

THE PROGRAM EVALUATION STANDARDS and CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Evaluation standards are the benchmarks used to address the quality of an evaluation effort. As professional evaluators, these standards are the foundation of our work. Since 1975, the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation has established standards that are endorsed by most evaluation professional organizations. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s *Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health* embraces these standards by literally placing them at the center of the evaluation steps. While stakeholder involvement always has been a cornerstone of the standards, the third edition further advances the need to understand the cultural context in which the evaluation occurs. Below are listed the standards and possible strategies that can increase cultural competence. For more detail, see [Practical Strategies for Culturally Competent Evaluation](#).

Standards	Strategies to Increase Cultural Competence
Utility	
<p>U1. Evaluator Credibility—Evaluations should be conducted by qualified people who establish and maintain credibility in the evaluation context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess yourself and the fit between your skills with culturally different groups and the evaluation context. • Engage a co-evaluator and/or an evaluation team to enhance credibility with stakeholders.
<p>U2. Attention to Stakeholders—Evaluations should devote attention to the full range of individuals and groups invested in the program and affected by its evaluation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively recruit and engage a range of stakeholders, including program participants or those affected by the program. • Ensure participation for affected groups that are typically overlooked or excluded.
<p>U3. Negotiated Purposes—Evaluation purposes should be identified and continually negotiated based on the needs of stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use communication norms appropriate for the stakeholders to ensure that the purposes are understandable and meaningful. • Ensure evaluation purposes address diverse needs of stakeholders. • Use inclusive practices to resolve conflicts among purposes proposed by different groups of stakeholders.
<p>U4. Explicit Values—Evaluations should clarify and specify the individual and cultural values underpinning purposes, processes, and judgments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take time to learn what different stakeholders value about the program and its evaluation. • Communicate clearly about these values through the evaluation process, and address important conflicts.
<p>U5. Relevant Information—Evaluation information should serve the identified and emergent needs of stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage stakeholders to think broadly about what constitutes relevant data sources and collection methods; discuss competing viewpoints.
<p>U6. Meaningful Processes and Products—Evaluations should construct activities, descriptions, and judgments in ways that encourage participants to rediscover,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach evaluation principles and skills to establish common ground for understanding and using evaluation processes and products. • Adapt activities and processes to incorporate cultural norms.

reinterpret, or revise their understandings and behaviors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure evaluation products are understandable to diverse audiences.
U7. Timely and Appropriate Communicating and Reporting —Evaluations should attend to the continuing information needs of their multiple audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailor information sharing to meet cultural needs: ensure that information is shared through appropriate translation, formats, and channels as well as comfortable venues.
U8. Concern for Consequences and Influence —Evaluations should promote responsible and adaptive use while guarding against unintended negative consequences and misuse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipate possible ways that evaluation information can be used or misused within the program’s cultural and operational context. • Protect information so that it is not misused in a manner harmful to vulnerable populations.
Feasibility	
F1. Project Management —Evaluations should use effective project management strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build in sufficient time and resources to address contextual and cultural needs: time for stakeholder interactions, translation, appropriate data collection staff, and diverse communication needs.
F2. Practical Procedures —Evaluation procedures should be practical and responsive to the way the program operates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect the organizational culture of the program itself. • Recognize diversity of perspectives within the program’s operations. • Select processes and methods that are responsive to the organizational culture and the cultural background of participants.
F3. Contextual Viability —Evaluations should recognize, monitor, and balance the cultural and political interests and needs of individuals and groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the cultural, political, and economic context of the program; engage stakeholders to ensure understanding among diverse perspectives. • Foster and monitor communications to ensure balance among stakeholders throughout the evaluation.
F4. Resource Use —Evaluations should use resources effectively and efficiently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize different perceptions of costs and benefits. • Be careful not to prioritize the needs of one stakeholder group over another on the basis of cost alone.
Propriety	
P1. Responsive and Inclusive Orientation —Evaluations should be responsive to stakeholders and their communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a wide range of stakeholders, including program participants and those affected by the program, and substantially engage them throughout the evaluation. • Consider power relations within the program when determining the breadth and depth of stakeholder involvement. • Optimize the benefits of stakeholder involvement by focusing on the unique assets and strengths of individuals and their cultures rather than on their deficits.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the contributions of all stakeholders to the evaluation.
<p>P2. Formal Agreements—Evaluation agreements should be negotiated to make obligations explicit and take into account the needs, expectations, and cultural contexts of clients and other stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take advantage of formal agreements to clarify differences in culturally based assumptions. • Use the writing process to educate stakeholders about evaluation. • Limit the use of jargon, and instead use community communication norms and requirements when writing agreements.
<p>P3. Human Rights and Respect—Evaluations should be designed and conducted to protect human and legal rights and maintain the dignity of participants and other stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the relevance of certain rights and how they vary across the cultures within the community. • Recognize that vulnerable groups may need specific protections. • Only select evaluation methods that respect cultural sensitivities. • Use the co-evaluator or evaluation team to monitor the evaluation to ensure respect is maintained.
<p>P4. Clarity and Fairness—Evaluations should be understandable and fair in addressing stakeholder needs and purposes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively engage less powerful or less vocal stakeholders in decision-making processes. • Think through and avoid ways that the evaluation can contribute to inequities.
<p>P5. Transparency and Disclosure—Evaluations should provide complete descriptions of findings, limitations, and conclusions to all stakeholders, unless doing so would violate legal and propriety obligations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain open lines of communication with stakeholders holding diverse cultural perspectives. • Use culturally appropriate ways to share information about the evaluation and to disseminate findings. • Explain and disclose information in an understandable manner. • Avoid jargon and build evaluation knowledge and skills among participants.
<p>P6. Conflicts of Interests—Evaluations should openly and honestly identify and address real or perceived conflicts of interests that may compromise the evaluation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge that stakeholder values and interests may conflict and build an open process to resolve conflicts. • Ensure that the perspectives of less powerful participants are respected.
<p>P7. Fiscal Responsibility—Evaluations should account for all expended resources and comply with sound fiscal procedures and processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that evaluation costs take into account activities and processes necessary to meet cultural and community needs (e.g., translations, additional meetings and trainings, appropriate dissemination to community audiences).
Accuracy	
<p>A1. Justified Conclusions and Decisions—Evaluation conclusions and decisions should be explicitly justified in the cultures and contexts where they have consequences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on how different or conflicting values may affect the way that evaluation findings are viewed or justified. • Ensure that less powerful stakeholders are engaged in drawing conclusions and making decisions. • Accept that accuracy is defined differently among different stakeholders.

<p>A2. Valid Information—Evaluation information should serve the intended purposes and support valid interpretations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify when key evaluation terms have different meanings for different stakeholder groups and build understanding between these perspectives. • Learn and use key terms as they are understood by the communities involved with the program. • Reconcile how stakeholders understand the meanings of key terms; guard against giving privilege to the way they are understood by the most powerful stakeholder groups.
<p>A3. Reliable Information—Evaluation procedures should yield sufficiently dependable and consistent information for the intended uses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember that reliability is dependent on who and what is being tested; don't assume reliability across cultures or contexts.
<p>A4. Explicit Program and Context Descriptions—Evaluations should document programs and their contexts with appropriate detail and scope for the evaluation purposes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tap diverse informants to describe the program and its context. • Recognize that perspectives and descriptions change over time and the evaluation process itself may affect the program and its context.
<p>A5. Information Management—Evaluations should employ systematic information collection, review, verification, and storage methods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with stakeholders to select methods they feel are credible and of which they can take ownership. • Be open to a variety of methods and sources of data. • Select information storage procedures that protect the rights of the individuals providing the information.
<p>A6. Sound Designs and Analyses—Evaluations should employ technically adequate designs and analyses that are appropriate for the evaluation purposes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help stakeholders to understand how different designs and analysis may be viewed in a different cultural context. • Select designs and analyses that will be credible to the stakeholders.
<p>A7. Explicit Evaluation Reasoning—Evaluation reasoning leading from information and analyses to findings, interpretations, conclusions, and judgments should be clearly and completely documented.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage stakeholders in developing findings from data, interpreting findings, and drawing conclusions. • Recognize that stakeholders may have different ways and styles of reasoning and that logic is contextual. • Clearly articulate all assumptions involved with the reasoning process.
<p>A8. Communication and Reporting—Evaluation communications should have adequate scope and guard against misconceptions, biases, distortions, and errors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build in checks early in the evaluation to ensure shared understanding of evaluation results among stakeholders. • Create and implement a communication plan that meets audience preferences and ensures that different language needs are met. • Ensure that key concepts are not "lost in translation."
<p>E1. Evaluation Documentation—Evaluations should fully document their negotiated purposes and implemented</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be explicit in documentation about decisions made to increase cultural competence and justify why the values of certain stakeholder groups were given precedence over those of other groups.

<p>designs, procedures, data, and outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all documentation is clear and understandable to all stakeholders. • Fully record the contributions made by all of the stakeholders within the process.
<p>E2. Internal Meta-evaluation—Evaluators should use these and other applicable standards to examine the accountability of the evaluation design, procedures employed, information collected, and outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build capacity within the evaluation team to enable team members to apply evaluation standards to assess the quality of the evaluation over time; help them reflect on their own worldview and culturally-based assumptions.
<p>E3. External Meta-evaluation—Program evaluation sponsors, clients, evaluators, and other stakeholders should encourage the conduct of external meta-evaluations using these and other applicable standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify cultural competence as part of the purpose and standards for the meta-evaluation. • Seek out persons from diverse cultural backgrounds to serve as reviewers. • Avoid the use of meta-evaluation and other jargon when communicating with stakeholders.