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AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH
PROGRAM EVALUATION DOESN'T HAVE TO BE SCARY:
INCREASE BUY-IN WITH MESSAGE FRAMING DESCRIPTION
WEBINAR

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>> XAN YOUNG: Okay welcome everyone. We will go ahead and get going now. Welcome to today's webinar, titled. This webinar is being recorded and will be available for later viewing on the youth.gov website. Thank you for being here. Hold on. Let's see if I can get this to advance. There we go. This webinar is hosted by the interagency working group on used programs.

On behalf of all the federal partner departments and agencies, which support the programs and services focusing on youth. In a moment my co-presenter and I will introduce ourselves but first to Okori Christopher, our technology specialist, will provide a quick overview of the technology we're using and logistics. Okori?

>> SPEAKER: Thank you for joining. This session today is listen only, so I'm going to mute all lines calling in. To submit your question, we ask that you do so using the Q & A pod on the left-hand side on any pictures of our presenters today. Those questions go to us, and we'll make sure that the

presenters address them as soon as the Q & A section starts.

For technical questions, please use that to submit them to me, and I will contact you directly and try to work out any issues you may be having on your side. With that, I'll pass it back over to you.

>> XAN YOUNG: Thanks Okori. Let's move on to introductions. My name is Xan Young. I'm a senior TA consultant here at AIR. I work with community members, professionals, and organizations to promote, policy, practice and system changes with the goal of improving the lives of youth as well as other people across the life span. Michael Baran will be co-presenting with me today.

Michael, would you like to introduce yourself?

>> MICHAEL BARAN: Thank you, Xan. So my name is Michael Baran. I'm a principal researcher at AIR. I'm not a program evaluation expert, per se, but I am a cultural anthropologist. And what I specialize in is doing deep ethnographic culture research on a variety of issues in a way to understand how people are thinking and acting in their daily lives and then to use that information to improve the way that we do communications, the way that we do messages, outreach, and to improve outcomes on the whole range of issues.

Before I started working at AIR, I worked at the Frameworks Institute, which really specializes on this idea of framing, and I'll be drawing on some of the research that I did there in this webinar.

>> XAN YOUNG: Great. Thanks, Michael. So we'll start out by discussing program evaluation in general; what it is and why it's worth doing. And I'll move through this part fairly quickly because this content may be familiar to many of you.

Michael will cover the rest of the presentation starting with an explanation of culture's role in strategic message framing, followed by an overview of common barriers to communicating about program evaluation, and then ending with a description of some framing strategies you can use to increase buy-in. So you might be asking yourself, buy-in from whom? I'll address that now and we'll also revisit it later.

We put this webinar together because we know that any successful program evaluation really requires the participation of many different people. It's not enough for a federal funder to require a programmer evaluation or for a project director to commit to engaging in evaluation. The reality is that many other people need to participate in the process.

You might need people to document how they implemented the program, collect information on sign-in sheets, distribute feedback forms, conduct follow-up calls, provide access to datasets, et cetera, et cetera. So if you don't have buy-in

from those people, you won't succeed.

So by the end of this webinar, you will know how to engage key stakeholders in support of the evaluation work. So let's get started. First, what comes to mind when you think about program evaluation? Why don't you write your answer on the "submit questions here" box that Okori pointed out earlier?

I'll keep an eye out for what you write there, and then I'll read a sample of your comments out loud to the rest of the group.

So before we start talking to you about program evaluation, just what does that phrase evoke for you? Either an association with it, a definition? Whatever you feel led to share. Okay I'm seeing a lot of responses, thank you.

Here are words that come to mind when people hear that phrase are understanding, exploration, program outcomes, measures, surveys, fidelity, transparency, someone else said a report that will be very little read. The quantitative data. Let's see. That it's necessary. The process of data collection and analysis. The effectiveness of variables we try to influence, accountability. Wow, lots of different pieces of feedback here. Great. Systemic way of gathering information to answer questions. Uh-huh.

It also evokes feelings like words like testing, boring, long. Nervousness. Okay, so I think that's a pretty good snapshot of the diversity of feelings and definitions that we come to this work with. Thank you so much.

We may revisit some of these comments from you later because you started to touch upon some of the things that Michael will be covering in later slides. So one of the things I like to do is define terms. I found it's important not to assume that the words I use have the same meaning to me as my listener. Take the word surveillance. Public health professionals hearing that term might think of CDC's youth risk behavior survey, but someone else might imagine an FBI surveillance van and a bunch of wiretapped phones. It's very useful when you're having a conversation with other people to make sure you use words the same way and this will be a recurring theme in the discussion today.

So to demonstrate that, we're going to briefly describe program evaluation starting with the word "program." There's no standard government definition of a program. It can be defined any number of ways. Whether a program is defined as an activity, a project, a function or a policy, it must have an identifiable purpose or set of objectives an evaluator assesses how well the purpose or objectives are met.

On this slide I share a definition from GAO that says, program evaluation is a systemic study using research methods to

collect and analyze data to assess how well a program is working and why. And actually it's important to note that evaluations may also assess whether programs had unintended or undesirable outcomes. This can be a very important finding.

Okay. So an evaluation can answer many different kinds of question. It can tell you whether a program attained the implementation objectives by answering questions like, are you implementing the services or training you initially planned to implement? Are you reaching the intended population?

Are you reaching the intended number of participants? Are you developing the intended collaborative relationships? It can also help you determine if a program obtained the outcome objective answering questions like, are participants exhibiting the expected changes, knowledge, attitudes, behaviors or awareness, and can these changes be attributed to the program itself?

So here's another way to think about the kinds of questions an evaluation answers, and you can answer implementation, effectiveness and attribution questions, which are some of what I covered on the previous slide. But here I'm also highlighting that it can measure efficiency. Are your program's activities produced with an appropriate use of resources such as budget and staff time, and it can help you determine cost-effectiveness. Does the value or benefit of achieving the goals or objectives exceed the costs of producing them?

So you can design your evaluation to answer any number of these questions. To answer questions like these, you do first need to be clear about what you're trying to accomplish. A logic model is a great tool for this, both for program planning and for evaluation. It visually describes how programs should work, presents the planned activities for the program, describes how activities will be documented, and focuses on the anticipated outcomes. It often uses diagrams or pictures that illustrate the logical relationship among key program elements through a sequence of if, then statements.

Sometimes the image says "if, then," and sometimes it's implied by arrows. In a sense it's a kind of roadmap. It's describing where you are, where you're going, how you're going to get there. It can help you identify program goals, objectives, activities, desired results, clarify underlying assumptions, communicate key elements of the program, and importantly, specify what to measure in your evaluation.

So here's a simple graphic that shows the key elements of a logic model. You know what I'm talking about. You basically say if we use these resources for activities to produce these outputs, so these people can change their ways which leads to these outcomes, then we'll have these fabulous results. So

here's an example of a sample logic model slightly adapted from one you can find on the CDC website at the URL at the bottom of the slide.

Here the goal is to reduce the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases among men in City X, and your objective is by month/year, staff will conduct three professional development workshops on STD screening recommendations for clinical providers caring for men in City X. I won't read the whole thing out, but you can kind of see how the inputs like funding and staff time are followed by activities, which result in the completed activities of these outputs, the workshops and you move on to the workshops leading to an increased knowledge about key things like the STD guidelines among the clinical providers and knowing about those guidelines leads to them being used and increased routine screens for STDs in men by the clinical providers who attended the workshop.

Then, presumably as a result of the screening, you actually have a decreased prevalence of STDs among men. Here's another one. This one is to illustrate you shouldn't be intimidated by logic models. This one was this was drawn by Courtney and Bailey Peters when they were 9 and 11 years old, and they made it after their mother Dorian Peters told them what she did at work that day.

She was on the staff of the Idaho Asthma Coalition and attended a presentation on logic modeling. When she came home and told her kids what she did that day, they decided to try it, and this is what they came up with. What I like about this is that it reminds you that it doesn't have to be fancy. You can hand-draw this thing.

It's also really helpful to see what kind of assumptions get revealed by a logic model. In the interest of time I won't have you type in what you see here, but take a look at it and see if you can identify some assumptions these kids had. One assumption seems to be that if they make \$1,500 they will be able to build a playground, right? Or get new playground equipment for the city park.

But looking at these images, you can find more assumptions. What do they think they will be able to accomplish? What's going to be the result of the new playground equipment? A safe place for kids to play. Okay.

So one of the reasons I love making logic models is that it reveals those hidden assumptions, and it allows you to adjust your implementation plan or identify the kind of data that you would really need to make sure you collect to support your program evaluation. So I'll stop there and say, it's clear that I'm a big fan of logic models and program evaluation in general, but not everyone feels the same way I do.

So I'm going to pass this over to Michael, and he's going to take us through the next section of the presentation.

>> MICHAEL BARAN: Great. Thank you, Xan. Who isn't a fan of logic models? In this section basically I'm going to answer why do we need to think about culture when we're talking about messaging, message framing? It's not something we often think that much about, so I'm going to get into that first in a general way before talking specifically about program evaluation.

To start, let's look what happens when a message goes out there. When people hear the kinds of things that van talked about. There's research from the CDC showing that people have these kinds of reactions; say these kinds of things:

It's too complex, it's too expensive, I can just tack it on at the end and it's too time-consuming, my resources are better used providing activities, I don't have enough staff, or it will make me look bad. As I went through the comments in that box when Xan asked what evaluation means to you, I can see that many of you are much more on board already program evaluation because there weren't too many responses like this, but there were some, you know. It's boring, it's long. Nervousness. Things like that. Right?

So these are the things that people say. What's really critical now is that when you try to respond to that, you can't just come back with the same kind of thing. The same kind of thing that she was talking about and saying, no, it's not like that and repeat what you already said. To be effective we need to understand what's underlying what people say in a deep way.

The deep patterns of thinking that underlie what people are saying, and then also to use that to be strategic and to be more effective in our messaging. So first I want to explain how this works with two examples. Not, like I said, from program evaluation, so don't get caught up too much in the project details, but just to show you how this works overall.

So this first example I'm going to talk about was from a project that I did with the Frameworks Institute for a group called transform justice in the U.K. Okay? This is a group in the U.K., and they were working with a whole bunch of experts, scientists, and advocates, and one of the messages they wanted to get out was this. This is a composite, not a direct quote. Prison only makes a youth offender more likely to commit future crime. Prison doesn't do any good for youth who engaged in minor crimes. Okay?

This is not just a value that they have, right? They're basing this on evidence, so there's a lot of evidence out there showing that to be the case. The task force for community preventative services, for example, reviewed a lot of that

research and found that transferring juvenile offenders to the adult criminal system leads to an increase in the risk of use re-offending, so when an expert in the U.K. says something like this, what's the reaction? What do people take away? These experts are trying to convey some of the science, really.

They're trying to convey that sending people to prison has an effect on people's identities, which is something that causes more crime in the future. It creates connections with other criminals and actually prunes connections sometimes with people outside prison, which also leads to an increase in crime. It can limit opportunities for people once they get out of prison, for example, making it harder to get a job. They're talking about things like that.

Now, when people hear this message, though, the response is something like this: Yes. So it sounds like they agree. Yeah, prison is too cushy, like a holiday camp. Very British expression. We need to take away prisoner activities and make prison more harsh so they never want to come back. Right? They're basically agreeing, yeah, prison doesn't work, but not because of the things that the experts wanted to talk about, cutting ties and making it harder to get a job and systemic issue.

No, because it's too cushy. You have this total mixed message between what the expert is trying to get out or what the general public hears or sometimes people in the field hear.

Here's a second example of a missed message. This one is coming from a project I worked on with the Harvard University Center on the Developing Child. So they were trying to get across this message that prolonged stress is harmful for a young child's cognitive development in a very physical way. It really impairs brain development.

And when people hear this, the typical response is something like, oh, stress. I experience stress, and it made me stronger and who I am today. Stress isn't that bad for kids. They need it. Right?

So again, total missed message. The expert is trying to convey one message, and the public or people in the field receiving a very different message. There are lots of explanations that people have for why messages get missed, especially people that work in communications, right? They often say things like, well, the message is too complicated, and that's especially true when it's a message from a scientist.

The message was poorly distributed. No one saw it. It wasn't using popular channels. The message wasn't memorable. It didn't grab your attention. It wasn't exciting. That's why people didn't receive it in the right way. It didn't trigger strong emotion. You have to really trigger emotion for your

message to get across. It didn't have facts in it, so why would people believe it? Or maybe on the flipside had facts but contrasted with myths. There's interesting research about the ineffectiveness of myth fact sheets, for example. The basic idea being that what happens is that in the short-term people misremember the myths as what's true, as the facts. And that it then gets worse over the long term when they test it. So that format is not very effective.

There's this idea that people are just misunderstanding the message because they don't understand the issue in general. Right? But there's something else going on here, which is what I'm going to talk about, and that is that culture gets in the way, okay? So what is culture? This is the way that I approach culture.

If you talk to 1,000 anthropologists, you'll probably get a thousand different definitions of what culture is. We're very good at that. This is the way I approach it the way a lot of psychological cognitive anthropologists like me approach the issue as well. We think about culture as models in our minds, right?

If you think about a developing child's brain, very young from zero to 3 years old, for example, they're forming about 700 synaptic connections per second, which is pretty amazing. They're literally building the cognitive architecture of their mind in this cultural environment. They're forming the connections that are going to create their understandings of what everything means and how everything works.

This helps us organize the way we think about the world, right? We couldn't think about all the stimuli we're getting on a second by second basis anew every time. We have to have patterns to make sense of it, and it basically builds up a common sense about the world. Then these cultural models that are there, they get triggered by the framing of any message.

When I talk about a message frame, what I'm talking about is not necessarily the content but the way it's presented. There are many different framing elements. I'm going to talk about a couple of these later. There are things like values, metaphors, keywords, the messenger, the tone of the message, these sorts of things. All of those frames end up having the effect of queueing, activating, triggering the cultural models that are there in our minds.

We used to have this idea that communication, you know, you thought of the brain as the general processing mechanism, and we have this idea that if you have an idea you want to convey, you encode it, right? This is the code model. You encode it into words or written words or visuals and send it out to a receiver.

That receiver unpacks that code and gets basically the message you are trying to get across. With the code model, you're surprised by miscommunication. That's not the way it's supposed to work.

With this model, instead--with the idea that you send out messages that trigger cultural models and the cultural models then determine how a person understands the message-- when you're thinking with that model, you understand that miscommunication is what we should expect. That's the norm. We plan for that, okay? That helps us be more effective.

How do we plan for it? If we have the time and we're starting a new project, we gather evidence in two phases. So we first have a formative research phase to find out what's getting in the way, what's causing the mixed messages, and then we have a second phase in which we develop messages that we think are going to trigger productive models and avoid problematic ones. Then we test those messages to make sure that they actually do work in the way that we expect them to. So what does that look like in the previous examples that I gave?

So here's the first example of criminal justice reform in the U.K. All right? Now, when we actually did a whole mapping of all the cultural models going on here, we can see what's underlying this general response. So in this case there are two cultural models that I'll highlight. Basically this idea of retribution is going on, the idea that you have to pay for your crime with equal punishment rather than, for example, looking at what's going to work to reduce future crime, right? That's not the model at play here.

It's about, there was a crime, it has to be paid for with an equal punishment. Then, there's an idea of a rational actor model. That the way people make decisions is by logically weighing pros and cons. If you made prison more harsh, people would think twice and maybe decide, no, it's not quite worth it to commit this crime. We know that's not the way people make decisions, but that's the way people think that people make decisions. Right?

So what do we do about that is when we understand that these models are getting in the way, what do we do about that? We develop a metaphorical way of talking about the same thing that allows people to be more receptive to those ideas. Ideas of pruning connections and making criminal connections and limiting opportunities and creating identities. Something like this: Prison sweeps young people into a powerful stream of crime from which it's difficult to escape.

It's subtle and metaphorical, and you can visualize it and it channels people's thinking to be receptive, to be able to access the kinds of things that experts are talking about.

Usually those things are there.

They're just a little bit more excessive, but something like this with the way it frames the issue actually allows people to understand what the expert is trying to say better. There's both qualitative and quantitative data suggesting that something like this is effective for that.

It channels people's thinking, okay. Kind of metaphorical in itself. Second message; second example. This is the one about stress. What's going on here? There's a very strong sense of individualism thinking, individualist thinking here, and there's also this idea that all you really need to overcome hardship is to pull yourself up, to try harder. If you use your willpower, you can do it.

While a standard communication recommendation might be something like, well, that scientist's message is too complicated, and you have to dumb it down and simplify it. What we end up doing is actually making it more complicated, so we started testing this idea of a taxonomy of stress. There's normal stress, things like going to school for the first day and stuff like that that is actually good for you. There's tolerable stress which is very serious life events happen, but if you have the right supports, you can get past that. Then there's toxic stress. Things like abuse and neglect that really inhibits the brain developing in the proper way.

When you then take that same content that the expert was trying to get out, but instead of calling it stress you call it toxic stress, that actually works. The message is not missed anymore, and the reaction is like, oh, yeah, toxic stress. That's bad. We definitely should limit that.

Then the message works in the way that you are intending it. Okay. So now let's turn specifically to program evaluation. What are the cultural models that get in the way? That's what we want to understand first.

The first thing I want to point out here is we don't have formative research to draw on for this topic that's specifically focused on program evaluation. So what we do have is research that the Frameworks Institute has done on program implementation that also addresses program evaluation. So that's what I'm going to draw on here.

The second thing to note is that the cultural models that I'm going to be talking about that get in the way of effective messaging, you personally might not have these problematic patterns of thinking that get in the way. I think from some of the reactions that we saw from Xan's first question, a lot of you probably don't have these problematic culture models. You might very much understand program evaluation in the way that an expert does. You might be an expert on program evaluation.

As Xan mentioned in the beginning, some people you work with have these problematic cultural models, so it's helpful for you to know what you're up against. Okay. So the first culture model is a "just do it" cultural model, right? You've got a plan, common sense tells you it will work. It worked somewhere else. It's going to be great. So just do it. What do you need evaluation for? You might have heard reactions like this if you have tried to get people on board with program evaluation in the past.

A second culture model, if you do have to have program evaluation, people often think of it as something that starts after implementation is done. It's at the end to see if it works. This way of thinking, of course, completely obscures the idea that continuous evaluation is critical to show what is working or not and why that is so that you can adjust as you go.

And that's something that has to be planned right from the start along with implementation. This cultural model makes it hard to see that. Like I said, I know some of you do see that. I think in the comments someone even specifically said, you know, planning right from the very beginning. So that's great to see.

Third, we have a cultural model we might call short term or small picture thinking. The idea here is that evaluation is about this single program, right? Not really thinking about the long-term for this program or the wider picture of people trying to make a difference on this issue and how data you collect could contribute to that, but really focus on this one particular program and this one particular iteration.

A fourth cultural model that often gets in the way is a focus on quantity. More is better. Delivering more services, reaching more people. That is what it's all about. That is impact, right? The bigger the numbers, the bigger the impact. It's all about the numbers. If it's all about the numbers, then that continuous program evaluation designed to improve quality is kind of at odds with that, because it's going to take away staff, going to take away resources, going to take away time from what really matters, and that you will definitely see folks that you are trying to get on board with this thinking what really matters is reaching more people and feeling frustrated that the evaluation is going to take away from that.

A fifth cultural model sometimes gets in the way. Sometimes this paralyzing way of thinking about the overwhelming complexity of the world. How can you evaluate a program that keeps fidelity to the original idea, when the real world is so messy. We have to adapt it for here for where we are, and that's going to screw it all up basically. Okay? That kind of thinking can get in the way because it really can be

almost -- people almost have a fatalistic way of thinking about it, that it's just too complicated.

Then, finally because it's adapting to the messy, real world, there's this idea that some people have that the -- that it's not going to achieve the desired results, and that's going to make us look bad. It's going to look like a waste of resources. It's going to make it so we don't get more resources in the future. That definitely makes the idea of evaluation pretty scary, right?

Okay. Now how can we take that where we know about what's going on and what we know about framing and make it less scary? In this class section I have some suggestions for more effective communication, for getting more buy-in.

One big caveat is not these suggestions have not been tested in that phase two that I mentioned earlier where you -- after you developed hypotheses for what's likely to work, you actually go out and test them. These have not been tested, but they are very good, educated guessing for knowing what we know about communications in general and what we know from that first formative phase of research that was done.

So first recommendation is to start off being very up-front about fidelity versus adaptation to context with something like this. Every situation is different. This program has core effectiveness factors that must be maintained, and then we'll adapt to our local context.

So this helps to avoid some of that worry that adapting to local context is going to mess everything up. Right?

Second is this idea to use values to frame the message. I want to pause for a minute to talk about values. Almost every message, even if you don't realize it, has a value built in. That's a subtle cue telling the person what's at stake, why it matters, how to approach it, something like that.

You can take the same content and switch the subtle framed value in there and have dramatically different results to give you a concrete example, there was a project I was working on in Canada which was looking to increase support for people who had substance abuse issues. So we were working with some organizations there. We did an analysis of the frames that were already used by that group, and it turns out they were framed with a value of empathy.

When they talked about substance abuse issues, they were sort of taking this that put yourself in the shoes of the person addicted to substances, you know? Don't you feel like they're a person, too and they're human and need support and stuff like that? It seemed very logical and obvious to them that this would be a good way to talk about the issue.

When we went out then and took the same content and tested

it against other values, they were framing that same content and even no value, which strips all of the values out of this particular phrase, we found something that even to us is pretty shocking. Not only was the value of empathy not helpful for increasing support, and this was a quantitative online survey with thousands of people testing this value-framed sentence against the whole series of dependent variables.

So not only does the value of empathy in this particular case not increase support, it actually decreased support in a significant way compared to that same context that had no value. Right?

So by then talking about what they were talking about, using the value of empathy, they were getting worse outcomes than if they had not had any value in there at all, which was pretty shocking to us. The good news is there were other values that were more successful.

I was just listening to your talk. I wish I can remember the name of the guy. He talked about testing values to frame issues related to conservation and the environment.

He found that conservatives had values that resonated with them and liberals had values that resonated with them. If you took the liberal content and framed it with conservative values, the same message, it actually had a much better success rate to getting people to support issues related to the environment. So really fascinating stuff.

Okay. Tangent aside, in this particular case, FrameWorks recommends these two values. The value of ingenuity and responsible management to avoid this overwhelming complexity cultural model. It would look something like this.

Our organization has a long history of being creative and resourceful when it comes to solving problems and improving outcomes for young people. We can use those skills to carefully plan and manage evaluations so we know what's working and why and so it doesn't take too much staff time, okay? Just embedding those values in there, and giving people not feeling the stress of the overwhelming complexity cultural model.

Next, you can use a different framing tool. Explanatory metaphors, and I want to explain what an explanatory metaphor is. It's taking something -- we use metaphors all the time, right? They're in poetry everywhere, but we can use them for communication.

The idea is taking something very complicated and talking about it in terms of something much more concrete and simple that people can understand. You can't just pick any metaphor to explain your issue even though a lot of times experts and advocates would like to and often they do actually frame their issues using explanatory metaphors.

Sometimes they go very wrong. I'll give you my favorite example, which was, again, working with the Center on the Developing Child but this time on the issue of resilience.

There were some experts there that thought that the perfect way to talk about resilience in children was to talk about orchid children and dandelion children and how what we really meant is dandelion children that can grow in any environment and didn't need a lot of care. They were just going to thrive no matter what, right? Whereas, of course, the opposite is the case for orchids.

When we went out and tested that message with people, you know, we could do this test right now, but I won't take time to do it. What comes to mind when you first hear that if you have kids especially? When we talked to people, no one wanted a dandelion kid. Everyone wanted an orchid child. They're beautiful, special, precious just like your children, right? It completely backfired which is why you have to test these things, okay?

This is one we suggest might be effective to talk about program evaluation because of some of the formative research that was found when the Frameworks Institute did that research. It's something like this. Using people's familiarity with tests and quizzes. We all went to school to say something like this. Imagine a classroom where students are given one test at the end of the year.

Sure, you'd see what they learned, but you'd miss the opportunity to see what was going on during the year, so you can adjust the teaching. The continuous evaluation is key so that students learn more. So a metaphor for something like if people have the trouble with the idea of continuous evaluation.

Fourth, focus on implementers and address their fears directly. So something like this. We know that the real world is a messy place and programs don't always hit the outcomes they want right away. We want to continually evaluate so we can adjust the program as needed, and we need input from people like you who are seeing what's really going on.

So empowering implementers in the process. That's critical. Focus attention on quality rather than quantity. Something like this: We all want to reach as many people as we can, but we won't be doing any good if our program doesn't work well for the people we're reaching, and evaluation is critical for that.

They're going to think about quantity no matter what, but focus on quality as well and how evaluations can increase the quality.

Then finally always linking the benefits directly to your mission. Focusing on the positive, something like that some

benefits include adjusting the program so it works better, learning from what's working and why so we can keep improving, telling compelling stories to get more buy-in and more resources and to do more good work. As you can see, these framing suggestions, these framing words are not magic-wired. That's not the idea.

They're not things you should memorize even. Just hopefully some helpful ways you can talk about program evaluation in your own words by using these framing tips and have slightly easier time getting people on board.

They work because you know what's getting in the way of people understanding these issues like you do. You know better what's making it scary in the first place, and you can use these framing tools to overcome that. All right? So that brings us to 15 minutes that we wanted to leave for questions.

So if you would like to type them as Okori mentioned, we have the lines muted. If you want to type them in the submit questions here box, we will try to address as many as we can now, and if we don't get to them all, we'll also be able to respond in writing and get those answers out to all of you.

>> XAN YOUNG: Yeah, thanks everyone. As a reminder, you can post comments. Maybe you managed to obtain buy-in using one of these techniques we mentioned or another one that worked. Don't hesitate to let us know about your story as well. While we wait for questions to be typed, I wanted to share one comment already posted. Someone typed in, I think there's also oftentimes a confusion between process/implementation type evaluations and outcome evaluations.

Too often decision-makers only care about outcomes and not enough about metrics related to process and delivery. That comment was written before Michael shared some slides about ways to frame this very issue, but you're absolutely right that, you know, a key question to answer is where are program activities put in place as originally intended? Some people call this measuring fidelity. We also hear Michael talk about them as key elements.

If we don't know what happened, we really don't know how to implement the outcomes, you know? If we say everybody go -- all the teachers implement this program with six sessions and two hours each session and look at the outcomes and it didn't seem to work, but we don't know anything about what happened after we told people to do it, we're missing a piece of the puzzle.

What if we find out teachers on average implemented the first two-hour session and decided it was a waste of time and didn't do the next five sessions. That would have been a great thing to know early on in the process. So process evaluation is one way that we can kind of monitor how things are going and

making mid-course adjustments and make sense of what we see in the outcomes.

>> MICHAEL BARAN: I wanted to address one question I see here, Xan. This is a question of how to address this in tribal communities, which is a great question to think about when we say cultural models, what culture exactly are we talking about? Those are decisions that are really key when we design that first phase of research, and although I didn't do this first phase of research that I was talking about with the Frameworks Institute on program implementation and evaluation, my guess is that it did not include a lot of Native-Americans in that research.

They made some decisions about demographic variables that were going to be included in the sample and then looked for shared assumptions and shared understandings among that group. Then I'm almost positive that's a very diverse group in terms of race, class, age, having children or not, all sorts of demographic variables. But my guess is they did not include people from tribal communities, and so what you want to do, then, is you'd want to do -- you could do a scaled-down version of a phase 1 research. If that was key for you, you could go and do research specifically with tribal communities and see if these same cultural models were at play or different ones to take into account.

>> XAN YOUNG: Great. Thanks. So just flipping through some of these messages as they pop up. Okay. So here's a comment that just came in. I agree with mixed messages and framing, it's a big problem. One example is when people say that African-Americans are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system. You know, the person saying that might have meant to show that there was a systemic issue there, and it's a problem, but the listener might interpret it as a sign that black people are more prone to criminal activity.

So that's a good example of a mixed message where one person is sharing data thinking that the interpretation they have is the same as interpretation of the listener. And oftentimes people don't realize that that message was missed in the conversation.

>> MICHAEL BARAN: Yeah. That's a great observation. I saw that, and I actually on that very issue saw that exact thing happening where this very strong individualistic way of thinking. So those facts that the experts or advocates often think speak for themselves.

They tell such a convincing story to the experts themselves that they think all I would have to do is show these facts or these graphs to my audience, and they're going to take away the same thing that I do because they're so convincing. As this

listener pointed out sometimes the cultural models really determine how we interpret even those basic facts or statistics and often in completely opposite ways.

It's fascinating to watch, and sometimes it's frustrating and sad to watch as well, but it's very true.

>> XAN YOUNG: Here's one person that is saying that in her experience she has found that it's useful to try and connect things you're trying to achieve in the evaluation to experiences that people might have already had in their personal lives. For example, if you're trying to talk to them about how you're trying to achieve an increased interest in something.

The example she shared was it's like having a bunch of friends giving you feedback on which picture to use in your Tinder profile. So trying to have a conversation with people about what does it mean to see increased interest? How do we do that? Let's compare it to something you might have had a conversation about before.

Or nutrition labels being connected to figuring out what kind of bread to buy was another example she shared.

>> MICHAEL BARAN: Yeah. There's dual strategies going on there, right? Sort of an explanatory metaphor and connecting to your personal life, so it's great.

>> XAN YOUNG: We're pausing for a second to flip through. We love all the feedback we're getting here.

So we have this question coming in about how to gain buy-in for evaluating competences for implementers or facilitators. Issues like they might understand the mechanics of the implementing the intervention but have gaps in competences like culture humility, sensitivity that could actually cause harm.

So I think what you're getting at, certainly culture linguistics is critical for any implementation, but also consider ways of measuring implementation that are going to get at these concerns, right? Like, having observations, for instance, to see -- to go out and see how people are implementing it included in the training and expectation about the way the training is delivered and our things like that.

Obviously, cultural and linguistic competency is more complicated than these two simple things, but to make sure that how our program is implemented, the decision about how implementing it is made, the way those most affected are engage in the implementation and the way the people who implement the program understand how to go about it, those are all important parts of making your implementation plan and considering what is important to evaluate.

>> MICHAEL BARAN: Yeah. A great question in here as well about whether there are any strategies for getting people on the same page within an organization on the message about evaluation

or really that question about everything, whatever you try too message about. That's a great question. It takes a lot of work, you know? Sometimes it's getting people on board with the right message takes practice.

It doesn't always come naturally to use these frames we're suggesting are more effective. In fact, I remember running a workshop once and at the end a participant said, so basically what you're saying is if it feels good to say it, don't say it.

And that's not exactly the right rule, but there's something to that that we often have habitual ways of talking about an issue because they resonate with us, but if our goal is to get people on board who might not already be, then we have to practice using those strategies to take a normal communication, a normal message that someone would want to say about evaluation and pick it apart to find what frames are embedded in there that you might not realize.

Then practice rewriting that or resaying it again and again. It takes some work. You can do it.

>> XAN YOUNG: While we see some comments coming in, I'm just reminded of another online learning event I was at recently where some colleagues in Los Angeles talked about the way they went about implementing a program to increase positive activity in local parks that were not at the time considered family, you know, places to spend time and feel safe and commune with your neighbors. Instead, they were kind of viewed as places where a lot of crime happened, gang activity, et cetera.

They really went to community members who were using the park, which included gang members, and talked about, you know, what would -- how can we come to a common understanding about the parks being a neutral space? Some of the language that they ended up adopting and kind of using across the board with community members who had had a lot of conflict with each other in the past in the park was, especially young people, was to refer to the common frame of reference around visiting areas in prison and those being a safe space where people wouldn't have fights with each other.

People who previously were incarcerated it turned out had a lot of, you know, understanding that you might have conflict in any number of locations in a prison, but when it comes to spending time with your loved ones who are coming to visit you, that's a neutral zone. Everyone should be able to go in there at the right time to be with their friends and loved ones and no one will mess with anyone else.

When they talked about the language to describe places like that and could we agree the parks are that kind of space in our broader community, they obtained buy-in and they were able to implement a program and then really keep checking in, like, is

it working? People really started to think about this space in a different way using that kind of understanding and language.

So that became part of both their implementation plan for building buy-in in the community for the program, but also part of the evaluation. Did we see a significant change in the number of people that think of parks this way, especially among those who had been previously incarcerated. They were able to measure there was that shift.

So I think that ties together some of what, you know, we were hearing about -- and then they were also able to measure some outcomes, and in the spirit of outcome evaluation, and show there was a decrease in violence in the community and there was a decrease in obesity because people were actually being more active and there was a real active commitment to fitness programs in this use of the parks to try and engage people around fitness and physical activity as well.

So it's an interesting thing where we see the real needs to tie in cultural understanding, messaging framing to the whole process so that you can evaluate and plan well for your implementation and have meaningful measures for your evaluation to understand what worked.

>> MICHAEL BARAN: Yeah. That's a great one to leave on, Xan. Before you all go, we hope you really enjoyed this. We've definitely enjoyed presenting this for you. Before you go, we'd love to hear any feedback you have in the chatbox. If you could just maybe say something that you learned or a way you could envision using this in your work, we'd love to hear from you. Again, thank you so much for participating.

>> XAN YOUNG: We're always here for a reason, so we want you to apply this in your real-world context. When you write your final comments in the question box, let us know kind of where you do your work and, you know, whether you got something out of this webinar you'll be able to use, because we're going to look through all that to learn more about what's useful to others in the future. If you have any suggestions also about additional information you want or other kinds of webinars we should deliver, or content we should put up on the youth.gov website, this is your chance to let us know that too.

It's great how this can be applied to do your work. Thank you for your time. We're really grateful that you spent this hour with us. I see the comments come in. Thank you so much for staying on to type those in. We are going to -- there's some logistical things coming up. I want make sure to let you know if people want to receive the slides, there is a download pod on the screen.

If you haven't downloaded a copy of the slides on handouts click on the one that says evaluation webinar notes and you'll

have it right away. This webinar will also be -- it has been recorded and it will be posted on youth.gov along with copies of these slides. So you can always find it there as well, and send other people to come watch it or get the resources. Thank you so much. One person said, really loved the thought process on messages, so critical. Thanks so much.

We really appreciate -- and you're from the U.S. department of treasury. It's nice to see people letting us know where they work. I won't keep anyone here by reading these out, but we'll read through them carefully. Thank you for your time. You can stay on as long as you want typing the messages, and we'll end the audio now thanking you and wishing you a great day.

(Webinar concluded at 12:02 p.m. CDT)

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