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Systematically assessing the performance of evaluation professionals allows evaluators to “walk the talk.” Using this client-based evaluation method can be a valuable process for informing practice.

Evaluating the Evaluator: Development, Field Testing, and Implications of a Client-Based Method for Assessing Evaluator Performance

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Improved services and client satisfaction are key aspects of independent evaluation consultants' practices. For evaluators to deliver the highest-quality services possible, they should regularly monitor their performance as evaluators, as well as the satisfaction of their clients. The client feedback form (CFF) was developed to gather performance assessment and satisfaction feedback from evaluation clients. Focusing on both performance assessment and client satisfaction provides evaluators comprehensive feedback regarding their services that they can then use to identify strengths and weaknesses and make appropriate adjustments to their work. This chapter discusses the importance of performance assessment and client satisfaction in general and within the field of evaluation and reviews the development and field testing of the CFF. Implications and future directions for the CFF are also discussed.

Performance Assessment

When not applied to programs, the terms *performance assessment*, *performance evaluation*, and *performance appraisal* are most commonly used in business management settings. Applied to the business of evaluation, performance assessment techniques can be an important part of a comprehensive quality



assurance strategy. Performance assessment has been shown to be a valuable component of many businesses' efforts to evaluate the performance of employees critically. Any course or book on business management or business leadership will contain a section on evaluating the performance of employees. Straub (2000) identifies two components to any performance appraisal: "the criteria against which employees are measured (such as quality of performance, job knowledge, and job-related behavior) and a rating scale that shows the level that employees have achieved on each criterion . . ." (p. 113). Performance evaluation is "the formal system by which managers evaluate and rate the quality of subordinates' performance over a given period of time" (Wideman, 2002).

One method for conducting performance evaluations that has recently experienced a rise in popularity is known as 360-degree feedback. Lepsinger and Lucia (1997) define the process as ". . . collecting perceptions about a person's behavior and the impact of that behavior from the person's boss or bosses, direct reports, colleagues, fellow members of project teams, internal and external customers, and suppliers" (p. 6). While asking clients to assess the performance of evaluators clearly falls within the domain of performance evaluation as defined by Straub and Wideman, it is only one aspect of the 360-degree process. The major difference between business definitions of performance assessment and client-based evaluator assessment is that the evaluation client rather than a manager or supervisor provides the feedback. Adding the peer review process to client-based assessment strategies would get one closer, although the peer review process undertaken as part of an "evaluating the evaluator" project (see Chapter Twelve, this volume) has focused on the product of the evaluation, that is, the report, rather than on the behavior of the evaluator.

Client Satisfaction

While performance assessment is one critical piece of information needed for quality assurance purposes, so is knowing whether consumers are satisfied with the services for which they are paying. In many areas of business and industry, companies and organizations focus a great deal of attention on satisfying the consumers of their products or services. In the broadest sense of the term, *client satisfaction* has been defined as "a complex process balancing consumer expectations with perceptions of the quality of the service or product in question" (Newsome and Wright, 1999, p. 161). According to Zeithaml and Bitner (1996), there are three types of client expectations: (1) desired service, which is the level of service a client hopes to receive; (2) adequate service, which is the minimum tolerable level of performance; and (3) predicted service, which is the level of service a client expects he or she is likely to receive. The authors state that consumers are able to recognize that service performance can vary and that consumers' willingness to accept this variation

affects their perception of how satisfied they may be with a product or service, a phenomenon they refer to as the “zone of tolerance.”

For most services, the zone of tolerance falls somewhere between desired services and adequate services. It is only when services fall outside the range of desired and adequate services that clients begin to notice service performance. Finally, it is the outcome of a service (rather than the service process) that has the greatest impact on the zone of tolerance and how much leeway clients are willing to give service providers. For evaluators, this suggests that final evaluation products and the overall perception of the quality of the evaluation are key aspects of client satisfaction.

Other researchers suggest additional factors that affect client satisfaction. For example, social equity theory suggests that clients will measure their gains with those of other clients and with those of the service provider (Oliver and Swan, 1989). Clients will be satisfied if they believe that their gains, compared to the resources they put out, are positive and fair. Furthermore, some emotional factors, for example, joy, excitement, pride, anger, and guilt, play into satisfaction (Oliver, 1993).

The majority of research on consumer satisfaction has been conducted in the fields of marketing and health care (Baker, Zucker, and Gross, 1998; Haag-Granello, Granello, and Lee, 1999; Kapp and Propp, 2002; Newsome and Wright, 1999); however, the theories and processes guiding efforts to measure consumer satisfaction in those fields apply to measurement of client satisfaction in the field of program evaluation. Measuring the satisfaction of evaluation clients is important for several reasons: (1) client satisfaction can be used as a quality control mechanism for evaluators; (2) satisfying evaluation clients may help independent evaluators compete and succeed in a sometimes highly competitive field by resulting in repeat business or referrals to other potential clients; and (3) it is fundamentally important for evaluators to know that they are meeting the needs of their clients because evaluation services cannot be considered high quality unless the client is satisfied.

Development of the Client Feedback Form

To bring both performance assessment and client satisfaction to the forefront of the evaluation field, a group of independent evaluation consultants developed the CFF to provide a systematic method for evaluation clients to assess the performance of evaluation professionals. The idea for the CFF originated at the annual meeting of the American Evaluation Association (AEA) in St. Louis, Missouri, in November 2001. The original discussion focused on two primary purposes for the CFF: to develop a tool for helping the Independent Consulting Topical Interest Group (IC TIG) identify professional development needs among its members and to “walk the talk,” that is, put our words into action and follow the same advice we give our clients:

using evaluation as a valuable process to provide us opportunities to collect data systematically to inform our practices.

Following the AEA meeting in St. Louis, a committee developed a proposal for a think tank on evaluating the evaluator at the next AEA conference. For the 2002 annual AEA conference in Washington, D.C., the committee prepared a draft instrument that allowed for collection of feedback from the client's perspective. At the 2002 think tank session, participants reviewed and offered suggestions for improving the draft client feedback instrument. Based on these comments, in early 2003 the committee finalized the first version of what became known as the CFF. The group spent the remainder of 2003 pilot-testing the CFF, and its results were presented at the 2003 AEA conference.

Overview of the CFF Tool

The CFF starts with a question asking the respondent about his or her level of involvement in the project in question. Respondents are provided with nine choices and can select all that apply from the following list:

1. Involved in selecting the evaluator
2. Provided input to the evaluation plan
3. Key decision maker (for example, approved instruments, reports, changes in the plan, and so on)
4. Day-to-day point of contact with the evaluator
5. Handled my organization's responsibilities in the evaluation
6. Approved invoices/interim status reports
7. Read/commented on final evaluation report/s
8. Participated in interpreting results/writing recommendations
9. Other

For the final option, respondents are asked to specify their response. This first question provides context for the responses that follow.

The respondent's role clarification is followed by ratings of overall quality and usefulness of the evaluation and whether the respondent would recommend the evaluator to colleagues. This last item is followed by an open-ended question asking the respondent to explain his or her response. These questions are designed primarily to assess evaluator performance.

The next item on the form presents the respondent with seven dimensions of evaluator performance, some of which are drawn from the Program Evaluation Standards, which were developed by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (www.eval.org). These performance dimensions refer to the evaluator's:

1. Understanding of the project
2. Attentiveness to my needs/organization's needs

3. Quality of reports/products produced
4. Appropriateness of reports/products for my needs/organization's needs
5. Timeliness in delivering reports/products
6. Accessibility to me/my organizations
7. Communication with me/my organization

This question also gives the respondent the opportunity to add any other dimension of performance that was not included in the list. Respondents are asked to rate each item on a four-point scale: poor, fair, good, or excellent. If a particular dimension is not applicable to the project or if respondents are unsure of how to rate a particular item, they have the opportunity to select "NA/Don't Know." While the dimensions described in this question concern the evaluator's performance, clients are essentially providing their level of satisfaction with the evaluator's performance.

Directly after providing ratings on the dimensions of evaluator performance, respondents are asked to describe in their own words the strengths of the evaluator and areas where the evaluator could benefit from improvement. These questions provide more detailed information for evaluators to improve their services, as well as to identify areas where the evaluator should continue to operate in the same way as in the past. This series of questions allows the client to provide further opinions as to the evaluator's performance.

The final formal rating question on the CFF asks respondents to rate the evaluator's adherence to eight of the Twenty-Five Guiding Principles for Evaluators that AEA developed "to guide the professional practice of evaluators, and inform evaluation clients and the general public about the principles they can expect to be upheld by professional evaluators" (www.eval.org). The principles selected for the form were those that were most appropriate for evaluation clients to rate. Most principles not included in the CFF include items that the majority of clients would find difficult to assess, such as, "To ensure the accuracy and credibility of the evaluative information they produce, evaluators should adhere to the highest technical standards appropriate to the methods they use" (Guiding Principle A.1). While it is true that some clients will have the ability to respond to this guideline, many more would not. Respondents are given four choices for each of the above questions: (1) NA/don't know, (2) no, (3) partially, and (4) completely. As with most other instruments of this kind, the final question on the CFF reads, "Do you have any other comments about your experience working with the evaluator on this particular project? If yes, please feel free to use the space below."

Pilot Testing of the CFF

In early 2003, after development of the first draft of the CFF, the committee sent out a call to members of the IC TIG's electronic discussion group for

volunteers to pilot-test the CFF. Twelve evaluators volunteered. Completed CFFs were collected from thirty-four clients who completed either hard copy or online versions of the form. Evaluators were not given direction regarding who should complete the CFF. It was left to the evaluators to determine who at their client agencies would be the most appropriate respondents. Evaluators were asked to collect the CFF forms from their clients and then submit the forms to a third party for data entry and analysis. Results for each individual evaluator were then sent back to the evaluator by e-mail. This approach reduced concerns about client confidentiality by having a third party enter and analyze the raw data, with evaluators receiving data files stripped of client identification.

Clients who completed the CFF during the pilot phase were highly involved with the evaluator-evaluation project they were asked about, with 100 percent reportedly providing input into the evaluation plan for the project, 91 percent considering themselves key decision makers about their project, 79 percent providing input into the selection of the evaluator for the project, and 74 percent considering themselves the day-to-day point of contact for the evaluator. These results suggest that evaluators were successful in identifying appropriate people at their client agencies to complete the CFF, and the clients who completed the form were qualified to address evaluator performance adequately and provide feedback on satisfaction because they were highly involved in the evaluation projects in question.

Table 11.1 displays results for CFF questions focusing on client satisfaction. As shown, 91 percent of clients rated the quality of the evaluators' work as excellent or very good, 91 percent rated the usefulness of the evaluators' work as extremely or very useful, 91 percent rated the quality of reports/products as excellent or good, 94 percent rated the appropriateness of reports/products as excellent or good, and 97 percent rated timeliness in delivering reports/products as excellent or good. In addition, 94 percent of clients said they would recommend the evaluator to their colleagues. Common reasons for recommending the evaluator to colleagues were knowledge and expertise in evaluation, having a pleasant/personable interaction style, thoroughness and attention to detail, and professionalism.

Key findings regarding performance assessment are set out in Table 11.2. As shown, 88 percent of clients rated the evaluators' understanding of the project as excellent or good; 97 percent rated attentiveness to clients' needs as excellent or good; 94 percent rated accessibility of evaluation staff as excellent or good; and 91 percent rated communication as excellent or good. Performance was also measured by asking clients to identify evaluators' strengths. The two most common strengths identified by clients were technical skills/analytical skills/data interpretation and writing/presentation skills. Each of these skills was identified as evaluator strengths by 28 percent of the respondents. Other strengths, each identified by 21 percent of clients, included understanding client needs, communication skills, and dedication/commitment/enthusiasm toward the evaluation project. Clients

Table 11.1. Client Satisfaction Pilot Test Results for CFF

<i>Satisfaction Dimension</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Overall assessment of the quality of the work	Excellent	85
	Very good	6
	Good	6
	Fair	3
	Poor	0
Usefulness of the work performed	Extremely useful	73
	Very useful	18
	Somewhat useful	9
	Not at all useful	0
Quality of reports/products	Excellent/good	91
	Fair/poor	9
Appropriateness of reports/products	Excellent/good	94
	Fair/poor	6
Timeliness in delivery of reports/products	Excellent/good	97
	Fair/poor	3
Would recommend evaluator to others	Yes	94
	No	6

Note: N = 34.

Table 11.2. Performance Assessment Pilot Test Results for CFF

<i>Performance Assessment Dimension</i>	<i>Excellent/Good</i>	<i>Fair/Poor</i>
Understanding of project	88%	12%
Attentiveness to client needs	97	3
Accessibility of evaluation staff	94	6
Communication	91	9

Note: N = 34.

identified a number of opportunities for evaluators to improve their work. The most common suggestion was for better report writing (40 percent), followed by deeper understanding of project (30 percent) and improved communication and interpersonal style (30 percent).

Responses to the questions regarding evaluator adherence to the AEA Guiding Principles indicated that most evaluators, from the clients' perspectives, effectively adhered to the guidelines. Table 11.3 displays the percentage of clients who reported that their evaluator completely adhered to specific Guiding Principles. The Guiding Principles with the largest percentages of clients reporting complete adherence were negotiating honestly with the organization (94 percent), conducting the evaluation in a way that

Table 11.3. Client Assessment of Evaluator Adherence to AEA Guiding Principles Pilot Test Results for CFF

Guiding Principle	<i>NA/Don't Know</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Partially</i>	<i>Completely</i>
1. Did the evaluator negotiate honestly with your organization concerning:				
Costs?	6%	0%	0%	94%
Tasks to be undertaken?	3	0	3	94
Limitations of methods?	9	6	6	79
Scope of results likely to be obtained?	12	6	3	79
Uses of data resulting from the evaluation?	6	0	12	82
2. Did the evaluator explore with you/your staff both the shortcomings and strengths of various evaluation questions and the approaches . . . ?	9	0	18	73
3. Did the evaluator record all changes made in the original negotiated project plans and the reasons why the changes were made?	36	6	6	52
4. Did the evaluator conduct the evaluation in a way that clearly respects the dignity and self-worth of stakeholders?	6	0	3	91
5. Did the evaluator identify and respect differences among participants and consider the implications of such differences when planning . . . ?	15	0	12	73
6. Did the evaluator include the perspectives/ interests of all stakeholders?	9	3	15	73
7. Did they communicate their methods/ approaches accurately . . . ?	9	0	6	85
8. Re: reporting negative findings, did the evaluator seek to maximize the benefits and reduce any unnecessary harm that might occur . . . ?	32	0	15	53

Note: N = 34.

respects the dignity and self-worth of stakeholders (91 percent), and communicating methods and approaches accurately (85 percent).

These initial findings from the field test of version 1 of the CFF suggested that the CFF could successfully provide feedback from clients on key dimensions of both performance and client satisfaction. Findings also indicated that the CFF was successful in helping evaluators identify areas of professional strength and weakness. After the pilot test was completed, there was growing interest in finding out exactly how useful the evaluators who used the CFF thought the form was in helping them with their own quality assurance strategies. The primary questions were: (1) Did results of the CFF provide evaluators with information they could use to assess their performance

and quality of work? and (2) Was the CFF a user-friendly tool that both evaluators and clients would consider using?

To address these questions, the twelve evaluators who participated in the CFF pilot test were surveyed regarding their experience using the CFF with their clients. Surveys were e-mailed to all evaluators who participated in the field test, and evaluators were asked to complete the survey and return the completed survey by e-mail. Of the twelve evaluators surveyed, 42 percent reported giving their clients the online version of the CFF, 25 percent gave their clients a hard copy to complete, and 33 percent offered their clients the choice of either the hard copy or online version. Of forty-nine clients asked to complete the CFF, thirty-four clients completed and returned the CFF, giving an overall response rate of 69 percent.

To determine if the CFF provided evaluators results they could use for quality assurance strategies, evaluators were asked a series of questions regarding their use of CFF results. One-third of the evaluators reported that they used the results of the feedback forms. Ways in which they used the results included:

- To better understand how clients used and rated their services
- To think about how to best approach and work with clients
- To identify and address negative comments made by clients
- To raise staff morale by sharing positive feedback from clients with the evaluation staff

Over half the evaluators reported not using the results of their CFFs. The most common reason for not using the results was that all the client comments were positive and did not provide the evaluator any ideas for changing his or her work approach. One evaluator reported never receiving CFF results from the third-party data manager, and another evaluator had concerns over client honesty and questioned the client's ability to understand the form, particularly the section on the AEA Guiding Principles. When asked how they would use the results in the future, evaluators reported that they:

- Intended to complete summary analyses to get an overall rating of services and to identify areas of weakness
- Would include CFF findings when creating marketing materials
- Would use the results to assess performance and make needed changes

Overall, 67 percent of the evaluators thought the CFF was a useful tool for assessing their performance. Evaluators reported that the CFF was useful in assessing performance because it highlighted aspects of their work that the clients valued, helped the evaluator know if he or she was on track with the client, provided evaluators with testimonials they could use for marketing purposes, and provided data that the evaluator could use to pinpoint areas of strength and weakness.

To address the question of whether the CFF was a user-friendly tool for the evaluators and clients, evaluators were asked about the barriers they encountered while using the form. They were also asked to identify ways in which the process could be improved. Evaluators identified a number of ways to improve the CFF process:

- Clarify who is to fill out the form, particularly if there is more than one person at the client agency with whom the evaluator deals.
- Ensure that evaluators receive their raw data files back in a timely manner.
- Make raw data files available to the evaluators in a format that is immediately usable.
- Create a version of the CFF that is appropriate for use while an evaluation is in progress (rather than having to wait until the end).
- Add questions about interactions between clients and the evaluators.
- Clarify what is to be assessed (that is, the overall evaluation versus specific individuals).

The pilot test identified a number of barriers to using the CFF. First, some evaluators were uncertain about how to introduce the form to their clients. This uncertainty stemmed mostly from being unsure about how to tell the clients what the form's purpose was and when to introduce it to the client. Other evaluators felt uncomfortable asking the client to complete the form because they knew their clients were extremely busy. A second barrier dealt with timing: knowing the best time in the life of a project to ask a client to complete the form. For example, some evaluators questioned whether the form should be used only when a project was finished or whether the form could be used at other times as well. Some of the questions were geared specifically to end-of-project timing, so introducing the form at other times was not appropriate. As a result of this difficulty, several evaluators expressed an interest in having a form that could be used at various times during the life of a project. Third, some evaluators reported client resistance to completing the CFF, either because the client was too busy (that is, clients view the CFF as "one more thing to do") or because they simply were not interested in completing the form.

Another barrier was related to entry and analysis of CFF data. During the pilot phase of the CFF, evaluators were not required to enter their own data into a database for analysis. After the initial pilot phase, however, evaluators were told that data entry would no longer be handled by a third party and that evaluators themselves would be required to do their own data entry. Several evaluators then expressed resistance to entering and analyzing their CFF data, mostly because they were too busy and CFF data entry was seen as "one more thing to do." Fifth, evaluators reported client concerns that clients' responses would not be anonymous (that is, "the evaluator will know who I am"). Finally, some evaluators reported that the form was not suitable for the type of work they were conducting. Personnel or

product assessments were examples of work that evaluators felt did not fit well with the types of questions included on the CFF.

Following the initial pilot testing of the CFF, several iterations of the tool were developed. Feedback from evaluators at the 2003 AEA meeting suggested that the section of the CFF that included the Guiding Principles may be difficult for clients to complete. Furthermore, they suggested that clients would more readily accept a shorter form (one page front and back). Based on these comments, two versions of the CFF emerged: the original CFF, which contains a series of question regarding evaluators' adherence to the Guiding Principles, and a shortened version in which the questions about the Guiding Principles are omitted.

In addition to wanting a shortened version of the CFF, several evaluators expressed concern that the language used in the Guiding Principles section of the long form was confusing. Therefore, that section was reworked so that the language used more common terms. The final version of the Guiding Principles section includes the following questions:

1. Did the evaluator negotiate honestly with your organization concerning:
 - Costs?
 - Tasks to be undertaken?
 - Limitations of methods?
 - Scope of results likely to be obtained?
 - Uses of data resulting from the evaluation?
2. Did the evaluator explore with your staff both the shortcomings and the strengths of different ways to evaluate your program?
3. Did the evaluator record all changes made in the original evaluation plan and the reasons why the changes were made?
4. Did the evaluator conduct the evaluation in a way that clearly respects the dignity and self-worth of everyone involved?
5. Did the evaluator identify and respect differences among participants (for example, age; gender; ethnicity; etc.) when planning, conducting and reporting the evaluation?
6. In planning and reporting the evaluation, did the evaluator consider including the perspectives and interests of all interested parties?
7. When the evaluator presented his or her work, did he or she communicate accurately and in sufficient detail to allow others to understand, interpret and critique it?
8. Did the evaluator report negative findings in a sensitive manner without compromising the integrity of the findings?

Further discussion at the 2003 AEA conference included the suggestion that the committee try to broaden the scope of use of the finalized versions of the CFF beyond the IC TIG. To accomplish this, the CFF committee approached AEA with the request to post both versions of the form on its Web site so that evaluators visiting the site could download

and use copies of the instrument. AEA posted both versions of the CFF at <http://eval.org/iccff.htm>. A brief introduction to the forms is available on the site, along with the names and e-mail addresses of the form's developers.

While most members of AEA have received a specific request at some point during the project to use the form, AEA members and nonmembers alike have made specific requests to obtain and use the CFF. Since the inception of the project, there have been over thirty specific requests to use the form, including one Fortune 500 corporation, one U.S. school district, one U.S. state agency, one training organization, two U.S. federal agencies, two private U.S. foundations, two private nonprofit organizations (one U.S., one Australian), four universities (three U.S., one Australian), and nineteen independent consultants or independent consulting firms that span the United States and Canada. In addition to using the instrument for client satisfaction and performance evaluation, other uses cited in requests included using the form for a strategic development planning process, providing an informational handout for evaluation training, and providing a tool to grantees to use with their evaluators (foundations and public agencies).

Lessons Learned and Future Directions for the CFF

The development and use of the CFF has opened the eyes of many evaluators to the importance of asking evaluation clients to evaluate their work systematically on important dimensions of both client satisfaction and performance. The CFF is a user-friendly form that provides evaluators one means of gathering feedback on how well they are performing. A pilot test of the CFF demonstrated the value of the data that evaluation clients can obtain. Many evaluators who pilot-tested the CFF reported positive experiences with the form and the information it provided. Most important, evaluators reported being able to use the data to assess their overall performance and help pinpoint areas of their work where improvement may be needed. From a quality assurance perspective, these data can be invaluable as evaluators continually seek to improve their work.

The primary advantage of using the CFF is the ability to receive direct feedback on specific dimensions of an evaluator's work. All evaluators dedicated to professional growth and development can benefit from such feedback. When responses are positive, consultants can potentially use direct quotations and aggregate ratings over time (given respondents' express permission to do so) in marketing materials. On a larger scale, the tool could be helpful in identifying areas of professional development that are needed for a specific group of evaluators, such as the IC TIG of the AEA or even a local affiliate.

The process of developing the CFF has been a learning experience for all involved. Based on feedback from evaluators who used the form, the CFF should continue to evolve into a method of client feedback that becomes easier to use and provides more useful data to evaluators. Future CFF efforts

may benefit from several changes or options that will allow for greater ease of use. For example, CFF use might be enhanced if clients are provided the certainty of remaining anonymous, that is, allowing them to send CFFs to a central location for data processing and analysis. For optimal functioning, the third-party data entry would provide evaluators with a raw data file that is ready for analysis, with no additional manipulation required. This approach would ease the burden of evaluators in using the form and may increase its use. However, this would require a much greater level of effort on the part of the project's sponsors than is currently possible.

During the pilot phase of the CFF, more clients submitted their feedback using the online version of the tool than hard copies. Offering clients and evaluators a permanent online version of the CFF tool may also increase use of the CFF. Ideally, an online version would allow clients to have remote access to the form and submit results in a completely anonymous manner. This approach would solve two problems associated with the CFF. First, it would reduce client and evaluator concerns about the confidentiality of client data, thus increasing the likelihood that clients will provide candid and truthful feedback. Second, the online form may make the logistics of the CFF process easier, as the evaluator will simply have to provide the client with the URL of the online form in lieu of preparing hard copies of the form that need to be mailed to clients. While an online approach seems to address some concerns, the costs of a Web-based instrument could impede this possibility.

Finally, it has been suggested that it would be beneficial for the profession if AEA took on the task of monitoring members' client satisfaction. A process proposed during an electronic discussion of the form included having evaluators build into their contracts with clients the completion of the form at the end of the project. To maintain client anonymity, forms would be returned to AEA, where they would be coded for analysis. After three forms have been submitted for any one evaluator or firm, an aggregate report would be sent to the evaluator. To help defray the cost of administering this effort, evaluators could either pay an annual fee or pay a fee per CFF sent out and completed. Such a program would benefit individual evaluators and firms, as well as the profession as a whole. As one TIG member noted, an approach such as this would put evaluators one step ahead of any other profession, which would be appropriate since the CFF is, in essence, an evaluation process and AEA is an evaluation association.

Conclusion

In the same way that clients' customers and project participants are excellent sources of information regarding the quality, importance, and usefulness of clients' programs, clients are excellent sources of information on the quality, importance, and usefulness of evaluators' products and services. The CFF offers evaluators one possible method for obtaining client feedback. However, it should be noted that the CFF is not offered as a comprehensive method for assessing

evaluator performance; just as clients cannot rely solely on program participants to evaluate their programs, evaluators cannot rely solely on clients to evaluate their performance. For a fully comprehensive look at evaluator performance, other aspects of the project must be reviewed. For example, without looking at how a project was designed and the processes used for project implementation, feedback from clients cannot reveal much about why the quality or usefulness of a project was rated high or low. In the case of evaluating the evaluator, the job of examining the design and methods for collecting and analyzing data must be that of our colleagues who are far more qualified to perform the task. Nonetheless, clients are valuable sources of information regarding certain aspects of evaluators' work. As more evaluators become aware of the CFF, the CFF may become an integral part of many evaluators' quality assurance strategies.

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