

Rethinking Evaluation

Developing a Strategy for the Sector, By the Sector

2016.01.27

[#RethinkEval](#)

Andrew Taylor
Ben Liadsky



@o_n_n | @ONTjobs



OntarioNonprofitNetwork



theonn.ca

ENGAGE

ADVOCATE

LEAD

Overview

- ✓ How can the Sector Driven Evaluation Strategy help you?
- ✓ What have we heard from you?
- ✓ How are we responding with practical ideas?
- ✓ How can you help shape the strategy?



ENGAGE

ADVOCATE

LEAD

theonnc.ca

@o_n_n
ontario nonprofit
network

Sector Driven Evaluation Strategy

- Evaluation is a big systems issue
 - lots of actors, lots of information flow, lots of influencing factors
- Can be a huge asset when we get it right
- Changing the conversation: focus on *why* not just technical *how to*
- Some changes are beyond org-level — we need to work together



Sharing perspectives = Better evaluation.



theonn.ca

ENGAGE

ADVOCATE

LEAD

What we are NOT doing



- We are NOT putting together a toolkit (although we will produce some resources)
- We are NOT offering training in how to do evaluation
- We are NOT developing a new methodology or endorsing an existing methodology
- We are NOT designing this strategy alone

ENGAGE

ADVOCATE

LEAD

theonn.ca

@o_n_n
ontario nonprofit
network

Some of what we've heard on evaluation...

Top-down

Non-negotiable

Misunderstood

Reports written, but not read

When do we stop proving the obvious?

Last-minute

Lack of capacity

Uncoordinated

Headache

Dismissed

Accountability

Inconsistency

Spun to sound effective

Focused on numbers

Inaccurate

Underfunded

Untapped potential

ENGAGE

ADVOCATE

LEAD

theonnc.ca

@o_n_n
ontario nonprofit
network

In other words, the system for evaluation is....



The Functions of Evaluation

Evaluation is:

- a tool for holding nonprofits accountable
- a tool for project management and decision-making
- a tool for developing collective action in response to complex issues
- a tool for learning and engagement with community members
- a type of intervention: a way of mobilizing people to take action

Framing the Issues: What Leads to a Useful Evaluation?

- A **clear, shared purpose**
- Specific people committed to **meaningful use** of the evaluation
- A plan for ongoing **communication** that ensures buy-in and transparency
- A match between **expectations**, skills / capacity, and funding
- A process to ensure that there is a **safe space for critical reflection** and learning
- **Follow-through**



theonn.ca

ENGAGE

ADVOCATE

LEAD

Community engagement and guiding principles

“Communities drive the (evaluation) agenda. Self-determination is exemplified in everything that we do. Homeless people need to be involved in homeless evaluation. Same in indigenous communities. Even the creation of the process has to be from the community. (Before this interview), we would have had the community help design the questions.”

ENGAGE

ADVOCATE

LEAD

The importance of negotiation

“In our project, we had three national partners. Within each community there were different sectors involved: business, people living in poverty, etc. There were a lot of meetings and it took a lot of time, a lot of angst. We had to challenge ourselves a lot. We need to create resources that give enough guidance to engage in this kind of process.”

ENGAGE

ADVOCATE

LEAD

Safe space for reflection

“We try to be very honest with funders, but sometimes it feels like you are not sure how honest to be. We are a very new organization. There is often a big learning curve. It is hard to tell a funder ‘holy crap, we are doing way too much!’ There were these really big things we learned, that we deviated from a plan, maybe we ‘failed.’ Always that fear factor that you will never get funded again because you suck at everything! We know this is widespread and we are in great company. We are not the only ones!”

ENGAGE

ADVOCATE

LEAD

Useful Evaluation: What We Learned from these Stories

- leadership that is strongly supportive
- involvement of an intermediary with little or no connection to accountability
- evaluation that lasts long enough to evolve and grow
- true shared ownership
- trust and strong relationships built through time
- a willingness to name and discuss differences

Why do we do evaluation?

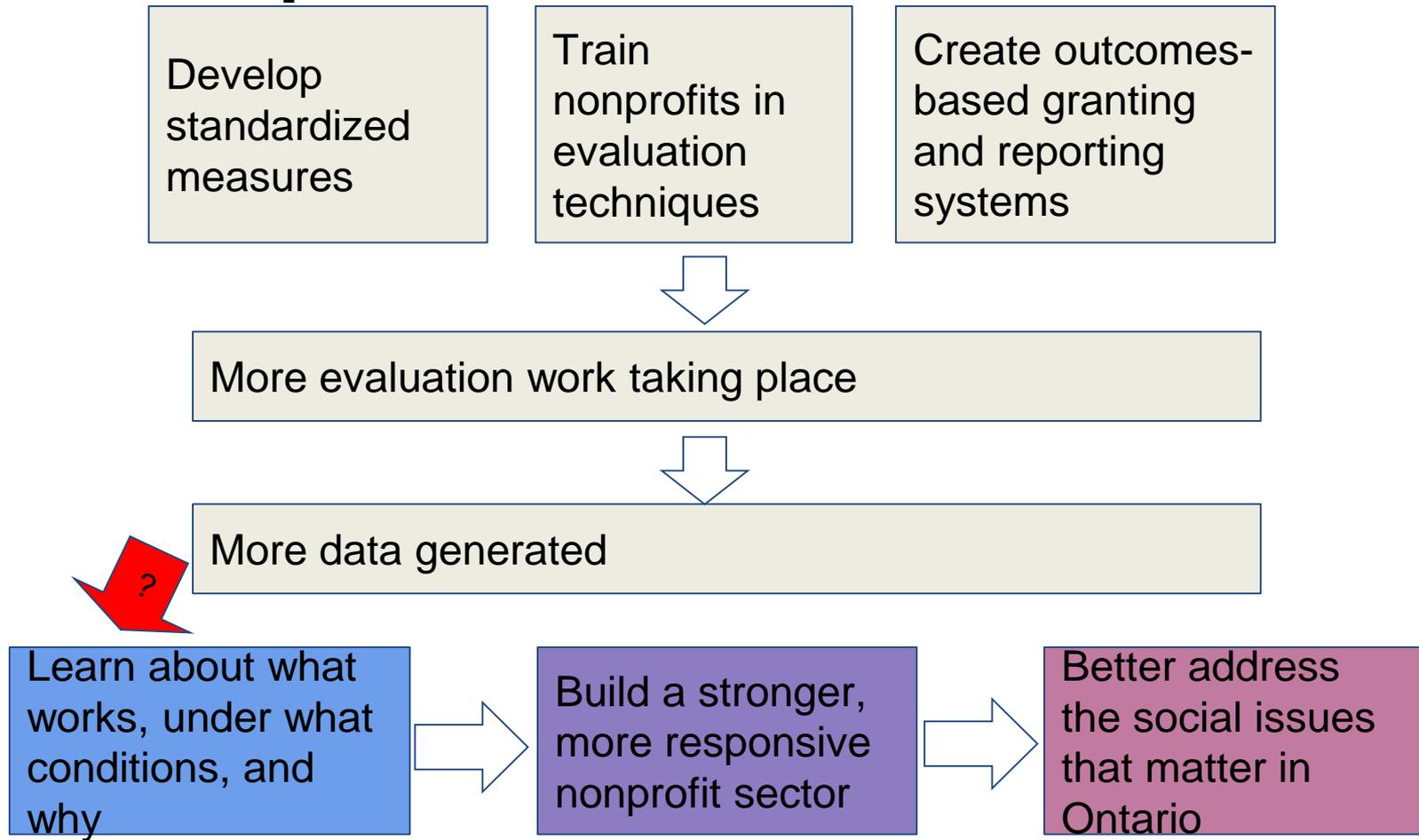


ENGAGE

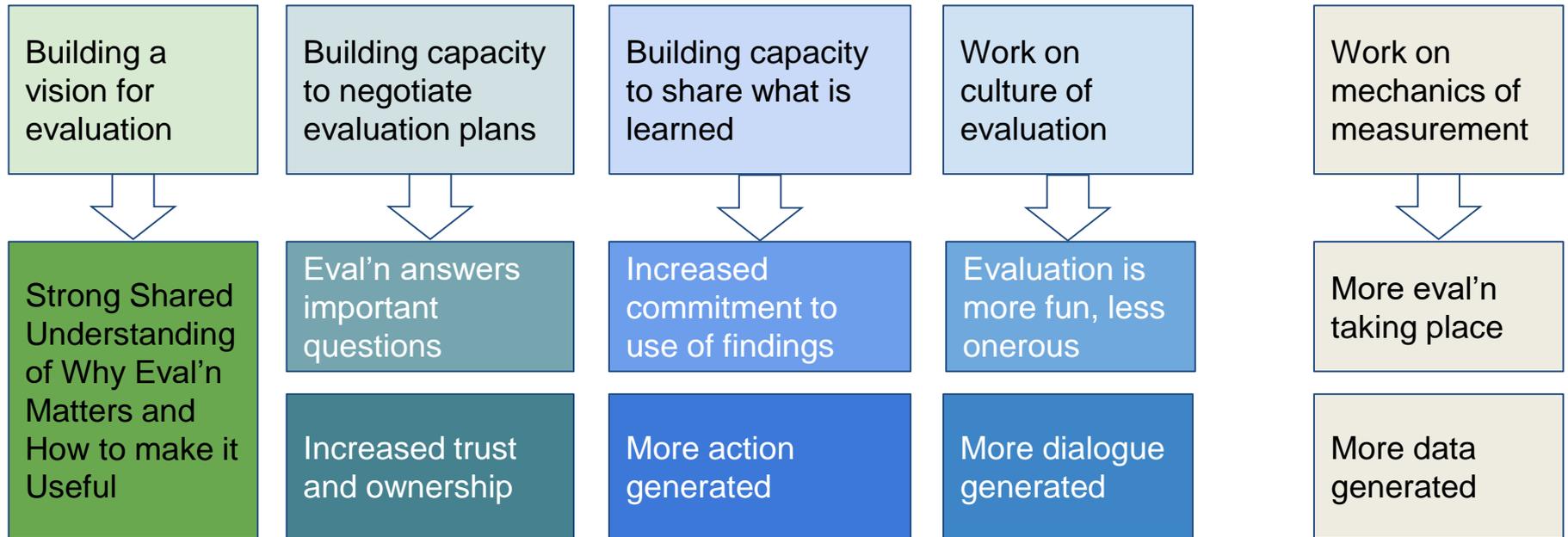
ADVOCATE

LEAD

How have government and funders tried to improve evaluation in the sector?



What More Needs to Be Done?



Strategies & Products

- A vision for evaluation in the nonprofit sector that expresses our values and is something we could use to advocate on behalf of the sector
- A guide for negotiation and planning of evaluation: a conversation starter
- Developing a culture of evaluation that can be fun and less onerous
- A network approach to better share what is learned and promote collaboration

ENGAGE

ADVOCATE

LEAD

Vision & Principles

Some examples:

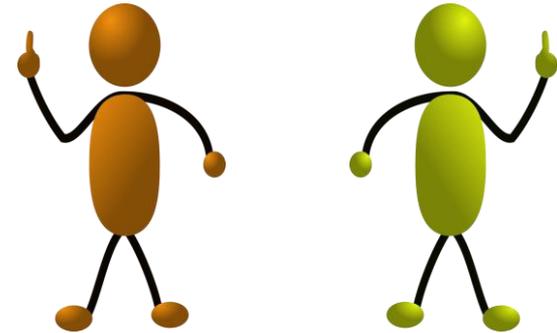
- Designed and altered collaboratively
- Regular communication between stakeholders
- Versatile and adaptable
- Openly sharing and talking about findings

and the sector did rise up and agreed that evaluation shall be useful

Negotiation guide

Examples of some important questions to ask:

- How did you think that last evaluation went?
- Who is going to use these results?
- Who is going to decide?
- How much work will this take?



ENGAGE

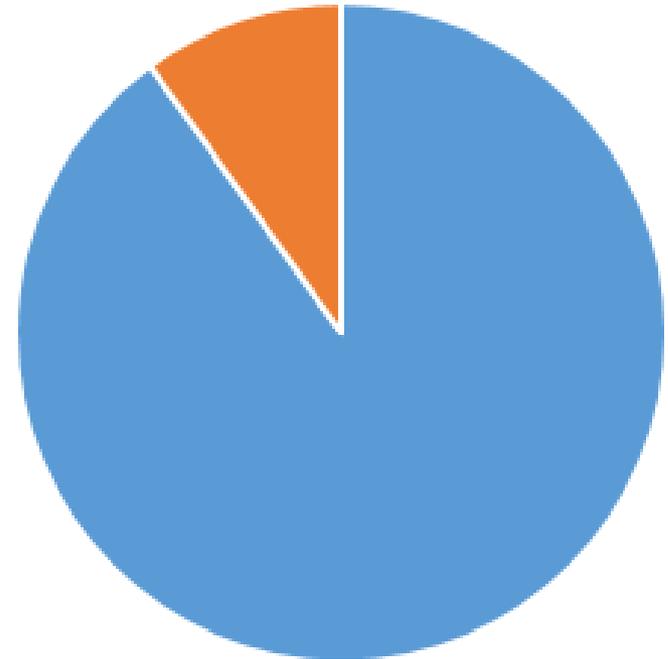
ADVOCATE

LEAD

Developing an evaluation culture

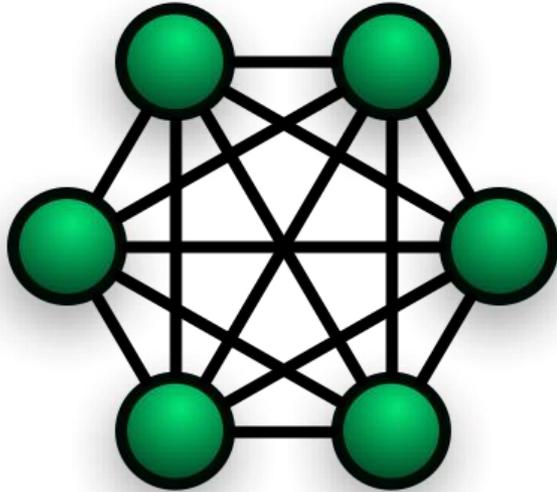
Some examples:

- Less paper
- Arts-based approaches
- Rapid response evaluation
- Safe space for failure



■ Fun ■ Not Fun

A network approach to promote sharing and collaboration



- Sharing findings
- Ways we can act as an evaluation intermediary or address systems level questions
- Ways we can work collaboratively to create common metrics

ENGAGE

ADVOCATE

LEAD

Next Steps

- Continue to refine ideas and collect feedback
- Identify and test strategies with nonprofits
- Meet with funders
- Future webinars
- Future events

ENGAGE

ADVOCATE

LEAD

Looking for a sleeping aid?

- Read our [evaluation blog post](#)
- Read our [evaluation executive summary](#)
- Read our [evaluation literature review](#)



SECTOR DRIVEN EVALUATION STRATEGY

Sharing perspectives
=
Better evaluation



Evaluation Literature Review

January 2016 | Ontario Nonprofit Network

Andrew Taylor

Ben Liadsky

theonnn.ca

ENGAGE

ADVOCATE

LEAD

Stay Connected

Subscribe to the [Evidence Network News Flash](#) to stay informed about our work.

Website: <http://theonn.ca/our-work/our-structures/evaluation/>

Twitter: @o_n_n #RethinkEval @OntJobs

Linkedin: Ontario Nonprofit Network

Facebook: Ontario Nonprofit Network

Email: ben@theonn.ca

ENGAGE

ADVOCATE

LEAD

theonn.ca

@o_n_n
ontario nonprofit
network