

PLS 506 Program Evaluation

Exercise: Tailoring Evaluations (Cont.)

Goals of this exercise and role play:

- Apply the theories and concepts from the readings on tailoring evaluations, program theory/logic models, and evaluability assessments to a real program

Directions: 60 minutes

In order to develop a research design, the evaluation team must have a basic understanding of the program and how it works. This requires understanding the social problem(s) addressed by the program and what it seeks to accomplish. Be sure you can define the problem in 1 – 2 sentences. You should also be able to identify describe the need for the program. You should then develop some understanding of what service(s) are provided and how these services are delivered to a set of targets. In other words, you need to ask the typical evaluation questions Rossi, et al. discuss on page 77 - 78. If the program is complicated and provides a range of services, evaluators often work with the client to see if there are ways to limit the scope of the evaluation in some way.

Once the evaluation team has some knowledge about how a program functions, it is important to consider the context that will shape the evaluation. This requires understanding the information that the clients would like from the evaluation. You also need to identify the potential stakeholders and determine what information from them is needed to evaluate the program. Who will be the audience for the evaluation findings? How might the data and results be used? Are there other political, social, ethical, or practical considerations that will shape your evaluation of the program?

Since we don't have a program representative from D.A.R.E for you to work with, for this task your evaluation team should make some inferences and assumptions about the answers to the following questions:

- What problem(s) does the program address?
- Who is the target of the program's services?
- How is the program delivered (i.e., resources, activities/services, and outputs)?
- What are the expected results (i.e., short term outcomes, intermediate outcomes, long term comes)?
- What are they hypothesized effects and relationships? In other words, how are the inputs supposed to result in changes in outputs or outcomes.

Be prepared to write a summary of your answers to the first 4 questions on the board.