCE. In most cases, each factor's explanation and justification are accompanied by steps to follow during a collaborative evaluation that is using a selected technique. In part, the step-by-step nature of the overall presentation and the checklists in Appendix A could give the impression that the process is circular/sequential rather than interactive, which I do not believe was the author's intention. An example, demonstrating how the author used the model in an evaluation would have been a welcome addition to underscore the fact that in different situations, different aspects of the model will be useful.

Conceptually, the book posits that evaluators should work collaboratively with groups of stakeholders who will assist with the evaluation. These two to six stakeholders, collaboration members (CMs), are the core decision-making body around the evaluation. Many of the suggested steps are intended to facilitate working/collaborating with this group in particular, as well as other important stakeholder groups.

The book is an excellent resource for new evaluators (collaborative or otherwise) in terms of understanding the importance of clarifying expectations through careful discussion and planning prior to implementing the evaluation. Chapter 1 very clearly describes the various components necessary to identify the evaluation situation and ensure the inclusion of essential elements. The sections on logic modeling, assessing strengths and barriers, developing an evaluation scope of work, and completing critical evaluation activities should be of particular interest.

Uniquely this book combines literature from multiple disciplines, external to the field of program evaluation, to justify the collaborative evaluation approach. Dr. Rodriguez-Campos uses citations from works that focus on effective leadership, organizational development, project and business management, consulting, and psychology to explain why the MCE component factors are essential to successful collaborative evaluations. For example, chapter 4, which focuses on ensuring open communication among stakeholders, crafts the argument to support the importance of communication by citing heavily from the current leadership literature that endorses team building and problem solving. Chapter 6, "Encourage Best Practices," starts with examples from the organizational development literatures, which emphasize the importance of valuing individual differences.

The book makes an additional contribution to the field with the seven "collaboration guiding principles" proposed by Rodriguez-Campos: (a) development, (b) empowerment, (c) involvement, (d) qualification, (e) social support, (f) trust, and (g) understanding. Development speaks to the importance of enhancing the learning of those involved with the evaluation. Empowerment has the evaluator and stakeholders working to remove obstacles and promote a sense of ownership and control over the evaluation.

Involvement addresses the importance of key stakeholders uniting with the evaluator to fully understand the evaluation effort. Qualification requires that those involved in the evaluation have the skills and knowledge necessary to work through the evaluation. Social support includes the development of networks to support individuals within the evaluation effort and reach beyond the effort for needed assistance. Trust advocates for a sense of sincerity and credibility among stakeholders. Finally, understanding recognizes the importance of being sensitive to the feeling of others involved in the evaluation. The expectation is that "These principles proactively guide the everyday collaborative practice" (p. 185).

It is very important to note that the book also demonstrates how collaborative evaluation can improve a variety of evaluation outcomes. Throughout, the book highlights the many positive results of collaborative evaluation, which include (a) improved implementation of the evaluation because of shared decision making, (b) enhanced knowledge base for the evaluation that is created by a team that combines evaluators with program staff and participants, (c) expanded creative problem solving to overcome evaluation barriers resulting from increased participation in the evaluation, (d) strengthened use of evaluation findings because people believe their points of view are represented in the evaluation, (e) better quality feedback from participants about the evaluation findings because they are included in interpretation of data analyses, and (f) increased resources available for the evaluation because the collaborative evaluation team can contribute to implementation efforts.

Overall, *Collaborative Evaluations: A Step-by-Step Model for the Evaluator* makes a valuable contribution to the field, adding new dimensions to the practice of collaborative, participatory, and empowerment evaluation. Those new to evaluation will find some very interesting, clear, helpful examples of the steps needed to implement an evaluation in a particularly collaborative way. Those experienced evaluators, new to collaborative approaches, who are interested in moving toward more collaborative evaluations will find a wealth of strategies to assist them in their efforts. Those of us with more experience in the approach might find (as I did) some new ideas and techniques that will appreciably enhance our current level of practice.